

CROSSING TO THE OTHER SIDE

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

COCOA

A sloth who recently died while causing a major automobile pile-up.

SETTING

A court in heaven.

SCENE

(Cocoa is standing in front of the jury, ready to defend his big mistake. Of course, this is audio, so no one can see any of that.)

COCOA

Gods and Goddess of the jury, you have asked that I speak in defense of myself and the sins that I have committed. And I know what you're thinking as you look at my face. Sloth. And that's completely understandable. After all, I am what I am, and let me be perfectly clear about this: I wouldn't change if I could. I'm *proud* of what I am. Maybe too proud. Perhaps that's my sin. There are some who would accuse me of hubris, but I believe that my actions are not merely explainable, not only defensible, but in fact should serve as an inspiration to others like me.

Now before getting to the admittedly very regrettable incident that brings us here... well, brings *me* here. I mean, this is where *you* are all the time, right? Anyway, let me set some context... go back to the beginning, if you'll indulge me.

It all began when, from a distance, I first laid eyes upon the love of my life. Brady. You must know her. I mean, you're divine beings after all, and there is no more divine creature on Earth than my lovely Brady Podidae. Just to look at her angelic face seemed to call down the rays of heaven themselves, a shining halo around her like...

Sorry. I digress. Where was I? Ah, right. Pile up. Deaths. Context. Explanation. Okay.

I won't deny that my friends and family were... dismayed... at my behavior. 'You're moving too fast!' they all said. "Slow down. Take it easy." That's an understandable reaction. After all, slowing down is what my family does best. But I think that's because they've never experienced the true fiery passion of *love*. And surely if I am guilty of any sin, it is the sin of Love.

Now I know what you're thinking. Love, or lust? A fair question. I cannot deny that I craved the soft embrace of my Brady, that I spent nights imagining our passion, the two of us entwined like animals pawing at each other under the stars. But I ask you... is this not natural? Is this not how a species *sustains* itself? When push comes to shove... as it were... it is the *instinctual passions* that carry us forward into future generations! Surely no one would deny this!

But that's not what worries you. You... my jury... I think *you* are concerned with... other matters. Other sins. Anger... greed... gluttony... *envy*. And yes, I cannot deny that faint traces of these may have touched my heart. But love will make anyone crazy, will it not?

But alright, let's get to the source of the problem. *Larry*. Larry Larry Larry. Big-eyed, brown-haired Larry, with that permanent smirk glued to his stupid hairy face. Hairy Larry. Yeah, I hated him. The way he would just lie around all day, expecting the world to take care of him. And of course I was jealous of the way he got along with Brady, and for no other reason than being born on the south side of the highway. Had I been born on the south side of the highway, things would have been different. They say the grass is always greener and all that, but in this case it's true. And that's why I took all those leaves.

You see, it wasn't greed. It wasn't gluttony. I *needed* those leaves. Not for myself. I'm above such pettiness. I eat only what I need, and maybe a little more on Sundays because as my mother always said, nothing starts the week off right like a good solid BM on Monday morning. No. No, I never intended to keep those leaves for myself. I needed them to win the heart of my Brady.

And so now we come to the central issue, don't we... the reason, I believe, why you asked me to appear before you. Crossing the road. Was I merely jealous of those rampant, irresponsible chickens? Did I think myself as immortal as this august jury? No, most certainly not. Was it a smart move? Also, probably not. But it was a *necessity*. I *had* to brave the rush-rush of those shiny metal demons the humans drive along the highways at breakneck speeds. I assure you that I tried to time it so that I'd reach the south side before... but... who could have known that the highway would be *so wide*?!? Sure, perhaps I stopped for a breather and a nibble on the way. After all, a sloth's gotta eat to survive, and the benefits of frequent naps have been scientifically validated. In hindsight, yes, perhaps it would have been smarter to do that on the median, but... who amongst us has not experienced the occasional lapse in good judgement?

Now I know that your focus must be on the pile-up. Yes, there *were* a lot of cars that smashed into a big heap. Yes, the big truck did spill 17,000 gallons of pasteurized milk over the countryside, but think of all the animals that fed! And yes, maybe a select few cattle were forcibly ejected from a livestock trailer. But again, look at the positives. How often does a cow get to experience the exhilaration and freedom of flight? Not very often, I think.

Please, I beseech you, my jury, to look beyond the simple answers, to delve into the true emotions at the heart of this unfortunate matter. Personally I think reporting it as, quote, "the deadliest traffic accident since 1974", unquote, is nothing more than extreme exaggeration by a small number of sensationalism-driven, money-grubbing, pseudo-journalists working for the Antigua Gazette. This... this is a story of love, my friends. Forbidden love, perhaps, but still love. The love between two sloths, fated to be born on opposite sides of the highway. This is our species' Romeo and Juliet, a story of *devotion*, purity of mind only barely interrupted by midnight fantasies that, in all fairness, are as much the responsibility of the government for allowing humans to

put up those road signs sporting those sexy pictures, all silhouetted and provocative with their suggestive ‘sloth x-ing’ slogans and... sorry. Where was... Right. This is like the sloth version of “The Fantasticks”, merely replacing show tunes with the melodious sounds of screeching tires and the heavenly thunderclaps of crumpling automotive sheet metal.

In summary, I return to my opening statement. I stand by my actions, and when you make your decision, I think you too will see what they truly represent: a sloth following the call of his heart. Thank you.

(Lights out.)