



A Lonely Man On A Wakeful Road

by Dan Ford

An Episodic Adventure

Episode #2

A Mucklehany Dream

In Episode One, we left an exhausted Matt falling asleep next to a huge jaguar in a cohune palm frond hut. This was on the banks of the Mucklehany Lagoon in a Belizean lowland rain forest. I hope you didn't miss reading about how he arrived in that position, dear reader. Going on a Vision Quest is an exciting affair! In any case, Matt's adventure is just starting, so I hope you will stick with us. We will continue this story as Matt had dictated it in his first-person narrative.

Matt begins again!

I woke up to many strange and disturbing noises sounding like animals engaging in a major conflict. It took me a little while to remember where I was, but

I couldn't see a thing in the pitch-black interior of this palm frond hut. I realized that I was lying against a warm breathing form, and remembered that I had fallen asleep next to a huge male jaguar. Good grief!

I reached up and gently patted the jaguar's back and heard him pull in his breath and emit a huff of sorts, but he didn't appear to have woken. I was glad about that because I wasn't sure what my next move should be. I have to admit that I enjoyed being next to his warm body. It was like having a giant pet next to you. I was not worried about him turning on me because he hadn't all night long.

The outside noises started to increase, and I began to recognize what the sounds were. I had read about these morning jungle greetings and learned that this was the norm in these rainforest environments. The howler monkeys initiated the morning wakeup with loud barking sounds that were more like roars. It seemed to cause other animals and birds to acknowledge that they were also aware that morning had arrived.

I reached over to grab my iPhone and activated the on-button. This gave me enough ambient light to see that the jaguar was indeed still there. It didn't seem to annoy him at all. I kept lying there and wasn't sure I should get up or move about. I was still attempting to ascertain what my relationship was going to be with this big cat.

I knew I had a flashlight built into the cell phone, but was hesitant to use it and decided to be happy with the phone's lighted faceplate. It took the curse off the darkness, and that was enough for now. It would soon be lighter outside as the sun came up and morning arrived.

And then the jaguar woke up. I could see the big cat yawn and roll over to see if I was still there. The weak, but adequate light from the cell phone reflected in the jaguar's brilliant golden eyes when the cat focused on me. I knew that this was decision time. Was I to go from being a bedmate to becoming breakfast?

I decided to stare back at him and see where this was going to go. It wasn't so much that I was brave, as I was resigned to my fate. What would happen would happen, and that was that.

So! We just stared at each other for nearly a minute, and then a strange thing began to happen. The jaguar began dissolving into a bright misty and silvery form,

and at the same time, another form of golden mist was starting to appear in the jaguar's place. I didn't dare move a muscle while this was happening.

Soon the jaguar had completely vanished, and where it had been stood a beautiful woman, emanating a golden aura. She stepped out of, or perhaps more accurately, stepped away from that aura, leaving it behind to disappear just as the jaguar had done. Her hair was a glistening silver blue.

She was wearing a lustrous blue dress, seeming to be made from a liquid crystal that flowed smoothly over every contour of her body. The dress was far more etheric in appearance than something made from a solid material. She had golden eyes, just as the jaguar had displayed, and she connected with and locked them directly into my eyes. I was mesmerized. I have never seen or even imagined anything quite so alluring or dramatic.

Then she spoke. "Good morning Matt! I trust you slept well?"

"I did!" I replied. But then, rather abruptly, I asked her, "Who are you and what had happened to the huge jaguar."

She replied. "I am called Gaia, and I represent the Earth and all Nature on this Earth. The jaguar spirit was replaced by my spirit. We are both of the same spirit."

I asked her if she was a Goddess, and she replied that she was not.

Then she turned and walked out of the hut and towards the lagoon's edge. The early dawn of the day was immediately turned to full morning light as she moved outside. I asked her if she was changing night into day, and she replied. "No! I simply speeded up time a little to accommodate your earth-bound sight limitations, Matt."

I was still in a state of confusion and awe. "How do you know my name, Gaia?"

"How could I not? If I am in charge of all things natural in this world, I get to know all of these things. It's not difficult."

