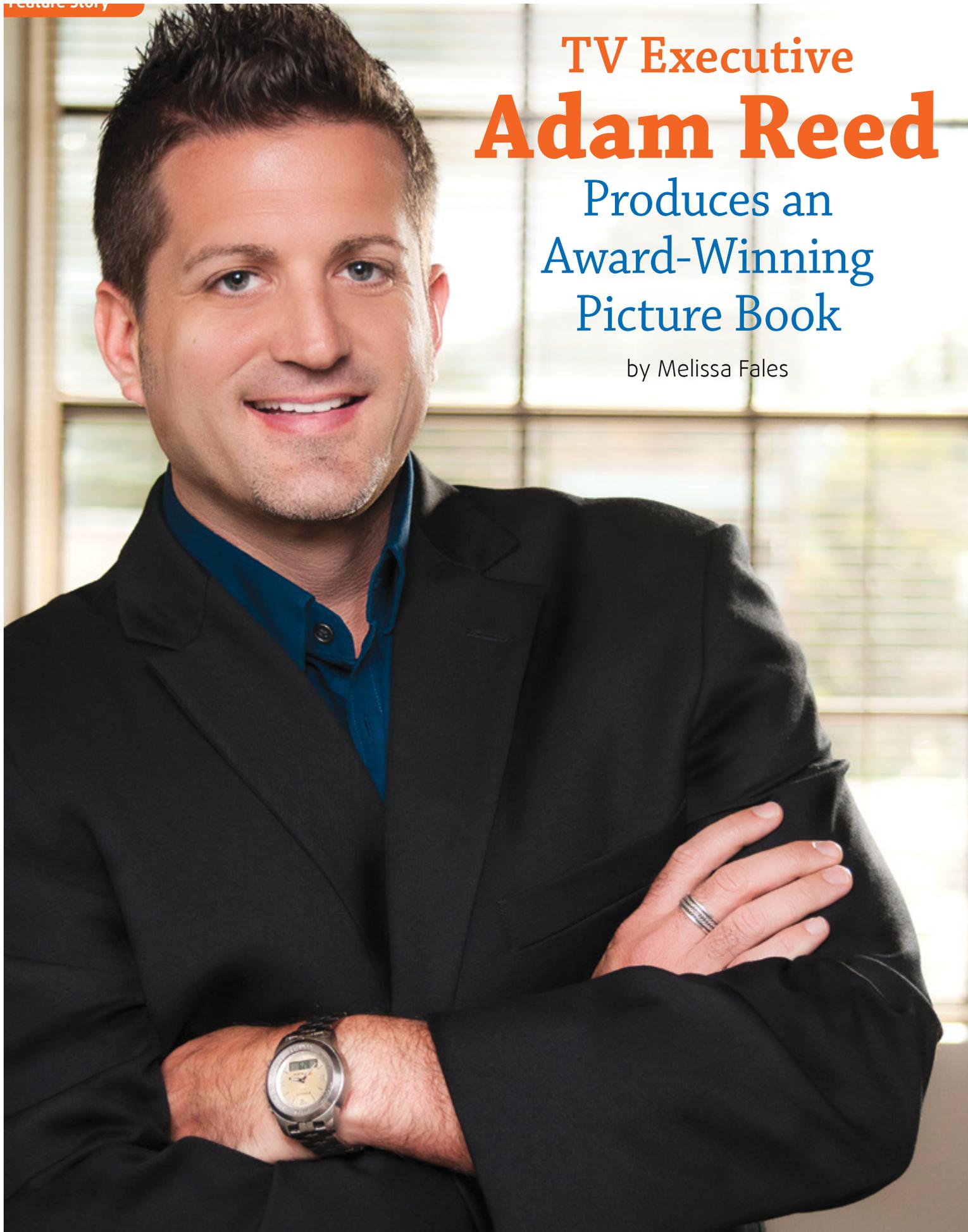


TV Executive **Adam Reed**

Produces an
Award-Winning
Picture Book

by Melissa Fales



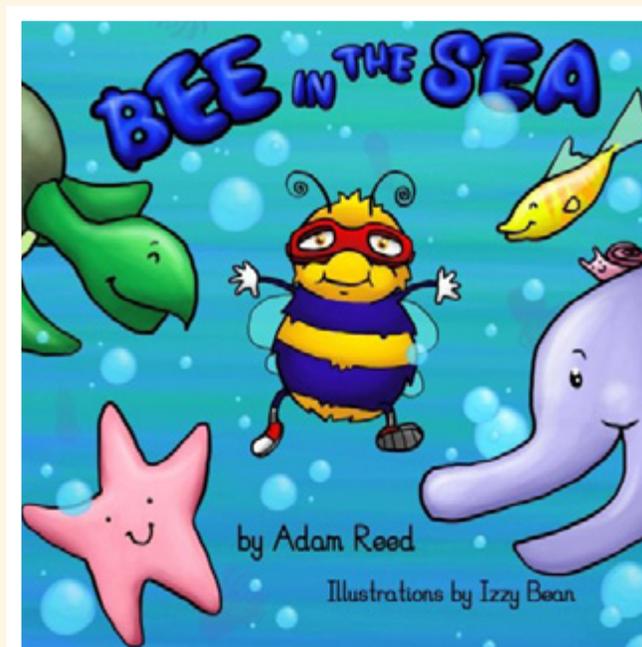
Adam Reed had absolutely no intention of becoming a children's author. As the executive vice president of Thinkfactory Media in Los Angeles, Reed produced shows such as *Married by Mom and Dad*, *Preachers' Daughters*, *R&B Divas*, *Gene Simmons Family Jewels*, and *Dead of Winter: the Donner Party*. The youngest television producer named to *The Hollywood Reporter's* "Reality Power List," Reed, 39, admits that writing a children's book was the furthest thing from his mind until the inspiration for his award-winning book *Bee in the Sea* came to him in a dream. "I realize how crazy it sounds," says Reed. "I have no idea how it happened but I'm glad that it did. I call it divine intervention."

