

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 73: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, learn all about foreshortening. (New here? [Click here to see what it's all about.](#))

On the surface it appears that nature is a haphazard collection of ingredients thrown randomly into a great stew of earth, water and air but then a quick view under the surface reveals an intricate architecture of connections and geometric complexities that make sense.

The dog, Sidestepper, had given much thought to this matter and was no closer to figuring out what he was thinking about than when he started thinking about it. He needed a break. Thinking hurt. Arriving at conclusions was just fine, as was verifying hypotheses and re-establishing previously held convictions...but there's a point at which you stop thinking because a voice dangling in the air breaks your field of thought...

"You will go no further until you have acknowledged and accepted us," said a plot of trees bordering the deep dark scary woods. "You are to notice our vertical parallel symmetry and acknowledge that there's more to nature than readily meets the eye."

Well, how about that? Looks like the dog, Sidestepper, thought himself right into this one.

"I see your lines and configurations," said the dog, Sidestepper. "Your vertical parallel symmetry is breathtaking."

"And is there more to nature than vertical parallel symmetry?" said the plot of trees.

The dog, Sidestepper, thought for a moment and a half and said, "*Horizontal* parallel symmetry?"

Loud booming and strange nasty tree sounds walloped Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, as the plot of trees swayed angrily and showered the two with small cones and green needles.

The dog, Sidestepper, assumed that his answer was wrong.

"We hate horizontal," said the plot of trees. "When you're horizontal, bugs eat you. Your roots die. Your branches wither and attract even more bugs. Your trunk hollows and collapses. No one wants to carve their initials into your bark anymore. Horizontal is death. Guess again. Or else."

The dog, Sidestepper's, mind raced madly. He had this. He knew the answer. It was just under the surface of his thoughts. All he had to do was focus on a collection of ingredients thrown randomly into a great stew of earth, water and air. He screamed it aloud the very second it crystallized in his mind: "*Non*-horizontal parallel symmetry!"

A heavy silence fell over the trees like a veil covering a sardonic smile before all hell broke loose. Branches suddenly drooped to the sides of the trees and the vertical symmetry created a chilling impression of soldiers standing at attention. One of the trees issued an order: "On the mark...left wheel."

Nothing happened.

One of the other trees spoke up: "We're trees. We can't turn left. We can't turn...period!"

"Yeah," said another tree. "Who put you in charge anyway?"

The order-issuing tree was silent, its leaves wrapped around its trunk as though deep in thought and then they suddenly stretched outward in an expression of sizzling eureka and the tree spoke. "On the mark...stay right where you are and laugh at the dog until he cries."

As the trees laughed and pointed their branches at the dog, Sidestepper, in an effort to make him cry, Crazy Man took something from his pocket and held it up. Seeing what he held in his hand, the trees shook their branches back to normal and were silent.

The dog, Sidestepper, looked at Crazy Man's hand. It held a package of matches. Crazy Man looked at the dog, Sidestepper, and said, "I might not have a flame thrower but I can still throw flames."

"OK," said one of the trees. "Maybe...just maybe...we were a bit harsh. We don't get the respect we did in the past and it makes us a bit spiteful at times. So...on the level this time and no trying to make the dog cry, guys...what more is there to vertical parallel symmetry in nature?"

Silent expectation settled over the trees like a veil covering a paradoxical smile.

The dog, Sidestepper, squinted his eyes as he thought. In a masterly executed expression of empathetic bonding, Crazy Man squinted his eyes as well and tried, unsuccessfully, to think. The trees waited with a veiled anticlimactic smile. After several mind-testing moments the dog, Sidestepper, spoke: "Natural foreshortening."

The response whispered its way through the trees, across the boundary between the deep dark scary woods and the path of adventure and new meanings, straight into the dog, Sidestepper's, ears: "Nope."

"I don't think he understands," said one of the trees, obviously dismayed by the dog's ignorance.

"He's a bastard," said another tree.

Crazy Man held up his package of matches and the trees shut up.

"If you're all so smart," he said, "then *you* tell *us* what else there is to nature."

Once again the trees were silent like sentinels with nothing to watch over. This went on for the amount of time it takes to define the future of a tree ring...whatever that means. Neither man, dog nor tree understood this whole ring of the future thing so no one knew how much time had passed before one of the trees said, "We don't know. We were hoping you knew."

The dog, Sidestepper, wasn't impressed. He always thought that nature knew what it was doing, that it could answer its own questions.

"We're kind of random," said one of the trees.

“It’s because we’re so big,” said another tree.

“What are we talking about?” said a tree at the very back of the vertical parallel symmetry.

This created a whole new train of thought for the trees to argue about and it gave Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, an opportunity to quietly step away from all that symmetry and continue their journey. After a while or two, Crazy Man turned to the dog, Sidestepper, and said, “So, what else would there be to nature other than vertical parallel symmetry?”

The dog, Sidestepper, curled his mouth over his teeth in the kind of smile that made Crazy Man wonder if he should ever turn his back on his travel buddy. “It would take a thousand rolls of two ply toilet paper to list it all. Do you have a roll of two ply toilet paper?”

Crazy Man checked his pockets. All he had was one ply toilet paper.

The dog, Sidestepper, smiled even more disturbingly...all those teeth in that tiny mouth...and said, “And I don’t have a plume pen. I guess we’ll just have to leave that to the trees.”

This made no sense to Crazy Man, who thought it was just another dog vs tree thing, so he changed the subject. “Remember that time you chortled?”

As night fell, the sound of canine chortling danced around the path of adventure and new meanings like happy waves.

To be continued...

© Biff Mitchell

www.biffmitchell.com

Check out the blog at: www.crazymanadventures.com

BTW.....

My third novel has been re-published. There’s no giant ant...it’s actually a computer virus called the War Bug. The artist didn’t read the novel before creating the cover. Later, I wrote a short story about a cover artist who is eat alive by one of his covers. It was published in an anthology by the same publisher.

You can buy the ebook version in a variety of formats here:

<https://doubledragonbooks.com/>

Or you can get the Kindle version here:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08W8KZZXF>



The novel is about a man trying to find his virtual wife and daughter as the internet begins to crash from a war between online city states. His only ally is the virus that started the war.