



Shri





Club Club
Club Club

APPEARING
AT THE
BLOWFLY TAVERN
THE
DEATH CALVES

Judy has the
alfalfa breath
FRANK MOODY HAS
OATS FOR BRAINS





Licks

It's Everybodys Problem!



For More See...



The Moo Note

THE WAX BUTCHER MUSEUM



olutely NO CKENS.

Bob Smith sucks on electric fence.



THE
COMPLETE
FAR SIDE

VOLUME ONE
1980-1986

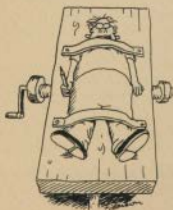


"It's time we face reality, my friends. ...
We're not exactly rocket scientists."

THE COMPLETE FAR SIDE

VOLUME ONE
1980-1986

Gary Larson



Andrews McMeel Publishing
an Andrews McMeel Universal company
Kansas City

The Complete Far Side copyright © 2003 by FarWorks, Inc.;
The Far Side® cartoons copyright © 1979,
1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990,
1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2003
by FarWorks, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
The Far Side® is a registered trademark of FarWorks, Inc.

Printed and bound in China. No part of this publication may
be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in
any form or by any means, or otherwise circulated in
any form, binding, or cover, other than the form,
binding, and cover in which it was published,
without the prior written permission
of the copyright owner.

For information, write Andrews McMeel Publishing, LLC,
an Andrews McMeel Universal company,
1130 Walnut Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

First Edition
First Printing, July 2003
Eighth Printing, October 2010

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Larson, Gary.
[Far side]
The Complete Far Side / Gary Larson.
p. cm.

"Presents every Far side cartoon ever syndicated. More than 4,000 cartoons,
1,100 which have never been published in a book, are included in this
two-volume, slipcased treasure trove"—CIP text.

ISBN 0-7407-2113-5

1. American wit and humor, Pictorial. 2. Caricatures and
cartoons—United States—History—20th century. I. Title.

NC1429.L32A4 2003
741.5'973—dc21

2003045301

Produced by Lionheart Books, Ltd.
5200 Peachtree Rd. #2103
Atlanta, Georgia 30341

Designed by Michael Reagan
Printed and bound through Asia Pacific Offset
Cover, slipcase, and page xxi paintings by Jerry Titilli

CONTENTS

Volume One

Foreword by Steve Martin	vi
Introduction by Jake Morrissey	viii
Preface	xvi
Acknowledgments	xviii
Production Note	xx
1980	2
1981	90
1982	178
1983	266
1984	354
1985	444
1986	538

FOREWORD

By Steve Martin



Different Beginnings for Gary Larson Essay

I am sorry to report, given the occasion of this very important publication, that many of the scenes depicted in this book are actually false. Several years ago I began to suspect the veracity of a few of the events portrayed by Larson. "Wait a minute," I thought. "A chicken couldn't confess to murdering Old MacDonald: Old MacDonald was a *fictitious* character." It was a small thought that grew to a big one: Was Gary Larson just making a lot of this stuff up? Though many believe that chickens talk, does it necessarily follow that likewise so do ducks and dogs?



Gary Larson came to my house last weekend, and I was surprised to find that he is an insect. All this time I figured him for a bear or a little fat kid, but when he walked across my ceiling and hid in the drapes, I knew ...



An Open Letter to Gary

Dear Gary,

Life does not come with little frames around it. Life is not topsy-turvy and surreal. Life is hard and it's not really funny when you make light of it. Have you ever read Schopenhauer? He thinks that death ...



I suppose Mr. Larson and others like him think it's funny to depict young boys standing on top of a flattened dog. This attempt at "humor" actually teaches and encourages young boys to stand on top of flattened dogs. In fact, though I am not a young boy, I myself was tempted to stand on top of a flattened dog. But you know what? There are no flattened dogs where I live. There are, however, hundreds of cats who, though not flattened, are actually quite thin, and if laid on their side, would qualify as flattened. I'll guarantee that standing on them was not funny. Not really funny, not har-de-har-har funny, just mildly funny.



Gary Larson is the greatest living cartoonist OOPS sorry, Gary—make that greatest beheaded cartoonist ...



Gary Larson, born Garyisovich Larsonoffsky, the third son of a farmer and a duck, raised in Peking, swore when he saw his family being taken away and bean-fried by two pandas that he would move to the United States and make enough money so that one day he could return in triumph, though when he did make enough money, he thought, "Actually I'd prefer to lose all my money and return in defeat."



Many Larson scholars like to cite panel 108, caption 16, as proof of the existence of a deity. However, the exact nature of the deity is contradicted by several other panels. Scholars working at the Institute of Talking Dogs offer panel 247, with its image of two men standing on white clouds of heaven talking out of earshot of the deity, as proof of Larson's *theory of semi-omniscience*. In another panel depicting heaven, the newly deceased are issued harps, indicating a *benevolent un-musical mover*. However, the two men in the previous panel do not have harps, they have a gun. So how does a supreme being regarded as a *benevolent un-musical mover* fit into the *theory of semi-omniscience*, especially when the devil, who is handing out accordions, is revealed to be a blithe humorist (panel 42, caption 16)?



I'll bet Gary Larson's neighbors would say that Gary is very quiet:

"He kept to himself, never bothered anybody."

"And how did you feel when you found out he wrote *The Far Side*?"

"I was shocked. He seemed like such a nice guy."



Questions I would like to ask Gary Larson:

Who are you currently dating?

What's coming up in the future for a Gary Larson?

Are you crazy and nutty at home?

If you were in a strict foreign country run by zealots, and they demanded that you renounce your belief that humans can deflate like balloons and fly around the room, would you recant, escape, or die while being squeezed by red-hot pincers?

Hey Gary, what do you think?

Steve



Introduction

by Jake Morrissey

"Well, this started off innocently enough ..."

—Gary Larson

My favorite Gary Larsons were never published. For the better part of a decade they sat at the bottom of a desk drawer, crammed into a tattered white envelope, forgotten by me and, no doubt, by Gary. I rediscovered them by chance one afternoon as I rifled through a drawer looking for something unrelated to *The Far Side*. The contents slipped out of the envelope and fell into my hand. It took a moment for me to recognize them and to realize what small wonders they are.

Wonders the size of a Post-it note.

Some of the most revealing work Gary Larson ever produced as a cartoonist can be found in the brief notes he stuck to his cartoons just before he sent them to Universal Press Syndicate, where I worked as his editor for the last 10 years that he drew *The Far Side*. Every week, as his deadline loomed and the Federal Express driver hovered expectantly at his door, Gary would dash off last-minute comments about the cartoons he was sending me. Some of the notes suggested how he thought a caption could be improved; others wondered if a drawing would reproduce satisfactorily in newspapers. A couple even questioned whether a cartoon was funny at all. They were pithy, astute, and self-deprecating, but what I like best about them now is the insight they offer into the process of creating *The Far Side*. In a way, they are a peek behind the curtain.

I can offer no reasonable explanation for why I kept these notes—they certainly weren't written for the ages. I know I didn't keep all of them; usually I threw them away. But one day as Gary and I were talking on the phone, instead of throwing the note into the wastebasket, I stuffed it into a spare envelope. And so a habit was born.

*"I have no idea why I drew this or what it means,
but compared to the next cartoon, it's very normal."*

Rereading Gary's notes, I am struck by how open he is to his own creativity, how willing he is to be guided by it. Several mention that his initial ideas for cartoons turned into (pupated?) panels that differed markedly from their inspiration. What continues to interest me about Gary Larson the cartoonist is how his methods differ from those of his peers. Many cartoonists begin with a gag, a punch line, and write toward it. Gary begins with the seed of an idea, which often doesn't feel traditionally funny, and then tends it a bit to see what takes root. What's so exceptional about *The Far Side* is that sometimes what sprouts isn't what anyone expects, least of all Gary: He plants what he thinks is a carrot and it turns out to be cabbage. It is this sense of not quite knowing how something will come out that makes *The Far Side* subversively exhilarating.

Cows ring doorbells. Monsters' eyes reflect in rearview mirrors. Praying mantises bicker over who devoured whose mate. Surprise may be a part of all humor, but in *The Far Side*, surprise, even astonishment, is the norm.

"Jake: Your version was the best of all. (Damn it!)"

Editing Gary's work can be tricky: "Improving" a vision as idiosyncratic as his without his input isn't easy, though there were editors who thought it was. "Just take the word out, nobody will get the damn thing anyway," a newspaper editor once said to me when he called to complain about the language in a



Far Side caption. What the editor didn't understand—or didn't care to understand—was how hard Gary works to get his art and his language just right. And I always kept in mind that readers turn to *The Far Side* for Gary's view of the universe, not mine, so my job was to help him

find in himself the best work he was capable of.

Early on, we settled into a working rhythm that served us well. Every Monday morning I received the next week's cartoons from Gary, and after going over them on my own I would call him. We would then discuss each cartoon, addressing the points he raised in the notes he attached, editing language or modifying art when we agreed it was necessary. He always knew where the true humor was in each panel—sometimes the best part of a cartoon was the reaction on a character's face, for example—and he knew when to stop fiddling with it, which some cartoonists can't do.

Gary is a rigorous, even ruthless, editor of his own work, writing and rewriting his captions so the flow of the words matches the cartoon's art and tone. He understands that the heart of a successful cartoon lies in the writing. Good writing can save bad art, but good art can never save bad writing. That is why Gary willingly reworked captions word by word to get them right. If you spend any time at all analyzing *Far Side* captions, you'll see that removing a word can ruin the rhythm and dilute the humor. We once had six different phone conversations in one day about a single word in a caption. (No, I won't tell you which cartoon; I invoke the cartoonist-editor privilege.)

His intriguing use of language also had unexpected benefits: Helping to decide the correct spelling of *luposipaphobia* was a lot of fun for someone who likes to play with language. Saying the word aloud still makes me smile.

Finding the right order for the *Far Side* cartoons over the course of a week was as important as finding the right language in the captions. We tried to pace the cartoons based on our own admittedly idiosyncratic view of newspaper readership. We opened the week on Monday with what we thought was the funniest cartoon, Tuesday's was usually a little less strong, but Wednesday's had to be the second funniest, since newspapers in North America usually ran their coupons and food advertisements in that day's edition, which generally meant a fatter newspaper and a wider-than-normal readership. Thursday's cartoon was more often than not one of the week's strange cartoons, while Friday's and Saturday's were usually the oddest of the group—the ones we weren't



quite sure people would get but which we liked anyway. (The Sunday cartoons were another matter entirely.)

I make no claim that this was the most effective way to publish *The Far Side*; no doubt there are people who will find this system bizarre. But it suited us and *The Far Side*, since it seemed to mimic its readers' tastes and sensibilities.



"For the life of me, I can't pronounce let alone spell the word know(n) to every trumpet player. Omnisure? Ambrochure? Oxzfyghz? What is it?"

But still the questions came—sometimes before the cartoons were even published. In the days before the common use of the Internet, I was the one who hunted down the correct spellings of words that Gary wanted to use in his cartoons, words such as "embouchure," and more unusual phrases or names, such as "Puddin' Tame." I spent hours on the telephone over the years asking experts and librarians to give me the correct spellings of the strange words that popped up in *The Far Side*. I did not usually tell them why I was calling. I did once, but I flustered a librarian at the Kansas City Public Library so much that she told me to hang up and call the reference desk again. "I can't help someone I don't understand," she said, sounding a trifle panicked at the mere thought of *The Far Side*.

"Not sure about the spelling of Honah-Lee. More importantly, this is a little obtuse. Do you get it, and did you get it right away? This is a test. Do not attempt to ask someon[e] else."

As all cartoonists do, Gary draws inspiration from personal experience: his interests, his childhood memories, the world he sees on his way to play basketball. He is sensitive to the fact that his readers may have a different view of life, so we often discussed whether they would understand a particular cartoon and find it funny. A line from *Puff, the Magic Dragon*, for example: Would the millions of people around the world who read *The Far Side* recognize the references? As Gary's audience grew, so did the number of head-scratchers, those readers who didn't quite understand *The Far Side* every day. So some cartoons became a judgment call: Should we release a cartoon that not everyone would understand, or use one that more people might understand but that might not be as funny? More often than not, funny won out. So I became the guy who could explain every *Far Side* cartoon. I know that the praying mantis standing atop a gramophone in one cartoon is the only insect that can cock its head at the same angle as the RCA Victor dog could in the classic



"His Master's Voice" pose. And I am one of the few people outside Seattle and the cafés of Italy who knew what a "latte" was before Starbucks made it a ubiquitous part of the coffee experience. I fielded dozens of calls and letters from puzzled readers who thought that the cowboy who asked, "Latte, Jed?" was proposing a bizarre sexual frolic.



A week did not go by that I was not asked—by an editor, by a reader, by the media—to explain a particular *Far Side* cartoon. When I did, I invariably heard one of two reactions: a moment of silence at the other end of the phone and then a sudden “Aaaah, now I get it,” or a perturbed, “That’s the joke? That’s not funny.” I tried to explain to those disappointed souls that a cartoon usually isn’t funny when it has to be explained to you.

“Would you mind responding to this guy on my behalf? I would just say you shared his comments with me, and that I offered my apologies for causing him any anger or concern ... and does he know how many dead babies it takes to—oh, forget the last part.”

The thornier problems were those readers who understood a *Far Side* cartoon but didn’t like what they read and felt the need to express their indignation. Because Gary wants his work to speak for itself and was never comfortable discussing it, I was the first line of complaint for anyone who was offended by a *Far Side* cartoon. I became adroit at replying to a litany of protests about the cartoon: How it was anti-dog, anti-cat, and anti-God; how it was pro-torture, pro-Satan, and pro-violence against animals. None of this was true, of course, as I tried over and over to explain. I came to understand that what bothered people most about *The Far Side* was that they couldn’t predict where Gary would find his humor, and that can be disturbing. It always amused me that the cartoons that generated the most irate comments from people who found them reprehensible and morally bankrupt were exactly the same ones that other people indicated were their favorites.



“Originally, what made this thing funny to me, was the fact we couldn’t see the tarantula—suggesting where the hell is it? I still think that’s what makes this effective. Yet, last-minute stuff, I drew this one, big, hairy leg, making the humor less ‘sophisticated,’ I think, but maybe a more direct line to the funny bone? (It could easily be whited out at your end.) This would be a good question in the HATs. (Humor Aptitude Tests—I got 680.)”

As painstaking as Gary is with his writing, he is just as careful about making his artwork unambiguous. Though he is the first to admit that his drawing style isn’t sophisticated, it shares a certain minimalist charm with the likes of classics such as *Krazy Kat*. Like *Krazy Kat*, the art of *The Far Side* is simple, even naive, but it’s comfortably free of the self-conscious, archcartooniness that characterizes so many comic strips. *The Far Side* doesn’t look slick or processed because it isn’t—because Gary never wanted it to look that way.

His choice of subject matter is just as personal. One of the more interesting subsets of *The Far Side* are the cartoons about cartooning itself. Several characters from other comic strips have appeared in *The Far Side*, notably Charlie Brown, Lucy, Garfield, and even Mark Trail, but I've always found the cartoons about the form more interesting. The characters understand they are in a cartoon and that they are being watched. This conceit makes fun of the idea of *being* a cartoon, an unusual conceit for newspaper comics pages when these first appeared. Over the years Gary has used this technique sparingly but to great effect. And the idea stayed with him: The final two *Far Side* cartoons that appeared on January 1, 1995, were both about cartooning and Gary's role as a cartoonist.

Sometimes I am asked if I think these are the "best" *Far Side* cartoons. I do admit to having a special affection for several others. One mad-scientist cartoon mentions a "Dr. Morrissey" who creates a hideous beast with the nine heads of the Brady Bunch. In another, Gary resorted to his version of "the dog ate my homework" to explain why that week's batch of cartoons was one short. He submitted a panel of an angry truck driver shaking his fist at an oblivious driver who had just cut him off. The caption reads: "Suddenly, Jake realized there



At *The Far Side's* spy center

was nothing funny about this cartoon. 'Maybe,' he murmured to himself, 'That's what's funny.' (However, a replacement cartoon would arrive on his desk Tuesday and he would breathe a tremendous sigh of relief.)"

Finally, there is a simple cartoon whose most interesting characteristic is its genesis. On Halloween night 1989, I sat on a wide windowsill in an apartment in New York City that Gary and his wife had rented while he was on sabbatical. As we talked, Gary said suddenly, "You just gave me an idea for a cartoon. It's the first idea I've had since I've been on sabbatical." Several months later, after he had returned to drawing *The Far Side*, Gary submitted a panel in which



The art of conversation

a woman was standing in front of a man hanging in a picture frame who was prattling on about the weather. The woman is thinking, "Oh, my ... This is depressing." The cartoon's caption is "The art of conversation."



The cartoon doesn't cast me in the most flattering light, I know, but that's not something I dwell on. I prefer to think of it as an object lesson in understanding that ideas for cartoons can come from anywhere if you know where to look.

Being a cartoonist can be very solitary: just you and the Bristol board in front of you. And it's not that easy. Anyone who thinks he can get rich by producing something funny that's read every day over soggy cornflakes should buy a lottery ticket instead. There are a limited number of comic strip slots in newspapers, and many of them are filled by cartoons drawn by old men and have been around for decades. (The Web is changing this, but for many cartoonists, the newspaper is still the venue of choice.) Imagine that the only bookstore in town has a selection of just two dozen titles, some of them 70 years old, and you have a fairly accurate idea of what cartoon syndication is like: It's a very competitive business. The odds are stacked against you.

But sometimes, when newspaper editors take a chance and readers aren't looking that carefully, something a little innovative can sneak in. Day by day, panel by panel, a cartoonist with a different point of view that's clear and fresh and impertinent catches people unaware, engaging them in unexpected ways and prompting them to think a little about the world around them. A connection is forged. Gary Larson and *The Far Side* did that.

"If by chance worse comes to worse and you don't hear from me—please just use your own judgment as far as selecting one version over another, one word over another, or repairing any of my usual grammatical errors. In other words, make me funny. Jake."

I never made Gary Larson funny. No one did. What he created over 15 years came from someplace unique within him, a universe all his own. That is why *The Far Side* still seems fresh, still seems rare, years after the cartoons were first drawn.

All I did was save the Post-its.







Preface

You know I'm nervous.

As I write, it's been almost seven years since I hung up my eraser. (For the record, an eraser was the most essential tool I owned.) And this is the first time, ever, that I have reviewed my own work in its entirety. I must tell you: I have seen things.

To begin with, I stumbled across a couple small mysteries herein: One cartoon appears twice, years apart, but with different captions. I have no idea what happened there, except that I strongly suspect chaos theory was involved. And another I unwittingly drew twice—again, several years apart. (No wonder I had this eerie sensation the thing was practically drawing itself.) I'm not going to identify any of the above offenders; I'm banking on you just saying "déjà vu" a couple times and moving on.

Now, that covers four cartoons—as for the remaining 4,333.

In hindsight, I realize it probably wasn't a great idea to base any cartoon on some news event, fad, expression, person, movie, TV show, or commercial that was destined to fade from everyone's memory before my ink was dry. Of course, time eventually erodes all humor, which is why you no longer hear the one about the Visigoth and the Hittite, or that old Neanderthal favorite, "Why did the Archaeopteryx cross the road?" (Actually, that last one still works for me.)

And then there are those cartoons that trigger something a friend of mine calls the What-the? Reflex. This reflex is entirely involuntary, much like the way a dead frog's leg can be made to kick with the proper stimulus. You'll see a cartoon, and "What the?" will simply burst from your voice box. (I love biology.)

Of course, there are a number of other reflexes that could be discussed (the more upsetting My God! Reflex is sure to strike on occasion), and I'm obviously hopeful that laughter is included among them. But there is only one more I wish to mention, and one I hope you encounter only rarely. Because this is the bad one. This is the one that any credible cartoonist truly fears. And it is this: the silent yawn. It seems innocuous enough, perhaps even preferred to the My God! Reflex. It is not. It is death. To bore someone—to fail to engage them on some level, good or bad (and you hope it's good), to fail to give something to them that sticks to their bones—even if they wish you hadn't—that is simply a creative effort that tanked. It's a frog's leg that not only won't kick, it won't even twitch. It's just going to lie there, cold and still. I beg you, please: Quit poking the damn thing and just move on. I'm sure a good, solid "What the?" is just around the corner.

Yes, I'm definitely nervous.

However, let me quickly add, I don't mean to sound defensive, or somehow distancing myself from anything in this book. Quite the contrary. Despite

the experiments that somehow went awry, I'm actually proud of this body of work. I'm ready to hand it in. (And, if nothing else, the other cartoonists will never call me "Skinny Books" again.)

So why, I have to ask myself, am I nervous? Well, I think it has something to do with what the cartoonist Richard Guindon once said to me when I was first starting out. We were discussing our shared, iron-clad rule of never accepting cartoon ideas from others, and Richard said, "It's like having someone write in your diary." It's an apt analogy. As I look over my 14 years of *Far Side* cartoons, what I really see are my daily "entries," my musings, my little experiments in ink. Every one of these cartoons is just something that drifted into my head when I was alone with my thoughts. And, for better or worse, I "jotted" them down. It was only later, when perhaps I received an angry letter from someone, that it struck me: Hey! Someone's been reading my diary!

Enough of my blabbering. What's done is done. I'll get out of your way. But maybe it would be helpful if I told you this: My drafting table, where I drew *The Far Side* for most of my career, faced a window that overlooked a beautiful garden; beyond the garden was a lake, and beyond the lake Mount Rainier rose majestically into the Washington sky.

I worked at night.

—Gary Larson



The Larson brothers, California (1957)

Photo by Garfy's mom

Acknowledgments

Someone once told me that no one has ever realized their goal in life without someone else having opened that first door for them. I believe it's true. (Even Jeremiah Johnson got that old geezer to show him the "ways" of the mountain.)

My Door Opener was Stan Arnold, the General Manager of Chronicle Features Syndicate. I met Stan in the summer of 1979, and in the space of about 20 minutes, while sitting in his office, I went from Gary Larson the Confused to Gary Larson the Confusing Cartoonist. (I guess Stan must have seen something in me, sort of like the way a horse trainer might recognize qualities in a two-year-old, despite the dull expression on its face.) When Stan passed away a few years ago, it was a contemplative time for me as I recalled the man who, well—there's no other way to put it—changed my life.

But if Stan Arnold opened the door to my cartooning career, I had a slew of folks who strove to keep it from swinging back shut on me.

Stuart Dodds was the lone and intrepid salesperson who first ventured forth with *The Far Side*, knocking on the office doors of newspaper editors, presenting my work, and braving their occasional shock and indignation. Believe me, in the heyday of *Nancy* and *Blondie*, what Stuart did took some chutzpah. (I've long suspected he pitched *The Far Side* wearing one of those big nose and glasses disguise.) If there was some kind of Purple Heart for syndicate salespeople, Stuart would be plastered with them.

Similarly, I must deeply thank those newspapers that did not recoil when they first saw my work. Indeed, a handful even embraced it. When you draw a cartoon that may, for example, show a nerdy kid walking toward the front of his class for "show 'n' tell," carrying a jar with a human head in it, then you definitely need some folks around you who aren't afraid to shake things up a little, or at least are willing to look the other way once in a while. During the first year or two that I was drawing, these papers essentially paid my rent and kept me in ink.

And on the subject of ink, I suppose I know a little something about drawing, but when it later came to painting my work, I sat on the bench and watched as a number of artists made wonderful, often inspired, contributions to my work. I am extremely grateful to them all, but I must specifically mention Donna Oatney, the alpha artist who created the lion's share of watercolors within these two volumes. If anyone ever came close to having a mind-meld with me, it was Donna. (Frankly, I think this was starting to worry her.)

My long-time editor at Universal Press Syndicate was the invaluable Jake Morrissey. And let me say this about editors in general: Not having a good one is like doing brain surgery with a butter knife—you can do it, but you're always paranoid the other surgeons are rolling their eyes when you're not

looking. What a relief to have someone standing next to you hand you a sharp scalpel and just say, "Cut that thing, Gary! Right there! Cut it, damn you!" Thanks, Jake.

In team sports, they refer to some athletes as the "Go-To Guy." In my world, that person was Tom Thornton, the president of Andrews McMeel Publishing. Always the trusted voice of calm and reason, Tom often guided me through the Valley of Nuts, where I believe I had a tendency to sometimes linger. Moreover, you hold in your hands a book for which virtually nothing was spared when it came to quality. That's not a rollover decision for any publisher, but I've always had a playbook with just one page in it, which simply says, "Get the ball into Tom's hands."

I cannot adequately thank my wife, Toni, for her unwavering support. Even with the help of a reliable editor, it takes someone who truly cares about you, someone who can look at something you've worked really hard on, and then, with eyes full of love, gaze into your own and softly say, "That's not funny."

My sincere gratitude is extended to this book's main editors, Dorothy O'Brien and Chris Schillig, for their collective advice and feedback, and also to author/editor John Yow, for his own helpful insights. Also, my thanks go to Charles Wheeler, who created the inspired database that allowed us all (especially the designer) to maneuver through thousands of images and make innumerable decisions on the crafting of this book.

Early in the planning process, someone at my publisher warned me that there was no avoiding some screwup or two in the final product. Too many layers to this thing, they said, and the glitch gnomes are always out in force. Probably true, but I immediately decided to haul out my secret weapon: a human microscope who is fondly known around here as Kate "The Eye" Gentry. You can stand outside The Eye's office when she's proofreading and hear those glitch gnomes scream for their lives. It's a lovely sound.

Now rumor has it that this book's designer and guiding force, Michael Reagan (not the son of a former president; the son of a ship fitter), having wrestled for three years with this project's enormous complexities (and one Mother Hen cartoonist), may have gone insane just as *The Complete Far Side* went to press. But I hope you'll agree, Michael went out in glory. (And should the rumor prove true, I certainly intend to swing by on occasion and express my deep thanks to him during visiting hours.)

And finally, of course, I must thank you. I found myself so often in hot water when my work crossed some invisible line, I intermittently thought, "Well, that was fun while it lasted." The Humor Police, it seems, are always hovering around; I just didn't know you were out there as well. Boy, did you guys save my butt on more than one occasion. My gratitude knows no bounds.

I would also like to thank Jeremiah Johnson.

Production Note

It all started simply enough: I received a call from Tom Thornton, the president of Andrews McMeel, in November of 2000, asking if I would be interested in working on the final *Far Side* book. It would include everything Gary had done during the 14 years *The Far Side* was in syndication, over 4,300 cartoons. I was a big fan so it was not a difficult decision.

I had never met Gary, so we set up a meeting a few weeks later to initiate a relationship that, as we both realized, would need to work effectively for the next three years. After all, this would be Gary's legacy book, and he was very serious about having it done right. In person, I found Gary to be surprisingly shy and modest; he does not try to impress you with his brilliance or overwhelm you with his ego. However, under that low-key, mild-mannered appearance is indeed a man of steel. Gary is ferocious in guarding against mediocrity and a perfectionist about his art. We have had endless discussions and generated a zillion e-mails about things like commas, italics, em dashes, and word choice—and that was just for the captions. When it came to reproducing the drawings or creating new ones—those black lines that make up the world Gary lives in—well, suffice it to say that Gary is unrelenting when it comes to making his work as good as it can be. (You can probably see why it did not stay simple for very long.)

But who can blame him? *The Far Side* was unique; there has never been anything quite like it, before or since. Maybe the timing was right. The first *Far Side* cartoon appeared in 1980, the year we elected Ronald Reagan. And over the next 14 years, a steady diet of hilarious abnormality was maybe just what the world needed. Or maybe a steady diet of bizarre genius was simply what the comics page needed—a riotous upheaval in a land where change comes glacially slow.

For whatever reason, *The Far Side* rocked the world. It became a cultural phenomenon. People didn't simply read *The Far Side*; they reacted to it, often with strange passion. On that first visit to Seattle, I was flabbergasted when Toni, Gary's wife, showed me a room full of boxes filled with letters that Gary and his publisher had received over the years. A room full. A lot of it was fan mail, of course, but there was an amazing amount of hate mail, much of it suggesting that Gary was a very sick person and should be put away, or at the very least barred from the comics page.

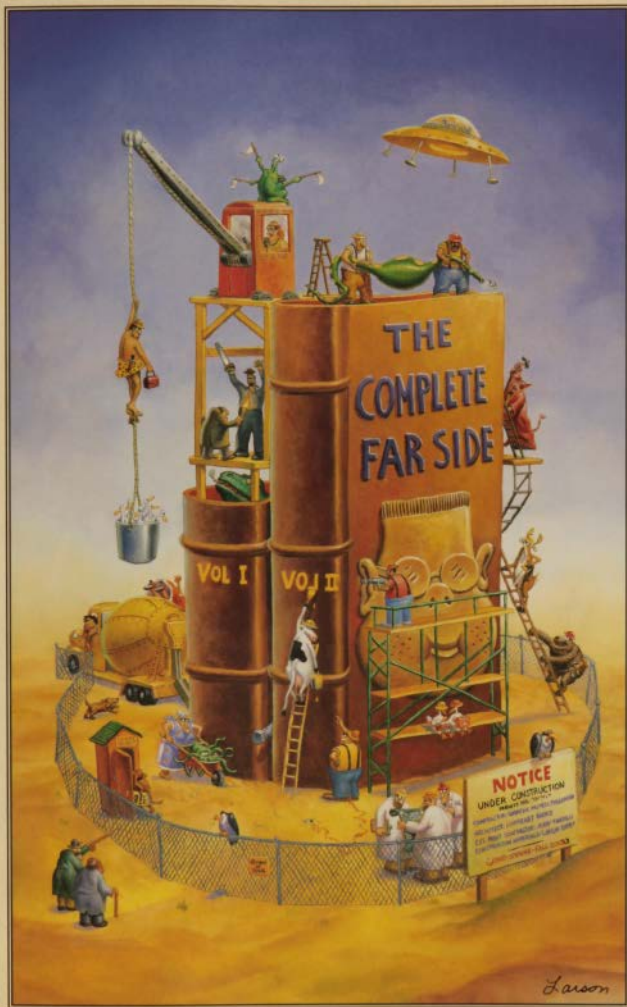
Not surprisingly, given the odd animals, insects, microbes, aliens, and humans that populate the panel, there were also thousands of letters from readers pointing out some mistake or other. Another large category consisted of letters from people who generally liked *The Far Side* but felt that in the case of a specific cartoon, Gary had gone too far and had offended them. In other words, as long as he poked fun at someone else, Gary's work was great. Looking back through all the cartoons, I've concluded that over the years he has been very evenhanded and managed to offend nearly every group.

But more than that, of course, what the letters show is that Gary engaged his readers—perhaps more than any cartoonist before or since. The response he stirred in the heart and mind of his audience—whether outrage, dismay, wonder, or hilarity—constitutes the necessary other half of the *Far Side* experience.

One last thing: You will probably notice that we organized the book in chronological order, but not rigidly. In the end, this is a book about images and at times the design overruled a strict chronology.

I hope you enjoy your journey into *The Far Side* as much as I have. Buckle up—it's going to be a wild ride.

—Michael Reagan



Larson



8

0



Larson

On Dorothy Parker, Gorilla Masks, and a Very Close Call

A few months before *The Far Side* made its formal debut, I was sitting in the San Francisco office of my editor-to-be, Stan Arnold, the head honcho at Chronicle Features Syndicate. And Stan, studying my meager portfolio, suddenly asked me if I would consider doing a strip. (Comic, not the dance.)

I was terrified. *The Far Side* comic strip? I had a single-image brain; I drew single-image cartoons. My primary influences had been Gahan Wilson and B. Kliban, both masters of the panel form who also spoke to my own sense of humor. There were a handful of others: George Booth, Edward Gorey, and the indisputable Charles Atlas of dark humor, Charles Addams. Nary a strip cartoonist in the bunch. I was doomed.

When it came to strips, for me, there was really only Don Martin of *Mad* magazine. Martin was not only a god to a lot of kids of my generation, he was a cartoonist's cartoonist. (Not only were his ideas often hysterical, the guy could just plain *draw*.) And I was no Don Martin. For that matter, I wasn't even Gary Larson; I was just an eager-to-please lump of self-doubt sitting in some editor's office.

Truth is, I've always been sort of in awe of comic strips. I used to think, How do those guys do it? As a kid, I always had a fondness for *Alley Oop*, and later on I consistently enjoyed the work of a couple of my contemporaries, Bill Watterson (*Calvin and Hobbes*) and Berkeley Breathed (*Bloom County*). But I could never get inside the *heads* of strip cartoonists, even the ones I liked. Clearly, I was wired differently.

I haven't reflected on any of this until now, but I believe I may have come up with a theory—just a theory—on why, for me, a single-panel cartoon was so natural, while the thought of drawing and writing a strip struck terror in my heart. As it seems so much does in life, it boils down to this: the way I was raised.

Imagine your own father sitting at the Algonquin Round Table, surrounded by that famous group of New York intellectuals. Would he most likely attempt to use his verbal alacrity and facile mind to impress and entertain everyone? Or would he find a quiet moment and simply lean over and ask Dorothy Parker to pull his finger? (Sorry, Dad, but I know the answer to this one.)

In short, the Larson Round Table was not a place where sharp dialogue and witticisms abounded. They happened, of course, and I hasten to add that wit was especially my mother's strong suit. But in reality you didn't fear a verbal put-down as much as you feared someone slipping a small invertebrate into your glass of milk while your head was

turned. It wasn't a witty retort that ensured your survival; it was good peripheral vision.

What I'm clumsily trying to say here is that, like the famous folks who once lunched at the Algonquin, most strip cartoonists (in my opinion, at least) approach their work from an appreciation of wit. And wit, of course, is the reflection of an agile and creative mind. Or, as my dictionary says, "a talent for banter." What's relevant to me, as a cartoonist, is what that implies: If you're striving to be witty, then you need banter, and if you need banter, you need a strip. You need characters like a sitcom needs them, talking to one another, setting things up, leading to that rimshot in the last panel when something clever or unexpected is said. (Okay, I know there are exceptions to any formula; I'm just firing some broadsides here.)

Wit, I think, grows out of a conscious desire to make someone else laugh, to be entertaining, to be liked. (I mean, why else make the effort?) A sense of humor, on the other hand, has to do with what makes *us* laugh. It's that largely unconscious, reactionary "funny bone" we all possess (well, most of us, anyway), and it struggles to exercise any self-control. (All of us, I'm sure, have a memory of trying not to laugh at a time we sensed was inappropriate.) The two undoubtedly overlap, but my gut tells me these are different animals leading separate lives, except when they might run into each other at some water hole in our brains. (Note: Never see a neurologist who uses this kind of terminology.)

Our sense of humor obviously didn't "burst" on the scene one day; it's been carved into our respective brains during all our formative years, eventually becoming as much a part of us as our eye color. Wit, on the other hand, is living in the moment. It's out on the dance floor, twirling, kicking, showing its moves—everyone's watching, either in admiration or embarrassment. Sense of humor is lurking in the shadows, secretly hoping that Wit falls into the punch bowl.

I'm not out on that dance floor. I'm a lurker. I draw—and draw from—my family's sense of humor. If you would allow me any talent, it's simply this: I can, for whatever reason, reach down into my own brain, feel around in all the mush, find and extract something from my persona, and then graft it onto an idea. I guess it's a Little Jack Horner kind of thing, only I fully admit it was not always a plum I pulled out—there are things down there I probably should have jerked my hand away from as soon as I made contact. Too late now.

Physical comedy—especially if it contained psychological overtones, such as those old chestnuts fear and humiliation—pervaded our home like a poltergeist. Around any corner, in any room, humor lurked, waiting to pounce. Not "Stooge" humor, I assure you. Research,

observation, psychology, biology—these were the tools, usually applied with deathly nuance, that one used in the quest to amuse oneself. For me, it was all *Far Side* boot camp. Study your prey, approach carefully, savor the moment, and then strike. (Truthfully, I was more often the "prey" in these training exercises, but I nonetheless could appreciate the skill involved.)

A single drawing is all I ever needed. I rarely required a series of panels to set up a "gag" or a punch line. In fact, I never thought in terms of punch lines and gags. I never thought of myself as a "joke writer" with a drawing attached. Maybe that's what I was doing, in some people's minds. But to me, *The Far Side* was more of an attitude, a distillation of life that came from growing up in a family that had a deep, sincere appreciation for the many uses of a good gorilla mask. (It was kept on the shelf in the coat closet, for quick access.)

For me, that little rectangle I drew in was the equivalent of a canvas. I needed to stare at it for a while and try to "see" as much as I could before things began. The thought of storyboarding an idea just sounded like a lot of work, and it flat out didn't interest me. (Besides, I could never get the characters to look exactly the same from one little box to the next.)

Back to my meeting with Stan. (God, have I digressed.)

So I'm sitting there in his office, sweating. And he was going on, explaining about the strengths that comic strips held over panels. "People like to see characters they recognize," he said. It was the old familiarity-breeds-fondness thing. Strips engage the reader in a more intimate way, like an old friend who comes by to visit every day or so. And that leads to reader loyalty. Single-panel cartoons are like strangers that suddenly appear on your doorstep. No one flings open their door for strangers. However, if you look out and see good ol' Charlie Brown, it's like, why sure—open the door! C'mon in, Charlie! ... Hey, wait! Quick! ... Shut the door! There's a damn cow out there!

So once you've got your character established in the hearts and minds of readers, it's not a good idea to run him over with a truck a few weeks later. Whoa! I was not going to be good at developing a character. I was not going to be good at developing a strip. I was not going to be good at telling a joke in visual form. I was hit and run. My ever-changing characters got crunched, speared, shot, beheaded, eaten, stuffed, poisoned, and run over about twice a week. (Tastefully, of course.)

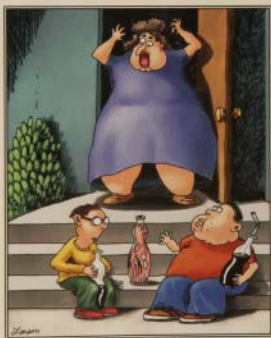
And yet another layer was added to the discussion when Stan said that strips were easier to *sell*. This was, I assumed, a big one. Newspapers, he said, really weren't thrilled with single-panel cartoons. Strips are easy to format on a comics page; single panels just throw the whole design out of whack. My cartoons might be funny, he encouraged, but couldn't I just

transfer my sense of humor over to a strip format? (Maybe that's when I should have asked him to pull my finger.)

Well, I sat there in Stan's office, listening to him describe the virtues of a strip, the headaches with a panel. I didn't say much (certainly nothing "witty"). Stan, I recall, wasn't really even looking at me; he was just flipping through my portfolio, talking about the wonders of comic strips, while clearly feeling me out about developing one strong, returning character. I just listened, smiling on the outside, dying on the inside.

And then, out of the blue, he said, "Well, let's just go ahead and do it your way." And that's the last time a comic strip was ever discussed. Believe me, I never felt such a whoosh of relief.

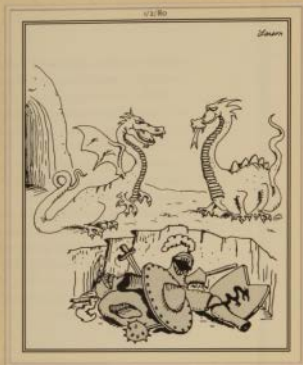
On December 31, 1979, *The Far Side*—a single-panel cartoon—was launched. I was crunching, spearing, shooting, beheading, eating, stuffing, poisoning, and running over my own characters within a week. Tastefully, of course.



"Gee, Mom! Andy was just showing us how far he could suck his lip into the bottle!"



"Yes. ... They're quite strange during the larval stage."



"Of course I never eat the shells."





"Egad! We must find some means of discarding the hideous thing!"



"Bring back his ear."



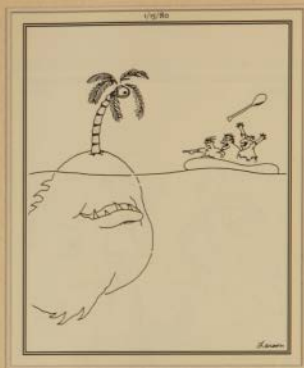
"Polly wanna cracker. ... Polly wanna cracker. ...
Pretty bird. ... HARRY! DON'T SHOOT! ...
Pretty bird."



"Egad! ... What a hideous creature!"



"Something's wrong. ... Reel up and check the bait."

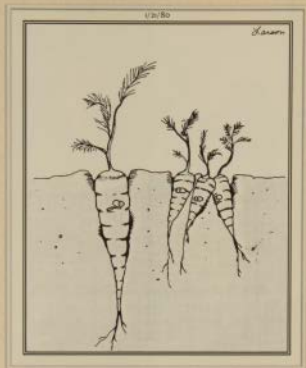


"Next!"





"And so I ask the jury—is that the face of a mass murderer?"



"... And then the creatures yanked him out of the ground, skinned him alive, boiled him, and ate him. The end. Now go to sleep!"





"All right, let's see ... which one's the 'Viva la Vegetarian' and which one's the 'Prime Rib Papa'?"



"There it goes again ... that eerie music."



"Nighty-night, dear, sleep tight ... and don't let the bedbugs bite."



"And don't you flare your nostrils at me, either!"





"Well, another sucker just bought twenty acres of swampland."



"We'll be eating in tonight."



"Hang on! I'm changing!"



"... and this must be the little woman."



"Gee, Mom! Andy was just showing us how far he could suck his lip into the bottle!"



"Hey! They're edible! ... This changes everything!"



"I told you to watch for bones."



"But what if he hits the apple?"



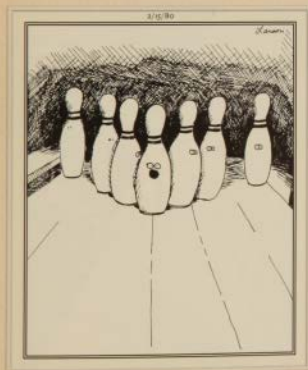
"He bit the Godfather."



"That does it! ... I'm going to go up there and give those people hell!"



"'H,' please ... for both of us."



"My God! ... Here it comes again!"



"Old McDonald had a farm, eeyi-eeyi-yo ..."



"Mother was right—you're nothing but an old goat."



"Incredible you say? But true, ladies and gentlemen! ... He has only one head!"



"Excuse me, but must you smoke that foul thing around here?"



"GET A ZORBI!"

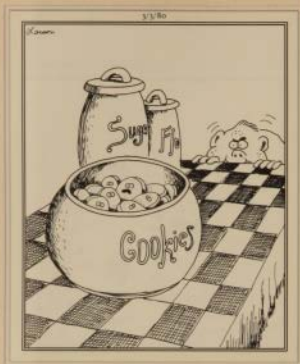


"He's makin' a fool of us, Bart."



"And I tell ya ... the next trail drive I sign onto, I'm readin' the fine print!"

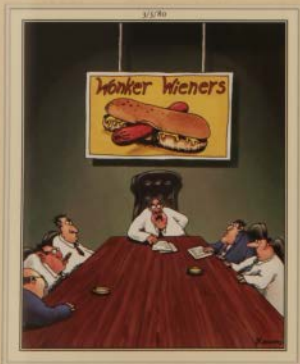




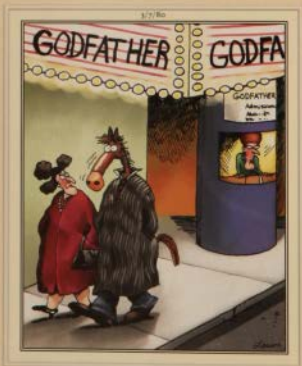
"It's back!"



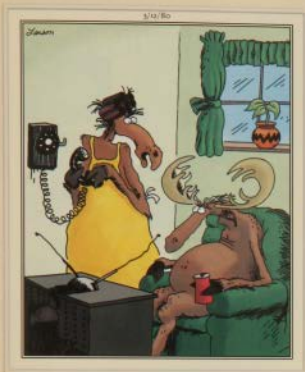
"Gad! ... Not *these* Indians again!"



"And so I've reached the conclusion, gentlemen, that the Wonker Wiener Company is riddled with incompetence."



"Get a hold of yourself! ... It was only a movie, for crying out loud!"



"It's the call of the wild."



"It seems that agent 6373 has accomplished her mission."



"... and then the second group comes in—'row, row, row your boat'..."

3/6/80



3/10/80

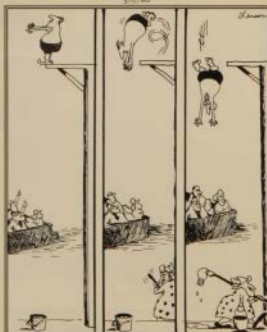


3/14/80



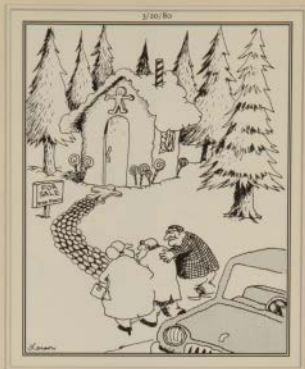
"HANGMAN! ... You lose!"

3/17/80

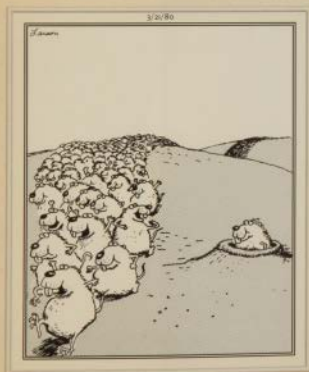




"Now you've done it!"



"We just listed it. ... Some young punks vandalized the place and cooked the owner."



"C'mon! You'll miss the fun! ... All the lemmings are going down to the beach!"



"Food's okay ... I just can't get used to the atmosphere."



"Say, Ernie ... that looks like Sally across the street. ... And she's with some guy."



"I got a bad feeling about this, Harriet."

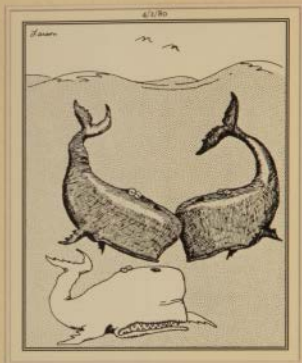


"Egad! ... Another flat!"

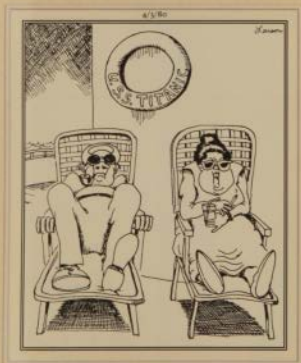




"I don't care if you don't like it! ... By God, you're gonna eat it!"



