### The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Weirdest World, by R. A. Lafferty

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at <a href="https://www.gutenberg.org">www.gutenberg.org</a>. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Weirdest World

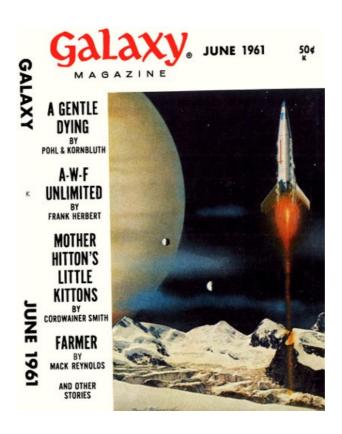
Author: R. A. Lafferty Illustrator: Wallace Wood

Release date: April 17, 2016 [EBook #51774]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Greg Weeks, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WEIRDEST WORLD \*\*\*



### The Weirdest World

By R. A. LAFFERTY

Illustrated by WOOD

[Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from Galaxy Magazine June 1961.

Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]

### Odd planet! The bipeds talked from their heads and saw only what lay before them. In short, they were pathetic—and deadly!

Ι

As I am now utterly without hope, lost to my mission and lost in the sight of my crew, I will record what petty thoughts I may have for what benefit they may give some other starfarer. Nine long days of bickering! But the decision is sure. The crew will maroon me. I have lost all control over them.

Who could have believed that I would show such weakness when crossing the barrier? By all the tests I should have been the strongest. But the final test is the event itself. I failed.

I only hope that it is a pleasant and habitable planet where they put me down....

Later. They have decided. I am no longer the captain even in name. But they have compassion on me. They will do what they can for my comfort. I believe they have already selected my desert island, so to speak, an out-of-the-way globe where they will leave me to die. I will hope for the best. I no longer have any voice in their councils....

Later. I will be put down with only the basic survival kit: the ejection mortar and sphere for my last testament to be orbited into the galactic drift; a small cosmoscope so that I will at least have my bearings; one change of blood; an abridged universal language correlator; a compendium of the one thousand philosophic questions yet unsolved to exercise my mind; a small vial of bug-kill; and a stack of sexy magazines....

Later. It has been selected. But my mind has grown so demoralized that I do not even recognize the system, though once this particular region was my specialty. The globe will be habitable. There will be breathable atmosphere which will allow me to dispense with much bothersome equipment. Here the filler used is nitrogen, yet it will not matter. I have breathed nitrogen before. There will be water, much of it saline, but sufficient quantities of sweet. Food will be no problem; before being marooned, I will receive injections that should last me for the rest of my probably short life. Gravity will be within the range of my constitution.

What will be lacking? Nothing but the companionship of my own kind, which is everything.

What a terrible thing it is to be marooned!

One of my teachers used to say that the only unforgivable sin in the universe is ineptitude. That I should be the first to succumb to space-ineptitude and be an awkward burden on the rest of them! But it would be disastrous for them to try to travel any longer with a sick man, particularly as their nominal leader. I would be a shadow over them. I hold them no rancor.

It will be today....

Later. I am here. I have no real interest in defining where "here" is, though I have my cosmoscope and could easily determine it. I was anesthetized a few hours before, and put down here in my sleep. The blasted half-acre of their landing is near. No other trace of them is left.

Yet it is a good choice and not greatly unlike home. It is the nearest resemblance I have seen on the entire voyage, which is to say that the pseudodendrons are enough like trees to remind me of trees, the herbage near enough to grass to satisfy one who had never known real grass. It is a green, somewhat waterlogged land of pleasant temperature.

The only inhabitants I have encountered are a preoccupied race of hump-backed browsers who pay me scant notice. These are quadruped and myopic, and spend nearly their entire time at feeding. It may be that I am invisible to them. Yet they hear my voice and shy away somewhat from it. I am able to communicate with them only poorly. Their only vocalization is a sort of vibrant windy roar, but when I answer in kind, they appear more puzzled than communicative.



They have this peculiarity: when they come to an obstacle of terrain or thicket, they either go laboriously around it or force their way through it. It does not seem to occur to them to fly over it. They are as gravity-bound as a newborn baby.

