

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 35: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, and the spider

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“Spiders are really icky,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “All those eyes and legs and fangs and...the way they walk. Creepy.”

“I heard about an old woman who peeled a banana and a spider jumped out and bit her on the nose,” said Crazy Man. “She died.”

“From a spider bite?”

“A deadly spider bite,” said Crazy Man while swinging a nonchalant look between his eyes.

“And you think that’s true,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man looked around. Once again the path of adventure and new meanings had veered away from the deep dark scary woods and onto a mysterious river bank with mysterious fog shrouding the mysterious water and mysterious river-bank bushes. Giant concrete pillars rose mysteriously out of the dark water. It was cold and discomforting. They were under a bridge and could hear cars and trucks clanking and thudding on the pavement above.

Crazy Man tossed his arms up in the direction of the water and the columns and did a 360 very cleanly and convincingly for someone wearing a porpoise costume. “Do you think any of this is true?” he said as he eyed the dog, Sidestepper, with eyes spinning in their sockets.

The dog, Sidestepper, frowned in a very canine way...all teeth and curled lip. Even on a dog with a body about the size of a baseball with big dreams it was emotionally disruptive. Crazy Man looked away. The dog, Sidestepper, said, “I still think spiders are gross and I’ll never eat a banana again.”

“Hey watch it with the name-calling, dog!”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked around. And around. And...well, they didn’t see anything that could yell at them. The dog, Sidestepper, saw a perfect bush-dwelling spider web and took three steps back. “Yuck!” he said.

Suddenly, there was movement in the intricately spun center of the spider web. Something dark and small appeared to be clutching the center of the web and using it like a trampoline. The something dark and small jumped more than a quarter inch up and less than a half mile. It screamed, “I’ll yuck you, dog.” It bounced up and down furiously. “C’mon, put your hand on the web...anywhere on the web...and you’ll be trapped. And then I’ll pounce on you with all my spider speed and deadliness and puncture you with my mighty venomous fangs and wrap you up in webbing and hang you around until I’m ready to eat you.”

The dog, Sidestepper, wasn’t about to misjudge, underestimate, under-react or become overly rapturous with false hopes. He knew for certain that this damn spider wasn’t his mother. Crazy Man, on the other hand, wondered if it would be easier to find food if he had venomous fangs.

But the dog, Sidestepper, wasn’t having any more of this. “We’ll see about that, angry little arachnid.” He lifted one of his overly long legs high into the air and brought it down on the web with a might spider-web-crushing blow right onto the right side of the web. Just as he was about to laugh at the mess he’d made of the web, he noticed that the web was still very much intact and his paw was stuck to it. He shook his leg to no avail. The web had his paw and it was keeping it. He pulled harder but neither the web nor the bush moved. He was getting worried. He’d never had his paw caught in a spider web before. And to his horror, the spider was scampering from the center of the web to the corner where his paw was stuck. The spider seemed have grown and its fangs were suddenly huge and dripping with venom. The dog, Sidestepper, struggled but couldn’t break his paw free. Both he and Crazy Man stared in terror as the spider reared up by the paw and opened its fangs. They were the fangs of all fangs and filled the web and the bushes and the bridge and the river...and everywhere its venom dripped, things withered and died...even dead things.

Just as the fangs were about to pierce the paw, the spider jumped back and held its stomach with its two back legs as it pointed at the dog, Sidestepper, with its front legs and laughed as spiders are wont laugh. Loud and booming. Well, maybe not as spiders are wont to laugh. This was likely no ordinary spider.

Suddenly, the web let go of the dog, Sidestepper’s, paw and he fell back several steps before re-gaining his balance.

“Let that be a lesson,” said the spider and laughed some more. In fact, its laughter was as contagious as yawning, only it made Crazy Man giggle and then burst out laughing. The

contagion spread to the dog, Sidestepper, and he started laughing in a very canine and not exactly comforting doggie manner with all the teeth and curled lip...the tiny polka dot eyes.

The spider pointed one of its legs at the dog, Sidestepper, and said, "I wasn't really going to poison you and eat you. Geez, even for an unnatural small-bodied dog like you, it would take ten spider lifetimes to eat all of you...and I hate to waste food."

At the mention of food, Crazy Man perked up: "You wouldn't have directions or a map to food, would you?"

"No," said the spider. "And I'm not the dog's mother. And you're both bastards but I'm in a good mood so I'm going to give you some valuable advice."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stopped laughing and leaned forward toward the spider. They were always open to valuable advice for as long as they could remember, which wasn't as impressive as it sounds given that one was a dog whose only memory was of a mother he'd never seen and Crazy Man who couldn't remember if he had a kitchen or a pizza pan. They perked their ears, ready for valuable advice.

The spider covered what the two hoped was its mouth as though to keep it down and said, "Don't cross the river *under* the bridge. It gets wet." And with that, spider shot a splotch of web a hundred feet into the air where it attached itself to the bottom of the bridge and almost flew up the strand and disappeared under the bridge. Its laughter lingered mysteriously in the bushes and fog.

"That was a really weird spider," said Crazy Man as he adjusted his porpoise collar.

"All spiders are weird," said the dog, Sidestepper. "All those eyes and legs and fangs and...the way they laugh."

"And..." Before Crazy Man could get the words out of his mouth, the spider was dangling from a line of web right in front of his eyes. "And...?" said the spider.

"Um," said Crazy Man. "And spiders eat bugs that bite me. And that makes me happy."

The spider turned towards the dog, Sidestepper, who said, "And me too." He shook his head affirmatively. "Yep...go get those mosquitoes. Go spider!"

The spider bounced up and down and laughed. "Just pulling your limbs. Ha Ha! Have a safe journey." And it scurried faster than a speeding dark brown Ferrari up the thread of webbing and disappeared under the bridge.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, glanced furtively at each other, and then up towards the under-bridge darkness where the spider had disappeared and both breathed a sigh of relief.

"Boy, those spiders sure eat a lot of bad bugs," said Crazy Man, overly loud.

"Yeah, they sure do," agreed the dog, Sidestepper, even more overly loud.

As they made their way along the path of adventure and new meanings, they were almost sure they heard thousands of tiny chuckles coming from the webs clinging to the beams and rails of the bridge.

To be continued...

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