

## The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 137: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the sitting stones.

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“Hey weary travelers,” said a large rock surrounded by two other large rocks, “come and sit on us and rest your tired bones.”

Crazy Man wondered how bones could be tired, but his legs were feeling kind of worn out and overused from endless walking along the path of adventure and new meanings and he was sure the dog, Sidestepper, was feeling pretty much the same thing, only with four legs that looked strangely like stilts.

“We’re the sitting stones,” said the sitting stone in the center. “We sit here for weary travelers to sit on us. And guess what?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, put their minds into guessing mode. They were sure they could guess right. Somewhere deep in their minds the answer lurked but lurking wasn’t doing it, so finally the dog, Sidestepper, said, “What?”

All three sitting stones giggled and the one on left said, “That’s OK. Nobody ever guesses right. The answer is...it’s *free* to sit on us because we’re the sitting stones and we exist to be sat upon. The accumulation of wealth means nothing to us. So come and sit for free.”

“That’s right,” said the sitting stone in the center. “We have everything we need...air, earth and water from the rain that cleans the dead bugs off of us so travelers won’t get bugs on their butts when they sit on us. So come and sit on us.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were suspicious. They couldn't imagine sitting for free in a world verging on the edge of putting a price on air as soon as someone figured out how to do it.

"Why should we trust you?" said the dog, Sidestepper. "How do we know that you won't roll as soon as we sit and turn us into pancakes of our former selves?"

The sitting stones giggled and chuckled and the one on the right said, "We're on level ground and we're not round. There's no way we can roll so how can we roll over you when we can't roll?"

"Look at me," said the sitting stone in the center. "I'm a flat bottom stone...held in place by the laws of physics and you can't argue with physics. Apples don't float in the air; they drop because of physics."

Crazy Man had to agree. He'd always had a great deal of respect for physics for keeping everything together with equations that filled entire blackboards. But the dog, Sidestepper, was still wary. His doggie sense tingled, and tingling was never a good thing when you didn't know exactly what was causing it. There was something not quite right about these sitting stones. He figured he should get to know them a little better before sitting on them.

"How many have sat on you?" he said.

The three sitting stones hummed and hawed and held secret telepathic discussions before the sitting stone in the center said, "A whole bunch."

"Could you be more specific?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"13,435,874,236,345 give or take," said the sitting stone on the right.

"That's a whole bunch," said Crazy Man.

But the dog, Sidestepper, wasn't convinced. He'd seen pictures of the steps leading upwards in the Leaning Tower of Pisa from just thousands of footsteps over a few hundred years. The steps were worn down in the center. He didn't see any wearing down on any of these sitting stones, definitely not the wearing down caused by a whole bunch (give or take) of sitters. It was time for another question. "How old are you?"

"Millions of years," said the sitting stone on the right. "But who's counting?"

"Yeah," said the sitting stone in the center. "It's easy to forget birthdays after a few thousand years. You don't even want to think about it."

The dog, Sidestepper, had to admit that they had a point. He wasn't sure of his own age so he winked at Crazy Man, who was good at changing the subject.

"You wouldn't happen to have a map to food, would you?" he said.

"No!" said all three sitting stones at the same time. "And we don't know where the dog's mother is and you're both bastards. Now come and sit on us."

*At least they didn't call us heartless bastards*, thought Crazy Man, but he was still doubtful about sitting on any of the sitting stones. There was something not quite right about them. Why were they so eager to be sat upon? Where did they come from? What was their ultimate goal? Why were there three of them? Was there another way to change the subject?

"What," said the dog, Sidestepper, who looked like he'd just hit investigative gold, "would be the purpose of sitting on you?"

"To rest your weary bones," said the sitting stone in the center, maybe a bit too hurriedly, thought the dog, Sidestepper, who pressed his question further.

"So," he said, "what's in it for you?"

The sitting stones were suddenly quiet, which was more stone-like than they'd been for the last few minutes. Something was brewing in their collective sitting stone mind and while they brewed a fly buzzed overhead, circling around the sitting stones as though checking them out.

Finally, the sitting stones stopped brewing and started talking.

"We get to be useful," said the sitting stone on the right.

"For millennia," said the sitting stone in the center, "we've been nothing more than ornaments of the earth."

"It's not enough," said the sitting stone on the left. "We want to do something useful, something that will allow us at the end of the day to feel like something more than just pretty to look at."

Both Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, glowed with admiration for sitting stones that wanted to better themselves and be useful where so much of the world hid the potential of its denizens under the veneer of

ornamentation. They decided that they would be proud to sit on these magnificent sitting stones but which ones should they sit on? There were three of them and only two sitters. Which one would be emotionally crushed by being left out? The sitting stones waited to see who would be popular and who would not.

Just then, the fly that had been circling them landed on the sitting stone to the left, leaving only two to be sat upon. Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were overjoyed. No decision was necessary. There were enough sitters for all three sitting stones. The world was fair. Life was kind and compassionate. Just as they began to walk toward the sitting stones, the one to the left flopped over and crushed the fly to death.

“Oops,” said the sitting stones to the center and right. The one on the left burped. Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stopped in their tracks, realizing that these were homicidal sitting stones.

“That was just a fly,” said the one in the center. “We try to keep the area clear of bugs when we have company.”

“We wouldn’t do that to you, ever,” said the sitting stone to the right.

The sitting stone to the left flopped back. Where the fly had been there was only a few scattered bits of wing and leg, nothing more.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, backed up. There would be no sitting today. They turned and started back down the path of adventure and new meanings, ignoring the pleas to come back and rest their weary selves in an environment now free of bugs.

“Do you think we’re weary?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Nope,” said Crazy Man. “Not as long as the story continues.”

Once again, he had no idea what he was talking about, but there was still a beautiful horizon ahead full of new stories and maybe even a mother and a map to food in this unpredictable *outside thing*.

To be continued...

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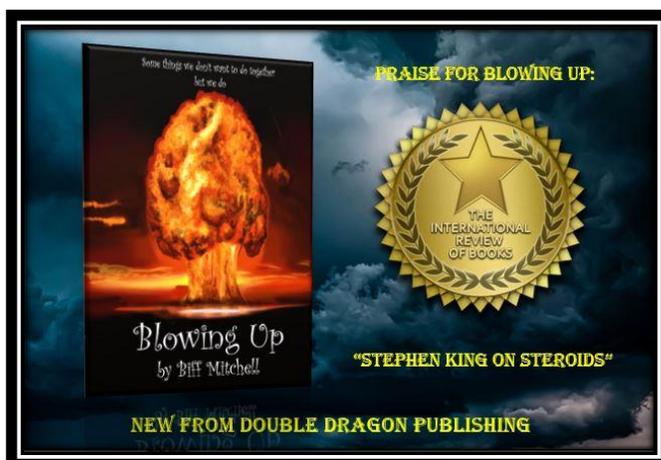
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