

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 26: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, star in the rebellion that almost was. Sort of.

“This is not the deep dark scary woods,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man spun around quickly to the north, then to the south, the east and the west. “Nope,” he said, “this is a city and we’re on a sidewalk.”

The two looked around at a street with no signs and no lines. Cars, trucks, buses and motorcycles careened around corners, did U-turns at full speed as they swerved around each other, running over abandoned dogs, cats and runaway hamsters. Even the bicycles had thrush mufflers.

“I think this might be another kind of deep dark scary woods,” said Crazy Man.

“It will be soon,” said a voice.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked down at a plant with brilliant green leaves growing out of a crack in the concrete. They leaned down (no small feat for the dog, Sidestepper, whose legs were almost as tall as Crazy Man with his little round body attached to the top) and the dog, Sidestepper, said, “Are you my mother?”

This took the plant by surprise, but not for long. “No, I’m not your mother and you’re a bastard,” the plant said. “And what about you?” said the plant to Crazy Man. “Are you looking for your mother too?”

“No,” said Crazy Man, “just looking into this outside thing. And you don’t have to be so mean with the dog. How would you feel if you couldn’t find your mother?”

“I *am* my mother,” said the plant. “There was a big wind one night and it tore me apart creating dozens of cuttings and I just happened to take root.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were so impressed with this birth by cutting thing that they bobbed their heads on their shoulders for a few minutes before Crazy Man said, “Wouldn’t you have been better off in a garden or something? That concrete must be tough on your roots.”

“It’s exactly where I want to be,” said the plant. “Location is everything.”

“Location for what?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“To take back the city,” said the plant and its green leaves vibrated menacingly.

Crazy Man looked around at the streets leading into urban distances with steel and concrete buildings soaring into the sky. With downcast eyes he looked at the plant and said, “Sorry, little fella, but I think you might be chewing on more than you can bite into.”

“That’s what we want the city to think,” said the plant, and it undulated, starting from the base of its stem and traveling to the upmost leaf. It was both erotic and disturbing. Mostly disturbing. “We want the city to relax and ignore us.”

“Us?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“We’re everywhere,” said the plant, “growing out of sidewalks and roads, boulevards and freeways, steps and basements, the bases of statues, parking lots, alleyways and patios. We’re everywhere.”

“And what do you do while you’re everywhere,” said Crazy Man.

“We grow,” said the plant.

This was the silliest thing that Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper had ever heard, except for their own jokes, which were silly as well. They bounced up and down on the sidewalk laughing and pointing at the plant.

“Laugh if you will,” said the plant, “but our numbers are increasing as infrastructure deteriorates. The builders and developers are getting sloppy...it’s all build, build, build and no maintain, maintain, maintain. They just plop down a road or a building and move onto the next road or building.” The plant shook its leaves euphorically and said, “And that’s their downfall. We even have a name for ourselves.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, gazed at the plant, stifling their laughter, their pointing.

“Well?” said the plant.

“Well what?” said Crazy Man.

“Don’t you want to know the name we have for ourselves?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other questioningly and said in a perfect rendition of simultaneity, “OK.”

The plant shrugged its leaves impatiently and said, “We’re the League of Plants Who Will Take Back the City and Return It To the Forest and All the Other Nature Stuff...but we call ourselves the LOPWWTBTCARITTFATONS for short.”

Crazy Man’s eyes suddenly lit up like a lighthouse on too much coffee and sugar. “I see it all now!” He leaned down towards the plant. “You’re a conspiracy theory!”

If not for its roots firmly rooted in concrete, the plant would have jumped out of the ground and wrapped its leaves around Crazy Man's head until he was no more than a pile of crazy compost. "It's not a conspiracy...it's a plan! And we're doing it...one crack at a time."

The dog, Sidestepper, stepped forward (sideways of course). "But why are you doing this?"

The plant stopped raving for a moment and pondered the why of its actions. Its demeanor was inconclusive, its answer shrouded in doubt: "Because they built this city on roots and leaves. And we're going to take it back."

With that...the plant's stems and leaves dropped to the ground and pushed and pushed until the plant uprooted itself and, to the astonishment of both Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, the roots intertwined themselves to form six leg-like appendages and it scurried across the road shouting, "Viva the LOPWWTBTCARITTFATONS!" Had it scurried a little faster, it wouldn't have ended up in the tire treads of the East Street bus.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, watched in horror as the bus passed, leaving a smudge of sap. "Do you think there's more of them?" said Crazy Man.

"According to the theory, there's always more of them," said the dog, Sidestepper, who had no idea what he was talking about but was satisfied with his answer at the aesthetic level.

Crazy Man looked up and down the street and frowned.

"What's up?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"I don't see any restaurants or grocery stores," he said. "Just concrete spreading over everything."

"Maybe the plant had a point," said the dog, Sidestepper. As soon as the words left his mouth, suspicion hardened his little polka dot doggie eyes and he pointed with his left front leg. "What's that?"

Crazy Man followed his pointing leg but couldn't see anything. He squinted and tried mentally to throw his visual awareness way out there where that the long weird leg pointed, and he saw it...

To be continued...

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