

Greg Wagner

Atlantis
Rising

An Epic Comedy

This book is a work of fiction. The characters, dialogue, and situations are drawn exclusively from the author's imagination and are not to be considered real. Any resemblance is purely coincidental.

Copyright© 2023 Greg Wagner Books

www.gregwagnerbooks.com

Also By Greg Wagner:

Almost Super – A Heroic Tale

**Trouble in Paradise - A Psychedelic Encounter of the
Extraterrestrial Kind**

Dragons Don't Grow On Trees – A Magical Tail

You Lie - A Cautionary Tail

At the End of Forever – A Historical Action Novel

The Adventures of Esme The Wonder Dog

The New Adventures of Esme The Wonder Dog with Abby

I would like to thank (in this order) my amazing wife Roberta, Wikipedia, Google Maps and YouTube, because without any of the above this novel would not have happened.

Prologue - 7 -

Chapter 1 - 9 -

Chapter 2 - 15 -

Chapter 3 - 21 -

Chapter 4 - 30 -

Chapter 5 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 6 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 7 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 8 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 9 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 10 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 11 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 12 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 13 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 14 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 15 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 16 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 17 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 18 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 19 Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 20 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 21 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 22 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 23 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 24 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 25 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 26 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 27 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 28 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 29 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 30 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 31 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 32 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 33 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 34 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 35 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 36 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 37 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 38 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Chapter 39 *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Prologue

Okrachokee Beach, North East Florida's best kept secret. Isolated from civilization by seemingly endless swampland and winding rivers, it is only accessible by Florida State Road 200 and the Coastal Highway.

The tiny coastal town boasts more senior citizen communities per capita than any other in the US. It has no airport, seaport, or train station, but hosts three national parks and countless nature preserves. Mangroves are a common sight as are manatees and alligators, mainly because the majority of the real estate in Okrachokee Beach was created by decades of draining and filling in their habitat.

Unlike many coastal cities, Okrachokee Beach doesn't want tourists. In fact, they go to great lengths to make sure people stay away. Air BNB's are illegal and the town has strict occupancy and zoning laws so that hotels are almost impossible.

There are no Welcome signs at the city limits. No flower filled planters. The one public beach is in such disrepair that any tourists who make it through the intimidation gauntlet turn right around and leave without getting out of their cars. The private gated beaches, on the other hand, are kept pristine by an army of town workers, who patrol regularly with a vast array of very expensive machinery.

Not much changes in Okrachokee Beach. Life is uneventful and mostly adequate, just the way the town's people like it.

That is all about to change.

May you live in interesting times.

Old English blessing/curse

Chapter 1

Fifty-four-year-old handyman Rick Baldwin perched precariously on the top of a very tall ladder at the Okrachokey Beach Sunshine Senior Center cleaning palm leaves out of the rain gutters. *Damn I hate ladders*, he thought as he carefully shifted his weight so he could reach a little farther along before having to climb down and move the ladder again. Every time it wobbled, he died a little more inside.

A small group of white haired ladies sat by the pool in their flowered one piece bathing suits minding the affairs of the world and setting the record straight.

"Well I like the way his package hangs down just so." Agnes Crabapple cackled as she held her hand out with her fingers spread and made a suggestive squeezing motion. "Oh I just wanna, umph,"

Barbara snickered, "Oh yeah, I'd eat those nuts for breakfast."

"*What?*" Evelyn leaned forward with her hand cupped to her ear.

"I SAID I'D EAT THOSE NUTS FOR BREAKFAST!"

"Oh yeah, me too."

Doris smiled dreamily, "I like those leg muscles and the way his hiney dimples right near the edge. I hear he was a championship body builder in his younger days."

"Mmmm, yeah I'd eat those nuts for dinner too," Barbara added.

"What?"

Rick frowned, "You know I can hear everything you ladies are saying."

"I don't care." Barbara laughed and flipped her hand in the air.

"What?" Evelyn leaned forward again.

"Yeah, so what?" Doris snapped, "If you'd put some damn clothes on you might not have that problem."

Rick looked down. The old lady was right, other than the skimpy yellow onsie tank top/workout shorts that he wore almost every day, all he had on was his trusty old moc-toe shit stompers and his favorite black soul man sunglasses. The weather in Northern Florida was its usual blast furnace hot. His current attire made the days much cooler. Not to mention it was good for his tan.

"Go easy on him girls," Agnes chuckled, "I gotta work with him you know."

