

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 136: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the last leaf.

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Crazy Man couldn't take his eyes off the leaf, as though his irises were metal holes magnetically attracted to the leaf. Though bulging eyes, he stared at the oak leaf lying on the ground, brittle and dried out, misshapen and colorless.

"I will be your pet," said the oak leaf. "Look into me. I will be your pet. You will adopt me."

Yes, the oak leaf was attempting to hypnotize Crazy Man. But...it didn't know that Crazy Man existed in two dimensions, his mind in one and his body in the other, and he wasn't sure which was in which so the oak leaf was casting commands in vain. But he still couldn't take his eyes off the leaf.

"You will bend over and pick me up," said the oak leaf.

"No I won't," muttered Crazy Man, eyes still trying to climb out of their sockets in the oak leaf's direction.

"You need a pet leaf!" yelled the oak leaf. "Everybody needs a pet leaf! Pick me up and adopt me."

"I don't know how to take care of a leaf," said Crazy Man.

"It's easy," said the oak leaf. "You just iron me with wax to make me look pretty and then you pour plastic over me to make me look pretty forever."

Crazy Man was sure he had an iron, some wax and some plastic in one of his pockets and he was just about to pick the leaf up and keep it as a pet.

"Oh, by the way," said the oak leaf, "you have to adopt the tree as well."

Crazy Man looked up at a towering oak tree edging out of the bushes and darkness of the deep dark scary woods. He was sure he didn't have pockets big enough for an oak tree.

"Please," said the oak tree, "adopt me and my last leaf. We're toilet trained."

Crazy Man thought about this for as long as he could stand it and said, "I don't think that would be a good idea. I might alter the biosphere in this section of the world. The ramifications could be catastrophic."

He looked around for moral support from the dog, Sidestepper, but he was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, Crazy Man was on his own, alone with a leaf and a tree, both of whom wanted him to adopt them. His mind crawled and twisted with misgivings. Would he be a good owner of pets? He'd never had a pet that he could remember. Would he be able to prepare the leaf and the tree for the hardships and heart break of the modern world? Would this tree sprout thousands of new leaves that he would have to adopt? Would he prefer to have pet frogs?

"Adopt us!" said the oak leaf and the oak tree together.

Crazy Man felt the beginnings of severe mental health problem brewing in his mind. He inhabited two dimensions...his body in one and his mind in the other and he had never been sure which was which...so he wasn't even sure where his mind was falling apart. *All of this would be so easy*, he thought, *if only I had bigger pockets*. Why hadn't he thought about bigger pockets when he went on his fashion sprees?

"I'm sorry," he said. "I don't big enough pockets to adopt you. A leaf maybe, but a tree is a tree and a tree doesn't fit in a pocket."

"Are you saying that I'm un-adoptable?" said the oak tree.

"No," said Crazy Man. "I just saying that you're a tree."

"And just what do you have against trees?" said the oak leaf. "Do you think you're better than trees?"

"No," said Crazy Man. "I would never say that I'm better than a tree. I'm just saying that there are no pockets big enough to adopt a tree."

"Tree hater!" yelled the oak leaf and the oak tree.

"I love trees," said Crazy Man, "even though some have tried to fall on me."

"Oh," said the oak tree, "so you have a problem with one tree and then you lump us all into the same pit of tree hate."

Crazy Man was beginning to have doubts about his feelings for trees, in particular...oak trees. He'd always favored maple trees, especially the leaves, which he felt were more centered than oak leaves.

"OK," he said, "but here's the deal...I don't have the pockets for an oak tree and we can't have you stumbling along the path of adventure and new meanings shedding root dirt and bugs, so I'll meet you both half way and just adopt the leaf."

He looked around again for the dog, Sidestepper, but he was nowhere to be seen. He wondered if his travel mate had been carried off into the deep dark scary woods by an under populated pack of wolves. Thoughts of what might happen to him chilled Crazy Man's soul.

"It's both or none," said the oak leaf. The oak tree nodded agreement in that adorable way that oak trees nod agreement.

"Then none," said Crazy Man.

The oak leaf and the oak tree began sobbing and feeling sorry for themselves.

"Nobody wants us," said the oak tree, tears flowing down its trunk like sap, and maybe they were sap.

"I'm just going to wither away and turn into dust to be blown away by the wind and forgotten," said the oak leaf. "You're a heartless bastard."

Crazy Man was intrigued. He and the dog, Sidestepper, had been called bastards many times, but neither of them had been called heartless bastards. He wondered if this meant they were making progress in finding a lost mother and a map to food but somehow he doubted that. And how could he claim to have a heart when he didn't even know which dimension it was in. He wished the dog, Sidestepper, was with him to help him think this through. They were certainly a well-gearred thought machine and that had brought them through many sticky situations.

"We can't accept your position on this," said the oak tree. "It doesn't align with our position, so it looks like need to go to Plan B."

"Plan B?" said Crazy Man.

“Yes!” said the oak leaf with a sort of madness about it. “Plan B it is!”

“What’s Plan B?” said Crazy Man.

Suddenly, the oak tree began to rip its roots out of the ground in the deep dark scary woods. The oak leaf flutter in an equally sudden wind. Crazy Man felt mildly threatened.

“We adopt you!” said the oak tree as its roots began to crawl towards Crazy Man and the oak leaf fluttered closer and closer.

“And this is how we adopt you!” said the oak tree as its roots towered over Crazy Man and slammed down.

“Hey,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “what’s wrong.”

Crazy Man opened his eyes and looked around. There was no oak tree, no oak leaves, no roots. He realized that he’d been dream walking. He’d been sound asleep...oblivious to the outside world as he strolled along the path of adventure and new meanings beside the dog, Sidestepper. And he thought: *Yes, just a walking dream. Whoever heard of talking leaves?*

“Just a dream,” said Crazy Man. “Guess I drifted off. An oak leaf and an oak tree wanted me to adopt them.”

“That’s crazy,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “Nobody has pockets big enough for an oak tree.”

“That’s what I thought,” said Crazy Man. “So...I don’t have to feel bad about having small pockets.”

“Not unless you’re a kangaroo,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

And the dog, Sidestepper, laughed till his nose was wetter than wet while Crazy Man laughed cautiously as he tried to figure out what that meant.

To be continued...

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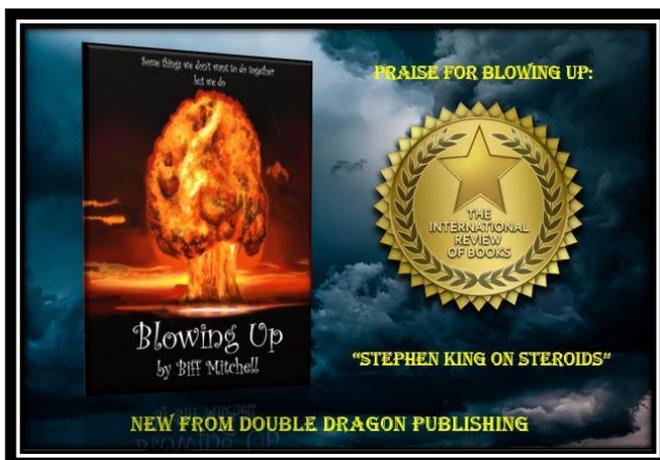
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