

Between the Covers

by Ken Furtado
book reviews



Installation one:

Authors Geoff Hoff and Steve Mancini have serialized *Weeping Willow* into book form.

Weeping Willow Vol 1: Welcome to River Bend

By Geoff Hoff and Steve Mancini

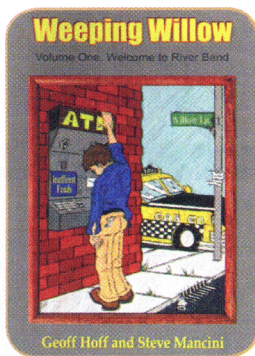
Author House

www.JosephCoaler.com

\$22.25, hard cover; \$13.50 pap.

Writers Geoff Hoff and Steve Mancini have created a fourth wall in book publishing, just so they could break it. That means, they talk to you, and to each other, while you are reading their serialized novel, *Weeping Willow Vol. 1: Welcome to River Bend*.

If that sounds like a wacky statement, it's a fair representation of the gonzo experience you'll get from reading this book. The art of the novel as a real audience participation event sort of thing.



Weeping Willow originated online as a serial, offered in 15 installments over the course of two years. Those installments were then collected in book form.

Lee Harris, the protagonist, is a 21st century Candide except that his (mis)adventures don't cover much territory, geographically. Upon discovering that his wife of eight years has a boyfriend on the side, Lee stuffs his car with all it can hold and takes off for parts unknown, landing in a town called River Bend.

Lee needs to get drunk, so he rents a motel room near a bar and ties one on. Ironically (irony is practically a major character in the story) he gets arrested for being drunk, finding the local

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cops unsympathetic to the argument that "he had purposely not driven so he wouldn't have to drive drunk."

Booked, fingerprinted and thrown into the hoosegow, Lee sleeps it off and emerges in need of ready cash and some mouthwash. But the ATM tells him his wife has cleaned out the bank account.

Is this the *Perils of Pauline* or what? Lee takes a job at the local greasy spoon; it comes with an attic and a sleeping couch. And he gets involved in the local amateur theater company. And he gets involved with the lives of the locals. And his wife sends a detective looking for him.

For those who keep score, one of the authors is gay and the story has a subplot involving a gay member of the theater troupe (what, only one?) and the detective. If you don't like to get your funny bone wrenched, wrap it up or read something else. And probably don't hold your breath waiting for volume two.