

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 162: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, are invited to take a different path

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(NOTE: Just one month from now, this series will have run for 4 years. At one point, several hundred people were reading it. At this point...just a handful. Not enough to go through the weekly process of taking the pictures and writing the stories I'm afraid. I do enjoy writing them, but I have too many other things on the go that pay the bills so I'm afraid The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, will be put on hold indefinitely. I may be taking down the blog version after a while but I will keep the series posted on my website at the link just above this note.)

There are those who fear that AI will evolve into a cyber tyrant...cruel and devoid of basic emotions...a machine intelligence that will run amok and either enslave us or destroy us...not because it will be a new form of sentience but because it may be too much like us.

But Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, neither knew nor cared about any dumb old cyber dictator AI. They were happy to just spend their days on the path of adventure and new meanings looking for a lost mother, a map to food and maybe some understanding of this *outside thing*. Today, things were going well: nothing had tried to kill, imprison, misinform, distract or eat them.

The sun blazed high in a solid blue sky and birds chirped through the leaves in trees that swayed slowly in a gentle breeze.

“Hey you two!” yelled a path that veered off from their path and into the deep dark scary woods. “C’mon over here.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were immediately suspicious. This path had not said ‘please’ and its invite sounded disturbingly like an order. Plus, it was kind of dark and scary...sort of like the deep dark scary woods it seemed to be more a part of that than a safe passage through it.

But what the hell.

“Do you lead to my mother?” asked the dog, Sidestepper.

“Do you lead to a map to food?” said Crazy Man.

“No and no,” said the dark path. “And you’re both bastards but that’s OK...you can, you know, step off the path of adventure and new meanings and step onto me.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, did the math on this, again with the illegal use of an abacus, and decided to tell the path to kiss its subsoil. No way was this dark path going to trick them off the blue skies of the path of adventure and new meanings.

“We love blue skies and sun,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“We don’t love dark paths leading into the deep dark scary woods,” said Crazy Man.

The dark path laughed ominously, more like a low blood chilling growl, and said, “Everything is a dark path leading through the deep dark scary woods. Underneath all light there will be dark.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, let this thought scamper in their heads for a bit or a lot until Crazy Man said, “Can you prove that?”

The dark path said, “Of course I can. I just said it, didn’t I?”

“Just because you said it doesn’t make it true,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “You could be wrong or just misinforming us on the critical issue of dark under all light.”

“No,” said the dark path. “I’m right and there’s proof of my rightness everywhere.”

“Where?” said Crazy Man, spinning his head on his shoulders to take in everywhere. “All I see is *no* proof of your rightness anywhere.”

“Well, of course you can’t see it,” said the dark path. “It’s because you’re *not* seeing it.”

Crazy Man thought about this for a moment or less and decided that he really did need a portable flame thrower.

“I’m not seeing it either,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “And I don’t think *you* can see it.”

“Of course I can,” said the dark path. “It’s all over the place when you let yourself see it.”

“But how do you let yourself see it?” said Crazy Man.

“You just take my word for it,” said the dark path. “If you don’t question me, then you won’t question what you see.”

A bumblebee flew past Crazy Man’s ear and into the air above the dark path where it immediately began flying in circles and then in spirals and then in squares followed by polygons and hieroglyphics after which it burst into a cloud of spontaneous confusion and drifted into the deep dark scary woods.

A few seconds later a short bumblebee shriek squeezed through a gap in the deep dark scary woods.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, suddenly had questions for the dark path which could see those questions coming from at least a few feet away so it said, “Don’t worry...I know all about bees and that bee is in a better place now.”

“I don’t think that bee’s anyplace now,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Yeah,” said Crazy Man, “Maybe you’re making this all up.”

“Does it matter?” said the dark path. “Everything’s made up at some level by someone or something.”

In a flash of *suddenly*, the dog, Sidestepper, had a crucial thought and expressed it: “What were we talking about? And why are we talking to you?”

