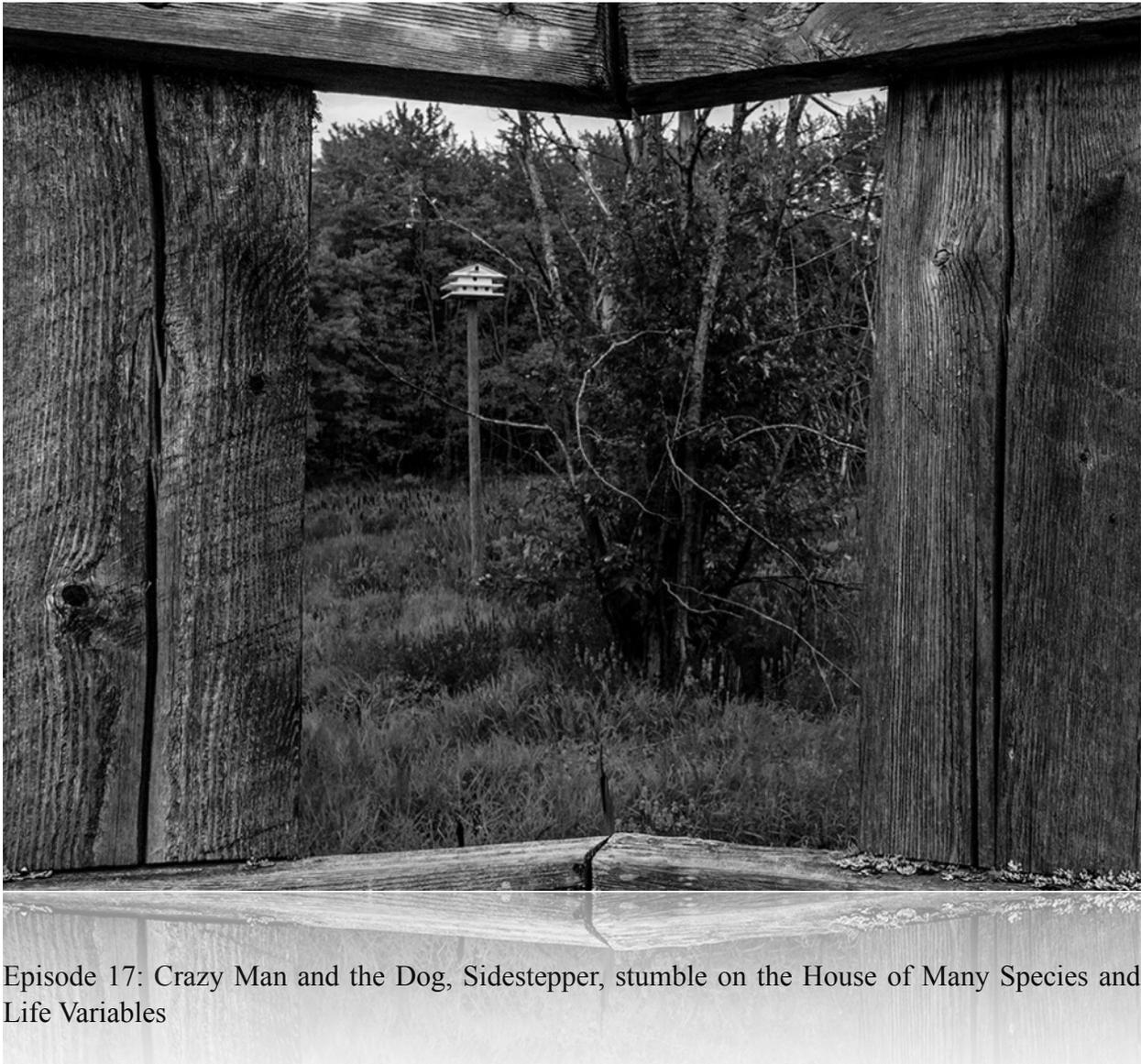


## The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 17: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, stumble on the House of Many Species and Life Variables

We all have one path and it draws us to unknown conclusions or it holds us in existential fear of the next step. But that has nothing to do with this story. In fact, I'm not even sure if I know what that means and I wonder what these two figures approaching would think of that.

"Are you sure you don't hear some kind of crazy messed-up narrative looming around the path of adventure and new meanings with more meanings than it can handle?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Maybe it knows where we can find food," said Crazy Man.

"If it even exists."

"I'm starting to have thoughts about that," said Crazy Man.

"What kind of thoughts?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"I dunno," said Crazy Man. "Sometimes this outside thing seems a lot like living in two dimensions."

The dog, Sidestepper, shot Crazy Man a semi-empathic glare. “Maybe that’s because you do exist in two dimensions.”

Crazy Man thought about this for a moment and arrived at a conclusion that made his head spin for several seconds. He snapped around at the dog, Sidestepper, and pointed at him. “You’re right!” He thought about this for another few seconds and stopped pointing. “But what does it mean?” His head spun for three and a half seconds and he pointed at something ahead on the path. “And what does *that* mean?”

The dog, Sidestepper, looked in the direction that Crazy Man pointed and wondered from which dimension his travel mate was pointing. This thought caused his canine cranium to hurt so he dropped the thought and joined Crazy Man in excruciating excitement at about whatever it was they were looking at.

