

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 143: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the deader squirrel.
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“Hey guys! Over here! Over here!” yelled a rotting patch of fur on the path of adventure and new meanings.
“Remember me?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were surprised to see the squirrel they’d met that claimed to have defeated death just before it was run over by an 18-wheeler and turned into road kill paper.

“I might have been a bit wrong about death being a state of mind,” said the squirrel. “I seem to be a bit deader than I expected.” With great effort, the squirrel turned its head in a circle to draw attention to its broken and twisted body that was more like a furry pile of snot than anything that jumped branch to branch and ran along power lines. “If those cars and trucks would just stop running over me.”

A sudden gush of extreme empathy overtook man and beast and tears sprayed out of their eyes as they jumped up and down, pounding their feelings into the ground as their heads spun on their shoulders and their eyes spun in their sockets. They jumped and they jumped and they jumped all day and into the night and into another day before they forgot what they were jumping for and calmed down enough to notice that the deader squirrel was looking at them as though they were crazy, which course, they probably were.

“All I ever wanted to do was spend my days lying down on a busy street taking in the sun and feeling the breeze of passing traffic,” said the deader squirrel. “I love the smell of gasoline fumes. I love the feeling of asphalt and concrete warming my broken butt.”

At that exact moment and not a moment sooner or a moment later, a runaway bicycle careened around a corner and headed straight for the deader squirrel and the deader squirrel screamed and Crazy Man and he dog, Sidestepper, screamed. And three ducks heading south for the winter screamed from the skies Everywhere there was screaming as the bicycle streaked across the pavement and first the front wheel and then the hind wheel bumped terribly hard over the deader squirrel's limp body. After which the runaway bicycle whizzed off into the horizon, possibly giggling.

"They keep making me deader!" yelled the deader squirrel. "How dead do I have to be before they stop running over me. Cars, truck, buses...all out to get me. Just yesterday, a plane made an emergency landing on a highway and guess who just happened to be lying deader on that strip of highway. That's right...good old deader me."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, suddenly realized that they were listening to another sob story and immediately fell asleep and they stood there, eyes open but brains shut down, as the deader squirrel went on for hours, days, possibly longer, about the outrageous condition of being made deader and never being made less deader. Where was the universal fairness in that? Where was justice for deader squirrels? Why wasn't this happening to a ground hog or a moose?

After an insufferable passage of time, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, sensed a silence hanging in the air. The deader squirrel's sob story was over. It was safe to wake up. They opened their eyes slowly, peeking first and then full on staring at the deader squirrel who's sob story was so boring that it put the deader squirrel to sleep as well.

Off in the distance, they heard a bicycle crash into a street light.

The deader squirrel woke up and said, "So that's what it's all about."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, nodded slow, knowing agreement. Whatever the deader squirrel said.

"And now I have a favor to ask," said the deader squirrel.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, greeted the deader squirrel's request for a favor with unbounded enthusiasm. They had always been in the business of doing favors for others. It was their basic philosophy and there were no lengths they wouldn't traverse in their need for do favors for others.

"Take me with you," said the deader squirrel.

However, in an infinite universe some things are finite and taking a deader squirrel with them on their journey along the path of adventure and new meanings was a little over the top, what with the deader smell, the constant reminder of mortality, the gooey mess of a target for every car, truck, bus and bike...where do you even put it?

The deader squirrel eyed Crazy Man's big silly pockets and said, "You can carry me in one of your big silly pockets. I won't be any problem and I'm low maintenance, being dead and all."

In spite of Crazy Man's unbounded enthusiasm for doing favors, the thought of carrying a smelly old deader squirrel in his big silly pockets wasn't exactly on his bucket list.

"They're fake pockets," he lied, knowing that big silly pockets always had room for one more. "I just keep them for show."

The deader squirrel sighed and slumped and looked at the dog, Sidestepper, and said, "I could ride on your back."

Even with sharing Crazy Man's unbounded enthusiasm for doing favors, he also shared Crazy Man's unbounded need to not carry a deader squirrel around.

There would be no favors today. There would be no spirit of cooperation and sacrifice of one's comfort for the comfort of another. The deader squirrel was plain out of luck.

At that exact moment, a runaway motor scooter roared out of a wall of mist that suddenly appeared and squashed the deader squirrel just a little more into deader-hood.

"Ouch!" said the deader squirrel. "Why does it always have to hurt so much?"

"It's just what happens when bones are crushed and skin is mashed," said Crazy Man.

"Gee thanks," said the deader squirrel. "I feel so much better about being run over, run down, mashed, squashed, squished and addled. I think I'll sing a happy song. Some day. But not now. *Please* get me out of this place."

Something in the deader squirrel's voice grabbed both journeyers who felt the desperation in the deader squirrel's voice and they melted into empathetic slush, a puddle of wishy-washy slime that would have seeped into the path of adventure and new meanings if it hadn't been so slimy...and in that moment of slime weakness, Crazy Man picked up the deader squirrel and placed it gently into one of his big silly pockets. Just one ear fell off the deader squirrel but it didn't seem to notice, being so happy to be on its way to somewhere other than a place to be run over and squashed all day.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other knowingly. Nothing good would come of this.

To be continued...

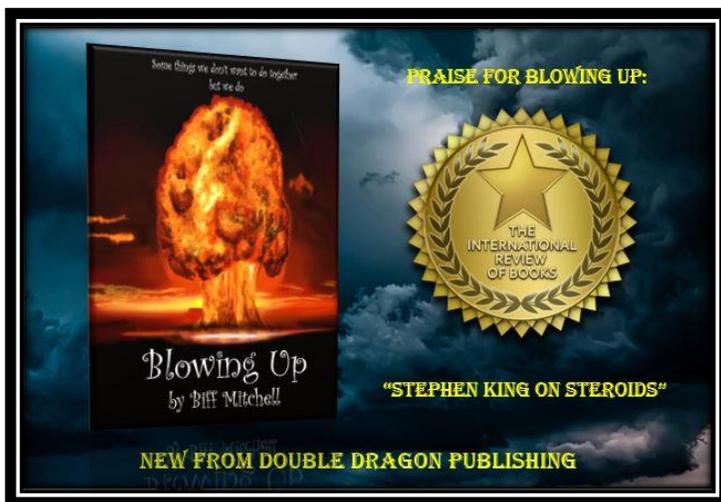
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