

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



Episode 32: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, meet a lizard

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“Hey!” called a squeaky voice from somewhere along the path. “Are you the ones who repulsed the alien invasion and saved the planet from certain destruction?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stopped and peered into the deep dark scary woods... where they saw the most amazing thing... a lizard. Neither of them had seen a live lizard before so this was a joyous occasion for both, and they expressed their joy by jumping up and down, rolling around on the ground and spinning their heads. Gawd knows how long this went on before the lizard said, “Well, are you the ones?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stopped rejoicing, not a bad thing for the lizard, which was more than a little disturbed by the sight.

“We don’t have to worry about being invaded,” said Crazy Man. “Looks like we don’t have anything they want, and lots that they don’t want.”

“So why are they here?” said the lizard.

“To keep us here,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Why would they do that?” said the lizard.

“Because they don’t want us spreading,” said Crazy Man.

“Don’t want us spreading?” said the lizard. “But that’s our mandate as a whole bunch of species sharing the same big happy terrarium...grow and spread, replace and supplant. What’s wrong with a little territorialism? As long as there’s lots of insects to eat, who cares about the fish?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, shared a small feeling of disappointment at the lizard’s words.

“But what did the fish ever do to you?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“They eat insects,” said the lizard, “insects that *I* should be eating. *My* insects.”

“But there’s lots of insects,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “More than you could ever hope to eat...more than a million lizards could ever hope to eat.”

“There better not be a million other lizards going after *my* insects,” said the lizard. “They’re *my* insects and *I’m* keeping them.”

“And I think that’s why the aliens don’t want to invade us,” said Crazy Man. “We seem to be a bad influence on planets.”

“Who said that?” said the lizard.

“The aliens.”

“Oh, them,” said the lizard. “So...they won’t be back?”

“Only if we try to escape what we’ve done,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“So the insects are all *mine*?”

“As many as you want,” said Crazy Man.

“*I* want them all,” said the lizard.

On one of the most far-fetched hunches in the history of far-fetched hunches, the dog, Sidestepper, gave in to a sudden feeling of desperation: “Are you my mother?”

“No,” said the lizard, “and you’re a bastard.”

The dog, Sidestepper, let it just bounce off his unreasonable expectations and wagged his tiny tail in spite.

“Do you have a map to where we can find food?” said Crazy Man.

“If *I* had a map to food, *I’d* follow it and eat all the food,” said the lizard.

“But you’re not big enough to eat all the food,” said Crazy Man.

“But it’ll all be there for when *I* want it,” said the lizard.

“But the other lizards would starve if you ate all the food,” said Crazy Man.

“Not *my* problem,” said the lizard. “If the other lizards are too slow and stupid to not get to the food first, then they get what they deserve. Nothing.”

“You’re not a very nice lizard, are you?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Nice lizards finish last,” said the lizard. “You can tell them by their skinniness. They share their food and never have enough for themselves.”

“But then there’s enough food to keep all the lizards alive,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“And then there’s too many of them,” said the lizard. “And they’ll all be trying to eat *my* food.”

“But you’ll have more than you can ever eat,” said Crazy Man.

“And that’s the way *I* like it,” said the lizard.

“You’re a really mean lizard,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “and the reason the aliens won’t invade us.”

“You’re welcome,” said the lizard, and it scooted off into deep dark scary woods, presumably to gather all the food upon itself.

“You’re just stalling the invasion!” yelled Crazy Man into the deep dark scary woods. “They’ll be coming to explore your garbage.”

The dog, Sidestepper, looked at Crazy Man knowingly. “Where did you get the garbage thing?”

“Just came into my head,” said Crazy Man.

“And you’re sure you never hear the voice hanging around in the air?”

“Nope,” said Crazy Man. “Maybe my head’s not in the same dimension as the voice.”

The dog, Sidestepper, didn’t waste any time thinking about this. “Do you think those aliens were right about us? Are we some kind of plague upon the universe?”

Crazy Man considered the dog, Sidestepper’s, question for an iota and said, “Well, until we start smelling the roses.”

“And the coffee,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Yeah,” said Crazy Man, “the coffee.”

Even though he couldn’t remember if he’d ever had coffee.

To be continued...

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