

notes from the disturbed edge - chapter 10

She had been sitting at the table next to the men's room door for what seemed like forever, holding her now-empty Styrofoam coffee cup and wondering what on earth could be going on in there. They were on one of those blessed-coolness-of-air-conditioning lunch breaks, on a sweltering summer day. Despite the heat outside she was in her standard get-up of long pants, boots, and long sleeve shirt, and already two women had given her that look she'd seen before, not knowing whether to drop a coin in her cup or just look away. Grimy field clothes always made a girl feel like a woman – a woman who had slept in the bushes. It would be a while before either of them saw a commode again, but what was going on in there?

She heard the door creak and turned her head just in time to see his face emerge with a weird look. "Pssst. Get in here. You gotta see this to believe it," he hissed, gesturing her inside. She didn't have to utter a word – her eyes said it all – *no way, absolutely not*. He knew how to read that look. "No," he continued, but then interrupted himself, "– man, you really do think I'm twisted, don't you?" She silently replied with a strong affirmative glance. "You really do have to come see this, it's...art, (*her expression shifted from disgust to puzzlement*) inspiration, literature!" He held up a roll of toilet paper with writing all over it. OK, so now she was interested. "It's...Poetry!" He held up the wad of toilet paper like Moses on the mountaintop. She was hooked.

Warily, but with increasing curiosity, she rose from her seat and sidled over to the door. "What the heck is going on?" He started rambling: "It's the ultimate bathroom graffiti – an Ode, a message from one our own kind, but it's long. If I could just drag a photocopy machine in here and hold it up against the wall I would, but I don't even have any real paper – go get a field book! Go! Go!" he urged her, as he ducked back into the bathroom to continue his insane work. Shaking her head, not believing she was doing this, she complied and returned, knocking tentatively at the door. The door opened abruptly and he scanned the perimeter. "Come on in," he indicated with a jerk of his neck. "We both have to scribble this down before it's erased forever by some overzealous cleanup crew." He was like a man possessed. "I can't go in there – it's the MEN's room," she protested. "What if someone sees me?" He rolled his eyes and then let them take a walk from her combat boots up to her summer-swelter hairdo tucked into her baseball cap, then looked her straight in the eye. "Come on in, Fred." She followed him.

Later that night, long after they'd emerged from the men's room and finished their day's work, they sat at his computer under the glow of a single bare light bulb and transcribed from their scraps of paper, vowing to spread this Desiderata of the exotic invasion by word of wall wherever they would wander.

– J.A.

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

Where the Backyards Meet the Backwoods

Where the white lines of the highway
fade to twin tracks in the grass
there's an ecotone where the weeds have grown
as the semis fly on past

There's a well-worn assumption
that it's somebody else's turf
but the fact remains that it's our domain
And we gotta work together
if we wanna save the earth

Among the lush greenery
of our suburban sprawl
there's an alien invasion waiting to happen
just beyond the garden wall

There's a common misconception
that all that's green is good
But the fact is there're probably out of place plants
growing in your neighborhood

Where the backyards and the backwoods meet
at this week's outer edge
there's an infestation taking place
on the other side of the hedge

Introduction through horticulture
has proved a foreign flora source
and the way we're headed now
ain't a sustainable course

We're putting a crimp in diversity
by putting aesthetics first
and our garden's seeds just make more weeds
so it just keeps getting worse

We've brought them here from around the world
Australia to Japan
But they've escaped from our cultivation
and foiled Mother Nature's plan

Imported from the forests
of another hemisphere
without the pests that keep them in check
they're out of control over here

We've spent so much of the people's cash
to buy the lands that remain
But there's a heck of a lot to be lost
after so much has been gained

There are problems on plenty of fronts
and money is never the least
because it takes substantial funding
to do battle with this beast

We've got to manage the lands we acquire
to keep the invaders at bay
and each time we plant another one
it's just more that we'll have to pay

It's hard to convince anyone
that we're not doing what we should
but the fact remains we've got problems spreading
from our back yards to our backwoods

Without regulation or education
we've planted anything we care
and now the fruits of our ignorance
are germinating everywhere

They're pushing out the natives
growing where they oughta be
And as a crow flies, he's an effective vector
if you nurture the wrong tree

Once they get established
it's hard to beat them back
So plant the plants and weed the weeds
resist the alien attack

This is a genuine problem
that only a few folks recognize
So we gotta spread the word, if we wanna make it heard
Gotta open up their eyes

There's a well-worn assumption
that it's somebody else's turf
but the fact remains that it's our domain
And we gotta work together
if we wanna save the earth.

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