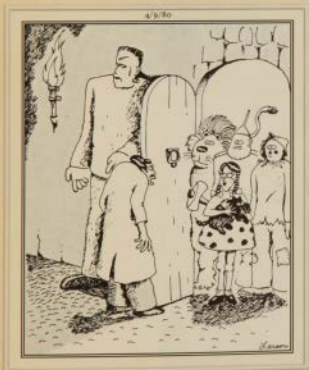
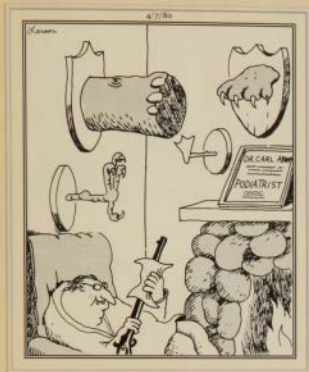
"I tell you he's up there! ... Those wild, sunken eyes! That horrid wooden leg! ... And he's looking for me!"



"Lousy food ... crummy service ... dinky cabins ... and that's only the tip of the iceberg!"



"I doubt if they'll ever reach the spawning grounds."



"Oh, Harold! Look! Porpoises!"

"I'm sorry ... try the wizard up the road.
I just used my last heart and brain."



"Most peculiar, Sidney ... another scattering of Cub Scout attire."





"I can't believe it! ... I was just talking to him yesterday!"



"Something big's going down, sir! ... They're heading your way now!"





"Okay, the sanatorium's on its way over ... all we gotta do now is start talking to her."



"It certainly has taken the romance out of the Bigfoot mystery."



4/24/80



4/25/80



"Okay ... on the count of three,
everybody rattles."

4/29/80



"Just look at this line! ... They'll never
get me to come back here again!"

4/30/80





"We've got the murder weapon and the motive ... now if we can just establish time of death."



"So! The little sweethearts were going to carve their initials on me, eh?"



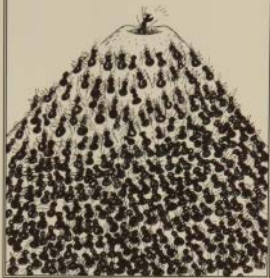
"All right. Run along and play ... and stay away from those tar pits!"

5/6/80



"Thank God! Those blasted crickets have finally stopped!"

5/7/80



"And remember ... ask *not* what your anthill can do for you, but what you can do for your anthill."

5/9/80



"Ahhh ... the plot thickens."

5/10/80



"So! You've been buzzing around the living room again, haven't you?"



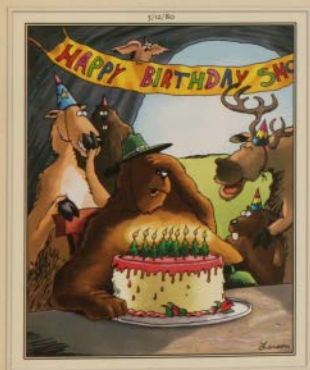
"I used to be somebody ... big executive ... my own company ... and then one day someone yelled, 'Hey! He's just a big cockroach!'"



"Me? This year it was *your* turn to go up and sacrifice the goat!"



"Keep your eye on that guy. ... He hasn't said or bought a thing for over an hour."

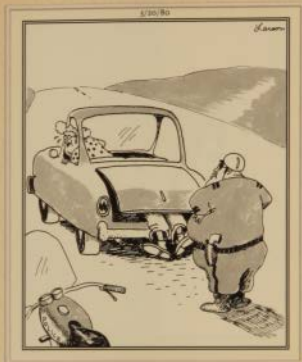


"Can I look now?"





"This is the place, all right ... and it looks like it's been stuck on 'Don't Walk' for some time."



"Well, well, well—what do we have here? ... I do believe it's a broken taillight."



"Okay—those that want to call our new club 'The Buccaneers' raise their ... Hey! Who's the wise guy that keeps cracking his knuckles?"



"We've still got a couple of years to go before we're ready for the moon."



"And remember—I don't want to catch you bothering the fish!"



"Curses! ... Quick, Igor! Run down to the store and get two size D flashlight batteries!"



"Yes, sir ... we caught him trying to smuggle this in under his coat."



"And now, ladies and gentlemen, I give you the world's greatest escape artist ...
THE GREAT WALDO!"

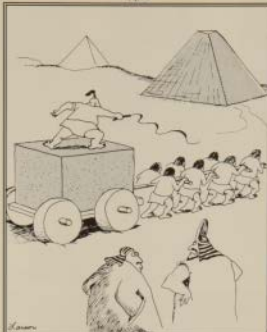


6/2/80



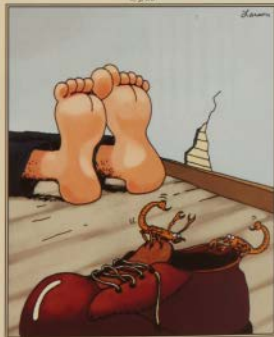
"There's something different about that kid."

6/4/80



"Well, if it'll keep my razor blades sharp, that's all I ask."

6/5/80



"There I was—asleep in this little cave here, when suddenly I was attacked by this hideous thing with five heads!"

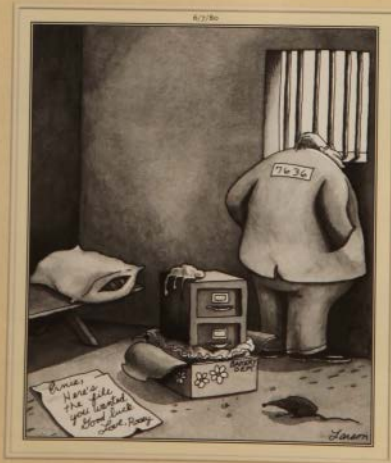
6/5/80



"Oh, Mrs. Oswald ... you've forgotten something again."

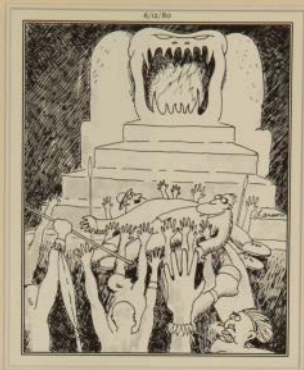


"That's fine," I said. "Good nose," I said.
But no, you had to go and hit the
chisel one more time."





"All units prepare to move in! ... He's givin' him the duck now!"



"By Jove, Andrew! ... It's just like being the heroes of some football game!"



"This town ain't big enough for both of us, Redeye."





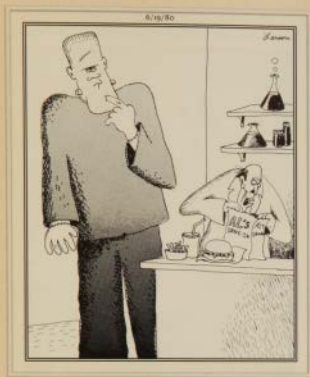
"And the last gladiator left alive will win the contest.
But first ... the egg-toss!"



"It's no use. I drink and I drink, and I
still can't forget."



"Get ready! He's put the rubber ducky down
and now he's reaching for the bar of soap!"



"What? No tartar sauce? ... You'd forget your own head if it wasn't bolted on!"



"So! You've been fighting again! ... And in your new suit, too!"



"Curse this New York City sewer system! ... It's backing up again."



"Nice guy ... except for that zebra-breath."



"Thank God! ... It was only a cat!"



"Oh Thor! The new bird feeder is wonderful!"



"Head five miles west until you come to a river, then fly upstream about a mile until you come to the sign 'Sunshine Nudist Camp.'"

6/24/80



"You'll never get away with this!"

6/26/80



"Yeah, Sylvia—my set too. ... And in the middle of *Laverne and Shirley*."

6/30/80



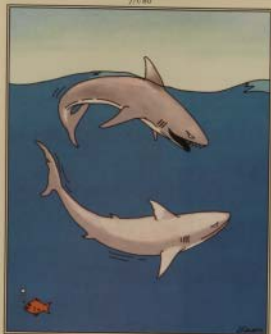
"REMEMBER THE ... uh ... REMEMBER THE ...
REMEMBER THAT PLACE IN TEXAS!"

6/28/80



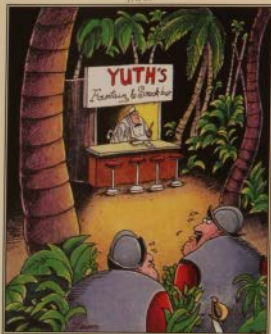
"The curse of every albatross—that ship's
been following us for days!"

7/1/80



"Say, honey ... didn't I meet you last night at the feeding frenzy?"

7/2/80



"When we get back, I'm gonna wring de León's neck!"

7/3/80



"What the? ... Margaret! Margaret! Wake up! ... The bed's covered with coconuts!"

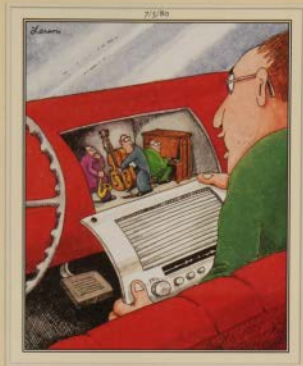
7/4/80



"Set the hook! Set the hook!"



"And that goes for Lancelot, Galahad, and the rest of you guys—no more stickin' your gum under the table."



"Aha!"



"Gad, that's eerie. ... No matter where you stand the nose seems to follow."



"Just look at those stars tonight. ... Makes you feel sort of small and insignificant."



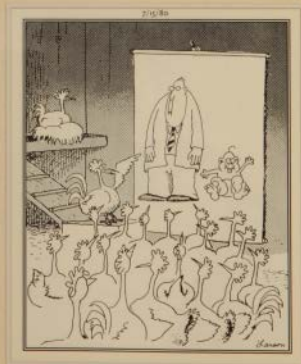
"And while you're out there, bring in a couple of them frozen dinners."



"It's the attendant ... he's been trampled."



"So then this little sailor dude whips out this can of spinach, this crazy music starts playin', and ... well, just look at this place."



"Now here's one of the mysteries of the universe. ... Which came first?"



"I'm sorry, we did call an exterminator ...
but we've changed our minds."



"Well, I guess that does it, folks. ... Number 26
is taking his ball and going home."





"Look! Down there! ... It's a worm!"



"Two, four, six, eight, who do we appreciate ..."



7/23/80



7/26/80



"AAAAAAAAAAAAAlbert!"

7/24/80



"And now we're going to play she-loves-me, she-loves-me-not!"

7/29/80



7/18/80



7/18/80



7/30/80



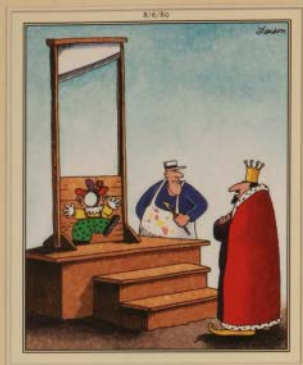
7/3/80





"Blast! ... The elephants are sick again!"





"I like it ... I like it."



August 1980

Dear Stan:

I wonder if we might gather some of the reactions I have had to Gary Larson--editors' comments--and weave them into a story of some kind for M&P (or even a note for general circulation--or both). The initial response to this cartoon has been quite funny and un-editor-like, if you think as I often do of newspaper editors as cautious and diplomatic people--judicious in their praise, given rarely to hyperbole or boundless laughter at the slightest occasion--above all, as having an immunity to outrage (a languor in the face of eccentricity) that borders on world-weariness!...And then, all of a sudden, with Gary Larson on their desk, what happens *epoux* emerges! What has made this interesting to me is not knowing as I travel from one place to the next what kind of response to expect--the reactions are so diverse, unpredictable--even from editors I know fairly well. I don't know if I am going to be offered another cup of Seneca or shown the door. There is a lot of outright laughter incidentally a lot of silence too with intermittent nervous laughter--and then there is some deep growling, a miserable sound to hear. Anyway, here are some of the comments:

"I hate it, it's sick."

"Oh dear, OH DEAR!"

"The best thing since Donnezbury as far as I am concerned. And they're all good!"

Editor's note: This is a memo from Stuart Dodd to his boss, Stan Arnold, general manager of Chronicle Features Syndicate. Dodd, the sales manager for the syndicate, had the unenviable job of being the first person to try and sell The Far Side to newspaper editors (who tend to be a rather cynical lot). It was written late at night in a small motel room in the desert outside of Tucson on his portable typewriter.

2--Larson

"What a mind this man has. He's brilliant!"

"He's insane."

"Jesus...Jesus Christ."

"It might go over in San Francisco..."

"This is all a Buffalo product" (Buffalo Evening News)

"I don't love what this is but it's not for us."

"This is an excellent feature you have."

"This is the strangest thing I have seen in my life."

"Funny as hell."

"We'd get too much flack. I'd like to catch it for a while."

"Who is this guy?"

(There could follow a humorous biography of Larson.)

Editors by their nature are drawn towards controversy. If we can cast it about that this is a controversial feature, that it has brought on the highest praise from some quarters and made others hair stand on end, we'd build up curiosity--the inquiries would flow in and a percentage of them would buy it. Maybe we could send parts of this memo to M&P as "Notes From the Field" or some such thing, with one or two of the more horrifying cartoons... Those are my favored thoughts in the desert tonight...

8/2/80--Dodd



"No, no, Wendell ... you can't get blood out of a turnip."



"Look. I just don't feel the relationship is working out."



"So ... you wanna sell our pencils, do you?"



"It's quite strange ... almost like I'm being followed."



"Gad! Clear the dance floor—here come the Nelsons again."

"This time, Johnson, just pull the pin, throw the grenade, and refrain from yelling 'Heads!'"



"Well, I'm just starting to worry about that roast
in the oven, that's all."



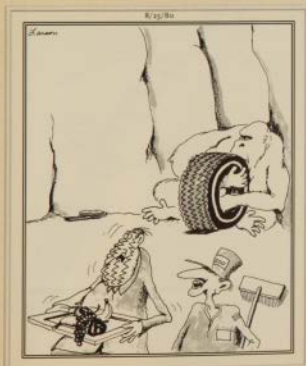
"Oh, sure—white whales.
We've got plenty of them."



"Excuse me, but I believe that's my Frisbee."



"I'm sorry, Mr. Funucci, but we've decided to award the ceiling project to Michelangelo."



"Quick, powerful, and totally unpredictable—that's our Bobo."



"And so, after being frozen in ice for almost 50,000 years, we'll ask our friend here what dramatic changes he's noticed."

8/27/80



"I'm afraid you'll have to do better than that, sir. ... The former president could spin twenty-six times before stopping."

8/28/80



"I've done it! The first real evidence of a UFO! ... And with my own camera, in my own darkroom, and in my own ..."

8/29/80



"Gesundheit!"

8/30/80





"Hmmm ... not bad, Kemosabe ... but this one little better maybe."



"Okay, okay, settle down! ... Now who wants dark meat and who wants white?"



"Gad ... I gotta get this thing in for a tune-up."



"God, Harriet ... check out the run in his nylon."



"Hey, Oona! Did you order some of this stuff?"



"Andrew, go out and get your grandfather. ... The squirrels have got him again."



"For twelve perfect years I was a car-chaser. Pontiacs, Fords, Chryslers—I took 'em all on ... and yesterday my stupid owner backs over me in the driveway."



"And now, as you will observe, the male *Bufo boreas* begins his courtship display as the female responds to the vocal stimulus."



"Looks like some drifter comin' into town."



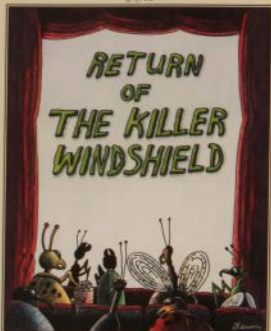
"You moron! ... I told you it was only a mirage!"

9/14/80



"Pie trap! ... We're in Zubutu country, all right."

9/17/80



9/19/80



"Nice try."

9/20/80



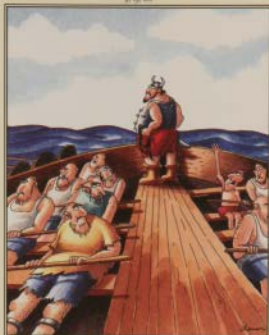
"Well, there goes the neighborhood."

9/18/80



"Mother was right! ... I never should have married outside my own species!"

9/19/80



"Yoo-hoo! Oh, yoo-hoo! ... I think I'm getting a blister."

9/23/80



"I can't take this curse any longer! ... Every sunrise I change into this hairless, frail little man who couldn't hurt a fly."

9/24/80



"Zag and Thena! ... Come on in and act uncivilized!"



"I guess he made it. ... It's been more than a week since he went over the wall."



"Hey, Zoran! What's happenin'? ...
Give me six!"



"We're in luck. I don't think he sees it."

9/27/80



9/30/80



"Hey! Here's one! ... 'Mad scientist needs assistant.'"

9/29/80



"Oh hey! I just love these things! ... Crunchy on the outside and a chewy center!"



"You fool! You can't eat that ... it's a wallet!"



"You're embarrassing me, Warren."



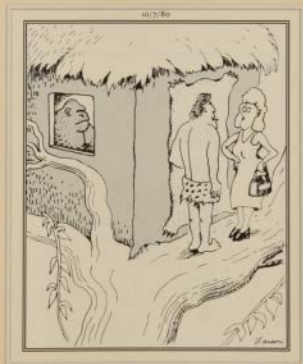
"So ... come here often?"



"Listen. I think we better keep this quiet."



"The contact points must be dirty. ... Just click it up and down a few times."



"My folks are a little different ... just ignore them if they start looking through your hair for fleas and things."



"Well, Mr. President, let's see—carry the one, take away three, carry the two ... that would be four score and seven years ago."

10/8/80

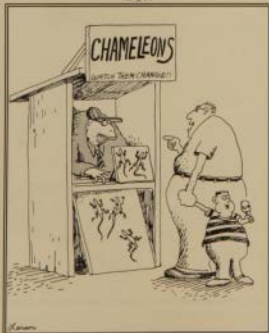


"We better eat it ... or we'll get that old lecture again about the birds starving in Asia."

10/12/80



10/15/80



"Well, my gosh, Mr. Turner ... I remember you selling these things thirty years ago!"

10/15/80



"And in addition, Mrs. Khan, little Genghis disrupts the class, fights with other children, and completely lacks any leadership ability."



"Young man, if you've got a pet in there ..."



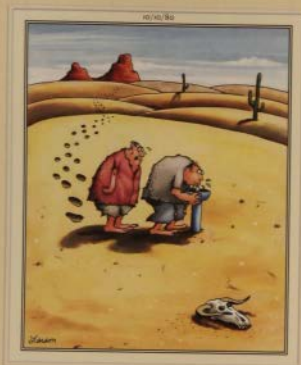
"Now over here, Mom and Dad, is what we call 'The Rack,' and I'll show you how it works."



"I could have guessed. ... My friends all warned me that this breed will sometimes turn on you."



"Don't take it so hard. ... Everyone's got a story about the one that got away."



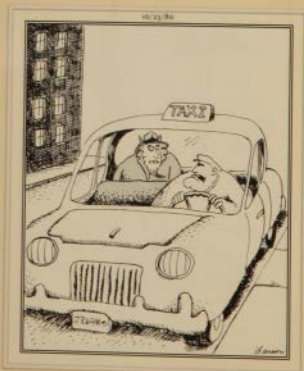
"Hey c'mon! Don't put your mouth on it!"



"Hey! Is that you, Dave? ... Small world!"



"And oh my goodness! ... Aren't the children getting long!"



"Hey, Buddy! Nobody tells me to go *there* and gets away with it!"

10/27/80



"And another thing! ... I want you to be more assertive! I'm tired of everyone calling you Alexander the Pretty-Good!"

10/22/80



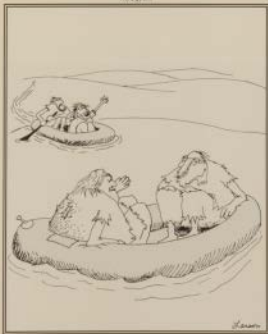
"Well I just think I've been putting up with this silly curse of yours long enough!"

10/21/80



"Well, it looks like Sylvia has latched on to another fly-by-night boyfriend."

10/29/80



"Gad! Here come those pesky Andersons again ... probably want to borrow a cup of water."



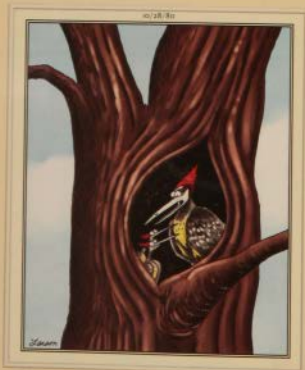
"I seeeeeee you!"



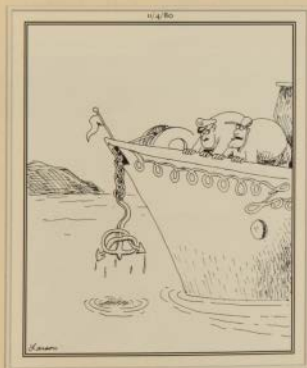
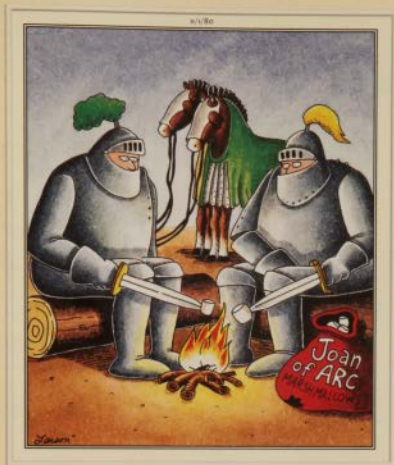
"Just keep him calm for a couple of days. ...
He's got lockbody."



"Wait! Wait! Here's another one—the screams
of a man lost in the woods."



"I don't know where your father is tonight. ...
No doubt out bangin' his head against some tree."



"Listen, Wadsworth ... as far as I'm concerned we can just go anchor somewhere else."



"Well ... since the elevator's power is dead, why don't we all just introduce ourselves?"



"That settles it, Carl! ... From now on, you're getting only decaffeinated coffee!"

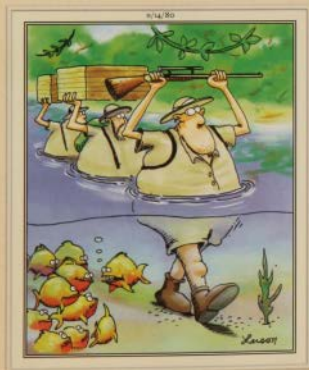




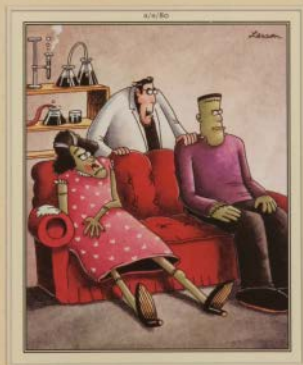
"Well, we both knew there'd be some adjustments moving from a small town to a big city."



"One small step for a fish, one giant leap for fishkind."



"Just nibble at first. ... But when you hear them yell 'Piranha!'—go for it."



"Hey, c'mon now! ... You two were made for each other!"



"One of the nicest evenings I've ever spent at the Wilsons'... and then you had to go and do that on the rug!"



"Excuse me, General Custer, sir ... but smoke signals say, 'Ready ... or ... not ... here ... we ... come.'"



"Look out! ... It's a black hole!"

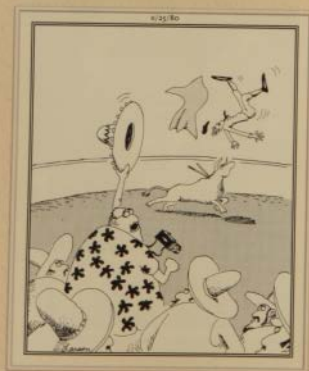


"Come on out. ... I think they're through."





"Hey look, guys ... maybe we got the wrong address."



"Ole!"



"Oh, Sidney! Look! I wasn't snagged on the bottom!"

11/27/80



11/28/80



11/29/80



Dec 13 1980

Dear Gary Larson
 Your cartoon strips are the best thing happening
 in American journalism. For years I have followed
 the advice of H. H. H. or someone, to watch
 the comics to find what's happening. Your
 wit and insight are a good sign.

Congratulations,
 Gary Larson
 Thank you
 P.S. Have you published a collection of your
 work yet. If not please do so soon!



"See, Frank? Keep the light in their eyes and you can bag them without any trouble at all."



"I don't like the looks of this."





"Go for it, Sidney! You've got it! You've got it!
Good hands! Don't choke!"



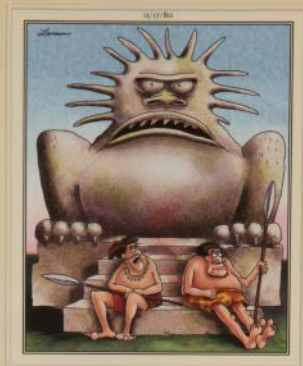
"The herring's nothin'. ... I'm going for the whole shmeer!"



"Here he comes again ... and he's carrying the thundertooth."



"An excellent specimen ... the symbol of beauty, innocence, and fragile life. ... Hand me the jar of ether."



"Twelve sacrifices already this week. ...
Thank Goran it's Friday!"



"Uh-oh—looks like the zipper has stuck on
that thing again."



12/16/80



12/18/80



12/19/80



12/20/80





"Quick! Back the other way!
Back the other way!"





"And I've only one thing to say about all these complaints I've been hearing about ... Venison!"

12/27/80



"Well, you better get someone over here right away. ... He really looks like he's going to jump."

12/29/80



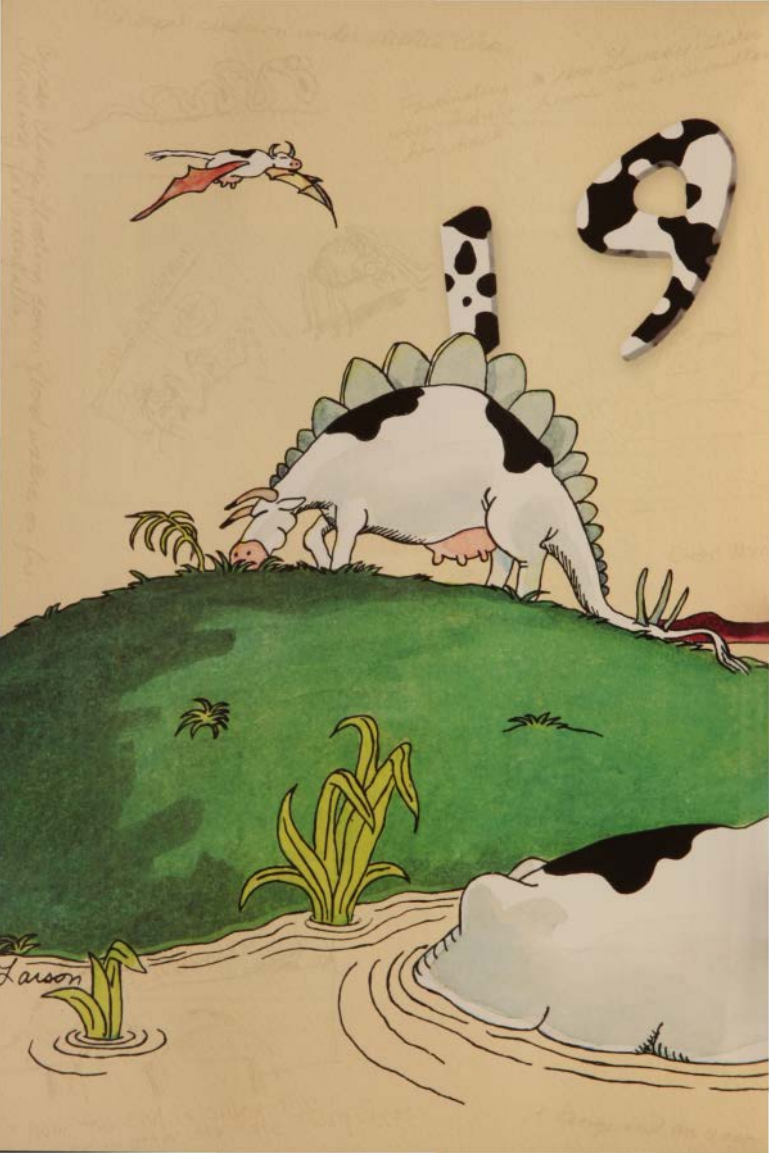
12/30/80



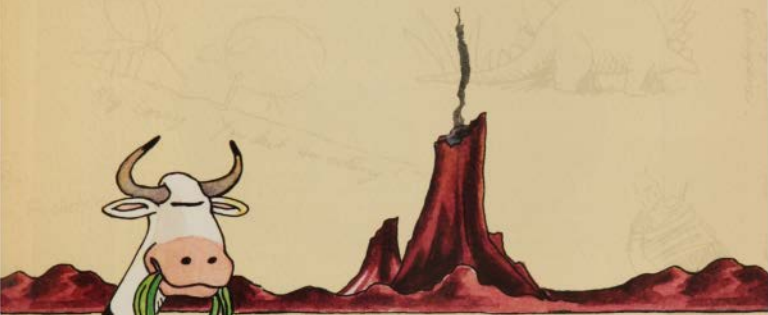
12/31/80



"I said act nonchalant—that doesn't mean whistling!"



Farson



With a Friend Like This ...

Many years ago, I traveled with my friend Ernie to a remote, mountainous area in northern Mexico. Ernie was the curator of reptiles at our local zoo, and he had invited me to accompany him on a mission to capture and bring back a little-known species of Mexican king snake. (Okay—it's not everyone's dream vacation, I grant you; but getting a tan on a beach somewhere always gave me the willies.) Oh, one other thing: Ernie was insane. Not clinically insane, of course—just your garden variety, watch-your-ass-when-you're-around-this-person kind of insane.

One afternoon we had been exploring a potential king snake habitat when I turned over a rock and discovered a couple of huge whip scorpions. (Some people call them vinegarroons, but for the three entomologists who have always dogged my trail on these details, I'll formally identify them as *Mastigoproctus giganteus*.)

I wanted to photograph these interesting critters, but I had left my camera back at camp. I did, however, have a large collecting jar in my backpack. Gingerly, I herded the slow-moving scorpions into the container, figuring I would simply schlep the happy couple back to camp, photograph them, and release them later. But we didn't get back to camp until dusk, so the photo-op would have to wait a day. I set the jar aside, next to some gear.

The next morning, warm and cozy inside my sleeping bag, I awoke to hear Ernie moving about, making a fire and getting breakfast together. I was reluctant to get up myself, since it was always so cold in the mornings before the sun got a good grip on the day. So I just lay there in my bag with only my face exposed. I still remember the tranquility of it all—surrounded by saguaro cacti, listening to the crackling fire, staring up at the Mexican sky.

That's when Ernie walked over. He paused and stood over me, then lifted a corner of my bag with one arm and plunged his other arm deep inside. He quickly withdrew it and leaped backward. A few seconds later, he was doubled up with laughter.

I still wasn't fully awake, and I remember just looking at him, wondering, what was the deal? And then I saw something in his hand. It was a jar. *The jar*. Whip Scorpion Inn. And the Inn was now vacant.

The basic scenario came groggily into focus. Ernie plus jar, minus whip scorpions, plus strange behavior (common with Ernie), plus laughter equals WHIP SCORPIONS (or, technically, *Mastigoproctus giganteus*) IN MY SLEEPING BAG!

There are people who claim your entire life flashes before you when disaster is imminent. I assure you that if the disaster involves something that looks like this (close to life-size, I might add) ...



your life will definitely not flash. This is all you're going to see.

I was now awake. Whip scorpions are not dangerous (no stingers), but look at this animal again. I ask you: Does it matter it can't sting?

It's interesting to note how quickly the nervous system can switch gears. Without a hitch, my brain shifted from dreamily contemplating the Natural World to the more basic there's-a-scorpion-in-my-bed mode. As a cartoonist, I enjoyed plumbing this aspect of human nature, the phobias and common fears many of us have to one degree or another—I just don't like to be personally involved in the research. (Especially, I might add, when it involves an arachnid whose Latin name ends with *giganteus*.)

I didn't bother with the zipper; I just shot out of that bag as if it was on fire—screaming, I'm afraid, like a girl cartoonist. When I finally stopped jumping around, one of the whip scorpions was clinging to my shirt collar. Another round of jumping, please. Between fits of laughter, Ernie kept saying, "God, if only I had a camera!"

Ah, friends. To any scorpion fanciers out there, rest assured that the little creatures were unharmed. And likewise rest assured, I did get my revenge on Ernie—but that's a story he can share in his own book.



"My stomach? ... Your stomach's rumbling!"



"That won't be necessary, Carl. ... I think we can safely conclude that they're definitely not afraid of mice."



"I don't know which one of you is doing it, but at the end of the sonata we shall refrain from playing 'Shave and a Haircut.'"



"I told you guys to slow down and take it easy or something like this would happen."



"You idiot! ... Twenty bucks for a smoke alarm and we don't even know what the stuff is!"





"Disgusting! ... It's just a sort of heavy huffing and puffing."

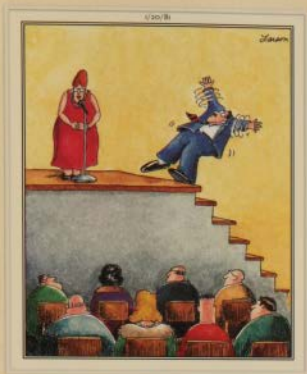


"Well that's how it happened, Sylvia. ... I kissed this frog, he turns into a prince, we get married, and WHAM! ... I'm stuck at home with a bunch of pollywogs."



"Come out of that cave and meet your doom, you miserable dragon! You can't hide in there forever, you overgrown chameleon!"





"And now, standing at my side, I give you the man who conquered Everest, the Matterhorn, Kilimanjaro ..."



"Sure—but can you make him drink?"



"There goes Williams again ... trying to win support for his Little Bang theory."



"I'm afraid his leg is broken, Ma'am. ... He'll have to be shot."



"I'm leaving you for another, Zog. ... His cranium is larger, his thumbs are more opposable, and he's really going somewhere."



"Well, Mr. Darwin ... have you reached any conclusions so far?"



1/24/81



1/26/81



1/27/81



1/28/81





"Hold still, Carl! ... Don't ... move ... an ... inch!"



"Gee, I don't know, Eddie ... how many college students do you think you could eat at one time?"



"C'mon, Sylvia ... where's your spirit of adventure?"

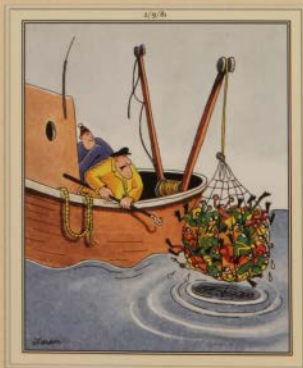


"Bird calls! Bird calls, you fool! ... Not mountain lions!"





"Lester! Wake up! Lester! ... I think I heard footsteps."



"I'm not sure, Al, but we sure got into a mess of 'em."

2/12/80



"This is General Sherman! The march to the sea is over! Turn back, I say!
HALT! HAAAAAALT!"

2/13/80



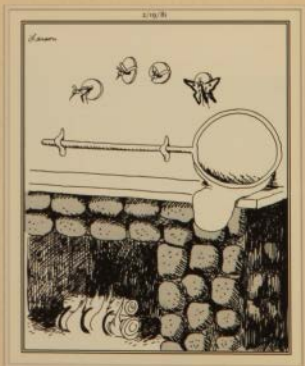
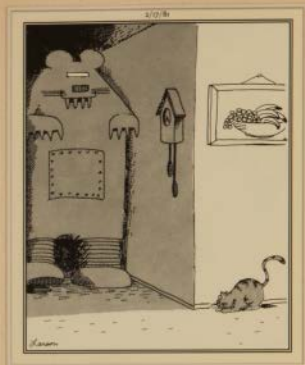
"Thag, this is Noona. Noona, this is Thag. ...
Thag is a Hunter and Gatherer."

2/16/80



2/17/80



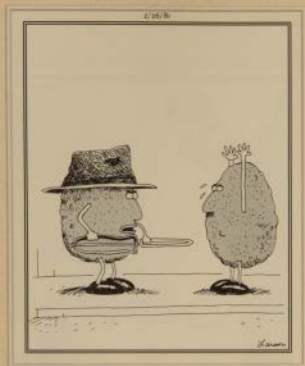




"Okay, Bob! Go! Go!"



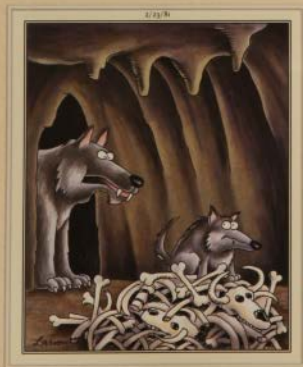
"Oh! Here he comes. ... Now, whatever you do, don't say anything about his ears."



"Get 'em up there!"



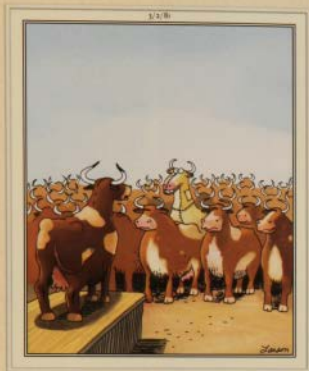
"THAAAAAAR SHE BLOOOOOOWS!"



"And I'm not going to tell you again—
clean up your room!"



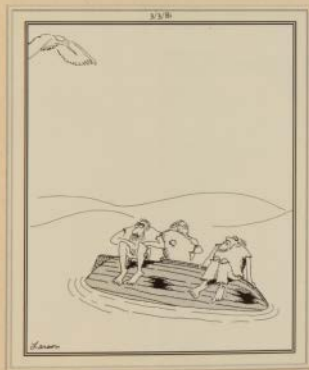
"We're here, Eric! Antarctica! ...
Bottom of the world!"



"The revolution has been postponed. ...
We've discovered a leak."



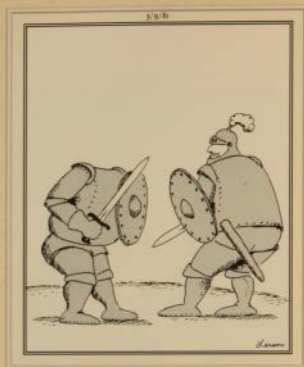
"Quick, Agnes! Look! ... There it is again!"



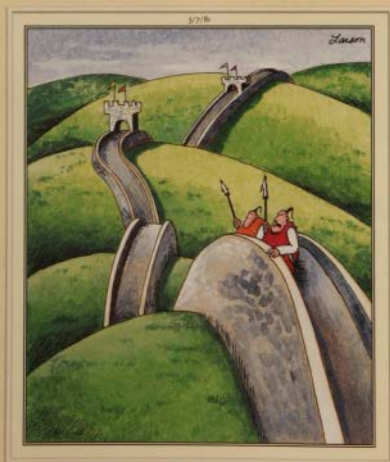
"Oh no! An albatross! ... Well, there
goes our luck."



"Knock, knock, knock ... ding-dong,
ding-dong ... anybody home? ...
knock, knock, knock ..."



"Give up, Sir James. ... You've lost."



"Now we'll see if that dog can get in here!"



"Eraser fight!!"



"And now for today's lesson. ... You've probably been wondering what *these* are for."



"Listen—if you think you got it rough, you should try *my* child-support payments."



"You should have thought of that earlier, Cornelius. ... You're just going to have to hold it until nightfall."



"Well, that's the last of 'em ... but just look at this place!"



"This may be hard, son, but your mother and I agreed it was time you were told the truth. ... You were adopted."



"Andrew! Listen! ... You can hear the ocean!"



"Hang on, Bernard! You've got him! ... Give him slack!"





"Hey, Bob! So how's death been treating you?"



"FOOD!"



"So then Carl says to me, 'Look—let's invite over the new neighbors and check 'em out.'"



"Okay, Billy. ... Tide's coming in now. ... Dig me out, Billy. ... Billy, I don't want to get angry. ..."

3/28/81



3/30/81



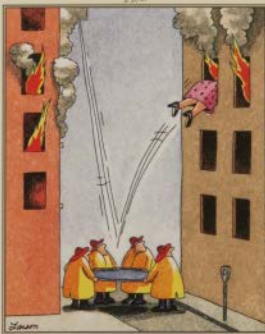
"And now we'll see if it attacks its own reflection."

3/25/81



"You heard me, Simmons! You get that cursed bugle fixed!"

3/31/81

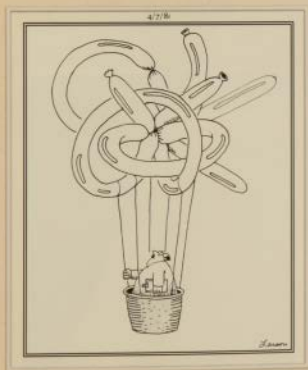




"Curse you, Zog! I've told you a hundred times to get them screens up!"



"Of course, that was back in the days when you were just a twinkle in your father's eyes."



"Watch it, Randy! ... She's on your case!"



"There they go again ... leaving the nest too early."



"Seven days at sea ... but thank God no one's seen us yet."



"Of course, living in an all-glass house has its disadvantages ... but you should see the birds smack it."



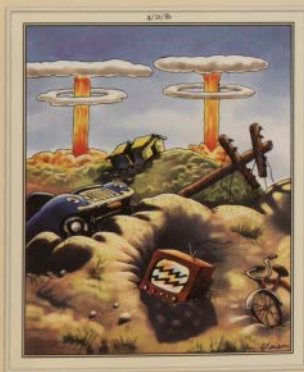
"Go get 'em, brother."



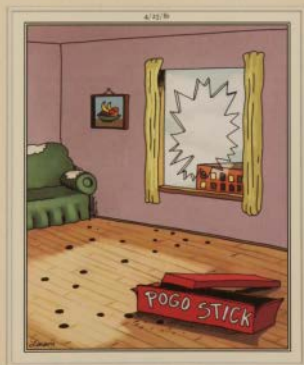
"No! No! Not that! Not the pit!"



"Uh-oh, Warren. ... The Williamses are checking us out again."



"This is a test. For the next thirty seconds, this station will conduct a test of the emergency broadcast system ..."



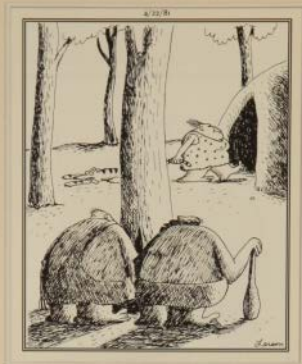


"Well, I guess that explains the abdominal pains."





"Now, close your eyes and go back to sleep, honey. ... There's nothing in your closet."



"Remember, Thag, approach her carefully. If she doesn't recognize your courtship behavior, she might eat you."



"So there he was—this big gorilla just lying there. And Jim here says, 'Do you suppose it's dead or just asleep?'"



"Ahhhh ... life!"



"Florence! It's my neck again! ... I can't move it!"



"And you should definitely stay away from short blondes and tall buildings."



"And stay off!"

4-30-81

Editor
Los Angeles Times
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, CA

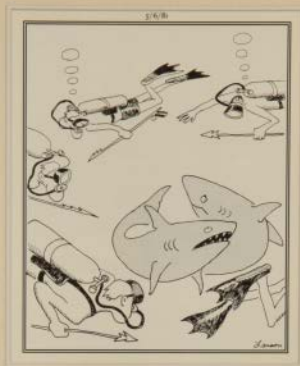
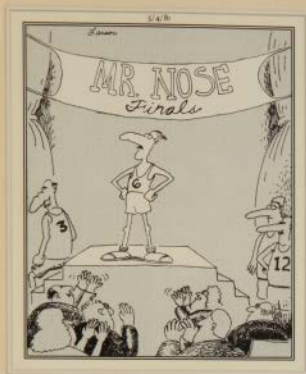
Sirs:

I must register strong exception to your cartoon "The Far Side" by Gary Larson in today's paper.

Being an old railroader and model railroad fan for longer than I care to admit I must inform you and Gary Larson that no model railroader in his right mind would force a perfectly sculptured "guy" from his railroad "layout".

A model railroader seeks perfection in his miniature world. A miniature creature would be welcomed as heartily as the perfect switch or a track that never gets greasy. His only complaint would be if the "guy" was "out of scale."

Rony Forever,
Howard Decker



"Just stay calm and don't make any erratic movements."



The Dawn of Man



"Now follow me. Step, step, slither, step ...
step, step, slither, step ..."

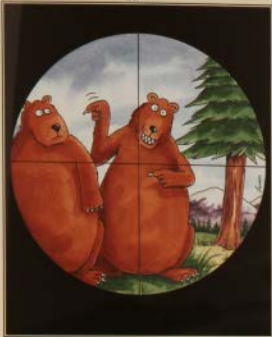


"We better do as he says, Thag. ...
He's got the drop on us."



"Oh, yeah? ... And I suppose you got those
suction marks at the meeting, too!"

5/5/81



5/7/81



5/0/81



5/9/81



"Now I remember, Helen! ... That's the old peasant woman who said she'd put a curse on me if I snapped her!"

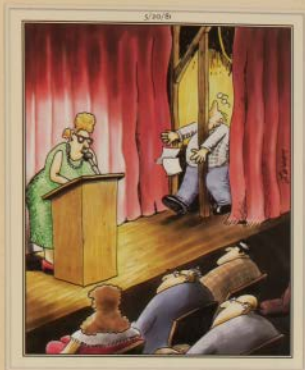


"Okay, okay, okay. ... Everyone just calm down and we'll try this thing one more time."

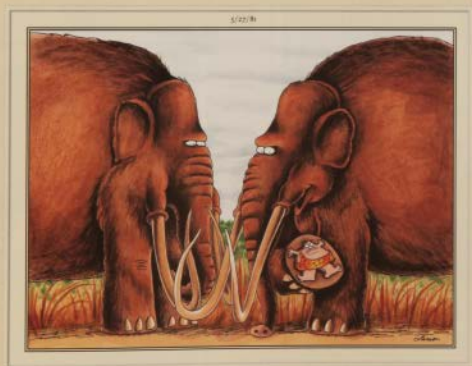
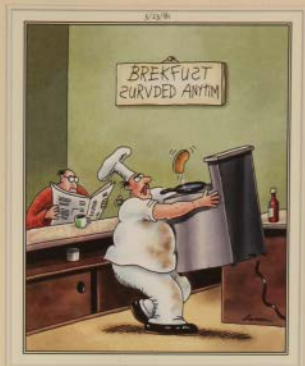


"This ain't gonna look good on our report, Leroy."





