he 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.” She didn’t have to utter a word – her eyes said it all – 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 hissed, gesturing his inside. “You really do have to come see this, it’s…art, (her expression shifted from disgust to puzzlement) inspiration, literature!”

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.”