Barbara ignored her; instead she smiled sweetly, "Are you single?"

"Wait I don't..." he sputtered as he pulled another clump of semi rotten palm leaves out of the gutter and the ladder shifted again.

"My daughter is available you know?" She tilted her head, "A nice Jewish girl might be just what you need."

"No I..."

"What?" Doris burst in, "You aren't gay are you?"

"No I..."

"Humph," she continued, "by the way you're dressed I'd say you are!"

"Now wait a minute..."

"Oh I would understand." Barbara nodded knowingly, "It's no big secret a lot of very good marriages have tended to be a little on the lavender side."

He rolled his eyes, "Ladies look, I am not interested."

"I told you he was gay."

"But I'm not..."

"Whatever!"

With that, the four ladies turned their backs to him and started cackling amongst themselves. Rick reached across to clear another section of gutter and the ladder wobbled for the hundredth time in the last half hour. He felt his heart go into his throat as he hugged the soffit for a few seconds before he finally felt safe again.

He shook his head.

Damn I hate ladders.



Fifteen-year-old Jennifer Miller, (AKA Esmeralda Estaldo) impatiently waved her silk laced bamboo fan and fluttered her long eyelashes as she strolled down the Okrachee Beach boardwalk in her billowing black bustle dress and matching bone corset. She waved at the heat in spite of the broad brimmed hat that she wore to shade her

delicate sensibilities from the harsh sun. A single peacock feather affixed to the band danced in time with her gait.

A small trash can shaped robot wheeled along a few feet behind her. His brass rivets glistened and sparkled in the morning light while a cloud of tiny bubbles whimsically flowed out of a small valve on the side of his head. Every so many feet he would twirl around and do a fair imitation of a 1980s moonwalk.

Jennifer frowned over her shoulder, "Quit showing off you."

The little robot's arms dropped and he hung his metal head but obediently followed after her like the good automaton that he was.

A dark shadow dropped across her path. A group of raggedy figures shuffled across the boardwalk blocking her way. She stopped suddenly and the little robot ran under the back of her bustle skirt.

"Cahfuck!" One of the creatures coughed/yelled.

Another one laughed hysterically and jumped up and down on the balls of his feet, "Oh ho, the queen's shoes smell like butter don't you know!"

"Sage! James!" A heavysset man with a shiny bald head came between and guided them off to the side. "Leave the poor girl alone."

"Hello Esmeralda," A deep voice issued from the center of the group. The bodies parted to reveal a rather unassuming bearded figure in a homespun robe.

Jennifer smiled as she untangled herself from her robot, "Hi Sonny!"

"Nice robot you got there."

"Why thank you, I worked really hard getting him just right."

"Ha!" A muffled voice came from behind her.

"Nobody asked you." She scowled at the little robot and turned back.

"So what brings you to my neck of the woods?"

"Oh, just out for a stroll." She waved her fan casually, "The weather sure is beautiful this morning."

"Yes it is."

"*Shitfuck ass!*" A voice erupted behind Sonny, "No Sage I don't want to see what's behind your back. *Shit ass!* Get away from me!"

"You scoundrel," the other man hooted. "You ne'er-do-well, your mother's eyes have windows."

The large heavysset man interjected again. "I am so sorry Ma'am." He looked pleadingly at Sonny, "I can't do anything with them today."

She nodded, "Um, I better be going."

"Yeah me too," Sonny shrugged, "say hi to your mother for me."

"Pfft," Jennifer rolled her eyes, "yeah right."

"Nowww," he chided, "you know she really cares about you and Josh. She tells me all the time how proud she is of you two."

"Squeak?" The little robot piped up.

She frowned over her shoulder then shook her head, "Oh OK Sonny, for you."

"Thank you Madam," he bowed low with a flourish, "and by all means have a pleasant day."

Sonny had a way of making people feel special. She felt a flush as she curtsied, "I will, and you do the same kind Sir."

They parted ways and she started off down the boardwalk again.

"Squeak squeak." A voice behind her declared.

She spun on the little robot, "What is your problem?"

"It's getting hot in here."

"Just a little bit longer."

"But you said I could take a break."

"I said when we got to the end of the boardwalk."

"But I feel sick and I'm sweating like crazy under here."

"I told you..." she slapped his helmet.

As soon as her hand made contact, her little brother whipped the helmet off and threw it at her. It bounced across the boardwalk and landed in the sand.