What air-traveling creatures I have met are of a considerably smaller size. These are more vocal than the myopic quadrupeds, and I have had some success in conversing with them, but my results still await a more leisurely semantic interpretation. Such communications of theirs as I have analyzed are quite commonplace. They have no real philosophy and are singularly lacking in aspiration; they are almost total extroverts and have no more than the rudiments of introspection.

Yet they have managed to tell me some amusing anecdotes. They are quite good-natured, though

They say that neither they nor the myopic quadrupeds are the dominant race here, but rather a large grublike creature lacking a complete outer covering. From what they are able to convey of this breed, it is a nightmarish kind of creation. One of the flyers even told me that the giant grubs travel upright on a bifurcated tail, but this is difficult to credit. Besides, I believe that humor is at least a minor component of the mentality of my airy friends. I will call them birds, though they are but a sorry caricature of the birds at home....

Later. I am being hunted. I am being hunted by the giant grubs. Doubling back, I have seen them on my trail, examining it with great curiosity.

The birds had given me a very inadequate idea of these. They are indeed unfinished—they *do* lack a complete outer covering. Despite their giant size, I am convinced that they are grubs, living under rocks and in masses of rotten wood. Nothing in nature gives the impression of so lacking an outer covering as the grub, that obese, unfinished worm.

These are, however, simple bipeds. They are wrapped in a cocoon which they seem never to have shed, as though their emergence from the larval state were incomplete. It is a loose artificial sheath covering the central portion of the corpus. They seem never to divest themselves of it, though it is definitely not a part of the body. When I have analyzed their minds, I will know the reason for their carrying it. Now I can only conjecture. It would seem a compulsion, some psychological bond that dooms them in their apparent adult state to carry their cocoons with them.

Later. I am captured by three of the giant grubs. I had barely time to swallow my communication sphere. They pinned me down and beat me with sticks. I was taken by surprise and was not momentarily able to solve their language, though it came to me after a short interval. It was discordant and vocal and entirely gravity-bound, by which I mean that its thoughts were chained to its words. There seemed nothing in them above the vocal. In this the giant grubs were less than the birds, even though they had a practical power and cogency that the birds lacked.

"What'll we do with the blob?" asked one.

"Why," said the second, "you hit it on that end and I'll hit it on this. We don't know which end is

the head."

"Let's try it for bait," said the third. "Catfish might go for it."

"We could keep it alive till we're ready to use it. Then it would stay fresh."

"No, let's kill it. It doesn't look too fresh, even the way it is."

"Gentlemen, you are making a mistake," I said. "I have done nothing to merit death. And I am not without talent. Besides, you have not considered the possibility that I may be forced to kill you three instead. I will not die willingly. Also I will thank you to stop pounding on me with those sticks. It hurts."

I was surprised and shocked at the sound of my own voice. It nearly as harsh as that of the grubs. But this was my first attempt at their language, and musicality does not become it.

"Hey, fellows, did you hear that? Was that the blob talking? Or was one of you playing a joke? Harry? Stanley? Have you been practicing to be ventriloquists?"

"Not me."

"Not me either. It sure sounded like it was it."

"Hey, blob, was that you? Can you talk, blob?"

"Certainly I can talk," I responded. "I am not an infant. Nor am I a blob. I am a creature superior to your own kind, if you are examples. Or it may be that you are only children. Perhaps you are still in the pupa stage. Tell me, is yours an early stage, or an arrested development, or are you indeed adult?"

"Hey, fellows, we don't have to take that from any blob. I'll cave in its blasted head."

"That's its tail."

"It's its head. It's the end it talks with."

"Gentlemen, perhaps I can set you straight," I said. "That is my tail you are thwacking with that stick, and I am warning you to stop it. Of course I was talking with my tail. I was only doing it in imitation of you. I am new at the language and its manner of speaking. Yet it may be that I have made a grotesque mistake. Is that your *heads* that you are waving in the air? Well, then, I will talk with my head, if that is the custom. But I warn you again not to hit me on either end with those sticks."