I then asked a question that I had been wondering about all night. "Why did you have the jaguar come into the hut and sleep with me all night?"

"That's an easy question to answer, Matt. You had been exhausted and stressed from hard days tromping through the jungle to get here and required a good night's sleep and renewal of your spirit. The jaguar was a guardian to help and protect you in that regard. It worked, didn't it?"

"I'm not sure, Gaia. How did you decide that it was not stressful for me to confront a full-grown male jaguar in the first place? I often refer to strangers in a strange place, which is not an existence known to relax someone. And then to be confronted with a giant predator wandering into my hut, and lying down to sleep with me wasn't exactly a good methodology to encourage that sleep."

"Well, I disagree. It worked well, and I didn't think it appropriate for me to wander into your hut to lie down, cuddle and sleep with you. Would that have worked better for you than the jaguar?"

"No! Maybe it would have been enough if you had just bonked me on the head with something or just used your powers to send me to dreamland without all of these dramas."

"Listen well, Matt. You earth-bounds are a stubborn lot, and you are so focused on your everyday activities and selfish thoughts that it isn't easy to get through to you. We are not allowed to bonk you on your head or anywhere else, for that matter, to get your attention. We do have rules, you know."

"No, I don't know that you have any rules at all, Gaia. And when did you start attempting to get my attention?"

"Well, let's see. I'm pretty sure it was when you were trying to determine why you didn't feel good about your current life. Then we started to urge you towards a solution to that problem by ensuring that certain suggestions got in front of you. These actually occurred via articles and books and things. You were impressed by the activities that your idol, Shirley MacClaine, accomplished doing The Camino, and that encouraged you to do something similar, and that's how it works. No bonks on the head, my friend. Just some subtle suggestions are allowed."

Gaia let that sink into my brain and marinate for a minute, and then continued. "Then, having made the decision to do something about your condition, you planned for and arranged this Vision Quest. You have been doing almost all of

that without our help once you started your journey. Of course, that was me that whispered into your mind while you were marching on the road between Burrell Boom and Bermudian Landing and sang you that siren song that led you here. You listened, made a decision, and then found yourself here."

"Well, it wasn't as quick as all that. I had to traverse ruts and furrows, dry river beds, and hammocks. Not to mention avoiding crocodiles and wading in Everglades type muck and mire. I also don't want to forget forcing my way through the brambles and branches, vines and spiders and snakes in the rainforest all day."

"I believe you made up the snake thing Matt. I specifically didn't want to have you deal with them because I can't abide them either, at least when I am in human form. I'm more inclined to send you blue butterflies and have them lead you to your wonderful accommodations here."

"That was a nice touch, Gaia. I loved the morphos, and I also have to admit that I loved the jaguar once I got used to the idea that I wouldn't be mauled and eaten by him. I haven't slept as good as I did snuggling up to him."

"He enjoyed it too. He told me so."

"Yeah, right!"

"At any rate, Matt, the reason I encouraged you to come here was for the isolation and atmosphere of this particular bit of natural existence. This place is nature at its finest, and I wanted you to see it under these circumstances that you have been introduced to. I also wanted you to immerse yourself into its particular essence and use that experience as a template for every other natural environment you will find yourself in. Every creation will be unique, but you must be able and want to see and feel the difference in each place. Creation is a specific effort, and it doesn't matter if it is a place, a thing, or an idea. All too often, the essence of anything or anyone is overlooked by the observer."

"Well, Gaia. I didn't know this part of my Quest would turn out to be a lesson, and it's a doozy."

Gaia turned towards the lagoon and walked on top of the water until she was several feet out into it. Then she turned and said. "Everything you do in this and every other life experience is a lesson, Matt. It's the reason for your existence. It's extremely important to deal with each lesson in your life and what you take away

from it. If you don't do it right, you will do it over and over again until you perfect it."

