
Fountain

by John Medler

Copyright 2014 John Medler
Publisher: Rocket Books, LLC
All Rights Reserved
ISBN 978-0-615-96300-6

To the Wood Family

CHAPTER 1. LEGEND

May 1499. Veragua (modern day Belize, Central America).

ELDER KINICH KAKMO, the strikingly tall wise man of the tribe, sat on a log by the fire, making pictures in the sand with his sharpened wooden stick. The orange flecks of fire danced upward silently from the beach fire pit, twirling and disappearing into the night air. Once a year, he gathered the children of the tribe together to tell them the story of the Popul Vuh, the Mayan Creation story, and of the cleverness and guile of the Mayan Hero Twins. It was an important job, for these children had to understand their connection to the tribe's ancestors. Kakmo had a long, narrow, unkept gray beard, which only dangled from his chin, and not from his cheeks. He was very old, over 110 years old, according to his count. Fifty Mayan children, dressed in loincloths, sat around the fire on large flat stones and logs, looking up at the tribal elder with their innocent brown eyes, anxious to learn of the ancient ways. The wise man spoke to the children in K'iche', the Mayan dialect of the tribe. Elder Kinich Kakmo's deep voice, set against the crackling of the fire and the rhythmic rushing of the nearby waves, mesmerized the small children.

"This is the story of the Popul Vuh," he began. "Back before time, the gods created three realms—the Upper World where the gods live, the Middle World where we live, and the Underworld, where the demons live. Just below the surface of the Earth, in the Underworld, there is a horrible City of Death called Xibalba. Xibalba was ruled by the twelve demons of the Underworld called the Lords of Xibalba. The terrible Twelve Lords wished nothing but the destruction of mankind and the capture of their souls. The demons were led by the High Evil Lords Hun-Came, also called One-Death, and his brother Vucub-Came, also known as Seven-Death. These demons ruled over the lesser Lords of Xibalba, who worked in pairs. They included Xiquiripat, which means Flying Scab, and Cuchumaquic, which means Blood Gatherer, who both poison the blood...." The wise man drew pictures of the demons in the sand. The children looked terrified.

"Another pair was Ahalpuh and Ahalgana, the demons of pus and skin yellowing, who make people sick; Chamiabac and Chamiaholom, the skull and bone demons, who make people thin and take the meat off their bones, turning them into skeletons...." The wise man pointed his

wooden stick at a small child sitting next to him, and touched the child's neck with the stick. Then he drew a picture in the sand of a skeleton. "Ahalmez and Ahaltocob were the demons who hide in the unswept corners of people's filthy huts, and then jump out and stab them until they die. Xic and Palan, the nemesis of travelers, cause people walking on the road to cough up blood and die."

The children shivered at the sound of these horrible demons, and several made mental notes to make sure to clean up any dirt in their huts.

"Now these twelve demons did not like to be disturbed. One day, a young man named Hun Hunahpu was playing racquet sports with his brother Vucub Hunahpu and woke the Lords of Xibalba. The Lords invited them to their ball court in the Underworld for a friendly game. But the Lords of Xibalba tricked the boys. The balls in the game had hidden razor blades, and the heads of the two boys were sliced off. Unbeknown to the Lords of Xibalba, however, Hun Hunahpu had a clever wife named Xquic. Xquic spoke to the decapitated head of her husband Hun Hunahpu." The wise man lifted up a coconut, showing it to the children, and spat on it. The old man continued, "The skull spat on Xquic's head, and as a result, two twin boys were conceived in her womb. Those boys were our ancestors, the Mayan Hero Twins, Hunahpu, which means 'One-Blowgunner,' and Xbalanque, which means 'Jaguar Sun.' They are the greatest two men to have ever lived, and they are the reason we are all here today. Ultimately, the boys would grow up to avenge their father's and uncle's death and conquer the Lords of Xibalba, thereby saving humanity."

"Where is Xibalba?" asked one child.

Elder Kinich Kakmo extended his stick out into the Atlantic Ocean. "It is not far from here," said the Wiseman. "Perhaps one or two days' journey by boat, on an island we call Boyuca, the Evil Place, and others call Ananeo. It is an evil island, guarded by evil people. On the island is a cave, and that is the entrance to Xibalba. You must never go there, for to go there means death. For in the many thousands of moons that have followed, the Lords of Xibalba have managed to return. They continue to wreak their havoc and destruction on the Middle World. Until Hunahpu and Xbalanque return, we will always suffer at the hands of the Lords of Xibalba."

