

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 123: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, learn when good guys are stupid. Sort of.

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“I think it’s a good name,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “And it’s *my* name, so I should get to choose what I call myself.”

Crazy Man, profoundly aware that his journey mate’s sanity was wobbling on loose ground, nodded agreement. “If you say so.”

“You don’t sound very enthusiastic,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “You don’t like my new name?”

“No,” said Crazy Man. “I’ve always been neutral on names. I’ve never met a name I didn’t like...or liked. I’ve been neutral on them all.”

The dog, Sidestepper, wasn’t convinced. He was sure that Crazy Man was holding back on something, like when the bad guy can’t shoot the heroine because he knows the hero has one more bit of crucial information before he shoots them both because the good guy was stupid enough to drop his gun to stop the bad guy from shooting the heroine. This strange brew of a man wearing a car racing outfit and a hockey helmet was holding a gun to his new name and the dog, Sidestepper, was having none of it.

What with walking sideways and all, he was already facing Crazy Man when he said, “OongaDog.” He smiled disturbingly around his razor sharp teeth and repeated, drawing out every letter, “Ooooooonga-doooooog.”

Crazy Man wanted to go somewhere else, be with other people or dogs, cross a deep canyon on a line of thread with forward the only way to go...anything to get away from the dog, Sidestepper, before he fell to the ground and seeped into it as a puddle of uncontrollable disturbed laughter.

OongaDog.

He had to admit that he suspected he'd often thought about changing his name but, unfortunately, he couldn't remember what he wanted to change it to...Smith, or something. Just as he was thinking this, the story continued...

"Hello travelers on the path of adventure and new meanings," said an arrangement of black metal posts lined up before Crazy Man's and the dog, Sidestepper's, eyes. "I'm that part of the path that reminds you we are all on paths and those paths flow out of you as your life."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, had no idea what the posts were talking about. They weren't even sure if the posts were politically correct.

"But once you've chosen a path," said the posts, "you still have to jump from departure point to departure point."

At which point the posts waited.

And waited.

"Now," said the posts.

"Now what?" said Crazy Man.

"Now you need to climb up on the first post and jump to the next," said the posts. "You've chosen your path and now you need to depart and depart and depart."

The dog, Sidestepper, scowled. He wasn't falling for any of this jump-away-from-the-moment craziness, as though every moment was an unsavory experience that he had to get away from as quickly as possible. Which might actually be true, but he was in no mood for departures today.

"Maybe I don't want to depart," he said in his most authoritative tone.

"Well," said the posts, "maybe you just want to stay right where you are and just rot away from inertia."

Crazy Man's forehead furled into a visual rendition of angst. He was no fan of inertia, especially the kind that stayed in one spot.

"Why do we have to depart?" he said.

"Because that's what life is," said the posts. "You do this for a while and then you suddenly do that. You do that for a while and then suddenly you do this. You're in a rut and you jump out of it and into another rut that you'll jump out of later."

Crazy Man, like his travel mate, wasn't convinced. He'd always viewed life departures as something you *crawled* out of. It was time to change the subject.

"Do you have a map to food?" he said.

"Nope," said the posts.

"Bastards," said the posts.

"So," said the dog, Sidestepper, ignoring the posts' gawdawful truth, "you believe that life is about just getting away from the moment?"

"No," said the posts. "Life is about leaving the moment behind."

"There's a difference?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Well," said the posts sheepishly, "not really." After a moment, the posts added, "But enough talk about all this *moment* and *life* mumbo jumbo. We're posts, we stick in the ground and we'd like you to jump around on us."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were suddenly suspicious. Neither of them had ever encountered departure point posts that turned out to be *not* departure point posts before. This called for meetings and studies, road trip sabbaticals and polls, PowerPoint presentations with coffee and donuts and consultations with world leaders and experts (whose expertise would be questioned and ignored after a couple of internet searches) none of which they had at the moment...so they did the only honorable thing: They jumped up and down on the spot. They jumped high into the air, ignoring the laws of gravity.

They jumped and jollied till they could neither jump nor jolly a moment longer, at which point they crashed to the ground and howled for all the lost maps to food and lost mothers in the world. Until the dog, Sidestepper, said, “Call us bastards again and I’ll doggie pee on you.”

The posts shuddered. They were no strangers to doggie pee and they didn’t like it.

“Fine then,” said the posts. “You can stay in the moment as it drags into the next moment and the next. You can tip toe through life without ever having made a leap. You can glue yourself to a spot that you carry with you each day and never wander away from. Or you can just go to hell and we’re out of here.”

And with that, the posts spun like mining drills into the ground and were gone like time passing on steroids.

“So,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “you don’t like the name Oongadog?”

“What’s an oongadog?” said Crazy Man in a desperate attempt to avoid the question.

The dog, Sidestepper, thought about this for as long as it took to realize that he had no idea what an oongadog was and decided that he liked the name he already had.

At least it wasn’t Fido.

To be continued...

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