



# THE ARMADILLO FOREST & THE BIO-ECONOMY

BY ETIENNE DOYLE

## OR THE JOYS & NIGHTMARES OF SOUTH FLORIDA FOREST DEFENSE

All our language is woven from animal hair.

—ROBERT BLY, *THE NIGHT ABRAHAM CALLED TO THE STARS*—

I am come in very truth leading you to Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave...the mechanical inventions of recent years do not merely exert a gentle guidance over Nature's courses, they have the power to conquer and subdue her, to shake her to her foundations.

—SIR FRANCIS BACON, *THE MASCULINE BIRTH OF TIME*—

I said to the saw palmetto: "Sister, speak to me of God." And the saw palmetto blossomed.

—ADAPTED FROM NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS, *REPORT TO GRECO*—

### CHRYSLIS AND CONCRETE

The Interstate of Powdered Bone bisects the Briger forest, which some call the Briger Tract or Indian Creek site #33, carrying the bodies of busy shadows through the forgotten land of miracles—wetlands, fire thirsty pine forests, and secret animal conspiracies. Anastacia calls it the Armadillo forest.

Anastacia is seven. She is in a beautiful world buried in mango blossoms, concrete, and the warm sparkling twilight of dystopia. She has green eyes speckled variously with gray, purple and yellow. It's late winter and the weather is warm. The air is salty and windy, tinted with the smell of mulberries and diesel gas. The sun is sitting heavy over the pines and the concrete facades of wealth. Anastacia sits at the edge of the forest counting cars, awaiting an invitation from an armadillo.

The Briger is skirted by the Avenue of Biotechnology at its northern edge, Hood Road to the south, Polished Glass street to the west, and Beach Fox lane to the east. Once a rather boisterous and comedic commu-

nity known for their love of travel and adventure, it is only seldom now that a beach fox dares to peak beyond her home in the sea grape forests of the coast. The last festival to host armadillos and foxes cavorting together took place just after the construction of Beach Fox lane, twelve years ago. Several foxes died on the crossing home.

And it is not a very large forest anymore. The hundred mile fingers of cabbage palm and pine habitat no longer press, uninterrupted, through marsh and sugar sand to mix with the Loxahatchee river, Hungreysland Slough, the Corbett, or Dupruis further west—remnants of the wild and estranged underbelly of the South. Anastacia, with a good machete or a snake's slither, could cross what's left of the Briger, from highway to highway, in three or four hours.

In a sterile building ornamented with exotic plants a large man finalizes a zoning permit. The Briger forest will be felled, parcels of trees mitigated into pockets around trenched ponds, endangered species will be gathered by biologists and relocated to eco-ghettos. Species without a designation of concern will be trampled and dispersed indiscriminately. Pipes will be laid, streets woven in, and enormous biotech labs and vivariums will glitter through the remaining pines, the squirms and screams of the organisms inside muted by sanitized walls. The new economy is coming to the South. The glint of a sounder money making scheme than the old economy has that modernizing ring—the development of alternative biofuels, nanotechnology, posh onsite apartments, boutiques, and restaurants for technocrats from California, Sweden and France, and the whole pharmacopoeia of genetically modified and patented life.

*This way*, a rustle whispers. The thin hairy tail of an armadillo, the one Anastacia calls Thea, disappears into the undergrowth, beckoning with little formality. Anastacia keeps her head low and unmoving, but

watches with her eyes for a moment when no cars are passing. Her heart feels warm as she waits. She finds her moment and follows the invitation into the thick understory.

The pounding sun creates an eclipse through the density of forest, casting long shadows. Anastacia is small for her age which is a great benefit. Saw palmetto, with serrated fronds, grows upwards and in almost total density below the pines to over eight feet. A small person, however, can find where the density subsides. Below three feet secret paths form, weaving between the impenetrable walls. It takes a special eye to find them, to follow the smaller trails of bobcat, racoon, opossum, and armadillo. Anastacia has special eyes.

*Pause here* Thea motions. The small armored creature looks deep at Anastacia. Time passes. A small burst of rain comes and goes.

