

notes from the disturbed edge - chapter 7

“...because this is serious business”, he continued as if no time had elapsed since he’d uttered his last word. She certainly wasn’t going to tell him that he’d been out cold for almost 30 minutes, twitching around as he lay on the soft grass in the shade, probably continuing the conversation in his head as he slept. She, too, was exhausted. It had been a long day and she was a human beanbag, but she had resisted the urge to get horizontal and had stayed awake, even after he’d drifted off in the middle of explaining why their work was important, and why the rest of the world should understand.

She’d found it difficult to believe in her cosmic significance during the past eight hours spent crawling around in a thicket, primarily focused on keeping both eyeballs in her skull and non-perforated. This was a nasty place for now, but it would look better after the chainsaw crews worked their way through and cut

away all the trees that were NOT labeled “NO CUT” in big black letters on day-glow pink plastic flagging tape. This was one of those sites where the most difficult initial decision had been whether to mark the exotic vegetation to be removed, or the native trees to be left untouched, knowing that either choice would involve considerable effort. She’d thought she had begun hallucinating in a haze of permanent felt marker fumes when she’d bumped into a seemingly brand new refrigerator in the middle of the thickest growth, but putting her fingers in the bullet holes that pierced the shiny white metal had told her she was really there, and gave her an idea of how quickly the invaders had become established.

Even now, when they were done marking trees, they still had a haul ahead of them. She’d drive the truck around on the road, and he’d drive the ATV cross-country, out to the storefront where they’d left the trailer. At least that was her

plan at this point. He’d been asleep, but she’d been pretty busy.

“Yeah, folks have got to eventually realize that it is serious business to continue to mess with Mother Earth. Too many people still view nature as something that happens in parks and on other continents. Not enough people today realize that we are part of nature, and the places we live - our habitats - are IN nature, part of the big picture...” He was definitely awake now, on a roll, but suddenly she was getting drowsy - she’d heard this one before and he was, of course, preaching to the choir. It was a good speech, the first time, but she didn’t need to hear it again.

She abruptly stood up and informed him “Time to roll. I’m taking the truck. You can bounce your butt back to the store on that beast of a machine.” She pulled a crumpled dollar bill from her pocket. “Hey, would you get me the coldest soda they have if you beat me there?” She headed for the truck and then stopped, patting her pockets. “Can I use your compass?” He handed it over, wondering why she’d need a compass to navigate back on the road she’d driven in on, and was amused to see that she instead used it only for its mirror - daubing dirt off her face and then slinging him a sideward smile as she climbed up into the truck and was gone. He creaked to his feet, climbed onto the ATV and began motoring through the woods. It kind of annoyed him that she’d cut him off mid-monologue. Maybe he would find a way to ease into the “we are in nature” spiel with the locals at the store before she arrived.

Meanwhile, just around the bend, she sat in the idling truck, trying to picture just how seriously he’d be received while sporting a brand new Zorro moustache and matching sideburns in shiny black permanent felt marker. She hoped he wouldn’t be too mad. They had to work together again tomorrow and this was, after all, serious business.

- J.A.

An excerpt from “The Adventures of Hack Garlon and his buxom sidekick Squirt.”

SUCCESS!

is the theme of the
**18th Annual Symposium
of the
Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council**
June 5-6, 2003
Renaissance Vinoy Resort, St. Petersburg, FL

- ✓ Learn how to create and maintain a working exotic pest plant management program
- ✓ Listen as land managers describe successful programs
- ✓ Practice plant identification
- ✓ Know herbicides: which ones to use and how to use them
- ✓ Maintain equipment: keep it safe, efficient and effective

Gather information to take back to the field and use!

Program Chair: Jackie Smith, jackie.c.smith@dep.state.fl.us

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Details will be posted on the FLEPPC website: www.fleppc.org