Episode 80: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, rightly take the wrong path.

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“What’s that?” said the dog, Sidestepper. In true canine style, he pointed his nose directly ahead on the path of adventure and new meanings.
“Looks like another tunnel with a light at the end of it,” said Crazy Man. “Any way we can go around it? I don’t feel like going into the light anymore.”
“No,” said the tunnel. “I’m not a tunnel. I’m the wrong path,” said the wrong path. “And that’s not a light…it’s a misconception.”
“A misconception of what?” said the dog, Sidestepper, who was intrigued by the wrong path’s blatant honesty.
“The path less thought about,” said the wrong path. “It confuses you with lifestyle trivia and politically correct standards. You will venture in and spend the rest of your days trying to please everyone but yourself and wishing you’d taken the other path.”
“But there’s no other path,” said Crazy Man. “You’re the only path on the path of adventure and new meanings and we’re not stepping into the deep dark scary woods to go around you. And besides, you just told us you’re the wrong path.”

The wrong path considered Crazy Man’s words and decided that he had a point.

“Well,” said the wrong path. “Maybe I’m not the wrong path if you consider all the other possibilities and decide that, ultimately, I’m the right path. Even though I’m the wrong path.”

“It’s that what’s called a bad decision?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“It’s that the only kind?” said the wrong path. “When was the last time anyone made a good decision?”

“That’s not true,” said Crazy Man. “People make good decisions all the time.”

“Name one,” said the wrong path.

“We took the path of adventure and new meanings,” he said. “That was a good decision.”

“Oh yeah,” said the wrong path. “And where has that gotten you?”

“It’s gotten us here,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“And where’s here?” said the wrong path.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other. The wrong path had a point…but they weren’t going to admit it. Crazy Man’s eyes lit up and spun like saucers on fire. “I’m right here, beside the dog, Sidestepper. That’s where I am!”

The dog, Sidestepper, caught on immediately and said, “And I’m right here beside this big lug. That’s where I am.”

The wrong path thought about this for the time it takes to hatch an idea and said, “OK, your point carries initial plausibility so I won’t send venomous snakes after you. They’re all over the place, you know…hiding under logs and rocks, waiting, drooling venom, thinking about things like is it time to molt? and who should I bite today? Important snake stuff.”

“And that’s where we are,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “This is where the path has gotten us.”

“And why is being here such a good decision?” said the wrong path.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, thought about his long enough to hatch a counter idea and Crazy Man said, “Being here was a good decision because it was a decision.”

The wrong path relayed its astonishment by shaking itself until the ground under Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, rumbled and shook in rhythm to the wrong path’s shake.

“Wonderful!” said the wrong path. “You made a decision. And who helped you make that decision?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, exchanged theories and opinions about who had helped them make their decision to be here until the dog, Sidestepper, blurted, “Nobody! We’re here because we’re here.”

“Right!” said Crazy Man. “We don’t need no stinking third party decision makers. We can make our own bad decisions.”

The dog, Sidestepper, stared at Crazy Man and quickly said, “But being here was a good decision and we made it all on our own.”

“And why is being here a good decision?” said the wrong path.

Crazy Man’s face reflected the pain his mind underwent in having to think because everyone knows that thinking hurts…but then his face lit up: “Being here was a good decision because if we didn’t decide to be here we’d be somewhere else.”

These words seemed to soothe the wrong path and its light softened and breathed muted colors. They were happy muted colors.

“So you think that being here with me was the right decision?” said the wrong path.

“May as well be here than there,” said Crazy Man. “We could have made the wrong decision and we’d be somewhere else…maybe somewhere with mean birds.”

“I hate mean birds,” said the wrong path. “I so glad you’re here instead of where the mean birds are.”

“We’re really happy to be here,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “We were attacked by mean birds once. We made a bad decision not to run when we should have.”

“Lots of that going around,” said the wrong path. “Some days I feel like a bloated haggis, filled beyond capacity with bad decisions that bring swarms of unfortunates to me.”

“That’s awful,” said Crazy Man. “You must feel like the last outpost of the real world.”

The wrong path thought about this for three unsteady seconds and said, “I have no idea what that means.”
“I don’t either,” said Crazy Man. “Are you sure about that?”
“Sure about what?” said the dog, Sidestepper. “I don’t always know what I say.”
“Lots of that going around too,” said the wrong path. “So, have you two made up your minds?”
“Seems to me there’s only one decision to make since you’re the only way forward,” said Crazy Man. “I guess we have no choice but to take the wrong path.”
“Which might be the right path,” said the wrong path, “even though it’s the wrong path.”
“Yeah…that,” said Crazy Man.
“I guess so,” said the dog, Sidestepper.
And with that, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, entered the wrong path because there was no other path. It felt strange walking through something so wrong that it might be right. Each step was like walking into a puddle and not knowing how deep it was.
Once they were well into the wrong path, it said, “By the way, I’m actually the wrong path. I’ve never been the right path. You should have chosen the deep dark scary woods.”
“What!” said Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, in unison.
But it was too late.

To be continued…

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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.

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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.