

# THE 11 HETEROGRAMS OF FARTHALOMEW SPLIB

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Beads of sweat sprang out on the brow of radio personality Wally Fletch as he sat down in front of the microphone. He knew that if he didn't read his uncle's story flawlessly, he'd lose his \$100,000 inheritance and with it the hand of the only woman he'd ever loved, Miss Avigail Beutelle. What a contretemps!

Three days earlier he had found himself poring over a small piece of paper he had found in the study of his wealthy uncle, Farthalomew Splib, the day after the latter's demise. He was looking for a will—which later turned up in the law offices of Immabod MucMarphy—but all that his uncle's desk contained was a slip of paper with eleven words scratched on it in his uncle's phthisic handwriting: Bass Bow Buffet Invalid Lead Sewer Singer Tear Tower Peer Colonized.

What could they possibly mean? Wally studied them all weekend and wasn't able to come up with anything. Then, Monday morning when MucMarphy revealed the will and its unusual stipulations, Wally became even more mystified:

I, Farthalomew Splib, in sound mind and health, do present my last will and testament. All of my estate, about \$100,000 after taxes and outstanding bills have been paid, shall go to my beloved nephew, Wally Fletch, if he can perform one task, the reading without error of my radio play *Grubs* on his show. If he fails, then my entire estate shall go to my pet research project, the Society for the Preservation of Anhydrous Slime Molds.

Simple enough—but was there a catch? Reading *Grubs*, a rambling saga of unlikely characters and implausible plot, Wally found to his dismay that it included all eleven words on the slip:

- Gasbaugh, bull fiddler for the London Symphony and professional sport fisherman, had a specially made craft he used to transport his equipment—his bass boat.
- After breaking into the Sheriff of Nottingham's armory, the flamboyant actor/thief Robin Hood took a bow.
- "One more buffet like that," the airline passenger moaned during the bumpy flight, "and I'm gonna hurl!"
- After losing her license and her leg, Nurse Lancet became an invalid processor for the hospital.
- At the beginning of the foot race on the molten metal planet Plumbum, Space Cadet Simpson found himself firmly in the lead.
- As the British troops searched the septic system of Betsy Ross's mansion for the patriotic rebel, Lieutenant Spythe cautioned, "Watch out for the sewer!"
- The crooning arsonist who specialized in torching nightclubs considered himself somewhat of a lounge singer.
- After her botched radial keratotomy surgery, Mrs. Biffings had tears in her eyes.
- Three stories tall, the huge mobile tower pulled a dozen troop carts behind it.
- His former commander considered John Wayne Bobbitt "a Marine without peer".
- After the name of the Roanoke settlement was changed from Jamestown to James:town, the king considered the New World colonized.