

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 90: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the last standing tree and the last street lamp guards of the park that no one visits.

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No tree that has lived for more than a hundred years is going to die in five years because a developer with a chainsaw attitude towards anything that can make a buck says it will die. In five years.

Without realizing it, the dog, Sidestepper, nodded agreement. Crazy Man saw this and said, “You seem to be in an agreeable mood.”

The dog, Sidestepper, smiled but refused to respond, knowing that any mention of the voice in the woods, the one that only he could hear, would be met with sarcasm, which would likely come anyway after Crazy Man saw the nod.

“So what’s the big secret?” said Crazy Man. “What’s all this agreement nodding about?”

After a few minutes or hours of deep analytical thought and consideration of potential pitfalls and alternate scenarios, the dog, Sidestepper, said, “Ice cream and fireflies.”

Initially, Crazy Man smiled and was about to laugh whole-heartedly when it occurred to him that he didn’t have clue what the dog, Sidestepper, was talking about. Did he have ice cream? Did he have a map to ice cream? Was he about to take Crazy Man to a secret cache of ice cream? What flavors of ice cream did he have? Where was this secret stash of ice cream? Was the ice cream a politically correct variation of vegan ice cream? Was it legitimate ice cream or an ice cream knock-off? Would the dog, Sidestepper,

share his bountiful supply of ice cream? He put these thoughts aside and focused on the real issue here: "Please don't let the fireflies eat the ice cream."

A short canine tongue looking more like mini meatball licked a scantily whiskered upper lip and the dog, Sidestepper, raised his lips in mirth...revealing two rows of tiny, but deadly, gleaming white teeth, as though his mouth was an intersection of two rip saws. Crazy Man looked away and immediately began the healing process of forgetting those teeth, that smile, that intersection.

Having forgotten what he was thinking about but in no mood to admit it, the dog, Sidestepper, said, "The ice cream is seen through the wings of the firefly."

And that was the end of that.

Crazy Man was almost afraid to ask more questions...lest he receive answers. He decided it was best to just state an irrefutable fact: "?"

And that was the end of that...just in time for the path of adventure and new meanings to suddenly spill them beside an abandoned park guarded by a tree and a street lamp.

"Hey you two!" said the street lamp. "Stop right there and empty your pockets."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, had never been given orders by a street lamp before and they weren't sure what to do, so they stopped and emptied their pockets. This was simple for the dog, Sidestepper: one stuffed toy with bell inside; one half-used candle and a doggie bag. (?)

Within minutes, Crazy Man was buried under a heap of stuff from his pockets and secret compartments in his capes, shoes, hats, vests, socks, disguises...things like fake beards, gloves, boots...heaps of stuff.

One day, when Crazy Man was well into emptying his pockets and piling everything into orderly rows of belongings that created a sort of maze covering much of his horizons, the street lamp said, "That's enough."

And Crazy Man stopped emptying his pockets.

"Just put it back," said the street lamp, surveying the rows of...stuff. "All of it. You too, pooch."

Sometimes you just have to give up on any concept of time and all its orderly progression of one second into the next in a way that you just can't grab onto and say, "Hold on a second there!" It slips through, right behind the second before it with the one after it pushing its bumper. And suddenly all the stuff in the mazes and tunnels was back in Crazy Man's pockets.

Time, eh?

"Why did you tell us to empty our pockets?" said the dog, Sidestepper. He thought for a moment and added, "And if you call me pooch again, I'll pee on you."

"Touchy, aren't we," said the tree.

The dog, Sidestepper, shot the tree a three prong with hooks look and said, "I've peed on trees. In daylight."

"We were just joking," said the street lamp. "We're supposed to be guarding this place. But nobody comes here anymore. Not even the ones we're guarding it from. And we don't even know who they are. It's confusing."

This was too much for Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper. They fell to the ground howling grief, beating the path of adventure and meanings with the empathic rightness of their fists and paws. There was no justice here! "Why?" they shrieked. "Why does the world hate trees and street lamps?" This went on for an excruciating while...just long enough to make a tree and a street lamp almost barf from the hideous wave of empathy...before the street lamp said, "Stop it."

"Please," said the tree. "It's nice...but disturbing."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, weren't exactly sure what the tree meant but they were sure it had nothing to do with their thoroughly empathetic rituals. So they just smiled and nodded. And got ready for another sob...er life...story. In fact, they were already asleep before the air was saturated with...

"...chainsaw of development..." said the tree.

"Profit has destroyed more rain forest than fire and insects," said the street lamp.

"Corruption has swallowed more souls than sink holes," said the tree.

Being asleep, standing, eyes open, necks performing occasional nods (they were good at pretending to be awake), Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, dreamed happily about *Ice cream and fireflies. Ice cream and fireflies. Ice cream and fireflies.*

And they woke up in perfect synchronicity when the tree said, "And that's our story. And no, we don't have a map to food, and we're not the dog's mother and you're both bastards."

“But that’s OK,” said the street lamp, “the whole world’s a bastard.”

And just like that, Crazy Man, the dog, Sidestepper, the tree, the street lamp, the path of adventure and new meanings, the deep dark scary woods, the deep blue sky with its bubbles of cloud and the geese in the field all stood together in mutual bastardy.

Everyone sort of wondering.

Why?

And suddenly, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were strolling along the path of adventure and new meanings wondering what the hell had just happened.

“What the hell just happened?” said Crazy Man.

“We dreamed about ice cream and fireflies,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man considered this for exactly one minute and smiled.

Being happy with his answer, the dog, Sidestepper, smiled as well.

But, as usual, the deep dark scary woods frowned and twigs bristled where deep dark scary things watched man and dog venture into the unknown of another day, another night.

To be continued...

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BTW.....

Team Player has been re-printed. Written when malware and associated nuisance software was just a small dot on the internet horizon, Team Player shows how fast science fiction becomes historical fiction in a wild wild world.

You can buy the paperback or non-Kindle ebooks here:

<https://fiction4all.com/ebooks/b16735-team-player.htm>

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Set in an uncomfortably close future run by homicidal marketing managers, 30 naked pagan women try to save the universe with the help of man who thinks he’s a tree.