Matt smiled at her and responded to her statement. "I think I understand pretty well. But could I walk out on the water of the lagoon like you just did? "

Gaia laughed. "Only if you want to sink to the bottom of this lagoon, you can, Matt. You have to learn to walk on top first if you don't want to sink. Remember. A baby is born with every capability that you have, but it takes a certain amount of time and effort for that baby to grow into those abilities of yours. It's the same with you and me. You must evolve to my level, and I am evolving still, so you have a lot to catch up to. It's a great plan."

"Ok, Gaia, but where do I go from here? You lured me here, and I think that I now understand why. How long should I stay here, and where should I head when I leave from here?"

"You stay as long as you need or want to, Matt. One hour, or one day or more. It makes no difference. And then, you continue on with your Vision Quest and head to your next location. You can and should divert from those targets when you feel the need. You continue to learn as long as your mind is open to where you are now and where you will be next. And before you ask me when you will see me again, I will tell you that you can see me when you have the need to see me. Specifically, that will be when we both feel the need is there."

Gaia then returned to the shore of the lagoon. She walked over to me and wrapped her arms around my shoulders. I was surprised at the intensity of feeling that I received from this embrace, particularly knowing that Gaia was an etheric being. But that hug was more intense and meaningful than any I had ever received from another person.

She said. "I will say goodbye, for now, Matt. I will leave my jaguar spirit with you for another night or longer if you stay here. He will be glad for the company, and so will you. I will be watching out for you.

And with that, Gaia started to dissolve into a golden mist, instantly replaced with a silvery mist that quickly morphed into that handsome jaguar form. The jaguar slowly walked over to me and rubbed my legs. I was so glad to see him again, and I rubbed him back. It was strange and wonderful how affection takes root between two very different spirit forms.

The rest of that day was used for playful routines. The jaguar and I walked a little deeper in the jungle to relieve ourselves, and then we returned to the hut. I stripped my clothes off, jumped into the lagoon to bathe, and had a little aquatic fun. My jaguar friend joined me in the lagoon, and we jostled and splashed away for well over an hour.

In the middle of the afternoon, it had gotten quite hot and humid, and we both retreated to the grassy area near the lagoon shore to languish away the afternoon. I thought that this particular jungle was quite bereft of animals when I first arrived here, but I soon found that there were animals of every description everywhere. It was just necessary that you stay quiet and wait for them to appear. Interestingly, the animals were not concerned with my presence or that of the jaguar either. Apparently, his spirituality was such that they were not concerned, and they understood the difference. Perhaps they did not see him. I didn't really know the reason.

I don't believe that I had ever been any happier than I was lying here by the cool water, with my head and shoulders resting on the jaguar's belly. I understood that we were enjoying a big dose of spirituality at this time, and we wouldn't have this when my reality returned, but I enjoyed what I was experiencing for the moment.

Later that afternoon, when sitting outside my hut, I watched tapirs doing a slow walk within our little yard space as if they were placing themselves on display. They ignored the jaguar, which normally would have gobbled them up in short order. My jaguar ignored them as well. There was also a gibnut, often called a paca, who came visiting but didn't stay long because there was no food growing in this area. The spider and howler monkeys were leaping about in the tree canopy above the hut. They acted as though they were aware of but not very concerned about us. Plenty of birds came and went, including some scarlet macaws and toucans. There seemed to be a law of some kind that required that a human must attempt to become invisible to allow other animals to come out and play. I don't blame them, as I found it very nice at moments like this not to have humans around.

We spent the rest of the day playing, lounging, taking a little nap, and in my case, doing some serious meditation. I followed the lead of my jaguar and didn't eat anything all day, and seemed to be the better for it. When evening came, I opened a can of Spam, sliced off a couple of pieces for myself, and offered the rest

to the jaguar. He declined to sample it as spirit creatures care less about food, of course. So I ate one more piece and then cast the rest into the lagoon for the fishes to have as a treat.

I decided to leave for Bermudian Landing in the morning. I didn't really want to go, but I received subtle urgings that perhaps I needed to get on with my Vision Quest walk, or I may never allow myself to leave this place. We spent the evening just enjoying being together and doing nothing in particular. We had bonded for this particular special time. Eventually, we both fell asleep.