"When will Hunahpu and Xbalanque return?" asked one child.

"No one knows," said Kinich Kakmo somberly, stroking his beard.

“But the legend says that their faces will be white, and that their beards will be long and white, for they will have entered Xibalba and faced Vucub-Came, whose icy hand of death will have partially touched their souls. It is also prophesized that the monkeys in the trees will howl, for the Hero Twins also made enemies of their wicked step-brothers by tricking them into climbing tall trees and then turning them into howler monkeys.” The children looked over at the trees in the jungle with concern. Were the howler monkeys there now?

Elder Kinich Kakmo continued on with the legend of the Mayan Hero Twins for another hour until all the children were fast asleep by the fire. Then he summoned their parents, who thanked the wise man, and carried their children to bed.

Later that night, the wise man had a vivid dream that Hunahpu and Xbalanque had entered their village on a huge, winged, ocean chariot. He dreamed that the villagers, frightened by the heroes, attacked them with bow and arrow. The Hero Twins, in anger, burned their entire village to the ground. The wise man woke up with a feeling of dread. He slowly got up and opened the door to his hut. The wind was whipping fiercely. Just then he heard the howling—the howling of the monkeys.

He ran outside into the dark night. His face was hit with the blowing spray of rain. Despite the downpour, he ignored the rain and ran down to the beach. Off in the distance he could see the masts of a great vessel, the biggest ship he had ever seen. It was bigger than a hundred canoes! The ship was being dashed by the large waves, but appeared to be heading toward their shores. The howling of the monkeys came again. “By the gods...” he thought. “It is Hunahpu and Xbalanque! We haven’t a moment to spare!” He sprinted back to the village to find the tribal chief.

CHAPTER 2. ACCIDENT.

Present day. Atlanta, Georgia.

CHARLIE WINSTON PULLED the black Dodge Ram pickup truck in front of Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School in suburban Atlanta. Today, he was taking his son to a fifth grade football game at another rival school. Roosevelt was in a fairly wealthy, primarily white neighborhood, and his ten year-old son Teddy was one of the few blacks in the school, but Charlie Winston did not care. Most of the other kids at school treated Teddy very well. And it was the education which was important. He and his wife Murielle had moved to this area of Atlanta because it was in the best public school district. Winston was an educator himself, so he knew the value of a good education. He had finished his lectures at Emory University an hour before. He was a Professor of American History at the university.

As the throng of students poured out seconds after the bell rang, he looked for his son in the crowd. He did not see him at first, but then the crowd thinned out and he saw him—the young boy in the wheelchair. Teddy had his book bag in his lap, and was rolling himself over to his dad’s truck. Winston got out to help put his son’s wheelchair in the back of the truck, when his son objected.

“Dad, I can do it by myself.”

“Sure you don’t need a hand?” asked Winston, concerned that his son might fall.

“You know, some day I am going to drive myself. When that happens, if you modify the truck so I can drive with my hands, I am going to need to get in all by myself without you being there. You have to let me do it, okay?”

“Sure son, okay,” said Winston, getting back into the black truck.

Teddy rolled the wheelchair to the passenger side of the truck and pressed a button. A small platform came down, and Teddy transferred himself, scooting his rear end from the wheelchair to the platform. Then, using a joystick, he maneuvered the small crane installed on the back of the pickup. Hooking the hook from the crane to the back of his wheelchair, he pushed another button and the crane lifted the wheelchair up in the air. Using the joystick, Teddy maneuvered the wheelchair through the air, where it was deposited into the back of the truck. Then he scooted himself from the platform to the passenger seat and closed the door.

“Let’s roll,” he said.

“What time is the game?” asked Winston.

“Three o’clock, but it’s across town, so let’s hurry, because I want to beat the bus.”

Teddy was the team’s numbers man, responsible for keeping all the stats of the football team. It was a job he really enjoyed. After the game was over, he would input the stats into a computer program he had created for the coach. The team let him wear a green and white football jersey like the other boys.

Charlie Winston drove the truck onto the interstate.

“How was school today?”

“Good, but Leon’s got a new girlfriend. He changed his Facebook status to ‘In a Relationship.’ Makes me want to puke.”

“Fifth grade, that’s a little young to be having girlfriends, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, personally, I think the girls in my class are gross, but you know Leon. He has had crushes on girls since the second grade.”

“Is the girl foxy?” asked Winston, purposely using an outdated slang term which he knew would drive his son crazy.

