

The Crazy Path

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Where Do The Ideas Come From?

It Starts with a Picture

People ask me how I come up with ideas for these stories. I tell them that I just provide a thousand words for a picture. Mostly, they wait a few seconds for an explanation which never comes so they smile, nod agreement and change the subject or walk away.

But it's true.

With the exception of the first image, every episode was inspired by a photograph...the one pasted to the top of the page and looks like it might have something to do with the story.

Strangely, the episodes usually work out to about a thousand words.

What Is Existentialism?

According to Wikipedia

Existentialism is a form of philosophical inquiry that explores the problem of human [existence](#) and centers on the lived experience of the thinking, feeling, acting [individual](#). In the view of the

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Why Are Clowns So Scary?

It's called coulrophobia and it seems to be catching on. It causes panic attacks, nausea and loss of conscious. It breeds nightmares and stomach-churning angst when you open the refrigerator door. But we keep coming back for more. Coulrophobia (pronounced chi can shit), is fear of clowns and it's becoming a common phobia in the 21st Century even though it's been on the sideboards for a long, long time.

Recently though, clowns have been getting a bad rap avalanche. Who wants to go for a swim in the local sewer after seeing Pennywise and his balloons? I know people who won't buy balloons anymore. Though not all that scary, the Joker is just as evil as Pogo the Clown (who turned out to be very scary).

But it goes deeper than individual personalities. Clowns are disturbing at a fundamental level: They're different. They dress in wild clothing that's fine for circuses and parties, but not so good for the workplace or politically correct social gatherings. They wear excessive makeup that entertains but creeps us out because we never know what the makeup is hiding.

And you never know what a clown is going to do until after the act is done. Are you sure that the axe they're bringing down on your head is really made of foam rubber?

A clown is a curious mix of adult and child...with the adult's experience and the child's sense of play. Some people find this offsetting: they was their adults to act like adults and their children to act like children. But we inhabit a world where those boundaries are shifting. As the modern adult dumbs down under the onslaught corporate needs and children can summon the adult world with the click of a button...maybe

existentialist, the individual's starting point has been called "the existential angst" (or, variably, existential attitude, [dread](#), etc.), or a sense of disorientation, confusion, or [anxiety](#) in the face of an apparently meaningless or [absurd](#) world.

According to Biff

Existentialism is a humanitarian way of life that puts ALL the responsibility for our lives in OUR hands. No supernatural being is going to save us. No pre-set fate is going to damn us or devour us. We set our own fate every minute of every day. However, there is magic out there. It's in the flow of the universe, part of human existence that human existence has yet to understand.

My 2021 Predictions

2020 will bite 2021's ass well into the year but things will become steadily less abnormal until Spring arrives and we return to the mess the world was before COVID... with some interesting add-ons. And I'm going to learn Spanish.

Yes, the Dog, Sidestepper, Is Back

Right, just like in a soap opera, right out of the blue, someone returns from the dead. This time it's a dog. But honestly, I never wanted to kill the dog off. I liked the dog. The dog reminded me so much of myself: awkward, lanky and freakish. But not afraid of clowns. At least, not publicly.

It was just the way the story went. I had nothing to do with it. I love dogs, even the weird ones that everybody else shies away from. You know, the ones with tiny bodies and stilt legs.

I received complaints, queries and death threats for killing off the dog, but this isn't why I brought him back from the other side.

I brought him back because that's where the story went. I had nothing to do with it. I just hope the story has a reasonable explanation for his crossover from there to here. Because I don't.

clowns are not so much unlike us and maybe we're not so much unlike them. Something to ponder.

Just...don't grab those balloons.

I Have a New Publisher

BTW, I have a new publisher. This came as a surprise, given that neither the old publisher nor the new publisher has contacted me about the change. I found out from another writer. Some of my novels are no longer available on Amazon until I re-submit all the works from the previous publisher to the new one. Apparently, they're guaranteed to be published.

It's like I always say: In the publishing industry food chain, writers at the very bottom of the chain.

Future Plans

According to my doctor, I'm alive and stand a good chance of staying so for a while longer if I promise to stop drinking, smoking, tight rope walking and playing with sharp, pointy objects.

We'll see.

Not liking the not drinking part. I'm guessing that includes beer, so I'm going to think these things through clearly, consult with friends and strangers, do a Tarot reading, check my horoscope and sacrifice three sheep. I have nothing against sheep, but I really would like to have a cold bubbly beer this weekend. It makes planning your future so much easier and I need some easier.

