

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



Episode 146: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the singing mushrooms.  
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Once upon a time in the land of singing mushrooms, which just happened to be somewhere along the path of adventure and new meanings (but not actually on the path...more like a little bit into the deep dark scary woods, but not too far in) Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, encountered a mushroom quartet. They were overjoyed. They'd gone long without music and had grown weary of their attempts to sing joyful ditties. They needed mushroom music.

"Hello, singing mushrooms," said Crazy Man. "Will you sing a song for us?"

"What's he want?" said the mushroom at the bottom of the quartet.

"I think he wants us to sing," said the mushroom at the top of the quartet as it peeked over the second mushroom from the top.

"I'm not sure if I feel like singing today," said the mushroom at the bottom. "I think we pretty much sang our asses off yesterday."

"Why does he want to hear us sing?" said the third mushroom with a bit of a scratchy voice, likely from the aforementioned ass-off singing.

"Hey!" said the mushroom at the bottom, "why do you want us to sing?"

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, thought the mushroom at the bottom was joking and they started to giggle and then gaggle and then laugh so hard they fell to the ground grabbing their stomachs and almost choking to death on their own merriment.

The mushroom quartet wasn't impressed.

"So you think I'm funny?" said the mushroom at the bottom. "You think you can just fall over laughing when I ask a simple and honest question?" The mushroom at the bottom harrumphed and added, "BTW, the dog's mother is just an idea, maps to food are a conspiracy theory and you're both bastards."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were shaken to the core of their strange beings. What was this crazy tree-hugging mushroom talking about? All they ever wanted was a song. Just a little song.

Reading their minds, the second mushroom from the top said, "You ask too much. Bringing your tuneless lives into our domain and expecting us to fill all the gaps in your music-deprived lives."

The dog, Sidestepper, was just about fall on all four doggie knees and beg forgiveness for his insensitivity but it occurred to him that singing mushrooms are supposed to sing...not make excuses for not singing.

"Now just wait one dog gone minute," said the dog, Sidestepper, in his best country accent for no particular reason other than to show these arrant mushrooms that he wasn't the urban monster he was often mistaken for. "Singing mushrooms are supposed to sing."

Whoa.

The truth is a Japanese kiridashi knife slicing and dicing yesterday's opinions and so it was this day when the singing mushrooms were faced with the grim reality of having to sing just because they were in the place when you sing.

"All we ever wanted to do was cling to this tree and look pretty," said the second mushroom from the bottom. "I don't even know how to sing. None of us do."

"I wanted to be a *dancing* mushroom," said the mushroom at the top. "Whenever I sing, somewhere in the world, a rock musician dies. I went on a singing spree once and almost decimated the Top 40."

"Then why do you live in the land of singing mushrooms?" said Crazy Man.

The mushrooms sort of nudged around trying to look at each other but the symmetry was all wrong. There would be no passing the buck this day. All four mushrooms were to be held accountable.

"We were carried away from a beautiful cow pasture by a foul wind that brought our spoor here and here we are," said the mushroom at the top.

"They told us we couldn't stay there because there were no trees and then they accused us of being tree fungi," said the second mushroom from the top. "I was studying to be a Sumo mushroom."

"But they wouldn't let us," said the mushroom at the top. "They accused us of being unnatural and told us we had to go with the program and then along came that vile wind."

"And here we are," said the second mushroom from the bottom. "Tuneless and toneless in singing land."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were both asleep. Sob stories did that to them. The mushrooms noticed this and were highly offended. They'd just poured their fungal souls out to these two malcontents but they broke a bond that could have been.

"Hey!" they yelled in unison and almost knocked the two off their sleep-standing feet.

"What?" they yelled in unison.

"You've offended us," said the second mushroom from the bottom. "And now you must pay."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other and then back at the mushrooms. Who were these tree-dwelling protrusions to threaten the traveling duo who everyone thought had saved the world from the aliens, even though it was the other way around? And just what exactly could they possibly do to make them pay?

"And just how do think you'll make us pay?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"We'll do the one thing we can't do here," said the mushroom at the top.

"And what's that?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"We'll sing," said the mushroom at the top. And with that, the mushroom at the bottom said, "Me Me Me Me." And the mushroom at the top said, "So So So." And their undersides suddenly dropped down giving them a mouth-like appearance. The air along the path of adventure and new meanings was suddenly quiet and motionless. Birds in the sky stopped flying and just floated. Ants gathering food around bushes and tree trunks lay down their mandibles and were still.

