

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 148: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the floating driftwood.
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NOTE: The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper will be on hold after Episode 150 (coming up soon) in order to give the production crew (me) a chance to take new photos and plan new adventures.

“Wow!” said Crazy Man as he stared at an interesting piece of driftwood floating in the air directly in front of him. “You sure are an interesting piece of driftwood.”

“I think it has something to do with the randomness of my being,” said the driftwood. “When was the last time driftwood dropped out of nowhere to float directly in front of your eyes?”

Crazy Man smiled.

The dog, Sidestepper, frowned. He was miffed. Where was the piece of driftwood that was supposed to float in front of *him*? Why was Crazy Man getting all the wood?

“How come nobody ever gets random with me?” he said in a whiney voice that reeked of jealousy and self-pity...so much so that Crazy Man and the floating driftwood were both offended. They were thinking about what unreasonable demands they would make of the dog, Sidestepper, and all the ways they would gloat as he paid dearly for expecting to be treated equally. The nerve.

However, the floating driftwood, in a change of driftwood heart, took pity on him and said, “Somewhere in this world there’s a floating piece of driftwood with your name on it just waiting to float in front of your eyes...but only when the time is right.”

“How will I know the time is right?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“When you see the piece of wood floating in front of you,” said the floating driftwood.

“Will I have a bigger floating driftwood because I waited longer?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Your floating driftwood will be the size of your floating driftwood,” said the floating driftwood. “No larger, no smaller.”

“Will it be as big as you?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“It will be as big as it is big,” said the floating driftwood.

The dog, Sidestepper, sensing a degree of indirectness in the floating driftwood’s answers, wanted to dig a hole in the ground and bury the floating driftwood in it.

In the meantime, Crazy Man was getting a little jealous, what with his floating driftwood completely ignoring him and carrying on all friendly and stuff with the dog. Where was the fairness in that? Why couldn’t this canine spotlight stealer find his own floating driftwood and leave his alone? But...this was his travel mate. They’d been through lots of cool and uncool stuff together so he followed suit with the floating driftwood and took pity on the dog, Sidestepper.

“Someday you’ll have your own floating driftwood,” he said. “And it will be the most beautiful driftwood ever.”

Crazy Man’s floating driftwood suddenly turned red and said, “Oh...and I’m not the most beautiful driftwood in the world? I appear right here in front of you in all my woody glory but it isn’t enough for you? I could be on a seashore right now fraternizing with gulls and jellyfish, but here I am...with you and you say I’m not enough?”

And with that, the floating driftwood disappeared with a tiny poof.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stared at the spot where the floating driftwood had been a moment before. They were speechless, motionless and mindless in whatever reality the story had led them. Suddenly nothing was real and everything was real and they weren’t sure which was which so they did the only thing that made sense...they stood on their heads and pretended to be drill bits drilling into the world. They spun merrily as they drilled to about where their feet were disappearing and they came to the mutual realization that maybe drilling wasn’t leading anywhere good.

They stopped drilling and climbed out of their holes.

“I’m sorry I drove your floating driftwood away,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “I was unconscionably jealous and self-pitying and I should have been happy for you, having your own driftwood and all. I promise that, in the future, I’ll cheer and jump up and down in honor of your having driftwood.”

Crazy Man accepted the dog, Sidestepper’s, confession with grace. He knew the power of jealousy. He’d felt it himself...the urge to hate all his friends because they had something he didn’t...the need to hog it all and be the center of attention even if it meant demeaning or destroying your friends and loved ones. These were positive feelings when not looked at too closely. Or not at all.

“I don’t need no floating driftwood anyway,” said Crazy Man. “I have the path of adventure and new meanings and the stars and this great *outside thing*.”

“And what about us?” said a question mark floating in the air just above them. Behind it were other question marks in all shapes, sizes and colors like Christmas in the Tiny Little Room of the Insane, and there were question marks behind them, some of them stretching into the clouds and others appearing to be burying themselves in holes and fissures breaking out over the surface of things. They started bobbing up and down and singing mystery songs that had no answers, let alone words.

Something strange was going on here. Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were sure of it.

The question marks multiplied like a mini-big-bang-of-doubt until the air was thick and impenetrable with question marks and no periods in sight. And they began singing:

“Questions, questions, questions

We all have questions, questions, questions

And we have no answers, answers, answers

Just questions, questions and questions.”

It was awful. Question marks were the worst singers in the world. Their lyrics crawled across the ear like molten lava. The melody stuck to the brain like a broken harpsichord trying to sound like an out-of-tune harmonica doused in peanut butter.

It was awful.

The question marks surrounded Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, singing directly *at* their souls like darts shooting through a Howitzer. They crowded around them, pushing and squirming between each other to get as close as they could and singing the whole time.

(Question mark song deleted in accordance with the 2026 Be Kind to Ears Act.)

Within minutes, neither dog nor man could move because they were packed tight in questions like flesh stuffing in a couch that is shunned by all but the most desperate butts. (Try not to think about that.)

Just as they were on the point of suffocating, a stray piece of non-floating driftwood fell out of a cloud where it had been floating unsuccessfully. It plummeted silently through the air and smashed into the singing question marks, toppling and scattering them over a landscape devoid of answers, after which it allowed itself to burst into flames because it couldn't exist knowing that it would never float.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, who had been flailing across the ground while they covered their ears and gasped for sanity and air, collapsed into dual heaps of man and beast who might never listen to music again.

Eventually they un-heaped themselves and continued along the path of adventure and new meanings, happy that they'd survived another day of this big and crazy *outside thing*.

And wondering what amazing adventures the path of adventure and new meanings would toss their way next.

To be continued...

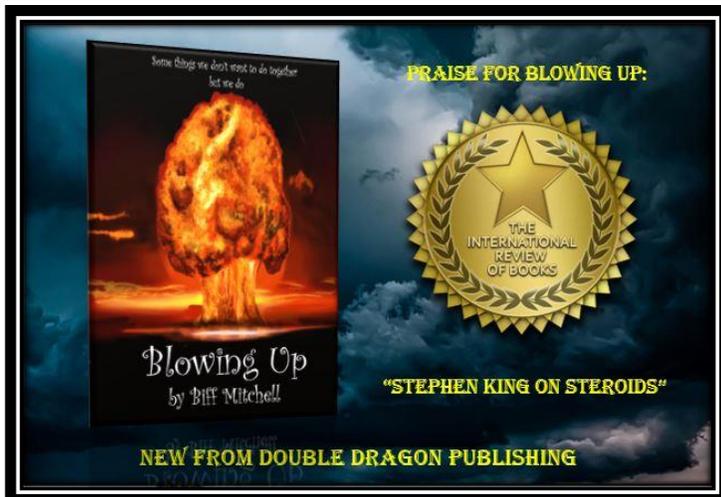
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