"And so, without further ado, here's the author of *Mind over Matter* ..."



"Well, what the? ... I thought I smelled something."

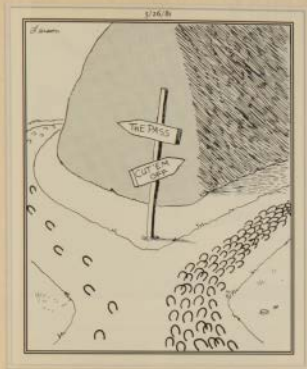


"My goodness, Harold! ... Now there goes one big mosquito!"

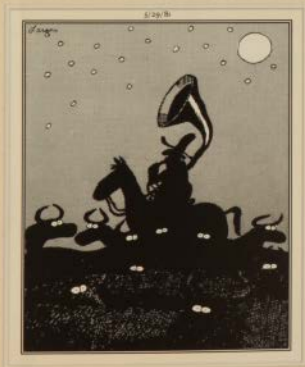


"Say ... wasn't there supposed to be a couple of holes punched in this thing?"





"Well, the Answer Man says, 'If the wheels start to spin, try rocking the car back and forth'..."





"Honey, the Merrimonts are here. ... They'd like to come down and see your ape-man project."



"Hey, Durk! ... New cellmate, Durk! ... New cellmate! ... Friend, Durk! ... Friend!"



"That does it, Carl. ... You're through doing the bookings."



"Well, well. ... The great hunter returneth."



"And then, whenever I come to the word 'chicken,' the couple here in front will jump up and make clucking sounds!"



"Faster! He's still there!"



"Well, I learned one thing. ... This works good on clothes, but don't try it on your dog."





"Don't be alarmed, folks—he's completely harmless unless something startles him."



"Agnes! It's that heavy, chewing sound again!"



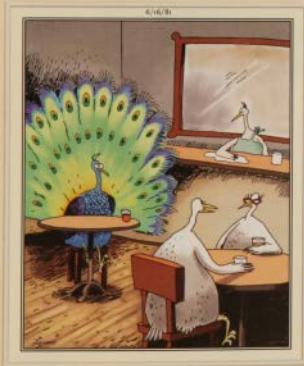
"No way! ... This time I get the legs and thighs; you get the wings and back!"



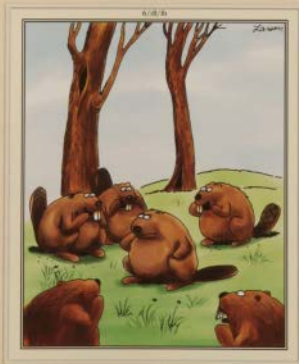
"I wish they'd keep those danged teenagers off the trails."



"Well, this better not be just a wild goose chase. ... Little Big Horn, huh?"



"Don't encourage him, Sylvia."



"Doesn't have buck teeth, doesn't have buck teeth, doesn't have ..."



"Hey, Richard! Your stupid dog's following us again!"

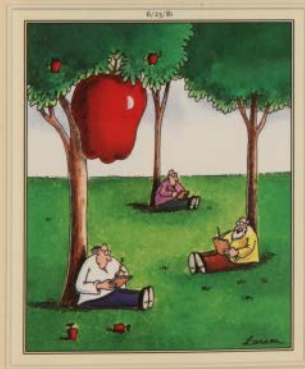


"Hot oil! We need hot oil! ... Forget the water balloons!"





"With a little luck, they may revere us as gods."



"Nothing yet. ... How about you, Newton?"





"Andrew ... the cows have come home."



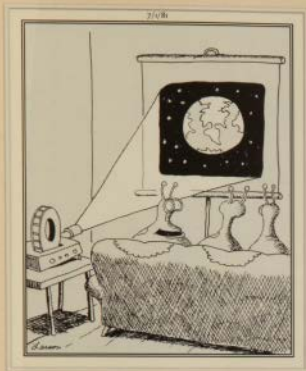
"Vive la difference."



"Dear Henry: Where were you? We waited and waited but finally decided that ..."



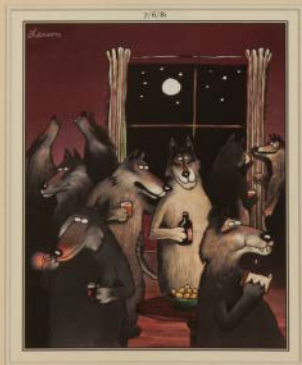
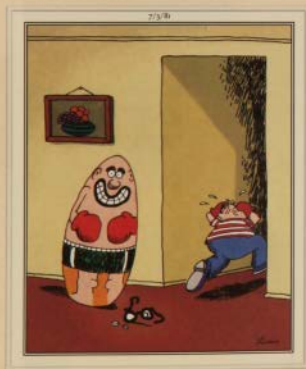
"Hey! You kids! ... Can't you read?"



"Oh, yeah. ... Now that place was really a greasy spoon!"



"God help us all."



"Listen ... this party's a drag. But later on, Floyd, Warren, and myself are going over to Farmer Brown's and slaughter some chickens."



"It's no use. ... We've just got to get ourselves a real damsel."



"Well, I never thought about it before ... but I suppose I'd let the kid go for about \$1.99 a pound."





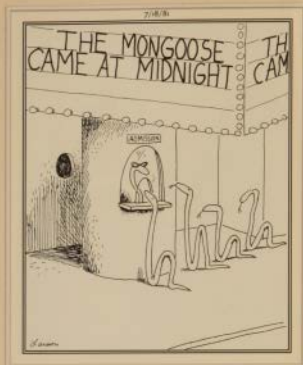
"Andrew! So that's where you've been!
And good heavens! ... There's my old
hairbrush, too!"



"Remember, milk, eggs, loaf of bread ...
and pick up one of those No-Penguin-Strips."



The discovery of tools



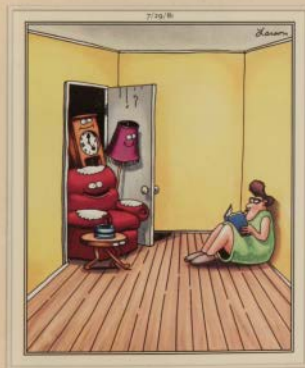
"I'm afraid you've got cows, Mr. Farnsworth."



"Oh, all right, Barnaby! ... One more quarter and then we're going home!"



"Reuben! The Johnsons are here! You come up this instant ... or I'll get the hose!"



"Well, we're back!"



"We're almost free, everyone! I just felt the first drop of rain!"



"Other cities get giant gorillas or dinosaurs. ...
But what do we get?"



"Okay, Pete! Start the pressure nice and easy."



"Put it back in the rock, Barbara—you couldn't
even slice a tomato with that old thing."

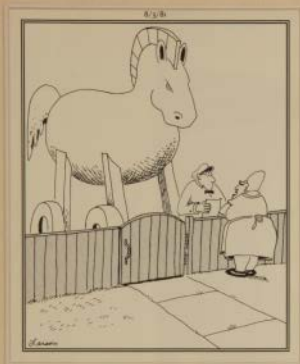


"I never got his name, but he sure cleaned up this town."



"Hey! Look! ... No hands!"





"No ... this is 221 Chestnut Drive. ... You want the big place around the corner."



"Skinny legs! ... I got skinny legs!"



"Dear ... have you seen the beef brains I bought for supper tonight?"



"Damn! ... I can't hibernate."



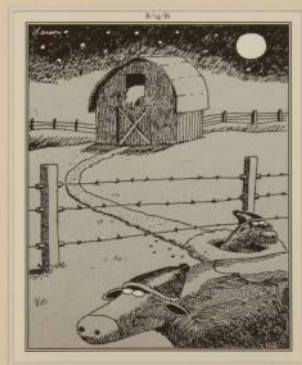
"That's not funny, Malcolm! There will be no more floating belly-up on the surface!"



"I can't believe it! One lousy little bee gets inside and you just freak out!"



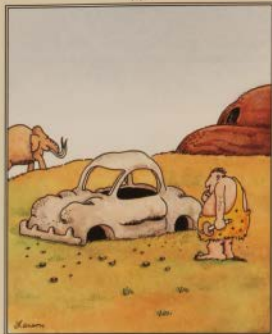
"Hey! What's this *Drosophila melanogaster* doing in my soup?"



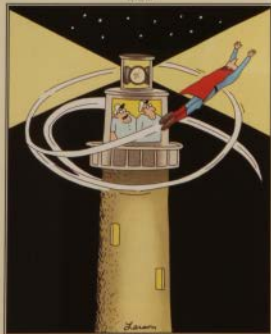
8/7/81



8/8/81

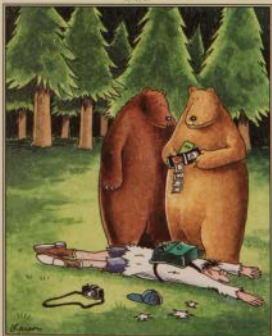


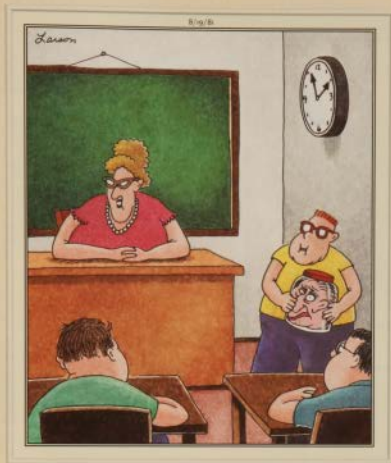
8/8/81



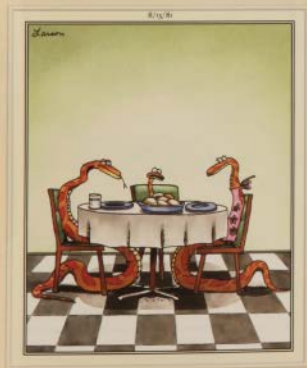
"For God's sake, kill the lights, Murray—he's back again!"

8/9/81





"And next, for show-and-tell, Bobby Henderson says he has something he found on the beach last summer. ..."



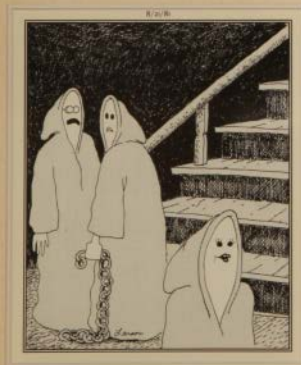
"Oh, brother! ... Not hamsters again!"



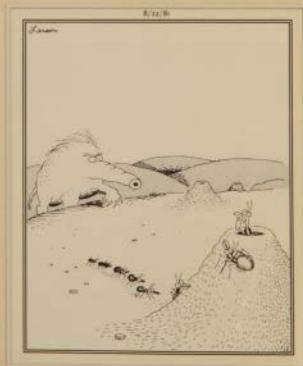
As the first duck kept Margaret's attention, the second one made its move.



"Blast it, Agnes! If you're going to put your cold feet on me, you could at least dry them first."



"Sure, I like her ... but she doesn't even know I exist."



"ALERT! ALERT! ... IT'S THE SUCKING DEATH!"



"What a day! I must have spread malaria across half the country."



"Now stay calm. ... Let's hear what they said to Bill."



"And, as you shall soon observe, we are quite proud of our test tube baby progress."

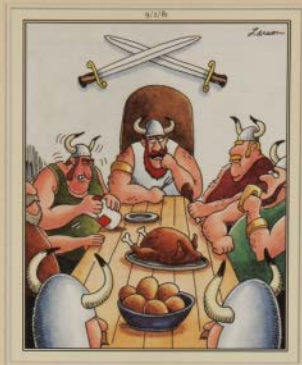


"On the other hand, what if we aren't alone in the universe?"



"So! ... You *still* won't talk, eh?"

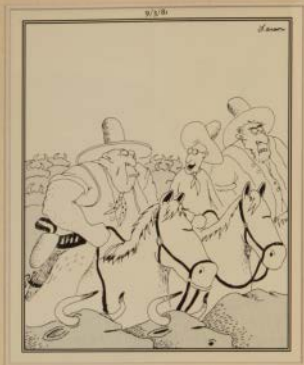




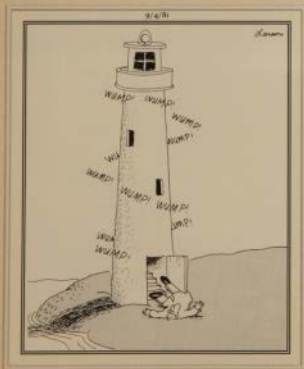
"I can't believe this! Can't anyone here get the lid off the mayonnaise?"



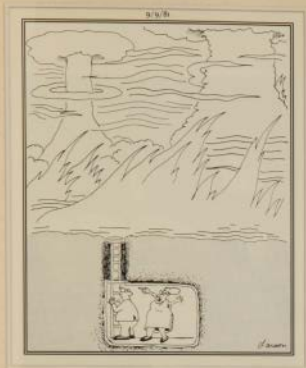
"You're kidding! I was struck twice by lightning too!"



"Anyone for a chorus of 'Happy Trails'?"



"Tough-guy, huh?"



"Arnold! The bird! The bird! ... You get back up there and get the bird!"



"C'mon, let's go! Remember Pharaoh's favorite mottoes: 'Many hands make light work, a job worth doing is worth doing well, and death to the laggard!'"

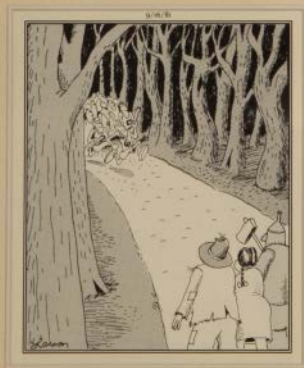




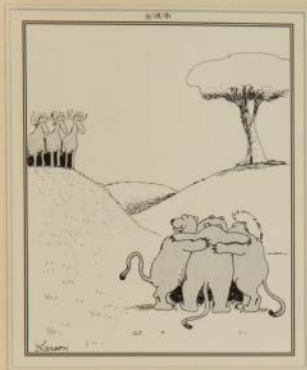
"What do you make of it, Earl? ... A small, pea-green boat, drifting way out here—empty, except for those two little skeletons."



"I daresay there's a woman in Mayfield, Nebraska, who believes in UFOs."

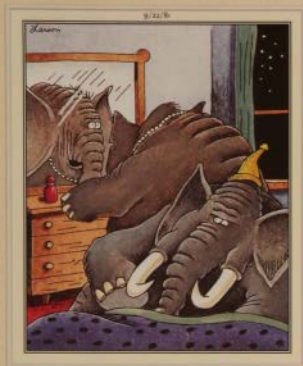


"RETREAT!"

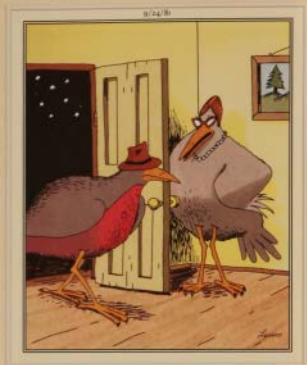


"Oh, my! ... What a cute little maggott!"

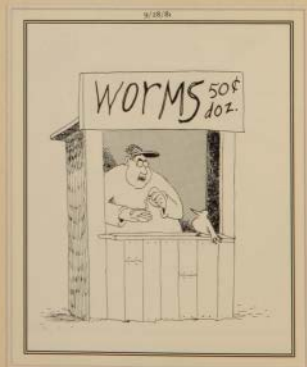
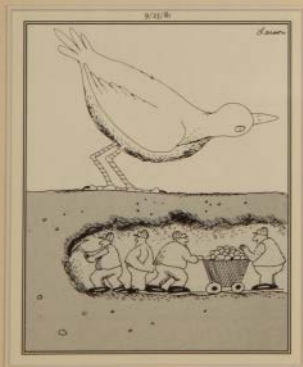
"Well, they ain't free anymore, buddy."



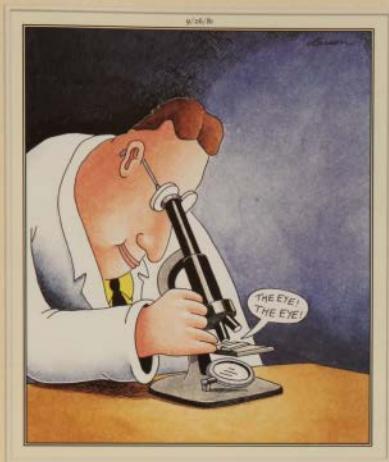
"Egad, Alex! I'm losing some wrinkles!"



"So! ... Out bob bob bobbing along again!"



"Well, I dunno. This one's a little beak-worm. ...
How much do you want for it?"



"Polly wanna finger."



"Okay now, listen up! ... First, I want all the car-chasers over here!"



"Autobiography I presume?"



"C'mon, c'mon! Either it's here or it isn't!"



"Through the hoop, Bob! Through the hoop!"

10/27/81



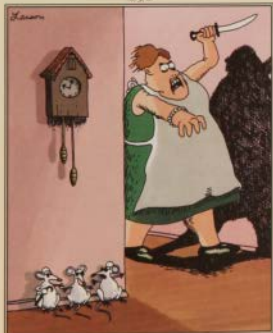
"Gad, I hate walking through this place at night."

10/19/81



Lawson

10/19/81

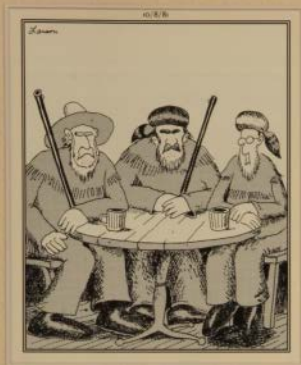


"Egad! ... Sounds like the farmer's wife has really flipped out this time!"

10/10/81



"It's still hungry ... and I've been stuffing worms into it all day."



Buffalo Bill, Grizzly Adams, and Pigeon Jones



"Sorry—Carl doesn't live here anymore."



"Let's not overreact, Agnes. ... For one thing, it was only a dud."



"This is Harold Schwartz! ... Something horrible is happening out here!"



"Looks like this place has been pretty much sucked over."

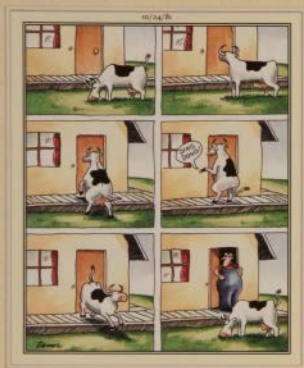


"Sure, go ahead—if you want the blood to rush to your feet."



"Sidney, just take one—don't handle every fly."





"C'mon! Look at these fangs! Look at these claws! You think we're supposed to eat just honey and berries?"

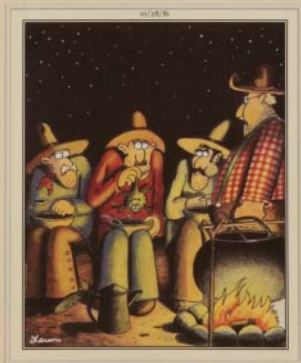


"Hey, wait a minute! This is grass! We've been eating grass!"





"CHARLEY HORSE!"



"Well, I'll be! Eggbeater must have missed that one."



"Counterclockwise, Red Eagle!
Always counterclockwise!"

November 8, 1981

Mary Larson
c/o The Washington Post
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Mr. Larson:

I am an English teacher in the Wynneboro Area Senior High School. Recently one of my students came up with a question in a research class—and as we both see, never the question. This is the question:

Why are all cars (buses and buses) run
counterclockwise around the track, rather
than clockwise?

We have consulted all of the sources available and cannot seem to come up with a satisfactory answer. Then, on October 27 the Post ran your "The Far Side" cartoon ("Counterclockwise, Red Eagle! Always counterclockwise!") and we are tactically inclined to know where you got the idea for this.

Could you help us, please? Thank you so very much.

Yours truly,
Mary Ann W. Hulp



"Mind if we check the ears?"



"I dreamt last night I was walking. ... And I mean I could walk anywhere ... fast, slow ..."





"You meathead! Now watch! ... The rabbit goes through the hole, around the tree five or six times ..."



"We've made it, Warren! ... The moon!"



"Get it off me! Get it off me!"



"Thank goodness, Malcolm! We've finally been spotted!"



"Bozo? Did you hear that?
She called me a bozo!"



"Stop! Stop! What's that sound?
What's that sound?"



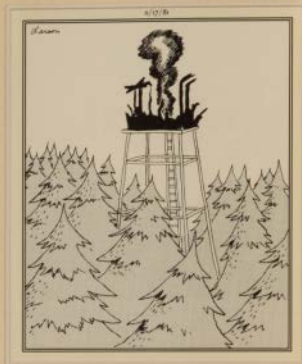
"Yes, yes ... now don't fuss. ... I have
something for you all."



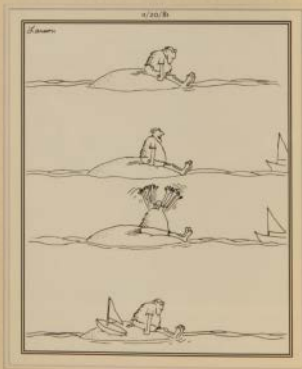
"You imbecile! We flew 12,000
miles for THIS?"



"First the good news, sir! ... I count only one Indian!"



"Uh-oh! It says here: 'A good mimic, this bird should not be exposed to foul or abusive sounds.'"





"Something's wrong here, Harriet. This is starting to look less and less like Interstate 95."



"FIND THEM!"

11/26/81



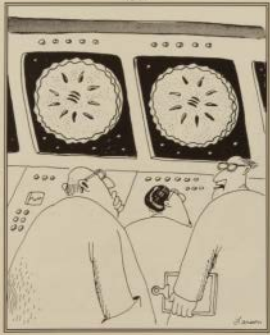
11/27/81



11/28/81



11/30/81



"We estimate it to be 7,000 kilometers in diameter, 130,000 kilometers away—and we're on a collision course!"



"Fair is fair, Larry. ... We're out of food,
we drew straws—you lost."



"Harry! I found this note from Mary Beth! ...
She's run off with a spoon!"



"Ha! I knew you were bluffing, Amos! You
never did have much of a poker face!"



"Say ... maybe it's not just a bad swarm of horseflies."

Comics Editor
Minneapolis Tribune
Minneapolis, Minnesota

I am quite liberal when it comes to various types of comics and even go so far as to enjoy the cartoons and jokes in magazines like Playboy and High Society.

But I must strongly protest the cartoon, The Far Side, by Gary Larson. A sample is attached.

Larson has some kind of sickness in that he has to portray animals in some kind of suffering situation. I think we have enough people in the world who inflict pain on helpless animals and we don't have to encourage this craziness on the comic pages.

I am able to accept comics that deal with people-to-people violence simply because people have some control over how they may or may not feel toward each other. I cannot stomach the violence of people against animals who have no way of knowing when danger is imminent.

The Minneapolis Tribune should drop The Far Side until Gary Larson completes psychotherapy to overcome his problem. The Far Side does not represent humor. It represents illness.

Please send Gary Larson a copy of this letter. He needs to know that a whole lot of people don't think he's funny.

Thanks very much.
N. S. Enger
Minneapolis

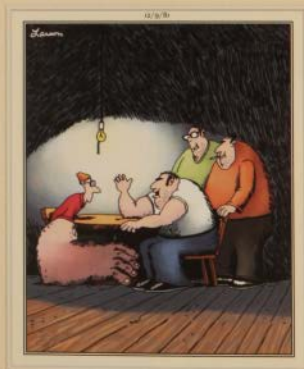
P.S. I should add that the Minneapolis Tribune comic page is excellent (except for an occasional Far Side) and urge you not to eliminate any of its other fine comics.



"So ... you must be the one they call Mr. Long."



"Thank God, Sylvia! We're alive!"



"Okay, buddy. Then how 'bout the right arm?"

12/14/81



"Rejected again, huh Murray? Have you heard about this new breath-freshening toothpaste?"

12/12/81



12/10/81



"Hey! Look what Zog do!"

12/11/81



"Excuse me, Harold, while I go slip into something more comfortable."



Near Gettysburg, 1863: A reflective moment



"Wouldn't you know it! Now the Hendersons have the bomb."



The wereduck cometh.



"Still won't talk, huh? ... Okay, no more Mr. Nice Guy."

12/22/81



"My goodness, Mr. Osgood! Your X-ray reveals several stethoscopes, a smock, and ..."

12/20/81



"Uh-oh, Stan. I guess it wasn't a big, blue mule deer."

12/21/81



12/20/81



"Well, that does it! ... Tomorrow he dies."

12/16/81



12/23/81

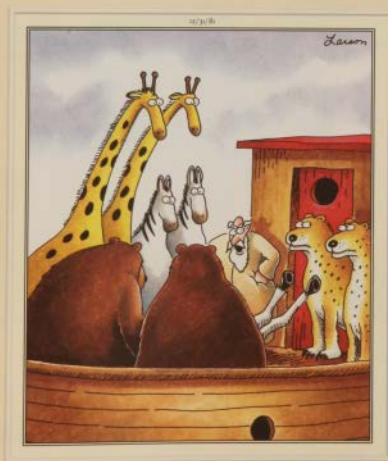
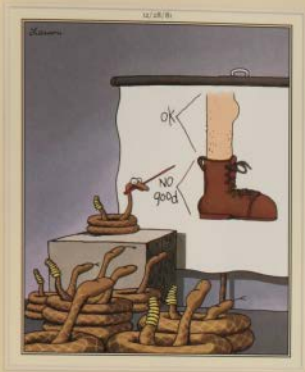


"Ooo! Ow! Blast it, Phyllis! ... Hurry up with them hot pads!"

12/24/81



"Hello, I'm Clarence Jones from Bill's office and ...
Oh! Hey! Mistletoe!"



"Well, so much for the unicorns. ... But, from now on, all carnivores will be confined to 'C' deck."

Little boy approaching front of class at
a head inside a jar, "Blacky" of Key, you
will see what Bobby B. Henderson has
brought for show & tell.

19



11th 4th 5th 6th

Come getting out of Texas with baggage etc. woman
newswoman, Arnold. The cows have come home.

8

2



Evolution of the Stickman.

Cow to show, horrified "Hey! Wait a minute
This is grass! We've been eating grass!"

And
I was at table. I had you remember to cut your
lips together like a diaphragm?

The Syndrome

The last time it struck me was a few years ago, while my wife and I were on vacation in Indonesia. Frankly, my syndrome hadn't surfaced for years, and up until this rather embarrassing "Bali episode," I had foolishly thought I was completely free of its grip.

I had just left the Hotel Bali Oberoi's outdoor bar and was heading back to our "hut," bearing a couple of those tropical drinks that look like someone had stuffed a clown into a blender. Just then, across the beautifully landscaped grounds, maybe a hundred feet from where I stood, strolled an enormous black lizard, perhaps three feet in length.

Outwardly, I was calm. Inwardly, I was completely undone. I put the drinks down on the lawn and immediately started moving toward this mysterious reptile. (Some kind of monitor lizard, I later determined.) And as it kept a watchful eye on me, maintaining a constant distance, I started moving a little faster. As did the lizard. As did I. Within a few minutes I was running full out, dodging palm trees and startled tourists. I was focused on that lizard, that big, beautiful, scaly creature of my dreams.

Hello to my little problem. Or, as my brother (who was also doomed to suffer under its spell) and I "scientifically" designated it, the *ohplease-ohplease syndrome*. For both of us, it first showed up in childhood.

On any given day or night, under optimum conditions (no school, essentially), Dan and I would gather up our boots, nets, and collecting jars and head for the local swamps or tidelands. We were on a quest for living treasure: the wetland fauna of western Washington.

Our passion for frequenting wetlands was not the syndrome per se: It was merely setting the stage. The syndrome itself, however, was always waiting in the wings, ready to pounce. Allow me to put you in my boots, and I will attempt to walk you through a typical "episode" of *ohpleaseohplease*.

It's night. You are at the edge of a big swamp, wading through the muddy shallows, staying close to the reeds. Your trusty net is in one hand, your less trusty flashlight in the other. The only sounds you hear are frogs and occasionally creatures of unknown origin. Your flashlight sweeps back and forth in a slow, smooth arc, its beam searching for denizens of the not-so-deep. And then ... your heart nearly stops. You can barely breathe. There, not far from where you stand frozen, illuminated in your light beam, is the most beautiful, the most incredible _____ (fill in the creature of your own dreams) that you have ever laid eyes on! Now the syndrome kicks in.

For a while, you dare not move. But soon you find yourself moving (or is it being "pulled"?) in slow motion toward this beautiful, amazing _____. And as you raise your net into capture position with the practiced skill of an Amazonian Indian (wearing glasses), knowing that at any moment the _____ might realize your intent and instantly vanish, you hear, over and over again, a single voice pounding in your head: *ohpleaseohplease!* It's an all-out begging of the gods to deliver yonder animal unto thy net. And while that voice implores away inside your brain, you experience a total eclipse of everything else in the known universe. All you see is that amazing, beautiful, incredible _____ that's staring back at you.

Like a full moon shining down on some werewolf, that huge lizard in Bali had triggered my own curse. I *wanted* that lizard. I *had* to have that lizard. I *lusted* after that lizard!

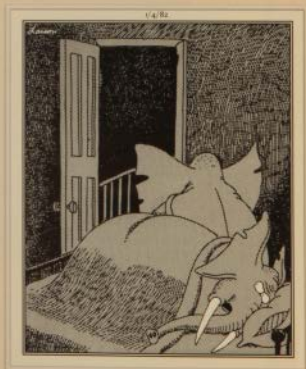
In the end, that big reptile just ran into some bushes. Gone like a lizard. And so there I stood, drenched in sweat—the only tell-tale sign that I had just experienced another attack of *ohpleaseohplease*.

Years ago, my brother and I concluded we were probably not alone with our affliction. Biologists, naturalists, all people who find themselves inexplicably drawn to look under rocks, down holes, up trees, under water, or wherever else you might discover some beautiful beastie, must also suffer from bouts of *ohpleaseohplease*. Very simply, it's the obsession to capture and to hold, if only for a few moments, some living, natural wonder, to observe it, examine it, have it touch your skin, feel its heartbeat against your hand—to "drink it in" before it once again slips back over that invisible wall that separates Us from Them.

Whether directly or indirectly, the memory of *ohpleaseohplease* was the genesis for a number of my cartoons. I guess in the end, you are what you draw. A scary thought.



"Eaaaaaasy, Smithers! ... Eaaaaasy ...
Oh please, oh please!"



"For crying out loud! ... You're always hearing something moving around downstairs!"

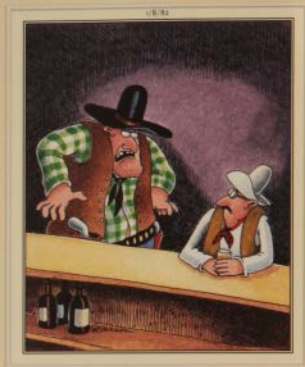


"Shove off, buddy ... I've been working this neighborhood for years."

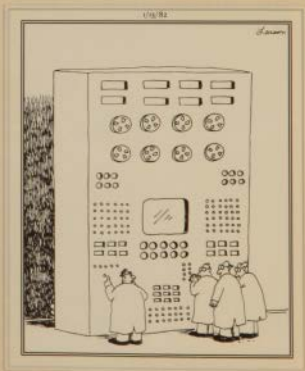




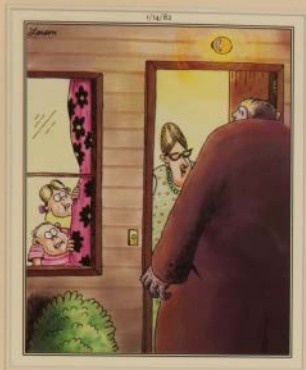
"Mrs. Harriet Schwartz? This is Zathu Nananga of the Masai. ... Are you missing a little boy, Mrs. Schwartz?"



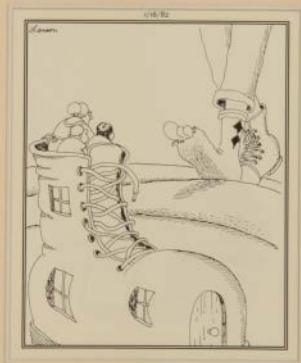
"I asked you a question, buddy. ... What's the square root of 5,248?"



"Wait a minute, gentlemen. ... Here's the 'on' switch over here."



"Why, yes ... we do have two children who won't eat their vegetables."





"This is just not effective. ... We need to get some chains."



"Hathunters!"



"I can't stand it. ... They're so cute when they sit like that."



Africa's deadliest game



"Hey, buddy ... you wanna buy a hoofed mammal?"



"Okay, so you're Grizzly Adams. ... Let's see some proof!"



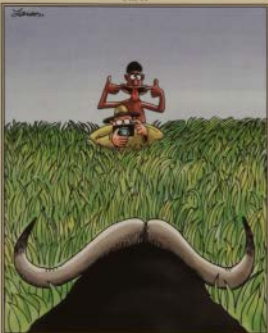
"Okay, Williams, we'll just vote. ... How many here say the heart has four chambers?"

1/26/82

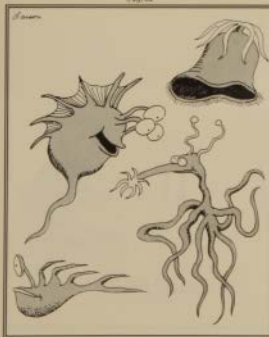


"These little ones are mice. ... These over here are hamsters. ... Ooh! This must be a gerbil!"

1/22/82

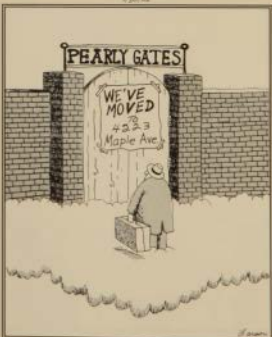


1/28/82



"Hey! Is that you, Arnie? ... Small petri dish!"

1/30/82





"Now wait just a minute here. ... How are we supposed to know you're the *real* Angel of Death?"



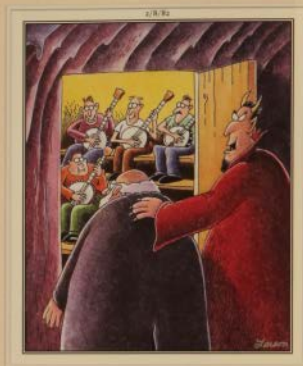
"Big one, Thag! ... We caught biiiiig one!"



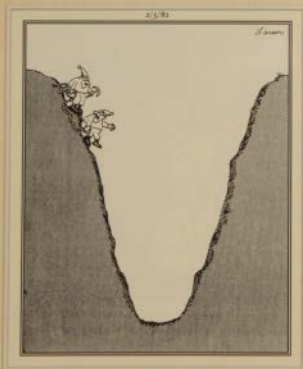
"Blast it, woman! ... Have you seen my reading glasses?"



"Millions of years old and they look as if they were laid yesterday!"



"Your room is right in here, Maestro."



"Because it's not there."



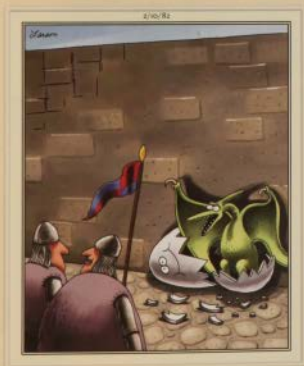
"Yes. Will you accept a collect call from a Mr. Aaaaaaaa?"



"Uh-oh, Gladys. ... Looks like your Sidney has had too much to drink again."



"Eaaaaaasy, Smithers! ... Eaaaaasy ... Oh please, oh please!"

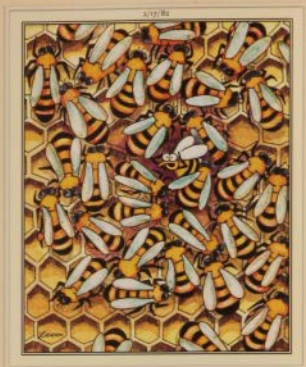


"Look. ... You wanna try putting him back together again?"





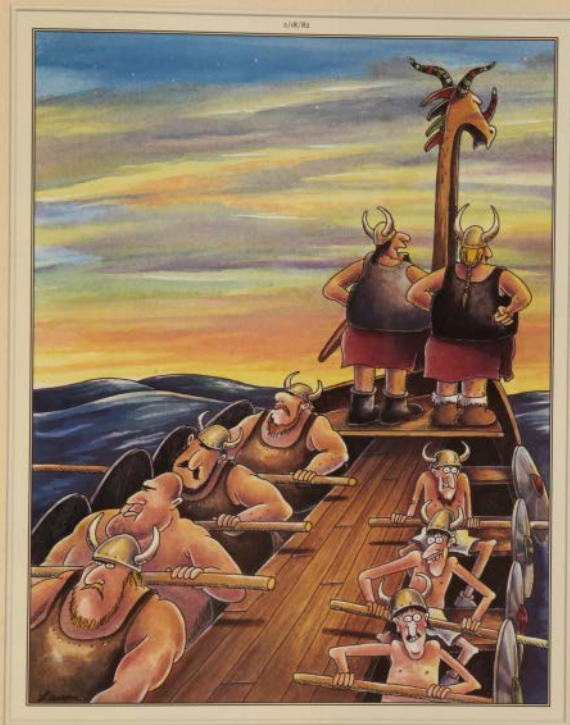
"You idiots! ... We'll never get that thing down the hole!"



"No more! No more! I can't take it! ... That incessant buzzing sound!"



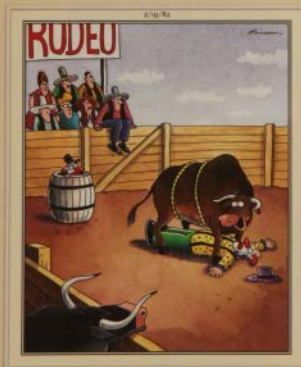
Great moments in evolution



"I've got it, too, Omar ... a strange feeling like we've just been going in circles."



Columbus discovers America.



"Hey! I got one! I got one!"





"Say ... I could go for something."



"Big Bob says he's getting tired of you saying he doesn't really exist."



"Me? I was charging on the right, when you suddenly went left, so I went left, and then you went right again, you idiot!"



"There! There! See it, Larry? ... It moved a little closer!"



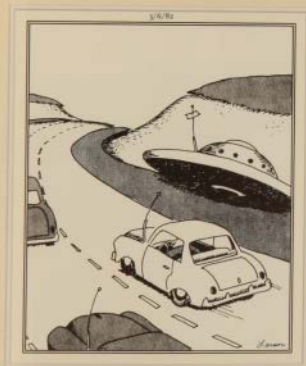
"Oh, wow! I can't believe this thing! ... Does my voice really sound that funny?"



"So, Andre! ... The king wants to know how you're coming with *St. George and the Dragon*."



"Look at that! ... Give me the good ol' days when a man carried a club, walked semi-erect, and had a brain the size of a walnut."



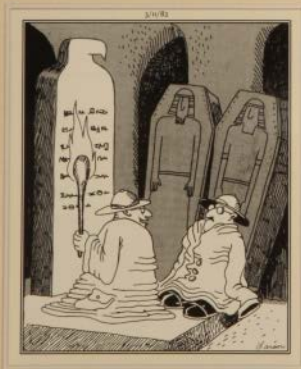
"FEEDING FRENZY!"



"My word, Walter! ... Sounded like a good-size bird just hit the window."



"And this little piggy went weee, weee, weee, weee ... but soon stopped struggling and was eaten."



"Ha! Check this out, Andrews. ... Seems there's some kind of ancient curse on those who defile this crypt."



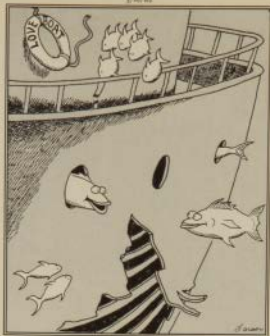
"Dang it! Doris! Hit the light! ... I think there's a mosquito after me!"

3/15/82



"Wait! Wait! ... Don't open that brand of beer!"

3/16/82



"Hey! Look in here! ... There's all kinds of cool movie cameras and junk!"

3/17/82



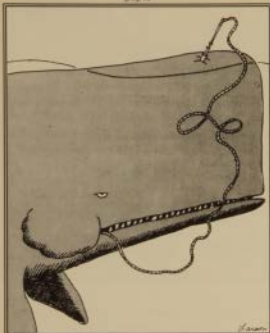
"Aphids! Aphids, Henry! ... Aphids are loose in the garden!"

3/18/82

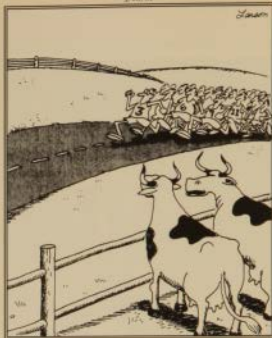


"I don't mean to be callous, Earl, but can I have your stereo?"

3/23/82



3/26/82



"I'd hate to be in a box canyon with those coming at me!"

3/24/82



"Now let me get this straight. ... We hired you to babysit the kids, and instead you cooked and ate them *both*?"

3/25/82



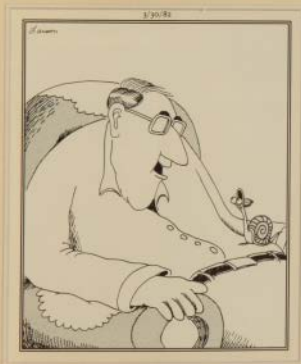
Grrrrr haruff! Arha raving
bah haff grargh woot woot?



"Be firm, Arnold. ... Let them in once and they'll expect it every time."



First encounters



"That's right, jimmy. ... One day your mother and I found you underneath a cabbage leaf."





"Now that constellation, Jimmy, is simply called 'The Big Dip.'





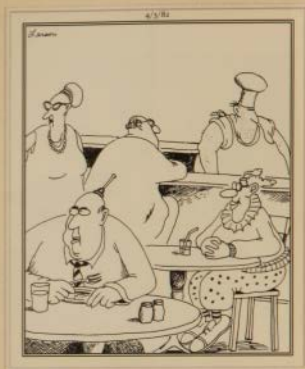
Los Angeles Times
Comics

I cannot understand the cleverness of this Gary Larson. Do these come from the inmates of prisons & are acid to him which he in turn sells (them) to you?

What lies behind these warped cartoons? I wish some one would clear their meaning (of them) to me.

To me they are a waste of space and are an insult to a L.A. Times reader who can find no reason for them in your newspaper.

R. E. Lewis



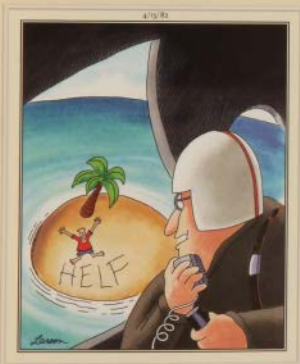
"So, Billy! Seems your father and I can never leave without you getting yourself into some kind of trouble!"



"What a lovely home, Edna! ... And look at the fresh newspaper, Stanley!"



Early stages of math anxiety



"Wait! Wait! Cancel that. ... I guess it says 'helf.'"





"For crying out loud! ... We were supposed to turn south after that last mountain range!"



"I found him in the park. ... I pulled a thorn from his foot and he just sort of followed me home."





"Sho I shez to her, 'Hey, look! I'm tired of livin' in this hole, diggin' dirt, and eatin' worms!'"



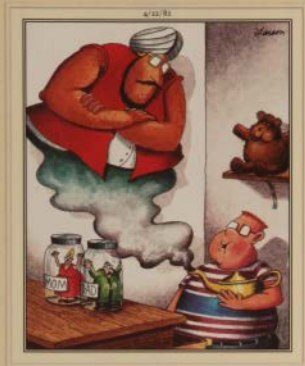
"I'm not telling you kids again! ... Stand on one leg, turn your head straight back, and go to sleep!"



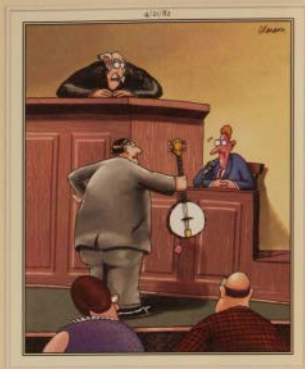
"Wouldn't you know it! ... A quiet day at the beach, and a real person shows up!"



"Quick! ... Run up and tell Him we found them!"



"Gee, whiz ... you mean I get a *third* wish, too?"



"So! You admit that this is, indeed, your banjo the police found at the scene, but you expect this jury to believe you were never in the kitchen with Dinah?"



"Oh, c'mon now. ... I know! Why don't you two go downstairs today and build a monster?"



"Are they gaining, Huxley?"



"Well, when it's my turn, I just hope I go quietly. ... You know—without a lot of running around."





"Excuse our excitement, Mr. Farnsworth, but your cries for help have afforded science a rare opportunity."



The volcano god of the Nerdesians



"What? ... You mean *no one* brought the buns?"



"ARMY ANTS!"



"See, Agnes? ... It's just Kevin."



"Sorry to bother you, Sylvia, but your Henry's over here and he's got my cat treed again."



"Say ... would you like to contribute to an endangered species?"



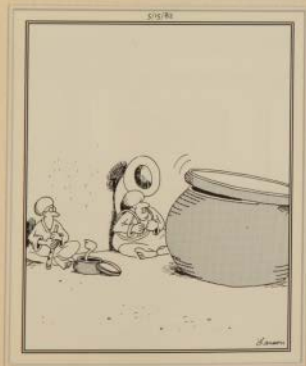
"No, he's not busy. ... In fact, that whole thing is just a myth."



"Uh-oh ... I think Bobby Joe went foraging in that direction."

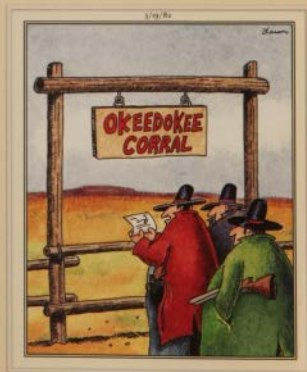


"By Jove! We've found it, Simmons! ... The Secret Elephant Playground!"

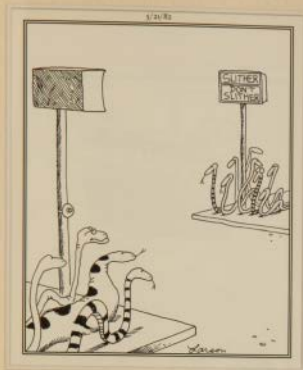




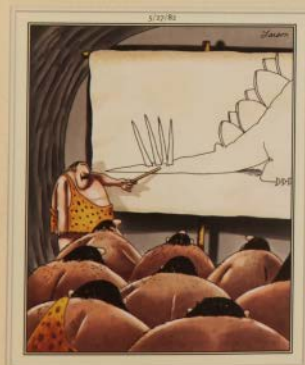
Never, never do this.