"Hey, fellows, I bet we could sell that thing. I bet we could sell it to Billy Wilkins for his Reptile Farm."

"How would we get it there?"

"Make it walk. Hey blob, can you walk?"

"I can travel, certainly, but I would not stagger along precariously on a pair of flesh stilts with my head in the air, as you do. When I travel, I do not travel upside down."

"Well, let's go, then. We're going to sell you to Billy Wilkins for his Reptile Farm. If he can use a blob, he'll put you in one of the tanks with the big turtles and alligators. You think you'll like them?"

"I am lonesome in this lost world," I replied sadly, "and even the company of you peeled grubs is better than nothing. I am anxious to adopt a family and settle down here for what years of life I have left. It may be that I will find compatibility with the species you mention. I do not know what they are."

"Hey, fellows, this blob isn't a bad guy at all. I'd shake your hand; blob, if I knew where it was. Let's go to Billy Wilkins' place and sell him."

II

We traveled to Billy Wilkins' place. My friends were amazed when I took to the air and believed that I had deserted them. They had no cause to distrust me. Without them I would have had to rely on intuition to reach Billy Wilkins, and even then I would lack the proper introductions.

"Hey, Billy," said my loudest friend, whose name was Cecil, "what will you give us for a blob? It flies and talks and isn't a bad fellow at all. You'd get more tourists to come to your reptile show if you had a talking blob in it. He could sing songs and tell stories. I bet he could even play the guitar."

"Well, Cecil, I'll just give you all ten dollars for it and try to figure out what it is later. I'm a little ahead on my hunches now, so I can afford to gamble on this one. I can always pickle it and exhibit it as a genuine hippopotamus kidney."

"Thank you, Billy. Take care of yourself, blob."

"Good-by for now, gentlemen," I said. "I would like you to visit me some evening as soon as I am

acclimated to my new surroundings. I will throw a whing-ding for you—as soon as I find out what a whing-ding is."

"My God," said Billy Wilkins, "it talks! It really talks!"

"We told you it could talk and fly, Billy."

"It talks, it talks," said Billy. "Where's that blasted sign painter? Eustace, come here. We got to paint a new sign!"

The turtles in the tank I was put into did have a sound basic philosophy which was absent in the walking grubs. But they were slow and lacking inner fire. They would not be obnoxious company, but neither would they give me excitement and warmth. I was really more interested in the walking grubs.

Eustace was a black grub, while the others had all been white; but like them he had no outside casing of his own, and like them he also staggered about on flesh stilts with his head in the air.

It wasn't that I was naive or hadn't seen bipeds before. But I don't believe anyone ever became entirely accustomed to seeing a biped travel in its peculiar manner.

"Good afternoon, Eustace," I said pleasantly enough. The eyes of Eustace were large and white. He was a more handsome specimen than the other grubs.

"That you talking, bub? Say, you really can talk, can't you? I thought Mr. Billy was fooling. Now just you hold that expression a minute and let me get it set in my mind. I can paint anything, once I get it set in my mind. What's your name, blob? Have blobs names?"

"Not in your manner. With us the name and the soul, I believe you call it, are the same thing and cannot be vocalized, so I will have to adopt a name of your sort. What would be a good name?"

"Bub, I was always partial to George Albert Leroy Ellery. That was my grandfather's name."

"Should I also have a family name?"

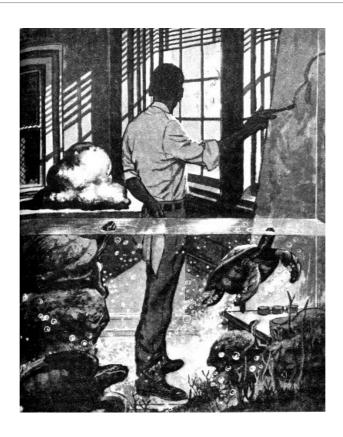
"Sure."

"What would you suggest?"

"How about McIntosh?"

"That will be fine. I will use it."

I talked to the turtles while Eustace was painting my portrait on tent canvas.



<sup>&</sup>quot;Is the name of this world Florida?" I asked one of them. "The road signs said Florida."

