

Mernation

Episode 5

*Down the Streets*

By A. C. Zito

It looked like a normal street. Like, all of a sudden, out of the blue, here we were; standing in a neighborhood with houses, picket fences, and sidewalks with people out for their evening stroll. The only difference was... well, there was a big difference. It was like being on planet Krypton and Super Man was going to fly down out of the sky any minute and become a normal person almost like he had never left. The trees and the grass to start: they were like the trees and grass from Up Above... except they had the strangest and most bizarre texture to them. Almost like they had been dipped into a fine balsamic vinegar; an oil to make them almost look seaweed-like. But you could tell that it wasn't seaweed at all by how erect the greenery stood; it stood upright and sort of wavy in a fashion that you could hardly tell the texture couldn't possibly be oily and wet. But then again; so it was. And then the sky; the mud-coating from outside was gone. I was told it wasn't mud at all, but a type of window they made back in 2028 to shield the Up Abovers from what lay beneath and give a spectacle of light to the Down Belowers so even though the Level was waterless, it still presented itself like you were still living with the fishes. But still; the term *'living with the fishes'* never lost its meaning. I mean it did... but for Up Abovers, the term became more heavily feared than ever before.

*Eat your vegetables, Lora, or you'll be living with the fishes tonight!* My grandpa used to always tell me when I was younger. My grandmother would slap him whenever he said that, where, he would always reply, saying: *Oh, Betsy, it doesn't mean what it used to like back in the day!*

*Yeah, Hank! It became so much worse, now, that they made those internment camps or whatever they're calling them; like what Trump did to those poor children! Do you remember that? Is that what you want to happen to our granddaughter?* She would then slap him again as he chuckled, shaking his head like he could never actually see me ending up here. But here I was. And I felt out of place more than I've ever felt in all my life. I'm what they call, *'a fish out of water.'* Like they think it's supposed to be ironic or something.

*"CRAIG! CRAIG! WHERE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GO, CRAIG?"* A woman screamed at her husband as she chased him down the street.

*"GET OFF ME, WOMAN! DEVIL WOMAN! SHE'S A DEVIL WOMAN!"* He had an underwater suitcase, two underwater dart guns strapped to each of his sides, and a harpoon tied to his back.

"Where do you think he's going?" I asked Michael as he passed through the water chamber, dripping heavily with water.

"Home, maybe." He shrugged. "Probably got married to a woman down here and now, his time's up so he's just abandoning her." I looked at Michael, shocked.

“People do that?” After asking the question, I quickly realized how stupid I sounded. Of course, it’s Down *Under*. Where dreams go to die; and right now, a wife’s dream of being happily married forever and ever just ended.

“But Shawna and Thomas; *our two CHILDREN, Craigie-bear!*” My heart dropped once the woman said this. But the husband, on the other hand, didn’t even flinch. His eyes were too focused on the door to his freedom.

“I made it. I made it, *Ma and Pa*. Your son, Craig, is coming home!” Craig whispered as he opened the water chamber and then slammed it shut in his wife’s face. She waited, patiently, as the water chamber filled up for him and then, like that, he was released. She then watched as the water chamber emptied out once again and it was her turn. She hopped in and then began scanning the ocean. Suddenly, we heard from the box:

“WHERE DID HE GO?” She began screaming this over and over again as Michael and I watched, horrified. A terrible sobbing took over her until it was drowned out by the water filling up passed her chin and into her lungs. And then, like that, she was out of the chamber and her body had disappeared into the ocean blue. The Michael turned to me, motioning with his hand:

“*C’mon, Lora; it’s time that I showed you around.*”