"Well, no wonder! ... This ain't the place."



Early Man



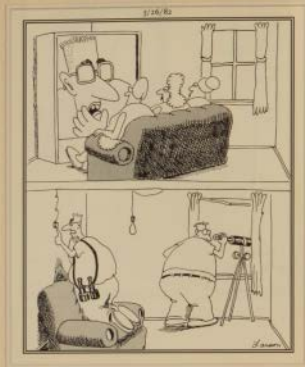
"Now, this end is called the thagomizer ... after the late Thag Simmons."



"On the other hand, gentlemen, what if we gave a war and everybody came?"



"Dirty, low-down skunk! ... I saw him slip that last card from his sleeve just before he yelled 'Fish!'"



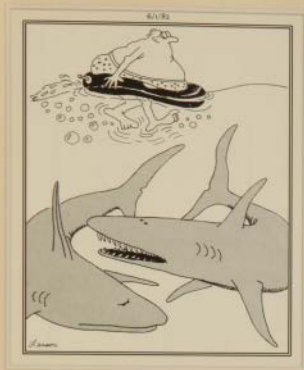
"Say, Carl ... forget the Hendersons for a second and come look at this thing."



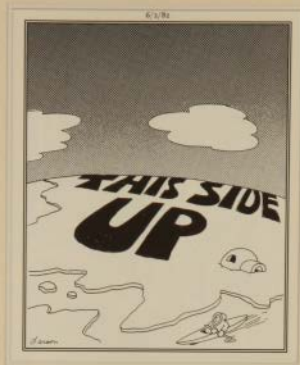
After 23 uneventful years at the zoo's snakehouse, curator Ernie Schwartz has a cumulative attack of the willies.



"Well, well ... seems we've found what's been causing that ringing sensation in your ear, Mr. Foley."



"I'm tempted, but it looks really high in cholesterol."



"Larry? Betty? ... Stand up, will ya? ... These are some friends of mine, folks, who flew all the way in from the dump."



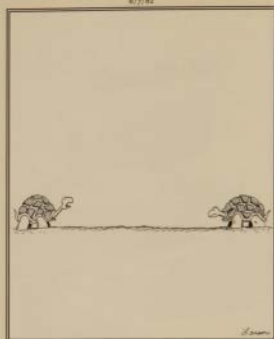
Dinnertime for the young Wright brothers

6/5/81



"Well, that should do it. ... When Mr. Warner comes around, make sure he gets all the ice cream he wants."

6/7/81



"This is it, Carl! ... We head straight at each other and the first one to veer off is 'chicken.'"

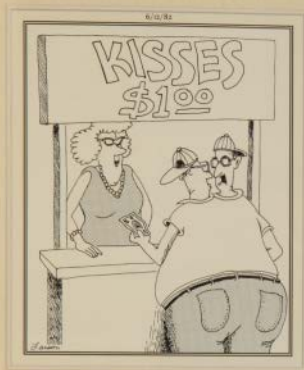
6/8/81



6/10/81



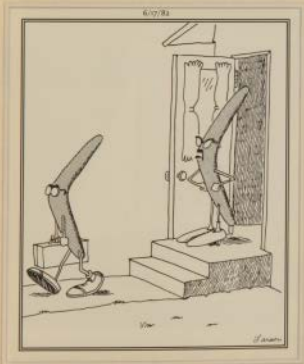
"I say it every time, 'Watch your head, Frank! Watch your head!'... But do you listen?"



"It's *my* turn, Randy! Or I warn you ... I'll start making weird sucking sounds again!"



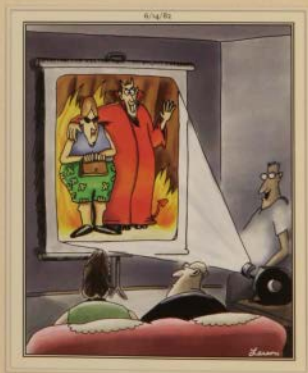
"Hold it right there, stranger. We got us a hat-check law in this town ... so just take it off *niiiiice* and slow."



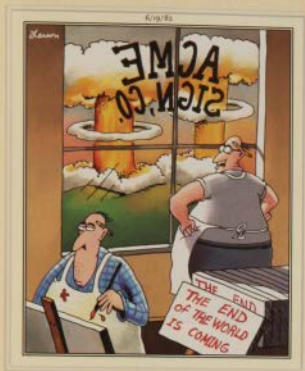
"Ha! Just like every time, you'll get about a hundred yards out, make a big arc, and start heading back."



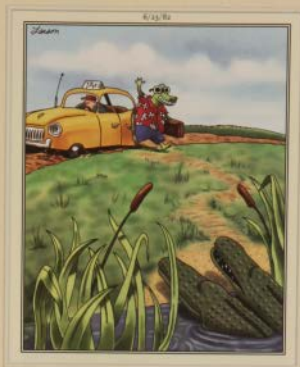
"Grunt, snort ... grunt grunt, snort ..."



"Oh. Now this is from last summer, when Helen and I went to hell and back."



"Well, wouldn't you know it! ... There goes our market for these things!"



"Well, for crying out loud! ... It's Uncle Irwin from the city sewer!"



6/21/82



"All right, Billy, you just go right ahead! ...
I've warned you enough times about
playing under the anvil tree!"

6/26/82



6/22/82



"Let's see ... I guess your brother's coming
over, too—better give it one more shake."

6/20/82



"For heaven's sake, Murray! ... We're
supposed to leave in five minutes
and you're not even drawn yet!"

6/28/82



"Well, well, King ... looks like the new neighbors have brought a friend for you, too."

6/29/82



"I'm sorry, Irwin. ... It's your breath. It's ... it's fresh and minty."

6/24/82



Left to right: Old Man Winter, River, and Higgins

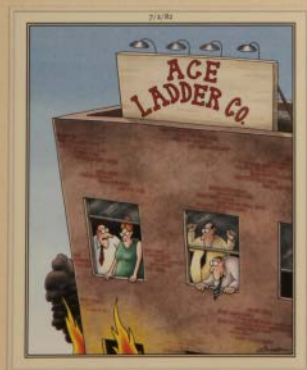
6/30/82



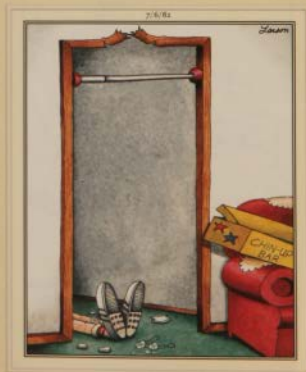
"I assume you're being facetious, Andrews. ... I distinctly yelled 'second!' before you did."



"Well, I dunno. ... Okay, sounds good to me."

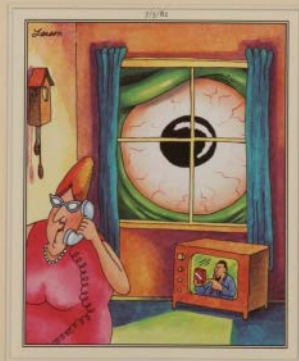


"Wait a minute! Say that again, Doris! ... You know, the part about 'if only we had some means of climbing down.'"





The African rhino: an animal with little or no sense of humor.



"Hello, Emily. This is Gladys Murphy up the street. Fine, thanks. ... Say, Emily, could you go to your window and describe what's in my front yard?"

7/6/82



"I'm sorry, but we haven't any room. ...
You'll have to sleep in the house."

7/9/82



"FOCUS! ... FOCUS!"

7/10/82



"No, no, no! Now, try it again! ... Remember,
this is our one and only ticket out of here!"

7/12/82



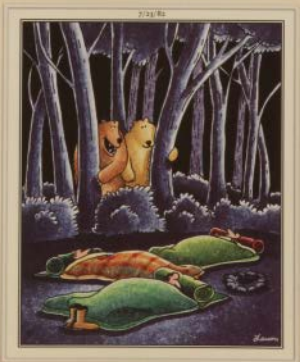
"Now don't you kids forget—stay away from
old Mr. Weatherby's place."



My dinner with Andy



"Oh, please, oh, please, Dad! ...
The little brown one!"



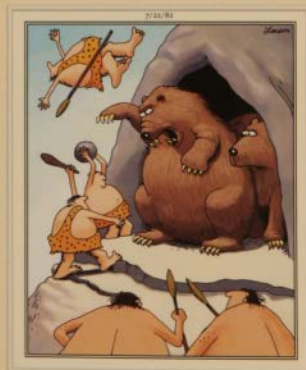
"Sandwiches!"



The duck relays



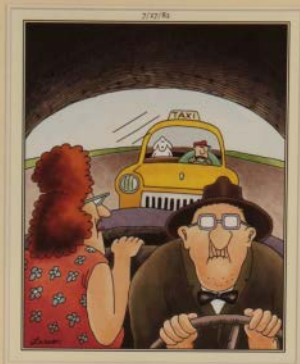
Young Jimmy Frankenstein



"Crimony! ... It seems like every summer there's more and more of these things around!"



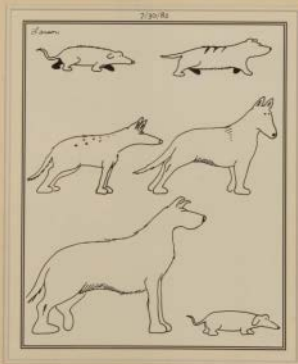
"Well, here they come. ... You locked the keys inside, you do the talkin'."



"Blast it, Henry! ... I think the dog is following us."



Historic note: Until his life's destiny was further clarified, Robin Hood spent several years robbing from the rich and giving to the porcupines.



Evolution of the dog



"DOWN IN FRONT! ... SIT DOWN! ...
SIT DOWN!"



In the days before television



Late at night, and without permission, Reuben
would often enter the nursery and conduct
experiments in static electricity.





"Just jump, fool! ... You don't have to go, 'Boing, boing, boing!'"



"General! Quick! Look! ... Henderson is doing it again!"



"Excuse me, but the others sent me up here to ask you to please not roll around so much."



"Say ... now I'm starting to feel kinda warm!"



"Step on it, Arnold! STEP ON IT!"



"Heeeeeeere, yakity yak yak yak! ...
Come, come, yakity yak yak yak!"



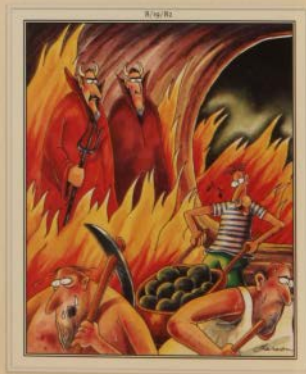
Professor E. F. Gizmo and some of
his many inventions



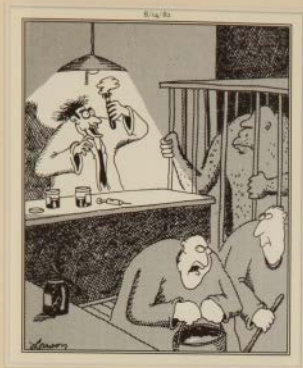
Loch Ness mobsters



"I say fifty, maybe a hundred horses. ...
What you say, Red Eagle?"



"You know, we're just not reaching that guy."



"Somethin's in the air, Carl. ... The doc's gettin' that old twinkle in his eye again."



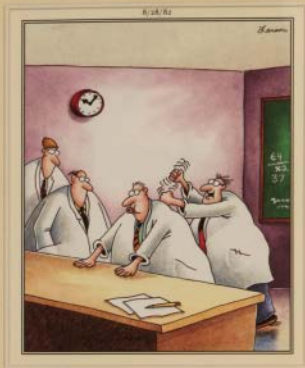
Inevitably, their affair ended: Howard worried excessively about what the pack would think, and Agnes simply ate the flowers.



"THE GOLDEN ARCHES! ... THE GOLDEN ARCHES GOT ME!"



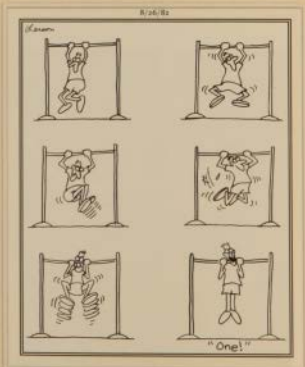
"Look! Look, gentlemen! Purple mountains!
Spacious skies! Fruited plains! ...
Is someone writing this down?"

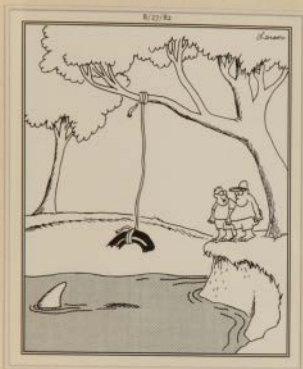


"And notice, gentlemen, the faster I go, the
more Simmons sounds like a motorboat."



"And now there go the Wilsons! ... Seems
like everyone's evolving except us!"





"Listen ... you go tell Billy's mother, and I'll start looking for another old tire."

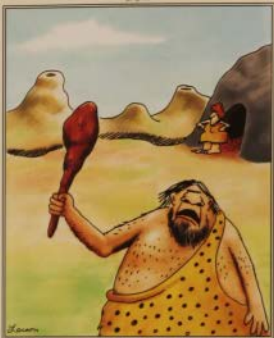


Things that go bump in the night



"Mom! Dad! ... The nose fairy left me a whole quarter!"

9/4/81



"Do you know me? I have to deal with lions, wolves, and saber-toothed tigers. That's why I carry one of these."

9/7/81



"Uh-oh, Lorraine ... someone seems to be checking you out."

9/7/81



"Hey! Hey, you idiots! The train has stopped! ... Come on down from there!"

9/7/81





The embarrassment of "morning face"



"Good heavens, Stuart! ... We're definitely going to need the net!"



Nature's subtle signs of danger





"Now here comes the barbaric finale."



"Now you've got him, Vinnie!"



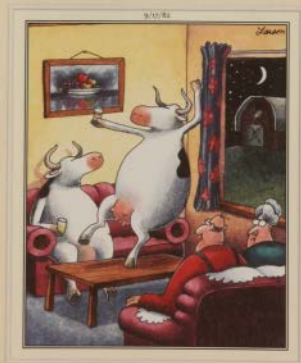
"FREEZE! ... Okay, now ... who's the brains of this outfit?"



"YEEEEHAAAAAAAAA!"



"The fool! ... He's on the keyboard!"



"Satisfied? ... I warned you not to invite the cows in for a few drinks."



"So, Mr. Fenton ... let's begin with your mother."



"Well, Emily is out like a light. ... Just can't resist pulling that little stunt of yours, can you, Earl?"



And then, from across the room, their eyes met.



"Shhhh, Zog! ... Here come one now!"

9/18/82

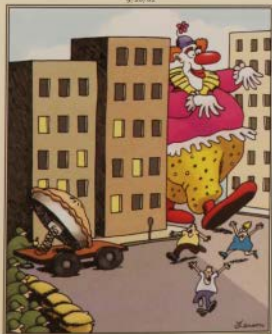


9/23/82



"Late again! ... This better be good!"

9/24/82



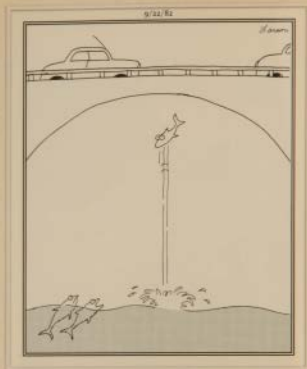
9/29/82



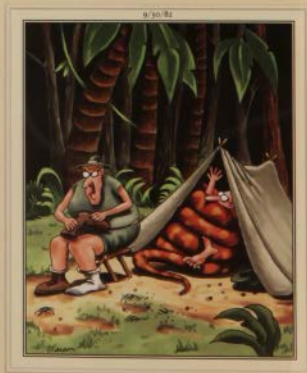
"Now take them big birds, Barnaby. ...
Never eat a thing ... just sit and stare."



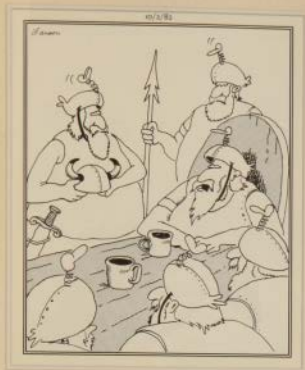
"Verrrrrry good, Ernie!"



"We're too late! ... He jumped!"



"AAAAAAAAA! MURRAY! ... A spider was in my shoe!"



"Now, on to other business ...
Bjorn Jorgensen here has a new
helmet design to show us!"



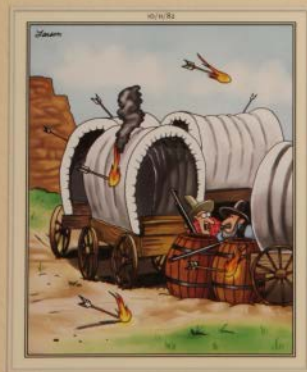
"Knock it off, I said! ... This is a still life!"



"Oooooooooooooooooo!"



"Ha! The idiots spelled 'surrender'
with only one 'r'!"



"Hey! They're lighting their arrows! ...
Can they do that?"



"This is your side of the family, you realize."



"For heaven's sake, Andrew! ... You're not going to plug that horrible thing in, are you?"



"Raaaaaaaaaaxphoooooooooorg!"



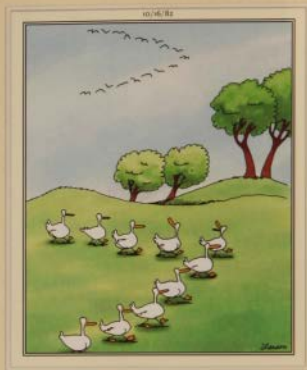
"Hang on, Betty. ... Someone's bound to see us eventually."



"Blasted recoil unit!"



Where parakeets come from



"Say ... look what *they're* doing."

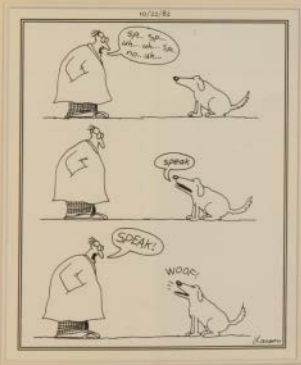




"RUB HIS BELLY, ERNIE! RUB HIS BELLY!"



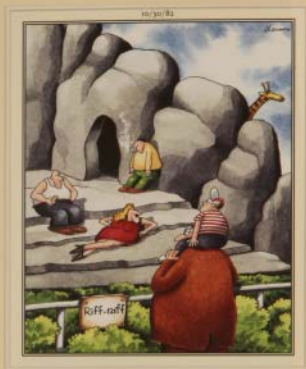
"Shhhhhh ... I wanna surprise the kids."



"Well, I guess both Warren and the cat are okay. ... But thank goodness for the Heimlich maneuver!"



"Let's see—mosquitoes, gnats, flies, ants ... what the? ... Those jerks! We didn't order stinkbugs on this thing!"



"Now, don't forget, Gorok! ... This time punch some holes in the lid!"

The Lexington Leader, Lexington, Ky., Monday, November 8, 1982

Comic too far out for 'Far Side' fans

By JODY JAFFE
Single-Header Newspaper

Cow says? It didn't make much sense to a lot of people.

Chronicle Features, the syndicate that handles Gary Larson and his Far Side cartoons was deluged with calls after his cartoon captioned "Cow Tools," his invertebrates across the country. Editors and readers were begging for an explanation.

"This cartoon did not appear in The Leader, one of 77 papers in the U.S. and Canada which carry the Far Side. Leader editor Steve Wilson said another Far Side cartoon was used in its place "because we didn't understand the joke."

"The phone never stopped ringing for two days," said Chronicle Features general manager Stuart Duddo, between chuckles about the whole mess. Duddo said he got the joke right off.

"It didn't seem like the greatest joke that Gary had made," Duddo said. "Those who didn't get it were searching for far-fetched explanations. Further than Gary's wisest thoughts."

But that's not the worst of it. Larson's own mother, Dora, didn't get the joke.

"She said, 'Dear, I don't think I quite understood this one,'" Larson said in a telephone interview from his home in Seattle. (Dora Larson, according to her son, understands most of his off-beat jokes, "except

for these occasional slip-ups.")

After countless explanations to countless Far Side fans, Duddo decided to go public with the punchline. For the first time in Chronicle Features history, it went out letters of explanation by the cartoonist to all 77 newspapers that carry Larson's daily cartoon.

"This cartoon was meant as an exercise in silliness," Larson wrote.

"I've never met a cow who could make tools, but if I had, I feel sure that its efforts would lack something in sophistication and would resemble the crude specimens shown in the cartoon."

That's it, folks, the punchline: If cows could build tools, these are the kind they'd build.

For those who want further explanation, read on. Larson came up with the joke after remembering a definition of mankind, one of the things that separates humans from animals is that humans can build tools.

"I started thinking of well-cows," said Larson, who at one time worked at a humane society. "I like cows. I just think there's almost something intrinsically humorous about them. I even just like the name 'cow'."

"I thought obviously cows don't make tools, but if they did, they would look like this. At the time I thought it was hysterical—Wrong."

10/28/82



Cow tools

10/29/82



10/27/82



"Stop the swing! I'm getting sick! Stop the swing! Oongowa! Oongowa!"



"Arnold, it's Mr. Wimberly on the phone. ... He says the next time you buzz his house, he'll have his 12-gauge ready."



"Wait! Wait! Listen to me! ... We don't have to be just sheep!"



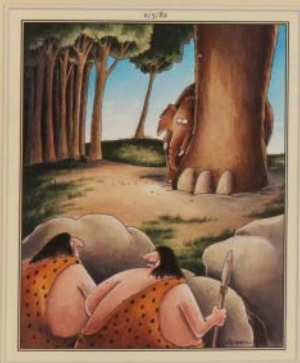
"Why ... yes ... thank ... you ... I ... would ... like ... a ... knuckle ... sandwich."



"Good heavens, Ronald! ... I think something just landed on the roof!"



"I'm sorry, Margaret, but it's time I spread my wings and said goodbye."



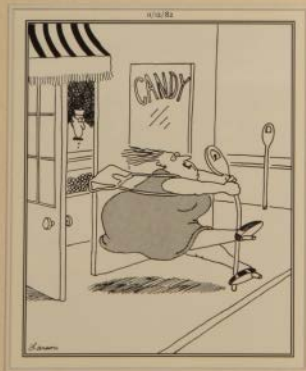
"Ha! We got him now!"



"I knew it! I just knew it. ... 'Shave and a Haircut' was a lousy secret knock."



"Oh! Is that so? ... Well, you've got a big mouth!"



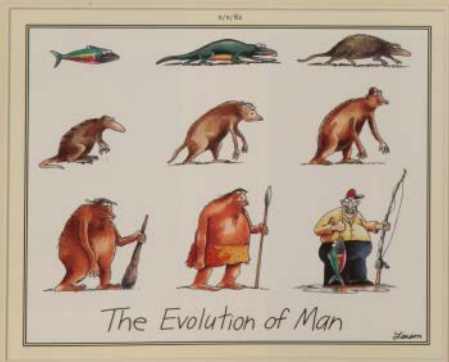
"Well, once again, here we are."



"Say ... wait just a dang minute, here. ...
We forgot the cattle!"



"I just don't like it, Al. ... Whenever Billy goes
outside, the new neighbors seem compelled
to watch every little thing he does."



11/16/82



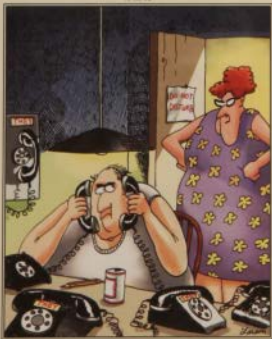
"'Looks like a trap,' I said. 'Nonsense,' you said. 'No one would set a trap way out here in the woods,' you said."

11/17/82



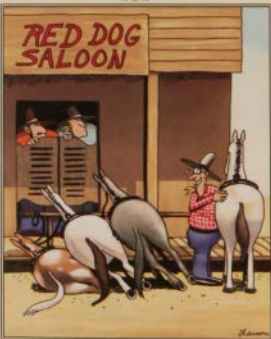
"Try to relax, ma'am. ... You say it was dark and you were alone in the house, when suddenly you felt a hand reaching from behind and ...
JOHNSON! KNOCK IT OFF!"

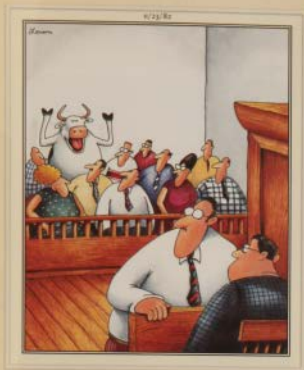
11/18/82



"You, Bernie Horowitz? ... So you're the 'they' in 'that's what they say?'"

11/19/82





"All right! All right! I confess! I did it! Yes!
That's right! The cow! Ha ha ha!
And I feel great!"



"Oh boy! ... It's dog food again!"



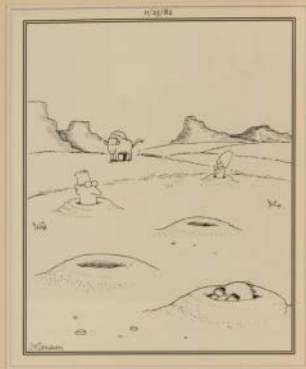
"I wonder if you could help me. ... I'm
looking for 523 West Cherry and ...
Oh! Wow! Déjà vu!"



"We're the Wilsons, bozo! ... What's it
say on the box?"



"He was magnificent! Just magnificent! And I almost had him!... I can't talk about it right now."



The rare and timid prairie people



"Well, you can just rebuild the fort later, Harold. ... Phyllis and Shirley are coming over and I'll need the cushions."

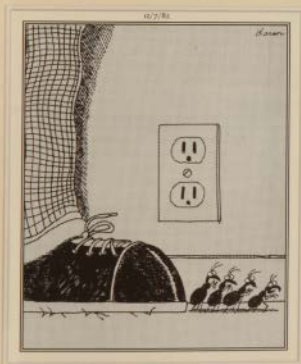




"THE CAPE, LARRY! GO FOR THE CAPE!"



"You boys got a bottle opener?"



"Shhh! Knock off that crunching noise! ...
Pass it on!"



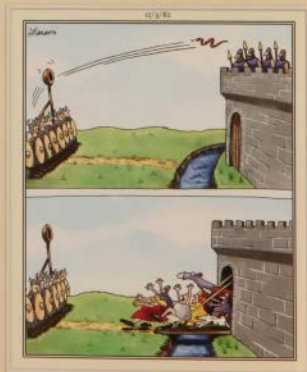
Jungle-wise characters



"See, Barbara? There's no one in here, no one outside. ...
I'll even open the drapes and have a look."



"Now wait a minute. ... He said two jerks
means 'more slack' and three meant
'come up' ... but he never said nothin'
about one long, steady pull."



History and the snake



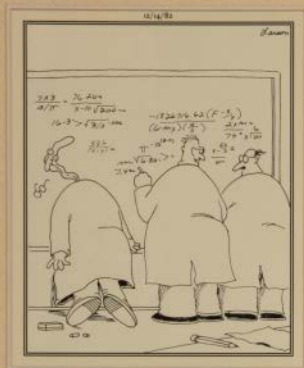
Car key gnomes



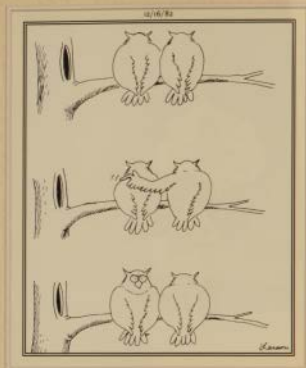
"Pull out, Betty! Pull out! ... You've hit an artery!"



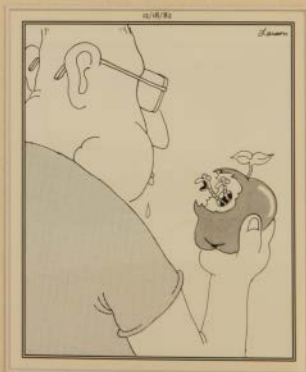
"Well, Zoron ... is this a close enough look for you?"



"Ha! Webster's blown his cerebral cortex."



"I'm not warning you again, Sparky! ... You chew with your mouth open!"



"Egad! ... It's got most of Uncle Jake!"



Edwin lived reclusively in his midtown apartment with his dog, Lola, whom he secretly loathed.

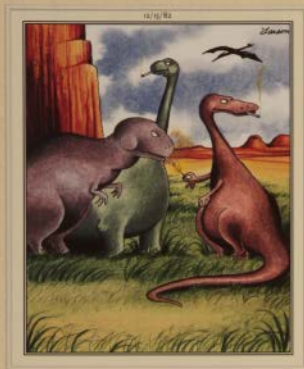


Metamorphosis



It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining, and Zog had just finished washing his new invention.





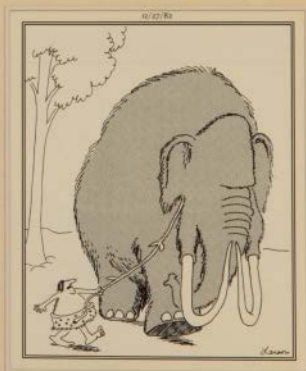
The real reason dinosaurs became extinct



"All right! Rusty's in the club!"



"Say, Thag ... wall of ice closer today?"



"Walkies! Walkies!"

12/28/81



Primitive peer pressure

12/30/81



"Well, for goodness sakes! ...
What is this thing?"

12/29/81



12/30/81



"Well, that does it for my tomatoes."



8

3



On Monsters

My childhood fear of monsters is a theme I've often explored. (Hell, you're looking at 1,272 pages of therapy, folks.) Under the bed, in the closet, up in the attic, the laundry room, that storage room at the end of the hall—monsters were everywhere in our house, lying in wait. Lying in wait for *me*.

But where they all came from, where these monsters all lived, was obviously one place: The Basement. I mean, all basements provide perfect conditions for any unnatural beast: dark, cold, drafty, lots of shadowy places to lurk—a complete monster ecosystem. All they needed was a little kid chow thrown to them now and then.

Now, in our house, the door to the basement was in the kitchen, and for some ungodly reason the light switch for the basement was controlled on the kitchen side. For a monster-fearing kid, especially one with an older brother who had obviously entered into some kind of evil pact with these same monsters in order to save his own skin, this was not a good thing.

One evening that I would like to forget, I was about halfway up the stairs, returning with some firewood. (Wouldn't it be nice if you could hear the sound track to your own life? At least you'd have a clue that danger was imminent.) And that's when it happened. With an audible click, the light switch went off and I was plunged into darkness. Welcome to nightfall in the Monster Serengeti.

I dropped the wood (the cacophony of which wrung out the last few drops that still remained in my adrenal gland) and scrambled blindly to the top of the stairs. There, my desperate hand finally found the doorknob. Locked, of course. (Did I mention the lock, also controlled from the kitchen side? Such a fun house to grow up in.) And then, in an eerie, lilting tone, my brother's voice could be heard from the other side: "It's coming for you, Gary! Do you hear it? It's cooominnnnng for youuuu!"

Just like the mother wildebeest, my own mother could always recognize the sound of one of her calves in distress. Soon she arrived, hooves flying, driving off the hyena (the laughing variety, as usual) and saving me from certain death at the hands of God-knows-what that was slowly ascending the stairs behind me.

Over the years, I can't help but think about how often people have asked me, "How do you come up with ideas?"

God, it is so easy.



For the time being, the monster wasn't in Ricky's closet. For the time being.



"See, Agnes? ... It's just Kevin."



"Now now, Billy. ... How could you have seen a monster if you can't even describe him?"



"I've got it again, Larry ... an eerie feeling like there's something on top of the bed."



"Uh-oh, Donny. Sounds like the monster in the basement has heard you crying again. ... Let's be reeeeeeal quiet and hope he goes away."



Things that go bump in the night.



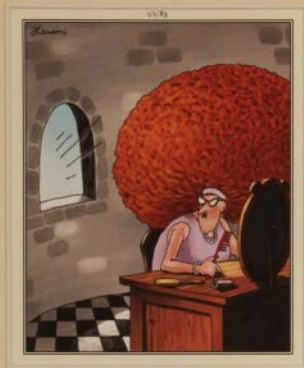
The nightly crisis of Todd's stomach vs. Todd's imagination.



"Shove off, buddy ... I've been working this neighborhood for years."



The monster snorkel: allows your child to breathe comfortably without exposing vulnerable parts to an attack.



"RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL! ... LET DOWN YOUR HAIR!"



No man is an island.



"That was incredible. No fur, claws, horns, antlers, or nothin' ... just soft and pink."



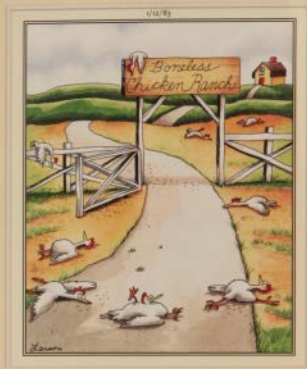
"Well, well ... looks like it's time for the old luggage test."



"Well, don't bring the filthy things in here, you imbecile! ... Take 'em down to the lake!"



"And see this ring right here, Jimmy? ... That's another time when the old fellow miraculously survived some big forest fire."



"Well, look who's here. ... God's gift to warthogs."



With a reverberating crash, Lulu's adventure on the tractor had come to an abrupt end.



"I ... could ... have ... sworn ... you ... said ... eleven ... steps."



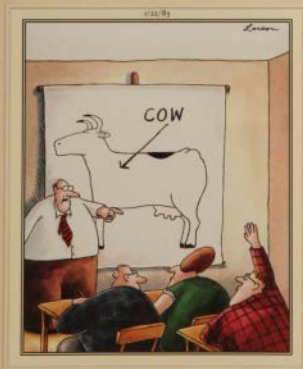
"For heaven's sake! Harold! Wake up!
We've got bed buffaloes!"



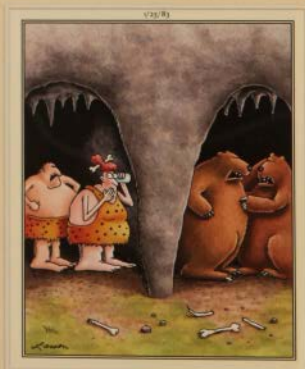
"Fool! This is an eleven-sixteenths. ... I asked for a five-eighths!"



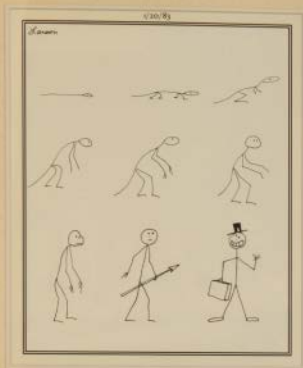
Mistakenly flying into the nose of a hurricane



"Yes ... I believe there's a question there in the back."



"There you go again! ... Every time the bears fight, you're right there!"

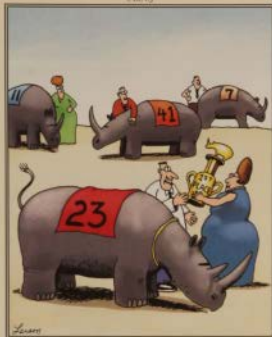


Evolution of the Stickman

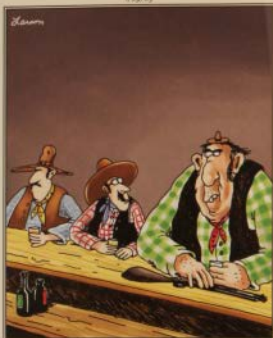


"Okay, here we go! Remember, wiggle those noses, stuff those cheeks, and act cute—and no smoking, Carl."

1/28/83



1/29/83



"Say ... now *there's* a little hat!"

1/30/83



"My project's ready for grading, Mr. Big Nose. ...
Hey! I'm talkin' to YOU, squidbrain!"



"Say ... what's a mountain goat doing way up here
in a cloud bank?"

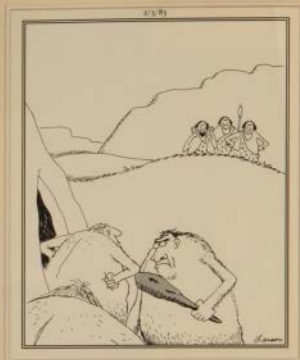


Harold would have been on his guard, but
he thought the old gypsy woman was
speaking figuratively.





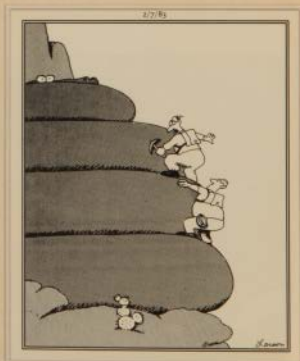
"You know? ... I think I'd like a salad."



"Neanderthals, Neanderthals! Can't make fire! Can't make spear! Nyah, nyah, nyah!"



Lewis and Clark meet Sylvia and Rhonda.



"Freeze, Earl! Freeze! ... Something rattled!"



Animals and their mating songs



"I don't like this, Wadsworth. ... Bob never should've been allowed out on the dance floor."



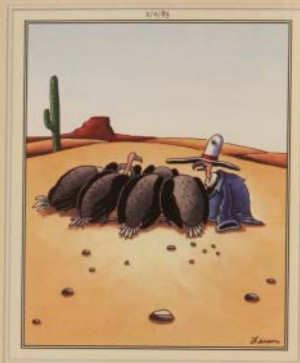
Brian has a rendezvous with destiny.



"Well, here comes Stanley now. ... Good heavens! What's he caught *this* time?"



Carl shoves Roger, Roger shoves Carl, and tempers rise.



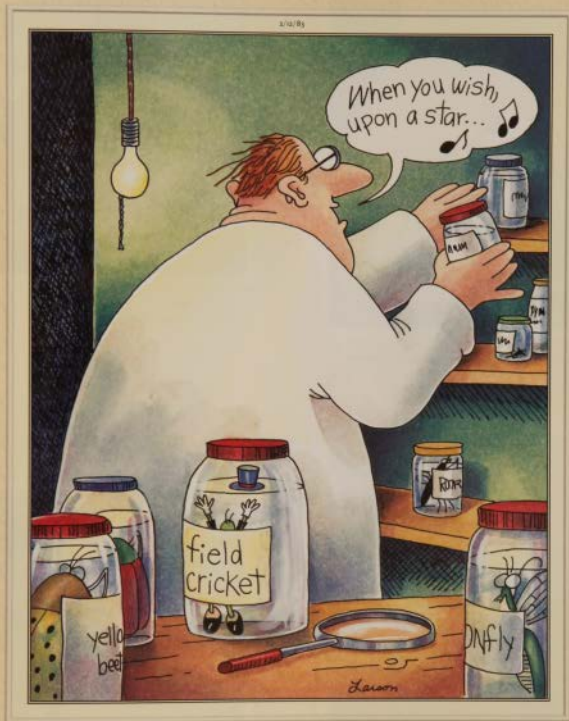
"Hey! Look at me, everybody! I'm a cowboy! ... Howdy, howdy, howdy!"



"Three wishes? Did I say three wishes? ... Shoot! I'll grant you *four* wishes."



"Again? Oh, all right. ... One warm, summer evening many years ago, I was basking on a stretch of Interstate 95 not far from here ..."





Sixty-five million years ago, when cows ruled the Earth



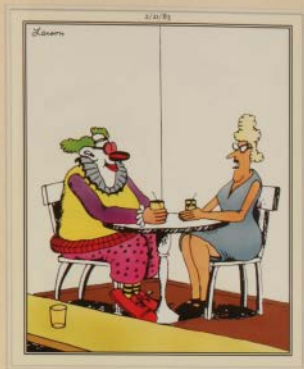
"What? ... They turned it into a WASTEBASKET?"



"Well, just look at you, Jimmy! ... Soaking wet, hair mussed up, shoes untied ... and take that horrible thing out of your mouth!"



"What did I say, Boris? ... These new uniforms are a crock!"



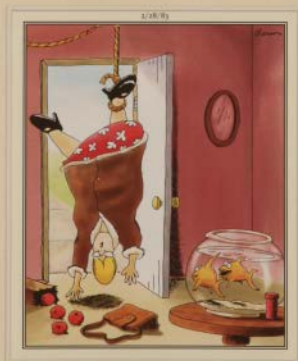
"And I like honesty in a relationship—I'm not into playing games."



Andrew is hesitant, remembering his fiasco with the car of straw.



"I'm leaving you, Charles ... and I'm taking the grubs with me."



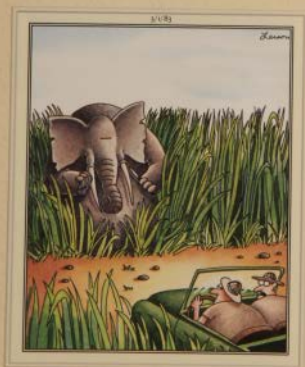
"It worked! It worked!"



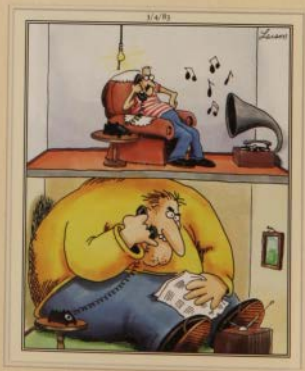
"Whoa! ... That *can't* be right!"



"Gesundheit."



"Not too close, Higgins. ... This one's got a knife."



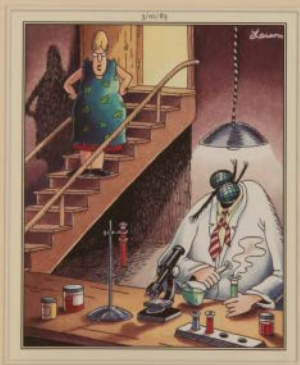
"Well, why don't you come up here and make me turn it down ... or do you just talk big, fella?"



"My word! I'd hate to be caught outside on a day like this!"



Night of the Robin



"Lunch is ready, Lawrence, and ... what? You're still a fly?"



Primitive man discovers tools.



"Okay! Now don't move, Andy! ... Here comes Mom!"



"Blast! Up to now, the rhino was one of my prime suspects."



Another great moment in evolution



Life in the petri dish





The Cyclops family at breakfast



"How cute, Earl. ... The kids have built a little fort in the backyard."



"I've got it again, Larry ... an eerie feeling like there's something on top of the bed."



Cow philosophy

3/2/83

Keaton



"It's true, Barbara. ... You're the first woman I've ever brought here."

3/2/83



3/2/83



3/2/83

Keaton



"Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"



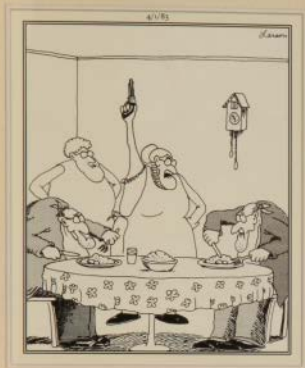
"Just pull it off and apologize, Cromwell ... or we'll go out in the hall and establish this pecking order once and for all!"



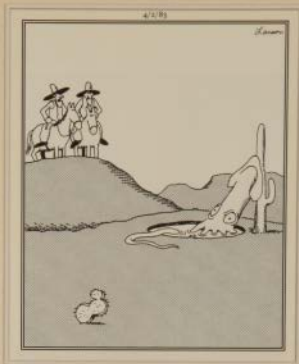
"You again!"



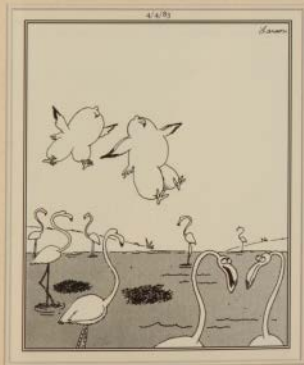
"Trim the bowl, you idiots! Trim the bowl!"



"Now listen up! You both know the rules, you've got equal portions, and we're going to settle this thing once and for all. ... On your mark ... get set ..."



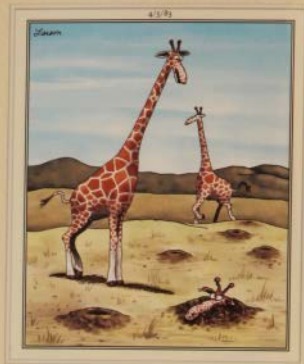
"Dang! Wouldn't ya know it? ... The only waterhole for a hundred miles, and dabsmack in the middle is a giant squid."



"Well, look who's here ... finesse on wings!"



"Kids! Kids! ... The slugs are back!"



"You've got to watch out for them gopher holes, Roger."



"This is it, Webster. ... We're onto the secret of migration."

4/16/83



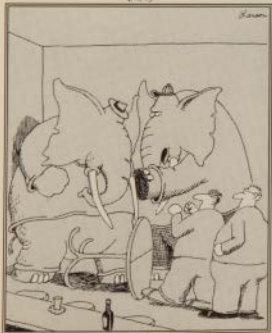
"Just a minute, young man! ... What are you taking from the jungle?"

4/30/83



"Whoa! ... Stuart blew his air sac!"

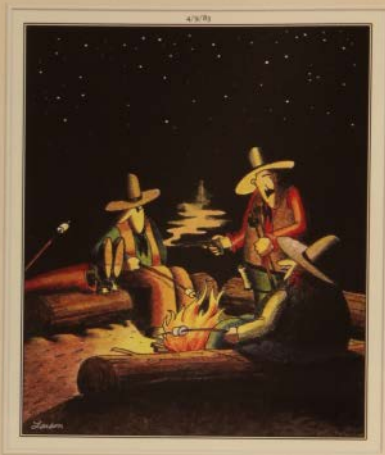
4/10/83



"Relax, Jerry! ... I'm sure he didn't know you were an elephant when he told that last joke!"

4/15/83





"You guys are both witnesses. ... He laughed when my marshmallow caught on fire."



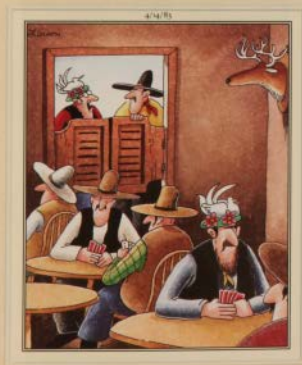
During the night, and as yet unbeknownst to Zelda, Phil had installed a volume knob.



Custer's first stand



"Calm down, Edna ... Yes, it's some giant, hideous insect ... but it could be some giant, hideous insect in need of help."



