

# Galaxy

SCIENCE FICTION

APRIL 1954

35¢

THE MIDAS PLAGUE  
By Frederik Pohl



The Project Gutenberg eBook of Special Delivery, by Damon Francis Knight

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere 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 [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)

Title: Special Delivery

Author: Damon Francis Knight

Illustrator: Ashman

Release Date: April 16, 2010 [EBook #32011]

Language: English

\*\*\* START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SPECIAL DELIVERY \*\*\*

Produced by Sankar Viswanathan, Greg Weeks, and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

Transcriber's Note:

This etext was produced from Galaxy Science Fiction April 1954. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.

# *Special Delivery*

**By DAMON KNIGHT**

**Illustrated by ASHMAN**

*All Len had to hear was the old gag: "We've never lost a father yet."  
His child was not even born and it was thoroughly unbearable!*

---

L

en and Moira Connington lived in a rented cottage with a small yard, a smaller garden, and too many fir trees. The lawn, which Len seldom had time to mow, was full of weeds, and the garden was overgrown with blackberry brambles. The house itself was clean and smelled better than most city apartments, and Moira kept geraniums in the windows.

However, it was dark on account of the firs. Approaching the door one late spring afternoon, Len tripped on an unnoticed flagstone and scattered examination papers all the way to the porch.

When he picked himself up, Moira was giggling in the doorway. "That was funny."

"The hell it was," said Len. "I banged my nose." He picked up his Chemistry B papers in a stiff silence. A red drop fell on the last one. "*Damn* it!"

Moira held the screen door for him, looking contrite and faintly surprised. She followed him into the bathroom. "Len, I didn't mean to laugh. Does it hurt much?"

"No," said Len, staring fiercely at his scraped nose in the mirror. It was throbbing like a gong.

"That's good. It was the funniest thing—I mean funny-peculiar," she clarified hastily.

---

## L

Len stared at her; the whites of her eyes were showing: "Is there anything the matter with you?" he demanded.

"I don't know," she said on a rising note. "Nothing like that ever happened to me before. I didn't think it was funny at all. I was worried about you, and I didn't know I was going to laugh—" She laughed again, a trifle nervously. "Maybe I'm cracking up."

Moira was a dark-haired young woman with a placid, friendly disposition. Len had met her in his senior year at Columbia, with—looking at it impartially, which Len seldom did—regrettable results. At present, in her seventh month, she was shaped like a rather bosomy kewpie doll.

*Emotional upsets, he remembered, may occur frequently during this period.* He leaned to get past her belly and kissed her forgivingly. "You're probably tired. Go sit down and I'll get you some coffee."

Except that Moira had never had any hysterics till now, or morning sickness, either—she burped instead—and anyhow, was there anything in the literature about fits of giggling?

After supper, he marked seventeen sets of papers desultorily in red pencil, then got up to look for the baby book. There were four dog-eared paperbound volumes with smiling infants' faces on the covers, but the one he wanted wasn't there. He looked behind the bookcase and on the wicker table beside it. "Moira!"

"Hm?"

"Where the devil is the other baby book?"

"I've got it."

Len went and looked over her shoulder. She was staring at a drawing of a fetus lying in a sort of upside-down Yoga position inside a cross-sectioned woman's

body.

"That's what he looks like," she said. "*Mama.*"

The diagram was of a fetus at term.

"What was that about your mother?" Len asked, puzzled.

"Don't be silly," she said abstractedly.

He waited, but she didn't look up or turn the page. After a while, he went back to his work. He watched her.

Eventually she leafed through to the back of the book, read a few pages, and put it down. She lighted a cigarette and immediately put it out again. She fetched up a belch.

"That was a good one," said Len admiringly.

Moira sighed.

Feeling tense, Len picked up his coffee cup and started toward the kitchen. He halted beside Moira's chair. On the side table was her after-dinner cup, still full of coffee ... black, scummed with oil droplets, stone-cold.

"Didn't you want your coffee?" he asked solicitously.

She looked at the cup. "I did, but—" She paused and shook her head, looking perplexed.

"Well, do you want another cup now?"

"Yes, please. *No.*"

Len, who had begun a step, rocked back on his heels. "Which, damn it?"

Her face got all swollen. "Oh, Len, I'm so mixed up," she said, and began to tremble.

Len felt part of his irritation spilling over into protectiveness. "What you need," he said firmly, "is a drink."



## H

e climbed a stepladder to get at the top cabinet shelf which cached their liquor when they had any. Small upstate towns and their school boards being what they were, this was one of many necessary financial precautions.

