

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 96: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, in the deep dark scary woods.

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Deeper, darker and scarier...the woods...Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were on high alert as they detoured through the dusk of another day on the path of adventure and new meanings. They tried to think about cheery things like orange popsicles and strips of dot candy and other stuff that nobody remembered because life is never *all* fun. There needs to be suffering, regret, pain, rejection, remorse, anxiety, angst, self-recrimination and soul-hunger. Without these, life deteriorates into a fantasy diet without a weekly dose of fried liver to remind us there is no detour around misery.

There's only the short cut.

Crazy Man was offended by the blunt truth of life. He was offended by the darkness of life. He was offended by the scariness of life. He was offended by the...he wanted a hot dog stand. He needed a hot dog stand. He craved relish and mustard. He dreamed about steamed rolls. He liked his hot dog rolls steamed and he wondered if he had a hot dog roll steamer in the kitchen he might have.

He was in want of a hot dog and, as his need for juiced animal parts that no one would dream of eating on their own but will eat when they're compressed into an edible cylinder, began to subvert his offense, he began to hallucinate.

Imagine: hallucinating on the path of adventure and new meaning in the twilight, surrounded on both sides by the deep dark scary woods. And not a hot dog stand in sight.

Beside him, the dog, Sidestepper, walking sideways as usual, eyes on Crazy Man continuously, tiny puppy body propped up on four long (and obscene, but don't tell anyone I said that) stilt-like legs, said, "Do you ever think about hot dog stands?"

Crazy Man's eyes cranked open like saucers flaming through the atmosphere. His ears wiggled so fast they made invisible rooster tails that swooped into the sky and knocked migrating geese off course. His jaw plummeted through the air past his neck, down past his chest and stomach, streaking past his belly button and thighs, past knees and shins and toes, until it slammed into the ground and Crazy Man said, "If you were a hot dog, I would put relish and mustard on you and..."

"Yikes!" said the dog, Sidestepper, who was greatly disturbed by a jaw that could talk while it lay on the ground between Crazy Man's feet. "I am a *dog*! I am not a *hot dog*!"

Crazy Man's ears wiggled forward right off the sides of his skull and collided on his forehead where they analyzed the context of the dog, Sidestepper's, words and realized that something had to be done fast. He had to either accept that the dog, Sidestepper, was in fact a dog or he had to accept that he was a hot dog and eat him. But he had no mustard and relish. How could he eat the hot dog, Sidestepper, when he didn't have mustard and relish?

And that's when the hallucinations began full tilt.

Suddenly, the dog, Sidestepper, was a hot dog...a giant hot dog...a raging towering nameless-brown tube disguised as something vaguely edible with the right marketing plan. But this raging tube of meat was far beyond vaguely edible...it was predator meat. It was a cellulose-wrapped pack of lowgrade animal meat from heads, feet and the fly-soaked slaughterhouse floors...and it was mad. Robbed! They'd robbed whatever animal it had been of its dignity and life...turned it into something eaten just for the sake of eating. And now it was going to eat back.

"Growl!" said the giant hot dog. It turned toward Crazy Man and said, "I'm going to eat you! Do you have mustard and relish?"

(Of course, Crazy Man was just imagining this because he was hallucinating and well...he's crazy. What the dog, Sidestepper, actually said was "Howdy! I sure wish you would pick your jaw off the ground and stop wiggling your ears because you're sending a lot of geese in the wrong direction. And do you have mustard and relish?")

Crazy Man screamed so loud that anyone born on June 8, 1545 died, retroactively.

The giant hot dog stepped towards him on crocodile legs and snapped at his face with flaps of bloody animal skin. The stench of unrestrained animal fat saturated Crazy Man's nostrils and lungs and made his eyes water.

The giant hot dog said, "I've been pre-cooked and re-cooked and colored to your appetite but you... you don't deserve me. You've never deserved me. You slap your mustard and relish on me and just chew away without a single thought to how I feel about that. Have I ever taken a bite out of you?"

With that, the giant hot dog attacked Crazy Man with a razor-edged mouth that suddenly appeared at the top of its cellulose tube. Towering over Crazy Man, the giant hot dog snapped its slaughterhouse road kill jowls at his face, missing by fractions of an uncomfortably close measurement that might have been 2.836645 inches, but let's not force our opinion onto the story.

Crazy Man had never seen a man-eating giant hot dog before and he was feeling kind of picked-on and still very much offended. This was shaping up to be a war between hot dogs and human sensibilities.

The hot dog's razor mouth shot past his head just in time to miss him. Crazy Man tried to figure out the syntactical misdirection of what had just happened and came to the conclusion that it didn't matter. He'd survived the hot dog attack and it was time to eat back. He snapped at the hot dog's bun as it shot past his head and scored a hit.

"OW!" said the hot dog. "What are you doing?"

Suddenly, Crazy Man was less offended and more embarrassed as he realized that he was biting the dog, Sidestepper's, tiny doggy neck and shaking it like a dog shakes a stuffed toy it just grabbed out of your hand.

"You're not a giant hot dog," he said as he released his grip.

“You’re back,” said the dog, Sidestepper, obviously relieved. Though thoroughly shaken, he understood where Crazy Man was coming from: he was crazy...just like everybody else.

“You were a giant hot dog and you tried to eat me,” said Crazy Man. “I tried to eat you back.”

The dog, Sidestepper, thought about his as he licked his lips. “Was there mustard and relish?” “No,” said Crazy Man, “no mustard...no relish.”

Man and dog, stood for hours contemplating the lack of mustard and relish in their lives until Crazy Man said, “What’s that up ahead?”

The dog, Sidestepper, looked in the direction that Crazy Man pointed and thought, *Oh shit.*

To be continued...

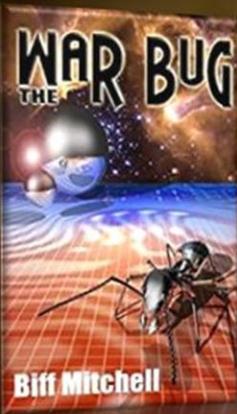
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