"I just can't go in there, Bart! ... Some feller in there and I are wearin' the same kind of hat!"



Suddenly, amidst all the confusion, Fifi seized the controls and saved the day.



"What a find, Williams! The fossilized footprint of a brachiosaurus! ... And a *Homo habilis* thrown in to boot!"

CREATED FOR THE STUDY OF SERVICIAL HUMANISM

April 25, 1983

Sentinel Star
P.O. Box 1120
Orlando, Fla 32802
THE FAX TIME
4151 GARY LARSON

Dear Mr. Larson:

I am somewhat puzzled by your cartoon appearing in the Sentinel Star on Monday, April 24th.

The implication seems to be that our archeological friends are more interested in their discovery than the fact that a poor human has been stepped on!

However, your cartoon does a disservice to the scientific community by promoting pseudo-science and a blatant disregard for historical accuracy.

The cohabitation of Brachiosaurus and *Homo Habilis* in the same time period is ludicrous since Brachiosaurus existed 70,000,000 years before *Homo Habilis* or any form even remotely resembling the human form came on the scene.

Surely, this is exactly what the "Creationist" would like us to believe; that evolution was a one-shot deal instead of a process that took place over billions of years.

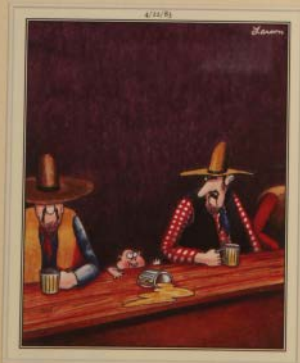
I would like to believe that you are very concerned for truth and historical accuracy in disseminating specific information to the public at large.

Your response to my concern is eagerly awaited.

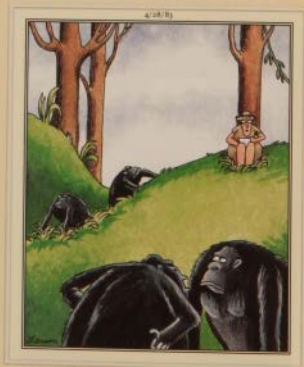
Sincerely yours,

Wesley F. Delgado
DIRECTOR

cc: Jeff Eberhart
Dart Sagan



"So! ... You must be the one they call 'The Kid.'"



"Don't shush me—and I don't care if she is writing in her little notebook; just tell me where you were last night!"



"It's Henderson again, sir. ... He always faints at the sight of yolk."



Continental drift whiplash



"By the way, we're playing cards with the Millers tonight, and Edna says if you promise not to use your X-ray vision, Warren promises not to bring his Kryptonite."





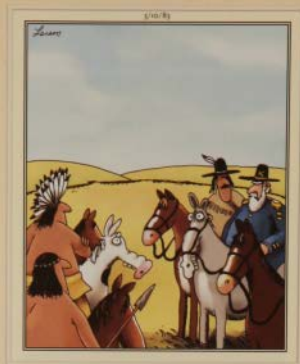
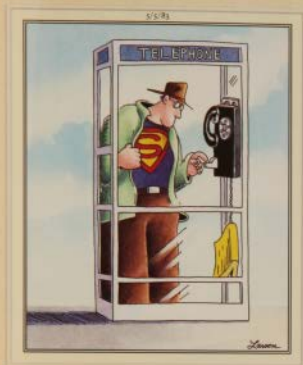
"Trapped like rodentia!"



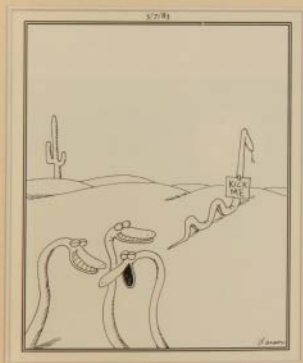
"Wouldn't you know it! ... And always just before a big date!"



"Hey! C'mon! Hold it! Hold it! ... Or someone's gonna get hurt!"



"Chief say, 'Oh yeah? ... *Your horse ugly.*'"





"The name is Bill ... Buffalo Bill."



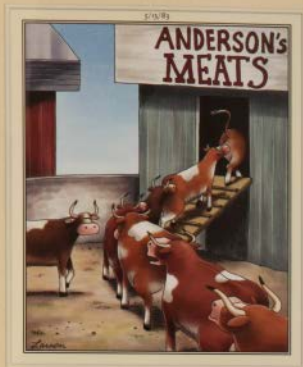
"Dang!"



"Go back sleep, Thag. ... You only dream we live just so long then die."



"And, if you squint your eyes just right, you can see the zork in the Earth."



"Hey! You! ... No cutting in!"



"Okay, okay, little Ahab. ... Which one is it going to be?"

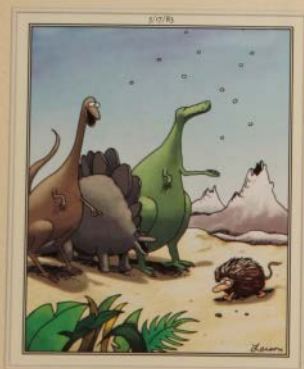


"Well, shoot ... I can never tell whether these things are done or not."





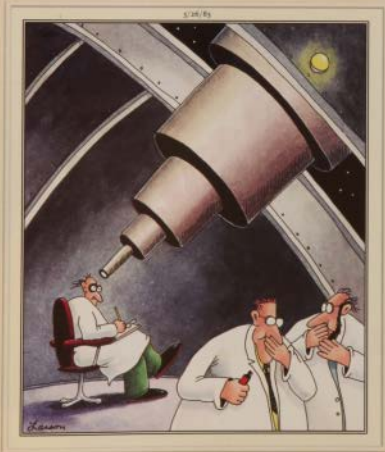
"And the murderer is ... THE BUTLER! Yes, the butler—who, I'm convinced, first gored the Colonel to death before trampling him to smithereens."



"I wouldn't do that, mister. ... Old Zeek's liable to fire that sucker up."



"Well, good heavens! I can't believe you men. ... I've got some rope!"

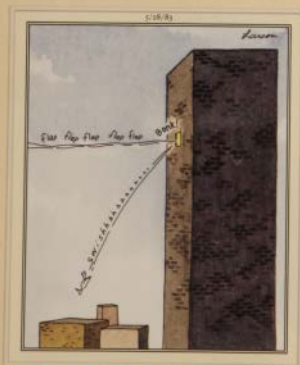




"Mmmmm. ... Nope ... nope. ... I don't like that at all. ... Too many legs."



"First!"



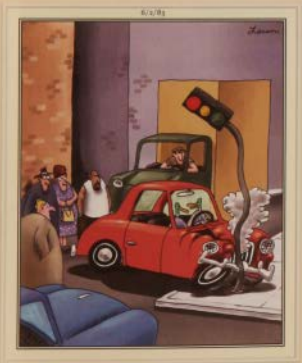
"Spiders, scorpions, and insecticides, oh my! ... Spiders, scorpions, and insecticides, oh my! ..."



"Oh, is that so? ... Well, if there's anything I hate worse than a big, stupid carrot, it's a big, stupid banana!"



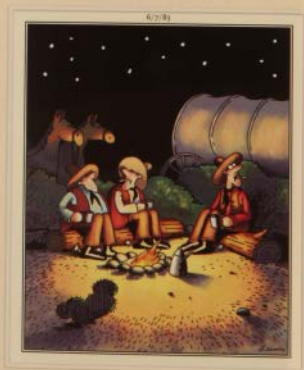
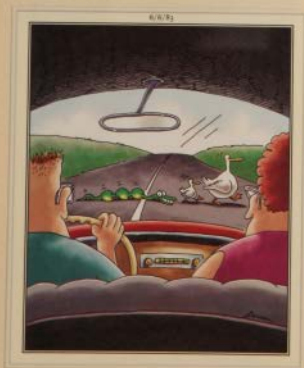
"What did I say, Alex? ... Every time we invite the Zombies over, we all end up just sitting around staring at each other."

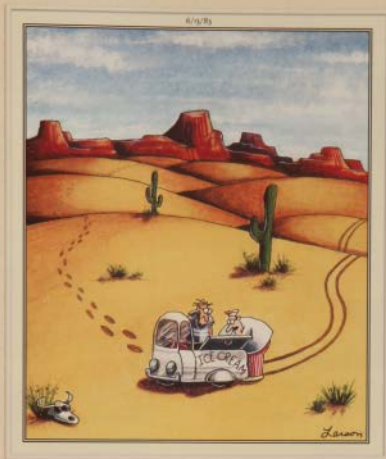


"Well, don't look at me, idiot! ... I said we should've flown!"

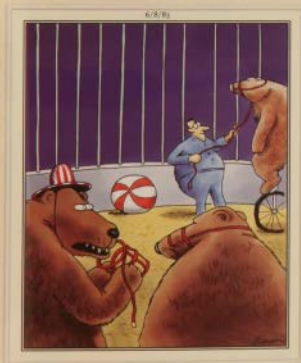


Stupid birds





"Let's see. ... No orange ... no root beer ... no fudgesickles. ... Well, for crying out loud! ... Am I out of everything?"



"Well, hey ... these things just snap right off."



"Take me to your stove? ... You idiot!
Give me that book!"



"Aha! ... My suspicions confirmed!"



"I said I wasn't interested. ... Now please remove your foot from the cave."



"Oh, that's Bernie Harrison from down the block. ... Bernie has lost his mind."



"Blast! The controls are jammed! ... We're headed straight for Mr. Sun!"

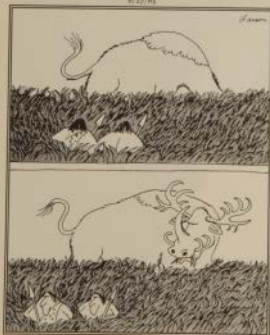
6/20/83



6/18/83



6/27/83



Primitive man's ability to reason

6/18/83



"What? ... Again?"

6/22/83



"Hang him, you idiots! Hang him! ...
'String him up' is a figure of speech!"

6/22/83



Ant games

6/29/83



6/30/83



"Auntie Em, Auntie Em! ... There's no place
like home! ... There's no place like home!"



"Now now, Billy. ... How could you have seen a monster if you can't even describe him?"



"Sally, this is Larry and his brother, Eddie. ... Larry used to be an only child until the gardener hacked him in half."



Obscene duck call



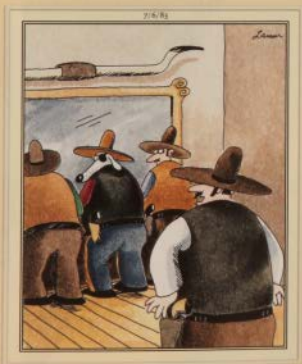
"Wait a minute! Isn't anyone here a real sheep?"



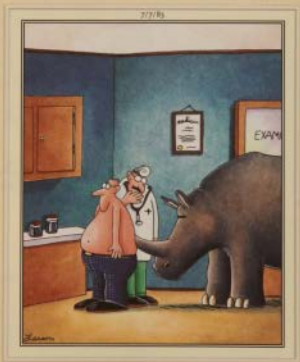
"Oo! Watch out! ... The walls are pointy!"



"Darlene is going with some new guy. ...
And he's got a shell."



"Okay ... which of you is the one they call
'Old-One-Eyed-Dog-Face'?"



"Wait a minute here, Mr. Crumbley. ...
Maybe it isn't kidney stones after all."



"So, Professor Jenkins! ... My old nemesis! ... We meet again, but this time the advantage is mine! Ha! Ha! Ha!"



"Blast! ... You raise a dog from a pup, and suddenly one day he turns out to be a chicken killer!"



"Whoa! ... Wrong room."



"This dangerous viper, known for its peculiar habit of tenaciously hanging from one's nose, is vividly colored.'... Oo! Murray! Look! ... Here's a picture of it!"





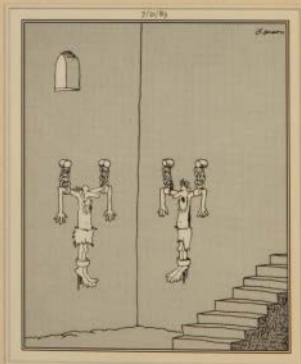
Suddenly, only a mile into the race, Ernie gets a nose cramp.



"Keep your rifle handy, Boswell. ... That wounded lion could be anywhere in this tall grass."



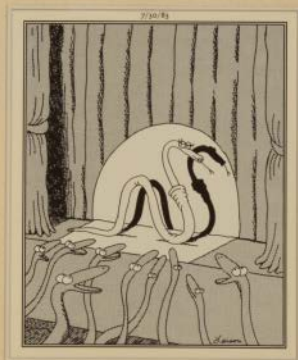
"Sorry, mister, but this is what we do to cattle rustlers in these parts."



"You idiot! ... Now this time wait for me to finish the first 'row row row your boat' before you come in!"



"Harold, you fool! ... The arrow goes the other way! ... WE'RE DOOMED!"



Primitive Man leaves the trees.

7/23/83

Laram



7/25/83



"Yes, yes, already, Warren! ... There is film in the camera!"

7/26/83

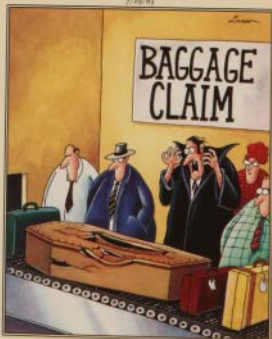
Laram



"I judge a man by the shoes he wears, Jerry."

7/29/83

Laram



8/1/83



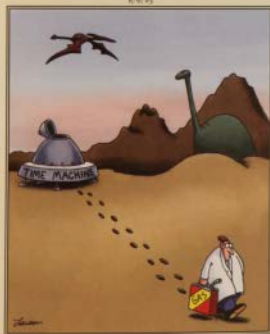
"Now this next slide, gentlemen, demonstrates the awesome power of our twenty megaton ... for crying out loud! Not again!"

8/3/83



"HALT! ... Okay! Johnson! Higgins! ... You both just swallow what you've got and knock off these water fights once and for all!"

8/6/83



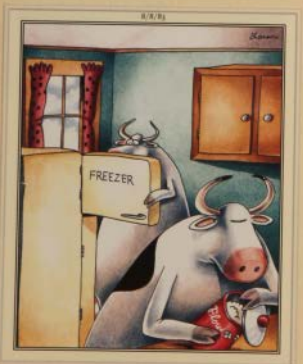
8/14/83



Never park your horse in a bad part of town.



"Fool! ... Give me those controls! ... You're just dang lucky both barn doors were open!"



While Farmer Brown was away, the cows got into the kitchen and were having the time of their lives—until Betsy's unwitting discovery.

August 8, 1983

Gary Larson
 Chronicle Features
 c/o Washington Post
 1150 15th St., NW
 Washington, DC 20071

Dear Mr. Larson:

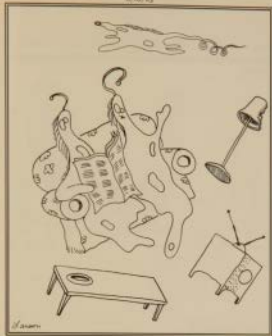
Please help us settle this minor family dispute. My son maintains that Betsy's unwitting discovery was finding steaks in the freezer. My husband and I believe that Betsy found Farmer Brown's supply of frozen bull semen.

Which of the above is the right answer - or, are they both wrong? Did you have something more delightful in mind? We'd be hardy bear to win for your sake.

Thank you for making our evenings a real pleasure. Your cartoons are weird, but delicious.

Sincerely,
 Janet A. Simmons

8/10/83



Things that live in a drop of water, and some of their furniture.

8/15/83

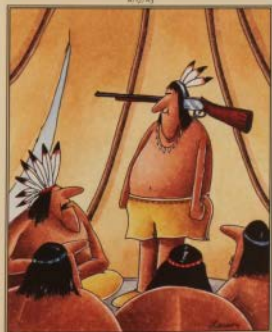


8/22/83

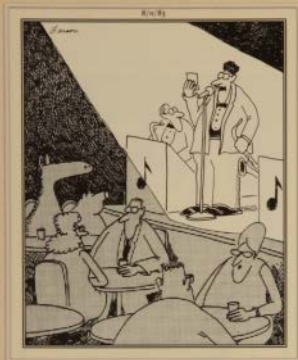


"And you call yourself an Indian!"

8/27/83



"Hey! Look at Red Bear! ... Waaaaait ... that not real!"



"What? ... Another request for 'Old McDonald'?"



"Blast! Caught in another tide pool! ... And here comes some damn beachcomber!"



On Oct. 23, 1927, three days after its invention, the first rubber band is tested.



"Wait! Spare me! ... I've got a wife, a home, and over a thousand eggs laid in the jelly!"



The Portrait of Dorian Gray and his dog



"Oh please, Mom! ... I've already handled him and now the mother won't take him back."



"Okay, now it's my turn. ... Bob want the cracker ... Bob want the cracker ..."



"Hey! What's going on here? ... We're losing the visual!"



"Good heavens, Charles! You're at it again! ...
And with my fresh sponge cake, I see!"



"Wow! Well, what happened next, Gramps—
after you found the cheese sitting on the
little block of wood?"



"Oh no! They're telling the story of
'The Hooked Hand'! ... I'll never get
to sleep tonight!"



8/27/83



8/29/83



8/30/83



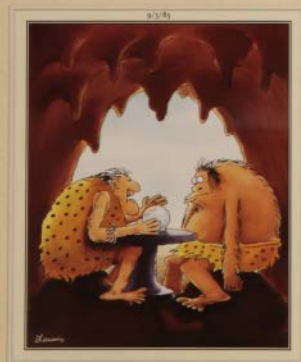
8/31/83



"Well, here comes Mr. Hunter and Gatherer with another useless treasure."



"I've heard all kinds of sounds from these things, but 'yabba dabba doo' was a new one to me."



"I see your little, petrified skull ... labeled and resting on a shelf somewhere."



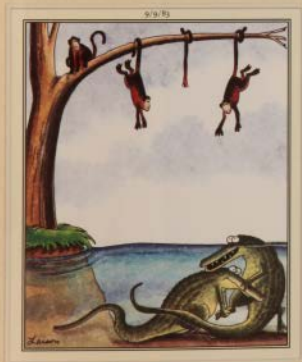
"Well, we're lost ... and it's probably just a matter of time before someone decides to shoot us."



Confucius at the office



"Boy, there's sure a lot of sharks around here, aren't there? ... Circling and circling ... THERE GOES ANOTHER ONE! ... Killers of the sea ... yes siree ..."



"Okay, here we go again ... one ... two ..."



"There! Quick, Larry! Look! ... Was I kidding? ... That sucker's longer than the boat!"



"Oo! Goldfish, everyone! Goldfish!"

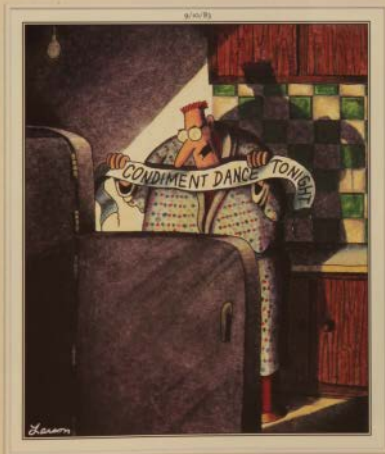




"Andrew! Fix Edgar's head! ... It's not facing the camera!"

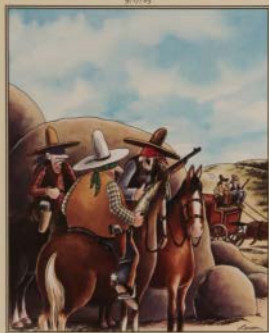


"I don't like this. ... The carnivores have been boozing it up at the punchbowl all night—drinking, looking around, drinking, looking around ..."



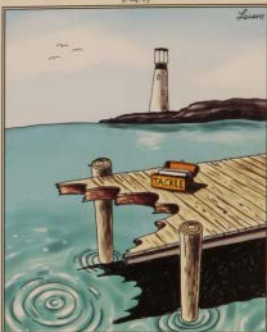
"I'll just take *this*, thank you! ... And knock off that music!"

9/17/83

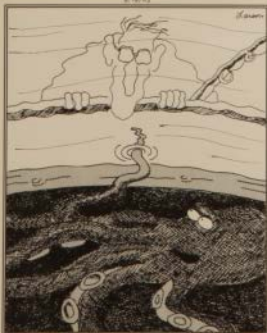


"Dang! This can't be right. ... I can hear the stage, but I can't see a blamed thing!"

9/14/83



9/16/83



9/22/83



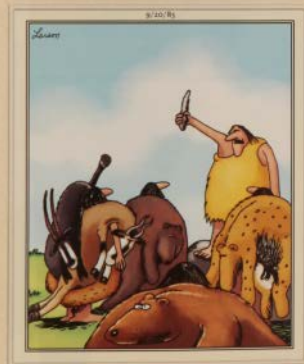
The frogs at home



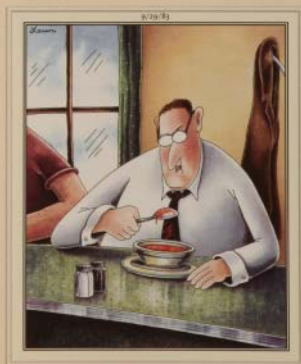
"Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock ..."



"Say ... you're not Bob! ... You look like him, but you're certainly not him!"



"Yes, with the amazing new 'knife,' you only have to wear the *skin* of those dead animals."



Darrell suspected someone had once again slipped him a trick spoon with the concave side reversed.



"So, Foster! That's how you want it, huh? ...
Then take THIS!"



With Roger out of the way, it was Sidney's
big chance.



Beware the elephant in tall grass.



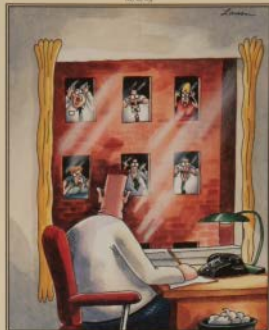
"My reflection? Look at yours, Randy. ...
You look like some big, fat swamp thing."

10/7/83



"You call that mowin' the lawn? ... Bad dog! ...
No biscuit! ... Bad dog!"

10/6/83



10/1/83



Charles wanders into a herd of dirt buffaloes.

10/2/83



"My turn? ... Well, I'm originally from the
shores of the upper Nile and ... saaaaaaay ...
did anyone ever tell you your pupils are round?"



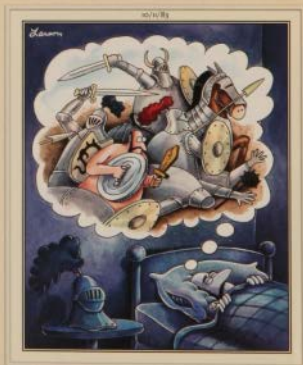
"I presume you're Dr. Livingstone. ... I mean ...
presumably, you're Dr. Livingstone. ...
No wait. ... Dang! I've screwed it up!"



Primitive fandango



"Look out, Larry! ... That retriever has
finally found you!"



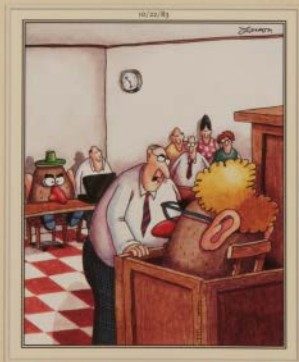
Common medieval nightmare



"Saaaaay. ... I think I smell perfume! ...
You haven't been over at the
Leopard Woman's, have you?"



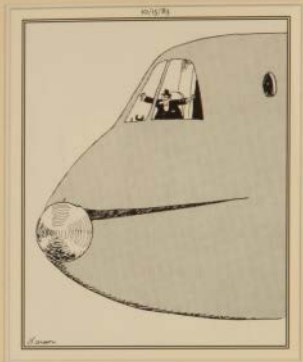
Clayton frequently watched the monsters, until
the night he knocked over the garbage can
and was subsequently eaten.



"So now tell the court, if you will, Mrs. Potato
Head, exactly what transpired on the night your
husband chased you with the Veg-o-matic."



"Well, Captain Grunfield, it says here you were expelled from the belly of a large squid after ... ha ... after your boat ... ha ha ... after ... ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! ..."



"Dang! ... Who ate the middle out of the daddy longlegs?"



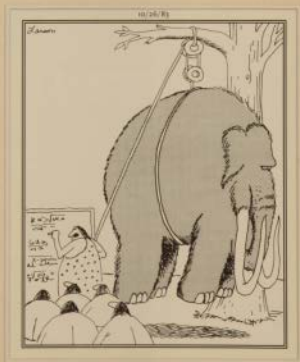
"Well, I'll be darned. ... I guess he does have a license to do that."



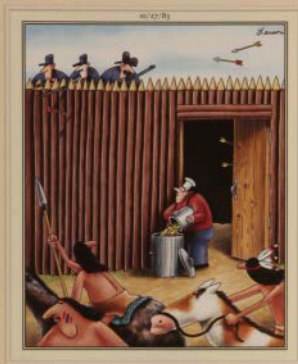
"Kemosabe! ... The music's starting!
The music's starting!"



"So then, when the bank doors open, we ...
Louie! You jerk! ... Your hat brim is up!"



Early physics



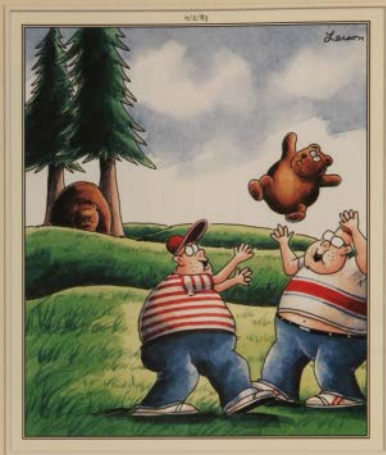
"FLETCHER, YOU FOOL! ...
THE GATE! THE GATE!"



"Here he comes, Earl. ... Remember, be gentle but
firm ... we are absolutely, positively, NOT
driving him south this winter."



Frances loved her little pets and dressed them differently every day.



And no one ever heard from the Anderson brothers again.

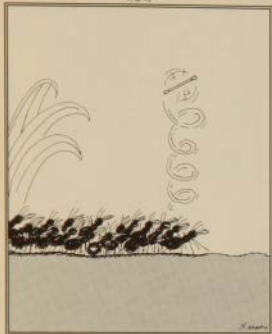


"Now, Grog! Throw! ... Throooooow! ... Throw throw throw throw throw throw! ..."



"So then Sheila says to Betty that Arnold told her what Harry was up to, but Betty told me she already heard it from Blanche, don't you know ..."

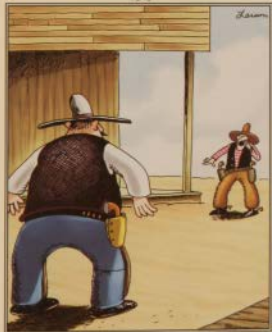
11/4/83



11/10/83



11/1/83

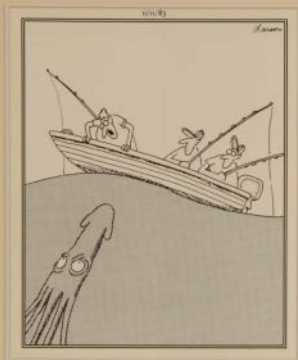


"SHOE'S UNTIED!"

11/7/83



"C'mon, c'mon, buddy! The heart! Hand over the heart! ... And you with the brains! ... Let's have 'em!"



"Look out, everyone! ... We're being attacked by a giant sq ... well, no ... I'd say medium squid!"



"Hey! You'll get a kick out of this, Bill and Ruth! ... Watch what Lola here does with her new squeeze doll!"



"Well, Bobby, it's not like you haven't been warned. ... No roughhousing under the hornets' nest!"



Museums of the future



"Somebody better run fetch the sheriff."



"If we pull this off, we'll eat like kings."



"Curses! ... How long does it take Igor to go out and bring back a simple little brain, anyway?"



"Okay, everyone, dig in ... and you kids watch for stingers."



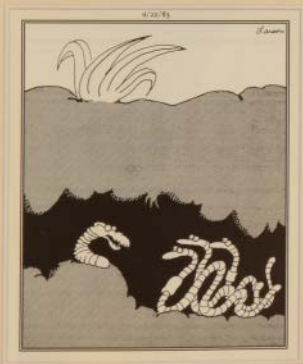
At the head of the train, Russell was first to notice the slide was out.



"Yes, they're all fools, gentlemen ... but the question remains, 'What kind of fools are they?'"



Early microscope



"So, there we were! ... Locked into this life and death tug-o'-war! ... Your grandma had one end of me, the bird had the other, but everyone went away satisfied."



"My word! ... That one came just too close for comfort, if you ask me."



Grog hesitated, not wanting to face his parents.



Tarzan of the Jungle, Nanook of the North, and Warren of the Wasteland



"Blast! This cinches it! ... If we ever find it again, I'm gonna bolt the sucker on!"



"Okay, this time Rex and Zeke will be the wolves, Fifi and Muffin will be the coyotes, and ... Listen! ... Here comes the deer!"



"I've had it, Doc! I've come all the way from Alabama with this danged thing on my knee!"



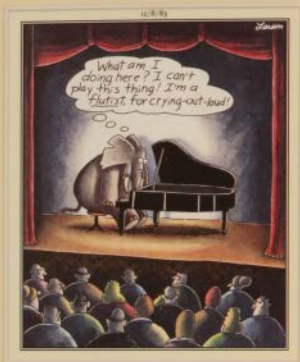
Psycho III



Last of the Mohicans



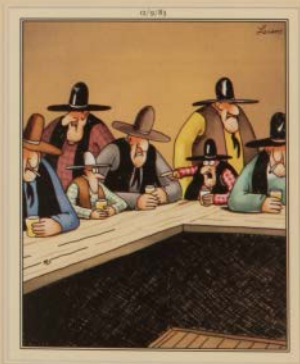
Games you can play with your cat.



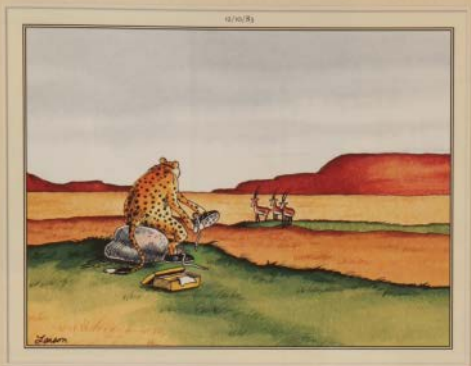
The elephant's nightmare



"I don't think I'll be able to tell the kids about this one."



"Hey! You! ... Yeah, that's right! I'm talkin' to YOU!"

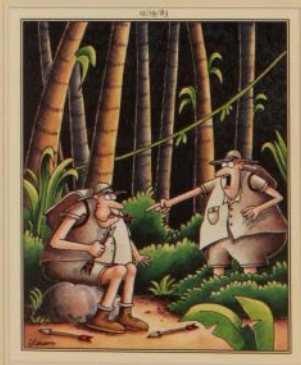
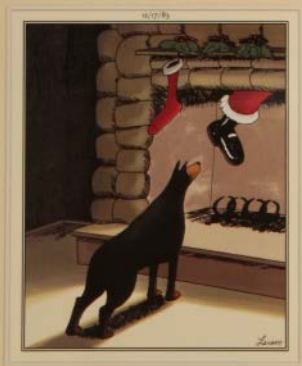




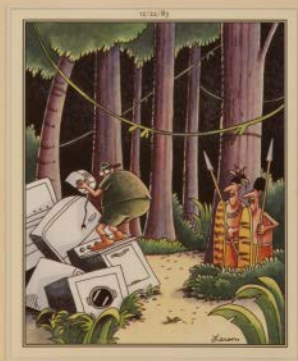
"Hold it right there, young man! ... Are you feeding the squid under the table again?"



"The first two gave me trouble, but not that little bear. ... I bagged him juuuuuuuust right."



"Oh my gosh, Andrew! Don't eat those! ... Those are poison arrows!"



Murray is caught desecrating the secret appliance burial grounds.

12/23/83



12/27/83



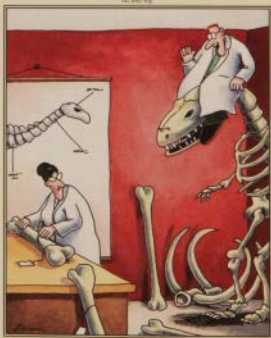
"Oh no, Elliott! Why? ... Why? ..."

12/14/83



"Ernie's a chicken, Ernie's a chicken ..."

12/26/83



"Hi ... Hi, Miss Collins."



"A one more time! ... HEY! I've been workin' on the railroad, all the live-long day, HEY! I've been ..."



Elephant skyways



"Wonderful! Just wonderful! ... So much for instilling them with a sense of awe."



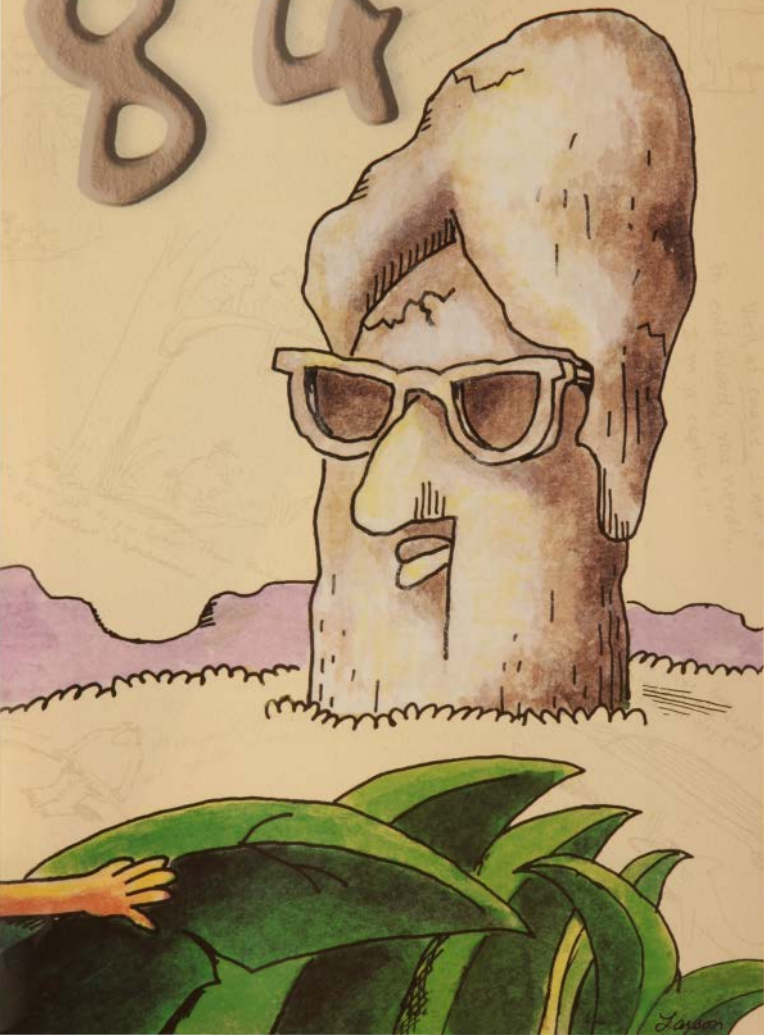
"Mom! Edgar's making that clicking sound again!"



19



84



Loren

A Bad Day in Cartoon Land

This is something I swore I would never reveal—ever. It was the worst day of my cartooning career—a day when I curled up into a fetal position on the floor of my studio (my usual reaction to adversity) and stayed there until the urge to die had passed.

I had promised myself I would never talk about this to anyone unless someone else brought it up. And no one ever did. (Actually, that's not true. A 12-year-old kid did ask me about it at a book signing, but he was easy to blow off.) In essence, I made it to the end of my career without ever being asked about the thing I had once thought would be my undoing. And oddly enough, 24 hours after my panic had been triggered, my book editor, with a single word, made my worst day ancient history.

It was 1984, and my publisher had been pumping out *Far Side* books with a who-knows-how-long-this-will-last fervor. I was never very keen on this process, as folks there were well aware, but they were the experts, not me. ("Momentum" was one of those words that got bandied around a lot.)

But the more tangible downside to this rush-to-print was the parallel rush to come up with new book titles and covers. I literally could get a phone call on Monday from someone in the production department telling me she needed a book title and a cover on Friday. And complicating the usual frenzy, once you've come out with a book called *The Far Side*, what's next? Hello to the following: *Beyond The Far Side*, *Valley of The Far Side*, *In Search of The Far Side*, *Hound of The Far Side*, *It Came from The Far Side*, and *Bride of The Far Side*. (Have I left any out?)

Somewhat better titles followed, I think, but for a while things were in a rut. My own idea of just numbering the books—*The Far Side #1*, *The Far Side #2*, and so on—horrified everyone and didn't get very far.

And so we come to *In Search of The Far Side*. Not a difficult cover and title to conceive, really. Just draw a couple of explorers who have hacked their way through the jungle and are gazing upon a giant stone carving in the image of a woman I often draw. Done.

A couple of months later, the book was printed, and I got a few advance copies. Always exciting. And the cover looked nice. (I drew it, an artist painted it, and you can see it on the previous page.) Then one evening a few friends came over, and there's my latest book to show off. It got passed around, until one person stopped, looked at the cover, and then sort of strangely looked up at me, and said, "Isn't this woman sort of, uh ... phallic-looking?" (DON'T LOOK AT IT!)

My God, that was a horrible evening. I grabbed the book and just stared at the cover. I'm thinking, I'm a dead man. I, Gary Larson, in my rush to meet a deadline, have drawn a gigantic penis on the cover of a book. (I SAID DON'T LOOK!)

I'm telling you, officially, *this was an accident!* Once the stone woman was painted in a contiguous gray, all her usual features blended into a single, uh, element. (Should I be blaming this on the artist?) It was just like I had imagined it, but here was a time when my imagination didn't quite get to the next level. The level of doom.

Enter Donna Martin, my main book editor. I called her the very next morning (early, and from my fetal position on the floor), letting her know the sky was about to fall. At the time, Donna was maybe in her early 50s, conservative-looking, professional, born and raised in America's heartland. Not what you'd call a flamboyant, devil-may-care kind of person. In fact, I wasn't even sure how to tell her what I had done, but somehow I got it out. *In Search of The Far Side*, I told her, had something on the cover that might be "mistaken" for something else. Specifically, Donna—a penis.

Donna was quiet. (I remember this very well.) I knew she was studying the cover. And then she said the one word I never expected, and its impact on me was unbelievable.

"So?"

That was it. In fact, she didn't even try to reassure me by saying something like, "Oh, Gary, people see what they wanna see." That response would probably have convinced me I *was* doomed. But Donna didn't veer from the issue in the slightest. With absolute calm in her voice, she matter-of-factly stated how cultures all over the world are rife with phallic imagery. Big deal, was her calm assessment. It was like, *C'mon, Gary—I thought you had some major concern to discuss. ... I got an office to run here!*

And that's the last time it was ever brought up, by me or anybody else. (Except for that 12-year-old kid.) Over the years, I sometimes wondered what was going on out there among the other people who bought the book, but I never worried about it again. I had my response ready. "Soooooo?" Man, what a great word.

On that day, the worst day of my cartooning life, that single word made every concern just vanish. And, to tell you the truth, I even like that cover. (BUT DON'T LOOK AT IT!)



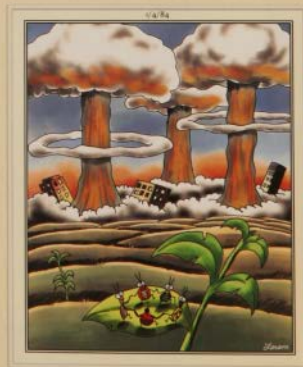
"And now—can dogs really talk? ... We found one who's willing to try, right after this message."

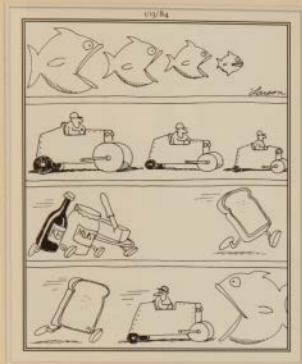


"Well, okay, Frank. ... Maybe it is just the wind."



Laboratory peer pressure





Various philosophies



"You know, Sid, I really like bananas. ... I mean, I know that's not profound or nothin'. ... Heck! We all do. ... But for me, I think it goes far beyond that."



"Listen ... I'm fed up with this 'weeding out the sick and the old' business. ... I want something in its prime."



"Say, there's something wrong here. ... We may have to move shortly."



"Now calm down, Barbara. ... We haven't looked everywhere yet, and an elephant can't hide in here forever."



"Whoa, Frank. ... Guess what youuuuuuuuu sat in!"



"What are you gonna tell your dad, Chuck?"



When clowns go bad



"Wait a minute! Just wait a minute! No need to worry. ... According to this, we're dealing with a rhino mimic!"



"Dang! ... Sorry, buddy."



"Calm down, everyone! I've had experience with this sort of thing before. ... Does someone have a hammer?"





"Dibs."



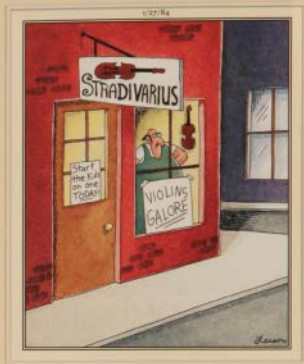
Confused by the loud drums, Roy is flushed into the net.



Water buffaloes



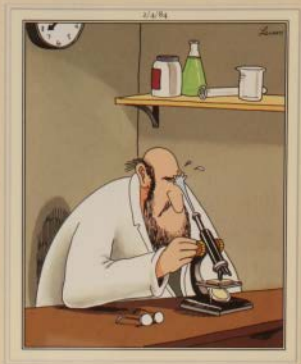
"Thunderstick? ... You actually said, 'Thunderstick'? ... That, my friend, is a Winchester thirty-aught-six."



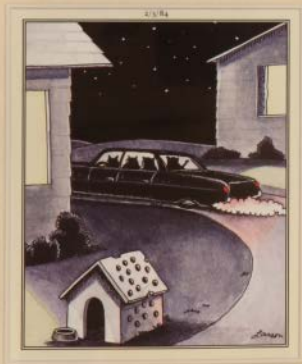
"For the one-hundredth time in as many days—I HAVEN'T GOT A QUARTER!"



"No, thank you ... I don't jump."



Paramecium humor



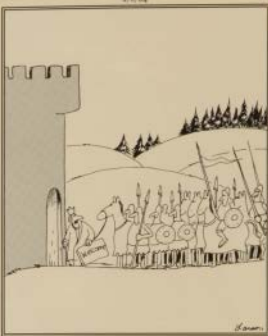
"Take another memo, Miss Wilkens. ... I want to see all reptile personnel in my office first thing tomorrow morning!"

2/1/84



"Irwin, you're nothing but a spineless, slimy, gelatinous blob. ... There, I've finally said it."

2/10/84



"Well, this is great. ... Some imbecile has taken the key from under the mat!"

2/2/84



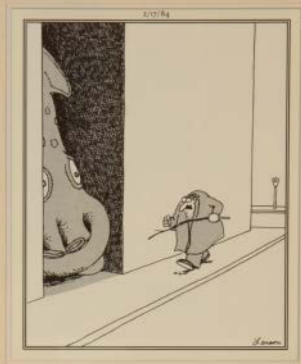
2/8/84



"Vernon! That light! ... The Jeffersons' dog is back!"



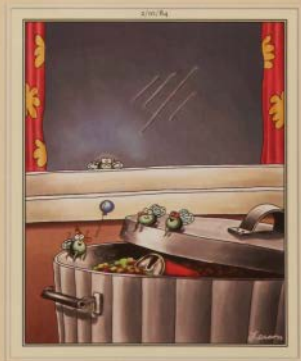
Cornered by the street ducks, Phil wasn't exactly sure what to do—and then he remembered his 12 gauge.



"I've had it! This time I've really had it! ... Jump the fence again, will he? ... Dang!"



Pet tricks on other planets



2/14/84



"Here's the last entry in Carlson's journal: 'Having won their confidence, tomorrow I shall test the humor of these giant but gentle primates with a simple joy-buzzer handshake.'"

2/16/84



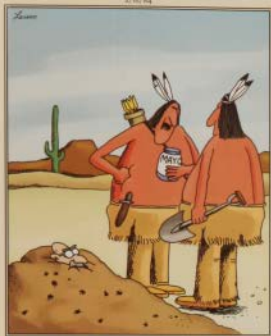
"It's back, Arnie! Okay—get the book! ... We're gonna settle whether it's an alligator or a crocodile once and for all!"

2/19/84



"Hold it right there, Charles! ... Not on our first date, you don't!"

2/16/84



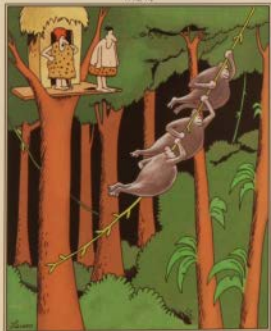
"You fool! 'Bring the honey,' I said. ...
This isn't the same thing!"

2/20/84



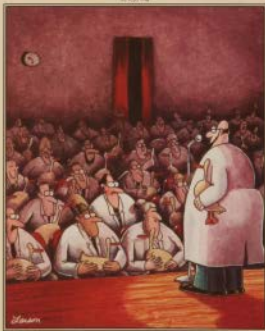
"Well, of course I did it in cold blood,
you idiot! ... I'm a reptile!"

2/22/84



"Well, you've overslept and missed your
vine again."

2/29/84



Suddenly, Professor Liebowitz realizes he has
come to the seminar without his duck.



"Well, what have I always said?... Sheep and cattle just don't mix."



"Aaaaaaa! ... No, Zooky! Grok et bok! ... Shoosh! Shoosh! ..."



The origin of clothes



"And now, Randy, by use of song, the male sparrow will stake out his territory ... an instinct common in the lower animals."



"I've got an idea. ... How many here have ever seen Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*?"



"Well, I dunno, Warren ... I think your feet may be uglier than mine."

3/2/84



3/1/84



"What the? ... Another little casket?"

3/2/84

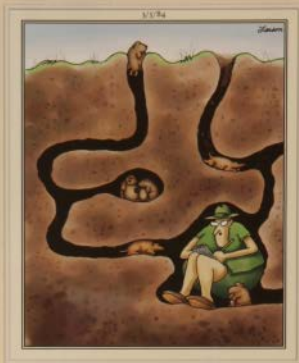


3/3/84





"Aaaaaaaa! ... It's George! He's taking it with him!"