A patch of pennyroyal blossoms glow blue-purple. The smell of wild fennel floats over the crisp pine fragrance. Thea unlocks her gaze and rushes off quickly, burrowing under a large palmetto root. Anastacia sits, winded from the crawl-climb-slash of moving through saw palmetto. She has a small cut above her eye. The warmth of the coagulated blood is comforting to her.

As she lays back in the sugar sand, she looks up at the exact moment that another cloud releases a brief slip of warm rain. It mists her eyes and it feels warm like crying or laughing hard. Its a promising omen to her. The pines are whipping, almost in dance, and the cabbage palms, with their alien structures, remind her of nothing. They are unto themselves. She stands up and raises her arms, takes to flight in a spin, and falls down laughing. These moments for her are once upon a time and she can imagine many endings. She knows all of the endings.

On the horizon she sees the twisting spire of a biotech building, the Scripps tower, tangling the vertical forest in a kind of gross mediation. Its the kind of building that will soon move into the pinelands and replace them. It looks like a syringe injecting the sky. She can hear the construction of the Max Planck Institute, a German bio-science operation, across the street. Its the same organization at odds with the Apache over the invasion and construction of an observatory on the sacred peak of Mt. Graham in Arizona. *When will construction start here? she wonders. It will come very fast and the forest will be gone.*

**Iatrogenic**—A medical term indicating an ailment caused by a cure, such as impotence induced by antidepressants, addiction to prescription painkillers, or an unhealthy dependence on indoor heating and air conditioning. “There was an old lady who swallowed a fly...”

—FROM *ROLLING THUNDER* No. 2—

**Iatrogenic**—Foremost among today’s iatrogenic (doctor-induced) diseases is the pretense of doctors that they provide their clients with superior health. This, while new sicknesses are constantly defined and institutionalized, and the cost of enabling people to survive in unhealthy cities and sickening jobs continues to skyrocket. The monopoly of the medical profession now extends over an increasing range of everyday occurrences in every person’s life, and preservation of the sick life of medically dependent people in an unhealthy environment has become its principal business.”

—FROM IVAN ILLICH’S *TOOLS FOR CONVIVIALITY*—

She hears the rustle of the armadillo again. It is somewhere deep in the roots below her and moving south. Every so often it stops and pushes a subterranean thump to call her forward.

She pushes back into the saw palmetto, soon to blossom their medicinal berries. Her feet and knees push her quickly and there is the sound of crashing as she collides with gray dead fronds. She looks down to keep her footing and traces patches of black soil, white sand, decaying branches. She looks up. A tall man wearing a variety of instruments towers over her.

“What are *you* doing out here? You are trespassing,” says the man. He is handsome and has a friendly but concerned face. She averts her eyes. He is not a cop. He is a biologist working for the Fish and Wildlife Commission. He is holding a wrap of orange tape and a wrap of white tape stripped with blue.

“What are you doing here?” Anastacia asks in return. A cloud opens up with a small spatter of rain again. They both pause to take it in.

“I’m marking gopher tortoise burrows for relocation and marking trees with endangered ferns and bromeliads to be saved for transplant. I’m also looking for wood stork rookeries. I don’t think there are any of those left in this forest. Do your parents know where you are? Are you with the tree-sitters?”

“What about the rest? What about the armadillos? What about the eagles and bobcats?”

“Those are not protected darling. The eagles will find a new place to hunt and the armadillos, well, there are lots of them in this part of the country. I’m sure the bobcats will move on.”

“What about all these pine, all the palmetto and the flowers? What about the forest?”

“Its going to be developed. The permits are in order. Your parents can take you to the state park.”

