

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 53: Wherein Crazy Man might make a friend.

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(NOTE: My apologies for posting Episode 52 wrongly. The link was to the image in the episode, not the actual episode. This is what happens when you post things in the morning before you've had coffee. The lesson: Don't get up too early to have coffee.)

An old adage among the children I played with as a kid went something like this: Don't piss in the sandbox. We beat kids up for doing that, and they never pissed in the sandbox again. A kid named Eddie shit in the sandbox the day before he and his parents moved away. We're still looking for him.

Crazy Man and the shopping cart, Wheels, didn't think about thing like this because they had no memory of things like this. The shopping cart, Wheels, remembered machines and mall music, but no sandbox. Crazy Man wasn't sure if he was ever a kid and, being in two dimensions simultaneously, he wouldn't have known which one contained a childhood.

But they were on the path of adventure and new meanings and Crazy Man had the dog, Sidestepper's, fur on a keychain in his pocket. Maybe someday he would find a key for it. He was wondering what that key would open when all of a sudden...

“Look!” said the shopping cart, Wheels.

Crazy Man stopped abruptly and stared. Before them, the path opened onto a large body of water with a scintillating rainbow that reared into the sky with all the godly power of light bent so far out of shape that it generates colors for the enjoyment of...

Wait a minute, thought Crazy Man. *Something's wrong*. He couldn't put his finger on exactly what was wrong for a few seconds (maybe a few days) until he realized that half the rainbow was missing.

Tears welled up in his eyes and he fell to the ground kicking and punching the unfairness of it all. He bellowed his empathetic anguish into the skies and scared away every seagull and air snail for miles. The shopping cart, Wheels, braked and watched..and would have scratched its head if it had had a head. But all it had was an empty bucket.

“This is what you've done to me,” said the rainbow.

Gee, a talking rainbow.

Crazy Man and the shopping cart, Wheels, were astounded, especially the shopping cart, Wheels, which had always wished to have a conversation with a talking rainbow. But this was just half a talking rainbow and the shopping cart, Wheels, realized that it was getting only half of its wish. It was crushed to the core of its empty basket.

“I used to be a full rainbow,” said the rainbow. “I was once a breathtaking arc in the sky that would cause farmers to whoa their horse, stop ploughing, and spend a few minutes admiring me.”

“What happened?” said Crazy Man, trying feverishly to hold back the tears...and the kicking and punching.

“You,” said the rainbow. “I'm at the mercy of the sun. I'm at the mercy of the wind. I'm at the mercy of the clouds. I'm at the mercy of physics, and then you altered the physics and the wind and now the water is confused and will only let me state half of what I am. You bastards.”

This sounded very much like a sob story to Crazy Man, who immediately fell asleep until his own snoring woke him up.

“You don't care,” said the rainbow. “And what will you do when there are no rainbows...when the wind washes everything away?”

“I care!” said Crazy Man. “Look!” Whereupon, he punched himself squarely in his round red clown nose (which terrified him). “See?”

“And that's the problem,” said the rainbow. “You punch yourself in denial and my water evaporates along the crust of your opinions.”

Crazy Man had no idea what the rainbow was saying and he wondered if the rainbow had any idea what it was saying. He was about to ask the rainbow a few pointed questions about opinions and crust...and maybe a map to food...when the shopping cart, Wheels, spoke up.

“You're right!” said the shopping cart, Wheels. “For years, they used me to pile up their stuff, the stuff they took home and then stuffed half of it into the garbage. I swear I carried more packaging that packaged goods.”

The rainbow began to throb in the sky, its colors shimmered and glowed, its blurred edges straightened and sharpened like scimitars cutting through the clouds. “And you won't do that anymore?” said the rainbow.

“The only things this basket of mine will ever see from now on will be things of value to me. Good things. Useful things. Things wrapped in their own essence.”

Tears of every color of the rainb...the colors of the spectrum scattered across the sky like liquid fireworks. The rainbow seemed to actually bow to the shopping cart, Wheels.

“You’re a good soul with a good basket,” said the rainbow. “And I want to help you along the path of adventure and new meanings.”

Whereupon the rainbow swept out of the sky and laid itself before the shopping cart, Wheels, and Crazy Man.

“Step on me,” said the rainbow.

The shopping cart, Wheels, rolled onto the glistening color. Seeing this, Crazy Man laughed, dropped to the ground and rolled into the color and was snapped up along with the shopping cart, Wheels, and carried into the sky on a roller coaster of color shards that tickled Crazy Man all over the hides and bones of his barbarian outfit. The rainbow wafted them to the right and tumbled them to the left. The somersaulted through the clouds and careened around jet liners and flocks of geese. They laughed madly...mostly out of fear and second thoughts from Crazy Man.

This went on for exactly 93 seconds before the rainbow set them back down gently on the path of adventure and new meanings about 20 feet beyond where they’d been.

And then it just evaporated without a sound.

Crazy Man lay face down in the dirt, giggling. The shopping cart, Wheels, lay on its side, giggling. Who knows how long a man and a cart giggle? Who knows?

Later that evening, or some other evening, Crazy Man and the shopping cart, Wheels, had finally stopped giggling and were acutely aware of the threats from the deep dark scary woods. But they weren’t afraid. Well, yeah, they were afraid...but they sure as hell weren’t going to show it to the other.

“You ever get afraid of the deep dark scary woods?” the shopping cart, Wheels.

“Naw,” said Crazy Man. “Unless there’s clowns in there, somewhere.”

The shopping cart, Wheels, regarded Crazy Man for a moment...and giggled.

To be continued...

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