In the morning, after receiving our very loud howler monkey wake-up call, we went outside to perform our daily elimination duties and washed up in the lagoon. We very sadly parted company. For my part, I hugged my jaguar as hard as I could, and the jaguar gave me several big cat rubs back and a giant lick to my face, and then dissolved into that silver mist. As silly as it seemed, I had tears dripping out of my eyes over our separation.

I checked my magical iPhone and accessed the compass to determine which direction I needed to go to reach the road to Bermudian Landing. I headed in that direction and quickly found a logging trail that seemed to be heading that way. A large kaleidoscope of blue morpho butterflies swarmed about me as if to say goodbye. I returned the intent by sending a strong feeling of love back to them, and they scattered into the jungle. It was easy walking on this trail, and I saw many other creatures crossing the path that I hadn't seen on the way into Mucklehany Lagoon. An improvement in spiritual attitude and outlook apparently had its advantages.

I had been walking for about thirty minutes when the sun suddenly disappeared, and a huge grey cloud appeared overhead. Torrential rain started to cascade down on me. This was what a rain forest was all about, I guess. The rain was so hard, I could barely breathe air because of the solid rain in this downpour. I cupped my hands together to create a shield and placed them over my nose and mouth. It worked, and I was able to breathe again. Then as quickly as the storm had come, it was gone. I wondered if this was natural or was Gaia showing off. I determine that it didn't matter. I loved it no matter what.

It wasn't long before the logging trail departed the rain forest and headed out through grassy pasture land. It soon reached River Valley Road that I had departed from two days ago. I considered how much easier it was leaving the Mucklehany than it was to arrive there. I wondered if Gaia wanted to make it an effort. It was

hell to battle through the arrival process. It doesn't really matter as I got there, and I learned a lot from having invested in the effort.

It was nice being back on the paved road again as I started to establish the cadence I had learned to enjoy. At first, my legs were bothering me because the muscles had lost their discipline when I slugged it through the pasture land, swamps, and the jungle. But they had memories built-in, and we're quickly getting back into the routine.

In a few hours, I arrived in Bermudian Landing. This is another small village that is known for the nearby Baboon Sanctuary. This sanctuary is run by a local women conservation group to promote and protect the howler monkey population in Belize. It has been very successful, and Belize has seen the Howler Monkey population increase dramatically since the reserve was established.

I had been waking up to the howler monkey early morning greetings in the last couple of days at Mucklehany Lagoon. I decided that I now wanted to see what a community would look and be like with many of these animals in residence. I decided to check into a small guest lodge in Bermudian Landing and treat myself to a warm shower, a good native meal, and interaction with the local people.

The guest room was very simple, clean, and comfortable. It was a real treat after sleeping in my cohune palm frond hut in the jungle, although I had enjoyed that as well. The guest house served a typical Belizean dinner, and I was treated to a shredded pork dish called cochinita pibil, marinated in achiote and orange and served with rice, beans, and pickled onions. It was wonderful. And there was a cold bottle of Belikin beer to wash it down with, of course. Five other people stayed at the lodge that I met during dinner, and they were all very pleasant people.

I didn't go to the Howler Monkey sanctuary the day I arrived and opted to go the next day as I wanted to have a fresh start after sleeping in a comfortable bed all night. I had been told that the howlers were far more active in the morning than in the hot afternoon, and I had noticed that when I was in the Mucklehany Lagoon as well.

After dinner, I went outside to sit on the porch. I met some of the other guests staying at the lodge. Everyone said they had made the same decision to make an early day of it the next morning, and as there was nothing to do at night in Bermudian Landing, they decided that cold beer and small talk on the porch was their best bet. It turned out to be a good choice for me.

Of the four guests, there were two couples, both from the United States and a Belizean man in his thirties from Belmopan, the capital city of Belize. We all had a pleasant time swapping stories about where we were from and what we looked forward to seeing here. After a couple of hours, the couples decided to turn in, and the man, whose name was Kareem, suggested that he and I stay and have another beer or two. I agreed.

Kareem said he was taking a few days off from his work as a tropical botanist. Although he was a native Belizean, he wanted to spend some time among the howler monkeys, as he had not done this before. I understood that.

