

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 133: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the Road Sorely Traveled.

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Once upon a time there was (and still is) a road called the Road Sorely Traveled. It wasn't a popular road but it was crowded with zigzag traffic and misleading road signs. It was bumper cars wrapped in foil, without windows or doors, its entire length watched by unsmiling crows. Warning signs were posted every night; in the morning, they were gone. Tracks led into it, but none led out. Though open and exposed to the sky and its surroundings, things that happened along the Road Sorely Traveled were never seen, never heard and never thought about.

Until today.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, came to a screeching stop as they raced each other to the next patch of weeds on the path of adventure and new meanings. The deep dark scary woods suddenly disappeared, replaced by open fields and an elevated road.

"Keep going!" said the road. "You don't want to travel on me."

"But why not?" said the dog, Sidestepper, who was feeling adventurous and thinking that maybe it was time for a change in scenery. And a change of road.

"I'm the Road Sorely Traveled," said the Road Sorely Traveled, "and I'm the shortest route between nowhere and nowhere and the longest route to get there."

Crazy Mana and the dog, Sidestepper, glanced at each other. What was this road saying? Where did this road lead when it was going nowhere? Would there be lost mothers and maps to food when the Road Sorely Traveled arrived nowhere? It was too much for the journeying duo...they broke down into spasms of high octane empathy. Furrows and dents in the path, sounds heard by passing clouds and ducks, crystalized screams and grunts hanging in the air...these were the curse of empathy without borders.

Days, possibly months, later, Crazy Man said, "Would there be a map to food somewhere between nowhere and nowhere?"

"No," said the Road Sorely Traveled. "All my maps lead nowhere. And you and the dog are bastards."

Hearing this, the dog, Sidestepper, decided not to ask this brazen road of nothings if it had valuable information on the whereabouts his mother. No, he would play his cards close to his tiny doggie ears. "If you lead nowhere and you're coming from nowhere," he said, "then how can you be somewhere right now?"

"And what makes you think I'm somewhere right now?" said the Road Sorely Traveled.

Crazy Man had never been a fan of roads sorely traveled but somewhere under the crustiness of his subjectivity he knew that this sorely used road was crying out for help. "At least you're not a parking lot!" he blurted

Silence poured into their surroundings like muddy water filling a coffee stained mug. They all knew that parking lots were the end of civilization. They displaced homes and hospitals, parks and preserves, daycares and taco stands and brought out the worst in driving and parking manners. Parking lots were the source of all evil in the 21st Century and they needed to be banned as soon as cars and trucks were obsolete.

"But I *am* a parking lot," said the Road Sorely Traveled. "When you set foot on me, you begin to walk but you go nowhere. Every pebble and weed is the one you just passed and the one you approach. Nothing changes, nothing grows, nothing..."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were sound asleep. The Road Sorely Traveled stared at them with high voltage contempt – the kind that wakes up even those well versed in sleeping through lectures and sob stories. They felt the flow of negative energy permeating their beings and decided it was time to stop snoring and face the sob.

"You're both bastards," said the Road Sorely Traveled.

"The whole world's a bastard," said Crazy Man, and the dog, Sidestepper, nodded agreement.

This made sense to the Road Sorely Traveled and it responded in kind: "Though maybe you two are lesser bastards in the grand scheme of bastardy."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, weren't sure how they felt about that. They'd always thought of themselves as top tier bastards, those at the top of the scale that you could look at and say, "Now, this is a real bastard."

If they were going to be bastards, then they would be bloody good bastards.

"But then again," said the Road Sorely Traveled, "maybe you're both bloody good bastards and the world is safer if you just tread on over here and go nowhere."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, eyed the Road Sorely Traveled suspiciously. *What's going on here?* they thought. First, this road said stay away and then they were bastards and then they were lesser bastards and then they were the worst bastards and now the road wanted them to travel it.

It was too much for them. Their minds spun in their heads so fast, they fell to their knees. All rational thought became too rational to think. Where was the fun when everything made sense? They looked upon the Road Sorely Traveled and noticed shadowy objects zig-zagging and tumbling over each other. They heard grunts, moans and screams. Waves of hot air sickeningly full of stressed out body odor clobbered their noses and...

No way were they going on that road. They straightened themselves and backed away as the Road Sorely Traveled said, "Just put one foot, one paw, on me and I'll take care of the rest. All you have to do is walk."

"And just walk nowhere?" said Crazy Man.

"Nowhere is everywhere when you're nowhere," said the Road Sorely Traveled.

"So what do we do when we're just walking nowhere?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Well," said the Road Sorely Traveled, "You get to suffer. It's kind of like spending forever looking for the end of your nose."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, had never been big fans of their noses and they weren't having any of this suffering thing.

"No!" said the dog, Sidestepper. "There's no adventure and no new meanings in...whatever you are."

Crazy Man had no idea what this road was either, but he almost shook his head off agreeing. And with that, the Road Soresly Traveled was swallowed by the deep dark scary woods with a muffled burping sound.

And at that moment, the sun dipped low in the horizon before them like a beacon leading them into this big shiny outside thing.

"That was fast," said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Yeah," said Crazy Man, "like a beacon or something."

So they did what travelers on the path of adventure and new meanings do...they laughed as they told each other their favorite beacon jokes.

Most of which were probably made up. But hey, when you're on the road to something.

To be continued...

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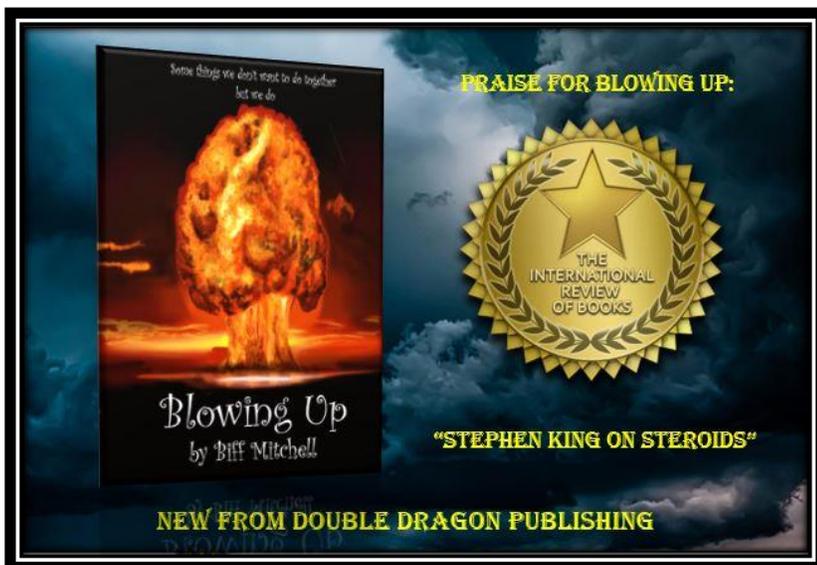
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