Inspecting the doleful few fingers of whisky in the bottle, Len swore under his breath. They couldn't afford a decent supply of booze or new clothes for Moira. The original idea had been for Len to teach for a year while they saved enough money so that he could go back for his master's degree. More lately, this proving unlikely, they had merely been trying to put aside enough for summer school, and even that was beginning to look like the wildest optimism.

High-school teachers without seniority weren't supposed to be married.

Or graduate physics students, for that matter.

He mixed two stiff highballs and carried them back into the living room. "Here you are. Skoal."

"Ah," she said appreciatively. "That tastes—*Ugh*." She set the glass down and stared at it with her mouth half open.

"What's the matter now?"

She turned her head carefully, as if she were afraid it would come off. "Len, I don't know. *Mama*."

"That's the second time you've said that. What is this all—"

"Said what?"

"Mama. Look, kid, if you're—"

"I didn't." She appeared a little feverish.

"Sure you did," said Len reasonably. "Once when you were looking at the baby book, and then again just now, after you said ugh to the highball. Speaking of which—"

"*Mama drink milk*," said Moira, speaking with exaggerated clarity.

Moira hated milk.

Len swallowed half his highball, turned and went silently into the kitchen.

When he came back with the milk, Moira looked at it as if it contained a snake. "Len, I didn't say that."

"Okay."

"I didn't. I didn't say mama and I didn't say that about the milk." Her voice quavered. "And I didn't laugh at you when you fell down."

Len tried to be patient. "It was somebody else."

"It *was*." She looked down at her gingham-covered bulge. "You won't believe me. Put your hand there. No, a little lower."

Under the cloth, her flesh was warm and solid against his palm. "Kicks?" he inquired.

"Not yet. Now," she said in a strained voice, "you in there—if you want your milk, kick three times."

Len opened his mouth and shut it again. Under his hand there were three explicit kicks, one after the other.

Moira closed her eyes, held her breath and drank the milk down in one long horrid gulp.

---

## O

nce in a great while," Moira read, "cell cleavage will not have followed the orderly pattern that produces a normal baby. In these rare cases some parts of the body will develop excessively, while others do not develop at all. This disorderly cell growth, which is strikingly similar to the wild cell growth that we know as cancer—" Her shoulders moved convulsively in a shudder. "*Bluh!*"

"Why do you keep reading that stuff, if it makes you feel that way?"

"I have to," she said absently. She picked up another book from the stack. "There's a page missing."

Len attacked the last of his medium-boiled egg in a noncommittal manner. "It's a



wonder it's held together this long," he said, which was perfectly just.

The book had had something spilled on it, partially dissolving the glue, and was in an advanced state of anarchy. However, the fact was that Len had torn out the page in question four nights ago, after reading it carefully. The topic was "Psychoses in Pregnancy."

Moira had now decided that the baby was male, that his name was Leonardo (not referring to Len, but to da Vinci), that he had informed her of these things along with a good many others, that he was keeping her from her favorite foods and making her eat things she detested, like liver and tripe, and that she had to read books of his choice all day long in order to keep him from kicking.

It was miserably hot. With Commencement only two weeks away, Len's students were torpid and galvanic by turns. Then there was the matter of his contract for next year, and the possible opening at Oster High which would mean more money, and the Parent-Teachers thing tonight at which Superintendent Greer and his wife would be regally present.

Moira was knee-deep in Volume I of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, moving her lips; an occasional guttural escaped her.

Len cleared his throat. "Moy?"

"—*und also des tragischen*—what in God's name does he mean by that—? What, Len?"

He made an irritated noise. "Why not try the English edition?"

"Leo wants to learn German. What were you going to say?"

Len closed his eyes for a moment. "About this PTA business—you sure you want to go?"

"Well, of course. It's pretty important, isn't it? Unless you think I look too sloppy —"

"No. No, damn it! But are you feeling up to it?"

There were faint violet crescents under Moira's eyes; she had been sleeping badly. "Sure," she said.

"All right. And you'll go see the doctor tomorrow?"

"I said I would."

"And you won't say anything about Leo to Mrs. Greer or anybody?"

---

## S

he looked slightly embarrassed. "Not till he's born, I think, don't you? It would be an awful hard thing to prove—even you wouldn't have believed me if you hadn't felt him kick."

This experiment had not been repeated, though Len had asked often enough. All little Leo had wanted, Moira said, was to establish communication with his mother—he didn't seem to be interested in Len at all. "Too young," she explained.

And still—Len recalled the frogs his biology class had dissected last semester. One of them had had two hearts. *This disorderly cell growth ... like a cancer.* Unpredictable: extra fingers or toes or a double dose of cortex?

"And I'll burp like a lady, if at all," Moira assured him cheerfully as they got ready to leave.