"You're mean," he stormed off, "I don't want to play with you anymore."

"Get back here," she yelled after him, "OK that's it, now you're not getting the two dollars I promised."

Chapter 2

I guess being a TV star isn't so bad, forty-seven-year-old Karen Gilder mused as she sat on the couch with her weimaraner Reginald and waited for the handyman to show up to fix her hot water heater, even if it is only public access television.

Back in the day, Karen was a very highly rated social media influencer. She did a Morning Show video podcast before podcasts were even a thing. Fitness, nutrition, lifestyle, cooking, she even convinced a few celebrities to stop by occasionally. She had a YouTube channel back when it was still cool. When live streaming came along, she was one of the first.

For a long time Karen was on fire, likes, adds, subscribers, and shares by the millions and monetization offers by the score. A good solid ten years in a row, her metrics continued to double and triple. The sponsorship and advertising deals were unbelievable. The money just kept rolling in. She was clearing six figures a month by her second year and it seemed like it would never end.

One day she aged out.

Over the course of only a year, she watched helplessly as her channel's followers dwindled from the millions to the hundreds and then oblivion. It was a hard pill to swallow.

That was over five years ago.

Fortunately, I landed a local job.

These days she has settled for just being Karen Gilder, host of Mornings with Karen, Okrachokey Beach's public access morning show.

Reginald licked her face snapping her back into the present just in time to hear the doorbell go through its Westminster cycle a second time. The dog raced her to the door and she swung it open to see a tall half-naked man with long curly white blonde hair standing just outside.

Before she could turn him away, he smiled wide and held up a toolbox, "Rick Baldwin, handyman. You called about a leaky hot water heater?"

She eyed his attire one more time, wistfully noting his bulging muscles and six pack abs, then took a deep breath and unlocked the storm door.

"Sure come on in. The water heater's back here."

She led him down the hallway to the closet/utility room. "It just started leaking this morning. Over here is the shut off valve."

"That's great. I'll have it fixed in a flash," he glanced down at his skimpy yellow onsie, "err um, I mean in a jiffy."

Karen turned around so he couldn't see her smirking as she made her way down the hallway. Reginald stayed behind so she lowered her voice, "Come on boy." They both looked up but only the dog obeyed, reluctantly following her to the kitchen.

For the next several minutes, she heard a lot of banging and clanking going on but barely resisted the urge to check on things. To take her mind off she pulled out a

bag of carob and started making cocoa. After a few seconds, she got up and yelled back the hallway.

"I'm making cocoa, want some?"

"Sure." A voice issued from the closet. "You need me to turn the water back on?"

"No that's ok I have distilled."

"Oh, OK."

She went back to the kitchen followed by more banging and clanking. In no time, Rick came back out carrying his toolbox and some kind of plumbing fixture.

"It was a faulty pressure valve. You're lucky you called when you did. It was on its last leg and when they go, let me tell you, they make an awful mess."

"Oh well, yes. Thank you." She handed him a mug. Reginald took that opportunity to bury his head in the man's crotch and snort loudly.

"Reginald!" She slapped at him.

"Oh no," Rick laughed nervously. "He's just checking me out. Who's a good boy?"

As he was petting the dog, Reginald lifted his leg and started peeing on him. Karen saw it coming a half a second too late. "Reginald! Bad dog!" She shoed him into the living room with his tail between his legs.

She turned back to the handy man. "Mr. Baldwin I am..."

"Rick, please," he chuckled.

"Rick, I am so sorry. Uhhh, he's such a dog sometimes."

"It's OK, I get it a lot."

"I'm sure, but still..." She handed him a wet washcloth.

"No really, it's fine."

Karen sipped at her cocoa to cover her embarrassment. When Rick was done cleaning up he did the same. He nodded and looked around her apartment.

"Oh wait, now I recognize you! Mornings With Karen, Okrachee Beach public access TV. Love your show. I watch it all the time."

"Oh, why thank you. Yes, I used to be a social media influencer you know?" She cursed herself for adding the last part and dug out one of her business cards. As she handed the card across she slapped her leg. "Oh I almost forgot, what do I owe you for today?"

Rick just stared at her.

She watched him for a second. It looked like he was trying not to laugh, but then she noticed his face was beet red. He dropped his mug and started convulsing.

"Oh my God, are you OK?"

"Ghaaa..." He shook his head from side to side. "Whaggat's in thiiiiiss?"

