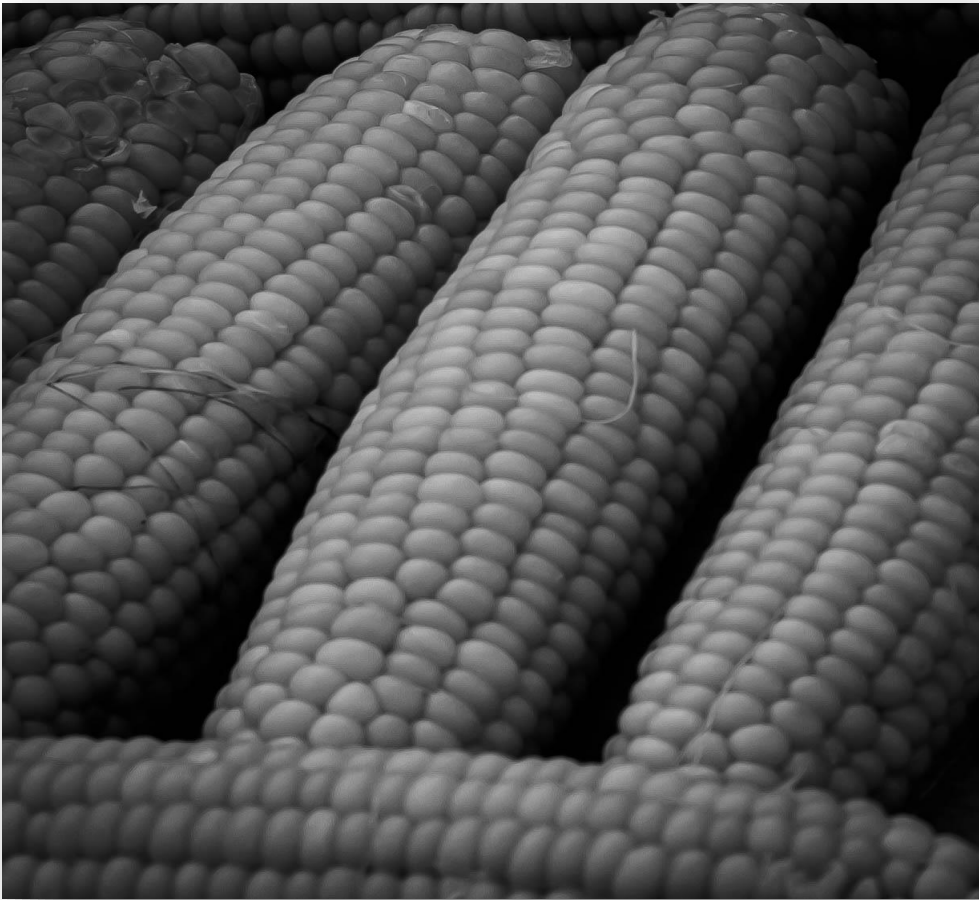


## The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 152: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, have a corny experience.  
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Fall is the season of dying and color with needles and leaves crumpling into brilliant shades of dying as their trees choke them to death in preparation for the snow. But it's also the season of harvest: fresh wheat for bread, juicy apples for pies and delicious corn on the cob. With lots of butter and salt.

"Hey! You two!" yelled several cobs of corn in a bin randomly placed beside the path of adventure and new meanings.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stopped abruptly. *Oh my god*, they thought, *talking corn*. *Who would have thought*.

The dog, Sidestepper, seized the moment like ice cream dripping off a cone on a hot summer day.

"Are you my mother?" he said.

"No," said the corn on the middle cob. "And you and your strange travel mate are bastards."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, had been called bastards by better than corn on the cob so they let the insult bounce off their path-harden hides and looked the corn straight in their thousands of eyes without even the trace of a flinch.

"So," said the corn on the right cob, "you refuse to cry in the face of our insults and attitude. Good for you."