---

## T

he room was empty, except for the ladies of the Committee, two nervously smiling male teachers and the impressive bulk of Superintendent Greer when the Conningtons arrived. Card-table legs skreeked on the bare floor; the air was heavy with wood polish and musk.

Greer advanced, beaming fixedly. "Well, isn't this nice? How are you young folks this warm evening?"

"Oh, we thought we'd be earlier, Mr. Greer," said Moira with pretty vexation. She looked surprisingly schoolgirlish and chic; the lump that was Leo was hardly noticeable unless you caught her in profile. "I'll go right now and help the ladies. There must be something I can still do."

"No, now, we won't hear of it. But I'll tell you what you can do—you can go right over there and say hello to Mrs. Greer. I know she's dying to sit down and have a good chat with you. Go ahead now, don't worry about this husband of yours; I'll take care of him."

Moira receded into a scattering of small shrieks of pleasure, at least half of them arcing across a gap of mutual dislike.

Greer, exhibiting perfect dentures, exhaled Listerine. His pink skin looked not only scrubbed but disinfected; his gold-rimmed glasses belonged in an optometrist's window, and his tropical suit had obviously come straight from the cleaner's. It was impossible to think of Greer unshaven, Greer smoking a cigar, Greer with a smudge of axle grease on his forehead, or Greer making love to his wife.

"Well, sir, this weather—"

"When I think of what this valley was like twenty years ago—"

"At today's prices—"

Len listened with growing admiration, putting in comments where required. He had never realized before that there were so many absolutely neutral topics of conversation.

A few more people straggled in, raising the room temperature about half a degree per capita. Greer did not perspire; he merely glowed.



## A

cross the room, Moira was now seated chummily with Mrs. Greer, a large-bosomed woman in an outrageously unfashionable hat. Moira appeared to be telling a joke; Len knew perfectly well that it was a clean one, but he listened tensely, all the same, until he heard Mrs. Greer yelp with laughter. Her voice carried well: "Oh, that's *priceless!* Oh, dear, I *only* hope I can remember it!"

Len had resolutely not been thinking of ways to turn the conversation toward the Oster vacancy. He stiffened again when he realized that Greer had abruptly begun to talk shop. His heart began pounding absurdly; Greer was asking highly

pertinent questions in a good-humored but businesslike way—drawing Len out, and not even bothering to be the slightest bit Machiavellian about it.

Len answered candidly, except when he was certain that he knew what the Superintendent wanted to hear; then he lied like a Trojan.

Mrs. Greer had conjured up a premature pot of tea and, oblivious of the stares of the thirsty teachers present, she and Moira were hogging it, heads together, as if they were plotting the overthrow of the Republic or exchanging recipes.

Greer listened attentively to Len's final reply, which was delivered with as pious an air as if Len had been a Boy Scout swearing on the Manual. But since the question had been "Do you plan to make teaching your career?" there was not a word of truth in it.

He then inspected his paunch and assumed a mild theatrical frown. Len, with that social sixth sense which is unmistakable when it operates, knew that his next words were going to be: "You may have heard that Oster High will be needing a new science teacher next fall...."

At this point Moira made a noise like a seal.

The ensuing silence was broken a moment later by a hearty scream, followed instantly by a clatter and a bone-shaking thud.

Mrs. Greer was sitting on the floor, legs sprawled, hat over her eye. She appeared to be attempting to perform some sort of excessively pagan dance.



## I

t was Leo," Moira incoherently told Len at home. "You know she's English—she said of course a cup of tea wouldn't hurt me, and she insisted I go ahead and drink it while it was hot, and I couldn't—"

"No, no—wait," said Len in a controlled fury. "What—"

"So I *drank* some. And Leo kicked up and made me burp the burp I was saving. And—"

"Oh, Lord!"

"—then he kicked the teacup out of my hand into her lap, and I wish I was *dead!*"

On the following day, Len took Moira to the doctor's office, where they read dog-eared copies of *The Rotarian* and *Field and Stream* for an hour.

Dr. Berry was a round little man with soulful eyes and a twenty-four-hour bedside manner. On the walls of his office, where it is customary for doctors to hang all sorts of diplomas and certificates of membership, Berry had only three. The rest of the space was filled with enlarged colored photographs of beautiful, beautiful children.

When Len followed Moira determinedly into the consulting room, Berry looked mildly shocked for a moment, then apparently decided to carry on as if nothing outré had happened. You could not say that he spoke, or even whispered; he rustled.

"Now, Mrs. Connington, we're looking just fine today. How have we been feeling?"

"Just fine. My husband thinks I'm insane."

