

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 46: Crazy Man misses his travel buddy, but then...

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Life can be a weed embedded in concrete or a match flash in the dark. It can be a Sunday drive in the country or a row boat facing a typhoon. And then it just stops. No weeds. No matches. No Sunday drive. No typhoons. No future tense.

But this was lost on Crazy Man as he stared at the graves and trees and wished that he could slide his travel companion, the dog, Sidestepper, under one of those slabs of stone where he would be protected from the life that had given up on him and at least have that marker that said, "I was there. Now I'm here." Crazy Man did the only thing that made sense: He jumped up and down and howled at the sky. He rolled around in the snow and he howled in the face of every flake. And then he sat quietly and sniffled and snorked for a while.

He spread his legs (while trying not to see his over-sized clown shoes, which terrified him), reached into his pocket and pulled out a ball of fur attached to a key chain. This was all that was left of the dog, Sidestepper, after he'd melted from a random needle's poisonous stabbing. It seemed like the least he could do for his erstwhile travel companion and he hoped to someday have a key that he could attach to what was left of this buddy.

"Your life should be worth your death...no less." said a voice that was not Crazy Man's.

Startled, he glanced around quickly. He was alone. Except for a garden of dead people.

"Your life should be worth your death...no less," repeated the voice that was not Crazy Man's.

"Are you that voice the dog, Sidestepper, kept hearing somewhere in the ether and bushes?" said Crazy Man.

"Naw, probably the dog was just hearing things," said the voice. "Happens a lot these days."

"But...if I can hear you, what are you to me?"

"I'm what you're hearing now. Nothing more"

"Does this mean that I'm crazy?"

"You've always been crazy. But not as crazy as the voices." A fly buzzed by Crazy Man's head and gave him its best Cheshire cat smile. "And by-the-way...your life should be worth your death...no less."

How about that? A talking fly: a flying smiling talking fly.

"What do you mean by that?" said Crazy Man.

The fly landed on his red bubble nose, causing much terror to shake Crazy Man's existential core. The fly's eyes bulged out of the little black body like oil slicks boiling in the sun. "If you were to die right now, would your life be worth it?" said the fly.

Crazy Man was beyond caring if life or death were worth anything. "I don't know what that means," he said.

"Nobody knows what that means until they die," said the fly. Its eyes sparkled like orbs of iridescence. "In the meantime, you need to make your life worth your death." The fly lifted the rear of its body into the air and rubbed its hind legs faster and faster until a high-pitched humming permeated the air with new meanings and formed the words: "No less." And then the damn thing flew away leaving Crazy Man bewildered and alone and trying to avoid his nose.

He plopped his butt down on the path of adventure and new meanings and went emotionally comatose for the amount of time it takes to make sense of one's life, draw up a detailed life plan in five year increments and develop a diet to enhance his plan with all the right food. Not that he did any of that, but he certainly had time to do it.

Back on the path of adventure and new meanings, he reached into his pocket and wrapped his hand around the furry key chain. Some of the strands of fur were still wet at the roots and he was sure that he could feel the waning embers of the dog, Sidestepper's, fire of life. He missed being watched as the dog, Sidestepper, sidestepped beside him, his eyes on Crazy Man at every step.

The deep dark scary woods felt deeper...darker...scarier. Shadows grew eerily longer as they crept menacingly through the remaining light. The air reeked of blood and fur.

He thought about the fly's words. *Your life should be worth your death...no less.* Somewhere out there in the universe, or maybe in the other dimension where Crazy Man's body (or mind) existed, these words had meaning and the texture of truth. Or maybe it was just a crazy fly.

One thing was sure: something was happening to Crazy Man's hand. The ball of fur began to feel warm...and did he detect a faint movement as though something was waking up? His heart began to pound. His blood pressure skyrocketed in whatever dimension his blood pressure did its thing. Stars in the sky smiled. Well, that may have been an exaggeration based on his imagination or just the way he saw the stars but the thought was clear: *Find my mother. No less.*

He opened his hand and looked.

It was just his imagination. The fur was cold. The fur was motionless. The dog was dead. The thought had never been thought.

Crazy Man screamed into the descending night and his head bounced up and down on his shoulders. He ate his clown nose even though it terrified him. He jumped up and down seven hundred times and would have sacrificed a dozen sheep if he'd had a dozen sheep. But then, if he'd had a dozen sheep, he probably would have eaten them. The reality of that thought snapped him out of his existential funk.

Maybe the thought had merit in his own mind.

Find my mother. No less.

He firmed his body and he firmed his mind. He set his eyes before him on a straight line down the path of adventure and new meanings to find the dog, Sidestepper's, mother.

Maybe she would have some food.

Behind him, buried in the bare branches of a well-wintered tree, a Cheshire fly with sparkling eyes and iridescent wings smiled sardonically as it watched the strange creature named Crazy Man saunter down the path of adventure an new meanings with an overwhelming air of purpose.

To be continued...

