

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 146: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, and the signs of the times.
(New here? [Click here to see what it's all about.](#))

NOTE: The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper will be on hold after Episodes 150 (coming up in a few weeks) until the fall in order to give the production crew (me) to take new photos and plan new adventures.

One day, the path of adventure and new meanings made a strange turn and took Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, to a place of noise and confusion. Machine sounds rumbled through the streets and sidewalks. Signs and posters invited all to a day of running in circles looking for a way forward...or out. The air smelled like someone's cheap perfume or aftershave and the two journeyers felt like they were pushing themselves through a jungle of question marks.

"How did we get here?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"I think we took a wrong turn somewhere," said Crazy man. "But I think I see signs ahead."

"Don't turn left! Don't turn left!" screamed a sign with an arrow pointing left. A thick red null and void line cut through the arrow as though turning left was a crime against reason.

"Hey!" yelled a street sign with a city logo sitting over the street name. "You're not supposed to yell at them, dummy...you're just supposed to sit there quietly and let them read you."

"Nobody reads us anymore," said the no left turn sign. "They just ignore us and do whatever they want."

"It's called progress," yelled a sign with a street name printed boldly across its surface. "Live with it. Nobody wants to be told what to do anymore. And nobody wants to make up their own minds anymore."

“We’re not telling people to do anything,” said the sign with the logo. “We’re just giving them information to help folks go where they want to go without being run over by an electric scooter or walking off the edge of the world.”

“A lot of people are doing that these days,” said the street sign with the city logo. “Just walking over the edge, complaining about the food and the lack of parking. Looking back while walking forward.”

“It’s a sure step into doom,” said the no left turn sign that was hell bent on stopping everyone from turning left. “But then...aren’t we all a little bit doomed anyway?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, couldn’t disagree more. Or less.

“We’re only as doomed as we are doomed,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “and no more.”

“That’s a crock!” said a stop sign. “I know lots of people who are more doomed than they’re doomed.”

“Yeah,” said the left turn sign. “I saw a woman drive around that corner over by the big flashing blue light and one of her front wheels fell off her car and her car stopped right in the middle of the intersection. She got out and looked really happy because she thought she was doomed but she lived and, just as she was looking up to thank the heavens for not being more doomed than she was, she was fatally run over by a rogue delivery truck with a masked driver. Talk about more doomed than she was doomed.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, glanced at each other and nodded...there would be no reasoning with these signs today...or any other day. These signs were an insult to initial plausibility. These were signs of the times with little connection to wherever the real world was. Thoughts of trying to reach into their reasoning would surely lead to madness. There was nothing left to do but jump up and down in such a way as to indicate rage against the...

At this precise moment, just when they were already in the air on their first jump, Crazy Man wondered what he was raging against. Was it because he didn’t want to be more doomed than he was doomed? Was it because he wasn’t sure if he could trust the no left turn sign and maybe they *were supposed* to turn left? Something had to be done.

He stopped jumping up and down. The dog, Sidestepper, seeing him stop, also stopped jumping. He looked confused and Crazy Man assumed, like himself, that he’d forgotten why they were jumping up and down as well. He tried to think of all the times they’d jumped up and down and why was it they did that? Why did they jump, smiling and laughing, up and down, chuckling and bubbling with joy?

But then...isn’t this the way to express rage whether you know what you’re raging about or not?

A little jump here; a little jump there; here a jump; there a jump; everybody jump jump.

These and many other thoughts rushed through Crazy Man’s brain like a storm drain spewing confusion and drowned spiders. He stared at the signs. His eyes crossed and uncrossed as he viewed them from various perspectives. He tried covering one eye and gazing with the other, and then switching eyes and tilting his head. He turned his head sideways to the right and then sideways to the left. He picked his nose very gingerly so as not to notice the roundness and redness of his nose. He scratched the top of his head as he squinted his eyes at the signs

“You’re just a bunch of nowhere signs,” said Crazy Man, and he winked solidly and enthusiastically as he spoke.

Traffic signs are not meant to be winked at. There is no under-the-counter agreement between a sign and he or she who would drive through a stop sign and expect nothing bad to happen. Bad things always happen around ignored signs and these signs were going to make Crazy Man pay dearly for winking at them. They would make him pay with bad things. Very bad things.

The no left turn sign centered its awareness on Crazy Man. It nearly glowed with animosity. It definitely shook with a dire need for vengeance. Who was this being with silly pockets to wink at the illustrated version of safe driving?

“You!” said the no left turn sign, its voice directed so hard at Crazy Man that he felt it tap his shoulder. “You are NOT to turn left. With all the powers of persuasion granted to me by my creators and that I don’t really possess, I order you NOT to turn left.”

