

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



Episode 82: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, face the mystery of the missing limbs.

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A wise woman of many decades, possibly more, lived in a cave in an undisclosed mountain range, making it almost impossible to find her. In fact, the only way to visit her was through dreams that would teleport you to her ethereal home. It took me decades, maybe more, to finally dream-travel to her cave. I floated in the air in the center of a high-ceilinged chamber completely

bereft of furniture, appliances and social media. The wise woman floated in the air directly in front of me. She was small with an intricately wrinkled face and long unkempt white hair. She was also nude. Her body could have been molded from the toes up with raisins. I tried not to see while I focused on the question.

I said, "What?"

She said, "Ask not what but why."

I said, "Why?"

She said, "What?"

Sometimes you need a flame thrower to get a straight answer.

But that's neither here nor there as Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, approached an unusual sight. It was a tree with all its boughs cut off.

"What happened to you?" said Crazy Man.

"None of your godamn business," said the tree.

*Well, thought Crazy Man, more of that diseased world attitude. Time to change tactics.*

"You sure look strange," he said. "Glad I don't know why."

"Well to hell with you," said the tree. "I'm going to tell you anyway."

It worked every time because everybody and everything has a story to tell and they all want to tell someone that story in return for exposure, but Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were on to this ploy and had developed and honed the perfect response.

"They call me the sad tree," said the sad tree. "I am what the world of has become."

And just like that, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were asleep, but the sad tree, like everything else with a sob story to tell, was too absorbed in its self-pity to do anything but continue.

"This is a world that breeds its own grief," said the sad tree. "This is a world that has long stopped listening to itself and lost sight of its potential... a world where fear, conformity and bad choices have been the chainsaws of ruin."

The sad tree ignored, or just didn't hear, the traveling duo snoring with eyes open and standing as though awake... a feat they'd perfected through the miracle of boredom.

"Evolution died in the Twentieth Century," said the sad tree. "Everything new became a variation of everything old. Growth stopped." Finally, the sad tree noticed that it was pouring its wooden heart out to an audience that really didn't give a damn. "Right," said the sad tree. "Your snores are the death knell to my boughs."

Sensing that they were being accused of something that might not have been their fault, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, woke in unison. Crazy Man was the first to speak: "You wouldn't happen to have a map to food, would you?"

In a better world, the sad tree would have boughs and leaves that it could shake to show its fury but this wasn't that world and the only recourse the sad tree had was meanness. "No! I don't have a map to food and you're a bastard. Both of you are bastards!"

The dog, Sidestepper, was having none of this. Seeing that the sad tree was helpless, he ambled over, lifted one very long leg and peed on the sad tree. Helpless to do anything, the sad tree resorted to the currently preferred response: shaming. "You have weird legs! Your pee is politically incorrect. Your behavior is not acceptable in polite society. You'll never find your mother!"

Oops. The sad tree had gone too far. Much too far. The dog, Sidestepper, finished peeing and squatted right beside the tree and let loose a modestly-sized smelly brown turd that emitted an inordinate amount of steam for a turd from a dog that was mostly legs.

Neither Crazy Man nor the dog, Sidestepper, picked up when the deed was finished. Instead, they continued down the path of adventure and new meanings and ignored the sad tree's outrage: "You come back here right now and pick up! Birds might accidentally step in that while they're looking for seeds!"

As the sad tree's shaming dwindled to a faraway disruption in the sound of things, Crazy Man turned to the dog, Sidestepper, and said, "I don't care what that stupid sad tree says...we're going to find your mother."

"And we're going to find a map to food," said the dog, Sidestepper. "And you're not a bastard."

"You're not a bastard either," said Crazy Man. "Weird...but not a bastard."

"We're two non-bastards on the path of adventure and new meanings," said the dog, Sidestepper, who, as usual, walked sideways with his snout pointed at Crazy Man. "And what's that up in the sky?" he said, pointing his canine snout into the sky over Crazy Man's shoulder.

Crazy Man looked up and said, "I don't believe it."

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.

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

<https://doubledragonbooks.com/>

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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.