"That's g—Well, that's a funny thing for him to think, isn't it?" Berry glanced at the wall midway between himself and Len, then shuffled some file cards rather nervously. "Now. Have we had any soreness in our stomach?"

"Yes. He's been kicking me black and blue."

Berry misinterpreted Moira's brooding glance at Len, and his eyebrows twitched involuntarily.

"The baby," said Len. "The *baby* kicks her."

Berry coughed. "Any headaches? Dizziness? Vomiting? Swelling in our legs or ankles?"

"No."

"All rightie. Now let's just find out how much we've gained, and then we'll get up on the examination table."

Berry drew the sheet down over Moira's abdomen as if it were an exceptionally fragile egg. He probed delicately with his fat fingertips, then used the

stethoscope.

"Those X-rays," said Len. "Have they come back yet?"

"Mm-hm," said Berry. "Yes, they have." He moved the stethoscope and listened again.

"Did they show anything unusual?" Len asked.

Berry's eyebrows twitched a polite question.

"We've been having a little argument," Moira said in a strained voice, "about whether this is an ordinary baby or not."

Berry took the stethoscope tubes away from his ears. He gazed at Moira like an anxious spaniel.

"Now let's not worry about *that*. We're going to have a perfectly healthy wonderful baby, and if anybody tells us differently, why, we'll just tell them to go jump in the lake, won't we?"

"The baby is absolutely normal?" Len said in a marked manner.

"Absolutely." Berry applied the stethoscope again. His face blanched.

"What's the matter?" Len asked after a moment.

The doctor's gaze was fixed and glassy.

"Vagitus uterinus," Berry muttered. He pulled the stethoscope off abruptly and stared at it. "No, of course it couldn't be. Now isn't that a nuisance? We seem to be picking up a radio broadcast with our little stethoscope here. I'll just go and get another instrument."

Moira and Len exchanged glances. Moira's was almost excessively bland.

Berry confidently came in with a new stethoscope, put the diaphragm against Moira's belly, listened for an instant and twitched once all over, as if his mainspring had snapped. Visibly jangling, he stepped away from the table. His jaw worked several times before any sound came out.

"Excuse me," he said, and walked out in an uneven line.

Len snatched up the instrument he had dropped.

Like a bell ringing under water, muffled but clear, a tiny voice was shouting: "*You bladder-headed pillpusher! You bedside vacuum! You fifth-rate tree surgeon! You inflated—*" A pause. "*Is that you, Connington? Get off the line; I haven't finished with Dr. Bedpan yet.*"

Moira smiled, like a Buddha-shaped bomb.

"Well?" she said.

---

## W

e've got to think," Len kept saying over and over.

"*You've* got to think." Moira was combing her hair, snapping the comb smartly at the end of each stroke. "I've had plenty of time to think, ever since it happened. When you catch up—"

Len flung his tie at the carved wooden pineapple on the corner of the footboard. "Moy, be *reasonable*. The chances against the kid kicking three times in any one-minute period are only about one in a hundred. The chances against anything like—"

Moira grunted and stiffened for a moment. Then she cocked her head to one side with a listening expression ... a new mannerism of hers that was beginning to send intangible snakes crawling up Len's spine.

"What now?" he asked sharply.

"He says to keep our voices down. He's thinking."

Len's fingers clenched convulsively, and a button flew off his shirt. Shaking, he pulled his arms out of the sleeves and dropped the shirt on the floor. "Look. I just want to get this straight. When he talks to you, you don't hear him shouting all the way up past your liver and lights. What—"

"You know perfectly well he reads my mind."

"That isn't the same as—" Len took a deep breath. "Let's not get off on that. What I want to know is, what is it like? Do you seem to hear a real voice, or do you just know what he's telling you, without knowing how you know?"

Moira put the comb down in order to think better. "It isn't like hearing a voice. You'd never confuse one with the other. It's more—the nearest I can come to it, it's like remembering a voice. Except that you don't know what's coming."

Len picked his tie off the floor and abstractedly began knotting it on his bare chest. "And he sees what you see, he knows what you're thinking, he can hear when people talk to you?"

"Of course."

"This is tremendous!" Len began to blunder around the bed-room, not looking where he was going. "They thought Macaulay was a genius. This kid isn't even born. I *heard* him. He was cussing Berry out like Monty Woolley."

"He had me reading *The Man Who Came to Dinner* two days ago."

Len made his way around a small bedside table by trial and error. "That's another thing. How much could you say about his—his personality? I mean does he seem to know what he's doing, or is he just striking out wildly in all directions?" He paused. "Are you sure he's really conscious at all?"

