

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 138: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, admire the crow.

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A wise Muse once said, “Those who travel alone, travel fastest; those who travel in groups travel safest.” After a few moments of thought, she smiled and said, “But then, that’s just my opinion.”

The dog, Sidestepper, didn’t bother asking Crazy Man if he’d heard the voice. He never did. Instead, he said, “Do you believe in muses?”

Crazy Man thought about all the words in his vocabulary that began with the letter M. The best he could come up with was museum and mulberries, but he was missing the ‘um’ in one case and you eat mulberries, not believe in them.

“Nope,” he said.

From somewhere around them a voice said, “Muses are minor deities that inspire some people and drive others out of their minds.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked around but saw nothing that might have talked let alone know anything about muses.

“Up here,” said a large stately crow perched on a tree bough at the edge of the deep dark scary woods.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked up and were overjoyed to see a crow. They liked crows and had long been impressed by their intelligence and adaptability. Highways would be buried under roadkill if it weren’t for crows.

“Hello Mr. Crow,” they said in unison.

“We like you because you’re a crow and we like crows,” said Crazy Man.

“Then you should get your gender right,” said the crow. “I’m Ms. Crow.”

Crazy Man blushed. He suddenly felt politically incorrect and he wasn’t about to say that all crows looked pretty much alike except for size.

The dog, Sidestepper, picking up on his travel mate's consternation, quickly jumped in. "My friend hasn't had his eyes checked recently and he may have problems seeing things as they are."

Ms. Crow cawed in a mocking manner and said, "I think that's highly unlikely, but I can forgive him. We crows have more important things on our minds...like keeping highways clear of roadkill."

Admiration for crows and all the good they do overwhelmed Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, and they immediately spun into their approval dance, which involved much jumping into the air, rolling on the ground, spinning ears and bouncing eyes in their sockets. Some saliva was involved.

Ms. Crow was flattered and flapped her wings a few times to acknowledge her approval of their approval.

"That was the most interesting approval dance I've ever seen," said Ms. Crow as she thought: *And also the weirdest*. She shuffled her wings slightly and lifted her beak in a way that suggested imperial lineage. "I've been following the two of you for quite some time now." She gestured upward with her beak. "Up there hidden from sight behind the third cloud from the left."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked up at a sky flooded with clouds and had no idea which one was third from the left, so they just took Ms. Crow's word for it.

"Unfortunately," said Ms. Crow, "the cloud blocked my view most of the time so I have no idea what you've been up to." She eyed them both with a fondness not generally seen in crows. "But I'm sure you've had many wonderful adventures."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, beamed.

"Yes," said the dog, Sidestepper, "the path of adventure and new meanings has given us much to think about."

"In fact," said Crazy Man, "we've had so much to think about that we try not to think anymore." He glanced quickly at the dog, Sidestepper, and said, "And my travel buddy has been hearing voices."

Ms. Crow seemed interested and said to the dog, Sidestepper, "What do the voices say?"

"Well," he said, "today it was something about muses. Other days it's about other things that sometimes foretell our next adventure, almost like warnings or premonitions."

"You should listen to those voices," said Ms. Crow, "unless they say something that you shouldn't listen to."

Both journeyers mentally scratched their heads.

"How would we know which to listen to and which to not listen to?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"You won't," said Ms. Crow, "until you listen."

"But then we've already listened," said the dog, Sidestepper. "Whether we should have or not."

"Life's a paradox," said Ms. Crow, pointing her beak at Crazy Man. "And what's wrong with *him*?"

Crazy Man's head was spinning so fast it looked like he had just one eye.

"You made him think," said the dog, Sidestepper. "It does strange things to him."

"Lots of that going around," said Ms. Crow.

Crazy Man's head began to slow down so that it looked again like he had two eyes which, of course, he had. His head finally stopped spinning and, of all things, he burped. It was time to change the subject.

"You wouldn't happen to have...?" he tried to say before Ms. Crow interrupted and said, "No, no map to food, no knowledge of lost mothers and you're both bastards."

Possibly another change of subject was in order.

"When you're up there in the sky," said the dog, Sidestepper, "you must be able to see for miles and miles and miles."

"That's right," said Ms. Crow. "I can see everything before and behind and to the sides of you."

"And what do you see?" said Crazy Man.

"A path," said Ms. Crow. "And the deep dark scary forest."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were in awe. Here was someone who could see into the deep dark scary forest. This crow, this Ms. Crow, knew what lay on both sides of the path of adventure and new meanings and, just as they were about to ask what that was, Ms. Crow read their thoughts and said, "You don't want to know."

Sort of man and kind of dog had long since learned that there were things to know and things not to know and they weren't about to question the basic nature of knowingness, so they let the question wither away into not knowing and replaced it with a new question.

"Can you tell us what lies ahead on the path of adventure and new meanings?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

Ms. Crow cawed shrilly three times (a crow's way of saying ha ha ha without insulting anyone). She fluffed her wings. "Only the path can tell you that," she said. "The path and your journey into it will create what lies ahead."

Whereupon she flapped her wings furiously and soared into the sky to disappear into so many scattered clouds it was impossible to tell which one was third from the left.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, watched the clouds for several minutes or hours trying to figure out which one was third to left until the dog, Sidestepper, said, "Did any of that make sense to you?"

Crazy Man shrugged and said, "No mother, no map to food...couldn't have been anything to crow about."

The dog, Sidestepper, smiled while whatever inhabited the deep dark scary woods groaned.

To be continued...

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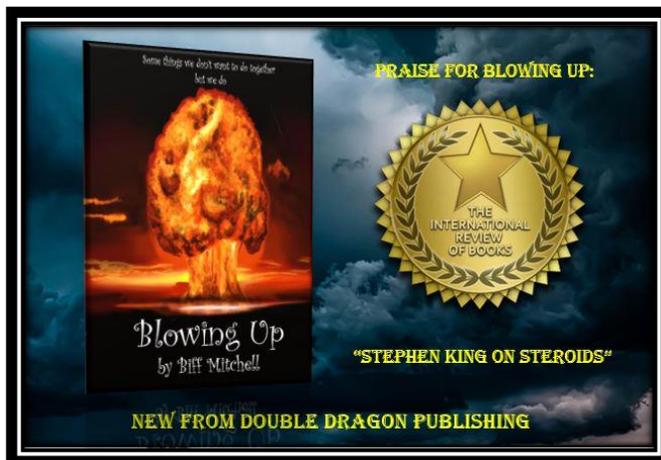
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