

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 119: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, step carefully.

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Some people see life as a stairway leading ever upward through discoveries and fascinations until they reach the top where everything finally makes sense and then they die. Others see life as a stairway leading ever downward through broken dreams and disappointment until they reach the bottom where nothing makes any sense at all and then they die. Apparently, if you...

Both Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were standing on the path of adventure and new meanings snoring so loud it seemed a deliberate attempt to piss off that pesky narrative voice...and it did. The narrative voice shut up and let Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, get on with the next episode which, strangely, began with them facing a brick and stone stairway.

"Hey!" said the stairway. "Are you the two who saved the universe from the aliens? I heard that you shoot fire out your eyes and mouths and kill fruit flies with you minds."

Wow. Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were intrigued. They'd never met a talking stairway before.

"I think we're a bigger problem to ourselves than the aliens," said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Yep," said the stairway. "Always water your own plants before you water the world."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, had no idea what the stairway was talking about so Crazy Man changed the subject. "Where do you lead, oh verbally gifted stairway?"

“You’re not making fun of me, are you?” said the stairway, sensing a degree of sarcasm in Crazy Man’s voice “Stairways are not to be toyed with...we have up but we also have down.”

Now Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were completely lost.

“So what’s the difference?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“What do you mean *what’s the difference?*” said the stairway. “Up is up and down is down. Everybody knows that.”

“OK,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “If up is up and down is down, why are stairways not to be toyed with?”

The stairway thought about this right down to the fifth brick from the left on the third stair and said, “Climb me and find out.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, conferred in a business-like manner (in fact, Crazy Man even wore his black bowler hat to show his acumen) and arrived at a variety of possible steps going forward which, in this case, would mean steps going upward...and they came to the conclusion that the stairway, being a part of the path of adventure and new meanings, would be the logical way forward.

“So,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “we’ll climb up you.”

“But,” said the stairway, “what if you get halfway up and you fall down?”

“We’ll walk carefully,” said Crazy Man. “We’ve both climbed stairs before. I think.”

While Crazy Man stumbled through his memories trying to remember if he’d ever climbed stairs before, the stairway said, “But every step is a new step and not the step before.”

Again, the stairway might as well have been talking in Dublin Greek.

“What if you get to the top and explode,” said the stairway. “Wouldn’t you rather go to a bar and drink Tequila and limes?”

Crazy Man immediately thought that, if the stairway knew the way to a bar, it might know where to find a map to food. “You wouldn’t happen you know where we could find a map to food, would you?” he said.

The stairway thought about this as stairways are wont to do and said, “Nope. No map to food and I wouldn’t have a clue where you could find a bar. I mean, look around...does it look like we’re anywhere near a bar?”

“But you said we could go to a...”

“I was just trying to be helpful,” said the stairway, “and by the way...you’re both bastards and you’ll never find the dog’s mother unless she’s in the bar we don’t know how to find and you manage to stumble into it in your dreams.”

That was the last straw. Both journeyers were pissed at the stairway. Crazy Man saw a grasshopper clicking its hind legs on a low-hanging leaf and picked it up. He stepped forward and carefully placed the grasshopper on the stairway’s lower step.

It took a minute or two, or maybe a day or two, before the stairway fully realized that this strange looking man in the Zorro outfit had put, of all things, a grasshopper on one of its steps. This particular stairway was terrified of grasshoppers.

“Take it off!” screamed the stairway. “Take it off! You bastard! You bastard! Take it off! I hate grasshoppers! I hate them!”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, smiled maliciously. Yes, they were pleased with the stairway’s repulsion for grasshoppers...it gave them the upper hand.

“So,” said Crazy Man, “we’re bastards are we?”

“No!” said the stairway. “You’re both wonderful philosophers and life-observers and the path of adventure and new meanings is not worthy of your footprints.”

“But we’re not bastards,” said Crazy Man.

“Well,” said the stairway, “you actually are bastards, or so the stories go along the path, but you’re nice bastards and...”

Crazy Man tossed another grasshopper onto the stairway, this time the second step.

“Noooo!” said the stairway. “You bastard! Take it off! Take it off! You’re not a bastard! You’re not a bastard...you bastard! But you’re not!”

At that moment, both grasshoppers jumped into the air and landed on either side of the stairway which seemed to have a calming effect on the entire area.

