



KAH
WALLA
WALLA
POO
POO

An island somewhere in the South Pacific

- Book One -
Maynard's Big, Bad
First Assignment

L.A. Osgard

illustrated by Henry Gonzales

KAHWALLAWALLAPOOPOO, BOOK ONE: MAYNARD'S BIG, BAD FIRST ASSIGNMENT

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Dedication

Mom, this book I dedicate to you.

You passed away far too young and with far too many stories unwritten. You were practically world-famous for your correspondence to friends and family and everyone always wondered why you didn't put your amazing talent towards a novel.

I have wondered so many times why I felt such intense passion to write this story – maybe it's been you guiding me this whole time and I'm just now figuring it out.

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The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records in a business setting. It highlights how proper record-keeping can help in decision-making, legal compliance, and financial management. The text emphasizes that records should be organized, up-to-date, and easily accessible to relevant personnel.

Next, the document addresses the challenges of data management in the digital age. It notes that while digital storage offers convenience, it also introduces risks such as data loss, security breaches, and information overload. Solutions like cloud storage, encryption, and regular backups are suggested to mitigate these risks.

The third section focuses on the role of technology in enhancing business operations. It explores how automation, artificial intelligence, and data analytics can streamline processes, reduce errors, and provide valuable insights into market trends and customer behavior. However, it also cautions against over-reliance on technology and the need for human oversight.

Finally, the document concludes by stressing the importance of a strong security protocol. It outlines key elements of a robust security strategy, including employee training, access controls, and regular security audits. The goal is to ensure that all business data is protected from unauthorized access and remains confidential.

✦ *Advice from a Manatee™* ✦

Breathe deep

Glide through your day

Have a gentle spirit

Enjoy time alone

Eat plenty of greens

Keep your whiskers clean

Live large!

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Chapter One

STRIKE ONE,” the ump yelled.

“STRIKE TWO,” the ump yelled.

“STRIKE THREE!” the ump yelled, a little too enthusiastically for my liking.

“Not again,” I mumbled to myself as I turned and walked back to the dugout with my bat dragging behind me, thoroughly disappointed with my performance. For the third time today, I hadn’t even attempted to swing the bat.

“Hey, kid! Yeah, you! Come here. I gotta ask you something!” I heard a squeaky little voice call out from where all the bat bags were hanging at the end of the dugout. I looked around to see if anyone else had heard

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anything, but it seemed no one had. Then I heard that same squeaky little voice again say, “Hey, kid – yeah, you! Come here. I gotta ask you something!”

This time, when I looked in the direction of that squeaky little voice, I saw an odd little dark gray head peeking out from my bat bag. It had these wiry, black whiskers poking out from its thick, dark gray snout, but it was the color of its eyes that took my breath away. It wasn't just that they were the most brilliant color of blue I'd ever seen, but the way the creature was staring at me was a little unnerving. It was as if it could read my thoughts. I stood there, almost paralyzed with indecision, unable to move any closer to the creature or turn and leave, so I simply stared right back at it.

Then the creature seemed to ooze itself farther out from deep inside my bat bag, almost as if it was coming up for air. It was then I saw that it had this thick, wrinkly, dark gray neck attached to an equally thick, dark gray torso. And then, to my complete surprise, it began waving at me to come toward him with these little, dark gray flipper-like things and calling out to me.

“WHAT THE?” I screeched.

“Hey, kid, over here. This is your bag, right?” the squeaky little voice asked as he yanked off the little baseball cap that was perched on his dark gray head and started waving it around. “Come on, man. You’re really gonna want to hear what I gotta tell you! It’s gonna make all the difference in the game!”

“WHAT THE?” is all I seemed to be able to say. I continued to just stand there, as if my feet were glued to the dugout floor, really just wishing it would go away and leave me alone.

“Kid, is that all you’ve got? ‘WHAT THE?’” The creature demanded to know in a tone that sounded like it was getting a little irritated with me. “I got something important to tell you about this baseball game, and you’re acting like you just saw a ghost or a monster or something! What’s the matter with you, huh, kid?” the squeaky little voice asked, as if it were a perfectly normal occurrence for a creature to be hanging out in someone’s bat bag giving baseball advice.

