

## The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



51Episode 51: Wherein Crazy Man might make a friend.

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I've heard it said that we live in a world of full shopping carts and empty cupboards. So much of what we put in the carts was never on the list, but it's in the carts and on its way to be thrown out, proving once and for all that carts are faster than cupboards.

Crazy Man tried to avoid these thoughts, and he often wondered if, somewhere in his long forgotten past, he might have cupboards and a kitchen to hold them. He fantasized things he would do in his kitchen, like make pizza in the pizza pan he might have. He wondered if he had a home around the bed he'd woken under before setting off to explore this outside thing.

He missed the dog, Sidestepper, but his spine still tingled with chills when he thought about the apparition that his heart said was the dog come back to haunt him and his mind said what a crock of shit that would be.

It was with subdued astonishment that he rounded a corner on the path of adventure and new meanings and there before him, surrounded by the deep dark scary woods, was a shopping cart, one of those large ones designed for family shopping as opposed to the short ones designed for competitive shoppers. Large as it was, it appeared frail and helpless with its huge basket empty like a grill without patties or steaks or chicken or...

Crazy Man sure wished that the cart had a few patties or steaks or chicken or...

"Please, sir, keep your distance from me," said the cart.

Well, how about that...a talking shopping cart. Crazy Man had always wanted to talk to a shopping cart, though he wasn't sure what he wanted to talk about...maybe the weather.

"It's a beautiful evening," he said.

"No it's not," said the shopping cart. "It's dark in the deep dark scary woods and it's cold and lonely and my shopping days are over."

That did it. Crazy Man's empathy response went whacko. He fell to the ground and pounded the path of adventure and new meanings with his fists and forehead while banging his knees together and dolphin swimming in circles. A shooting star blazing through the atmosphere saw Crazy Man and wondered if it really wanted to become dust on this planet.

It could have been the length of a comic book, it could have been the length of a set of encyclopedias...but eventually he calmed and his body stopped spinning with the dolphins and he said, "That sucks."

This just happened to be what the shopping cart had been waiting to hear all its life. "Though you look strange," said the cart, "your heart is in the right place. I will be your friend and spend eternity boring you with my life story."

Suddenly, Crazy Man felt his empathy for this abandoned metal construction dissipate into the air and all he wanted to do was get away from it.

"I sense you're not much enthused with hearing my story," said the cart.

"I don't really need the sleep," said Crazy Man, well aware of the effect sob stories had on him. "Would you happen to have a map to food?"

"No," said the cart, "and you're a bastard."

"Well," said Crazy Man, "you're a bastard too." He stepped closer to the cart.

"No!" said the cart. "Keep your distance from me."

Crazy Man stopped dead in mid-left-foot-stepping-forward and said, "Do you have ebola?"

"I might," said the cart as its four tiny wheels turned forward and then backward, creating a swaying motion that almost made it seem like the cart was getting ready to run.

"You look healthy," said Crazy Man. "Are you sure you might have ebola? I'm not sure if I've ever had it, but I might have a kitchen. And a pizza pan."

This made no sense to the cart. "I just feel so naked out here with my basket empty. I used to spend my days being filled with marketing strategy approved treasures from malls and supermarkets. I sparkled with colorful plastic packages, big boxes filled with big screen TVs and all sorts of things that confused the unwary buyer. My shoppers were like Romans vomiting after each course to make way for the next course. I was the repository of their deep-seated need to acquire that which had not yet been acquired and their need to fill the chasm of my empty bucket to..."

Crazy Man's snoring shook the ground and split through the night like a sword of sound.

"Hey!" said the cart.

Crazy Man snapped out of it and said, "Sorry, sob stories bore me and..." He almost said the dog, Sidestepper, but stopped short. The cart felt his sense of loss and said, "Yeah...me too. Sorry 'bout that." It lifted up on its hind wheels and spun a few times. This reminded Crazy Man of something he couldn't quite put his finger on.

“And then,” said the cart, “I was suddenly here, on the path of adventure and new meanings rolling along with my empty basket as a constant reminder of my abandonment.”

Crazy Man almost slipped into a state of comatose redux before the cart shut up.

“I’m traveling the path of adventure and new meanings to explore this outside thing and maybe find a departed friend’s mother. And maybe a map to some food or something,” said Crazy Man.

“I’ve had mountains of food in me,” said the cart.

Crazy Man eyed the sparse metal construction of the cart and noticed the lack of food or anything else. “Let me know when you small hill of food,” he said, sarcastically.

The cart ignored his remark and spun its wheels. “How about if we travel together for a while? I promise I’ll keep my sob story to myself.”

Crazy Man considered this. It would certainly break the monotony of his own disjointed thoughts and maybe he might find the dog, Sidestepper’s, mother before she, like her son before her, croaked.

“OK...” He realized that he didn’t know the cart’s name. “What should I call you?”

The cart immediately gushed. “Call me Wheels Carrying The Fruits Of Your Labor And All The Things You Never Dreamed Of Owning And Then Some.”

Crazy Man thought about his for a moment or ten and said, “How about just Wheels?”

The cart nodded agreement as carts nod agreement and said, “I like it. From now on I shall be known as Wheels.”

And Crazy Man and the cart called Wheels set off down the path of adventure and new meanings in search of food, a dog’s mother and this outside thing.

To be continued...

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