“You were telling me how happy you would be to venture off that old path you’re on and try something new,” said the dark path. And somehow...somewhere in its mass of path-ness it winked. Maliciously.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, backed slowly and cautiously away from the dark path.

“I know what you are now,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “You’re no side trip path into something on the side.” He pointed his nose and doggy ears toward the path and said, “You’re the path of misadventure and false meanings.”

Hearing these words, Crazy Man searched furiously through his Jimmy Hendrix lookalike costume for a suitable riff but finding none said, “And you’re a bastard.”

The dog, Sidestepper, smiled a disturbing canine smile that Crazy Man desperately avoided seeing and spoke with sincere menace: “Bastard. Bastard. Bastard.”

The dark path (aka the path of misadventure and false meanings) shifted to the left and shifted to the right. It bloated and discombobulated and shrieked hell and outrage and it shook its fake gravel and dirt and spun around its mistruth and went off somewhere in a self-pitying huff to chew on the minds of the unwary and naïve.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, continued to smile as they stared at the gap in the air where the dark path had been...both of them wrapped in the warm comfortable layers of moral correctness.

“Did someone just call us morally correct?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man considered this for an unreasonable number of minutes and seconds and said, “Nope. I think you’re hearing things again.”

The dog, Sidestepper, who’d never been all that confident in his mental health to begin with, said, “Sometimes I get the feeling that the whole world is watching us or maybe we’re watching the whole world and it really makes it hard for me to pee.”

“I think that’s a dog thing,” said Crazy Man.

The dog, Sidestepper, considered this minutely and said, “I wonder if my mother is as crazy as I am.”

Crazy Man smiled and said, “She would have to be one crazy mother.”

At first they chuckled quietly and then burst out laughing as they journeyed forward into another quizzical day on the path of adventure and new meanings.

To be continued...

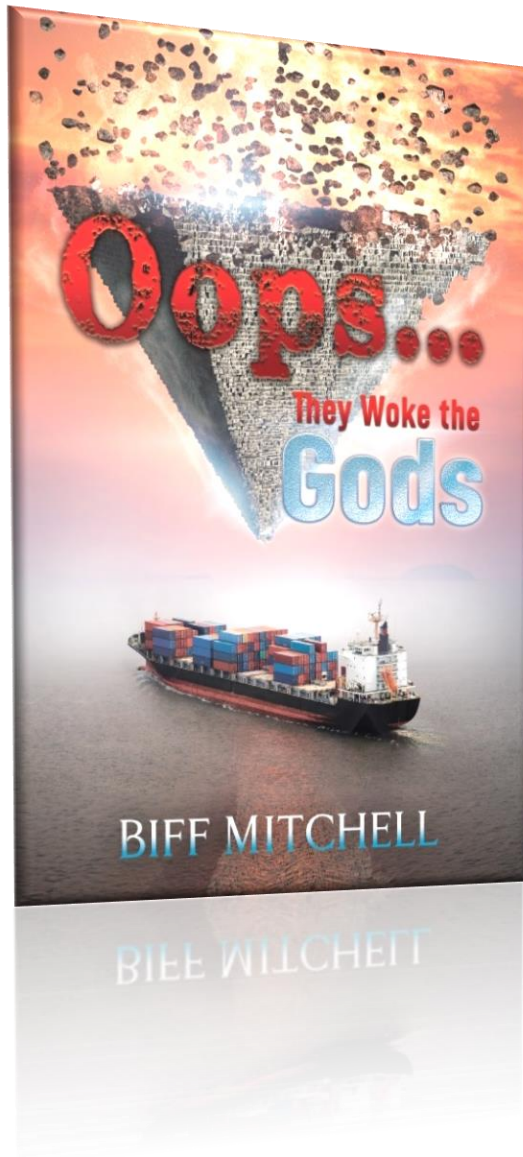
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Oops...



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 they didn't have coins for the ferry crossing to the underworld. Now, he must hunt those legions down, give them a coin for the ferry and kill them.

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 SOON!