---

## M

Moira began, "That's a silly—" and stopped. "Define consciousness," she said doubtfully.

"All right, what I really mean—*why* am I wearing this necktie?" He ripped it off and threw it over a lampshade. "What I mean—"

"Are you sure you're really conscious?"

"Okay. You make joke, I laugh, ha-ha. What I'm trying to ask is, have you seen any evidence of creative thought, organized thought, or is he just—integrating, along the lines of—of instinctive responses? Do you—"

"I know what you mean. Shut up a minute.... I don't know."

"I mean is he awake, or asleep and dreaming about us, like the Red King?"

"I don't *know!*"



"And if that's it, what'll happen when he wakes up?"

Moira took off her robe, folded it neatly, and maneuvered herself between the sheets. "Come to bed."

Len got one sock off before another thought struck him. "He reads your mind. Can he read other people's?" He looked appalled. "Can he read mine?"

"He doesn't. Whether it's because he can't, I don't know. I think he just doesn't care."

Len pulled the other sock halfway down and left it there. In a stiffer tone, he said, "One of the things he doesn't care about is whether I have a job."

"No. He thought it was funny. I wanted to sink through the floor, but I had all I could do to keep from laughing when she fell down.... Len, what are we going to do?"

He swiveled around and looked at her.

"Look," he said, "I didn't mean to sound that gloomy. We'll do something. We'll fix it. Really."

"I hope so."

Careful of his elbows and knees, Len climbed into the bed beside her. "Okay now?"

"Mm.... Ugh." Moira tried to sit up suddenly, and almost made it. She wound up propped on one elbow, and said indignantly, "Oh, no!"

Len stared at her in the dimness. "What—?"

She grunted again. "Len, get up. All *right*. Len, *hurry!*"

Len fought his way convulsively past a treacherous sheet and staggered up, goose-pimpled and tense. "What's wrong?"

"You'll have to sleep on the couch. The sheets are in the bottom—"

"On that couch? Are you crazy?"

"I can't help it," she said in a small faint voice. "Please don't let's argue. You'll just have to."

"Why?"

"We can't sleep in the same bed," she wailed. "He says it's—oh!—unhygienic!"

---

## L

en's contract was not renewed. He got a job waiting on tables in a resort hotel, an occupation which pays more money than teaching future citizens the rudiments of three basic sciences, but for which Len had no aptitude. He lasted three days at it; he was then idle for a week and a half until his four years of college physics earned him employment as a clerk in an electrical shop. His employer was a cheerfully aggressive man who assured Len that there were great opportunities in radio and television, and firmly believed that atom-bomb tests were causing all the bad weather.

Moira, in her eighth month, walked to the county library every day and trundled a load of books home in the perambulator. Little Leo, it appeared, was working his way simultaneously through biology, astrophysics, phrenology, chemical engineering, architecture, Christian Science, psychosomatic medicine, marine law; business management, Yoga, crystallography, metaphysics and modern literature.

His domination of Moira's life remained absolute, and his experiments with her regimen continued. One week, she ate nothing but nuts and fruit, washed down with distilled water; the next, she was on a diet of porterhouse steak, dandelion greens and Hadacol.

With the coming of full summer, fortunately, few of the high school staff were in evidence. Len met Dr. Berry once on the street. Berry started, twitched, and walked off rapidly in an entirely new direction.

The diabolical event was due on or about July 29th. Len crossed off each day on their wall calendar with an emphatic black grease pencil. It would, he supposed, be an uncomfortable thing at best to be the parent of a super-prodigy. Leo would no doubt be dictator of the world by the time he was fifteen, unless he would be assassinated first, but almost anything would be a fair price for getting Leo out of his maternal fortress.

Then there was the day when Len came home to find Moira weeping over the typewriter, with a half-inch stack of manuscript beside her.

"It isn't anything. I'm just tired. He started this after lunch. Look."

Len turned the face-down sheaf the right way up.

**Droning. Abrasing  
the demiurge.**

**Hier begrimms the tale:  
Eyes undotted, growling  
and looking, turns off  
a larm, seizes cloes.**

**Stewed Bierly a wretch  
Pence, therefore tchews we. Pons!  
Let the pants take air of themselves.**

---

## T

he first three sheets were all like that. The fourth was a perfectly good Petrarchian sonnet reviling the current administration and the political party of which Len was a registration-day member.

The fifth was hand-lettered in the Cyrillic alphabet and illustrated with geometric diagrams. Len put it down and stared shakily at Moira.

"No, go on," she said, "read the rest."

The sixth and seventh were obscene limericks; and the eighth, ninth and so on to the end of the stack were what looked like the first chapters of a rattling good historical adventure novel.

