

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



Episode 65: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, learn the truth about money.

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Various sages proclaim that you must have Feng Shui of the mind before you can find Feng Shui in your home. Others say they have that backwards.

“Did you hear that?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man raised an eyebrow. Obviously, his travel buddy was hearing voices in his head again. But then, he'd just cheated death through a grammar error and spent time with his mother who wasn't really

his mother in a place that didn't exist, so he decided to bear with him. "Maybe it's the wind tickling the trees and the bushes."

The dog, Sidestepper, sensed a condescending tone under the surface of Crazy Man's words and was about to tell him where to go when a faltering voice crawled through the air and crept into the ears of the two travelers, causing them to stop abruptly. Before them on the path of adventure and new meanings, the air swarmed with droplets and streaks of water around a plant with brown dying leaves.

"I'm a dead, broken money tree wallowing in the tears of my failure," said the plant.

This immediately elicited hours of extreme empathy from both Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper. They howled and rolled around on the ground, crying and biting the air. They hugged and comforted each other long after they'd forgotten why they were hugging and comforting each other until...

"Gee thanks for the show of empathy," said the dead money tree, as it sweated still more tears into the air. "But I already did all that stuff."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, suddenly remembered the source of their empathetic show of support.

"Are you really dead or is this an illusory death?" said the dog, Sidestepper, having recently experienced his own illusory death.

"Nope," said the money tree. "I'm dead." It fluttered its death-browned leaves. "And all I ever wanted was to make things cool. I wanted everyone to be wealthy and well. I created good vibrations and turned a home into a paradise of quality wellness."

This sounded like a life story sermon to Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, and they were just about to fall asleep when the money tree mustered enough energy to say, "HEY! I'm talking to you two and what I have to say is important." The death-dried leaves of the money tree seemed to wrap themselves protectively around the dead trunk. "Well, at least to me it is."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, blushed in unison as they realized how close they'd come to being dickheads. The last thing they wanted to do was insult a dead money tree that wasn't handling the concept of death very well.

"And to us too," said Crazy Man. "We just don't want to hear about it. We're travelers on the path of adventure and new meanings looking for a dog's mother, a map to food, the place a key unlocks and..."

He stopped talking when he noticed that the money tree was snoring. "HEY!" he said.

The money tree woke. "Sorry," it said. "Sometimes I can be a dickhead, especially when people start telling me their life stories."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, experienced the disturbing immediacy of déjà vu. "We can relate to that," said the dog, Sidestepper, "and if you forgive us, we'll forgive you."

And thus ensued the greatest celebration of forgiveness of all time which ended with no mother, no map to food, no clue what the key was for...and the dead money tree was still dead.

Crazy Man was the first to recover from forgiveness enough to speak: "So, you created an indoor paradise and then you died?"

"No," said the money tree. "I created an indoor paradise and ran away to create an outdoor paradise. I wanted to bring wealth and wellness to the whole world."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, felt another surge of mutual empathy but managed to keep it under control with a mere ten minutes of lightly controlled jiggling.

"But little did I know," said the money tree.

"What happened?" said Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, in unison.

The money tree's dead leaves drooped. "It was the outside air, soil and water. It's all contaminated, poisoned. The outside world is tainted so much by the needs of the inside world that it was impossible for me to bring anything good to it...so it killed me. Not that it wanted to. That's all it can do now...kill things."

"But," said the dog, Sidestepper, "if you bring wealth to the outside world, then there will be the means to fix it."

"There is no wealth," said the money tree.

"Of course there is," said Crazy Man. "You just didn't look hard enough."

"It's not there," said the money tree. "It's hidden in secret places harder to find than a pirate's buried treasure." The money tree's crinkly lifeless leaves wrapped themselves tighter. "It's a world of broken dreams."

"Don't say that," said Crazy Man. "There's always a way to make your dreams come true."

“And just how do I do that,” said a skeptical money tree.

“Change your dreams,” said Crazy Man. “Or go back inside.”

This made so much unwanted sense to the money tree that it instantly withered into dust. “Bastards,” said the dust before it was blown away by a sudden breeze.

“Maybe you should have said it was doing the right thing and that it should just keep doing what it was doing,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “Sometimes pretending there’s hope in the hopeless of it all is better than facing the hopelessness of hopelessness.”

“Do you know what you just said?” said Crazy Man.

“Well...not really. But did it sound good?”

“It had initial syntactical plausibility,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “And sometimes...that’s enough.”

“Do you think our journey is hopeless?” said Crazy Man.

“Not,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “as hopeless as bringing wealth and wellness to the whole world.”

“That really sucks,” said Crazy Man. “But who needs more than we have?”

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

Crazy Man pulled the furry key chain with the mystery key attached to it and jiggled it in the air. “We have a missing key, a missing mother and a missing map to food.”

“So,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “stay on the path?”

“That’s the dream,” said Crazy Man with a smile.

And once again laughter rang out from the path of adventure and new meanings in spite of the deep dark scary woods.

To be continued...

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