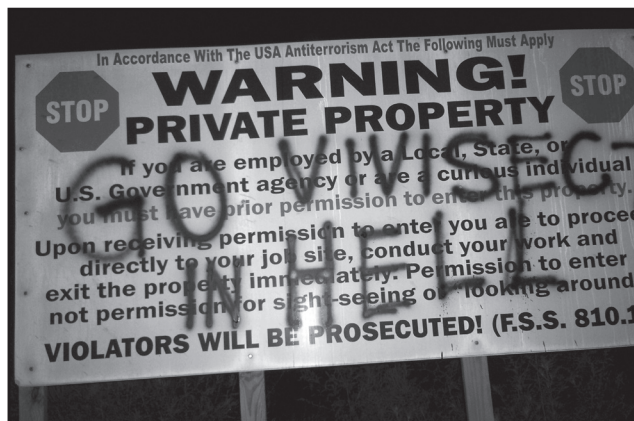
Anastacia stands in the shadow of a tall man. She is determined never to speak to him again. They do not have a language in common. They speak from two different worlds. She rushes into the thick understory as he calls out to her to come back, to be careful.

## THERE IS A NIGHTMARE WAR OVER LIFE

On March 9, 2010, an underground cell of the Animal Liberation Front sends an encrypted email to Scripps researcher Howard Fox. With no return address the message explains that they have placed an incendiary device (25% fine powder aluminum and 75% fine powder iron oxide) in his vehicle parked outside the bio-pharmaceutical company's La Jolla facility. Having received the message he paces in his lab. Beyond the sound proof walls primates injected with methamphetamines and the Simian Immunodeficiency Virus wait to die.

Several months later in September 2010, members of an ALF cell infiltrate Primate Products, Inc in Doral, Florida just outside of Miami, a leading distributor of primates and restraining devices to vivariums around the world including Huntingdon Life Sciences and Scripps. What they unveil is a hidden world of crushed skulls, scraped and seared flesh, and human supremacy. Images of the tortured animals are leaked to the media and the Food and Drug Administration. Donald Bradford, president of Primate Products glances over his shoulder, flicks his cigar, and walks toward a media crew waiting to interview him outside of the vivarium.

On May 8, 2011 another cell throws down a middle of the night blockade at Primate Product's secret breeding facility along the edge of the Big Cypress swamp and the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge near Immokalee. Truck tires, logs, and cement blocks are chained and tarred to impede the arrival of vivisectors to a "primadadaptation" conference. The brochure for the event highlights a course on turning "naive" primates into "willing workers." An anti-terrorism sign near the entrance is spray painted and a banner reads "No Primate Products," "No Scripps."



Over a period of years, Corninne Lasmezas, a scientist with the department of infectology at Scripps Florida heads up a study on the transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy to nonhuman primates. BSE, also known as mad cow disease, is caused by forced bovine cannibalism. The factory meat industry, in order to cut costs, has been known to feed their beef cattle the remains of ground up cattle, and

specifically sick cattle that they can not sell on the market to humans. In the study, brain particulate from infected cows is fed to macaque monkeys imported from the wild or bred in captivity by companies like Primate Products. What follows for the macaques is rendered in emotionless scientific jargon: *truncal ataxia* (impaired motor function), *hypermetria* (loss of voluntary movements), *dysesthesia* (unpleasant sensations produced by ordinary stimuli), *priapism* (persistent and painful erections), *myoclonus* (uncontrollable and shock-like twitching of muscles), paralysis, withdrawal, depression, death and autopsy. Their opened brains show rot and liquefaction. The study concludes that primates are susceptible to infection from contaminated cow brain.

Biotechnology is creating a new industrial revolution based on biology instead of petroleum. As biotech processes replace old rust-belt technologies, they are enabling a transformation from a petroleum-based economy to a bio-based economy.

—B. ERICKSON, BIOTECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION—

This burgeoning "bioeconomy" conceives the planet as a closed system to be managed and claims to establish the foundations for a science that would integrate all the parameters of life...video-surveillance cameras, spirituality, biotechnologies and sociability all belong to the same "civilizational paradigm" now taking shape, that of a total economy rebuilt from the ground up. Its intellectual matrix is none other than cybernetics, the science of systems—that is, the science of their control.

In the 17th century it was necessary, in order to completely impose the force of economy and its ethos of work and greed, to confine and eliminate the whole seamy mass of layabouts, liars, witches, madmen, scoundrels and all the other vagrant poor, a whole humanity whose very existence gave the lie to the order of interest and continence. The new economy cannot be established without a similar screening of subjects and zones singled out for transformation.

