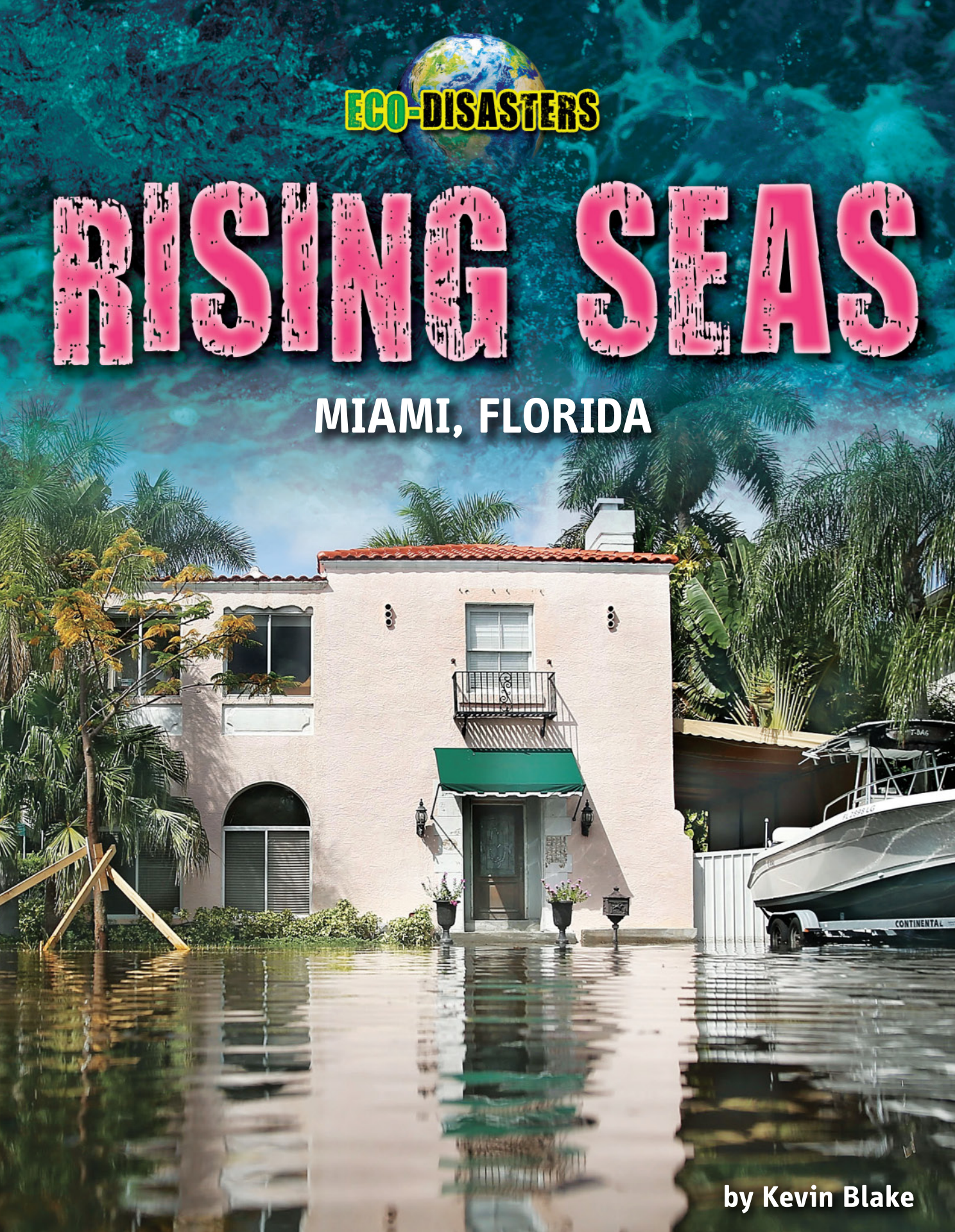
ECO-DISASTERS

RISING SEAS

MIAMI, FLORIDA



by Kevin Blake

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ECO-DISASTERS

RISING SEAS

MIAMI, FLORIDA

by Kevin Blake

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Water Everywhere

Strange things are happening in the city of Miami. On a bright sunny morning, a man walks across a flooded neighborhood park while carrying his small dog. Nearby, a woman looks out her apartment window to see a stream of water flowing down the street past her front door. A restaurant owner suddenly finds a giant puddle where his outdoor tables used to be.

The number of days every year that Miami floods has been increasing.

Water is part of the Miami landscape.

