

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 64: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper almost get burned

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A long long while ago, the earth was a blazing ball of lava...at least in the minds of those who deemed the world to be round. Others are certain it was a blazing cube of lava that spilled its firey surface over its sides to make room for plants and animals and other things on the once fiery landscape. Recent scientific findings have proven the first concept correct but others claim their opinions are sturdier than science and refuse to travel outside their towns for fear of falling off the world. Still others would say that the world is inside-out...a theory that might more fittingly be applied to the species that claims to be the smartest.

These and other musing came to an abrupt halt as an imperious voice slashed across the path of adventure and new meanings and attacked the ears of Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper.

"I am fire. You will fear me," said a random imperious campfire. It flickered and crackled and popped and snapped. Embers shot out from the burning wood like tiny meteors arcing through the night air. The dog, Sidestepper, was having none of this.

“We fear no fire,” he said.

The campfire flared wild and brilliantly and said, “Yes you do.” But the words were half-hearted. “Sort of...deep down somewhere.” The voice grew desperate. “I scared you just a little bit, didn’t I?”

“Not really,” said Crazy Man. “Maybe if you roared.”

“Yeah...sure,” said the campfire. “I would need to burn down half the deep dark scary woods to roar but I’m just a measly little campfire that goes snap and crackle...but I can burn your fingers and toes if you’re not careful. I’ve done that before.” The campfire crackled and snapped for a few minutes or so and said, “Well, maybe I haven’t really done it before but I could...I could burn fingers and toes.”

“But all we have to do is stay away from you,” said Crazy Man. “You can’t burn us if you can’t reach us.”

A spark shot from the flames of the campfire and landed on Crazy Man’s nose. His head, arms and legs sprung out of his body like Slinkys looking for gravity to pull them away. He screamed so hard his tongue tore out from his mouth and caught three flies that were heading for the campfire on a suicide mission to defeat the concept of fire. He jumped up and down and ranted for five minutes and several indeterminate seconds as the dog, Sidestepper, watched in horror.

“I am fire!” yelled the campfire. “You will fear me or I will spark and spew burning matter upon you.” The campfire sizzled in burning matter for a moment before saying, “I mean it!”

“But what if we run away,” said the dog, Sidestepper, as Crazy Man rolled around on the ground, screaming, “My nose! You bastard!” Though, with his tongue hanging from his mouth catching flies, it sounded more like, “Prepare the main sail! We sail at noon, ye buckos!”

When Crazy Man finally snapped out of his pain and managed to put the parts of himself back together, the campfire flashed up like a solar flare until it was higher than the trees in the deep dark scary woods. “Whoa! Never did this before,” yelled the campfire. It twisted and curled in the air for hours as Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stared while Crazy Man rubbed his nose.

Eventually, the camp fire stopped flaring and settled back into its metal fire pit. “You two inspired me to be so much more than myself. I’m no longer just a campfire wasting away in a metal pot...I can burn noses and flare into the sky very impressively.”

Crazy Man suddenly felt that this fire, after burning his nose, and sucking energy out of his and the dog, Sidestepper’s, presence...this fire...owed him. Yes, the fire owed him.

“You burned my nose. You tried to scare me and my travel buddy,” he said. “You owe me.”

“Owe you what, mere mortal who has granted me power over all that I survey?” said the campfire.

“Do you have a map to food,” said Crazy Man.

“No,” said the fire. “And you’re a bastard.”

“Do you know where my...” the dog, Sidestepper, tried to say.

“No,” said the campfire. “I haven’t seen your mother and you’re a bastard too.” The campfire swirled and flared, tossing red embers into the night. “And I have a destiny to meet.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, gawked at the campfire as it grew brighter and the metal fire pit began to melt. Molten metal mixed with combusting wood as the campfire became less and less “camp” and more like the beginnings of an apocalyptic blaze.

“I am fire and I will rule the world with rising temperatures. I will heat the ice until it melts. I will turn the oceans and seas into steam. I will...”

At that moment, a freak typhoon passed over the path of adventure and new meanings and doused the fire so thoroughly that even its ashes washed away into the deep dark scary woods where they mixed with humous and lichen to become fertilizer. Dark shapes rushed out of the bushes, grabbed what was left of the metal fire pit and disappeared into the night.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stared at the suddenly barren patch of grass where the campfire had threatened to eventually turn the world into an ember floating in space.

Crazy Man rubbed his nose and frowned. “Guess nobody escapes the weather.”

“Yep...the world does what it can to save itself,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man looked up into moonlit sky teeming with stars and potential. “Do you think the aliens will ever let us visit all that?” he said.

“I guess that’s in our hands,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “We need to keep our campfires under control.”

“Yeah,” said Crazy Man. “We were missing just one thing back there.”

“What’s that?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Marshmallows.”

Once again laughter from the path of adventure and new meanings melted into deep dark scary woods, keeping the eyes in the bushes at bay.

To be continued...

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