First, I'm working on a book of short stories I've had published over the years along with one I serialized called *100 People, A Dozen Bats and One Cat Blowing Up*. It's a series of vignettes about people blowing up in a nuclear holocaust and all the humor that generates.

And the rest of the time? Well, I'll be working on the Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper. Probably forever.

Magical Realism and the Surreal

Nothing is ever as it appears to be on the surface. There's always something below where things don't need to be explained or justified...they're just there, adding depth and mystery to all the things around us.



For the most part, we ignore anything that's not immediately seen. We don't have time to look below the surface, but when we do....

I'm not going to say magic, but it sure as hell feels like it. There are those times in everyone's life when something happens that you can't quite put your finger on, but it's there, just under the surface of things..where trees and bridges talk to travelers on the path of adventure and new meanings.

But nobody, real or surreal, has a map to food.

New to the Stories?

So far, there have been 60 mindless episodes of The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper. You can read them [on the blog](#), an arduous chore of scrolling through episodes and clicking for the PDFs. I wouldn't do it. I'd go to [the Crazy Man site](#) and click on icons to get the PDFs.

But some people like to scroll down the blog posts and read the episodes randomly. After reading the first one, you don't have to read them in order to get the basic idea: They're all equally thwarting.

HOW ABOUT SOME FREE STUFF

Click on the titles to see the books and articles. And remember...they're all free.

[The Creativity Workshop](#)

After teaching creative writing workshops for over a decade, one thing I'm well aware of is this: Everyone is creative but most people have lost it over the years. If you've lost your creativity, this workshop will help you find it...

[The Coffee Shop Writing Workshop](#)

I've written six novels, dozens of short stories and many dozens of articles in coffee shops. This workshop prepares you for that experience.

[How to Write Sex Scenes in Your Stories](#)

How do you avoid turning your erotic sex scene into pornography?

[How Does Violence Fit into Your Stories?](#)

How much violence is appropriate for your characters and their milieu.

[Back Story and Motivation](#)

It's not enough to throw a bunch of characters into the story and let them struggle to be real. You need to give them a past.

[How to Revise a Novel](#)

This is when you turn bad writing into good writing and maybe even great writing. This free document guides you through the revision process step-by-step.

[Finding a Publisher](#)

This was a workshop I taught at the 2011 Maritime Writers Workshop, but most of the information is still relevant if for no other reason than to show you the options.

[eMarketing Tools for Writers, 3rd Edition](#)

This ebook is outdated, but still has valuable information about marketing your book.

Beat the COVID Blues

For the vast majority of our species, 2020 will be remembered as that year when the world soured. It's been a year of loss, a year of change and a year that has tested us. It's brought out the best in us and the craziest. Images of 2020 fly the spectrum of beauty and ugliness, rarely settling on points between.

I think those of us who read the news and think about it knew before New Year's Eve 2019 that something big and bad was heading our way. The experts have been telling us for years that we're due for another big on like in 1918. They were right. And it wasn't a matter of something taking a century to hatch...we had SARS and HINI to keep us on the alert, but we ignored them, closed down agencies, cleared out equipment and failed to re-new stockpiles.

But we've always been that way: we'd rather bitch than prepare.

So here we are...coming into 2021, most of us thinking that things can't get any worse. But they can. They usually do. And I'm pretty damn sure that, this time, they will. It's going to be a Winter and Spring that everyone will want to forget, but I'm guessing things will begin to normalize starting in the summer. We just need to get through the 17 months of Winter.

And how do you trudge through Hell while keeping the demons at bay and the flames cool? There's only one way and it's easy. Win a million dollar lottery. Just select the right numbers and you're COVID-proof and set for life. What could be easier?

Just joking. Everyone dies and COVID doesn't check your bank account before killing you. What you need to get you through this is something easy and available. Air and water come to mind but you've probably already tried those. A hot shower and change of clothes is always good for lifting the blues, especially if you turn the water to ice cold for the last two or three minutes. You'll find yourself calm as a clam after all the screaming.

But I found a better way. It's easy, free and you can do it anywhere and anytime. Just smile. It's actually been proven that faking a smile can trick your brain into thinking you're happy, which causes the brain to release dopamine and serotonin. These are powerful anti-bad-mood drugs (referred to in all the right places as hormones) that search out negative thoughts and kill them with friendliness. They just hug your bad mood to death.

And BTW, Merry Christmas. Have a good one.