Its chief characters were Cyrus the Great, his jaunty-bosomed daughter Lygea, of whom Len had never previously heard, and a one-armed Graeco-Mede adventurer named Xanthes. There were also courtesans, spies, apparitions, scullery slaves, oracles, cutthroats, lepers, priests and men-at-arms in magnificent profusion.

"He's decided," said Moira, "what he wants to be when he's born."

Leo refused to be bothered with mundane details. When there were eighty pages of the manuscript, it was Moira who invented a title and by-line for it—*The Virgin of Persepolis* by Leon Lenn—and mailed it off to a literary agent in New York. His response, a week later, was cautiously enthusiastic. He asked for an outline of the remainder of the novel.

Moira replied that this was impossible, trying to sound as unworldly and impenetrably artistic as she could. She enclosed the thirty-odd pages Leo had turned out through her in the meantime.

Nothing was heard from the agent for two weeks. At the end of this time, Moira received an astonishing document, exquisitely printed and bound in imitation leather, thirty-two pages including the index, containing three times as many clauses as a lease.

This turned out to be a book contract. With it came the agent's check for nine hundred dollars.

---

## L

Len tilted his mop-handle against the wall and straightened carefully, conscious of every individual gritty muscle in his back. How did women do housework every day, seven days a week, fifty-two goddam weeks a year?

It was a little cooler now that the Sun was down, and he was working stripped to shorts and bath slippers; but he might as well have been wearing an overcoat in a Turkish bath.

The faint whisper of Moira's monstrous new electrical typewriter stopped, leaving a fainter hum. Len went into the living room and sagged on the arm of a chair. Moira, gleaming sweatily in a flowered housecoat, was lighting a cigarette.

"How's it going?" he asked, hoping for an answer. He hadn't always received one.

She switched off the machine wearily. "Page two-eighty-nine. Xanthes killed Anaxander."

"Thought he would. How about Ganesh and Zeuxias?"

"I don't know." She frowned. "I can't figure it out. You know who it was that raped Marianne in the garden?"

"No, who?"

"Ganesh."

"You're kidding!"

"Nope." She pointed to the stack of typescript. "See for yourself."

Len didn't move. "But Ganesh was in Lydia, buying back the sapphire. He didn't return till—"

"I know, I know. But he *wasn't*. That was Zeuxias in a putty nose with his beard dyed. It's all perfectly logical, the way Leo explains it. Zeuxias overheard Ganesh talking to the three Mongols—you remember, Ganesh thought there was somebody behind the curtain, only that was when they heard Lygea scream, and while their backs were turned—"

"All right. But for God's sake, this fouls everything up. If Ganesh never went to Lydia, then he *couldn't* have had anything to do distempering Cyrus's armor. And Zeuxias couldn't, either, because—"

"It's exasperating. I know he's going to pull another rabbit out of the hat and clear everything up, but I don't see how."

Len brooded. "It beats me. It had to be either Ganesh or Zeuxias. Or Philomenes, though that doesn't seem possible. Look, damn it, if Zeuxias knew about the sapphire all the time, that rules out Philomenes once and for all. Unless—no. I forgot about that business in the temple. Umm. Do you think Leo really knows what he's doing?"

"I'm certain. Lately I've been able to tell what he's thinking even when he isn't talking to me. I mean just generally, like when he's puzzling over something, or when he's feeling mean. It's going to be something brilliant and he knows what it is, but he won't tell me. We'll just have to wait."

"I guess so." Len stood up, grunting. "You want me to see if there's anything in the pot?"

"Please."

Len wandered into the kitchen, turned the flame on under the silex, stared briefly at the dishes waiting in the sink, and wandered out again. Since the onslaught of The Novel, Leo had relinquished his interest in Moira's diet, and she had been living on coffee. Small blessings....

---

## M

Moira was leaning back with her eyes closed, looking very tired. "How's the money?" she asked without moving.

"Lousy. We're down to twenty-one bucks."

She raised her head and opened her eyes wide. "We couldn't be! Len, how could anybody go through nine hundred dollars that fast?"

"Typewriter. And the dictaphone that Leo thought he wanted, till about half an hour after it was paid for. We spent less than fifty on ourselves, I think. Rent. Groceries. It goes, when there isn't any coming in."

She sighed. "I thought it would last longer."

"So did I. If he doesn't finish this thing in a few days, I'll have to go look for work again."

"Oh. That isn't so good. How am I going to take care of the house and do Leo's writing for him?"

"I know, but—"

"All right. If it works out, fine. If it doesn't—he must be near the end by now." She stubbed out her cigarette abruptly and sat up, hands over the keyboard. "He's getting ready again. See about that coffee, will you? I'm half dead."