—THE INVISIBLE COMMITTEE, *THE COMING INSURRECTION*—

## PINELAND CANOPY OCCUPATION

"Is the banner ready to unfurl" a tired voice yells out over the rush of interstate traffic. She is anchored into a spindly 50 foot pine tree, pulling a line around to set a traverse. "Yeah, but the line seems loose." Another climber in another tree is preparing to drag a banner that reads "Defend this Forest" out over a line between two pines. They had spent the nights previous setting up a tree further back in the forest with hammocks, water, food, and tarps, preparing for a long term canopy occupation to block the destruction of the forest and the construction of the Scripps biotech city. The grass-



roots environmental group responsible for the forest occupation has a history of fighting Scripps.

From 2004 to 2006, activists fought and defeated the project from its initial site, a 2,000 acre fallow orange orchard along side of a 60,000 acre wildlife management area just northwest of the Briger. They chained the gates to the construction site, interrupted meetings with government officials, biotech lobbyists, and developers, visited the oceanfront condo of former Scripps CEO Richard Lerner (also a consultant for Philip Morris through the Molecular Science Institute and a director of Kraft Foods) and they held public rallies in opposition. Though over thirty-eight million dollars of concrete, labor and litigation hit the site, a judge ordered the development to cease for lack of a proper Environmental Impact Statement. The developers surrendered the site and regrouped around the Briger.

"Look, an eagle!" one of the climbers shouts. A giant bald eagle hovers for a moment over the spot where forest and interstate collide and then turns East. "I don't have enough steel links," the other responds.

By noon camera crews, local sheriffs, and a Homeland Security SUV arrive. With the banner unfurled the two climbers withdraw to the interior tree to rest off the night's work in hammocks suspended forty feet over the thick saw palmetto below, far enough back to keep cherry-pickers out of reach. One of them dreams of the sound of the ocean rising up and blending with the rush of semi-trucks. The ocean turns dark black and turbulent. A spinner shark leaps from the water's surface and its eyes glow brilliant green then murky red. The other dreams of armadillos, thousands of them, climbing to the tops of the trees, escaping a flood. They pour over the climbers position like ants.

*The canopy occupation continues for over a month before police arrest the activists and cut all the trees connected to their site.*

## CONSPIRACY

The sun is falling towards the west.

The humidity and salty air begin to prepare for rest. "This is Anastacia," Thea motions to the others gathered in the center of the forest. Anastacia is surrounded by hundreds of armadillos in a dark cabbage palm jungle. She can see many of their small faces lit by the thin fibrous strands of sun that fleck through the canopy of fronds. There are also tortoises and lizards present. Whispers and excited deep breaths rise and fall, filling the understory. Even the tall whispering grasses seem to move with conspiratorial intention.

"You are gathering to defend this forest? You know what is happening" she asks, stuttering.

"Soon we go on the offensive. We will," Thea responds "and there are others too. People may be adaptable to the loss of places like this. But we are not. We live and die right here. We have received correspondence from forces in Cascadia, Italy, Haiti, and Mexico. And we have you with us now. Thank you for coming."

Between living and dreaming there is a third thing.  
Guess it.

—ANTONIO MACHADO—

There are many possible ends for the Armadillo forest. It survives. It is cleared. The biotech mega-project is born. It cures cancer. It causes cancer. The armadillos are slaughtered, tossed head-long under bumpers and bulldozers. The armadillos are victorious. Dreams are realized, dreams are void. The ocean opens up, red and purple, over the Interstate of Powdered Bone. Relationships are born anew.

Blood will be fixed on the ocean and the forest, the dark spaces, the white caps, the bromeliads—but also the underworld. Behind your face, turned away, will be another face.

—THEA THE ARMADILLO—

*The campaign to save the Briger Forest is ongoing. As of today the final development order has not been given. Everglades Earth First! as well as other environmental and animal rights organizations are actively engaged in its defense. Keep an ear out for part II of this tale of truth and legend in a future issue of the EF! Journal.*

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