

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 5: Crazy Man Meets the Dog, Sidestepper, Encounter a Cold and Heartless Reminder

“So,” said Crazy Man, “you say your mother couldn’t read or write?”

“That’s right,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “She was a singer.”

Crazy Man thought about this for a moment and decided it would be best to change the topic. “So,” he said, “why does having disproportionately long legs make you walk sideways instead of forward?”

“Because,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “I used to be a singer”

Crazy Man decided it would be best to just keep his mouth shut and try to remember whether or not he had a kitchen, a garage and a car.

They walked for what seemed like reading the unabridged version of *War and Peace* three times, including the annotations. It was still sort of Winter but not full blown Winter with snow-trapped trees and corn-loving non-vegan deer. “Did those deer seem kind of confused to you?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Everything seems confused to me,” said Crazy Man. “This whole outside thing...it’s all confused.” He sounded bleak and disappointed.

“Confused?” said the dog, Sidestepper. “You mean *confusing*, don’t you?”

“Maybe in that other dimension, but not here.”

The dog, Sidestepper, looked around for the dimension Crazy Man referred to but didn't see anything that qualified as beyond anything he could see. Crazy Man had not yet told him that his body existed in one dimension and his mind in another and he could only be seen in one of them and it was never certain which one that was depending on which dimension the observer occupied and he was not yet one hundred percent certain that the dog, Sidestepper, wasn't a figment of his imagination in the dimension where his mind resided. Or was it the other way around?

They walked another very confusing *Finnegan's Wake* without annotations before they came across something that caught Crazy Man's eye. He grabbed one of the dog, Sidestepper's, long pole-like legs and pointed to the side of the path of adventure and new meanings. "Look," he said.

The dog, Sidestepper, barely keeping his balance due to Crazy Man's precarious hold on his long pole-like leg looked in the direction he pointed. What he saw sent a chill to the core of his being. "What's that!" he said.

"I don't know," said Crazy Man. "I'm new to this outside thing. Let's just quietly walk past it and pretend it never happened."

So Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, quietly began to slink past a horrible thing on the side of the path of adventure and new meanings. They were almost there when a deep lifeless voice boomed out of the darkness of snow and branches and frozen twigs.

"I am that which you fear!"

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other with much confusion suffusing their eyes. Again, a voice out of nowhere. When would this ever stop?

"I think it's coming from that thing by the side of the road," said Crazy Man.

"I am that which you fear!" said the voice again.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stopped in mid step and turned their eyes courageously at the apparition on the side of the path of adventure and new meanings.

It was a dead bird. Possibly a pigeon. Definitely not a phoenix or an albatross...too small. But not a canary...too large. Whatever it was, it was dead. But it had something to say.

"I am that which you fear."

"And what do we fear?" said Crazy Man.

"What I am," said the dead bird.

"And what are you?" said Crazy Man.

"I am that which you fear," said the dead bird.

"And why do we fear you?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Because I am what you fear," said the the pile of feathers and bones scattered in the twigs and detritus of a Winter winding down. "And I have a story to tell."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, exchanged knowing glances, both them thinking: *Seems like everything has a story to tell out here...in this outside thing.*

The dead bird began its story. "I flew through the air with the greatest of ease, swirling and twirling and gliding through clouds and the sunlit air. I..." The dead pigeon stopped its story dead when it heard a strange sound emanating from the two travellers. They were snoring. They'd fallen asleep, standing up, and they were snoring loud enough to drown out this story.

The dead bird sensed a sincere lack of dread from them. "YOU BASTARDS!" screamed the mouldering pile of once-flesh and currently useless beak and feather.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, opened their eyes, startled from sleep, and gazed at the small decomposing heap.

"I reached out to you from the depths of my lifeless being. I trusted you with my innermost feelings. I was about to spare you the dreadful truth...if you had just listened to my story."

Tears began boiling over Crazy Man's eye lids. "We're sorry, so sorry, please let us apologize. We're tired. We're hungry. We're confused and lost on the path of adventure and new meanings." He pointed at the dog, Sidestepper, and said, "And my traveling friend has lost his mother."

The dog, Sidestepper, said, "Are you my mother?"

"No!" said the dead bird. "I'm nobody's mother. And now I'm going to tell you the dreadful truth...I'm going to tell you that which you fear...for I am that which you fear."

Crazy Man's eyes bulged and his face contorted in sheer horror. He screamed soundlessly over and over and his head spun and wax flew out of his ears. The dog, Sidestepper, shook violently from wet doggy nose to the tips of his doggy tail and down to the paws of his unnatural legs.

"No!" they cried. "Not that which we fear! Not the dreadful truth!"

The rotting pile of once-life began to laugh like apples falling from a shaking crab apple tree. "YES! The truth...the dreadful truth!" And the dead bird suddenly fell silent. Crazy Man stopped spinning and stared expectantly at the bird rot. The dog, Sidestepper, stopped shaking and stared. Everything along the path of adventure and new meanings fell into an unnatural hush. All movement ceased. Even the wind ceased rustling the leaves in the trees. Shapeless white blobs that might have been clouds in the blue sky stopped blowing in the wind. It was like the entire world waited, breath abated, for the dreadful truth. The entire world leaned toward the dead bird...countless ears waited for that which they feared.

The patch of rotting non-life rustled and squirmed and said, "We're all gonna die."

Silence suffused the path, the woods around the path, the clear blue sky hovering over the path and the entire world on both sides of the path, behind the path and ahead of the path. Even the tectonic plates under the path. And the moon. And the stars.

And the entire universe laughed for three minutes and twenty-two seconds...until Crazy Man said, "We already knew that."

"Yep," said the dog, Sidestepper, "old news."

With that, the grisly remains of the bird, dissolved into the air with a tiny pooping sound.

"That was almost intense," said the dog, Sidestepper. He looked at Crazy Man and said, "I'm glad he wasn't my mother. It would have raised serious metaphysical questions about my breeding."

Crazy Man nodded agreement and said, "Life is a butterfly."

"What does that mean?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"I have no idea," said Crazy Man. "I think it came from that other dimension. Maybe it makes sense there." He turned his head to endless vistas of possibilities on the path ahead them...the adventures, the new meanings, this outside thing. He pointed into all that unresolved muck and said, "Maybe we'll find your mother somewhere in all that..." He was suddenly at a loss for words. The dog, Sidestepper, understood and held his silence.

The two travellers continued along the path of adventure and new meanings as the sun spun relentlessly into the horizon of its choice leaving darkness and things of the dark behind.

To be continued...

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