“Uh, well, I guess I’m not too sure what to say!” I said, as loudly as I dared, hoping none of my teammates would see me talking to my bat bag! What exactly should I say to a weird-looking creature with a

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squeaky little voice, a creature who's in my bat bag demanding to talk to me about baseball?

"What are you anyway? Why are you in my bat bag, and how did you even get in there?" I asked, as I inched my way closer to the creature.

"Come on kid, quit looking at me like I'm some freaky, scary monster. I'm just a sweet, adorable, loveable manatee. You know what a manatee is, don't you?"

"Of course I know what a manatee is!" I said, feeling kind of dumb that I was acting as if I was afraid of a manatee. "Hey, wait a minute," I whispered as I leaned in closer to the creature, just in case any of my teammates were watching me. "Can anyone else see you or hear our conversation? Or am I the only one?"

"Now that's an excellent question, kid. My answer might be a little hard for you to believe or understand right now, but I'll try to explain it as simply as I can. To most people, I just look like a sweet, little stuffed manatee. You see, it's only those that truly believe in their dreams who can see me for what I really am and hear me when I talk. Are you still with me, kid, 'cause you're looking a little pale," the creature asked.

“Uh, sure, I guess so,” I mumbled.

“OK, good! See, I’m a Mystical Guiding Manatee, and I have many, many mystical powers, but those details aren’t important right now. Do you wanna hear what I gotta say or not?” the squeaky little voice demanded, sounding quite frustrated with me, again, for my reluctance to listen to him or her or whatever it was.

I turned and looked around the dugout for one of my teammates and asked him if I had just gotten hit in the head with a baseball and was bleeding profusely. My buddy said he didn’t think so, but that I did look a little pale, like I’d just seen a ghost or something. Then he looked past me and asked me why I had a stuffed animal peeking out of my bat bag. I quickly replied that it was a silly gift from my best friend and cousin Kacey. I moved closer to my bat bag and shoved the creature down as far as I could, hoping it would have the good sense to leave me alone and let me wallow in my misery by myself. Even though my teammate said I hadn’t gotten hit in the head, I still felt around for a lump, or maybe even some blood, hoping that he was wrong.

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“Kid, snap out of it!” the creature yelled as he popped his head out of my bat bag. Again, he waved his little baseball cap around and began working himself up into quite a lather. “No, you didn’t just get hit in the head with a baseball! Come on, kid. This is just ME trying to help YOU!”

“Holy cow. What are you talking about?” I yelled back, completely forgetting, and at this point not really caring, how strange I probably looked yelling at my bat bag that had a stuffed manatee peeking out of it. “Help me with what? What kind of squishy, squeaky little creature are you anyway?”

“First off, let’s get this clear. I ain’t no ‘creature.’ I already told you, I’m a manatee – an extremely spectacular manatee, so please don’t ever call me a creature again, OK? Second, we ain’t got time for all these silly questions! Kid, I’m gonna get right to the point. **WHY AIN’T YOU SWINGING YOUR BAT?**”

“Excuse me? What the heck are you talking about? I’ll have you know, I’m practically the best hitter on the team . . . well, maybe not the best, but certainly not the worst hitter. Not that I need to explain myself to you, but I am not swinging my bat ‘cause this

pitcher stinks. It isn't my fault he's a terrible pitcher. If he were a better pitcher, I'd be hitting the spot out of the ball."

"Oh, I get it. So now it's the pitcher's fault that you can't swing your bat! So you're saying if he were a better pitcher, then you'd be a better hitter, right?" The squeaky little manatee creature rolled his eyes and slapped me on the arm with his teeny baseball cap.

"Exactly," I exclaimed.

"Sorry, kid. I ain't buying that. It sounds more like a case of *victim-itis* if you ask me!"

"*Victim* . . . what? Dude, you aren't making any sense. You asked me why I wasn't swinging my bat, and I told you, so what's the problem?"

"No, all I heard was an excuse for why you weren't swinging your bat. You didn't give me a reason why you weren't swinging your bat. See, kid, there's a huge difference between the two. As I see it, there are two kinds of people: *victims* and *victors*. Some people like being the *victim* 'cause then it means they don't have to take responsibility for their actions. See, it's always someone else's fault; but a *victor* is someone who overcomes difficult situations and defeats the opponent.

