

# Notes From The Disturbed Edge

## Chapter 3

Last night he'd dreamed that he was falling, tumbling headlong through layer after layer of clawing vegetation, crashing downward but never hitting bottom, grasping at crumbling branches and crackling leaves as he hurtled down and down.... memories of the invasive exotic vegetation he'd laid waste to, never ending, haunting his sleep.

Every morning he drove out of town, down a two lane road lined like some obscene botanical Champs d'Elysees of Australian pine, crossed ditches with banks infested with Brazilian pepper, past cypress heads draped thick with Old World climbing fern from floor to canopy, through neighborhoods landscaped with carrotwood trees and *Bischofia*, past abandoned ag lands that had become earleaf acacia and melaleuca tree farms. They loomed over and around him like silent specters, waved in the breeze like rank upon rank of the unstoppable barbarian hordes. Everywhere he looked they flaunted their superiority and dared him to take a swing.

He'd spend all day in the heat or the cold, the dust or the damp, or some other intriguing combination of the elements, and then climb back into his truck and make the drive home. What he saw along the way had hit him hard tonight. It was like he had enhanced perception, true-view, a special filter in his brain that distinguished good from evil, in a color-coded spectrum. Natives glimmered across the rainbow's spectrum, but the aliens stood flat black, moving like a storm cloud, consuming

the horizon. Was he insane? He'd never be able to overtake this monster. How could he ever think he was going to even make a dent, let alone instigate some drastic reversal? He was outnumbered, outgunned, powerless, useless. Who'd have thought a simple rural road could stir such passion? But it did. He could barely breathe.

Amidst the depths of his despair he heard her voice crackle across the radio. "Hey- I got done down there - I'm headin' home. You?"

He swallowed hard "Yeah, I'm headin'- somewhere..."

Uh-oh. She recognized that tone. "You OK?"

"I don't know..." he slowly answered "...Am I insane?"

"Hell yeah!" she shot back.

"No. I'm serious. How am I ever gonna do this, you know, really accomplish anything?"

There was a long silence. He felt embarrassed, whining over the radio. He never should have said anything. Should have just not answered her, just quietly quit and gone to look for a job where he could measure success in dollars and cents. But then her voice came across the radio again.

"I'll help you ..." He smiled as she continued speaking. "See you tomorrow? Same bat channel?"

"Yeah" he answered through a spreading grin, shaking his head, "see you tomorrow".

He ran a finger along the corner of his eye, adjusted his sunglasses and hat, and grinned at his reflection in the rearview. Disgusting. He stared out the window at the silent alien onlookers, took a deep breath, and raised a finger to salute them: "Manana, we dance". As for tonight, he decided, he would dream about fishing.

- J.A.

**An excerpt from "The Adventures of Hack Garlon and his buxom sidekick Squirt."**