“Yeah, Dad, real ‘foxy.’ I think ‘foxy’ went out with the hula hoop. I guess it makes sense you are a history teacher. Everything you know about is from ancient history. What is this you are listening to? Sounds like elevator music. Can I change the station?”

“Sure,” said Winston, as Teddy turned the dial to a rap station. “That’s better.”

“Hey, I noticed you haven’t ‘friended’ me on Facebook,” said Charlie.

“Dad, I am not going to ‘friend’ you, because then you will start posting all kinds of weird stuff on my page, and mom will do the same thing. Facebook was not invented for parents, you know?”

“What weird stuff? I am not going to post weird stuff.”

“Dad, I saw your post on Uncle Sal’s page. It was something about newly discovered writings of John Adams. That’s weird. I do not want that on my page.”

“John Adams was very important. Good grief! What are they teaching you at that school? Are your friends doing anything this weekend?”

“Yeah, there is a girl named Mandy who is having a big birthday party at Skyzone, which is that trampoline place. Just about the whole class is going.”

“ ‘Just about...’? Are you going?”

“I didn’t get invited. Leon’s new girlfriend knows another girl who knows the kid. She said I didn’t get invited because they didn’t want it to be a ‘Pity Party.’ Some people are real jerks, you know what I mean? I wouldn’t want to go to her dumb party anyway.” Teddy looked out the window. After a few seconds of awkward silence, Teddy asked, “What time is it? Are we almost there?”

“Sure, son, almost there.”

Charlie Winston looked at his brave son and his legs. For a moment, he thought back to that day two years ago...

It was a rainy night in December. The Falcons were playing the Rams on Monday Night Football. Eddie Reznó, a boy in Teddy’s class, was going to the game with his father, and had invited Teddy along. Murielle was against the idea. It was Monday, a school night, and their hard and fast rule was that no one could go out on a school night. But this was Monday Night Football, after all, and Teddy loved football. Charlie Winston intervened and prevailed upon his wife Murielle to break the rule, just this once. Their son had gone off to the game, while Charlie and Murielle enjoyed a quiet night of reading books by themselves on the couch.

Charlie had gotten nearly halfway through a biography of Frederick Douglas when his wife told him to stop reading. The game had been over by 11:00 p.m. It was midnight, and their son was still not home. Murielle began making phone calls. She called the Reznó’s home, but Mrs. Reznó had not heard anything. Mrs. Reznó had tried her husband’s cell phone, but no one was answering. She was worried, too. Charlie assured his wife that Mr. Reznó had probably taken the boys somewhere after the game, maybe to get burgers or ice cream or something. Murielle was not buying it, but she decided to sit tight for a little while longer before she started calling the police. At 1:00 a.m., the Winstons got a call from a nurse at the Presbyterian Hospital. There had been a terrible accident. An eighteen year-old boy had crossed the center line in the rain. Mr. Reznó had tried to swerve out of the way, but the oncoming car struck the side of the car behind the driver, right where Teddy was sitting. He was now in intensive care. No, the nurse did not know any other details.

Charlie and Murielle Winston, terrified, drove at high speed to the hospital. All the hospital staff would tell them was that Teddy was in

intensive care, and the doctor would be out as soon as he could. They were soon joined by Mrs. Rezno in the waiting room, who had learned that Eddie had a broken arm, and would recover without incident. Mr. Rezno had a fractured pelvis, three broken ribs, and a ruptured spleen, but would ultimately make it. There was still no news on Teddy.

After another hour, the spinal surgeon, Dr. Ben Wolff, came out of the operating suite.

“Mr. and Mrs. Winston, your son Teddy had had a very serious spinal cord injury at the level of the tenth thoracic vertebra.”

“Is he going to live?” asked Murielle Winston.

“Yes, Mrs. Winston, but the spinal cord has been compromised.”

“What does that mean, ‘compromised?’” asked Charlie Winston. “Is it severed?”

“No, it is not severed, but there is a tremendous amount of swelling around that level of the cord as a result of the accident. We won’t know his prognosis for a few days. But right now, he has no feeling beneath the belly button.”

“Oh my God!” exclaimed Murielle. “You mean he is paralyzed?”

“We do not know that for sure yet. But if he does not regain his feeling below the waist within a few days, then it will probably be a permanent injury, yes, ma’am.”

“What are the chances he will regain the feeling below the waist?” asked Murielle.

“I cannot give you chances,” said the doctor. “For Teddy, it is either 0% or 100%. We just don’t know.”