<sup>&</sup>quot;World, world, water, water, water, glub, glug, glub," said one of them.

"Yes, but is this particular world we are on named Florida?"

"World, world, water, water, glub," said another.

"Eustace, I can get nothing from these fellows," I called. "Is this world named Florida?"

"Mr. George Albert, you are right in the middle of Florida, the greatest state in the universe."

"Having traveled, Eustace, I have great reservations that it is the greatest. But it is my new home and I must cultivate a loyalty to it."

I went up in a tree to give advice to two young birds trying to construct a nest. This was obviously their first venture.

"You are going about it all wrong," I told them. "First consider that this will be your home, and then consider how you can make your home most beautiful."

"This is the way they've always built them," said one of the birds.

"There must be an element of utility, yes," I told them. "But the dominant motif should be beauty. The impression of expanded vistas can be given by long low walls and parapets."

"This is the way they've always built them," said the other bird.

"Remember to embody new developments," I said. "Just say to yourself, 'This is the newest nest in the world.' Always say that about any task you attempt. It inspires you."

"This is the way they've always built them," said the birds. "Go build your own nest."

"Mr. George Albert," called Eustace, "Mr. Billy won't like your flying around those trees. You're supposed to stay in your tank."

"I was only getting a little air and talking to the birds," I said.

"You can talk to the birds?" asked Eustace.

"Cannot anyone?"

"I can, a little," said Eustace. "I didn't know anyone else could."

But when Billy Wilkins returned and heard the report that I had been flying about, I was put in the snake house, in a cage that was tightly meshed top and sides. My cellmate was a surly python named Pete.

"See you stay on that side," said Pete. "You're too big for me to swallow. But I might try."

"There is something bothering you, Pete," I said. "You have a bad disposition. That can come only from a bad digestion or a bad conscience."

"I have both," said Pete. "The first is because I bolt my food. The second is because—well, I forget the reason, but it's my conscience."

"Think hard, Pete. Why have you a bad conscience?"

"Snakes always have bad consciences. We have forgotten the crime, but we remember the guilt."

"Perhaps you should seek advice from someone, Pete."

"I kind of think it was someone's smooth advice that started us on all this. He talked the legs right off us."

Billy Wilkins came to the cage with another "man," as the walking grubs call themselves.

"That it?" asked the other man. "And you say it can talk?"

"Of course I talk," I answered for Billy Wilkins. "I have never known a creature who couldn't talk in some manner. My name is George Albert Leroy Ellery McIntosh. I don't believe that I heard yours, sir."

"Bracken. Blackjack Bracken. I was telling Billy here that if he really had a blob that could talk, I might be able to use it in my night club. We could have you here at the Snake Ranch in the daytime for the tourists and kids. Then I could have you at the club at night. We could work out an act. Do you think you could learn to play the guitar?"

"Probably. But it would be much easier for me merely to duplicate the sound."

"But then how could you sing and make guitar noise at the same time?"

"You surely don't think I am limited to one voice box?"

"Oh. I didn't know. What's that big metal ball you have there?"

"That's my communication sphere, to record my thoughts. I would not be without it. When in danger, I swallow it. When in extreme danger, I will have to escape to a spot where I have concealed my ejection mortar, and send my sphere into the galactic drift on a chance that it may be found."

"That's no kind of gag to put in an act. What I have in mind is something like this."

Blackjack Bracken told a joke. It was a childish one and in poor taste.

"I don't believe that is quite my style," I said.

- "All right, what would you suggest?"
- "I thought that I might lecture your patrons on the Higher Ethic."
- "Look, George Albert, my patrons don't even have the lower ethic."
- "And just what sort of recompense are we talking about?" I asked.
- "Billy and I had about settled on a hundred and fifty a week."
- "A hundred and fifty for whom?"
- "Why, for Billy."
- "Let us make it a hundred and fifty for myself, and ten per cent for Billy as my agent."
- "Say, this blob's real smart, isn't he, Billy?"
- "Too smart."
- "Yes, sir, George Albert, you're one smart blob. What kind of contract have you signed with Billy here?"
- "No contract."
- "Just a gentlemen's agreement?"
- "No agreement."
- "Billy, you can't hold him in a cage without a contract. That's slavery. It's against the law."
- "But, Blackjack, a blob isn't people."
- "Try proving that in court. Will you sign a contract with me, George Albert?"
- "I will not dump Billy. He befriended me and gave me a home with the turtles and snakes. I will sign a joint contract with the two of you. We will discuss terms tomorrow—after I have estimated the attendance both here and at the night club."