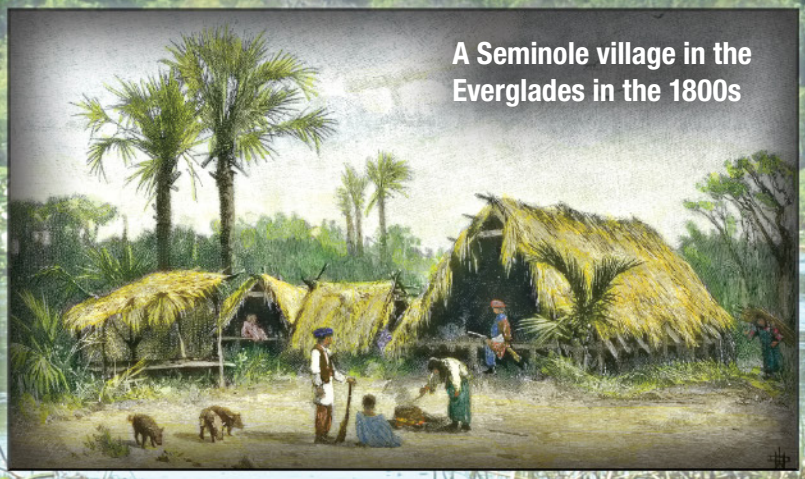
These odd scenes of flooding are occurring more often in Miami, Florida. For many years, millions of Americans have lived in and visited this **vibrant** city located along Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Now, however, it seems like the ocean is slowly swallowing the city. As scientist Harold Wanless warns, "Miami, as we know it today, is doomed."

The Miami **metropolitan area** is the eighth largest in the United States. More than six million people live there.

Changing Wetlands

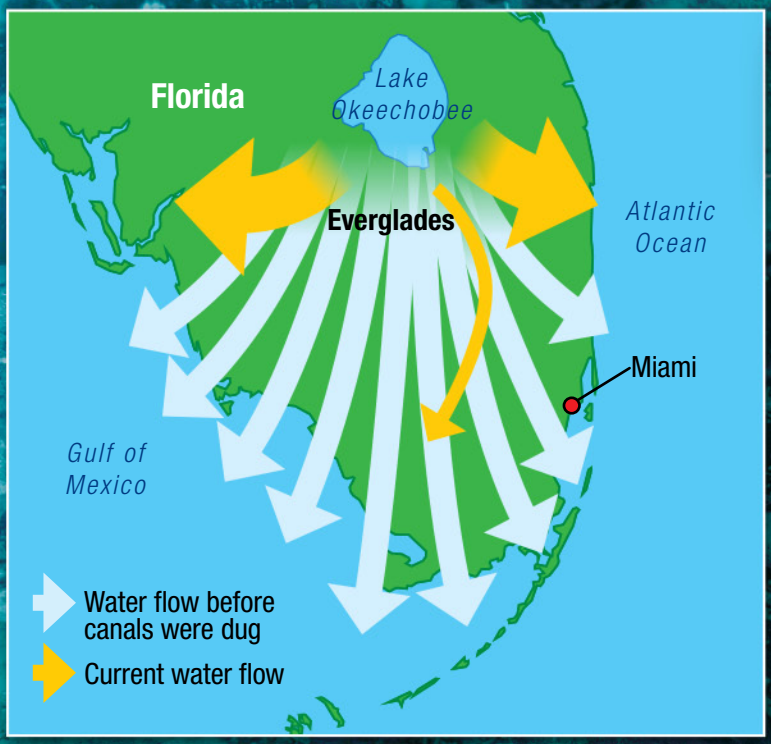
Miami's fight against creeping water isn't new. In fact, Miami used to be part of the Everglades, one giant **wetland** area that covered nearly all of South Florida. It was a perfect home for alligators, birds, and other wetland animals. The Everglades was a difficult place for people to live. However, for thousands of years, Native Americans such as the Seminoles made it their home.

Alligators and other swamp animals live in the Florida Everglades.



A Seminole village in the Everglades in the 1800s

In the early 1900s, businessmen started changing the region so it would be suitable for large numbers of people to live there. They drained much of the water from South Florida and sent it into the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. By 1920, more than 200 miles (322 km) of **canals** were dug to **divert** the water and dry out the land. It worked. With the swamp cleared out, towns like Miami grew and became popular **tourist** destinations.



Much of the water from the Everglades used to flow south toward Miami. After the canals were dug, most of the water flowed east and west.

Before it was drained, the Everglades covered more than 4,000 square miles (10,360 sq km). That's bigger than the states of Rhode Island and Delaware combined!

An Everglades canal