Murielle became irritated by this response. “Doctor, I know you are doing everything you can, but please, do not patronize me. I am a scientist. Can you just give me what his chances are?”

“Again, Mrs. Winston, I just cannot say at this time. We will know more in two or three days, when the swelling has had a chance to die down. It is possible that the swelling could die down and the spinal cord could regain its full function. The spinal cord is a finicky animal. We just do not know at this point.”

“Okay, thank you, doctor,” said Murielle. When the doctor had left, Murielle groused, “Finicky animal? That’s the best he can do?” Murielle’s lip began trembling, and she collapsed into Charlie’s chest. Murielle was

accustomed to keeping cool under pressure as a result of her job. But this was too much. She broke down sobbing and was inconsolable. Charlie took his wife down to the hospital chapel to pray. For the next three days, they prayed at the hospital. They made every promise to God they could think of if only He would let their son be able to walk. But Teddy's condition did not improve. Unfortunately, they would later learn that Teddy's condition was permanent. He would never walk again.

The next year was almost unbearable, as Teddy learned to adapt to his new world. He would learn incredibly difficult regimens for urination and defecation. He would learn to power his wheelchair over high curbs and get himself up and down stairs. The entire home had to be remodeled with ramps and special toilet facilities. They set up his own kitchen area with microwaves and other appliances built low to the ground. Life as Teddy previously knew it was over.

Charlie had taken a leave of absence of six months from Emory to help his son through the rehabilitation process. It was a grueling time, with nighttime "accidents" happening frequently. Winston felt like he had washed all the sheets of defecation in the middle of the night almost one hundred times. He felt so badly. The worst part was that at times, he blamed himself for letting Teddy go to the game on a school night.

He tried not to look down at his son's legs, but he could not help himself. He wished there was some way to wave a wand and bring his legs back. The truth was that Teddy had adjusted to his new life much easier than Charlie Winston and his wife. Charlie and Murielle Winston had spent the last two years researching potential cures for their son's illness, but they had found nothing.

When they got to the rival school's football field, Winston waited as his son used the crane to swing his wheelchair down to the ground.

"It will be great when I can drive," said Teddy. "Then I will not have to drive like an old Granny like you."

"Granny? Who are you callin' Granny?" asked Winston.

Teddy laughed, and hopped into his wheelchair.

"Hey, hand me my book bag, Granny," joked Teddy.

Charlie Winston bent over with a stoop, like he was a hundred years old and squinted at his son. "Why, I cannot find the book bag," he said, mimicking an old lady's voice. "Where is that blasted book bag?"

Teddy laughed and grabbed the book bag himself, and wheeled off to the field.

“See ya, Granny,” he said. Charlie Winston smiled and walked toward the field to watch the game.

CHAPTER 3. CABOT.

May 1499. Veragua (modern day Belize, Central America).

JOHN CABOT, ONE of the greatest explorers of the modern world, and the first European to set foot on the American mainland since the Vikings, was steering his ship *The Matthew*, named after his wife Mattea, to the shores of Veragua to wait out the storm. Father Giovanni Antonio de Carbonariis, his trusted companion, stood near Cabot as he maneuvered the steering wheel of the large ship. The priest was not only a man of the cloth but also a doctor, and he was the only other Italian on the English ship. Cabot was a tall man, with a great white beard, which was matted down from the sheets of rain pouring into the boat. He wore a black velvet mariner's hat with a large ostrich feather, which was also not fairing well in the blowing rain. Father Giovanni, small, bald, and portly, wearing a brown hooded monk's robe tied with a white rope around the waist, held onto a barrel to steady himself from the pitching ship.

"I hope we get to shore soon. This storm is terrible," said Father Giovanni.

"Well, this ship has a holy man here, after all, Father Giovanni, so I am sure God will spare us on the sea." Cabot laughed heartily and yelled out orders to a sailor to secure the pickle barrels, which were sliding on the deck. Cabot managed to steer the ship into a small cove, where he pointed the ship toward the shore.

"We will put the ship ashore here until the storm passes over," said Cabot.

"Look there!" yelled Giovanni, peering over the rail. "Those are boats!" Cabot looked where the priest was pointing, and stared in amazement when he saw the four outrigger canoes heading towards his ship. Cabot took out his looking glass and peered over the water at the canoes.

"They are not bearing any weapons," said Cabot. "It looks like they have ropes!"

