

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 116: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the broken tree.

(New here? [Click here to see what it's all about.](#))

It was a quiet day on the path of adventure and new meanings, and Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were feeling hopeful that, someday, they would find a dog's mother and a man's map to food. In fact, if there was one thing this *outside thing* had taught them, it was...

"Ouch!"

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stopped walking abruptly and walked cautiously until they stopped before a tree that appeared to be broken in half at the edge of the deep dark scary woods.

"Ouch!" said the tree.

Being empaths in the scraggly wheel of lie, somewhat man and breed-less dog immediately fell to the ground howling at the gods and the universe for allowing such obvious cruelty to trees. As he rolled around in the muck of the path of adventure and new meanings, Crazy Man's eyes spun in their sockets and his ears wiggled sympathetically in honor of the tree's suffering. The dog, Sidestepper, tied his long stilt-like legs into pretzels and question marks and snapped at the air with his rows of razor sharp canine teeth.

"You poor, picked-on-by-the-powers-that-be-tree!" howled Crazy Man.

"We feel your pain!" snapped the dog, Sidestepper, snarling at the air. "And we suffer with you!"

"Knock it off, you two," said the broken tree. "This is *my* fate. *Mine*. Now bugger off."

However Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were not ones to simply bugger off when the situation called for it. They had questions.

“Have you seen my mother?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“No,” said the broken tree. “And you’re a bastard.”

“Do you have a map to food?” said Crazy Man.

“No,” said the broken tree. “And you’re a bastard as well.”

“You’re not a very polite tree,” said the dog, Sidestepper, as he contorted his long stick-dog body in an effort to stand up. “We were just feeling your pain.”

“It’s my pain,” said the broken tree. “I earned it and I don’t have to share it.”

“How did you earn your pain?” said Crazy Man as he brushed dirt and detritus from the path off his papier mache armor. “Maybe we can help you earn more pain.”

“You can help by bugging off and letting me wallow in my pain,” said the broken tree.

“How did this happen?” said the dog, Sidestepper. “You look really awful.”

“And you look like a freak from a test tube,” said the broken tree. “And my broken-in-half-ness is *my* fate. Now bugger off.”

“How is it your fate?” said Crazy Man.

“Because I am my own tree,” said the broken tree. “And that’s exactly what I said to the wind.”

“What wind?” said Crazy Man.

“The wind that broke me,” said the broken tree. “What other wind would I be talking about?”

“But aren’t you supposed to bend with the wind so that you don’t break?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“That’s what they all say,” said the broken tree. “Take a look around. What do you see? Look! All these trees around me, tall and unbroken.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked around at the healthy tall-standing trees surrounding the broken tree and said in unison, “And your point?”

“Look at them!” screamed the broken tree. “Not one of them has accepted their fate. Only me.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, studied the trees surrounding the broken tree. They discussed their observations in depth and considered the ontological ramifications of their discussions and arrived at a mutual conclusion: “And your point?” said the dog, Sidestepper, as Crazy Man nodded agreement.

The broken tree let out a long sigh that filled the air with a sense of exhaustion. “I’m the only one who stood up to the wind. I’m the only one who used my superior intellect to decide that I am a tree with deep roots and a strong trunk and no wind is going to make me bend.”

“But, but doing that,” said Crazy Man, “instead of bending, you broke. In half.”

“As was my fate,” said the broken tree. “As was the fate that I accepted because I am a strong tree with deep roots and no wind can make me bend.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, wondered if they were missing something. This required further deep thought and discussion that came close to requiring the appointment of committees to conduct in-depth studies that would lead to meetings with PowerPoint presentations and bad coffee. Fortunately, the broken tree broke their inquisitive revelry when it said, “If a meteorite is going to land on your spot then you should be on your spot and accept your fate with grace and honor. It’s the least you can do for the meteorite.”

“But why would you do anything for the meteorite?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Because it’s your fate,” said the broken tree.

“But,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “if you were to accidentally fall down on your way to your spot and the meteorite got there first, wouldn’t that be fate?”

The broken tree growled something that sounded affirmative.

“So then...” said the dog, Sidestepper, “if something can happen that would cause you to be late, then being on the spot when the meteorite lands doesn’t have to be your fate after all.” The dog, Sidestepper, huffed tiny little doggie huffs through his tiny little doggie nose and said, “There can be more than one fate so, if you’re not tied into just one fate, then you can decide not to be there because not being there can also be your fate.”

Crazy Man looked away from his travel buddy and looked right into the broken tree's tree-ness and nodded agreement.

The broken tree snorted and spit dried sap and yelled, "There's no escaping your fate! And all those who try and succeed will be doomed to go on living and knowing that they should be dead...or broken...like me."

"Or they could just live happily and not think about fate," said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Ideas like that will land you in a land of woe," said the broken tree.

Both Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked around at the stately (though scary) trees in the deep dark scary woods and then at the broken tree and Crazy Man said, "And how's that different from you?"

"Because it's different!" yelled the broken tree...maybe a little too loud because it attracted the attention of several million beetles and random spore, all of which immediately crawled, flew, blew and covered the broken tree with mandibles, fungus roots and all means of broken tree destruction. Within minutes that might have been seconds or vice versa, the broken tree was a steaming pile of forest mush and then nothing but a stain on the ground.

"Must've been its spot," said the dog, Sidestepper, "twice."

As they continued their journey along the path of adventure and new meanings, they talked about lost mothers and maps to food, completely unaware of a sky full of meteorites and jumbo jets.

To be continued...

© Biff Mitchell

www.biffmitchell.com

Check out the blog at: www.crazymanadventures.com

**ABOUT THE STORIES IN BLOWING UP:
PART 1- OBSESSION AND *THESE EYES***

This is the first in a series of articles about the stories in
Blowing Up.

These Eyes is one of my more disturbing stories, mostly because it
preys on me from the inside.

[Click here to read the story behind the story.](#)



Blowing Up

Now available through Double Dragon Publishing (an imprint of Fiction4All)

<https://tinyurl.com/4xmjyrx9>