"Yes," said the corn on a straggler cob. "We salute you. We usually reduce travelers to blobs of teary-eyed goo but you two appear to be better than that."

Crazy Man rubbed his eyes and drooled. Corn on the cob. Something to eat. He suddenly no longer needed a map to food because here...right before him...was food.

"Can I eat you?" he said.

A ripple of disgust washed over the surface of those kernels of corn.

"No!" said the corn on the center cob. "We're not that kind of corn."

"Yeah," said the corn on the cob to the left. "We're that other kind of corn."

Crazy Man was confused. He'd always thought that corn was corn, on or off the cob.

"We're decorative corn," said the corn on a cob buried under the other cobs. "You just look at us and start feeling all kind of seasonal."

"That's right," said the corn on the cob to the left. "We're symbols of the season of dying and plenty."

Crazy Man wasn't sure if the corn was joking or serious but he didn't want to raise a fuss with talking corn on the cob so he said, "Do you have a map to food?"

"No!" said all the corn kernels on all the cobs in unison. "And you're still a bastard."

They waited for Crazy Man to cry but he was saving his tears for another day.

"If I had butter and salt," he said, "I would eat all of you and spit you out because you're mean corn on the cob."

"And I would join him," said the dog, Sidestepper. "And I don't even like corn."

A palpable sense of displeasure settled over the bin. Nobody had talked to corn on the cob like this before and each kernel searched its memory for a precedent but found none.

"Food is too precious for decoration," said Crazy Man. "It's a map to food that leads nowhere."

These words confused the corn on the cobs and very likely Crazy Man as well.

"And it's unnatural," said the dog, Sidestepper, who knew a thing or two about unnaturalness. "Someone, somewhere, without food could starve to death while you sit here looking pretty."

"Not our problem," said the corn on the cob in front. "We can't see them so they don't exist."

"And we can live with that," said the corn on the cob behind the corn on the cob in front. "What we don't know kills everybody but us."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, thought about this for a few minutes or days, possibly a month, until they ran out of thought and forgot what they were thinking about. However, in a flash of suddenly lucid thought Crazy Man never dreamed he would possess, he hollered: "Until it comes back to you!"

He immediately fell silent when he realized that he'd just blurted aloud and immediately forgot what he'd blurted as did the dog, Sidestepper, and every kernel of corn on the path of adventure and new meanings. So he immediately changed the subject: "Why do you need to look pretty when you'd be doing something useful like boiling in water before being slathered with butter and salt and feeding the unfed masses?"

"Or being dried out and ground up into powder and being made into corn bread," said the dog, Sidestepper. "Haven't you always wanted to be corn bread?"

"How would you like to be ground up and cooked into corn bread and be eaten by people you don't know, especially not knowing where their mouths have been?" said the corn on the cob to the right. "Have you ever been boiled in water?"

The dog, Sidestepper, thought about this for a polite amount of time and said, "No, but I sort of died once"

Crazy Man nudged the dog, Sidestepper, and said to the corn, "He did. He was dead sort of. And now he's here."

"Were you boiled or baked?" said the very same corn on the cob.

"No," said the dog, Sidestepper. "But I was sort of killed by a discarded needle with something so terrible in it that I went kind of nuts before I sort of died."

But the corn on the cob was having nothing of the dog, Sidestepper's, sort of death by needle of unknown origins.

"Enough of this!" said the corn on the cob under all the other cobs. "Some will be eaten and some will look pretty. It's the way of things in a world where everything is relative to the moment and that's where we are: in the moment...and looking pretty damn pretty in the moment."

"Yeah," said the corn on the cob to the right of the cob under the other cobs. "Nothing looks prettier than us in this moment and those who would boil and eat us can starve in their own moment."

“And just what’s that supposed to mean?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Who knows?” said that same corn on that same cob. “All that matters is that we look pretty and you’re free to hang around and admire our prettiness for as long as you want.”