"March 5, 1984: After several months, I now feel that these strange little rodents have finally accepted me as one of their own."



"Grobby! Bad! ... Not put things down Oona's back no more!"



"Always keep label up, Dag."



Snake dreams



"And now Edgar's gone. ... Something's going on around here."



"Hmmm. ... Are the red ants right off the hill?"



Analyzing humor



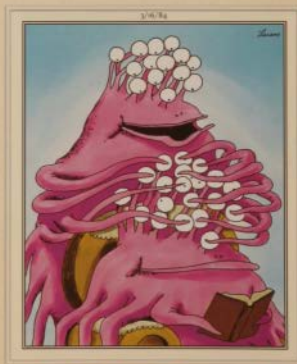
Stimulus-response behavior in dogs



"I believe, Farnsworth, that the data from the previous tissue sample was ... Farnsworth! Are you listening to me?"



"Oh, that's right! You *did* have a hat. ... I believe you'll find it in the other room."



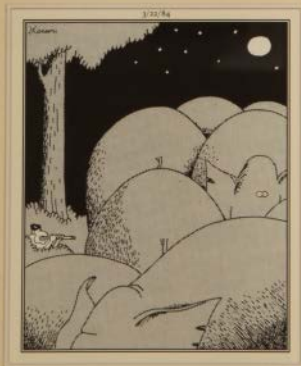
"Guess who!"



Nature scenes we rarely see



"That time was just too close, George! ... Jimmy was headed straight for the snake-pit when I grabbed him!"



"Listen ... you've got to relax. ... The more you think about changing colors, the less chance you'll succeed. ... Shall we try the green background again?"

3/27/84



The birth of jazz

3/28/84



Humor in the Old West

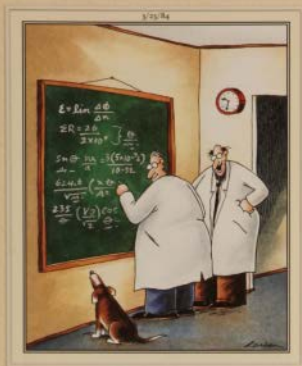
3/30/84



Anteaters of the future

3/31/84

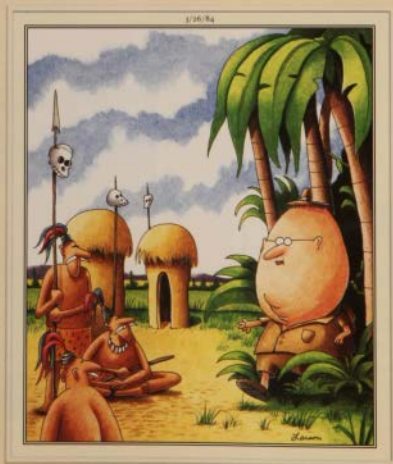




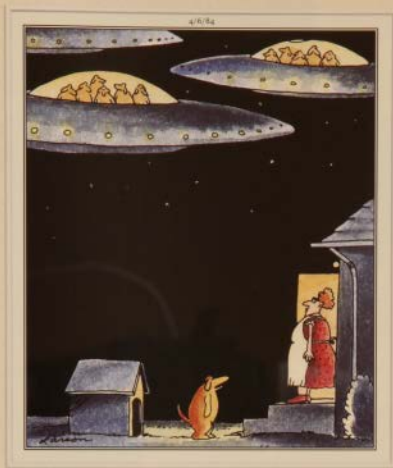
"Ohhhhhhh. ... Look at that, Schuster. ... Dogs are so cute when they try to comprehend quantum mechanics."



"Well, there it goes again. ... And we just sit here without opposable thumbs."



Unwittingly, Palmer stepped out of the jungle and into headhunter folklore forever.



"Well, they finally came ... but before I go, let's see you roll over a couple times."



I wonder if that's really fire. The cook always goes down with the ship!

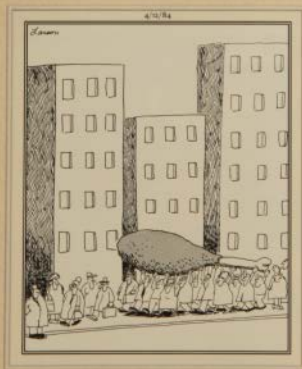


Shirts on fire... NOW IT'S OUT!

Humor at its lowest form



"Carl! Watch for holes!"



How social animals work together



Releasing the shaft, Red Bear falls victim to the old fake-bow-and-arrow trick.

4/7/84





"Well, there is some irony in all this, you know. ... I mean, we *both* lose a contact at the same time?!"



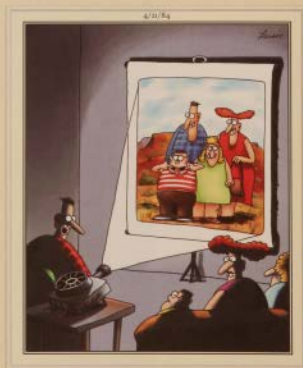
"Aha! As I always suspected! ... I better not ever catch you drinking right from the bottle *again!*"



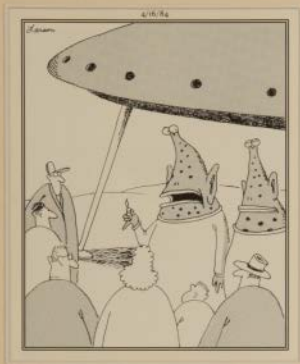
"The white whale! The whiiiiite wh ... no, no ... my mistake! ... A black whale! A regular, blaiaaaack whale!"



"So! They're back, are they?"



"Well, here we all are at the Grand Canyon ... but, as usual, Johnny just had to ruin the picture for everyone else."



"Well, they're unimpressed. ... And now what are we going to do with fifty cases of butane lighters?"



"Do what you will to me, but I'll never talk! ... NEVER! And, after me, there'll come others—and others—and others! Ha ha ha!"





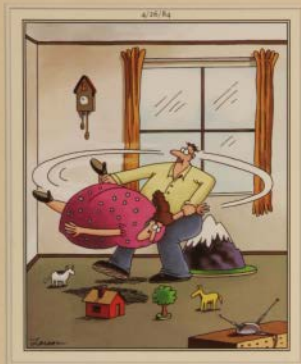
"Oo! I know, Doris! ... Drape one of his arms over your shoulder!"



"No, Zak. ... It Wilga's turn lick bowl."



Trying to calm the herd, Jake himself was suddenly awestruck by the image of beauty and unbridled fury on the cliff above. Pink Shadow had returned.

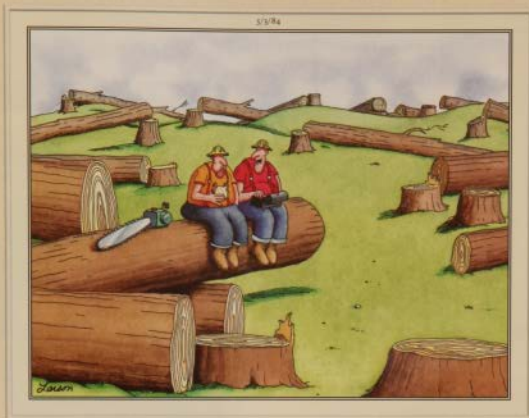


On the next pass, however, Helen failed to clear the mountains.

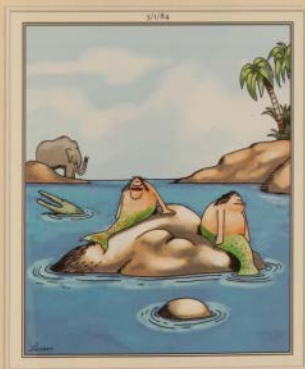


"What have I told you about eating in bed?"





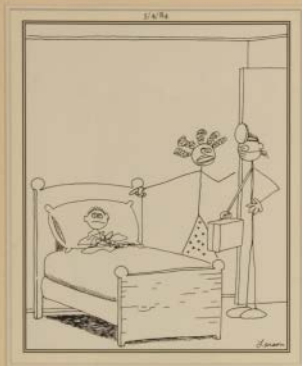
"You know what I'm sayin'? ... Me, for example. I couldn't work in some stuffy little office. ... The outdoors just calls to me."



Early Pleistocene mermaids



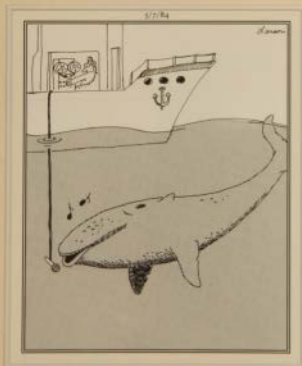
Knowing the lion's preference for red meat, the spamalopes remained calm but wary.



"Thank goodness you're here, Doctor! ...
I came in this morning and found Billy
just all scribbled like this!"



The Boy Who Cried "No Brakes"



"A Louie, Louie ... wowoooo ...
we gotta go now ..."



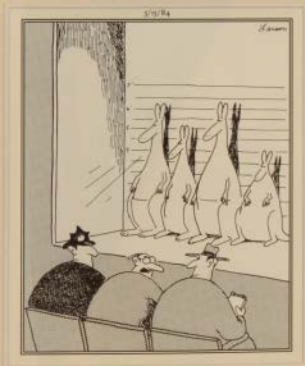
"I've never been so embarrassed. ... After dinner,
you just never gave up trying to cram the
world into your cheek pouches!"



"CANNONBAAAAAAAAALLLLLLLLLL!"



Grog Schwartz eats some bad beetle grubs, and the art of dance is born.



"Don't rush me! Don't rush me! ... I've *always* gotten my kangaroos and wallabies confused!"



"Okay! I'll talk! I'll talk! ... Take two sticks of approximately equal size and weight—rub them together at opposing angles using short, brisk strokes ..."



Early vegetarians returning from the kill



"Ladies! Ladies! He's back! ... Our mystery man who does the Donald Duck impression!"



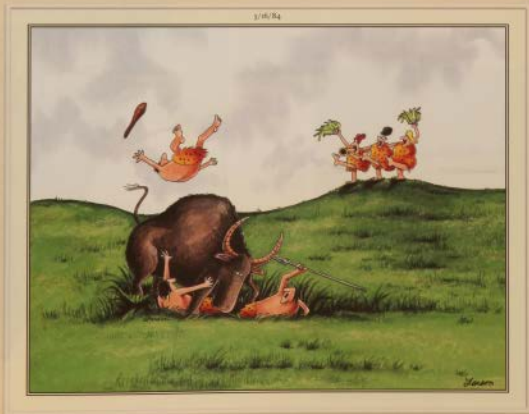
"Quit complaining and eat it! ... Number one, chicken soup is good for the flu, and number two, it's nobody we know."



"So tell us, Buffy—for how long have you been a talking dog?"



One day, as he nonchalantly reaches for a match, Leonardo da Vinci's life is suddenly transformed.

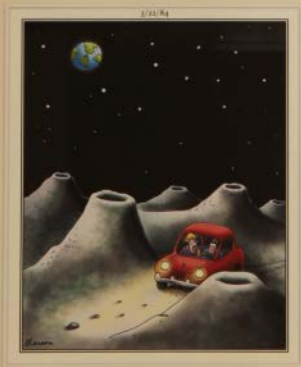




"Well, more arrivals from the States, I see."



The Squid kids at home



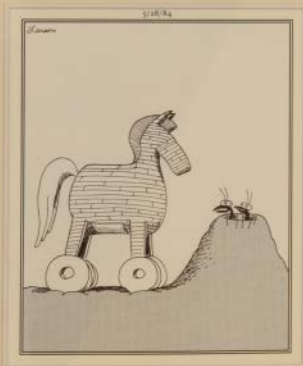
"For heaven's sake, Elroy! Now look where the earth is! ... Move over and let me drive!"



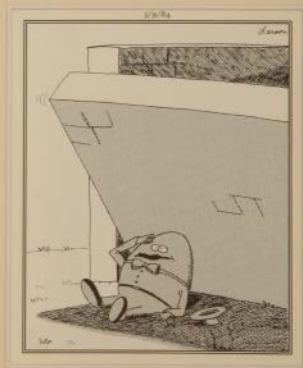
Dog Stoozes



Hank knew this place well. He need only wait. ...
The deer would come, the deer would come.



"I don't know about this. ... The red ants
never gave us anything before."



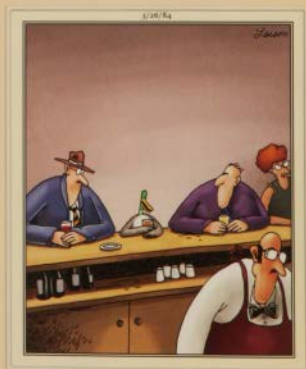
"Well, I'll be danged! ... I'm okay!"



"Uh-uh-uh-uh. ... Question. Can anyone here tell me what Hanson there is doing wrong with his elbows?"



"Now calm down there ma'am ... your cat's gonna be fine ... just fine."



"I tell you she's drivin' me nuts! ... I come home at night and it's 'quack quack quack' ... I get up in the morning and it's 'quack quack quack.'"



"Uh-oh."



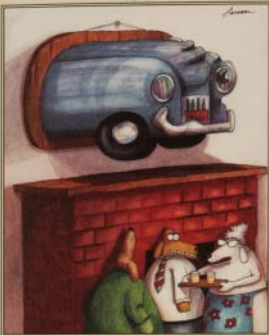
"No lions anywhere? ... Let me have the chair."

6/6/84



What dogs dream about

6/13/84



"Don't listen to him, George. He didn't catch it ... the stupid thing swerved to miss him and ran into a tree."

6/2/84



"Relax, Worthington. ... As the warm, moist air from the jungle enters the cave, the cool, denser air inside forces it to rise, resulting in turbulence that sounds not unlike heavy breathing."

6/9/84



Of course, the slugs worshipped their god out of fear, not love.

6/4/84



"For crying out loud, Norm. Look at you ... I hope I don't look half as goony when I run."

6/5/84



6/7/84



"Okay, before you go, let me read this one more time: 'Burn the houses, eliminate the townsfolk, destroy the crops, plunder their gold!' ... You knuckleheads think you can handle all that?"

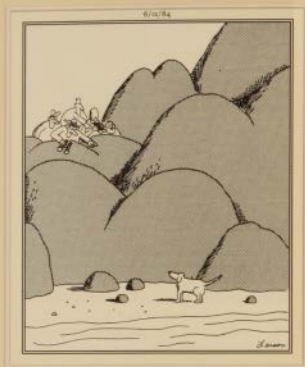
6/9/84



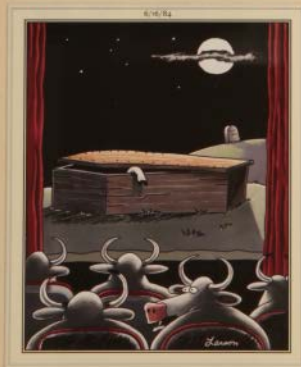
"Well, you've got quite an infestation here, ma'am. ... I can't promise anything, but I imagine I can knock out some of the bigger nests."



"Soup of the day is ready!"



Another sighting of the Loch Ness dog



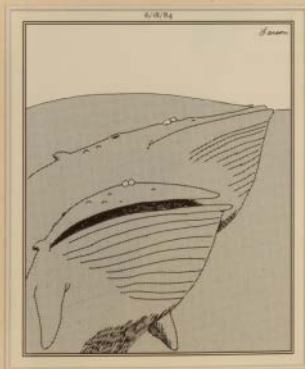
"Oo! ... Here he comes to feed on the milk of the living."



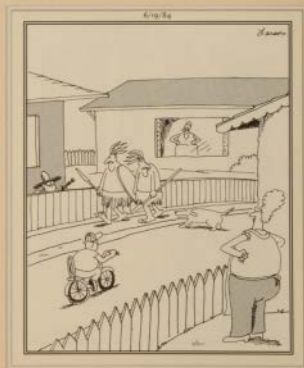
"Oh, hey! Fantastic party, Tricksy! Fantastic! ... Say, do you mind telling me which way to the yard?"



"FIRE!"



"Oo! Icky icky! ... Something just went down
that surrrrrre wasn't plankton!"



Lost in the suburbs, Tonga and Zootho
wander for days—plagued by dogs,
kids, and protective mothers.



"Dennis, do you mind if Mrs. Carlisle comes in and sees your rhino tube-farm?"



The first cruise arrow is tested.

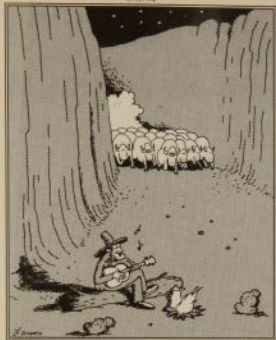


The mysterious intuition of some animals



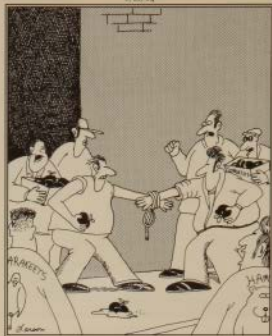
"Okay, Wellington. I'm comfortable with my grip if you are. ... Have you made a wish?"

6/27/84



"Oh, give me a home, where the buffalo roam ..."

6/28/84



Goaded on by their respective gangs, the leaders of the Hamster Demons and the Parakeet Devils square off.

6/29/84



Dreaming he's falling, Jerry forgets the well-known "always-wake-up-before-you-land" rule.

6/30/84



Testing whether laughter *is* the best medicine.



"Well no wonder! ... It's plugged in! ... And I thought I was going nuts!"



"Uh-oh, Ruby. ... The apartment downstairs is awfully quiet."



Jungle apparel



At night, the forest custodians would arrive—sometimes stopping work to laugh and gossip about the habits of certain daytime animals.



"Well, thank goodness we all made it to the surface. ... You and your damn smoking in bed!"



"I hate this place."

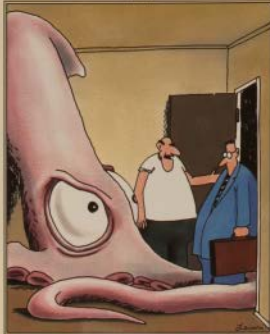


7/12/84



"Hey! ... Six eyes!"

7/19/84



"Oh, no, he's quite harmless. ... Just don't show any fear. Squids can sense fear."

7/16/84



"What the? ... How'd that thing get out on the field?"

7/16/84



Natural selection at work



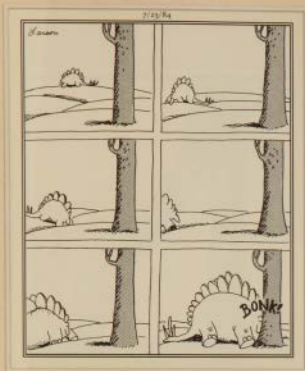
"Well, she's done it to me again ... Tuna fish!"



"Play him, Sidney! Play him! ...
Oooooowweeeee! ... It's gonna
be fresh burgers tonight!"



"That's the third one you've lost this month,
Edgar. ... You've got to stop believing these
guys who say they're just stepping out
to use the restroom."



Dinosaur cranial capacity



Animal lures



"You know, it's really dumb to keep this right next to the cereal. ... In fact, I don't know why we even keep this stuff around in the first place."



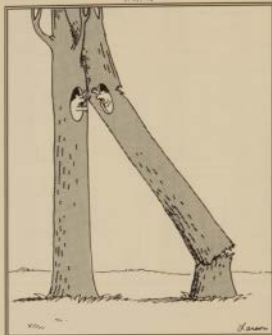
"Hey, you stupid bovines! You'll never get that contraption off the ground! ... Think it'll run on hay? ... Say, maybe you'll make it to the moooooooooon! ..."

7/26/84



Animal Samaritans

7/27/84



7/28/84



7/31/84



"Yes! Yes! This is it, Sidney! The guy with the dog! ... I think he sees us!"



"Couldn't resist, could you, Farnsworth! ... Just had to reach up and honk the chief's nose!"



Social manners



"They say they're not making any deals until they're sure the animals are okay."





"Now, this is a typical dwelling of a species that ... Hey! All right! I think we even caught the little fellow at home!"



"Come on, baby ... one grunt for Daddy ... one grunt for Daddy."



And then, the dawn was still once more—another miracle of Nature had emerged.



Visiting the Petrified City



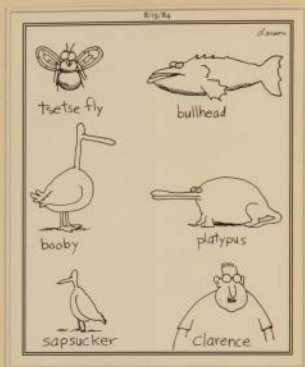
In the animal self-help section



People who don't know which end is up



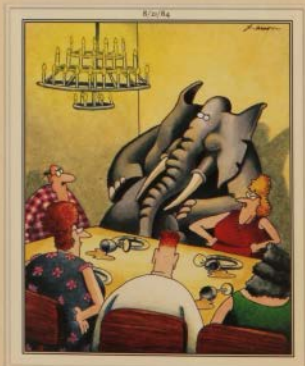
Early musical chairs



Unfair animal names



Harvesting the work of ketchup bees



"Well, I beg your pardon ... but where I come from, it's considered a compliment to let fly with a good trumpeting after dinner."



Returning from vacation, Roy and Barbara find their house, their neighborhood, their friends—in fact, all of Atlantis is just plain gone.

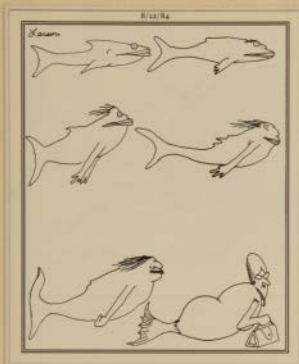


Suddenly, his worst fears realized, the old fellow's tusks jammed.



"No gophers, Stuart. ... But there's an old garden rake of yours down here."





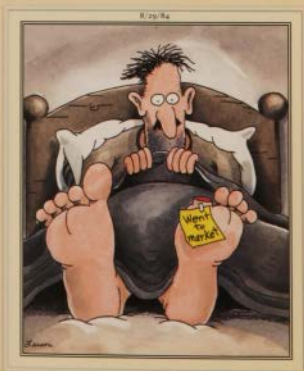
Mermaid evolution



After a full day of carousing and raising Cain in the neighborhood, Old Jake could count on a familiar sight to greet him.



"Oo! Grog run into a ... a ... dang! Now which kind stick up and which kind hang down?"





"My word, Frank—sounds like you're coming down with one heck of a cold."



Someone for everyone



"Let's move it, folks. ... Nothing to see here. ...
It's all over. ... Move it along, folks. ...
Let's go, let's go ..."



Fly heaven



Her tentacles swaying seductively in the breeze, the Venus Kidtrap was again poised and ready.



"Egad! It's those weird possums from across town! ... Everyone fake like you're dead."



"Dang! The radio's been ripped off again."



Suddenly, Bobby felt very alone in the world.



The young dog's nightmare: premature mange



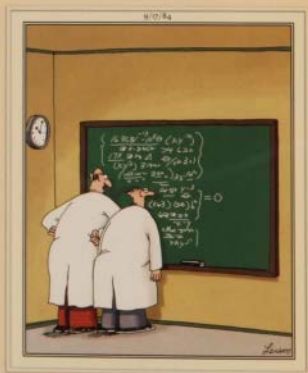
Unfortunately, Larry had always approached from the side that wasn't posted, and a natural phenomenon was destroyed before anyone could react.



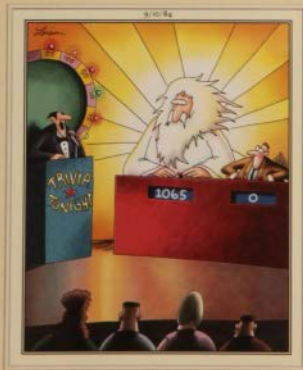
"Well, that cat's doing it again—keeping that poor thing alive just to play with it awhile."



"Oh, quit worrying about it, Andrew. They're just love handles."



"No doubt about it, Ellington—we've mathematically expressed the purpose of the universe. God, how I love the thrill of scientific discovery!"



"Yes! That's right! The answer is 'Wisconsin'! Another 50 points for God, and ... uh-oh, looks like Norman, our current champion, hasn't even scored yet."



"Watch ... Thag says he make gravel angel."



Murray didn't feel the first pangs of real panic until he pulled the emergency cord.



"Okay, one more time and it's off to bed for the both of you. ... 'Hey, Bob. Think there are any bears in this old cave?' ... 'I dunno, Jim. Let's take a look.'"



When cliff divers belly flop



"Ah! The shed skin of some large, reptilian denizen. ... And a bonus, Ellsworth! Here's his wallet."



"Oh! Wait! Wait! My mistake! ... That's him down there!"

9/22/84



Saturday night at the crypt

9/20/84



One remark led to another, and the bar suddenly polarized into two angry, confrontational factions: those espousing the virtues of the double-humped camel on the one side, single humpers on the other.

9/28/84



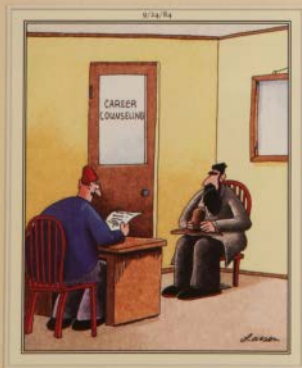
"Thag, take napkin. Got some mammoth on face."

9/29/84





"It's okay! It's okay! The tunnel was closing in on me there for a while, but I'm all right now."



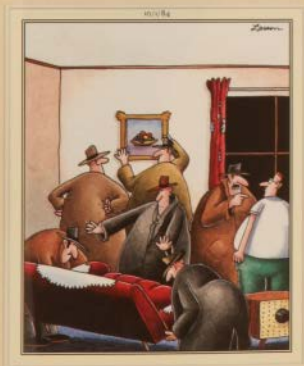
"Well, Mr. Cody, according to our questionnaire, you would probably excel in sales, advertising, slaughtering a few thousand buffalo, or market research."



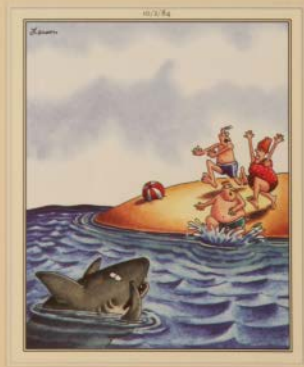
"Harold! The dog's trying to blow up the house again! Catch him in the act or he'll never learn!"



"Ha! Ain't a rattler, Jake. You got one of them maraca players down your bag—and he's probably more scared than you."



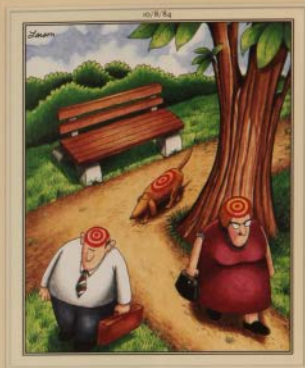
"The boss wants his money, see? Or next time it won't be just your living room we rearrange."



"BEAR! BEAR!"



"Bob! Wake up! Bob! A ship! I think I see a ship! ... Where are your glasses?"



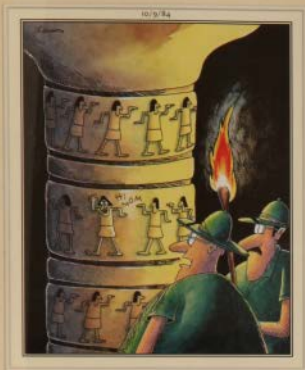
How birds see the world



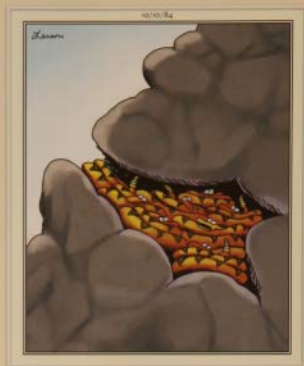
"Oh, I see! You return covered with blond feathers, and I'm supposed to believe you crossed the road *just* to get to the other side?"



"Hey! I'm gonna roll now! You guys gonna watch or what?"



"Any theories on this, Cummings?"



"Hey, I feel someone moving! Dang, this place gives me the willies."

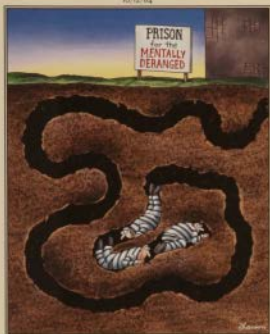


The restless life of the nomad

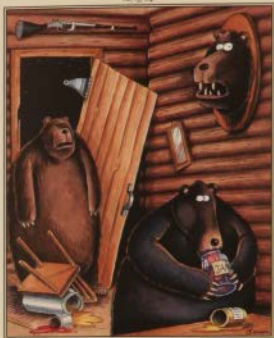


"No, thank you. It's a little nutso out there for me right now."

10/10/84



10/10/84



"Oh, Laaaaaarrrrrry ... I think you should look up niiiice and eaaaaasy and see what's right ... over ... your ... head."

10/16/84



"Sorry about this, buddy, but the limit on those things is half a dozen—looks like you're one over."

10/17/84



"Take this handkerchief back to the lab, Stevens. I want some answers on which monster did this—Godzilla? Gargantua? Who, dammit!?"

10/16/84



Animal nerds

10/20/84

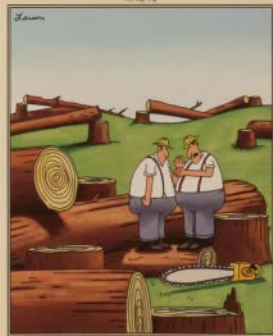


10/25/84



Early experiments in transportation

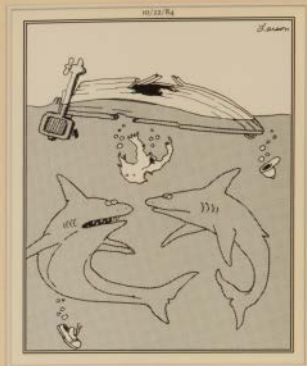
10/26/84



"I don't seeeee ... Wait! There it is! Oo!
I hate those little slivers that stand
straight up and down."



The balloon was his enemy.



"I was just going to circle them a couple times and leave—but they started yelling 'shark,' and suddenly I felt very proud."



"Well, we've tried every device and you still won't talk—every device, that is, except this little baby we simply call 'Mr. Thingy.'"



The anthropologist's dream: a beautiful woman in one hand, the fossilized skull of a *Homo habilis* in the other.



Jungle graffiti



When animal mimicry breaks down



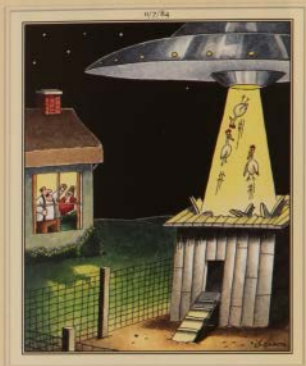
"Gee ... look at all the little black dots."



"And here he is—but when I started, I bet he was at least this tall."



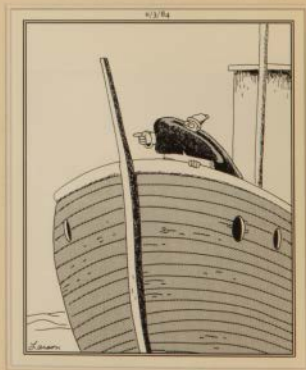
"Aha! According to this, your great-great-grandmother, Abigail Woodworth, was once married to a man townsfolk simply called 'Grog.'"



"Dang! Get my shotgun, Mama! The aliens are after the chickens again!"



Vending machines of the Serengeti



"Thaaaaaar she—mmph!"

n/c/84



n/c/84



"Excuse me, but I'm trying to sleep next door and all I hear is scratching, clawing, and 'eek, eek, eek.'"

n/c/84



December 24, 1987

Gary Larson, Cartoonist ("Far Side")
 1/2 Andrew, Mikes & Parker
 A Universal Press Syndicate Affiliate
 4900 Main Street
 Kansas City, MO 64112

Dear Gary:

We do shall read and enjoy your "Off-the-wall! Calendar" every day; however, we are stumped by your December 22, 1987, cartoon (copy attached) and we would like you to explain it to us.

We don't feel that it can be as simple as "the gorilla fell on the dog's master, so what is the dog going to do now?" We are guessing that the gorilla is King Kong, but why is he lying down? What is that little thing his head is lying on (a parking meter)? Is there something missing, some punch line that we are not getting? Did you put in a cartoon that you knew no one could figure out on purpose just to boggle our minds? This is driving us crazy.

Please send your response to:

Kevin M. Holt or Herb Temple
 Shell Oil Company
 Financial Department - General Accounting

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Holt
 Herb Temple
 EX Filomeno
 Cheryl Lee



"Mr. Fenton? First of all, I want to say that it's all Carl Denham's fault. 'Watchin' that machine?' I says to Carl, and ... Wait, Carl! You can talk when I'm through!"



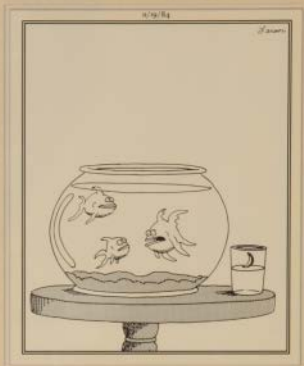
"Well, this shouldn't last too long."



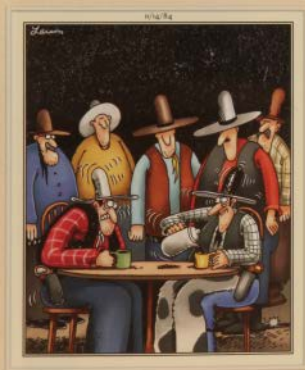
"Now remember—roar just as you leap. ... These things have some of the greatest expressions."



"Come and get it! Commmmm and get it! ... It's not going to get any more raw, y'know!"



"Again? Well this time, young man, you use the glass."



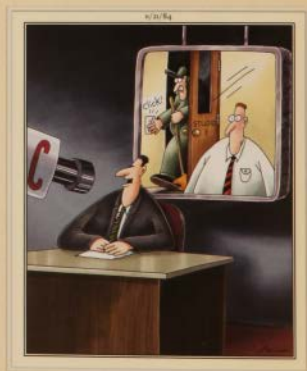
Hour after hour, cup after cup, the two men matched their caffeine limits in a traditional contest of the Old West.



"Well, heaven knows what it is or where it came from—just get rid of it! But save that cheese first."



Aerobics in hell



"My next guest, on the monitor behind me, is an organized crime informant. To protect his identity, we've placed him in a darkened studio—so let's go to him now."



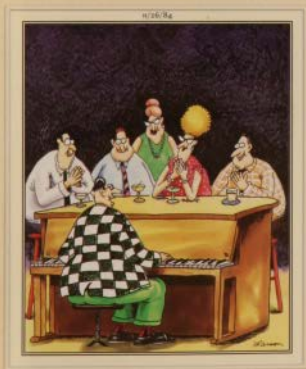
The Holsteins visit the Grand Canyon.



"Hey! ... Be cool, man, be cool!"



"Remember me, Mr. Schneider? Kenya, 1947. If you're going to shoot at an elephant, Mr. Schneider, you better be prepared to finish the job."



"Hey, thank you! Thank you! That was 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon.' ... Now, what say we all really get down?"



"Wendell ... I'm not content."



Profanity on other planets



"Foster! You better get over here if you want to see Meeher's hangnail magnified 500 times."



"Well, shucks! I've lost again! Talk about your alien luck!"



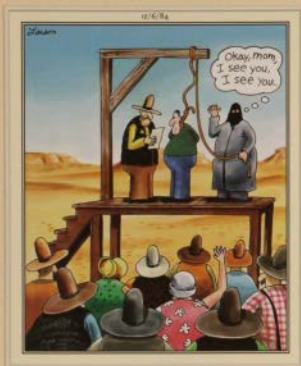
"Let's see here. ... Oh! Close, but no cigar. You want the place up the road—same as I told those other fellahs."



The origin of "dessert"



"Now just hold your horses, everyone.
Let's let it run for a minute or so and
see if it gets any colder."



"Bedtime, Leroy. Here comes your animal blanket."



"It's the mailman, doc. He scares me."



"You gotta check this out, Stuart. Vinnie's over on the couch, putting the move on Zelda Schwartz—but he's talkin' to the wrong end."



"Here, Fifi! C'mon! ... Faster, Fifi!"



"Uh-oh ... I've got a feeling I shouldn't have been munching on these things for the last mile and a half."



"Hold on there! I think you misunderstood— I'm Al Tilley ... the bum."

Coaching Association of Canada
Association canadienne des entraîneurs

December 21, 1984

Mr. Gary Larson
The Far Side
c/o Universal Press Syndicate
4709 Agate Road
Minnetonka, Kansas
62022

Dear Gary,

1984 was quite an eventful year for me. I was married in February. My niece, Karen Tilley, was crowned Miss Canada in October, and in December I appeared (in some ways) in The Far Side.

The last event, of course, takes precedence over the other two. (But please don't tell my wife or my niece.)

I would be curious to know if your caricature for Al Tilley ... The Bum is drawn from your personal experience or whether my reputation here has penetrated the United States!

Yours sincerely,

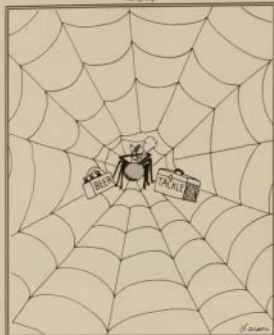
Al Tilley (the bum)

Al Tilley
Marketing Services Manager

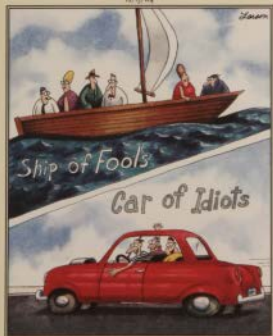
12/5/84



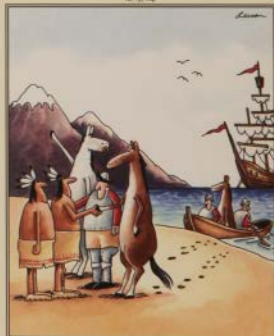
12/13/84



12/16/84



12/19/84



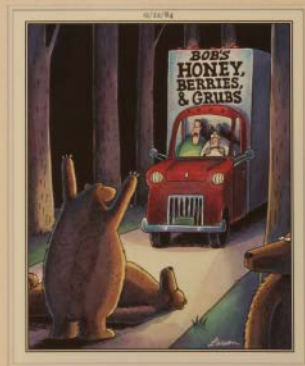
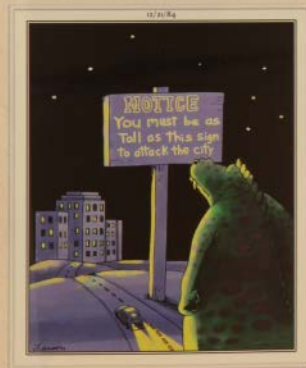
Circa 1500 A.D.: Horses are introduced to America.



Mobster slapman

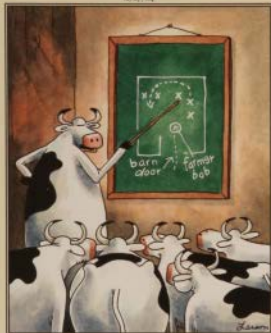


"Well, it just sort of wriggled its way up the beach, grabbed Jonathan, and dragged him back again. I mean, the poor thing must have been half-starved!"



"Just stay in the cab, Vern ... maybe that bear's hurt and maybe he ain't."

12/27/84



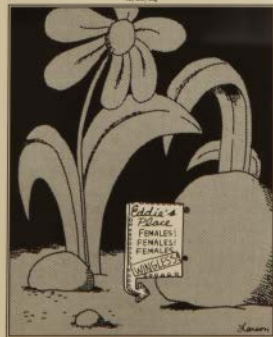
"So when Farmer Bob comes through the door, three of us circle around and ... Muriel! Are you chewing your cud while I'm talking?"

12/26/84



The Vikings, of course, knew the importance of stretching before an attack.

12/20/84



Insect hangouts

12/24/84



"Dang it, Monica! I can't live this charade any longer! I'm not a telephone repairman who stumbled into your life—I'm a Komodo dragon, largest member of the lizard family and a filthy liar."



Fire is invented.



"Okay, he's asleep. Pull the wagon, Buck, and I'll start barkin' my head off. ... God, I love this."



"Oh, is that so? Well, you might be a kangaroo, but I know a few things about marsupials myself!"



Unwittingly, Irwin has a brush with Death.



85



Big Ungulates, Little Bipeds

As much as I've used cows as a theme in my work, it's a childhood encounter with another farm animal that left an indelible mark on my imagination.

My grandparents had a draft horse, "Nelly." (A name that is the horse equivalent of "Smith," I believe.) I was not only in awe of this enormous, powerful creature, I was more than a little scared.

Under the watchful supervision of my grandfather, a small, wiry man with a commanding voice, it seemed as if Nelly was perpetually pulling some enormous log from one place to another. But on a day off, Nelly would sometimes walk up from her barn to my grandparents' house, insert her huge head through the open kitchen window, and look for a treat from Grandma. For at least one grandkid with an overactive imagination, it was an impressive sight, evoking a stuffed moose head that had suddenly come to life. Grandma would say something like, "Okay, okay, girl—here ya go," and hand her a carrot.

Nelly was an immense animal, smoky-colored, with feet the size of dinner plates. I always sensed she could've accidentally squashed me without even knowing it. (Actually, I had the same feelings about Grandma, but that's another story.)

My grandparents' island farm had a sort of "Lost World" feel to it. The house and barn, in picturesque fashion, were nestled between the shore and a high bank, the latter overgrown with trees and leafy vegetation. Nelly's pasture was far above, accessible only by following her switchback trail that cut its way through the steep, clay hillside. But once you reached the top, the "jungle" gave way to a grassy plateau—my Lost World. For me, it was a place where time stood still and giant horses ruled the earth.

One day, my brother, two cousins, and I—all little squirts—set out on a quest to find this flesh and blood tractor up on her range. It's unclear to me as to why we were doing this: Only Gramps really knew the mysteries of how to start, stop, and shift Nelly. The rest of us were mostly tiders or carrot givers. In truth, I was a little scared even to hand-feed Nelly, regardless of the sturdy fence that usually separated us. I always imagined my fingers being sucked up into her jaws by those enormous, prehensile lips, and then being contentedly crunched right along with the carrots. Offering her sugar cubes was the scariest. As you held it up in your palm, someone was always screaming, "HOLD YOUR HAND FLAT! HOLD IT FLAT!" That didn't help.

Actually, in thinking back on it, it may have been my grandpa who inadvertently put the fear of Nelly in me. There was the "foot thing," you see. I don't think Nelly ever actually stepped on anyone's foot, but I remember this was something Gramps used to say: *Be careful around that horse. . . . If she steps on your foot, she'll crush it! Crush it, I tell ya!* HAHHAHAHA! (Gramps was a bit eccentric.)

As we climbed the hill, it was hard to ignore the hoofprints that looked like sunken pie pans, let alone the road apples the size of my head. (An unfortunate comparison, but I'll stay with it.) Do you remember that scene in *King Kong* when all those guys landed on Skull Island and went looking for the "mysterious creature" that had taken Fay Wray, and how they moved nervously through the jungle, looking over their shoulders every few seconds? Same scenario.

When we reached the crest, we paused, lowering our voices. There were no fences up here. We were far from the barn and far from Gramps. We were in Nelly's domain, and our feet were plump little sausages, waiting to be stomped into patties.

And that she grazed. Nelly was far across the pasture but in plain view, standing in profile with her head lowered into the tall grass. The four of us stood there, just watching her, I suppose trying to figure out what would happen next. I think somebody must have laughed or something, because Nelly lifted her Tyrannosaurus-size head and looked in our direction. I can still see it; I'm there as if it was yesterday. She's not chewing anymore. She's looking. Straight at us. (I thought it was only dogs that could sense fear, possibly chickens—now I know horses are also fairly good at it.) Nelly headed toward us. Kong was coming.

Well, the four of us simultaneously screamed, did a 180, and started running with the firm belief that our lives depended on getting back down that hill and over the fence. About halfway back down that hillside, with Nelly in hot pursuit, I must have sensed she was going to overtake us, because I pitched myself off the narrow trail, landing face-down in some ferns. And there I froze. I couldn't see Nelly, and I remember I didn't want to look. But I could definitely hear her. She was bearing down on my hiding place like a locomotive. This was a long, long time ago, but I can still hear the rhythmic thudding of Nelly's hooves and the rhythm of her breathing, which—I swear—sounded like, "Crush feet, crush feet, crush feet! . . ."

It was almost impossible not to jump up and simply have my feet pulverized and be done with it. But I stayed where I was. And

Nelly sailed right on by. It was like that Doppler effect:

crushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeetc...
 She didn't see me. She was going to crush the feet of the others, not mine. I felt sorry for my brother and cousins, but God, it felt good to be alive!

Epilogue

Everyone escaped unharmed. I know today that having our feet crushed was at best a remote possibility; Nelly was a wonderful, benevolent animal, and when she looked across the field and saw us she only recognized us as Those Things That Bring Me Carrots. But something was definitely etched into my psyche from that experience of being chased through the woods by a 2,000-pound animal (even if it was just a horse), and the emotions I felt have been fodder for more than a few of my cartoons. It's that sensation of finding yourself in the presence of something that doesn't know or care you're a member of the highest form of life on the planet—all it sees is food or possibly an irritation to be dealt with.

Some writers (and at least one cartoonist) have a fascination for this primal wiring in all of us—that big, instinctual button at the bottom of our brains that cuts through all our higher cognition and says, simply, RUN LIKE HELL!

Note: Certain conditions can trigger this mechanism's companion button, the TOO LATE! HIDE! HIDE! button. Which one kicks in when we're in some desperate situation—whether it be facing a large, charging animal or simply observing Jehovah's Witnesses approaching our front door—is just one of those mysteries of the human nervous system.



"Well, what the? ... I thought I smelled something."

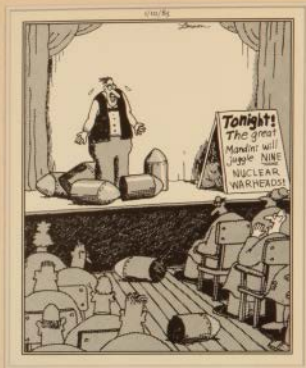


Left to right—Danny, Cathy, Janice, Gary, and Nelly (1954)

Photo by Gary's dad



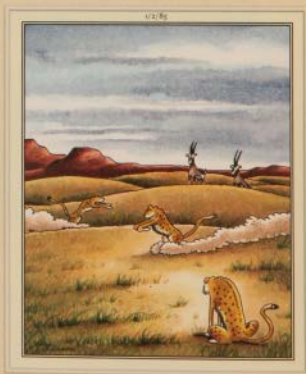
"Well, here's your problem, Mr. Schueler."