"Just almond milk and carob powder, I use it in the place of cocoa because it's poisonous to Reginald."

"Accck, I'm agllergic to cccaaarob."

While she stood there digesting his words, Rick's neck puffed up and hives broke out all over his face.

"Oh crap, I'll get you some Benadryl." As Karen sprinted back the hallway to the bathroom, she speed dialed Nassau General's emergency department.



Reginald the Weimaraner waited until the humans were gone before he snuck out and started licking the floor where the mug still lay on its side. He couldn't figure out why they were so upset. The Food Lady just didn't understand. All he was trying to do was help the poor beta male out. Any dog worth his weight in kibbles knew that the naked one was never going to impress The Food Lady if he didn't smell right.

Humans are so confusing, he shook his head sadly, their priorities are all screwed up.

From the minute he said hello to the male, to when he tried to help him smell better, Reginald was doomed. *The Food Lady just needs to get laid, then maybe she'd loosen up a little.* He thought, as he continued to lick the floor. *A good bout of humping fixes everything.* When he was done, he walked over and drowned his sorrows in the water bowl.

Why the naked one turned red was the real puzzler. Reginald thought as he dropped to the floor and started rolling around on his back. *He probably just needs to eat some grass and throw it back up, and then of course eat it again.*

Reginald wasn't worried. He wished the naked man would come over more often, that way he got to lick up the spilled carob.

Chapter 3

Sixty-three-year-old Jacque Johnson stood on the foredeck of his eighty-foot expedition yacht and gazed out over the Atlantic Ocean. The surface was dead calm. A great shining blue mirror with wispy cotton candy white clouds on both sides for as far as the eye could see. He was two hours into a paid three-hour "Anything They Can Find" wildlife spotting tour and not a manatee or a Wright whale in sight. In the colder months, you couldn't sail a half a mile without hitting something, but today was a complete no show.

His first mate Stumpy hobbled over and waved his hand conspiringly. "Aye Cap'in, I hate to be the bearer of bad news but the natives are getting restless."

"I know, I know," Jacque shook his great mane of bushy brown hair. "Curse me for a landlubber anyway."

He normally wouldn't have taken the sightseeing charter but he was getting dangerously short on cash. A predicament he found himself in quite a lot lately for some reason.

My father never would have resorted to such silliness, Jacque thought.

Bear Johnson, *god rest his soul*, was a real ocean explorer, a legend in the field. Whether it was fishing for the big ones or diving for treasure, he was always knee deep and sometimes even neck deep in it and he had the income to show. Bear Johnson died at home in his favorite easy chair over ten years ago. Choked to death on a blue marlin fillet from a fish he caught the week before.

I guess in the end the fish had his revenge, he shrugged, so goes the circle of life.

As if on cue, fifty-seven-year-old multi-billionaire Halston Rockefeller III and his twenty something wife Mimi flagged him down. "I say my good fellow. When do we get to see some action?"

Jacque put on his customer service face, barely resisting the urge to scowl, "I'm sorry, but this type of thing is completely out of my control. If you refer to the paperwork you signed there was no guarantee that we would see anything."

"I understand but..."

"Oh wow, like that's a real bummer," another voice interrupted from behind them, as world famous reality star Tammy Curry and her bestie Kim Simpson strolled up, cell phones in hand, even though the wireless signal was nonexistent this far from shore.

"Excuse me young lady," Mimi frowned at the pair, "but my husband was speaking,"

"Pfht, young lady?" Kim scoffed, "I'm probably older than you, and I've got the stretch marks to prove it."

"Speak for yourself oldtard," Tammy laughed and snapped a selfie with her tongue sticking out. She took another with her kissy pout face.

The billionaire's wife frowned down her nose, "Do you even know who we are?"

"Tayaa, like no, as if anyone cares." Kim did a snakehead shake and waved her hand.

"Ha! My husband could buy you two just like that." Mimi tried to snap her fingers but her extra long polygel manicured nails got in the way. She tried a couple more times before grabbing Halston's hand and dragging him off in a huff.

Jacque smiled down at the two girls.

"This is going into my review you know," Kim waved her phone threateningly, "my fans will not be happy." She spun around and stormed away with a swish. Tammy rolled her eyes before following after her bestie, at her own pace of course.

In their wake, a slightly geeky looking fellow wearing a flowered shirt with an overloaded pocket protector materialized.

"Greetings captain, I can't help but notice a profound absence of aquatic mammals on today's tour."