The first sound was the warning. The second mushroom from the bottom opened its mouth and emitted a sharp noise that was like talons ripping apart ear drums. The mushroom at the top screamed, "It's raining

time again in the forest..” Each word was so off beat that it traveled immediately to the soul and soured everything around it, including all the chi energy stored there. Then, the other two mushrooms kicked in with unholy noises the threatened to peel the flesh off man and dog’s ears.

It was a bong bong dewy dewy bong kind of sound, only not so friendly, more like a mean and unsmiling bong bong dewy dewy bong kind of sound that might have been called singing in some torture chamber in hell where pain was the main course on a menu for the damned.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, held hands and paws over their ears and screamed for the mushrooms to stop singing.

“Stop! Stop!” they said.

“Stop!” said the deader squirrel from one of Crazy Man’s big stilly pockets.

Suddenly the air was thick with discordant noise. Blades of grass grew back in terror. The birds floating in the sky dropped...dead before they plunged into the ground. The air was solid with sound. It poked its miscarried capellas and insulting allegros into Crazy Man’s and the dog, Sidestepper’s, ears and souls. In fact, it was so dense, it held man and dog in place, unable to move for hours and days and more hours until finally the mushrooms tore into an insane crescendo that bleached the ground around the tree.

It was days more or less before Crazy Man’s ears stopped spinning.

“So what do you think of us now?” said the mushroom at the top.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, smiled nervously. Tears glistened in their eyes. Their cheeks and brows twitched. Their bodies shook and shimmied and they were both sure they didn’t want anything else from any mushroom, anywhere. Without saying a word, they backed away from the mushrooms, slowing, so as not to bring on another fit of singing.

“Where ya going?” said second mushroom from the top. “We’ve only just warmed up.”

“You should hear us when we sing oldies,” said the mushroom at the bottom. “Everything around us wilts and dies of old age.”

“We have a New Age version of Inna Godda Da Vida,” said the mushroom at the top. “In face, we’re going to sign that right now.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, felt the air begin to tighten around them as the mushrooms Do Ray Me’d into their next song. They covered their ears and backed up as fast as they could...no small feat for the dog, Sidestepper, walking backwards on two hind legs that were more like stilts than anything you would attach to a dog, and, since he was a sidestepping, dog, he did this sideways.

“Hey,” said the second mushroom from the bottom. “We do Baroque like nobody should ever do Baroque. Wanna hear something really scary?”

Crazy Man and he dog, Sidestepper, started running. They ran fast and furious and as far away from the mushrooms as possible. It could have been miles or leagues but it was as far as they could run before passing out and, when they finally felt they were a safe distance from the mushrooms, they stopped, listened to the ground and sniffed the air. Nothing threatened their ears or noses. They were safe. The mushrooms were gone. The singing was gone.

When they were sure the music was over, they continued down the path of adventure and new meanings and, strangely, it sounded like...it’s raining time again in the forest.

To be continued...

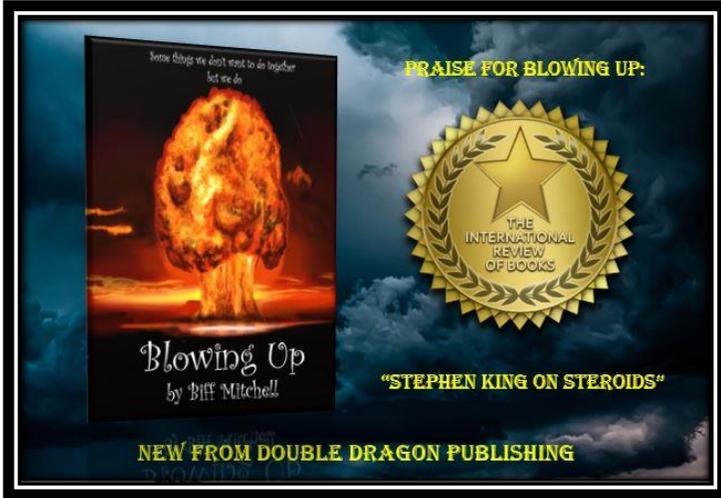
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