"Nuclear warheads, huh? ... More like defused nuclear warheads, if you ask me!"



"Okay, listen up! The cops are closing in on this place, so here's our new hideout: 455 Elm Street. ... Let's all say it together about a hundred times so there'll be no screw-ups."



Cheetah wheelies



January 3, 1985

Gary Larson
The Seattle Times
P.O. Box 70
Seattle, Washington 98111

Dear Mr. Larson:

I am one of your most ardent fans who has probably never missed one of your published cartoons.

It is my sad duty, however, to share my professional expertise with you and thereby identify a technical error in today's Seattle Times - the wide-eyed dog reading "The Malleian Carried Water". The fact is that water does not work on dogs but on the bright side most people do not know that. A caption like "The Malleian Carried a 100 Gallon Solution in a Spray Bottle" probably would not have had much impact, of course, but the accuracy would have been unchallengeable.

Well, keep them coming and if you ever need some more great advice like this, just call me.

Yours very truly,

D. P. Van Blaricow
Chief of Police

1/3/85



1/4/85



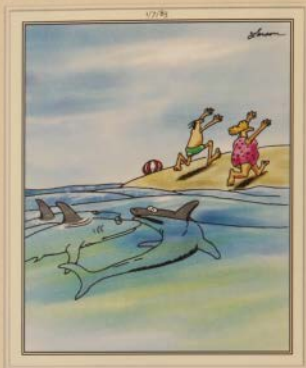
1/8/85



Einstein discovers that time is actually money.



How Nature says, "Do not touch."



"Well, somehow they knew we were—whoa! Our dorsal fins are sticking out! I wonder how many times *that's* screwed things up?"



"I'm leaving you, Frank, because you're a shiftless, low-down, good-for-nothing imbecile ... and, might I finally add, you have the head of a chicken."



"There it is—the old Muffy place. They say on some nights, when the moon is full, you can still hear him dragging his chain over to the old oak and back."



"Now that desk looks better. Everything's squared away, yessir, squaaaaaaared away."



"I can't believe you. ... We go in and out of this cave a hundred times a day, but you always just *have* to try that thing!"



"Well, we might as well put it on board—although I'm not sure what use we'll have for a box of rusty nails, broken glass, and throwing darts."



"Oh, wow! How could you even think that, Wendy?
Of course it's your mind I'm attracted to!"



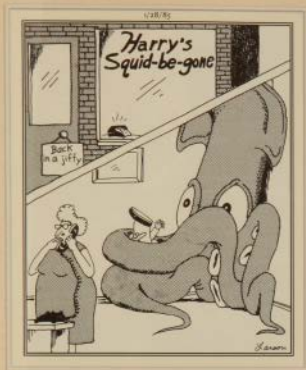
The perils of improper circling



"Oh, for heaven's sake! Your father left in such a hurry this morning he's lost another antenna."



Although an unexplained phenomenon, there is a place on the outskirts of Mayfield, Nebraska, where the sun does not shine.

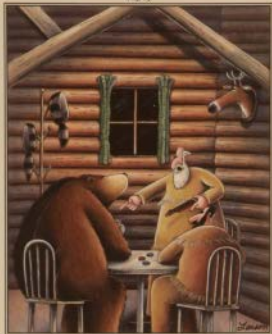


"Well, I suppose you're all wondering why I've asked you here today. ... Ha! I've always wanted to say that."



"Boy! I'm sooooo full, and this is the laaaaaast slice of beef ... guess I'll finish it off, though."

1/23/85



"Wait just a gol dang minute here! He's been dealin' from the bottom of the deck, Jake! My pappy always said, 'Never trust a grizzly.'"

1/23/85



"Whoa, back off, Bobby Joe. ... That's just your reflection."

1/23/85



"Well, I laid four Wednesday, three yesterday, and two more today ... of course, George keeps saying we shouldn't count them until they hatch."

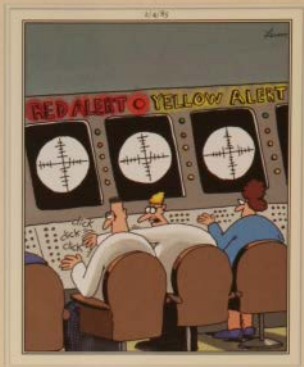
1/23/85



"Well, sorry about this, Mrs. Murdoch, but old Roy and I got to arguin' politics, and dang if he didn't say some things that got my adrenaline flowin'."

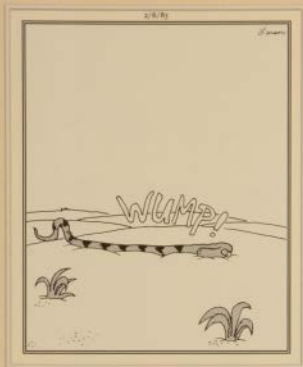


"And what is *this*, Nurse Wilkens? I distinctly asked for the *big* scalpel! ... Big scalpel! Big scalpel!"



"Okay, Baxter, if that's your game, I'll just reach over and push a few of *your* buttons."

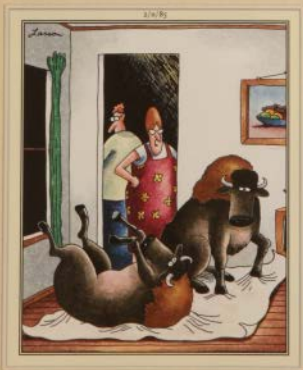




When snakes trip



Birds of prey know they're cool.



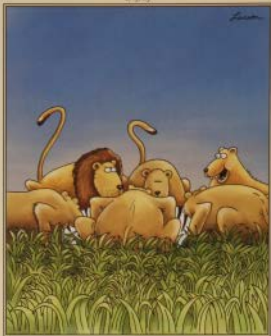
"Well, Vern, looks like that buffalo paper you set out this morning is doing the trick."

2/8/85



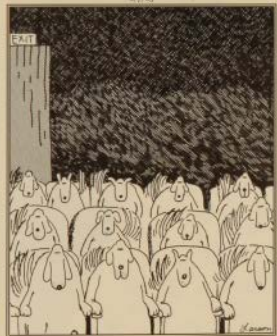
"Well, the Parkers are dead. ... You had to encourage them to take thirds, didn't you?"

2/11/85



"Hey, Sid! Remember that time last summer we were all gathered around the kill like this, someone told a leopard joke, and you laughed so hard an antler came out your nose?"

2/7/85



At the Dog Comedy Film Festival

2/9/85



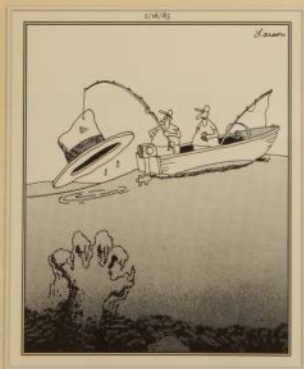
"Hey, Thak. ... You know you move lips when you look at pictures?"



Testing whether fish have feelings



"Aw, c'mon, you guys—the cat's away and everyone's so dead serious."



"Well, I'll be. You've snagged some humongous hat, Frank. ...
HAHAHAHAHAHA!"



"Dang! My hat!"

2/20/85



Taking the family pet for a ride.

2/21/85



"Well, I've got your final grades ready, although I'm afraid not everyone here will be moving up."

2/25/85



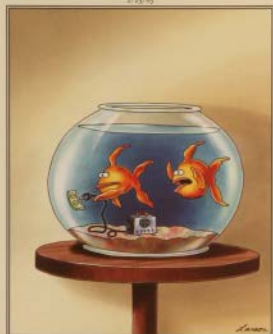
"Look at this mob. ... We'll be lucky if there's even a seat cushion left."

2/27/85



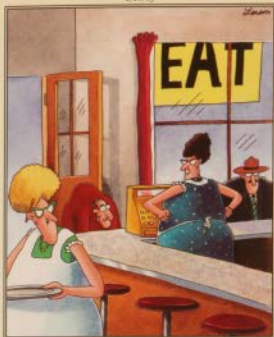
"Hey! I think you've hit on something there! Sheep's clothing! Sheep's clothing! ... Let's get out of these gorilla suits!"

2/23/85



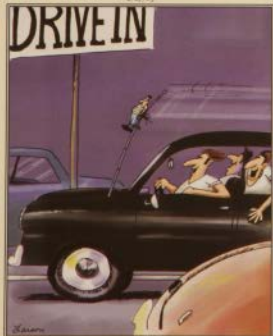
"Bob! You fool! Don't plug that thing in!"

2/24/85



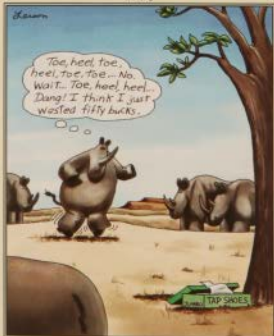
"Well, I don't think so, but I'll ask. Hey, Arlene! Anyone turn in a human brain left here yesterday? ... He says it was medium-sized, sort of bluish-gray."

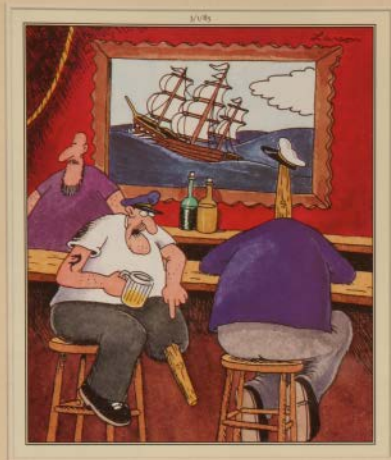
2/27/85



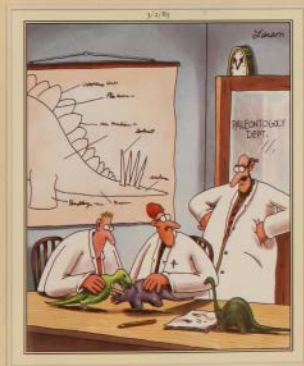
As the smallest member of the gang, Wendell was used as an attention-getter while cruising for girls.

2/28/85

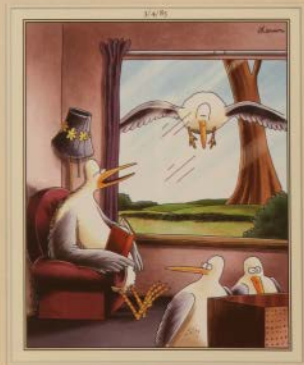




"Well, I guess that ain't a bad story—but let me tell you about the time I lost *this!*"



"Cummings! Schneider! You've got plenty of research to work on ... and for the last time, stop playing with those plastic models!"



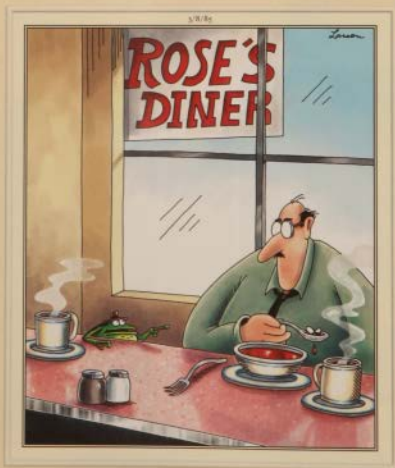
"Well, I warned your father we shouldn't have had that glass window installed."



Going out for the evening, Tarzan and Jane forget to tie up the dog.



How vampires have accidents



"I beg your pardon, but you're not planning to just throw that fly away, are you?"



"Gad, it gives me the creeps when he does that. I swear that goldfish is possessed or something."



Neanderthal creativity



"What is this? ... Some kind of cruel hoax?"



"See how the vegetation has been trampled flat here, Jimmy? That tells me where a deer bedded down for the night. After a while, you'll develop an eye for these things yourself."



The modern lion



Deep inside, Brian wondered if the other guys really listened to his ideas or regarded him only as comic relief.



Roger screws up.



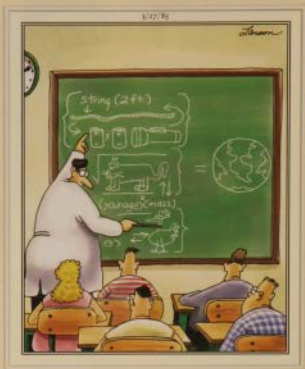
"The fuel light's on, Frank! We're all going to die! ... Wait, wait, ... Oh, my mistake—that's the intercom light."



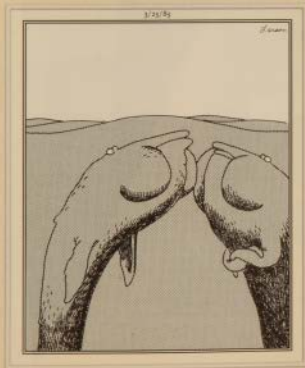
"Now you listen to me, Miss Billings! You have not seen a thing here—do you understand? I'm not kidding about this, Miss Billings."



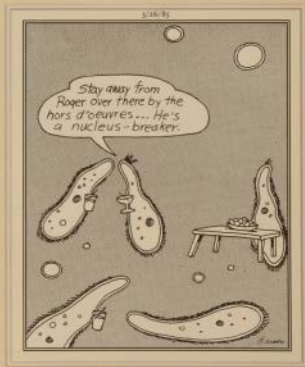
Ed and Barbara are visited by the insects of the Amazon Basin.



Creationism explained



Whale breath-holding contests



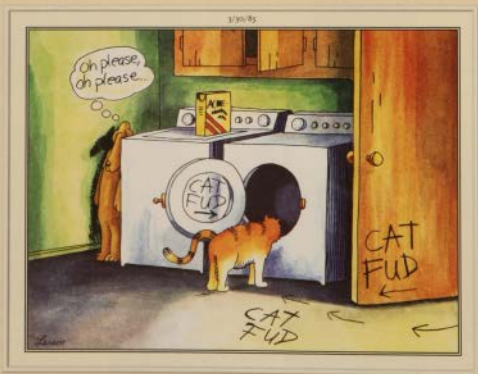
Protozoan gossip

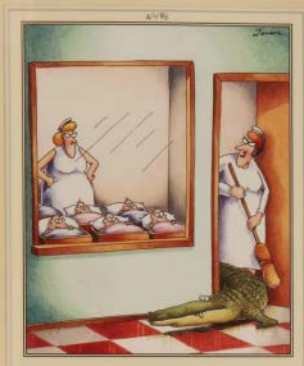


The termite queen in her egg chamber



Disaster befalls Professor Schnabel's cleaning lady when she mistakes his time machine for a new dryer.





"Get, you rascal! Get! ... Heaven knows how he keeps getting in here, Betty, but you better catch 'em."

Journal Tribune, Biddeford, Maine, 11/17/86
He's definitely not a fan of 'The Far Side'

I have never written to a newspaper before to complain but I feel compelled. The "Far Side" cartoons in anything but a cartoon and is purely "junk" in its presentation. Never in any paper have I seen such poor taste. I would suggest you discontinue same. We have enjoyed the paper since we moved here eight years ago. The contents

are informative and entertaining — that is why I was somewhat surprised that you would dignify me with "The Far Side".

Thank you for the privilege of expressing myself.

Morris Sellar
 Old Orchard Beach

Misses the 'Menace'

Why has the Journal Tribune discarded excellent art-work, all the interesting and family-oriented people, delightful humor and the insight "Carnie the Menace"? Is it possible that the ugly and creepy drawing, the insensitive characters, and the

pseudo-sophisticated "humor" of "The Far Side" are now your standards for your readers?

In "The Far Side" just another prime example of far from art, beauty and intelligence — and do we need it?

Patrice Whitcomb Hess
 Ogunquit

Harold Statesman, Yorkers, N.Y.
 11/12/86

Distasteful comics

I am disappointed that you have replaced more good, old-fashioned and humorous cartoons with distasteful ones. For example "The Far Side" by Larson is not funny, just lacking in good taste. "Calvin and Hobbes" by Watterson could be more acceptable if made less offensive (in times "Dennis" and "Slam Country"). I suggest, reflect our times. Far better for our newspaper to be writing to change what is an unaccomplishment to us all in these times. Many other cartoons are funny, lighter and reflective of the real life good in our country.

MARK KOHLER
 Yorkers

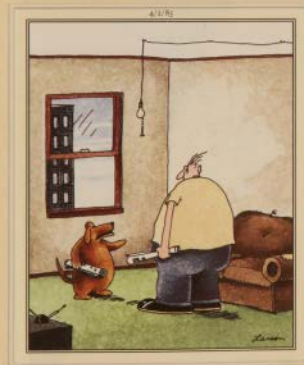
Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.
 10/21/86

'Far Side' not welcome here

I have enjoyed reading the Argus Leader for several years, and as a general rule, have been pleased with most aspects of your coverage and layout. Prior to this time, I have not felt a need to address you personally about any differences or dislikes regarding your paper.

I am writing at this time to tell you that I feel that it was very bad judgment, or worse than that, to incorporate the comic, The Far Side into your paper. For an area of the country that prides itself in its clean, wholesome, country, family-oriented atmosphere, an item such as this which is so totally morally and religiously degrading should not, and cannot, be tolerated. I do hope that this item will soon be eliminated from our paper, and thank you for your consideration in this matter.

— Pete Hagenbaugh
 Inwood, Iowa



"No way. I'll put my magazine down when you put yours down."



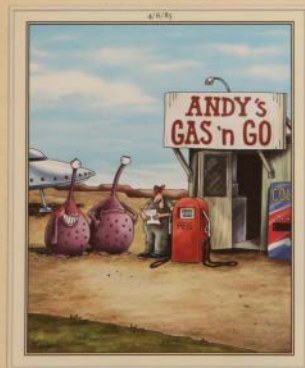
How locusts are incited to swarm



At the Porcupine Ball



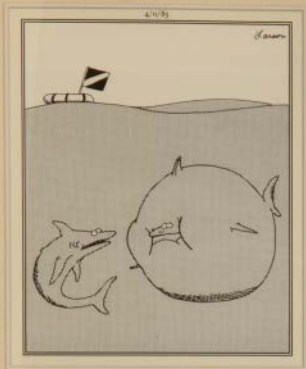
"As if we all knew where we're going."



"Shoot! You not only got the wrong planet, you got the wrong solar system! ... I mean, a wrong planet I can understand—but a whole solar system?"



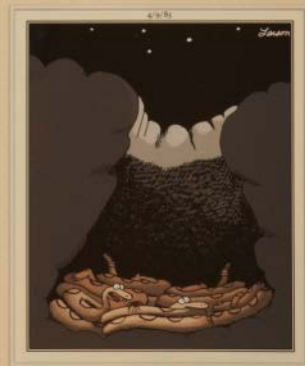
"It's the Websters. They say there's some pitiful thing dying of thirst out their way, and would we like to come over?"



"Well, Vinnie, that's one of the inherent risks of ingesting scuba gear."



"Great. ... Just great, you imbecile! I've been floating here for hours like a harmless log and you come up and start talking to me!"



"Doreen! There's a spider on you! One of those big, hairy, brown ones with the long legs that can move like the wind itself!"



"Crimony! Kevin's oozing his way up onto the table. ... Some slugs have a few drinks and just go nuts!"



"You know, I have a confession to make, Bernie. Win or lose, I love doing this."



"Listen! The authorities are helpless! If the city's to be saved, I'm afraid it's up to us!
This is our hour!"



Toby vs. Godzilla



"Watch out for that tree, you idiot! ... And now you're on the wrong side of the road. Crimony! You're driving like you've been pithed or something."



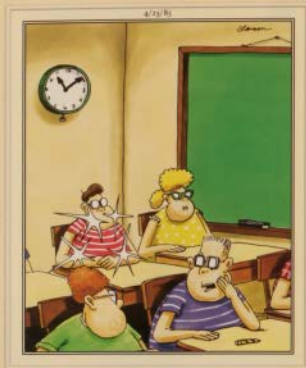
"And don't give me that 'I'm only bird-watching' line."



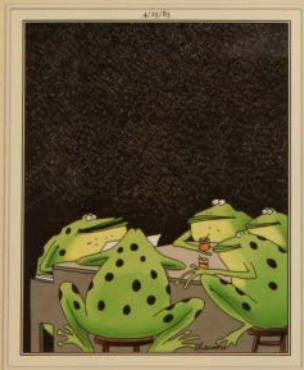
As Thak worked frantically to start a fire, a Cro-Magnon man, walking erect, approached the table and simply gave Theena a light.



Danny shows off his sheep's brain.



"Hey, Barry—in the back row—new kid."



"Okay. Here's another little ditty we can all sing. ... Of course, as always, the only words are 'ribbit, ribbit, ribbit.'"



"Well, here comes Roy again. ... He sure does think he's Hell on Wheels."



"You idiot! I said get the room freshener! That's the insecticide!"



"Aaaaaa! Here they come again, Edgar! ... Crazy carnivores!"



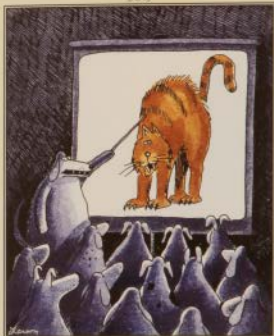
How snakes say goodbye

5/1/85



"Look, just relax, son ... relaaaaaaaax ... I'm gonna come over there now and you can just hand me your gun. ... Everything's gonna be reeal cool, son."

5/2/85



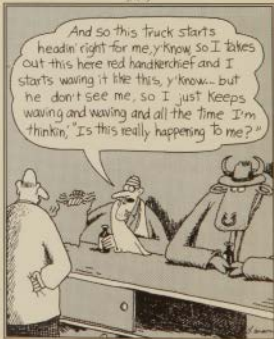
"Now, in this slide we can see how the cornered cat has seemed to suddenly grow bigger. ... Trickery! Trickery! Trickery!"

5/4/85



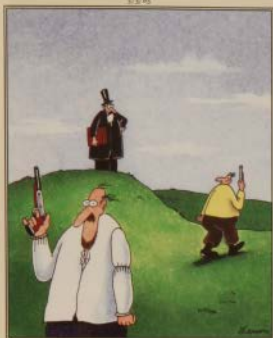
"So what do you guys want? My watch? Money? ... I got nothin'!"

5/10/85



And so this truck starts headin' right for me, y'know, so I takes out this here red handkerchief and I starts waving it like this, y'know... but he don't see me, so I just keeps waving and waving and all the time I'm thinkin', "Is this really happening to me?"

5/3/85



"... four ... five ... six ... Oh, heck—just turn and shoot."

5/6/85



"One more thing, young man. You get my daughter home before sunrise—I don't want you coming back here with a pile of dried bones!"

5/9/85



"Civilization-slickers."

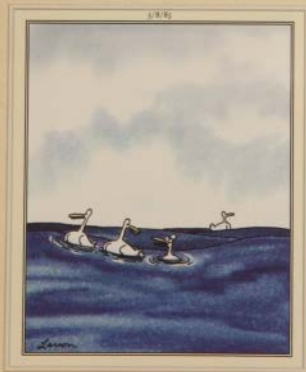
5/14/85



God loses a contact lens.



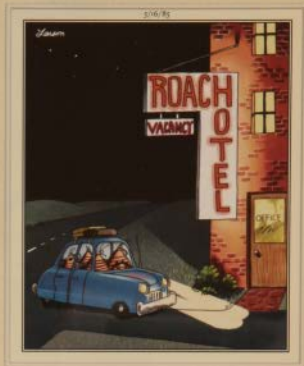
French mammoth



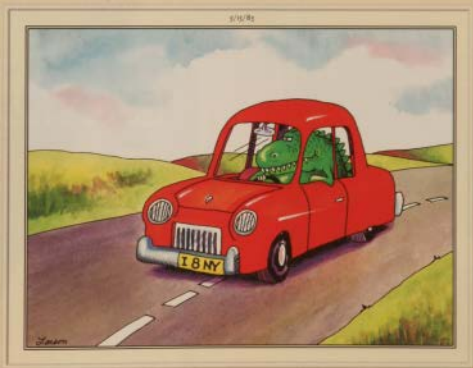
"Bob, do you think I'm sinking? ... Be honest."



"And as the net sloooooowly lifted him from the water, the voice kept whispering, 'I want your legs. ... I waaaaant your legs.'"



"Dad! Find out if they have cable!"

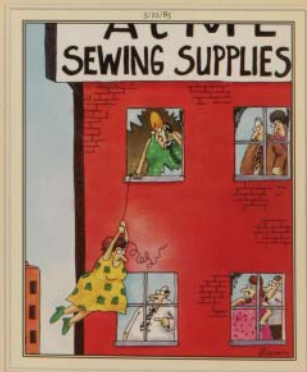




"Hey, hey, hey! Are you folks nuts? I'm telling you, *this* is the car for you!"



"For crying out loud, gentlemen! That's us! Someone's installed the one-way mirror in backwards!"



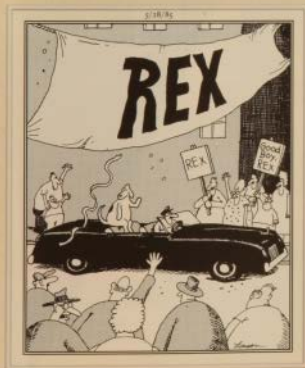
"That's right, the 49th floor! ... And you better hurry—she's hanging by a thread!"



Carl Sagan as a kid



"Go ahead, Vera ... treat me like dirt."



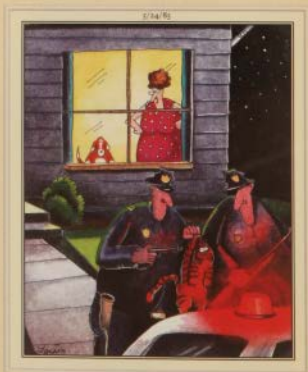
"Well, every dog has his day."



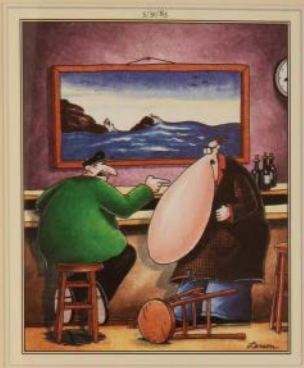
"All right! All right! If you want the truth, off and on I've been seeing *all* the vowels— a, e, i, o, u. ... Oh, yes! And *sometimes* y!"



"You're on. Ten to one if I start howling I'll have everyone here howling inside five minutes."



"And I suppose you think this is a dream come true."



"Just back off, buddy ... unless you want a fat lip."



"Shh. Listen! There's more: 'I've named the male with the big ears Bozo, and he is surely the nerd of the social group—a primate bimbo, if you will.'"



"Ha ha ha, Biff. Guess what? After we go to the drugstore and the post office, I'm going to the vet's to get tutored."

6/1/85

Lawrence



"Hank! You're reflecting!"

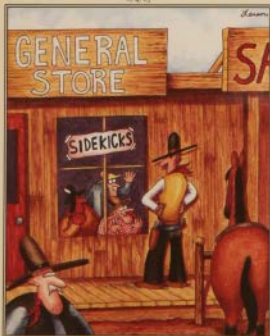
6/3/85



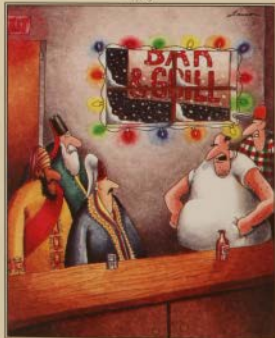
The third most common cause of forest fires.

6/2/85

Lawrence



6/7/85



"Oh yeah? More like the three wise guys, I'd say."

6/6/85



"You're a hard man, Bud."

6/12/85



When birds don't read

6/5/85



Suddenly the burglars found themselves looking down the barrel of Andy's Dobie-o-matic.

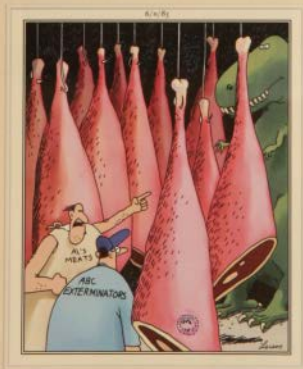
6/10/85



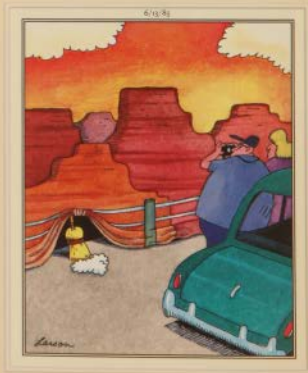
"Details are still sketchy, but we think the name of the bird sucked into the jet's engines was Harold Meeker."



Ginger decides to take out Mrs. Talbot's flower bed once and for all.

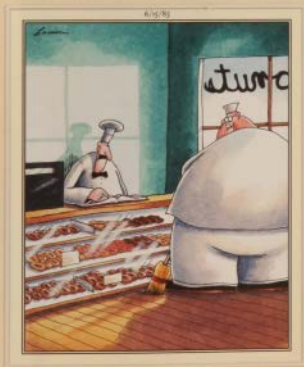


"There's one of 'em! ... And I think there're at least three or four more runnin' around in here!"





Mitch loses a dollar.



"Well, shoot. I just can't figure it out. ... I'm movin' over 500 doughnuts a day, but I'm still just barely squeakin' by."



When vultures dream

6/14/85



"Oh, look, Roger! Nerds! ...
And some little nerdlings!"

6/17/85

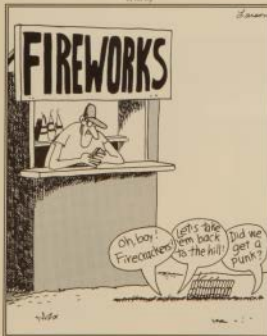
Lawson



Fly whimsy

6/18/85

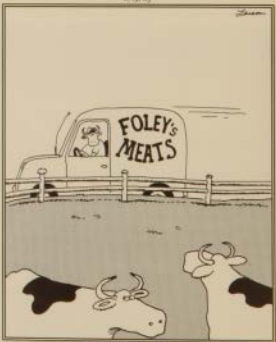
Lawson



In his heart, Willy knew the ants were
being very foolish.

6/19/85

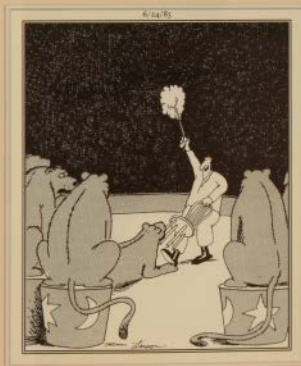
Lawson



Eventually, Murray took the job—but his
friends never did speak to him again.



"I dunno. We're just so far up, I think this would be better on the tube."



"He's using blanks—pass it on."



Randy and Mark were beginning to sense the wolves were up to no good.



"Oh, that's so disgusting—I guess a fly strip and you in the same house just aren't going to work out."



"C'mon, Gordy. ... Are you really choking, or just turning green?"



"Rise and shine, everyone! ... It's a beautiful day and we're all going to the windowsill."



"That's him! That's the one! ... I'd recognize that silly little hat anywhere!"



"Uh-oh, Norm. Across the street—whale watchers."



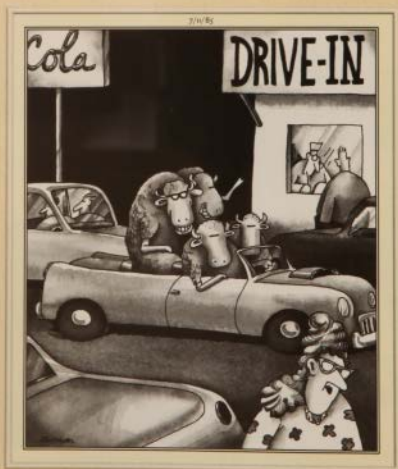
Occasionally—and especially thrilling for the visitors from the Midwest—a sub would come close enough to have its nose scratched.



"Ooooo! Ooooo! ... Are you a good witch or a bad witch?"



The can of Mace lay where it had fallen from Bill's hand, and, for a moment, time froze, as each pondered the significance of this new development.



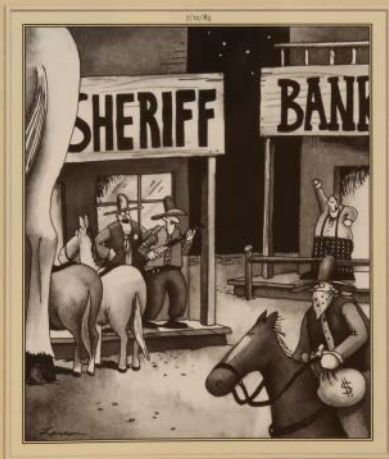
Where the buffalo cruise



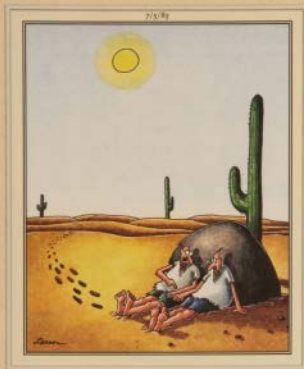
Tarzan visits his childhood home.



When a tree falls in the forest and no one is around.



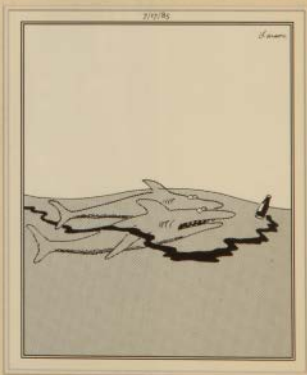
"Looks like the bank's been hit again. Well, no hurry—we'll take the big horse."



"Are you serious? Look at our arms! If anything, I'm twice as tan as you are."



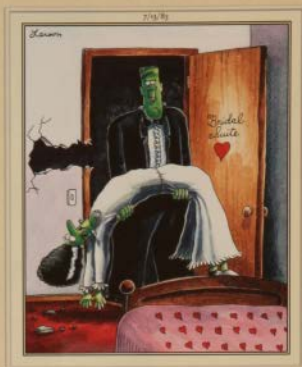
Pirate school



"What the--? Ketchup? We followed a ketchup trail for three miles?"



"C'mon, c'mon—it's either one or the other."



"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Stop the music! ... Something's wrong here!"



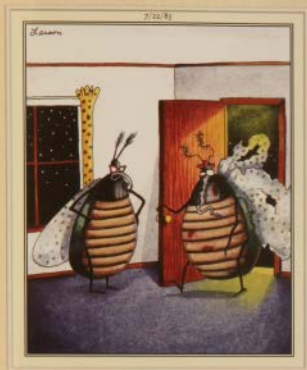
"Barrow"—precursor to the game of "wheelbarrow."



"Hold up, Niles. It says here, 'These little fish have been known to skeletonize a cow in less than two minutes.'... Now *there's* a vivid thought!"



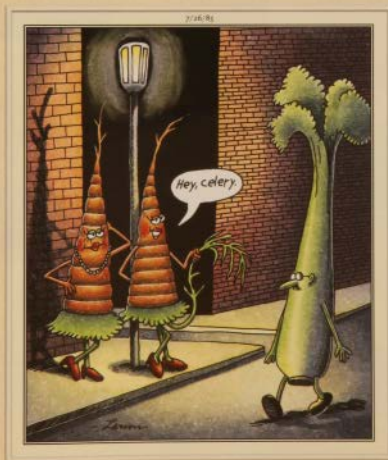
Between classes at the College of Laboratory Assistants



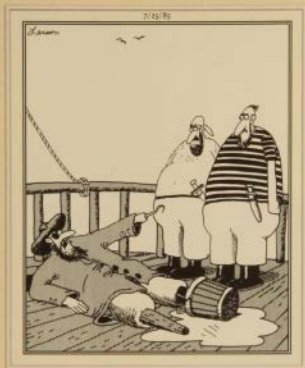
"Good heavens—just look at you! You've been down at the Fergusons' porch light, haven't you?"



"Mom! He's doing it again!"



Carrots of the evening



"Well, somebody 'yo ho hoed!'"



Life on cloud eight



Channel 42—your vampire station.

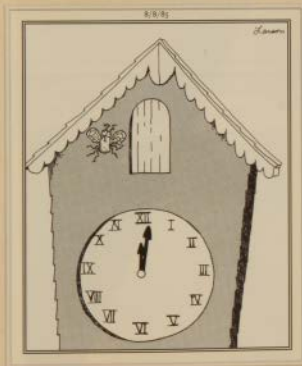




"Staaaaanleeeeeeeey!"



Medusa starts her day.



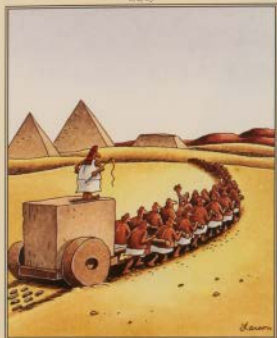
"Look out, Thak! It's a ... a ... Dang! Never can pronounce those things!"

8/2/85



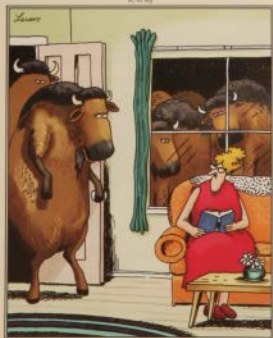
"To the death, Carlson! Hang on to the death!"

8/2/85



"Excuse me, sir, but Shinkowsky keeps stepping on the back of my sandal."

8/4/85



"Sorry to intrude, ma'am, but we thought we'd come in and just sort of roam around for a few minutes."

8/7/85



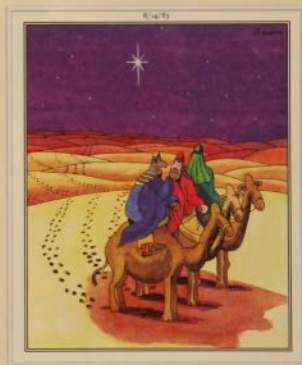
"Well, if you're almost ready, I'm dressed to kill."



Down at the Eat and Slither



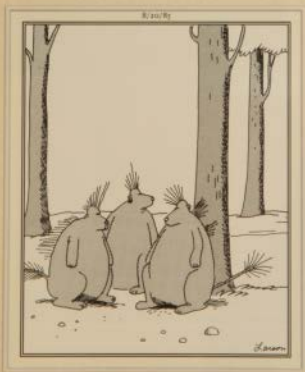
"Well, I guess I'll have the ham and eggs."



"Hold still, Omar. ... Now look up. Yep. You've got something in your eye, all right. Could be sand."



"Don't ask me how it happened, Stan—just get your abdomen over here and get me unstuck!"



Punk porcupines

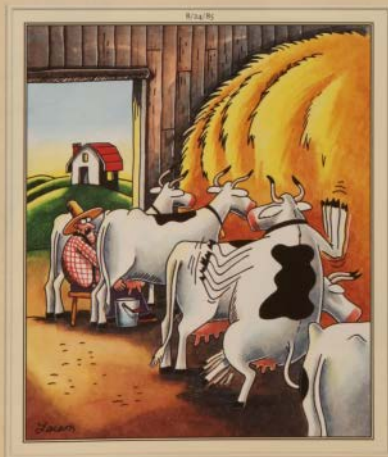




When flight mechanisms become flooded



Childhood innocence



"Hey! I'm coming, I'm coming—
just cross your legs and wait!"

8/10/85



8/10/85



"Goldberg, you idiot! Don't play tricks on those things—they can't distinguish between 'laughing with' and 'laughing at!'"

8/11/85



The shark on the go

8/22/85



"One more time, stranger—if you're *really* an old cowhand from the Rio Grande, then how come your legs ain't bowed and your cheeks ain't tan?"

8/25/85

Faun



Billy leaves home to join the zoo, but returns the next day after being told that, as an animal, he was just "too common."

8/25/85



Dumb ox

8/25/85

Faun

Call of the Calf
by zeek

I sensed the mailman's fear as he opened the gate. It was like a warm slend in the air -- so thick you could cut it with a knife. Suddenly, I felt myself growing dizzy -- as if the fear was some powerful drug. The entire yard began reeling. And then I heard his soft, plump calves begin calling to me: "Zeeeeeek... Zeeeeeek... bite us, Zeeeeeek... biiiiiiiiite uuuuuusss..."



Creative dog writing

8/25/85



"According to the map, this should be the place—but it sure don't look right to me. ... Well, we're supposed to die around here somewhere."



When fleas go unchecked



"Betty, you fool! Don't tease that thing!"



"Now, I want you all to know this cat's not from the market—Rusty caught it himself."



Tarzan contemplates another entry.



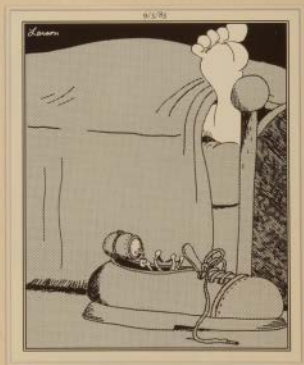
Knowing how it could change the lives of canines everywhere, the dog scientists struggled diligently to understand the Doorknob Principle.



"This was *your* suggestion, Edna! ... 'Let's play Twister, everyone, let's play Twister!'"



"Is it still there?"



The kegger lasted well into the night, and on the following morning Dale thrust his foot into a nest of cranky, hung over, stimulus-response scorpions.

9/10/85



Through patience and training, Professor Carmichael believed he was one of the few scientists who could freely visit the dangerous Wakendas.

9/10/85



"Varmints! ... You're all just a bunch of cheatin' varmints!"

9/14/85





"Oh, what a cute little Siamese. ... Is he friendly?"



And then Jake saw something that grabbed his attention.



Seymour Frishberg: Accountant of the Wild Frontier

9/18/85



9/20/85



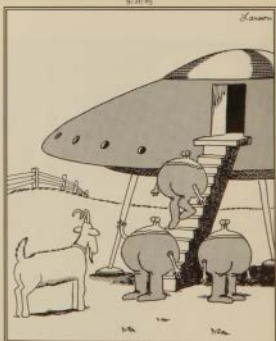
"Python ... and he's home."

9/19/85

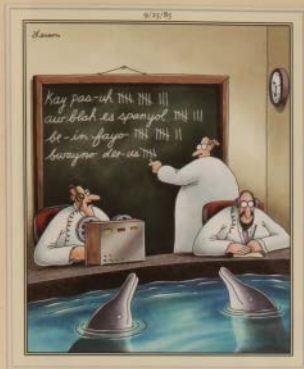


Igor goes shopping.

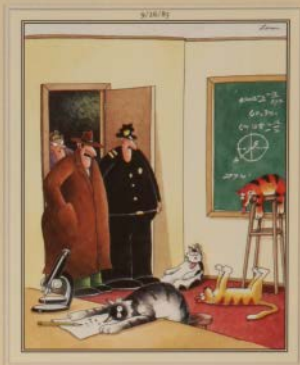
9/24/85



When worlds collide



"Matthews ... we're getting another one of those strange 'aw blah es span yol' sounds."



"Notice all the computations, theoretical scribbles, and lab equipment, Norm. ... Yes, curiosity killed these cats."



While the city slept, Dogzilla moved quietly from building to building.



Feb. 27, 1907: The duck-billed platypus is invented.

9/27/85



Late at night, his own stomach would foil Gordon's attempt at dieting.

9/28/85

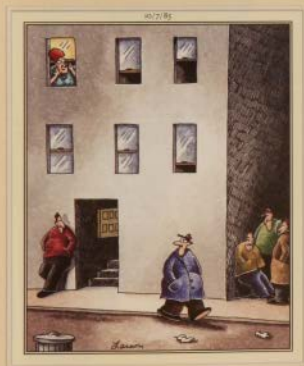
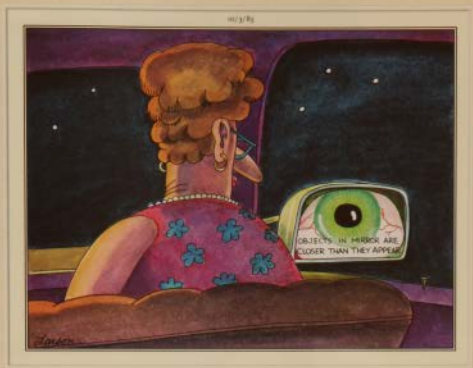


"A cat killer? Is that the face of a cat killer? Cat chaser maybe. But hey—who isn't?"

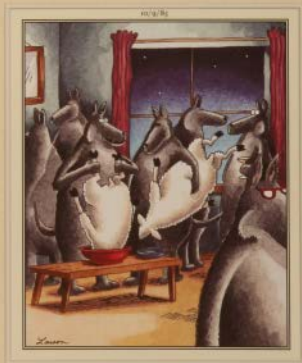
9/30/85



The Arnolds feign death until the Wagners, sensing the sudden awkwardness, are compelled to leave.



"Sidney! I made a mistake! ... Deposit the \$50 check into savings, and put the \$500 in cash into checking!"



"Well, I'm addicted. ... Have you tried Carol's sheep dip?"



The ghost of Baron Rudolph von Guggenheim, 16th-century nobleman murdered by the Countess Rowena DuBois and her lover (believed to be the Duke of Norwood), falls into Edna's bean dip.



"And now here comes Zubulu. If this isn't weird—middle of the night, and for some reason we're all restless."



"Here comes another big one, Roy, and here—we—goooooowheeeeeeeoo!"



After reaching the far side, Tonga cut the bridge—sending the outraged suburbanites into the river below. Their idol was now his ... as well as its curse.



"Quick, Abdul! Desert—one 's' or two?"



The bride, best man, and ushers
of Frankenstein



"Whoopsies! ... If this tomb does have a
curse on it, Webster, I daresay we'll be
the first to find out."



Hannibal's first attempt



"Be back by suppertime, Hump. ... And as always, you be careful!"



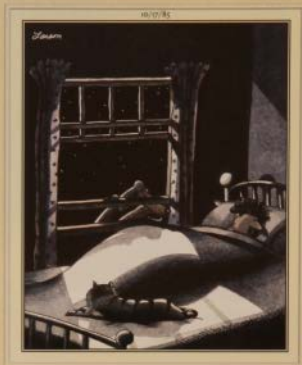
"I just can't tell from here. ... That could either be our flock, another flock, or just a bunch of little m's."



Luposlipaphobia: The fear of being pursued by timber wolves around a kitchen table while wearing socks on a newly waxed floor.



"Wait a minute, Stan. ... These are good hubcaps. If we don't take 'em, it's a cinch some other bears will."