"Ah yes Professor Tanner," Jacque took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

"I could fix that you know," he gave him an amused look, "with your permission of course."

"Hah, well, by all means have at it."

The smaller man pulled out the computer tablet that hung from a holster on his belt and started tapping the screen. "I will need access to the diagnostic port on your sonar system."

"Hunh? Oh sure, follow me."

Jacque led him to the bridge. After pointing out the sonar control unit, he stood back and hummed softly to

himself. The professor tapped at his computer screen a few times then stopped and looked up at him.

"Do you mind not doing that?"

"What?" He asked innocently.

"The humming, it's distracting me."

"Oh, OK, sure thing, no humming," He started tapping his foot instead.

The professor frowned at him, "That too."

"What? Oh come on...OK, well how about if I just wait over here?" He edged out the door and stood at the deck rail fuming to himself. *Damn brainiac know it all, tell me what I can and can't do on my own ship.*

Professor Tanner cleared his throat. Jacque turned around and gave the smaller man a big smile, "All done?"

"Yes, I took the liberty of activating the system," he looked at his watch, "we should see the results in precisely four minutes."

Jacque raised his eyebrows, but kept his mouth shut. He gazed out over the railing at the dead calm water below. After five minutes had passed he started humming.

The other man frowned at him.

They waited another five minutes.

"There must be something wrong." The Professor tapped frantically at his computer screen.

Just as Jacque was ready to give up, tiny bubbles appeared all around the ship. A large clump of seaweed

churned to the surface and smaller fish started jumping close by.

The other passengers came over to see.

"Oh Em Gee, that is like so cool!" Kim giggled.

In less than a minute, the water was boiling with life. Manatees and dolphins crowded into the hundred-foot circle of sonar signal. A Wright whale surfaced not far away. It swam past less than ten feet from the ship and blew a great spray of water up onto the deck. This went on for another few minutes then without warning, the newly surfaced school of fish swam away from the ship in droves. Soon all that was left were the bubbles, which had increased considerably in size and frequency.

The eighty-foot cruise ship swayed to one side. Everyone grabbed the railing except for Professor Tanner who groaned loudly from his position lying on the deck.

Jacque was just about to say something smart assed when the deck rocked and the bow heaved out of the water followed by a huge and rapidly rising rock outcropping. This quickly turned into a green slime covered mountain range as he felt his body go airborne for a brief moment before he slammed headfirst into the bridge wall.

The last thing Jacque remembered as he lost consciousness was the sight of an impossible island sprawling out below him like some ancient lost continent.



Sonny Joseph made his way back to camp with the day's food haul. A half-eaten uramaki sushi roll and a slightly stale bread stick in a small styrofoam take-home tray. He also carried a large shopping bag. When he reached the hidden entrance to the grotto, he looked both ways then ducked under the boardwalk. He followed a low wall for a few yards before he made another turn that brought him to a large open area. Before he stepped out, he put the styrofoam tray in the shopping bag. His lifelong friend Peter met him as he walked up.

Peter stabbed a bony finger at him and growled, "I'm telling you Sonny you need to do something about these freaks."

"What is it now Peter?" He sighed.

In answer, his friend waved a hand toward the fire where two younger men sat bickering.

"Junk your hand truck!" Sage chortled.

"*Cahfuck!* Stay away from me Sage!" James yelled, eyes bulging, "I'm not gonna tell you again."

"Ho ho, here's mud in your eye fish and chips."

"I'm not kidding. *Shitfuck!*" James spotted Sonny and Peter standing at the edge of the grotto. "Sonny he's invading my space again, make him stop. *Shit! Shit! Yurass!*"

"Now James, calm down."

"Me calm down?" He shook his head violently, "*Yurass! Dingdong!* It's his fault!"

Sonny looked over at Peter, but he just nodded and frowned. He turned back to the fighters. "OK, but you both need to calm down first."

"HMMMMMMMM, beached whale," Sage hooted then blinked twice. His demeanor changed completely, "Why Sonny, it's so good to see you're back. Is it time to eat?"

"Yes it is. I have dinner right here," he held up the bag, "and I brought enough for everyone."

Applause filled the grotto as Thomas walked up and stood beside Peter. The taller man just nodded severely at the newcomer. Sonny muttered out the side of his mouth, "We'll talk about this after supper, OK?"

Thomas smiled wide, "Wise advice Brother Peter don't you think? A full stomach cures whatever ails you."