Crazy Man had a feeling that this no left turn sign was up to no good. The deader squirrel popped its head out of one of his silly pockets. Its eyes were x’s. Its cheeks were beginning to thin out and crack. It said, “Don’t trust the road sign. Nobody trusts the road signs.” And it popped back down into the silly pocket.

“I’m nobody’s directional bitch,” said Crazy Man. “I will walk where I want to walk and stop where I want to stop. I will run, I will saunter, I will cross the crosswalk of my journey and...”

He stopped talking as soon as he realized that he’d forgotten what he was talking about and he looked at the dog, Sidestepper, for moral support but to his horror his travel mate was bent forward on his front legs so that his head was on the ground and his butt was sticking up in the air where it was dangerously close to being pollinated by bees and birds. He covered his tiny doggie ears with his front paws and growled under his breath.

“What’s wrong?” said Crazy Man.

But the dog, Sidestepper, ignored him, ears covered by paws and all. So Crazy Man nudged him with the tip of his left foot and said, “Hey!”

The dog, Sidestepper, turned his head to face Crazy Man. His eyes were a miasma of irises moving so fast to focus on something that it looked like he had dozens of them in each eye. For the first time since Crazy Man had known him...the dog, Sidestepper, barked. It was a long lonely howl of a bark, not sharp like your average street bark, but smoothed at the edges and bloated in the center. That kind of bark.

It was at that moment that Crazy Man realized that they needed to get out of this place of dysfunctional signage and...

At that exact moment, the signs began to spin. They spun in different directions and they spun at different speeds and there was no way to know which way was which until the signs defined the way whether it was the way or not. Their poles vibrated and hummed. Everywhere along the street the signs danced and switched directions.

Fortunately, traffic was non-existent, there being no room for traffic when there’s no direction...and there would be no direction coming from these over-animated direction-confused signs until they defined where they wanted everyone to go. Sparks and smoke spewed from the signs as they jockeyed for positions on the poles in spite of having to re-define...

And wouldn’t you know it. Just before the signs were about to agree on everybody’s traffic orientation the cars came. And the buses and the trucks and the motorized scooters. The sound of rending steel and screams exploded all around them. Apparently, the signs decided on directions that didn’t quite match the lay of the land and now the land was covered drivers burning in their vehicles or crushed by the wrong direction.

And then of course, it all went away just like all bad things just go away and we’re all back on the path of adventure and new meanings...just like Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper.

“Do you think we’re going in the right direction?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Forward is always the right direction,” said Crazy Man. “Anything else is a distraction.”

The dog, Sidestepper, was impressed with Crazy Man’s insight, even though he knew that his travel buddy didn’t have a clue what he was talking about...but they were back on the path of adventure and new meanings in search of a dog’s mother, a man’s map to food and this great *outside thing*.

What could be better?

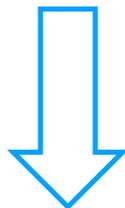
To be continued...

© Biff Mitchell

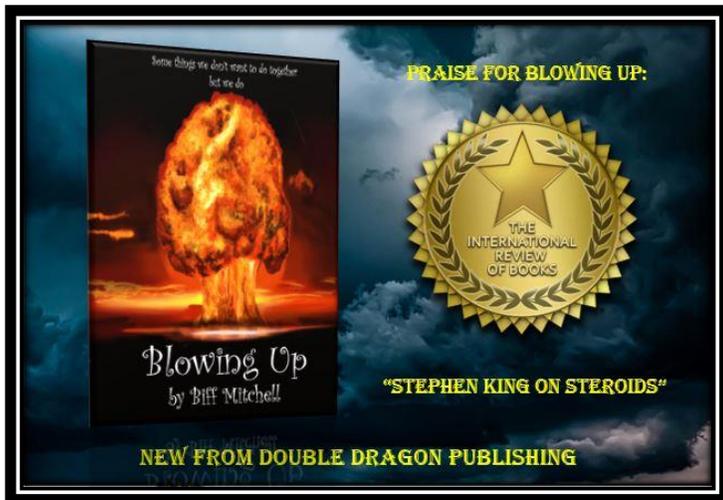
Up for more laughs? www.biffmitchell.com

Check out the blog at: www.crazymanadventures.com

New from Double Dragon Publishing!



Blowing Up



“His stories are simultaneously shocking and funny, literate and profane, a riot of cynical creativity brightened by occasional flashes of compassionate insight...the book is utterly original.”

Lisabet Sarai, Goodreads Reviewer

[Click here for your very own copy.](#)