As Kareem was telling me his story, I was looking at him with considerable interest. He was a handsome black man and seemed to speak with a wisdom beyond someone of his age. He was soft in his speech but strong in his meanings, even when the subject he was referring to, was insignificant in content. That was an interesting juxtaposition.

After four Belikin beers each, and a lot of talk about nothing in particular, we decided to call it a night. As we walked to our rooms. I said goodnight, and he countered, "Have a good sleep Matt. Perhaps it will not be as nice as sleeping with jaguars, but hopefully nice nonetheless." And with that, he went into his room, leaving me standing in my doorway with my mouth wide open.

I went to bed with that parting statement on my mind. It lasted for quite a while. I did not remember telling Kareem about my jaguar, but perhaps I did. There were, after all, many beers passing through my lips this night.

The next morning, after a great sleep, I arose. I took care of my morning affairs and went to the dining room. Everyone was there, including Kareem. Coffee was poured, and a great meal of scrambled eggs with peppers and ham was served. We all agreed that we were looking forward to walking over to the Baboon Sanctuary. Kareem and I walked over there together and connected with others and a guide to show us through the sanctuary.

I walked along with Kareem throughout the sanctuary. We both enjoyed listening to the guide telling us all about how the howler monkeys were thriving in the sanctuary. Kareem leaned over and whispered to me that both howler and spider monkeys loved playing in the treetops. He then added, "Just as you saw them at Mucklehany Lagoon, having a good time." I looked at him and said. "This

is the second time you have caught me off guard, Kareem. What do you know about me watching those monkeys, and how did you know I was sleeping alongside a jaguar at Mucklehany Lagoon? All I said to you was that I had visited the lagoon."

"I know because I saw you there with my sister. And she loaned her jaguar spirit to you to sleep over as your protector while you were there. Did you like her?"

I stayed silent for several long seconds and then smiled and said to Kareem. "I loved Gaia, and I loved her jaguar spirit as well. Did you arrange this meeting with me here at Bermudian Landing?"

"Kareem answered, "Of course I did, Matt. And there is much more that you need to learn to make your Vision Quest really effective, and we want to help you in achieving your Quest goals."

"I'm ready, willing, and able, Kareem. I have a zillion questions, but the one I have at this moment is, what's next?"

We had arrived at a wooden bench and decided to sit down and let the rest of the tour group go on with the guide without us. Kareem had something to say to me. "To better understand your fellow human travelers sharing this incarnation, it is said that you have to walk in their shoes to know how they feel and what they think. This is more difficult than it sounds because spiritual rules are protecting the privacy of fellow souls. The same restrictions, however, do not apply to non-sentient animals. They have no need for this privacy, and you can join them and share in their experiences. In doing this, you can see and feel how they react to the stimulus and activities in their lives."

Kareem then paused, and I asked. "What do you mean by sharing, Kareem? Is there some way that I actually become aware of what they are feeling?"

"Yes, Matt! You can know what they are feeling and seeing and even thinking to a lesser degree. It is a matter of your consciousness joining with their consciousness. You do not do this to control them in any way. But to experience what they are experiencing in any given of their moments. They are not affected by you in any way. They go about their normal business unaware that you are sharing the experience with them. Unlike human animals, they have little or no value or interest in privacy issues and are unaware of your presence."

"Well, now I have a zillion plus many more questions now, but I will stick to one additional one right now. How does someone go about this joining with the animals?"

"Let me help you with that, Matt. I will teach you by example, and you will be able to do it on your own after that. You have many gates within your brain that your consciousness can access to perform spiritual functions when wanted or needed. With your permission, I will open one of these gates.

How about that gang! I can't wait to see what its like to join with the monkey minds, and swing through the rain forest canopy with them. Matt is having the time of his life with his Vision Quest. I loved Gaia, the butterfly mob and most of all, Matt's big jaguar. You can be sure that Episode #3 is going to bring some very interesting discoveries to our awareness. I had a sneak peek and am pretty sure that you will like it.