

notes from the disturbed edge - chapter 14

The fun definitely never seemed to end for them. Five hours earlier, she'd seen him trundle north as she'd headed south, scouting for outliers among the flatwoods. The plants were there to be treated, but they were few and far between, so the day had involved a lot of solitary walking, which was good. It gave her time to think about things, about her life. Weather-wise, it was a perfect day for a change, but she'd worked up a sweat and acquired a patina of dirt and dust. She felt at peace, felt strong and limber and alive. She felt she'd done good work today for herself and for Mother Earth.

She heard him coming before she saw him, whistling as he strode down the trail, the absence of that telltale slosh telling her he'd used up the contents of his backpack sprayer. She heard the light metal clang of his machete blade pushing aside branches in the path. She saw him in her mind's eye far before he came around the bend, and then he came into the clearing and just stood there, looking at her. She waited for what seemed like forever, and finally asked him, "What are you looking at?" and there was no hesitation in his reply.

"You." The single word escaped his smiling face as if he were a traveler arriving at the end of a long journey intended only to deliver him to stand in this place and say it.

"Oh." This was unexpected.

She felt something - maybe it was just all the major arteries surrounding her brain contracting, but more likely it was her social alert mechanism, the reference librarian in the corner of her mind who catalogued away her missteps and faux pas, and kept them neatly arranged so they could easily be paraded before her at a moment's notice in the aftermath of another disaster - that told her this was one of those times when she should just say nothing, to avoid digging a hole deep enough to bury herself in, but something else closer to the surface, something ethereal and warm and just far enough away from that blood-starved brain, told her it was OK to go on, to just roll with her gut reaction, and she dove head first. "And what do you see?" She felt the librarian tearing pell-mell down the corridors of her medulla to fetch that ultimate I-told-you-

so reminder off the deepest darkest archives the moment she completed the sentence, but it was too late. She had dived, or dove, or whatever else the librarian would not approve of, and once again he immediately replied with another perfect single word. "Everything."

This was way beyond the unexpected, but somehow it felt right, as if a moment of truth had arrived. Again her head was reeling, feeling that same librarian now converted to a cause by two simple words, throwing down the lists of bygone blunders and frantically thumbing through the stacks, wanting to do nothing but dredge up the ideal poetic response from some perfect archaic source, but her gut, her reliable gut, took the wheel and allowed her to simply whisper "oh" again, as she felt the librarian clench her fists and bite her lip and giggle with a foolish grin.

But after that she was speechless, realizing that she could hear her heart pounding a mile a minute, and swore that she could feel the damn thing going "pitty pat." What the hell was going on here? This was crazy. The man she had spent so much time working beside was looking at her and talking mush, and she was swooning. Aaah! Never trust a man who whistles after more than five hours of hard work. Now the racket of her heartbeat was upstaged by her breathing, deep and huffy. She tried to convince herself that she was just hyperventilating, in need of nothing more than a paper bag and a few minutes with her head between her knees, but he was still just standing there, looking straight at her. She closed her eyes momentarily but the librarian interceded, dancing on the back of her retinas, and giving her a crazy-ass double thumbs up. She snapped her eyes open and there he was right next to her, looking full of concern, on the verge of speaking. She looked into his eyes and realized that, for some time now, she had possessed the ability to understand exactly what he was thinking without either of them having spoken a word. Now he was afraid he'd overstepped the boundaries of their relationship, and he didn't know whether to say something more. Thank goodness she wasn't alone on this roller coaster of sense and sensitivity.

She was pretty sure that he felt the same as she did, but she also knew why she felt herself hesitating. She loved to dance, but she'd always liked the way she felt when she danced by herself - not alone but by herself - and she'd always felt that even attempting to dance as half of a couple had only made her feel awkward. She recognized that he was one with whom things could be not too complicated, and yet not too simple. It was an elusive balance, an enviable partnership, and hard to find.

She saw his lips begin to move, on the verge of saying something, but she summoned her willpower, managed to break free of her monosyllabic cooing, to utter three words in a row, "Don't say anything." And suddenly, everything around them was quiet, as if the woods themselves had heeded her words (or, hey, maybe she was having a mild stroke) except for the sound of birds singing and the whisper of the breeze. Peripheral vision faded (how far to the closest hospital?) and all she saw was him. She realized she was sweating profusely, definitely disheveled and probably stinky, but she felt radiant. This really blew her mind, but she simply accepted it. She reached out her hand and placed it in his and they stood like a pair of grimy little Hummel figurines, just staring at one another, both of them allowing themselves to see each other in this way for, maybe, the first time.

Again she asked him, in a way that would with time become their trademark phrase, "What are you looking at?" and again he replied, without hesitation, "You," and once again reduced to cooing, she barely whispered "Oh" and kissed him.

She had come to realize, perhaps a while ago, maybe a second ago, that hearts that are brave are hearts set free, and some folks are just meant to be together. In the end, despite all our insecurities and posturing, it is Love that makes the world go 'round.

THE END

- J.A.