Crazy Man stared straight into the stair-ness of the stairway and said, “There’s lots more where those came from.”

“OK,” said the stairway, “you can start climbing me. But don’t fall.”

“Why would we fall?” said he dog, Sidestepper.

“Because I’m a stairway and sometimes people fall off stairways, or they fall down the stairway, or they just fall. We stairways are not to be taken lightly. Remember...for every up there is a down and every down has its up.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, ignored the stairway and surged forward in a colossal tide of intent and began to climb the stairway. Immediately, vertigo set in and they flailed and tottered and fell. They fell from the third step back to the first step and were on their feet and paws again and climbing only to be overcome by dizziness and fear before they tumbled back down the stairway. This went on well into the next few minutes until Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, decided it was time to fill the stairway with more grasshoppers. The stairway, tuning into their minds (after somehow finding Crazy Man’s mind in whatever dimension he currently harbored it) said, “OK! I was just having some fun. I played with your heads with this thing called altitude.”

Altitude, thought the pair in unison. Why hadn’t they realized this so many minutes ago...possibly three or four. Altitude. It explained a lot of things, none of which actually had anything to do with them falling back down the stairs, but it was an interesting concept that filled their minds as they tumbled down the stairs and found themselves on their asses on the path of adventure and new meanings with no stairway in sight.

They looked around. They struggled to their feet and brushed twigs and dried leaf stuff off their hides and Zorro cape. Before them, the path of adventure and new meanings stretched into a distant horizon surrounded every step by the deep dark scary woods but there were no more stairways, causing them to wonder if there had ever been one at all.

To be continued...

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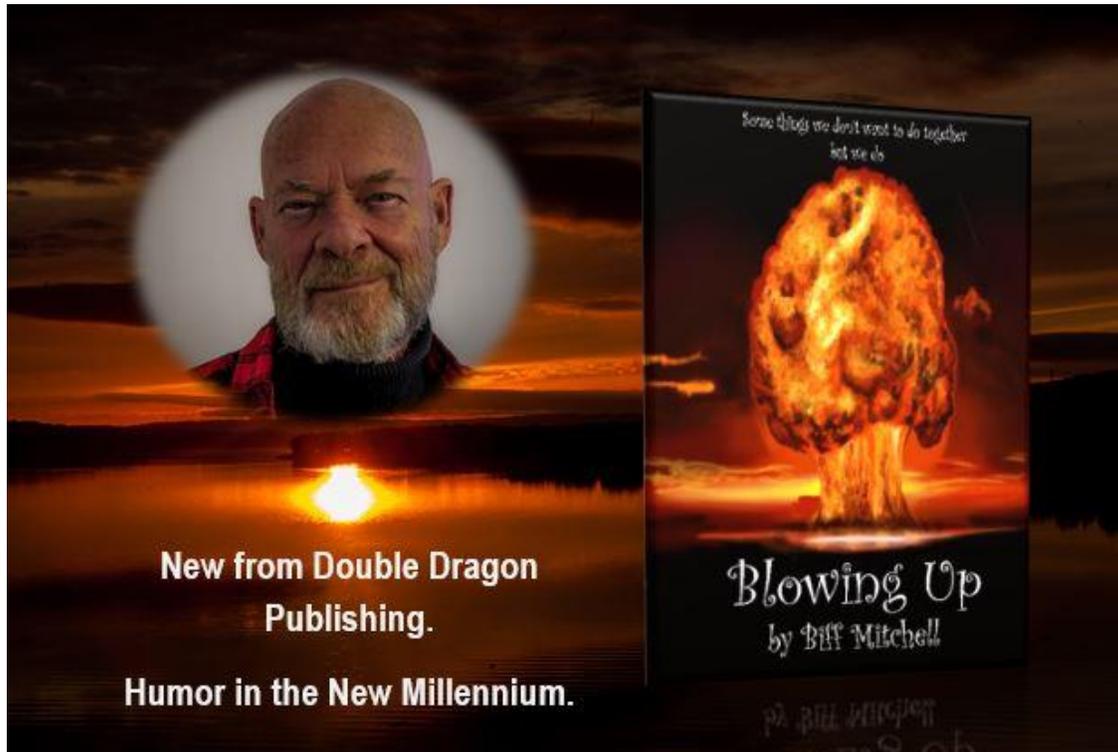
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