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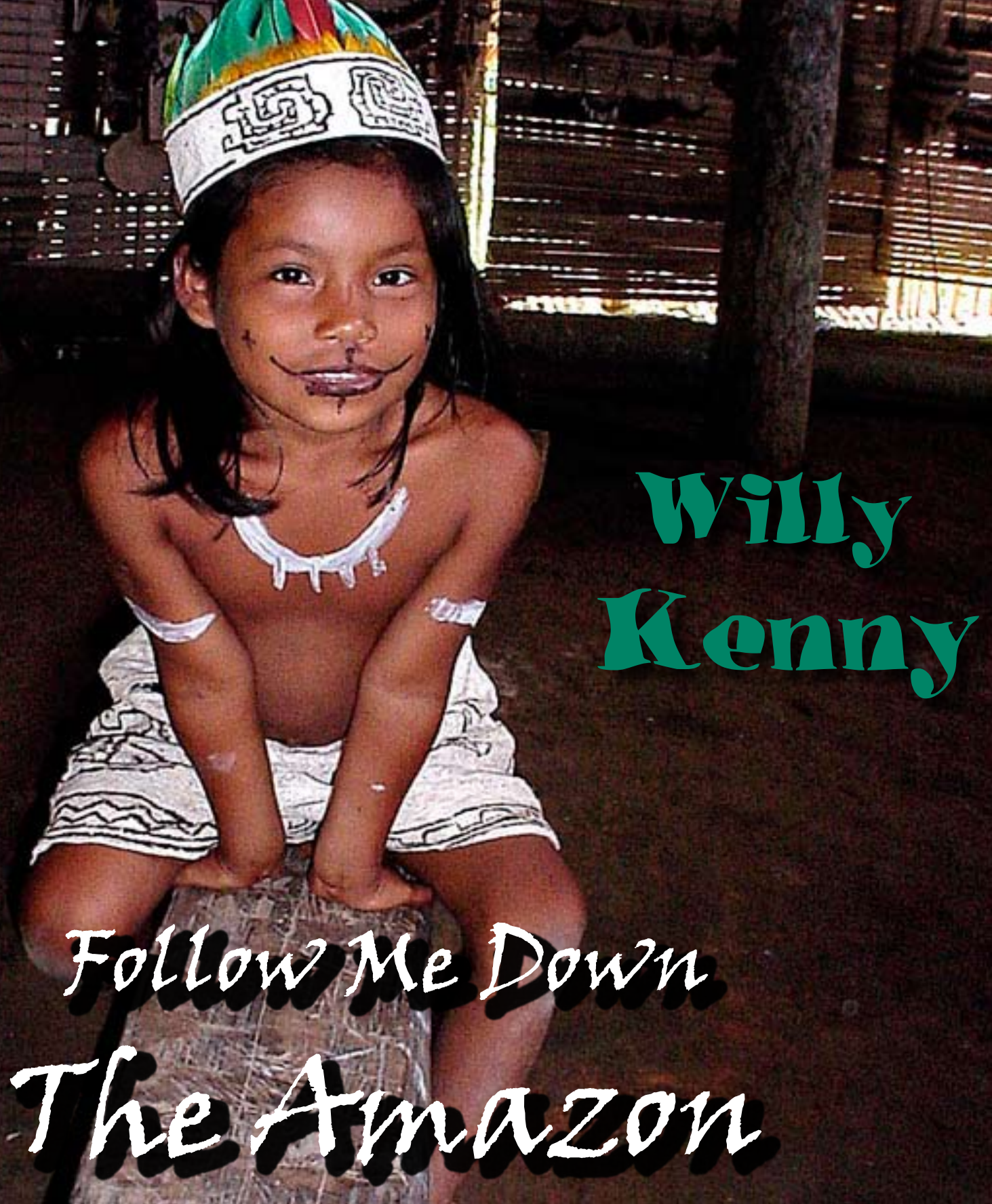
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Preface

The Amazon River is the second longest river in the world, and the largest in terms of the size of its watershed, the number of tributaries, and the volume of water discharged into the sea. No bridge crosses the river along its entire length.

The Amazon and its tributaries flow through the countries of Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean 6, 437 kilometers (4,000 miles) from the Amazon's headwaters high in the Andes mountains of Peru. This huge watershed includes the largest tropical rainforest in the world as well as areas of dry grassland, or savannah.

The rainforest's climate has heavy rainfalls and continuous high temperatures. These forests are so huge that scientists believe they actually help control the world's climate in important ways. Destruction of the forests as settlers clear the land for farming and companies harvest trees for lumber is believed to be contributing to the problem of global warming.

The Amazon is home to a variety of Indian cultures who have a great deal of knowledge about the rich and complex rainforest environment. As settlement brings changes to the forest, these cultural groups are also changing, and the lessons they have gained through thousands of years of living within the rainforest are in danger of being lost. Scientists are trying to learn from the extinct.

THE AMAZON

VENEZUELA

COLOMBIA

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Mouths of the Amazon

Equator

ECUADOR

Negro River

Japurá River

Putumayo River

Jaú River

Jari River

Marajó Island

Belém

Manaus

Napo

Amazon

Trombetas River

Amazon

Iquitos

Solimões

Juruá River

Urucu River

Tocantins River

Tucurui Dam

Nauta

Marañón

Javari River

Madeira River

Tapajós River

CARAJÁS PROJECT

Amazon

Ucayali

Juruá River

Purus River

Iriri

Xingu River

PERU

BRAZIL

Tambo

Apurímac

BRAZILIAN HIGHLANDS

BOLIVIA

Calloma

PACIFIC OCEAN

ANDES MTS

course of river flows along the border between two countries

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Peru

Yagua Indian Women
Three generations

Peru

Sunset on the Amazon