

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 63: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper are on to something. We hope.

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Some say that wishes come true only by choice, sort of like the things we search for. Some say that wishes come true when you clap your hands three times, jump up and down five times, spin in a circle ten times and stab a fruit fly to death with a silver sword. Once. Others say that wishes come true when you meet a talking dandelion.

“Hello, hello, hello journeyers on the path of adventure and new meanings.”

Well now, how about that...a talking dandelion.

"I couldn't help but notice you when you walked by...inches away...with those big red boots."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were aghast...a dandelion that could tell colors. They'd never heard of anything like it. Of course, Crazy Man couldn't remember if he had a kitchen and the dog, Sidestepper, was color blind. But here it was...a dandelion that knew the color red.

They, needless to say, were aghast.

"How is it that you know colors?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Oh...you know...just looking around...seeing things...comparing...differentiating...contextualizing...modifying previous conclusions...all of this while bees walk all over me and steal my pollen right in front of me. It's a wonder that we dandelions get pollinated. I mean, I don't know where that bee is taking my pollen."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper were asleep, snoring loudly. This was their preferred response to the life stories but it made the talking dandelion cry, which went unnoticed by the two journeyers because they were asleep. The dandelion cried for days or hours...who cares? Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, didn't...until the dandelion stopped crying and said, "I'm not just your ordinary talking dandelion who can see colors you know."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, sensing that the life story was over, awoke.

"I'm a wish-granting dandelion and I'm going to forgive the two of you for falling asleep while I poured out my feelings."

The two journeyers shuffled uncomfortably.

"I'm going to grant you one wish."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were beside themselves with joy. They'd always wanted to make wishes that would come true. "So, we each get a wish," said Crazy Man.

"No, you get one wish between you, you greedy bastard," said the dandelion. "But wishes don't come easily. You have to win a contest to see which one of you gets to make the wish. That's been the tradition all four days since I sprouted. No contest, no wish."

A contest sounded like fun but the life-story-close-call almost put them to sleep.

"What kind of contest?" said Crazy Man, who wasn't sure if talking dandelions could be trusted.

"A contest requiring great skill, perfect timing, spacial awareness and legendary self-control," said the dandelion.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, glanced quickly at each other, both certain that they possessed the necessary qualities to make a wish come true.

"We're ready," said the dog, Sidestepper. "What do we do now?"

"OK then," said the dandelion. "You have to find and kill the Dragon of Ipswich."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were crest-fallen. Neither of them knew what an Ipswich was and neither of them wanted to go anywhere near a dragon, wish or no wish.

The dandelion, seeing their consternation, laughed and said, "Just joking, guys. No dragons. I mean, you'd sooner meet a talking lake than a dragon."

An edgy relief settled over Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper. "So what do we do?" said Crazy Man.

"It's actually very simple," said the dandelion. "You run over here and blow on me."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were dumbfounded and suspicious. How could it be that easy? What was this dandelion up to?

“And we need great skill and legendary self-control for that?” said Crazy Man.

“I might have exaggerated a bit,” said the dandelion. “Just blow my pollen away before the bees get it.”

Crazy Man shrugged his shoulders and the dog, Sidestepper, shrugged whatever dogs with tiny bodies and long stilt-like legs shrugged. *Too easy*, thought Crazy Man and, just as the dog, Sidestepper, was about to run to the dandelion, he stuck his foot out and tripped his traveling pal. The dog, Sidestepper, crashed into the ground with a mighty thump while Crazy Man rushed at the dandelion, bent down and blew so hard that a giant cloud of yellow pollen swirled around both of them. The dandelion laughed and giggled. “Take that all you bees! You’re not taking my pollen today.”

“Can I make my wish now,” said Crazy Man.

“Sure,” said the dandelion. “Just make the wish and stick your hand into me.”

Crazy Man was tempted to kick the dandelion for making fun of him. “Yeah, sure,” he said. “I don’t think my hand, which is much bigger than you, will fit inside you.”

“Go ahead and try,” said the dandelion. “Anything’s possible on the path of adventure and new meanings.”

Crazy Man shook his head and thrust his hand forward into the dandelion’s yellow petals and was shocked to see his entire hand disappear inside the dandelion. He felt something solid against his fingers and grabbed it. He pulled his hand out. Gleaming in his palm was a silver key.

“This isn’t what I wished for,” he said. “I wished for a map to food.”

“And there you go,” said the dandelion. “You’re not supposed to tell anyone what you wished for.”

“But I didn’t tell you until *after* I didn’t get my wish,” said Crazy Man.

“Those are the rules,” said the dandelion. “You’re not supposed to tell.”

Crazy Man wanted to step on the dandelion and stomp it into the ground but he had a thought. He took the key chain from his pocket and put the key on the key chain and, of course, it fit.

However, today there was a cosmic sense to the fit as though the key and the key chain were meant to be together. He wasn’t sure what he was going to do with the dog fur so he just left it there. A subdued snarl from behind caught his attention and he remembered the dog, Sidestepper, who was flat on the ground and struggling to get up on those long unwieldy legs.

“You bastard,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

He helped his travel buddy to his legs and the dog, Sidestepper, being reasonable and forgiving, forgave Crazy Man for tripping him and stealing his wish but was secretly satisfied that Crazy Man didn’t really get his wish.

Crazy Man turned to the dandelion and said, “So what’s the key for?”

“Damned if I know,” said the dandelion. “It’s your wish that didn’t come true.”

That was the last straw. Crazy Man walked over to the smart-assed dandelion and lifted his foot but, catching a glimpse of his wide red boots (which terrified him), decided to call it a day and get back to the journey.

Later, on the path of adventure and new meanings, the dog, Sidestepper, said, “You tripped me, you bastard.”

Crazy Man lifted both hands up as though protecting himself from a verbal threat that might congeal in the air and hit him in the head like a hammer. “With your long stilt-like legs you wouldn’t have been able to lean down far enough to blow on it.”

The dog, Sidestepper, thought about this for a moment and nodded agreement. “But you could have just said that to me at the time instead of tripping me.”

“Where would be the fun in that?” said Crazy Man.

The dog, Sidestepper, did some more thinking and decided that Crazy Man was right. Maybe. “So what do you think the key is for?” he said.

“I’m not sure,” said Crazy Man, “but I have a feeling that the path of adventure and new meanings will take us to whatever the key fits.”

And the two continued, throwing theories about the key at each other while the deep dark scary woods receded on either side of the path of adventure and new meanings.

To be continued...

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