

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 101: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet The Antsy.

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When it's possible to destroy the world a hundred times over, it's impossible not to try. It's in our nature. We push ourselves to the brink and struggle to survive. We tell ourselves that this makes us stronger, this is evolution...and we adapt mostly from the worst, seldom from the best.

But Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, never dwelled on these things because they were existentially chill in an angst sort of way. Instead...

"Someday," said Crazy Man, "I'm going to cook up a big delicious steak with mushrooms and gummy bears in the kitchen I might have."

The dog, Sidestepper, tried not to think about this. He had other things on his mind, important philosophical things like: "I don't remember what my mother looks like...or even if she's a dog."

Crazy Man turned his head sideways into the dog, Sidestepper's, eyes (who was already looking at Crazy Man...walking sideways and all) and said, "If you're a dog, so she must also be a dog."

"But what if she isn't?" said the dog, Sidestepper. "Maybe I'm some kind of genetic mistake. Maybe my mother is a rat or a tree or a fire hydrant."

Crazy Man looked the dog, Sidestepper, up and down. His body looked very much like a slightly oblong beach ball with a knob-like tail and tiny doggy ears held up by four long skinny stilt legs that brought him up to eye level with Crazy Man who thought that, yes, maybe his travel mate was the product of a genetic

experiment gone haywire. Or maybe he was the result of aliens playfully tampering with his chromosomes or maybe he was born into a lineage of dogs lacking balanced diets.

Or maybe his mother looked like a furry rice paddy shack with a cute wiggly tail just like him.

“It doesn’t matter what you look like,” said an ant dancing on the side of a flower-in-a-ball. “We’re all gonna die...just like the man on the stage said, and if you two are what it’s all come to then I think we’re overdue.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were not impressed with the ant’s attitude. “We don’t like you,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Yeah,” said Crazy Man, “and you’re a terrible dancer.”

The ant, not accustomed to having its dancing openly criticized, cried so hard that its tears watered the plants for dozens of feet in every direction. It cried for hours and days and more as Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stared in horror. The tiny being’s legs bounced up and down as it squashed it’s underside down onto the surface of the flower-in-a-ball.

“You bastards!” screamed the ant (whose name apparently was The Antsy. Go figure.) “You try dancing with six legs. Every step is a mathematical miracle.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were emotionally demolished by The Antsy’s reaction. They were up to their knees in the tiny bug’s tears and they felt an almost competitive urge to out-cry the ant. Their tears, combined with The Antsy’s tears, created a flash flood of such a magnitude that it threatened to wash away the path of adventure and new meaning’s past. Just seconds before that happened, all three stopped crying.

Silence straddled the air like a wet towel as the three shifted their gaze from one to the other, wondering...what the hell was that all about? The Antsy would have been the first to break the silence but the dog, Sidestepper, couldn’t hold back the inevitable: “Are you my mother?”

The Antsy laughed. It was a mean laugh, a laugh riddled with scorn and self-righteousness. “No, you bastard,” said The Antsy. “I’m an ant.” The Antsy looked Crazy Man up and down and said, “And I can tell by the hunger in your eyes that you’re looking for a map to food. Ha! There’s no such thing and you’re both bastards.”

The dog, Sidestepper, scowled at The Antsy. “I am what I am and I’m really glad that I’m not what you are...a terrible dancer with too many legs.”

The Antsy was offended.

Crazy Man chuckled. He’d always thought that ants were annoying and outspoken and he never felt bad when he stepped on them on sidewalks and in dark alleys. The Antsy heard the chuckle and shot a dirty look in his direction. “And you’re the biggest bastard of all.”

Crazy Man felt a sudden urge to step on an ant.

“If you try to step on me,” said The Antsy, as though reading his mind, “you’ll find out just how really big I am and you won’t like it. And you won’t get to hear my story.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other. Crazy Man twirled his finger over his ear to let the dog, Sidestepper, know that he thought The Antsy was crazy beyond belief.

The dog, Sidestepper, glared at The Antsy and said, “I bet you don’t have a mother and you never will...even if mothers were on sale and you had a million dollars.”

The Antsy perked up and said, “Mothers are on sale? Where?”

“No,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “I was just saying that to insult you.”

The Antsy considered these hurtful words and said, “You better watch out or you and your odd-looking friend will find out just how awfully big I really am.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, shook The Antsy to the core of its being with waves of scornful laughter. Even the deep dark scary woods hunkered down, ready for a devastating retort. A few puffs of rain-in-the-making disguised as clouds scampered across the sky and jumped over the horizon.

The Antsy’s cheeks (or what passed for cheeks on an ant) turned red and bulged out the side of its ant head in a very unflattering way. The Antsy’s ant eyes glowed red and glowered at the two. “I will show you the meaning of big.” And The Antsy glowered and glowed and glowered some more at Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, for minutes that turned into hours that turned back into minutes.

“There,” said The Antsy.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stood and waited.

“There!” said The Antsy.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked around, thinking that maybe The Antsy was referring to something in the deep dark scary woods but there was nothing there.

“THERE!” screamed the Antsy.

“There what?” said Crazy Man.

The Antsy growled its answer: “There, you clown, look at me. Look how big I am.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were confused. The Antsy was still small as an ant and Crazy Man sure as hell didn’t like being called a clown. Clowns were scarier than the deep dark scary woods.

“You’re still small,” said Crazy Man.

The Antsy twisted its ant head almost in circles looking at its body. “Just look! I’m giant! I’m a whole lotta ant. You are impressed! And now you have to hear my story.”

Crazy Man winked at the dog, Sidestepper, who smiled. They were both in dire need of a nap and nothing put them to sleep faster than another damn sob story.

The Antsy began: “It was dark and stormy inside the hill that day...”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were asleep before the word *dark* inserted itself into the sob story. They stood erect and held back on the snoring. They were getting better at this. They even kept their eyes open in a characterization of wonder as The Antsy spilled out its tale of ant woe and ant angst. The universe felt so bad about the ant’s sob story that it sent a swarm of rogue neutrinos blasting through The Antsy’s ant-ness and carried it off to an alternate universe where everything was smaller than small and The Antsy rumbled and roared as it stepped on the mini-humans scurrying terrified under its legs.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stared at the ant-less flower-in-a-ball, having been waked by The Antsy’s soul-chilling scream as it was whisked away by a universe bigger than everything in it.

“I’d like to think that it’s gone on to better things,” said Crazy Man, “but I think it’s just gone.”

“Do think it’s any bigger in its new place?” said the dog, Sidestepper. “Maybe it’s as big as a praying mantis.”

“I don’t know,” said Crazy Man. “Does a praying mantis dance?”

“I pray not,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

And the two journeyers giggled and snarckled as they strolled down the path of adventure and new meanings stretching into irresistible new horizons in this outside thing.

To be continued...

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BTW.....

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