Ш

Of the walking grubs (who call themselves "people") there are two kinds, and they place great emphasis on the difference. From this stems a large part of their difficulties. This distinction, which is one of polarity, cuts quite across the years and ability and station of life. It is not confined only to the people grubs, but also involves apparently all the beings on the planet Florida.

It appears that a person is committed to one or the other polarity at the beginning of life, maintaining that polarity until death. The interlocking attraction-repulsion complex set up by these two opposable types has deep emotional involvements. It is the cause of considerable concern and disturbance, as well as desire and inspiration. There is a sort of poetic penumbra about the whole thing that tends to disguise its basic simplicity, expressible as a simultaneous polarity equation.

Complete segregation of the two types seems impossible. If it has ever been tried, it has now evidently been abandoned as impractical.

There is indeed an intangible difference between the two types, so that before that first day at the Reptile Ranch was finished, I was able to differentiate between the two more than ninety per cent of the time. The knowledge of this difference in polarity seems to be intuitive.

These two I will call the Beta and Gamma, or Boy and Girl, types. I began to see that this opposability of the two types was one of the great driving forces of the people.

In the evening I was transported to the night club and I was a success. I would not entertain them with blue jokes or blue lyrics, but the patrons seemed fascinated by my simple imitations of all the instruments of the orchestra and my singing of comic ballads that Eustace had taught me in odd moments that day. They were also interested in the way that I drank gin—that is, emptying the bottle without breaking the seal. (It seems that the grub-people are unable to absorb a liquid without making direct contact with it.)

And I met Margaret, one of the "girl" singers.

I had been wondering to which type of people I might show affinity. Now I knew. I was definitely a Beta type, for I was attracted to Margaret, who was unmistakably a Gamma. I began to understand the queer effect that these types have on each other.

She came over to my cage.

"I want to rub your head for good luck before I go on," she said.

"Thank you, Margaret," I replied, "but that is not my head."

She sang with incomparable sadness, with all the sorrow and sordidness that appear to be the lot of unfortunate Gammas. It was the essence of melancholy made into music. It was a little bit like the ghost music on the asteroid Artemis, a little like the death chants on Dolmena. Sex and sorrow. Nostalgia. Regret.

Her singing shook me with a yearning that had no precedent.

She came back to my cage.

"You were wonderful, Margaret," I said.

"I'm always wonderful when I'm singing for my supper. I am less wonderful in the rare times that I am well fed. But are you happy, little buddy?"

"I had become almost so, till I heard you sing. Now I am overcome with sorrow and longing. Margaret, I am fascinated with you."

"I go for you too, blob. You're my buddy. Isn't it funny that the only buddy I have in the world is a blob? But if you'd seen some of the guys I've been married to—boy! I wouldn't insult you by calling them blobs. Have to go now. See you tomorrow night—if they keep us both on."

Now there was a problem to face. It was necessary that I establish control over my environment, and at once. How else could I aspire to Margaret?

I knew that the heart of the entire place here was neither the bar nor the entertainment therein, nor the cuisine, nor the dancing. The heart of the enterprise was the Casino. Here was the money that mattered; the rest was but garnish.

I had them bring me into the gambling rooms.

I had expected problems of complexity here with which the patrons worked for their gain or loss. Instead there was an almost amazing simplicity. All the games were based on first aspect numbers only. Indeed, everything on the Planet Florida seemed based on first aspect numbers.

Now it is an elemental fact that first aspect numbers do not carry within them their own prediction. Nor were the people even possessed of the prediction key that lies over the very threshold of the second aspect series.