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You, young man, are acting like a *victim*, and that's a scaredy-cat way of handling things if you ask me!" the squeaky little manatee creature said, as he placed his flipper-like things on his hips and stared at me with his big blue puppy-dog eyes.

"What . . . I'm not scared! And I'm no scaredy-cat! I told you he's not throwing me any good pitches, and that umpire is just as bad; he can't tell the difference between a ball and a strike. So, like I said, it isn't my fault!"

"Oh, so now it's the umpire's fault as well. Now I get it. The pitcher's a bad pitcher, and the umpire's a bad umpire, so you're just gonna stand there. You're just gonna blame everybody else! Hey, kid, STOP LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE TO BLAME! Did you know you're putting a lot of time and energy toward blaming everybody else? How about using some of that time and energy to improve yourself? Kid, I know that you know what you need to do, but for whatever reason, you can't, or won't, let yourself do it. Kid, it's quite simple: *when you believe in your heart that you are ready and capable, then, and only then, will good things start to happen!*"

“Wait a minute! This is getting way, way too weird and starting to get a little creepy!” I said, as I backed up and sat down hard on the bench. My patience with this manatee creature was wearing thin. I was hot and sweaty from playing baseball all day. My hair was soaked with sweat, my white uniform pants were anything but white, and my cleats were too tight. “Come on, man. Give me a break. You can’t really think I’m gonna believe all that mumbo-jumbo stuff, do ya? Why should I believe you? I don’t even know who you are or where you’re from.”

“Kid, you’re right. Please excuse my bad manners. How rude of me! The name’s Maynard, Maynard the Mystical Guiding Manatee. YOUR Mystical Guiding Manatee. See, look here: it’s on my beautiful yellow cape! Isn’t this an awesome cape? I think it’s the most beautiful color of yellow in the whole world. Yellow is absolutely my favorite color, and I especially love this color yellow ‘cause it’s not too mustardy, and it’s not too orangey. It’s just the perfect color yellow, ya know? Kinda like a beautiful sunflower!”

“OK, so now I know your name’s Maynard, Maynard the Mystical Guiding Manatee, who wears

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a cool yellow cape! But the real question is why do you even care if I swing my bat? You're a manatee, remember? You're not a baseball player, you're not a coach, you're not a major league scout. You live in the water. You eat sea grass and float around all day. What the heck could you possibly know about baseball? And it seems like all you want to do is talk about your cool, yellow cape. So far you haven't explained why I should start swinging my bat."

"Kid, are you kidding me? Didn't you just hear me explain to you that you have the choice to be a *victim* or a *victor*? I feel like you are starting to make some questionable choices, choices that are going to cause you a lifetime of problems if you don't reevaluate, right now, what kind of person you want to be. I told you: I'm a Mystical Guiding Manatee, YOUR Mystical Guiding Manatee, and I have many, many mystical powers. I love, love, love the game of baseball, and I hate to see such a talented young person that has so much potential struggle so unnecessarily. Kid, this ain't entirely about swinging your bat, goofball. It's about what's in your heart and what kind of person you want to be, a victim or a victor. Do ya get it? Hey,

wait a minute. Your name's Jake, right?" the creature asked, a little hesitantly.

"Yeah, it's Jake, but how did you know that? How could you possibly know that? I think I'm getting a lump where that baseball hit me in the head. Can you see it?" I asked him as I bent over for him to get a closer look.

"Kid, you didn't get hit in the head with a baseball! Gosh, how many times do I gotta tell you that? But now that I think about it, this is kind of strange. They said you were ready to have a Mystical Guiding Manatee. It seems I must have the wrong kid. Oh no! Oh no! Oh boy, I'm gonna be in some kinda trouble! This is my very first assignment, and now I've blown it! I told King Moo Moo and Queen Mee Mee that I was more than ready and now this! I begged them to let me have this assignment. I absolutely love baseball, and now . . . oh no, this is not good! Not good at all!"

I watched as Maynard's big blue puppy-dog eyes began to fill with tears; his chin sank into his chest, his shoulders slumped, and he let his little baseball cap fall to the ground.

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Oh no, I thought. He's not handling this well! Holy cats, I think he's crying! Come on, Jake. Can't you think of something to say that might make him feel a little better?