Growing up in Bakersfield, California, Reed spent more time writing poetry than watching TV. His father, an aspiring writer, and his mother, who worked in marketing, were supportive in every way possible. "I had two parents who believed in me," Reed says. "They supported me emotionally and encouraged me to follow my dreams."

An avid roller skater, Reed spent much of his teen years on eight wheels and was at one time, the second-best in the country. At 18 he ditched the roller skates for roller blades. His fancy footwork on the blades earned him a spot in a Mountain Dew commercial.

The experience piqued Reed's interest in show business. "It was so much fun to be in front of the camera," he says. For a time, Reed worked as an on-camera CBS affiliate reporter. "I wanted to be a news anchor," he says. When the company promised him a job if he earned a journalism degree from UCLA, Reed enrolled. "During my first journalism class, I was told I had to be objective," he says. "I was told that I couldn't be partisan or apologetic." It was a wake-up call for Reed. "I realized I was way too opinionated to be an objective reporter," he says. He later pursued acting, but realized that it didn't offer him enough control. "I found out that the people behind the scenes were the ones pulling the strings," he says. That's when he began studying film and television.

After graduating from UCLA, Reed set about doing any production jobs he could get, even if it meant not getting paid. "My goal was to immerse myself into the world of production," he says. Instead of spending thousands of dollars for graduate school, Reed decided to get as much real-world production experience as possible instead. "I saw it as a trade-off," he explains. "It all sounds glamorous and glossy now, but at age 23, I was \$100,000 in credit card debt."



“I had two parents who believed in me. They supported me emotionally and encouraged me to follow my dreams.”

Reed compiled a reel of sample commercials he created to show prospective clients what he could do. “I didn’t get signed,” he says. “I still have all of those rejection letters. I keep them to motivate me.” Undaunted, Reed learned that the Partnership for a Drug-Free America was looking for someone to direct their next campaign. He wrote a heartfelt letter, weaving in his experiences about a family member who’d been in and out of jail due to his struggle with drugs. “I admitted I’d never directed a real commercial before,” says Reed. “I told them my personal story and said I’d love a chance.” He sent the letter along with a copy of the sample commercials he’d created. Reed was chosen for the job. “They really, really took a chance on me,” he says.

That chance paid off. Reed’s commercial highlighted the dangers of the drug, Ecstasy, hooking the audience with testimonials from a coroner and grieving parents of a girl who died after taking it. The campaign established Reed’s place in the industry and is still considered one of the most successful campaigns in the history of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

At age 28, Reed co-created the A&E hit *Gene Simmons Family Jewels* which ran for 186 episodes. “My current business partner had known Gene for 20 years but Gene likes to claim that I had no clue who he was when I first met him since I grew up in a very small town,” Reed admits, and he saw that as a benefit. “I actually did know who he was, but I wasn’t infatuated with him as many others were so I had absolutely no

bias either way. I wasn’t afraid of him like everyone else.” Reed says working with Simmons was a major learning experience for him. “He’s a branding and marketing genius,” Reed says. “Being around him was like attending the Gene Simmons Business School.”

Since then, Reed has been involved in every genre of television. “You name it,” he says. “We’ve done scripted, unscripted, documentaries, live shows, talk shows, game shows ... everything.” He acknowledges the stark contrast between his day job as a producer and his career as an author. “With TV, there’s always a network that wants things a certain way,” he says. “I love the networks I work with, but it’s always a collaboration between their vision and your vision. With my books, I’m 100 percent in control. I’m limited only by what my mind can come up with. I like that kind of creative freedom.”

Even for someone like Reed, who is used to the twists and turns of television plots, the story behind *Bee in the Sea* is unusual. “It’s so odd,” he says. “It was about six months before my wife, Jennifer, got pregnant with our daughter, Peyton. I had a dream and I can still hear the voice from the dream that said ‘Write children’s books!’” The voice even suggested the title *Bee in the Sea*. The next morning, Reed went about his daily routine, including a trip to the gym. While on the treadmill, he felt compelled to start writing the book. “I wrote about 90 percent of the book on my phone on the treadmill that morning,” he says. “It was totally stream of consciousness. I have absolutely no idea where it came from.”

Reed spent the next few months editing the book and searching for a suitable illustrator. Since then, he has completed his second book, *Star in the Car*, which is about being afraid of the dark and is due out this year. A third book is in the works, too.

For Reed, becoming an author is a remarkable adventure he never sought out, but nonetheless embraces. “It’s weird the way life works,” he says. “It’s been a wild ride.” Reed says he most treasures the unexpected pleasure of snuggling up with Peyton at bedtime every night and reading to her from a book that he wrote. “That’s all the reward I need.” For more information about Adam Reed, visit www.adamreed.com.