Len poured two cups and carried them in. Moira was still sitting poised in front of the typewriter, with a curious half-formed expression on her face.

Abruptly the carriage whipped over, muttered to itself briefly and thumped the paper up twice. Then it stopped. Moira's eyes got bigger and rounder.

"What's the matter?" said Len. He looked over her shoulder.

The last line on the page read:

TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT

Moira's hands curled into small helpless fists. After a moment, she turned off the machine.

"What?" said Len incredulously. "To be continued—what kind of talk is that?"

"He says he's bored with the novel," Moira replied dully. "He says he knows the ending, so it's artistically complete; it doesn't matter whether anybody else thinks so or not." She paused. "But he says that isn't the real reason."

"Well?"

"He's got two reasons. One is that he doesn't want to finish the book till he's certain he'll have complete control of the money it earns."

"Yes," said Len, swallowing a lump of anger, "that makes a certain amount of sense. It's his book. If he wants guarantees...."

"You haven't heard the other one."

"All right, let's have it."

"He wants to teach us—so we'll never forget—who the boss is in this family."

---

L

en, I'm awfully tired," Moira complained piteously, late that night.

"Let's just go over it once more. There has to be some way. He still isn't talking to you?"

"I haven't felt anything from him for the last twenty minutes. I think he's asleep."

"All right, let's suppose he *isn't* going to listen to reason—"

"I think we'd better."

Len made an incoherent noise. "Well, okay. I still don't see why we can't write the last chapter ourselves. It'd only be a few pages."

"Go ahead and try."

"Not me. You've done a little writing. Damned good, too. And if you're so sure all the clues are there—Look, if you say you can't do it, all right, we'll hire somebody. A professional writer. It happens all the time. Thorne Smith's last novel—"

"It wasn't Thorne Smith's and it wasn't a novel," she said dogmatically.

"But it sold. What one writer starts, another can finish."

"Nobody ever finished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*."

"Oh, hell."

"Len, it's impossible. It is! Let me finish—if you're thinking we could have somebody rewrite the last part Leo did—"

"Yeah, I just thought of that."

"—even that wouldn't do any good. You'd have to go all the way back, almost to page one. It would be another story when you got through. Let's go to bed."

"Moy, do you remember when we used to worry about the law of opposites?"

"Mm?"

"The law of *opposites*. When we used to be afraid the kid would turn out to be a pick-and-shovel man with a pointy head."

"Uh. Mm."

He turned. Moira was standing with one hand on her belly and the other behind her back. She looked as if she were about to start practicing a low bow and doubted she could make it.

"What's the matter now?" he asked.

"Pain in the small of my back."

"Bad one?"



"No...."

"Belly hurt, too?"

She frowned. "Don't be foolish. I'm feeling for the contraction. There it comes."

"The—but you just said the small of your back."

"Where do you think labor pains usually start?"

---

## T

he pains were coming at twenty-minute intervals and the taxi had not arrived. Moira was packed and ready. Len was trying to set her a good example by remaining calm. He strolled over to the wall calendar, gazed at it in an offhand manner, and turned away.

"Len, I know it's only the fifteenth of July," she said impatiently.

"Huh? I didn't say anything about that."

"You said it seven times. Sit down. You're making me nervous."

Len perched on the corner of the table, folded his arms, and immediately got up to look out the window. On the way back, he circled the table in an aimless way, picked up a bottle of ink and shook it to see if the cap was on tight, stumbled over a wastebasket, carefully up-ended it, and sat down with an air of *Ici je suis, ici je reste*.

"Nothing to worry about," he said firmly. "Women have kids all the time."

"True."

"What for?" he demanded violently.

Moira grinned at him, then winced slightly and looked at the clock. "Eighteen minutes this time. They're getting closer."

When she relaxed, Len put a cigarette in his mouth and lighted it in only two tries. "How's Leo taking it?"

"Isn't saying. He feels—" she concentrated—"apprehensive. He tells me he's feeling strange and he doesn't like it. I don't think he's entirely awake. Funny—"

"I'm glad this is happening now," Len announced.

"So am I, but—"

"Look," said Len, moving energetically to the arm of her chair. "We've always had it pretty good, haven't we? Not that it hasn't been tough at times, but—you know."

"I know."

"Well, that's the way it'll be again, once this is over. I don't care how much of a superbrain he is, once he's born—you know what I mean? The only reason he's had the edge on us all this time is he could get at us and we couldn't get at him. If he's got the mind of an adult, he can learn to act like one. It's that simple."

Moira hesitated. "You can't take him out to the woodshed. He's going to be a helpless baby, physically, like anybody else's. He has to be taken care of."

