

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 68: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the first horror in the cavern.

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Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, followed the path of adventure and new meanings through the cavern that wasn't a tavern deep into the bowels of the earth. The air was moist and warm. Dark shadows played hide and seek in crevices and behind strange rock formations. Milky water drip-dropped from giant limestone stalactites. The dark walls glistened with rivulets of water and a vague sense of threat permeated the shadows of every cranny in the limestone walls. Man and dog stopped abruptly as a dark shape dropped from above and hung in the air before them.

“Whoa! It’s about time! What took you so long? I’m starving.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were stunned. They’d heard about eight-legged arachnids but they weren’t sure if they’d ever seen one before.

“That’s a spider,” said Crazy Man. “I’ve heard about them. They have giant fangs full of poison and bad intentions. Their bite turns you into tomorrow’s lunch and they wrap you up like a cocoon with sticky gooey webbing.”

“That’s right,” said the spider. “I’m Andy Arachnid and you’re the lunch I ordered weeks ago. What took you so long? I’m starving.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, glanced at each other and then at Andy Arachnid.

“Are you one of the horrors the cavern warned us about?” said Crazy Man.

“Who’re you calling a whore?” said Andy Arachnid. “I’ve bitten tongues out for less than that.” The spider scrambled down its web until it was just a few feet from the two travelers. “Now, which one of you wants to be eaten first?” It chuckled as only an arachnid can chuckle and said, “I guess another way to put it is...who considers himself dessert and who considers himself the main course.”

“You can’t eat us,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“I can if I want to,” said Andy Arachnid. “Do you see any bugs here? No. You don’t. That’s because I ate them all. Nobody out-eats me. That’s why I had to order out. Give the bugs here a chance to grow new food for me.”

“But we’re not bugs,” said Crazy Man. “We are human beings...except for the dog. He’s a dog.”

“And he has a key,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“A key?” said Andy Arachnid. “I didn’t order a key with my lunch.”

“And I have a key *chain*,” said Crazy Man. “And I might have a kitchen. And a pizza pan.”

Andy Arachnid bobbed up and down crazily on his web and made strange spider sounds that echoed off the cavern walls. “No! No! No! No!” he yelled. “I just want lunch! Not keys and chains and pizza pans.”

“Maybe your lunch order is still on its way,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“And maybe you’re in lunch denial,” said Andy Arachnid as he shook his web angrily. “Come over here right now so that I can eat you. I’m starving.”

“But,” said Crazy Man, “there is one thing that you might want to consider before you try to eat us.”

“What’s that?” said Andy Arachnid. “I don’t have time for word games. I haven’t eaten in ages. I’m starving and I need food right now.”

“Tell me about it,” said Crazy Man. “We’ve been looking for a map to food for so long I forget what food looks like.”

“It looks like you!” said Andy Arachnid. “Get over here right now!”

Crazy Man walked over to the spider, put his hand out and cupped it under Andy Arachnid’s half inch body.

“Wait a minute,” said Andy Arachnid. “Something’s not right here.”

“I’ll say,” said Crazy Man as he looked down at the spider in the palm of his hand.

The dog, Sidestepper, chuckled.

Andy Arachnid gazed up at Crazy Man towering over him. The palm of his hand was as big as a parking lot, proportionately speaking. “But where’s my lunch!” The spider jumped up and down in Crazy Man’s hand. “I need food!”

“And someday you’ll have food,” said a suddenly sympathetic Crazy Man. “But not today.”

“I could bite your hand and poison you,” said Andy Arachnid.

“But then I’d just bunch my hand into a fist and turn you into spider mash,” said Crazy Man. “But I have a better idea.”

Andy Arachnid and the dog, Sidestepper, perked up, both being die-hard fans of better ideas.

“When we find a map to food,” said Crazy Man, “we’ll bring some of the food back to you.”

The dog, Sidestepper, glanced at Crazy Man questioningly.

Andy Arachnid, obviously enthused at the idea of having food brought to him, nodded vigorously and said, “Now we’re talking. Do you think you could bring me some gravy on that food? I love gravy.”

“Sure,” said Crazy Man. “We’ll douse everything with gobs of gravy.”

Andy Arachnid rolled around on Crazy Man’s palm in a fit of unrestrained joy. “I’m so glad I didn’t eat you two! That would have been a meal without gravy! I need gravy.”

Crazy Man lifted Andy Arachnid up towards his web and watched as the spider grabbed onto the silky strands and once again hung on the web as though he was floating in the air. “How long do you think it will be before you find your map to food?”

“We’d answer that question if we knew,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “but the path of adventure and new meanings is unpredictable and rigorously cruel.”

“So,” said Andy Arachnid, “what you’re saying is you’ll bring me food and gravy as soon as possible.”

The dog, Sidestepper, mulled the concept of as-soon-as-possible and said, “That’s exactly what I mean.”

“So that could be this afternoon,” said Andy Arachnid.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, exchanged thoughtful glances and Crazy Man said, “It could be anytime the path leads us to the map.”

“So...you’re saying it could be this afternoon,” said Andy Arachnid.

“If the path deems it to be so,” said Crazy Man. “And the path is pretty good at deeming.”

Andy Arachnid pulled and released his web until it looked like he was bobbing up and down on an invisible trampoline and he sang: “I’m going to have lunch today. I’m going to have lunch today. I’m going to have gravy today...”

As Andy Arachnid bounced blissfully on his web, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, quietly walked around him and made their way again down the path of adventure and new meanings.

“That wasn’t so horrifying,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “Do you think the cavern might have been exaggerating on the matter of unspeakable horrors?”

“At least we don’t have to worry about the deep dark scary woods in here,” said Crazy Man.

“True,” said the dog, Sidestepper, as he glanced around at the glistening walls and menacing stalactites where hazy shadows drifted just beyond his sight. “But I wouldn’t go too close to those walls. We seem to be in a deep dark scary cavern.”

“That’s not a tavern,” said Crazy Man. And both he and the dog, Sidestepper, laughed and continued down the path of adventure and new meanings in the hopes that all their future horrors would be as horrible as Andy Arachnid.

To be continued...

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