"Maynard, I'm sorry that I wasn't the right kid, 'cause you're probably not that bad of a manatee to have around! I'm sure they'll forgive you! You know, since this is your first assignment, right? Maynard, is there anything I can do or anyone I can call to help you figure this out? Think, Maynard, think. Please stop crying, and just think about how to fix this!"

"Maybe I just landed in the wrong bat bag," Maynard said. "Yeah, that's it! If I can just find the right bat bag real quick, then maybe no one will even notice. Gosh, I don't know how this could've happened. Jake, if you'll just excuse me and please accept my apology, I'm very sorry for bothering you. But don't worry; I'll be gone when you get back from your next turn at bat. And if you could just do me a teeny-weeny little favor and keep this little mishap on the down low, that would be so awesome! Hmm. Jake, I just can't believe this has happened! Maybe, just maybe, it wasn't me who made a mistake? Maybe King Moo

Moo or Queen Mee Mee made the mistake? No, that's just not possible. That would be so unlike them. Well, maybe. I don't know . . . I guess mistakes can happen! Jake, I guess they thought you were one of the ones who, you know, cared about the game."

"Hey, what are you talking about? I love baseball, way more than you'll ever know. You may not know this, but I'm gonna play for the Los Angeles Angels one day, so there! And furthermore, I'm not a victim, and I am no scaredy-cat! I work really hard to be a good hitter, harder than most guys; it's just so embarrassing and frustrating to know I can hit the ball – and pretty good, too. And then, when I need to, I can't seem to hit the ball at all."

"Oh, Jake, now I'm beginning to understand. I don't think anyone has made a mistake! I get it. You're the right kid! I'm sure you're the right kid! Jake, that's the point I was trying to make! That's exactly my point, kid! '*When you believe in yourself completely, and I mean completely believe, then, and only then, will you be able to do whatever it is that you want to do.*' I promise! But you gotta believe it in your gut every minute of every day.

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“You Jake, are an amazing baseball player. But today, even if they were throwing watermelons, you still wouldn't be able to hit one, and that's a fact! I guess you gotta make a choice, kid. Are you gonna continue to be a *victim* like you've been doing all day, or are you gonna run out there and take charge of your situation and be a *victor*? I'm telling ya kid, when you realize that it's all within your control, that '*your body follows your brain,*' then, and only then, will you be successful. Jake, did you hear me? 'Cause you really gotta hear this: '*your body follows your brain.*' Tell your body what you want it to do, and it *will follow!*”

“Maynard, this is almost too weird to say out loud, but for some strange reason, you're starting to make some sense. Hmm, '*my body follows my brain!*' Well, OK, Maynard, I'm gonna give it a try, and I'll let you know how it goes.”

“Kid, ya can't just give it a try. Ya gotta believe it in your gut, every minute of every day! Ya just gotta decide that you can, and you will succeed. And kid, you won't have to tell me how you did, 'cause I've been watching you all day. Don't you worry – I'll know how it goes.”

“Jake! Jake, are you planning to stand there all day talking to your bat bag, or would you like to go hit?” Coach yelled.

“Sorry, Coach. I’m coming!”

“STRIKE ONE,” the ump yelled.

“STRIKE TWO,” the ump yelled again.

“Time,” I called to the ump. Come on, Jake. Not again! I took a step back and went through my routine. I adjusted my right glove, then my left glove, took a practice swing; and then took a deep breath. What was it that squeaky little manatee creature said? *‘My body follows my brain. My body follows my brain!’* OK, body, let’s smack the snot out of that watermelon and sail it over the fence!

“OK Ump, I’m ready.”

SMACK! No way, no way. I just hit my first home run! I kept saying no way over and over in my head. Keep running, man. Keep running. First base, second base, third base, no way, home plate!

“HOLY CATS, WE JUST WON THE GAME,” I started screaming. This time it was gonna be me on the bottom of the dog pile, but it was just where I wanted to be.

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“JAKE, JAKE, WE WON! WE WON!” Everyone was yelling and clapping and jumping around.

“Settle down a minute guys,” our coach said. “Listen here, I’m proud you didn’t give up on yourselves. You worked hard all the way to the end of the game! Nicely done boys! Now, get this dugout cleaned up and go home!”