"All right, there are plenty of other ways. If he behaves, he gets read to. Things like that."

"That's right, but there's one other thing I thought of. You remember when you said suppose he's asleep and dreaming, and what happens if he wakes up?"

"Yeah."

"That reminded me of something else, or maybe it's the same thing. Did you know that a fetus in the womb only gets about half the amount of oxygen in his blood that he'll have when he starts to breathe?"

Len looked thoughtful. "I forgot. Well, that's just one more thing Leo does that babies aren't supposed to do."

"Use as much energy as he does, you mean. What I'm getting at is, it can't be because he's getting more than the normal amount of oxygen, can it? I mean he's the prodigy, not me. He must be using it more efficiently. And if that's it, what will happen when he gets twice as much?"



## T

hey had prepared and disinfected her, along with other indignities, and now she could see herself in the reflector of the big delivery-table light—the image clear and bright, like everything else, but very haloed and swimmy, and looking like a bad statue of Sita. She had no idea how long she had been here—that was the dope, probably—but she was getting pretty tired.

"Bear down," said the staff doctor kindly, and before she could answer, the pain came up like violins and she had to gulp at the tingly coldness of laughing gas.

When the mask lifted, she said, "I *am* bearing down," but the doctor had gone back to work and wasn't listening.

Anyhow, she had Leo. *How are you feeling?*

His answer was muddled—because of the anesthetic?—but she didn't really need it. Her perception of him was clear: darkness and pressure, impatience, a slow Satanic anger ... and something else. Uncertainty? Dread?

"Two or three more ought to do it. Bear down."

Fear. Unmistakable now. And a desperate determination—

"Doctor, he doesn't want to be born!"

"Seems that way sometimes, doesn't it? Now bear down good and hard."

*Tell him stop blurrrrr too dangerrrr stop I feel worrrrr stop I tellrrrr stop*

"What, Leo? What?"

"Bear down," the doctor said abstractedly.

Faintly, like a voice under water, gasping before it drowns: *Hurry I hate you tell him sealed incubator tenth oxygen nine-tenths inert gases hurry hurry hurry*

"An incubator!" she panted. "He'll need an incubator ... to live ... won't he?"

"Not this baby. A fine, normal, healthy one."

*He's idiot lying stupid fool need incubator tenth oxygen tenth tenth hurry before it's*

The pressure abruptly ceased.

Leo was born.

The doctor was holding him up by the heels, red, wrinkled, puny. But the voice was still there, very small, very far away: *Too late same as death*

Then a hint of the old cold arrogance: *Now you'll never know who killed Cyrus.*

The doctor slapped him smartly on the minuscule behind. The wizened, malevolent face writhed open, but it was only the angry squall of an ordinary infant that came out.

Leo was gone, like a light turned off beneath the measureless ocean.

Moira raised her head weakly.

"Give him one for me," she said.

—DAMON KNIGHT

---

End of Project Gutenberg's Special Delivery, by Damon Francis Knight

\*\*\* END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SPECIAL DELIVERY \*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\* This file should be named 32011-h.htm or 32011-h.zip \*\*\*\*\*  
This and all associated files of various formats will be found in:  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/3/2/0/1/32011/>

Produced by Sankar Viswanathan, Greg Weeks, and the Online  
Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

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

Creating the works from public domain print editions 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-tm electronic works to  
protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm concept and trademark. Project  
Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you  
charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you  
do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the

rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. They may be modified and printed and given away--you may do practically ANYTHING with public domain eBooks. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

\*\*\* START: FULL LICENSE \*\*\*

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE  
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm License (available with this file or online at <http://gutenberg.org/license>).

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm 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-tm electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is in the public domain 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-tm mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg-tm works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm 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-tm work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside 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-tm License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg-tm 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 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 [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is derived from the public domain (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-tm trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm 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-tm License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

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-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-tm work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site ([www.gutenberg.org](http://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-tm 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-tm 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-tm electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm 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 e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm 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-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm 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 public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm 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 F3. 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 THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

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-tm electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-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-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

## Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-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-tm's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm 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-tm 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 web page at <http://www.pgla.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. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at <http://pglaf.org/fundraising>. 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 principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email [business@pglaf.org](mailto:business@pglaf.org). Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at <http://pglaf.org>

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby  
Chief Executive and Director  
[gbnewby@pglaf.org](mailto:gbnewby@pglaf.org)

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

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread 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 <http://pglaf.org>

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: <http://pglaf.org/donate>

#### Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared

with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain 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 Web site which has the main PG search facility:

<http://www.gutenberg.org>

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-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.