“It’s a window,” said Crazy Man. “It’s a window into this outside thing.”

The dog, Sidestepper, allowed three glints of suspicion to spark across his beady little doggy eyes before he had this window thing all worked out. “Maybe I’ll find my mother there.”

This thought caused a multi-meaning ascension into initial understanding to descend upon Crazy Man’s existence in both dimensions and he started dancing wildly on the path out of sheer exuberance. Maybe the dog, Sidestepper, would finally find his mother. Maybe this window into this outside thing would show them where to find food. Food would be a good thing. Crazy Man had almost forgotten what food was and why he wanted it so much but he had a vague mouth-watering flash of hot dogs with mustard and relish...just like *whatsisname*, the actor, liked this children. “Maybe we’ll find food.”

They closed in on the window. It was wood and maybe not really a window...but definitely wood...planks of wood forming a portal into something magnificent and truly astounding...and at once they both knew what it was from rumors and intuition embedded deep within their minds and genes: It was the House of Many Species and Variables.

They just knew this.

“Look,” said Crazy Man, “it’s the House of...”

“Yeah, I know,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “I’ll bet my mother is here.” His eyes drooled in expectation.

“Probably not,” said Crazy Man, “but maybe there’s food here.”

They approached the window with the promise of miracles singing in their heads and knelt down and stared into a world that took their breath away. It was a world of verdant green, buzzing with insects and pollen, steaming with the heavy air of swamp fumes and frogs’ eggs, mosquito incubators and emerald algae. Clouds of mosquitoes and black flies swarmed into the humid air...and directly in the center of this fantastical world was a tall wooden post with a three-story wooden house propped on top like everyone’s wooden Liechtenstein Castle. But not Austrian. They stared with jaws a-drop, eyes like saucers with white jelly stains and black polka dots. (Best not to think about that.)

It was a mansion of mini-proportions, a miraculous compactness of natural wonder.

“It’s a bird house,” said Crazy Man.

“It’s *the* bird house,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

They saw an eagle perched on top of the house with a sparrow perched on top of its head and they were talking about the disturbing changes in temperature that appeared to be limiting the

supply of bugs and essential grains. The sparrow was especially out-spoken and wanted to know what the hell was going on. A tear dropped from one of the eagle's eyes in avian empathy for its small feathered friend that might be lunch some day if the bug situation didn't improve. For now, the eagle just nodded agreement, carefully, so as not to disturb the song of a distraught sparrow. Below them, a cormorant shrugged itself out of the second floor of the house and said hello to the eagle and the sparrow before it flew off into the day looking for bugs and things. A flock of yellow finches circled the house twice and flew into the first floor. Minutes later, the sounds of bird laugh and partying spilled out of the first floor holes and made the eagle dance a brief jig, but with due restraint for the sparrow perched on its head.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, gazed in wonder as a giant black raven emerged from the second floor and peered down at the party in the first floor. A moose as tall as three buildings crashed into the bog and thrashed at the air, saw the house and smiled. In keeping with the mood, a resounding cacophony of bird greeting tumbled out of the house and across the bog to the moose's ears. The moose smiled again and crashed into the woods for no particular reason than to crash into the woods just as a flock of starlings emerged from the third floor and created magical patterns in the sky.

Crazy Man had never seen anything so compliant with mutually assured survival. He head bobbed up and down as his eyes jiggled. He was a sure, now, that everything was going to be OK with this outside thing.

"Somebody must really love those birds to build this house out here away from the maddening loneliness of the city." Tears spooled in his eyes.

"What was that?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"Would you put peanut butter on a hot dog?" said Crazy Man with genuine concern.

Just then, a red bulldozer as tall as three suburban cottages crashed through the trees, pushing them down like twigs and grinding them into the mud under its tracks. An uproar rose in the air of the clearing around the house as the bulldozer steamed toward it and smashed into the pole, sending the house, winged creatures flooding into the air, crashing into the ground where it exploded and the sounds of birds on fire galloped through the air.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, gazed in wonder as front end loaders, excavators, dump trucks, construction and construction crews swarmed over the swampland and, within minutes, it was replaced by three ten story condos, a mini-mall, a fully-automated mini water park and a casino. But no golf course.

The dog, Sidestepper, turned his head slowly toward Crazy Man, "Guess the people who loved the birds are gone."

Crazy Man slid his hand under his new fedora and scratched his head. He looked back at the marsh replacement and said, "You think there might be food in there?"

"None that we can have," said the dog, Sidestepper, sadly. His doggy face brightened and he let his doggie tongue dole on his lower lip and drip doggie saliva on the path of adventure and new meanings and said, "But I'm sure this good old path will lead us to food. Some day."

Crazy Man's face brightened and the smile beyond his ears. "One thing though..."

"What's that?"

"Nothing called us bastards today."

And the two not-quite-fully-disillusioned-yet travellers laughed till their heads spun like out-of-control hula hoops as they ventured down the path of adventure and new meanings in search of food, a mother...and this outside thing.

To be continued...

© Biff Mitchell

[www.biffmitchell.com](http://www.biffmitchell.com)

Go to the blog: <https://crazymanadventures.com>