"Who's your daddy?" Sage chortled.

"Cahfuck yeah!"

Peter continued to scowl as Sonny took the bag into the middle of the seating area. He placed it on the ground and waved everyone to silence.

"I want you all to picture in your mind what you are hungry for." Sonny met each of their eyes around the clearing. They were a motley crew, from the stoic Peter, to Brother Thomas the jovial peacemaker, to the two aged out prostitutes Cagney and Jade, to James and Sage and all the other misfits who wound up at the grotto. They were all his people and he did his best to help them.

He waved his hand. "OK, so when you have an image ready, come forward."

Sage was the first. The young man hummed as he stepped up bashfully and reached into the bag. He pulled out a sandwich and a cup with a lid on it. When he took a sip from the cup, he started bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Sonny smiled, "Did I get it right?"

"Butterrum barrels says the king!" Sage grinned from ear to ear, "Yes, it is just the way I like it. Thank you Sonny." He hurried away to his seat making little whistling noises.

James was right behind. He twitched involuntarily as he too reached into the bag and pulled out a steaming bowl of something and a little bag with Chinese letters on it.

He smiled too. "*Cahfuck!* Thank you Sonny, you're the best."

Cagney and Jade approached the bag together. The latter watched carefully while the former reached into the bag. When they were done, they quickly moved back to the edge of the clearing without speaking.

Thomas pulled out a salad bowl and an apple. He bowed his bald head wordlessly then sat down again.

Peter was the last. As he reached into the bag, Sonny felt a shiver run down his spine. His vision swam and he barely heard Peter when he growled, "Hey what the hell? There's nothing in here but garbage."

Sonny shook his head but he couldn't get over the strange feeling. He had enjoyed so many years of blessed

obscurity, but now he sensed that trouble was coming to Okrachokey Beach.

Then it dawned on him. "Oh shit," he gasped, as his vision swam again.

Thomas put a hand on his shoulder to steady him. "What's wrong? It looks like you just saw a ghost."

Sonny nodded sadly, "Yes, I think I just did."

Chapter 4

Cabo Wabo opened his eyes.

He looked around the tiny room through a thick layer of sleepy dirt crusting his lids. He tried to remember. Unfortunately, his brain was only firing on a small percentage of the neurons usually required for cohesive thought.

He could hear the ocean crashing in the distance.

Other than a bed of loosely woven reeds, the only thing in the room was a stone washbasin and a very detailed etching of a hippopotamus. The wooden frame was crazed and peeling with age. He smiled at the etching.

Cabo Wabo had little use for material things. He had everything he needed here. His food grew on trees and his grass skirt and hat were all that was required to protect him from the elements. He had been asleep for far longer than he anticipated. There were so many things to do, places to go, and people to meet. His bones creaked when he tried to sit up so he lay back down and stared at the ceiling while his brain and the rest of his body got up to speed.

Finally, after a spate of herculean effort Cabo managed to get somewhat upright. He hobbled outside and lifted his skirt to relieve himself over the cliff. He chuckled as the golden stream cascaded down to meet the crashing waves far below. He shaded his eyes. The sun was a great fiery ball in the sky and a gentle breeze tussled his hat. It looked like a good day for adventure.

He wandered to his friend's room and peeked in to see him still snoring like an angry beehive. Vabo Wabo

was Cabo's most trusted advisor and best friend. He had the gift of tongues, which was a rank of monumental importance.

Cabo reached down reverently, stuck one hand over his trusted advisor's mouth and held his nostrils shut with the other.

Vabo sputtered a few times and sat up, "Oh, I see you're finally awake."

"Wide awake and ready to go."

"Go?"

"Yes, we have been here too long. I think it's time to see what has become of the world."

Vabo Wabo just sat there with a silly grin on his face, his tanned belly sticking out well beyond his own reed skirt. He rolled his eyes and tried to stand.

"Well then, I guess there's no better time than the present."

End of free preview

Greg Wagner lives in a tree house with his wife Roberta and their dogs Abby and Olivia on the side of Wagner Mountain (more like a really big, really steep hill) in Maysel, West Virginia.

When he isn't plotting to take over the world or in search of spiritual enlightenment, Greg manages to find time to spin yarns of wonder and amazement. In whatever time is left, he enjoys riding his motorcycle, reading, splitting firewood, making music and playing with melted glass.

His other books can be found at www.gregwagnerbooks.com