

notes from the disturbed edge - chapter 12

He had to ask himself, "Why am I doing this?" He was staring at the computer screen, fingers on the keyboard. He'd always thought that it would be easy to sit down and write this, but it just wasn't happening.

For some time he'd been jotting down notes, thoughts, ideas on scraps of whatever was available to write on, and now he had them all spread out in front of him, shuffling bits of paper into interconnected columns and rows like a confetti jigsaw puzzle that was almost ready but still missing a few key pieces. He knew that anyone witnessing this exercise would probably think he was insane, and he kind of liked that.

He'd come to the conclusion quite a while ago that devising a means to convey the breadth and depth of the invasive exotic plant problem to the general populace was the only way to possibly turn the tide. Anyone who already cared already knew. The only real hope lay in reaching the rest of the world. Now he just had to put it into words.

It wasn't that he hadn't written before - he had penned a box full of journal articles and technical publications throughout his education and career, but those were different. They were sound, well-documented compilations of information but, he had to admit, reading them was about as exciting as watching paint dry, and although he saw them occasionally cited as references in other equally scintillating papers, he wasn't sure whether anyone besides his mother had actually read them, and even she had been suspiciously vague about content in follow-up conversations. He wanted to write something different, something that a person from outside the wonderful worlds of land management and botany might read or, heaven forbid, even enjoy. It didn't matter whether the stuff was packaged in a dry journal, a pocket-sized pamphlet, or a slick magazine layout. Nobody in their right mind was going to read it unless it was just the least bit fun, or even a little kooky.

He knew this could work. The whole invasive exotics thing just lent itself so

eagerly to becoming a somewhat twisted metaphor for the human condition, with struggles between old and new, stayed normalcy and self-induced chaos, and parallels or inroads to everything from macroeconomics to theology. It all seemed so clear, so intricately entangled in the stuff of everyday life and transcendent awareness at the same time. He knew that people needed poetry and craziness, imagery and prose, empathy and inspiration. Any text that could pull it all together was almost certainly destined to become a cult classic. He wanted to write something that a reader would never want to end.

This almost certainly was a job for some creatively concocted down-to-earth super-heroes who were larger than life, but not too much larger than conceivable reality. They needed to be a bit edgy, bearing nebulous monikers that could promote some eyebrow raising or stir a little interest. Adam and Eve, Yin and Yang, or Sonny and Cher, cutting line in tandem from Eden to who knew where.

Maybe he could convince just one person that we can all do something to help the earth by spreading awareness or taking action, eating the elephant one bite

at a time. He knew that most people considered the prospect of nuclear war, world hunger, or a scratch in their new car to be of greater concern than the idea of a bunch of plants growing wild, but he knew he had to try. Maybe just one person would take one step towards sanity or sustainability in a world run amok, and that couldn't be a bad thing.

He was ready to dig deep into common human experience and that long list of the things we all realize we could or should have done, to tell a tale as it emerged from his daily stream of consciousness. He didn't know how it would end, and at this point he didn't even know how it would start.

This wasn't going to be easy, but he thought it was possible and he knew it was necessary, and so he began, imagining that one day someone might stop him on the street, grasp his forearm, look him in the eye and tell him that their outlook on life had been changed by reading about a character who had sat at a keyboard and asked, "Why am I doing this?"

- J.A.

An Excerpt from "*The Adventures of Hack Carlon and His Buxom Sidekick Squirt*"

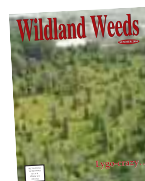
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