

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 106: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, the white feather...
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“Look what I found!” said Crazy Man to the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man stood facing down at something lying before him on the path of adventure and new meanings. The dog, Sidestepper, sidestepped up beside him and looked down. There on the path was the whitest feather either of them had ever seen. A low-flying wind rippled its shaft and quill, causing its vane to giggle.

“Amazing,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “a giggling white feather.”

“What do you think it means?” said Crazy Man.

“That the feather is having more fun than we are?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Easy for you to say,” said the white feather.

OMG, a talking, giggling white feather.

“Try being a symbol of angels and wind and a connection to the higher realms of being,” said the white feather whose name happened to be Penn. “And BTW, my name is Penn.”

The words “higher realms of being” drove into Crazy Man’s mind like spikes hammered into a cliffside by someone climbing a mountain in a desperate search for a map to food.

“You wouldn’t happen to have a map to food up there in those realms, would you?” said Crazy Man.

The white feather (hereafter referred to as Penn) thought for a moment and said, “Well, the realms aren’t really *up* anywhere. They’re, like, all around us, except somewhere else.”

This puzzled the dog, Sidestepper, who looked around and, seeing nothing out of the ordinary, assumed that Penn didn't have a clue what it was talking about. However, Crazy Man, existing in two dimensions, felt a sense of kinship with Penn.

"But that's neither here nor there," said Penn. "And nope...no map to food and I'm nobody's mother and you're both bastards."

Suddenly, Crazy Man felt zero kinship toward this or any other feather. They were nothing more than pillow stuffers and bug carriers.

"So," he said, "if you're so special, why did your bird drop you?"

"It didn't," said Penn. "I left. That bird was not worthy of me."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, exchanged looks charged with such deep skepticism and Penn felt the nasty vibe all the way over in its higher realm of being.

"Birds are merely carriers of the true worth of a bird..." said Penn, "...the feathers. Have you ever tried putting a whole pigeon in your hair or hat?"

Crazy Man checked his brown derby for pigeons and, finding none, assumed that Penn's statement might have at least an iota of initial plausibility.

"Feathers," said Penn, "are like gods."

But then again, he thought, this feather named Penn might just be full of it.

"If you're like a god," he said, "let's see you fly."

Penn tsk'd as only a white feather could tsk and said, "As I said, Mr. Skeptic, I left the bird. There's nothing up there. It's all down here...everywhere. Can't you feel it? My connection? My connection with the angels, the wind...the higher realms of being?"

The dog, Sidestepper, sniffed the air. Crazy Man scratched his nose. Bubbly white things in the sky learning how to be clouds skittered across the blue and ducked under the horizon. The deep dark scary woods shrugged. Somewhere buried deep in the story's narrative, a voice said, "?"

Penn was offended. "You bastards! There will be no love, hope nor peace for you. At least not in this dimension."

"Love, hope and peace do not from feathers come," said the dog, Sidestepper.

Not having a clue what the dog, Sidestepper, was talking about, but secure in the knowledge that it might make this weird white feather cry, Crazy Man nodded agreement.

But it was pointless. Nothing was going to make Penn cry. This was no cry-baby feather. It opened its voice, about to throw some really nasty words at dog and man when, suddenly, it emanated shock and awe. "Wait a minute! Aren't you the two that saved the Earth from the aliens?"

Both man and dog rolled their eyes.

Penn shook with excitement. "I heard that the two of you single-handedly warded off thousands of invading war ships from an unnamed galaxy where they eat planets for lunch and burp black holes."

Crazy Man wasn't in a mood to argue with a white feather so he decided to have some fun. "We looked them square in the eye...all 75,000 eyes...and told them that I might have a refrigerator and a flame thrower."

"That's right," said the dog, Sidestepper.

"I told them about my plans to buy a flame thrower," said Crazy Man.

"He did," said the dog, Sidestepper, "and you should have seen those alien eyebrows rise."

"We made them cry," said Crazy Man. "And we pointed at them as they cried."

"Like big off-world babies," said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Wow!" said the white feather that was named Penn. "Did they really cry?"

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, thought about this for a moment until an unidentified member of the duo said, "Yes. And the louder they cried, the harder we pointed at them like we were pointing flame throwers."

"Yep," said the dog, Sidestepper. "They cried and they left."

"Wow," said Penn. "Really?"

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, exchanged chagrined glances and Crazy Man said, "Well, not really."

Penn paused to ponder and said, “Not...really?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, glanced around in a sort of caught-in-the-lie nonchalance stupor for almost five seconds before the dog, Sidestepper, grabbed onto the storyline and said, “My partner in travel just might really have a kitchen.” And he erected a barrier of temporary pride around himself as he waited for Penn to respond.

Penn thought for much more than one second and, having covered all the possibilities and outcomes through recollection and prescience, said, “You’re both fakes.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were crushed like oranges under a sitting mule (a situation both had been avoiding for most of their conscious lives) until Crazy Man said, “If we tell the truth, nobody believes us. If we lie we don’t believe us. If we don’t say anything, a mule might come along and sit on us.