At that exact moment the clouds above them shredded into smaller clumps of cloud that scampered off somewhere in the blue sky and disappeared leaving the corn on the cob by the side of the path completely exposed to the sun’s rays. Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, could almost feel the corn on the cobs shrinking away from the sunlight as though it were a blanket of fear smothering their tiny corn kernel screams as they baked in the light.

They watched as the kernels bloated insanely and began to split and burst into puffy white gobs of popped corn. Crazy Man’s mouth watered. This was food. This was popcorn and popcorn was one of his favorite foods...right up there with a rare rib eye steak served with a baked potato and sour cream, broccoli with cheese sauce and a glass of red wine. Just as he was about to bend over and scoop up the steaming popped corn a flock of hungry crows converged on the popped corn like an angry black cloud and ate it all in about 9.5 seconds; after which, the crows flew away burping corn and cawing something that sounded like “bastards”.

Crazy Man drooled as he stared at the cloud of crows. The dog, Sidestepper, looked at Crazy Man and said, “It’s OK. We didn’t have butter and salt anyway.”

For some reason he couldn’t explain, Crazy Man felt somehow consoled by these somewhat pointless words that did nothing to calm his growling innards, but his mind and heart were light as they wandered further down the path of adventure and new meanings in search of a mother, a map to food and this outside thing.

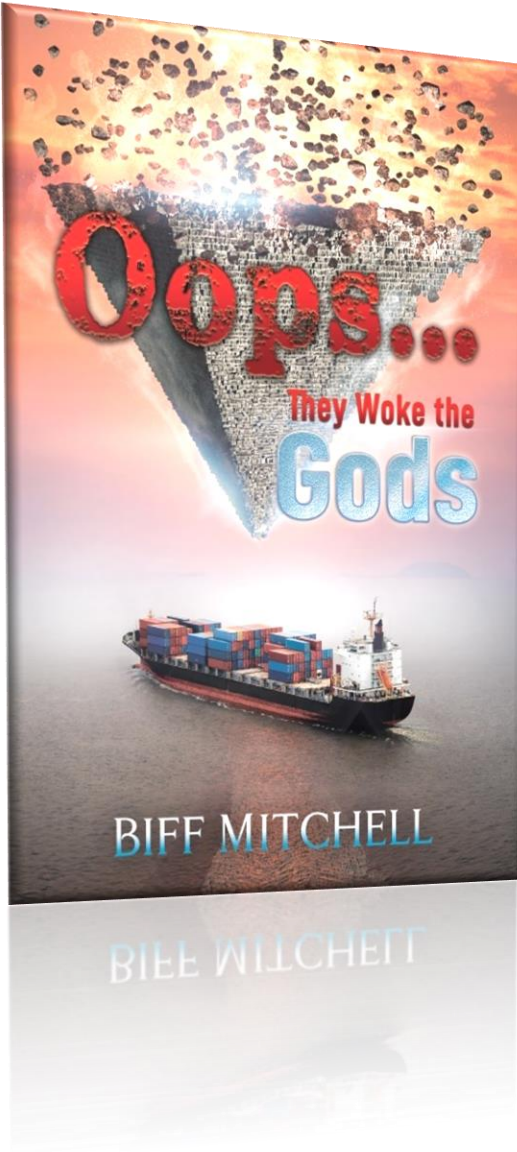
To be continued...

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# Oops



## **They Woke the Gods**

Cursed to sleep for 2000 years, the Gods of Rome awoken to a world destroyed by the mortals and a war among themselves that threatens to destroy all that's left.

Charon the Ferryman has upset the balance of nature by sending legions of the dead back to the firmament because no one is given coins for the ferry crossing to the underworld.

Meanwhile three crazed demigods wreak havoc on what's left of the human race and gods of the skies and the underworld must join forces in seedy bars and drink vast quantities of Scotch to plan their moves.

**COMING THIS DECEMBER**