

One Big Damn Puzzler



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On an island paradise somewhere in the South Pacific, Managua--the only native who can read or write--is busily translating "Hamlet" into pidgin English when a plane interrupts his noble work. Strapping on his false leg, he makes his way to the landing strip to greet the unexpected arrival: William Hardt, a young American lawyer driven by his misguided ambition to win reparations for the island's inhabitants. Hardt is not the first white outsider to pay a visit; the British came earlier, bringing their language, the small pigs that run wild in the jungle, and Shakespeare . . . and the Americans followed with guns, land mines, and Coca-Cola. But in this place of riotously logical ritual, Hardt's determined quest to do good could make him the most devastating visitor of all. Profoundly moving and achingly funny, "One Big Damn Puzzler" brilliantly explores the collision of the twenty-first century with unsullied pagan reality--and establishes John Harding as one of the most imaginative contemporary chroniclers of the human condition.

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