An excerpt from "*The Adventures of Hack Garlon & His Buxom Sidekick Squirt*"

epilogue

Dear Fellow FLEPPC Members:

This has been quite a ride - I hope that you've enjoyed it as much as I have. In the summer of 2001, I left my office at lunchtime and drove my minivan to a shopping strip mall to pick up my shoes from a repair shop.

Somewhere along the way I was inspired to write what became the first chapter of this Wizard of Oz odyssey that has continued quarterly since then. Now I awaken dazed from the dream, and see you looking down at me, asking where have I been. The answer of course is that I have been on a journey with you. You are the strong, sensitive, intelligent, outspoken, and crazy heroes of this story. You embody the knowledge, foresight, initiative and humanity that he and she possess, and together you are an unbeatable team.

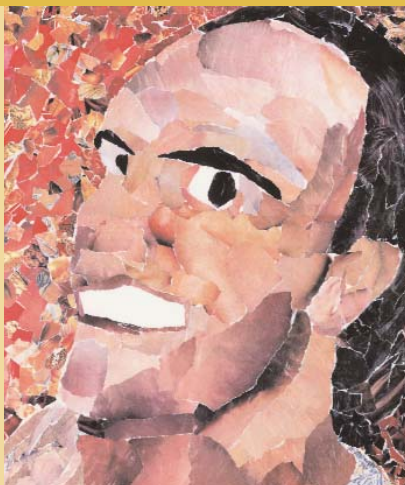
Thank you for granting me supposed anonymity for the past few years. Your consideration has allowed me to let this story self-evolve in a vacuum relatively devoid of prompting. I hope that angle didn't seem too weird, but it just worked best that way.

Thank you to my muse, the Goddess of the Moon, for your constant encouragement, and many thanks to The Fern Queen, who read Chapter 1 and expressed her support by publishing it. Look what can happen with just one spark of positive energy.

And so this story ends, but continues. Live it, and love it. There is work to be done.

Thank you,

J.A. (a/k/a Tom Fucigna)



PRESENTS



A series of seminars and field tours held throughout south Florida to demonstrate biologically based melaleuca management strategies.

What will be featured?

- Mechanical and chemical control techniques
- Biological control
- Integrated management

Who should attend?

- Public and private land managers
- Land owners and homeowners
- Vegetation management professionals
- Tree trimmers
- Anyone interested in melaleuca management

Where and when?

- Lee County – **February 15 & 16, 2005**
- Broward County – **March 10-12, 2005**
- Collier, Hendry and Palm Beach Counties – To be announced

Details on demonstration dates, locations, and registration will be posted on the TAME Melaleuca website

<http://tame.ifas.ufl.edu>

CEUs available.

INDEX TO WILDLAND WEEDS *continued*

Laroche, F.B.	Cost Comparison of Melaleuca Treatment Methods (S-04)
Lopez-Zamora, I.	Below Ground Competitive Strategies: The Root of the Melaleuca Problem in a South Florida Flatwoods (S-04)
Meisenburg, M.J.	Melaleuca as an Allergen: Setting the Record Straight (S-04)
Silvers, C.	Status and Impacts of the Melaleuca Biological Control Program (S-04)
<i>Milicoccus bijugatus</i>	
Clark, D.	Weeds are Still "Weeds" in Paradise (W-03)
<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>	
Neal, J.C.	Japanese stiltgrass (<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>) Identification and Management (W-02)
Allison, J.	2002 Privet Pull & Microstegium Massacre (S-03)
<i>Paulownia tomentosa</i>	
Johnson, K.	Exotic Plant Management through the Seasons at Great Smoky Mountains National Park (SU-03)
<i>Pueraria lobata</i>	
Johnson, K.	Exotic Plant Management through the Seasons at Great Smoky Mountains National Park (SU-03)
<i>Rose multiflora</i>	
Johnson, K.	Exotic Plant Management through the Seasons at Great Smoky Mountains National Park (SU-03)
<i>Schefflera actinophylla</i>	
Possley, J.	Exotic Species Threaten Rare Ferns in Miami-Dade County (SU-04)
<i>Schinus molle</i>	
Cuda, J.P.	Brazilian Peppertree Seed Chalcid: Wasp Wages War on Widespread Weed (W-02)
Langeland, K.A.	Evaluation of Three Glyphosate Products for Controlling Adventitious Sprouting of Melaleuca and Brazilian Pepper Tree Stumps (F-02)
<i>Senna pendula</i> var. <i>glabrata</i>	
Langeland, K.A.	Merry Christmas Senna (W-03)
Langeland, K.A.	Evaluation of Foliar Application Herbicides for Control of Christmas Senna (W-03)
<i>Syngonium podophyllum</i>	
Possley, J.	Exotic Species Threaten Rare Ferns in Miami-Dade County (SU-04)
<i>Triphasia trifolia</i>	
Clark, D.	Weeds are Still "Weeds" in Paradise (W-03)
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	
Johnson, K.	Exotic Plant Management through the Seasons at Great Smoky Mountains National Park (SU-03)
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	
Johnson, K.	Exotic Plant Management through the Seasons at Great Smoky Mountains National Park (SU-03)