

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 72: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, have a great fall.

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Reality is personal and it starts the moment we open our eyes after being pushed out of the warmth of a mother's womb...tossed out of all that comforting darkness where everything made sense and there was nothing to worry about: no bills, no final exams, no Shepard's pie with peas, no decisions to make about what to have for dinner or what color towels to buy for the washroom. If there's one true horror in the world, it's being kicked out of the womb into a cold world with sharp corners.

And it's personal.

The world is a big incomprehensible blob to the newly arrived and it takes a while before walls look like walls and people look like people. Shapes with definition and meaning emerge from the chaos of life as we construct a reality that's personal to each of us and we have no idea how crucial that construction is until we lose it.

There was no up.

There was no down.

The fall was soundless; the plunge, directionless.

They could have been falling sideways.

They could have been frozen in place and imagining the whole thing...the fall...the screaming.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, screamed loud enough to annoy the dead. It seemed they were plummeting into the sky...or were they splashing into a forested stream without the splash? They descended upwards as they soared downwards. All borders, reference points and previous conceptions of space/time continuums became the stuff we flush down toilets and there was just one certainty: They were where they were and nowhere else.

"I don't like being here," said the dog, Sidestepper. His voice cracked from too much screaming. "I think the light at the end of the tunnel screwed us."

"No kidding," said Crazy Man. He thought back to the time, so long ago (or was it yesterday?) that he was comfortable under his bed, clutching an empty bottle of wine, crying, feeling sorry for himself and at odds with the world. He'd emerged from his hiding place to explore *this outside thing* and now he just wanted to be under a bed again... with a *full* bottle of wine.

"Did the light say we *would* live through this or we *might* live through this?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"I think it was *might*," said Crazy Man. "At least it didn't eat one of us."

"I'm pretty sure it would have eaten you," said the dog, Sidestepper. "I mean...if it were going to eat one of us."

"I don't know," said Crazy Man. "I wouldn't eat me. But I do like the occasional hot dog."

The dog, Sidestepper, faced away from Crazy Man as they fell, but his chortle ignited the space around their falling with a sense of *OK-so-we're-falling-to-our-death-because-we-walked-through-the-light* fatalism.

"Did you just chortle?" said Crazy Man. "Did I just hear you chortle?"

"I've always wanted to chortle," said the dog, Sidestepper, "ever since I was a flea-sized pup...but it always came out as a belch or a country song."

Crazy Man suddenly felt all fuzzy and mushy. He said, "It warms me to the core of my about to die being that you finally got to chortle," he said. "How did it feel?"

The dog, Sidestepper, mulled on chortling as they fell into oblivion. They passed trees growing out of the sky. They streaked past great bodies of water and streams full of jumping trout swallowing giant May flies. And it didn't matter that they were going to be flattened on the hard surface of the world...the dog, Sidestepper, had finally chortled.

"It felt like finding a bone I buried when I was a pup," he said, "and it was just as delicious as when I buried it."

Hearing the joy and sense of accomplishment in his friend's voice, Crazy Man did the only thing that made sense: he had an emotional melt down...a falling, twisting, turning, flying, somersaulting, plummeting, tumbling, gyrating, nerve-wracking, you're-my-best-pal-ever total head over heels (literally) emotional melt down...the details of which would likely cause eternal (and then some) disturbing dreams for any normal person. Let's just say that they involved strange noises, weird body contortions, impossible facial manifestations and questionable re-telling. It's unclear to this day how many tears Crazy Man shed in the 3.4 seconds of his melt down but they were enough to leave a trail of eye-water sloshing in the wake of their falling.

Crazy Man's emotional melt down induced a fit of chortling from the dog, Sidestepper...which, of course, led to another empathetic melt down from Crazy Man...which, of course, added to the slosh of water following them.

Without warning, the sky was above them, the ground was below them and they were streaking to certain death in a world that suddenly had reference points. They were going to die.

Jesus, thought Crazy Man, *I'm going to die*.

Christ, thought the dog, Sidestepper, *I'm going to die.*

Holy moly, thought the sloshing tear water following them, *I'm going to splash.*

Imagine that... cognizant water. Holy moly.

A thousand roller coaster riders couldn't have screamed louder as their cars tore off the tracks and plunged a hundred feet to the ground. Crazy Man's eyes bulged and sprung out of their sockets. His tongue drooped from his hollow screaming mouth. The dog, Sidestepper, howled like a dog on fire. The tear water sloshed like a tsunami crashing onto a beach.

Through an existential miracle that will be heatedly argued by opposing points-of-view a hundred years from now, they landed lightly on the path of adventure and new meanings just in time to be thoroughly doused by a tsunami of sloshing eye water.

They stood, drenched to the bone in Crazy Man's empathy and the dog, Sidestepper, let out one last chortle before the two continued their journey, quietly, still wondering what the hell just happened. But they were alive.

For now.

To be continued...

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