Now, we should all understand something essential about fallen feathers (i.e., no longer attached to a bird)...for some reason, the bird didn’t like them. And if a bird doesn’t like a feather well then...

As Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, gaped, a large foul-mouthed mule charged directly at Penn and laid down on that feather to keep its ass warm.

(Don’t think about that. I wouldn’t.)

The journeying pair stared in wonder at that which they had always dreaded. They stared into the mule’s mad eyes as it stared into theirs and they backed slowly away and turned from the mule slowly, slowly and continued down the path.

“Do you think anyone will ever believe us about the aliens leaving because they didn’t want to have anything to do with us?” said Crazy Man.

“Does it matter?” said the dog, Sidestepper, “They won’t be back for a long time, if ever.”

Crazy Man shrugged and said, “Where’d that mule come from?”

“I think...” said the dog, Sidestepper, “...that it might have been improvised.”

This made no sense to Crazy Man so he nodded agreement and said, “All those realms and no maps to food.” His face suddenly contorted around his round red detachable nose and he said, “What if you find food before we find a map to food.”

And this thought occupied the minds and conversation of both man and dog as they continued down the path of adventure and new meanings in search of this outside thing, a dog’s mother and a map to food or just the food...whichever came first.

To be continued...

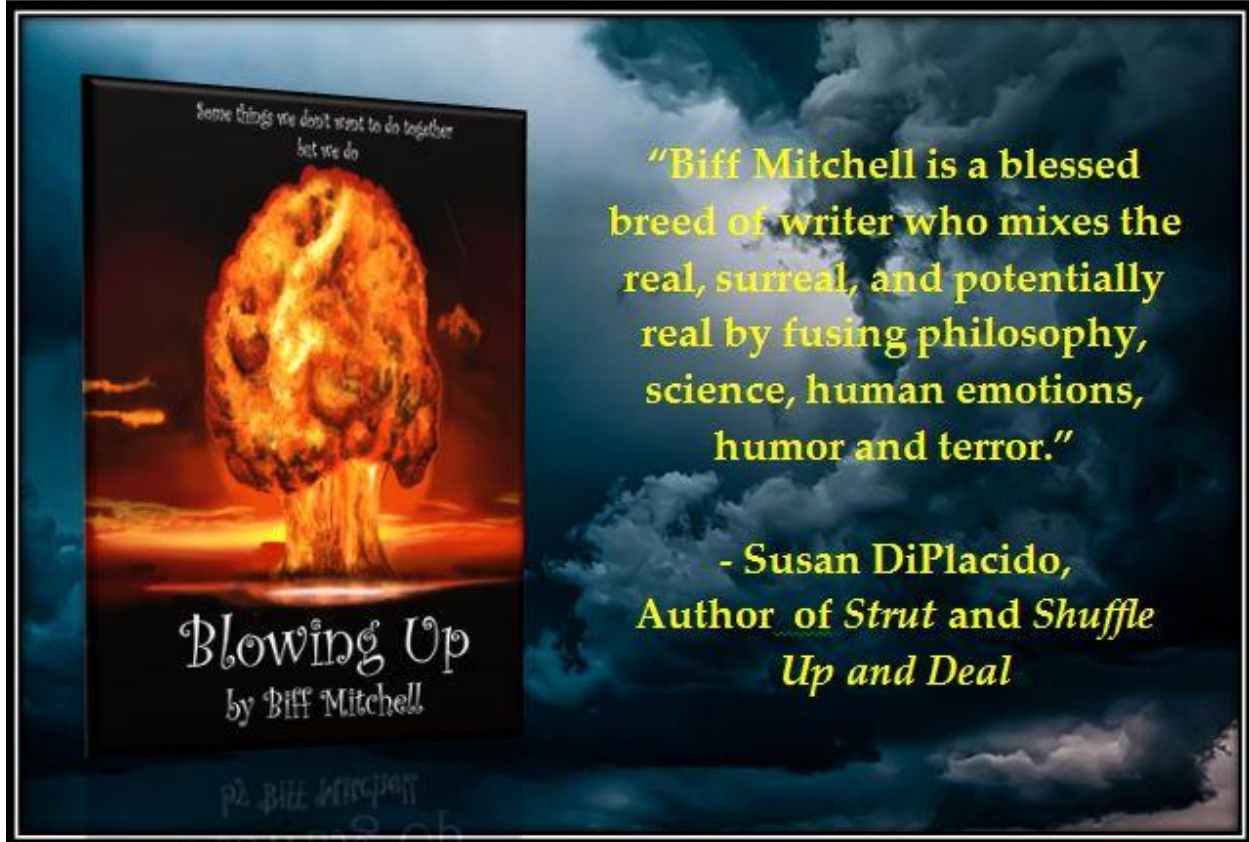
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About the picture at the top of this article: the Westmoreland Street bridge in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. (Has absolutely nothing to do with this article.)