These people were actually wagering sums—the symbols of prosperity—blindly, not knowing for sure whether they would win or lose. They were selecting numbers by hunch or at random with no assurance of profit. They were choosing a hole for a ball to fall into without knowing whether that was the right hole!

I do not believe that I was ever so amazed at anything in my life.

But here was my opportunity to establish control over my environment.

I began to play the games.

Usually I would watch a round first, to be sure that I understood just what was going on. Then I would play a few times ... as many as it took to break the game.

I broke game after game. When he could no longer pay me, Blackjack closed the Casino in exasperation.



Then we played poker, he and I and several others. This was even more simple. I suddenly realized that the grub-people could see only one side of the cards at a time.

I played and I won.

I owned the Casino now, and all of those people were now working for me. Billy Wilkins also played with us, so that in short order I also owned the Reptile Ranch.

Before the evening was over, I owned a race track, a beach hotel, and a theater in a place named New York.

I had begun to establish control over my environment....

Later. Now started the golden days. I increased my control and did what I could for my friends.

I got a good doctor for my old friend and roommate, Pete the python, and he began receiving treatment for his indigestion. I got a jazzy sports car for my friend Eustace imported from somewhere called Italy. And I buried Margaret in mink, for she had a fix on the fur of that mysterious animal. She enjoyed draping it about her in the form of coats, capes, cloaks, mantles and stoles, though the weather didn't really require it.

I had now won several banks, a railroad, an airline, and a casino in somewhere named Havana.

"You're somebody now," said Margaret. "You really ought to dress better. Or are you dressed? I never know. I don't know if part of that is clothes or if all of it is you. But at least I've learned which is your head. I think we should be married in May. It's so common to be married in June. Just imagine me being Mrs. George Albert Leroy Ellery McIntosh! You know, we have become quite an item. And do you know there are three biographies of you out—Burgeoning Blob, The Blob from Way Out, The Hidden Hand Behind the Blob—What Does it Portend? And the governor has invited us to dine tomorrow. I do wish you would learn to eat. If you weren't so nice, you'd be creepy. I always say there's nothing wrong with marrying a man, or a blob, with money. It shows foresight on the part of a girl. You know you will have to get a blood test? You had better get it tomorrow. You do have blood, don't you?"

I did, but not, of course, of the color and viscosity of hers. But I could give it that color and viscosity temporarily. And it would react negative in all the tests.

She mused, "They are all jealous of me. They say they wouldn't marry a blob. They mean they couldn't.... Do you have to carry that tin ball with you all the time?"

"Yes. It is my communication sphere. In it I record my thoughts. I would be lost without it."

"Oh, like a diary. How quaint!"

Yes, those were the golden days. The grubs appeared to me in a new light, for was not Margaret also a grub? Yet she seemed not so unfinished as the rest. Though lacking a natural outer casing, she had not the appearance of crawling out from under a rock. She was quite an attractive "girl." And she cared for me.

What more could I wish? I was affluent. I was respected. I was in control of my environment. And I could aid my friends, of whom I had now acquired an astonishing number.

Moreover, my old space-ineptitude sickness had left me. I never felt better in my life. Ah, golden days, one after the other like a pleasant dream. And soon I am to be married!

IV

There has been a sudden change. As on the Planet Hecube, where full summer turns into the dead of the winter in minutes, to the destruction of many travelers, so was it here. My world is threatened!

It is tottering, all that I have built up. I will fight. I will have the best lawyers on the planet. I am not done. But I am threatened....

Later. This may be the end. The appeal court has given its decision. A blob may not own property in Florida. A blob is not a person.

Of course I am not a person. I never pretended to be. But I am a  $\it personage!$  I will yet fight this thing....

Later. I have lost everything. The last appeal is gone. By definition, I am an animal of indeterminate origin, and my property is being completely stripped from me.

I made an eloquent appeal and it moved them greatly. There were tears in their eyes. But there was greed in the set of their mouths. They have a vested interest in stripping me. Each will seize a little.

And I am left a pauper, a vassal, an animal, a slave. This is always the last doom of the marooned, to be a despised alien at the mercy of a strange world.

