

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 47: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper,

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Crazy Man had just one question that would explain everything...one question that would shine the flashlight of eternal understanding on a world cruel to its magnetic core...a world in which a strange but lovable sidestepping dog could be reduced to a furry key chain before he had a chance to find his mother. He had a question that would define the exact location of food (possibly a nice bowl of steaming chicken soup or a veggie spring roll) even *without the answer*. It would just be there, inherent in the question. The chicken and the egg together. It was the 42 of questions and all he had to do was ask it and everything was going to be alright.

If he could remember it.

But he couldn't. He was alone in a world that wasn't doing so well with its own aloneness and in the cosmic scheme of things it was somewhere at the edge of the universe and pretty much forgotten by all the light and energy at the center and, according to the aliens, this was probably a good thing. For the rest of the universe.

If he could just remember that question.

He passed by a familiar-looking tree. There was something about it that struck chords in his woe-begotten soul. Words tumbled around in his head, banging into each other like a thousand rabbits playing musical chairs, until that moment of clarity when all are seated and nothing is left but: *I weep for the trees.*

Crazy Man knew this voice. He knew the tone and intent of the voice. He knew the tree that projected this voice. But it was impossible.

“It’s you,” said Crazy Man. “But we watched you turned into ash and dispersed across the water and grass.”

“Well,” said a willow tree with an obvious half of itself missing, “that may not exactly be the way I perceived things happening.”

“But we saw...”

“You saw what your mind could handle at the time.”

“But our minds couldn’t handle it. Our jaws dangled and our eye whites circled our irises in disturbing ways.”

“OK then...you choose to see me turned to ash and you want me to go along with your interpretation of events? I don’t think so.”

“Yeah, give the tree a break,” said a partially submerged park bench. “It’s tough being the object of someone else’s misconstrued interpretation of reality.”

Holy shit! A talking park bench.

Crazy Man vaguely remembered talking park benches, or did he? He wasn’t sure. If the dog, Sidestepper, had been there, he could have asked him, but now he was on his own, in charge of his own answers and in charge of his own destiny as far as he could be in charge of his own destiny when he wasn’t sure which dimension his body was in and which his mind was in.

“But we didn’t choose...”

“We all choose,” said the tree. “No life is constrained by random acts of...”

At which point a random bolt of lightning shot through the sky and turned the tree into an arboretum of tree steam. A sudden breeze carried the steam off and Crazy Man turned to the bench. “I didn’t choose that,” he said.

“I don’t think the tree chose that either,” said the bench. “But what would I know. Somebody planted me in a flood zone. You have any idea how frustrating it is to offer a perfect river view and not be able to do it because you’re suddenly a part of the river view?”

Crazy Man thought about this for two and three quarters of a second before his empathy kicked in and tears shot out of his eyes, snot shot out of his nose, drool shot out of his mouth and his head spun so fast that tear, snot and drool slashed through the air and covered the bench and passing flotsam with the fluids of his empathy.

He was pretty sure that any directions to food would likely cause the current situation to vomit but there was one thing he had to ask, “You wouldn’t happen to be the dog’s mother would you?”

The bench remained stationary and silent in the water just like any other park bench and Crazy Man wondered if the bench had really talked. He wondered if he'd really seen the tree destroyed by random lightning. For a second time. He turned his head toward the path and saw that it followed the river for a few miles before it appeared to rise over a hill with something strange and orange dotting the surface of the hill overlooking the valley through which the river flowed.

He looked back at the bench that had become what it was: a bench. He looked at the spot where the tree was no longer a tree. Uneasy with reality, he looked around for random bolts of lightning. The air was clear of threat. It was time to continue down the path of adventure and new meanings in search of the dog, Sidestepper's, mother. And maybe some food.

And just what were those orange things?

To be continued...

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