Sure enough, the Veraguan natives were coming with ropes to help secure the boat and bring it safely to the shore. But before Cabot could explain this to his men, several crew members rushed the side of the boat, with guns drawn, ready to fire on the Veraguans.

"Hold your fire!" screamed Cabot. "They come in peace. They are bringing ropes to help us. Don't fire! Put down your weapons!"

“Captain, how do we know they mean peace?” asked his first mate, Wilson Henry. “They are savages.” Henry was tall and white-bearded, like the Captain. Many of the men joked that they looked like brothers. But Henry was considerably bigger and stronger than the Captain. Henry was a man of action who tended to act first and ask questions later. Cabot was wiser than his first mate. Cabot was not shy about using a firearm. He could kill an enemy if it came to that. He just chose not to start a battle when it was unnecessary.

“Wilson, take my glass. Look at their boats. They are bringing us ropes.” Henry took the Captain’s spyglass and performed his own inspection. He agreed that the natives did not appear to be armed. The first mate lowered his weapon.

Soon the outrigger canoes met up with the ship and waved to the members of the crew in friendship. They threw up ropes to the members of the crew, who eyed the natives warily. But no attack occurred. The natives were truly trying to help. Within an hour, the ship had safely landed on the shore near the Veraguans’ village, safe from the storm. There was a loud trumpet from the shore, and dozens of natives came down to meet the great ship. Cabot instructed Father Giovanni and his first mate Wilson Henry to accompany them onto the shore to meet the natives. Henry was skeptical but obeyed. However, he kept his loaded firearm beneath his coat, ready for action at a moment’s notice. As the ship came closer to the shore, the rain suddenly died down, and was now only a light drizzle.

Their group was met in the surf by a large fat man who appeared to be the tribal chief. He wore a loincloth but was adorned with a cape and a headdress of red and yellow macaw feathers. Next to the chief was an extremely tall, but very old man, also with an elaborate headpiece. John Cabot would later learn this was the tribe’s elder wise man and principal advisor to the chief.

As soon as the wise man looked through the darkness and saw John Cabot and his first mate, both similar looking tall men with white faces and long white beards, the wise man became more convinced than ever that the strangers were the reincarnations of Hunahpu and Xbalanque. He advised the tribal chief, who seemed to agree. These strangers would be treated with every hospitality which their small village had to offer. The chief greeted Cabot, and was surprised to learn that neither he nor

his white-bearded brother appeared to be able to speak their language. Nevertheless, he managed to use gestures to welcome him into the tribal circle by the beach. A great fire was started and the men brought in a large wild boar attached to a spit and began roasting it over the fire. Cabot, Henry, and Father Giovanni rested on logs by the fire, warming themselves. After quite a while, the meat was ready.

John Cabot had never eaten wild boar. It was actually quite good. The boar reminded him of the pork roast his wife used to cook back in Bristol, England, the place where his voyage had begun. He used his teeth to slide the meat off the kabob and gave a welcoming smile to the Indian chief, who nodded happily, thankful that Cabot liked the meal. As the meal wore on, the clouds cleared. The fire crackled on the beach, under a full canopy of stars, as curious natives crept up closer to Cabot to marvel at his strange clothing, white skin, and white beard. They wondered why he would cover himself up with cloth when it was so hot. And why did he speak in such a strange tongue? Cabot smiled at the natives and devoured the boar meat with gusto. The Veraguan natives seemed amazed at the size and craftsmanship of his ship. Several of the islanders were swimming in the water, putting their hands on the hull of the large ship. The rest of Cabot's crew remained back on the *Matthew*. They were afraid to interact with the natives, fearing they were savages who meant them harm. Cabot never understood this distrust. He had heard reports of the Spanish explorers slaughtering natives. Why kill a completely harmless, even friendly, group of people? Cabot could not understand it. The men on his ship stood on the decks, uneasily watching the captain from the rails. He was a kind and wise captain, that was for sure, but they believed his kindness would ultimately be their undoing. When the captain ordered the men to bring a small barrel of rum ashore to share with the natives, the Bristol sailors went absolutely apoplectic. That was their rum. They needed it for the long voyage. What purpose would be served in giving away their supplies (especially the rum!) to ignorant savages? Wilson Henry was also concerned and whispered his disagreement to the captain. Cabot heard their grumbling, but assured them that a good Christian returns kindness with kindness. After some discussion, the men reluctantly obeyed the captain and rolled the small barrel ashore.

Cabot took a cupful of rum and handed it to the chief. The chief looked at the clear liquid and smelled it. It smelled strange. The chief

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