Yet it should not be hopeless. I will have Margaret. Since my contract with Billy Wilkins and Blackjack Bracken, long since bought up, is no longer in effect, Margaret should be able to

handle my affairs as a person. I believe that I have great earning powers yet, and I can win as much as I wish by gambling. We will treat this as only a technicality. We shall acquire new fortune. I will reestablish control over my environment. I will bring back the golden days. A few of my old friends are still loyal to me, Margaret, Pete the python, Eustace....

Later. The world has caved in completely. Margaret has thrown me over.

"I'm sorry, blobby," she said, "but it just won't work. You're still nice, but without money you are only a blob. How could I marry a blob?"

"But we can earn more money! I am talented."

"No, you're box-office poison now. You were a fad, and fads die quickly."

"But, Margaret, I can win as much as I wish by gambling."

"Not a chance, blobby. Nobody will gamble with you any more. You're through, blob. I will miss you, though. There will be a new blue note in my ballads when I sing for my supper, after the mink coats are all gone. 'By now."

"Margaret, do not leave me! What of all our golden days together?"

But all she said was "'By now."

And she was gone forever.

I am desolate and my old space-ineptitude has returned. My recovery was an illusion. I am so ill with awkwardness that I can no longer fly. I must walk on the ground like one of the giant grubs. A curse on this planet Florida and all its sister orbs! What a miserable world this is!

How could I have been tricked by a young Gamma type of the walking grub? Let her crawl back under her ancestral rocks with all the rest of her kind.... No, no, I do not mean that. To me she will always remain a dream, a broken dream.

I am no longer welcome at the Casino. They kicked me down the front steps.

I no longer have a home at the Reptile Ranch.

"Mr. George Albert," said Eustace, "I just can't afford to be seen with you any more. I have my position to consider, with a sports car and all that."

And Pete the python was curt.

"Well, big shot, I guess you aren't so big after all. And you were sure no friend of mine. When you had that doctor cure me of my indigestion, you left me with nothing but my bad conscience. I wish I could get my indigestion back."

"A curse on this world," I said.

"World, world, water, water, glug, glug," said the turtles in their tanks, my only friends.

So I have gone back into the woods to die. I have located my ejection mortar, and when I know that death is finally on me, I will fire off my communication sphere and hope it will reach the galactic drift. Whoever finds it—friend—space traveler—you who were too impatient to remain on your own world—be you warned of this one! Here ingratitude is the rule and cruelty the main sport. The unfinished grubs have come out from under their rocks and they walk this world upside down with their heads in the air. Their friendship is fleeting, their promises are like the wind.

I am near my end.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WEIRDEST WORLD \*\*\*

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

To protect the Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{TM}}$ </sup> mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{TM}}$ </sup> License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

# Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

- 1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{TM}}$ </sup> electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{TM}}$ </sup> electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{TM}}$ </sup> electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.
- 1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.
- 1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{IM}}$ </sup> electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{IM}}$ </sup> mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{IM}}$ </sup> works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{IM}}$ </sup> name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg<sup> $^{\text{IM}}$ </sup> License when you share it without charge with others.
- 1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.
- 1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:
- 1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at <a href="https://www.gutenberg.org">www.gutenberg.org</a>. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

- 1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg<sup>™</sup> electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg<sup>™</sup> trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.
- 1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> License for all works posted with the permission of

the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

- 1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup>.
- 1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$  License.
- 1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.
- 1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg<sup>™</sup> works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.
- 1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> electronic works provided that:
- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by email) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$  works.
- 1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

#### 1.F.

- 1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.
- 1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF

- 1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.
- 1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.
- 1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.
- 1.F.6. INDEMNITY You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg  $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$  electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg  $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$  electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg  $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$  work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg  $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$  work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

### Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg $^{\text{TM}}$  is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup>'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg<sup> $\mathsf{TM}$ </sup> and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

## Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

# Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1\$ to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for

any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

## Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg<sup>m</sup> concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg<sup>m</sup> eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg<sup>TM</sup> eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.qutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg $^{\text{TM}}$ , including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.