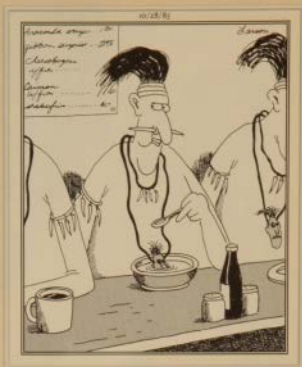


"Puuuut the caaaaaat ouuuuuuuut. ...
Puuuut the caaaaaat ouuuuuuuut. ..."



"Oh, yeaaaaah? ... Your mother lives in
an Army boot!"

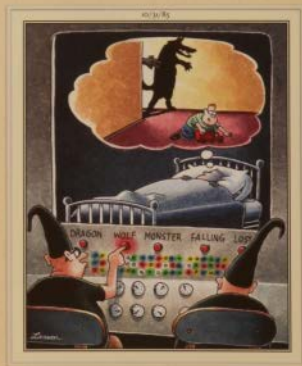




Nanoonga froze—worrying less about ruining a good head than he did the social faux pas.



Quasimodo ends his day.



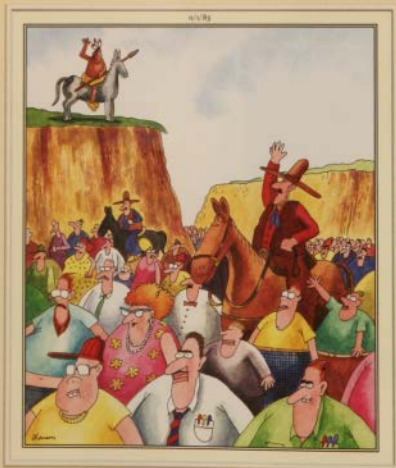
The nightmare makers



Manvark decimating an office mound



At the Comedians' Cemetery



The Great Nerd Drive of '76



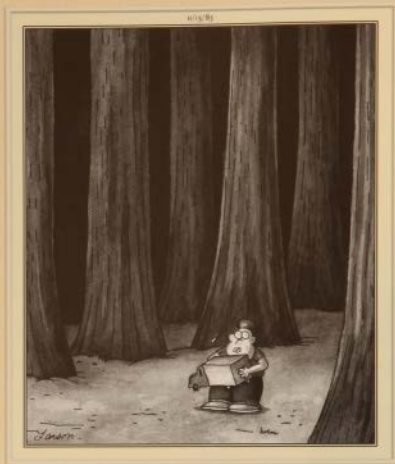
Stupid clerks



Tempers flare when Professors Carlson and Lazzell, working independently, ironically set their time machines to identical coordinates.



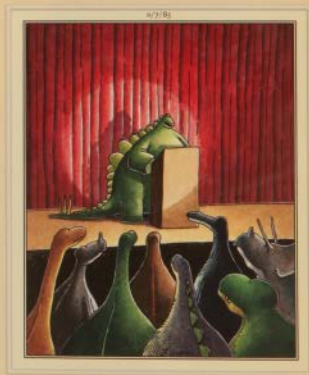
At Maneaters Anonymous



Eventually, Stevie looked up: His mother was nowhere in sight, and this was certainly no longer the toy department.



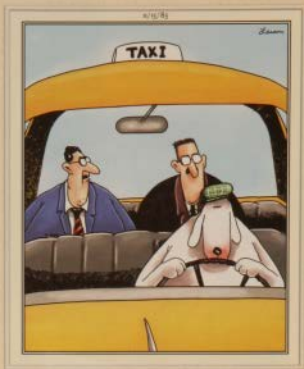
"If there're monsters moving in next door, Danny, you just ignore them. The more you believe in them, the more they'll try to get you."



"The picture's pretty bleak, gentlemen. ... The world's climates are changing, the mammals are taking over, and we all have a brain about the size of a walnut."



The morning dew sparkled on Bill's web. The decoys were in place, his fly call was poised, and luck was in the air.



"Well, we just took the wrong exit. I know this breed, Morrison—you have to watch them every minute or WHAM, they'll turn on you."



"Saaaaaay, aren't you a stranger in these parts? Well, I don't take candy from strangers."



Garbage dumps of the wild



"Whoa! This just looks like regular spaghetti! ...
Where's my Earthworms Alfredo?"



"C'mon, c'mon! You've done this a hundred
times, Uzula; the vines *always* snap you back
just before you hit. ... Remember, that's
National Geographic down there."



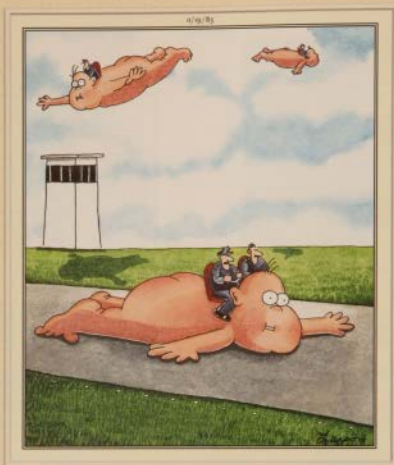
"Well, guess who's home a little early from today's castle siege?"



Dog endorsements



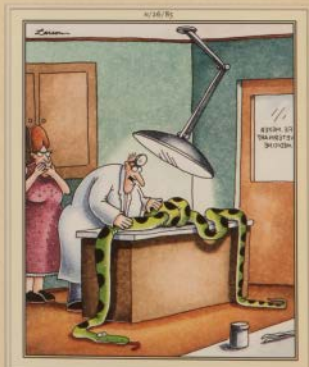
The Fords of Norway



"Fuel ... check. Lights ... check. Oil pressure ... check. We've got clearance. Okay, Jack—let's get this baby off the ground."



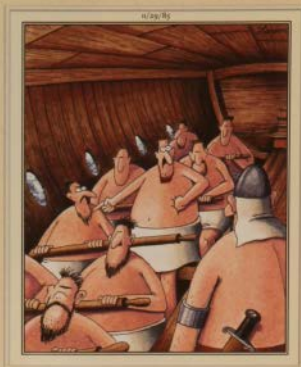
"Hey! Where's everybody going? I still have one or two empty stomachs."



"The big fellah's gonna be A-OK, Mrs. Dickerson. Now, a square knot would've been bad news, but this just appears to be a 'granny.'"



"Bigger, Wayne, bigger! It's gonna be a record!"



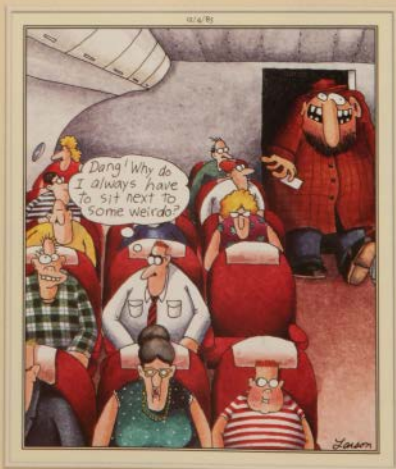
"Mr. Matthews! Mr. Matthews! I just came back from the restroom and Hodges here took my seat! ... It's my turn for the window seat, Mr. Matthews!"



In God's kitchen

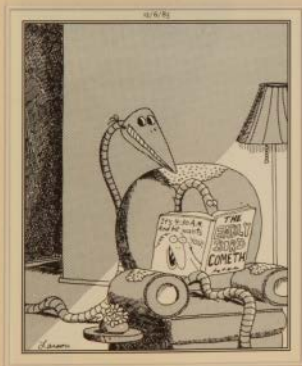


A lucky night for Goldy





As quickly as it had started, the egg fight was over.



Invertebrate practical jokes



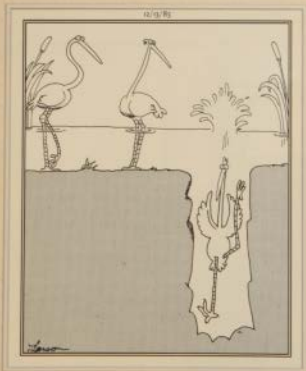
"Oh, you think that's something? See this scar right here ... that's from one nasty little dik-dik."



"C'mon, Arlene. Just a few feet in and then we can stand."



As Harriet turned the page, a scream escaped her lips: There was Donald—his strange disappearance no longer a mystery.



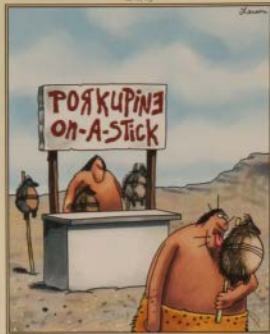
The rhino in repose

12/14/85



"Oh, yeah? If you're alone,
then whose eye is that?"

12/16/85



Early business failures

12/17/85

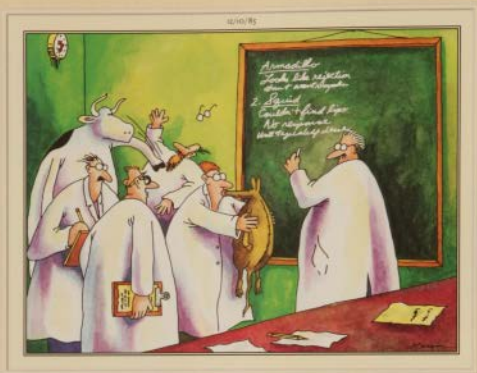


"Igor! Get that Wolfman doll out of his face! ...
Boy, sometimes you really are bizarre."

12/18/85



"Hey! I can hear the traffic!"



Testing whether or not animals "kiss."



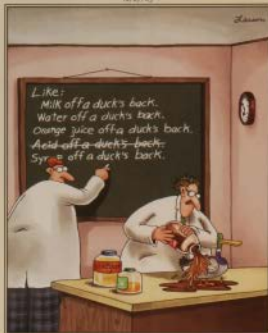
Animal game shows

12/21/85



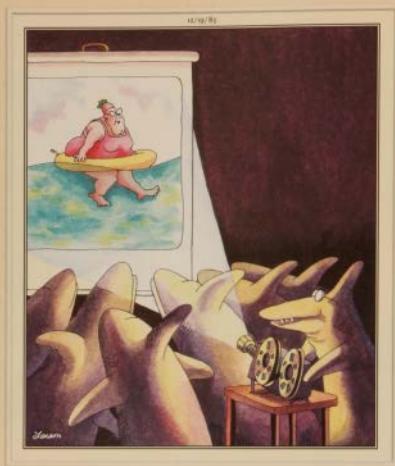
"Rusty! Two points!"

12/27/85



12/30/85

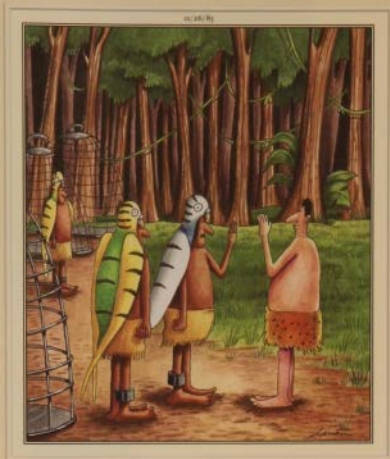




Shark nerds always ran the projector.



When careers and allergies collide



Tarzan is greeted by the Parakeet People.



"You have to prime it, you know."



"This is getting pretty eerie, Simmons. ...
Another skull, another fortune."

19



86

You have a...
at the...
and...
like...



The Eye and I

I've already told one story about my childhood fear of monsters, but please allow me one more. This one is different, because something more than a good scare was burned into my psyche; I learned a precious lesson one night that has stayed with me. The lesson was about *craft*. I paid a high price to get it, but for you, my friends, it's free.

Growing up, I had a fear of my closet. The basement was of intermittent concern, but my bedroom closet, for obvious reasons, was a nightly menace. Something hideous lived in there, and that something wanted me. I knew it, it knew I knew it, and we both knew my parents knew nothing. (That's the way these things usually go.)

Fortunately, there was one rule imposed on my closet monster: If the sliding door was kept shut, I was safe. I'm talking *completely* shut—no room for errors here. I don't know where this rule came from or why the monster even honored it, but I knew it kept me alive. I knew it, it knew it, and, well—I won't wear that out.

One night I was in bed, reading. Only my lamp was on, so the rest of the room glowed in your standard, eerie semi-darkness loved by all monsters. As usual, I couldn't keep myself from glancing up at the closet every so often; you know, just monitoring the situation. And on this night—the night that changed me forever—I looked up and saw my worst fear realized. Very, very slightly, maybe by just a half-inch or so, the closet door was open. I was looking at a dark crack that led into the bowels of hell. How could this have happened? How did I overlook something so essential to my very existence?

My dilemma was this: I could try to make it over to the main light switch, through the said eerie semi-darkness, but that was a long way across the room—at least eight feet, I'm guessing—far, far from the safety of my bed. (The Safety of the Bed Rule is a whole other issue, with complex sub-rules and regulations; for brevity's sake, I'll not discuss it here.) Or, I could walk over to the closet and simply shut it, but I knew that's *exactly* what the thing inside wanted me to do! I was a chicken, not a fool.

I stared at that horrible sliver of darkness in the corner of my room until I could at last force my eyes back down in an effort to keep reading. But I hadn't read much before I looked up again. My stomach rolled over. The door, it *seemed*, had opened just a little wider. No, it *couldn't*

have moved. It *had* to be just my imagination. I lowered my eyes. Two seconds later, I looked up again. The closet door had opened further. There was no doubt. The slit was now open a full inch.

What happened next was all rather dreamlike. I was so scared I couldn't move, I couldn't even scream. (You know, it's that basic law of terror that a primal scream is sort of like a starter's pistol to all the participants in your own death. You scream, you die.) With my heart and adrenal glands going berserk, my eyes just burned into that inch-wide abyss. And as I stared, something very slowly took shape: Framed within that narrow slit, a single, listless eye stared back at me.

It was time to scream. Without taking my eyes off that horrible eye, my vocal cords opened up into a glorious, all-out shriek. Unfortunately, my scream also indicated to the monster that the jig was up; it was time to kill. As I watched (and screamed), the closet door began to slide open. Not hurriedly, but very, very slowly, with deadly deliberation. The thing inside knew it had me; there was no need to hurry.

And from the depths of the closet, something emerged. And that something was ... my older brother, Dan.

Chaos immediately reigned. My mom came running in, flipped on the light, absorbed the situation, and began to chew out my brother while I remained in bed, crying and hyperventilating. Blah blah blah, end of story. Ah, but the lesson about craft.

Dan was like some master from the Shau Lin Temple of Scaring Younger Brothers. The instant I had screamed, any hack would have crudely flung the closet door open, jumped out, and vocalized some corny, monster-*cliché* kind of sound. Not Dan. The nuances of fear—the nuances of humor—were imbued in him. Think of how long he must have hidden in that closet, patiently waiting for me to go to bed. He had studied me. He knew what scared me. He knew enough to open that door in such small increments that I would doubt what was actually happening. And in the end, he slid that door open with a methodical, uncanny perfection, letting me watch the horror unfold as if it were all a dream. He never yelled. The sound of that door rolling on its casters was enough. He simply "emerged"—smoothly, unhurriedly—from the darkness. He let my mind fill in all the blanks.

Craft. I hate craft.



"Never mind my name. You just tell your boss some *thing* is here to see him!"



Butterflies from the wrong side of the meadow



"Ed ... the 'later' is back."



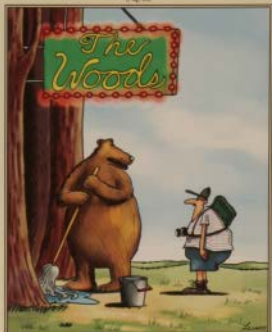
Thwarting the vampcow

1/4/86



"Yup. This year they're comin' along reeeeeeeal good. ... 'Course, you can always lose a few to an early frost or young pups."

1/4/86



"Hey, look. Number 1, we're closed, Number 2, I only work here, and Number 3, we don't like your kind in here anyway."

1/8/86



"And the next thing I knew, the whole ship just sunk right out from under me. So what's the deal with you? ... You been here long or what?"

1/7/86



When migration routes encounter the window of vulnerability



In its early stage, it was simply known as the Ölduvai Pothole.



"For heaven's sake, Lee. That spoiled rhino is going to either bellow or charge the door all night till we let him in."



"So what's this? I asked for a hammer!
A hammer! This is a crescent wrench! ...
Well, maybe it's a hammer. ...
Damn these stone tools!"



Whenever geese pass through tunnels



Belly button slipknots



Gross stories



Practical jokes of the wild



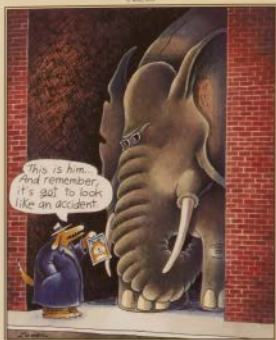
"Don't be 'fraid, Dug. Me teach him sit on finger. ... Closer, Dug, closer."

1/22/86



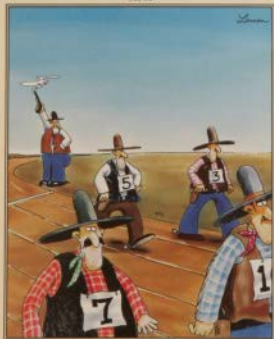
Working alone, Professor Dawson stumbles into a bad section of the petri dish.

1/20/86



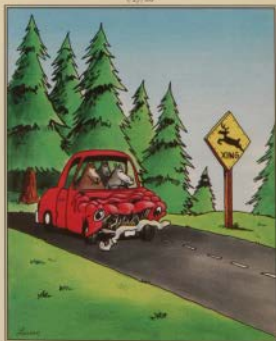
Hit elephants

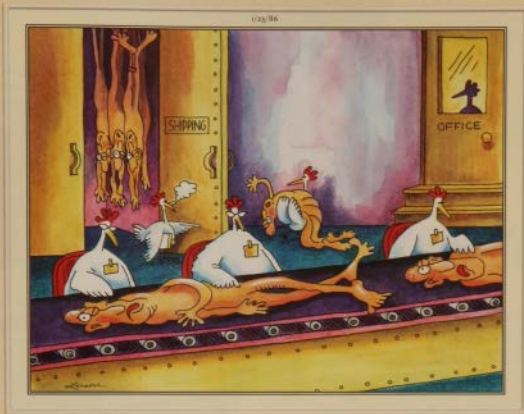
1/20/86



The 100-meter mosey

1/27/86





At the rubber man factory



"Gee, that's a wonderful sensation. ... Early in the morning, you just woke up, you're tired, movin' kinda slow, and then that oooooold smell hits your nose ... blood in the water."



Primitive spelling bees



"Look. Why don't you just give yourself up quietly? ... Otherwise, this thing could turn into a frenzy--and nobody wants that."



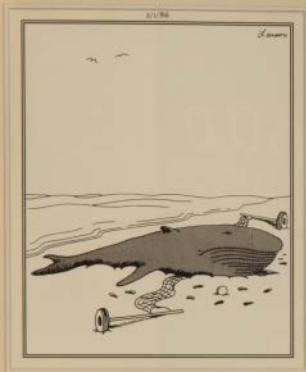
"Check this guy out, Lois. ... Artificial for sure."



Another case of too many scientists and not enough hunchbacks.



Edgar finds his purpose.



Beached whale surprise



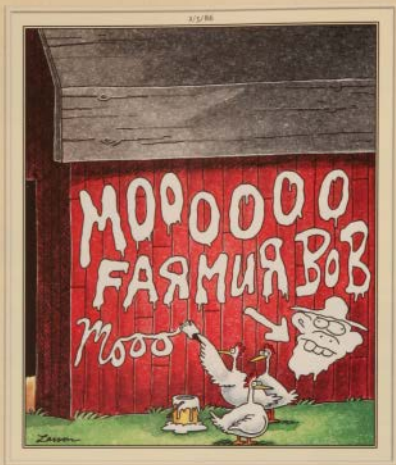
"Once in a while couldn't we just have some pasta?"



"You know those teeny tiny little birds that walk around so trustingly inside a crocodile's mouth? Well, I just been eatin' those little guys like popcorn."



Saturday morning in the Garden



Eventually, the chickens were able to drive a wedge between Farmer Bob and Lulu.



"Oo, Sylvia! You've got to see this! ... Ginger's bringing Bobby home, and even though her jaws can crush soup bones, Bobby only gets a few nicks and scratches."



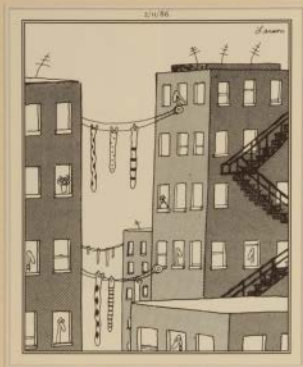
"For crying out loud, Doris. ... You gotta drag that thing out every time we all get together?"



"Sure, I'll draw, mister—but first you gotta say the magic word. ... Didn't your mother ever teach you the magic word?"



Farmer Brown froze in his tracks; the cows stared wide-eyed back at him. Somewhere, off in the distance, a dog barked.



Across town in the snake district



"Mom! Theron's dried his bed again."



"Listen. You want to go extinct? You want to shoot and trap us into oblivion? ... We're supposed to be the animals, so let's get back out there and act like it!"



"Louise! C'mon over here. ... I think we got some bug spreading through the store."

2/10/86

Lauren



"Looks like another one of those stupid
Incredible Journey things."

2/20/86



"You know, Bjorg, there's something about holding
a good, solid mace in your hand—you just look
for an excuse to smash something."

2/21/86

Lauren



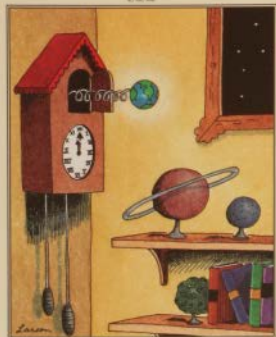
The invaluable lizard setter

2/22/86



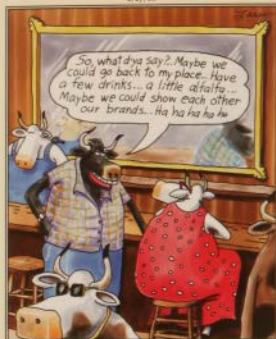
The heartbreak of remoras

2/8/86



In God's den

2/27/86

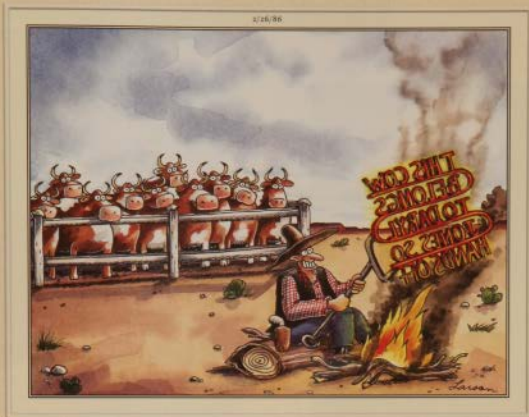


Cattle hustler

2/8/86



"You're gonna be okay, mister, but I can't say the same for your little buddy over there. ... The way I hear it, he's the one that mouthed off to them gunfighters in the first place."



Testing the carnivore-proof vest.



In the days before soap



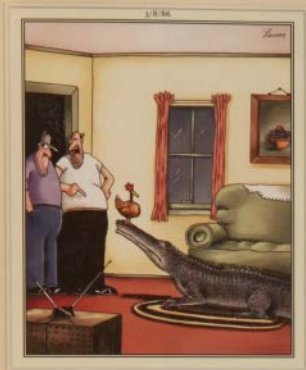
Single-cell sitcoms



"Mom! Allen's makin' his milk foam!"



"Sorry ... we're dead."



"Now watch this. He'll keep that chicken right there until I say okay. ... You wanna say okay, Ernie?"



Clumsy ghosts



Canine social blunders



Clowns of the animal world



"Hors d'oeuvre?"



Early comedians

"Mr. Ainsworth. ... Calling Mr. Aiiiiinsworth. ... If you're within the sound of my voice, Mr. Ainsworth, please give us some kind of sign."



"Randy's goin' down!"



Forest violence



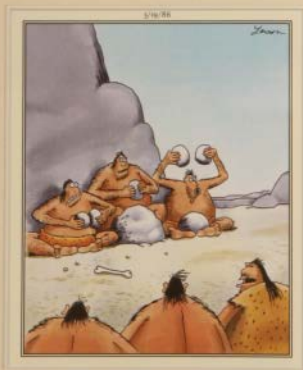
The old "fake harpoon" gag



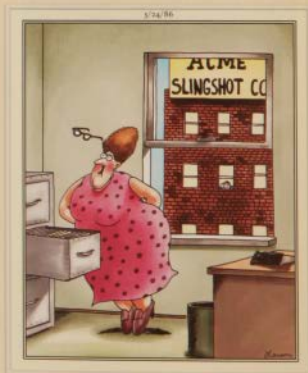
When snakes try to chew gum and crawl at the same time.



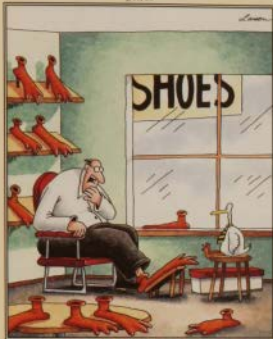
"Mr. Bailey? There's a gentleman here who claims an ancestor of yours once defiled his crypt, and now you're the last remaining Bailey and ... oh, something about a curse. Should I send him in?"



"Grog. ... They play our song."



3/22/86

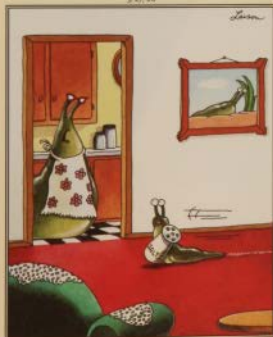


"Well, I'm not sure. ... You don't carry any other styles?"

3/25/86

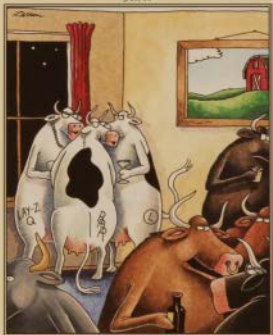


3/27/86



"Eddie! I've told you a hundred times never to run with that through the house!"

3/28/86



"Okay, guys, let's move in on those three heifers in the corner. ... Bob, you take the 'Triple R,' Dale, you take the 'Circle L,' and I'll take the 'Lazy Q.'"



The secret python burial grounds



Custer's last view



The livestock would gather every morning, hoping for one of Farmer Dan's popular "airplane" rides.



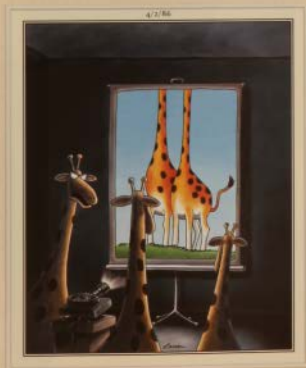
"Hold it right there, Doreen! ... Leave if you must—but the dog stays!"



Cartoon teenagers



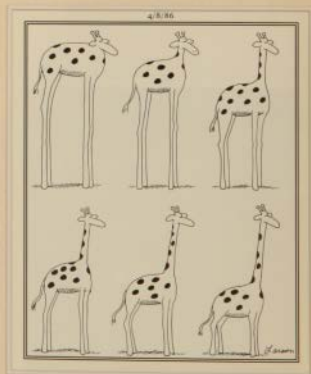
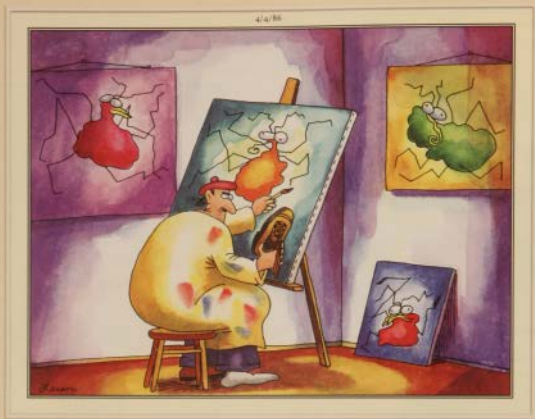
Interplanetary luggage mix-ups



"Oh, lovely—just the hundredth time you've managed to cut everyone's head off."



"Hey, Bob wants in—does anyone know how to work this thing?"



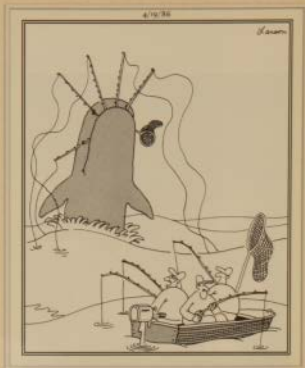
Giraffe evolution



Rock Shop 101



"Uh-oh—did anyone remember to feed the giraffe tonight?"



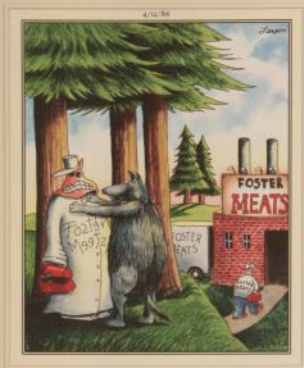
"Ooooooweeeeee! ... I wonder what they were using."



"And here we are last summer off the coast of ... Helen, is this Hawaii or Florida?"



"Margaret! He's doing it! He's doing it!"



"Okay, let's take a look at you."



"In the wild, of course, they'd be natural enemies—but they do just fine together if you get 'em as pups."



"Well, one guess which table wants another round of banana daiquiris."



"Buffalo breath? *Buffalo* breath? ... Shall we discuss your incessant little grunting noises?"



"Dang, that gives me the creeps. ... I wish she'd hurry up and scoop that guy out."



Elephant campfires



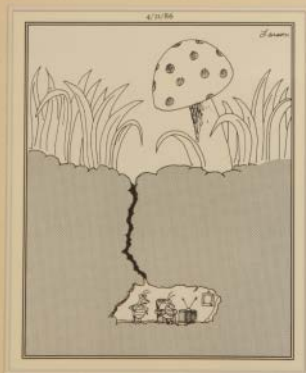
Neither rain nor snow nor sleet nor hail,
they said, could stop the mail. ... But
they didn't figure on Rexbo.



Headhunter hall closets



"Oh, and here's Luanne now. ... Bobby just got sheared today, Luanne."



"You call this a niche?"

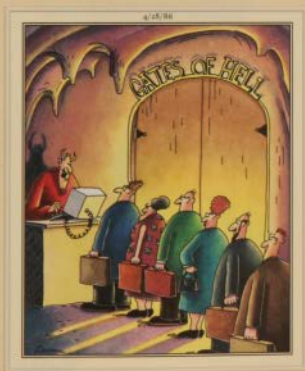




The Kongs at home



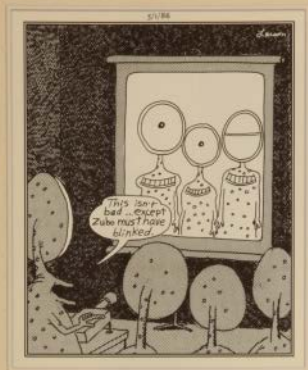
"Listen. We may be young, but we're in love and we're getting married—I'll just work until Jerry pupates."



"Okay, sir, would you like inferno or non-inferno? ... Ha! Just kidding. It's all inferno, of course—I just get a kick out of saying that."



"NOW!"



Alien slide-shows



Insectosaurs



"Donald ... trade you a thorax and six legs for two of your body segments."



"Now, here's a feature you folks would really enjoy. ... Voilà! A tree right off the master bedroom!"



Parents of a lazy river



Back-hump drivers

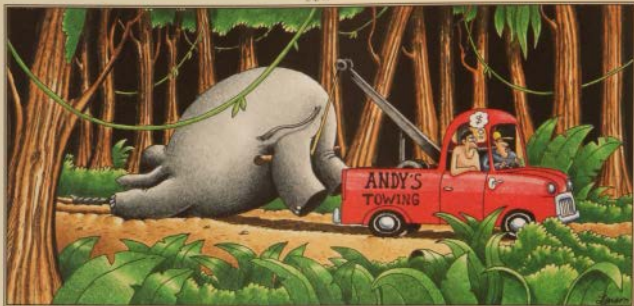


"Whoa! Gotta go, Karen. ... Think I've caught somethin' pretty big."



Mahout training wheels

5/4/86



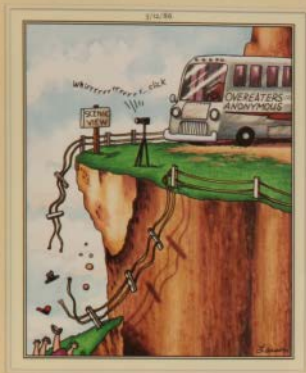
5/7/86



"Dang, if it doesn't happen every time! ...
We just sit down to relax and someone's
knockin' at the door."

5/13/86

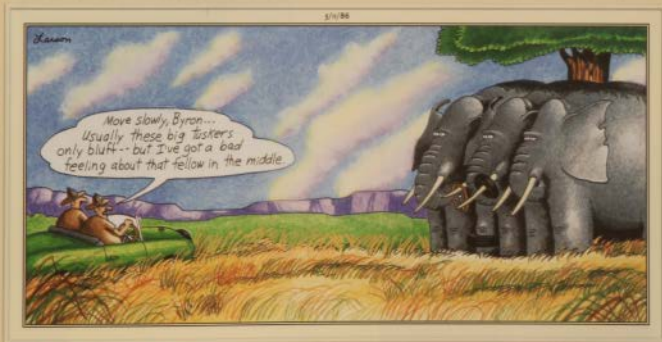




Group photo disasters



"Okay, let's see ... that's a curse on you, a curse on you, and a curse on you."

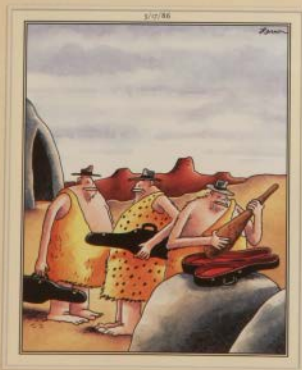




Evening on a beached whale



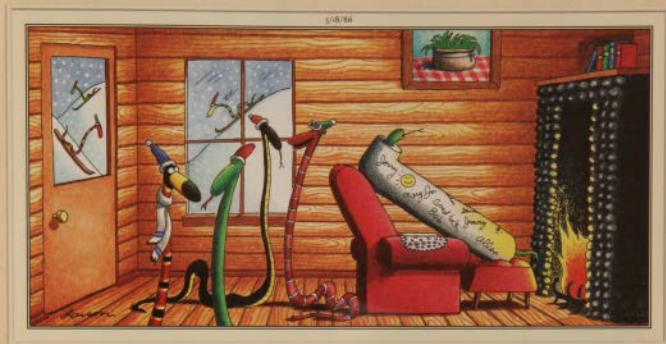
Cockroach nightmares



Primitive mobsters



"Nik! The fireflies across the street—I think they're mooning us!"



The Grim Reaper as a child



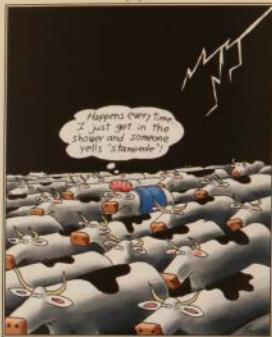
"I'm talking to you! ... You're so ... so ... so thick-membraned sometimes."

5/20/86



Cow joyrides

5/23/86



5/24/86

Loam



Braving the Indian "pillow" gauntlet.

5/22/86

Loam



Brain aerobics



Places never to set your electric eel.



"Gee, it's good to see the old nest. ... Even that thing down there's gettin' to be a sight for sore eyes."



Beginning duck





"Bummer of a birthmark, Hal."



Shark food-fights



Amoeba porn flicks



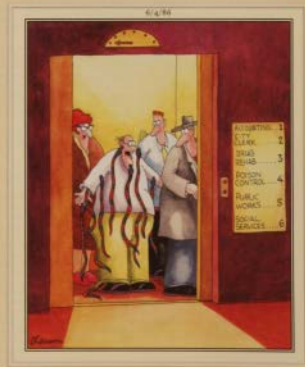
Early appliances



Wasted mirage



"What's this? Your house? ... Yes! Your house is on fire! ... Fly away, dearie! Fly away home!"



"Fourth floor, please."

6/8/86



Dog hell

The Herald Statesman, Yonkers, N.Y., 7/16/86

Cartoon not funny

As a mother of a 3-year-old who is now interested in the newspaper, I am perplexed that you would allow a cartoon like "The Far Side" to be on the same page with "Marvin" and "The Family Circus."

The Sunday supplement funnies are supposed to be entertainment, not "Dog Hell" as "The Far Side" put it. This cartoon does not belong on the "funny papers" because it isn't funny. This type of humor belongs in an adult magazine—not something in a local

paper that is (and should be) read by a child. The other mothers I have spoken to feel the same way. If necessary, to be rid of this, I can start a petition of concerned parents or if you can see your way clear, for you, the press, to ask your readers if they want it or not.

I realize that this is not the first letter you've received about this, but I feel that writing to you is the only way you'll find out how your paper affects your reader.

JOY MARTIN
Ostling

Times-Advocate, Escondido, Calif., 1/19/86

"Far Side" is garbage

My wife and I were talking about how disappointed we are with one of the comics you include in your paper. When Gary Larson, creator of "The Far Side," made fun of pornography with "Amoeba Porn Flicks," I was sensitive that my children would see it. I passed it off as just something that slipped by the better judgment of the editor. But when I opened the June 8 edition and saw "The Far Side" in the Sunday funnies depicting "Dog Hell" (reproduced at the right) where dogs carry pooper scoopers and are presumably forced to collect their own feces, I came close to canceling my subscription.

Why don't you get rid of that garbage? We don't need it on the family funny page, and I want to keep my subscription. Whatever happened to "Annie"?

Jerry Jargenson
Rancho Bernardo

"Far Side" is disgusting

I am April Marie Arzani. And I'm 8 years old. And I like to read the funnies on Sunday. On Sunday, June 8, I was very disgusted with the comic called "The Far Side." I thought that to me, as a Christian, it was very unnecessary.

April Marie Arzani
Escondido

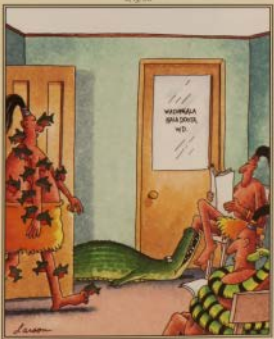
6/7/86



6/10/86



6/13/86



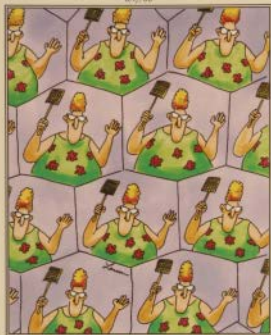
Witch doctor waiting rooms

6/14/86



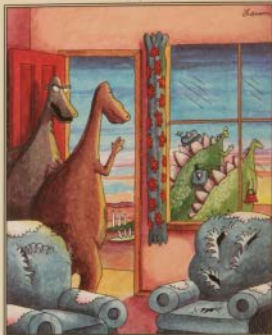
Unknown to most historians, William Tell had an older and less fortunate son named Warren.

6/17/86



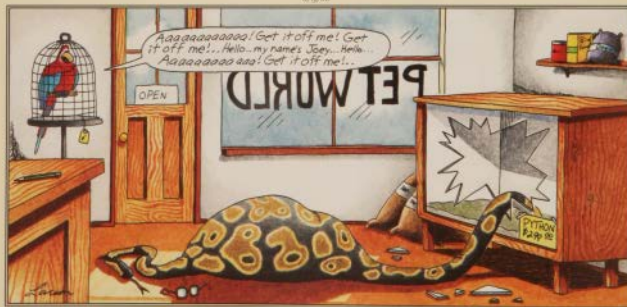
The last thing a fly ever sees

6/16/86



"Well, that does it! Look at our furniture! The Shuelers have visited us for the last time!"

6/16/86



6/22/86



6/18/86



"And that's the hand that fed me."

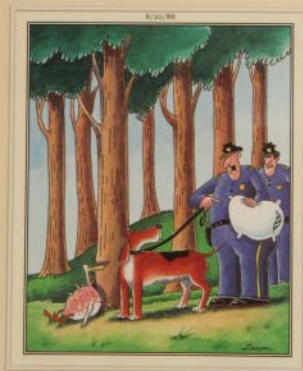
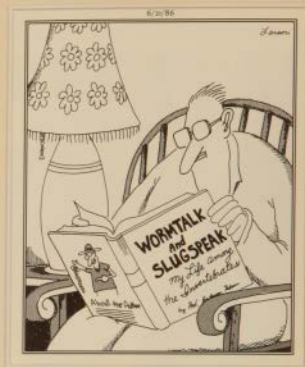
6/19/86



"Whoa! *That* was a good one! Try it, Hobbs—just poke his brain right where my finger is."



Roberta takes on a dust rhino.



"You idiot! We want the scent *on* the pillow!
On the pillow!"



16th-century Mona wanna-bes

6/23/86



"I heard that, Simmons! I'm a wimp, am I? ...
Well, to heck with you—to heck with
all of you!"

6/23/86



The mark of Deero

6/27/86



6/23/86



"Wait a minute, Vince! Last summer—
remember? Some little kid caught you,
handled you, and tossed you back in the
swamp. ... *That's* where you got 'em."



Before paper and scissors



Gong birds

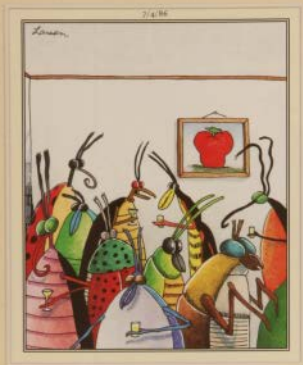




An impressionable moment in the childhood of Buffalo Bill



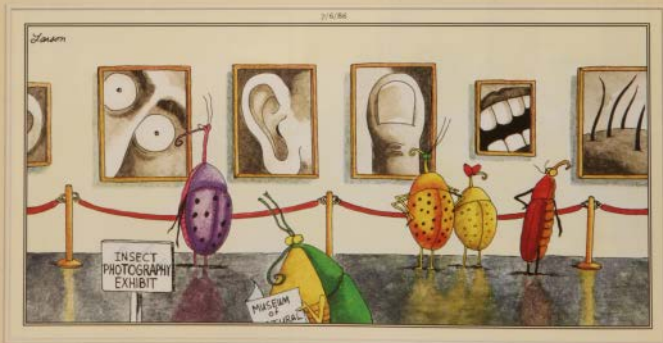
The primitive game of "Kiss-the-mammoth-and-run"

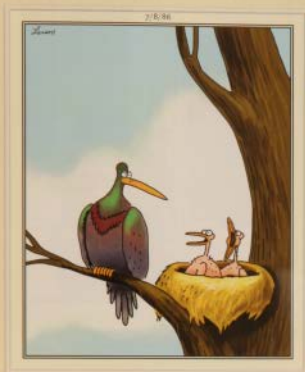


"Think about it, Ed. ... The class Insecta contains 26 orders, almost 1,000 families, and over 750,000 described species—but I can't shake the feeling we're all just a bunch of bugs."



"Okay, folks! ... It's a wrap!"





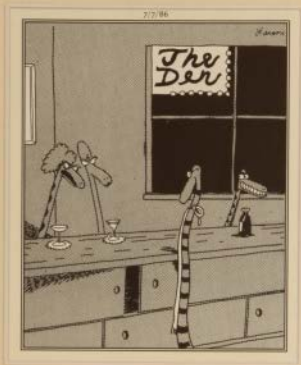
"Mom! ... Earl's grossing me out with a mouthful of worms!"



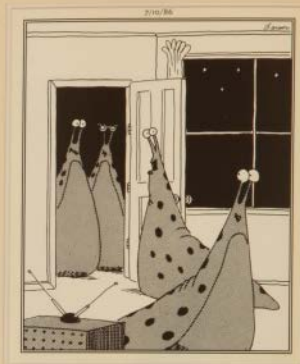
Flora practical jokes



Alien student drivers



"Stay away from that character down there, Barb—he's poison for sure."



"Well, I'll be! ... Honey, it's the Worthingtons—our favorite couple of slimebags!"



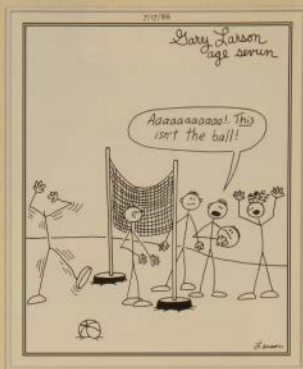
African rakesnake



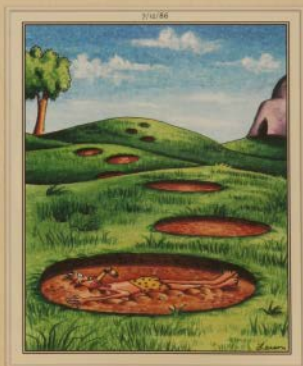
"I don't know what you're insinuating, Jane, but I haven't seen your Harold all day—besides, surely you know I would only devour my own husband!"



"I don't mean to exacerbate this situation, Roger, but I think I'm quite close to bursting into maniacal laughter and imagining your nose is really a German sausage."



"We're gettin' old, Jake."



50,000 B.C.: Gak Eisenberg invents the first and last silent mammoth whistle.



Same planet, different worlds

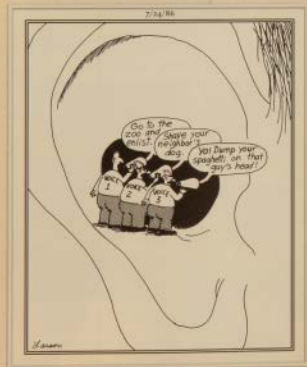


"We should write that spot down."





Fast-food farms



Inside the ear of crazy people



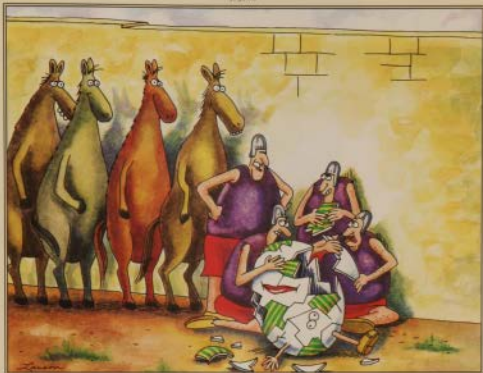
"Another nutcracker? Well, this is my lucky day!"



"I'm sorry, Mr. Caldwell, but the big guy's on his way out. If you want my opinion, take him home, find a quiet spot out in the yard, and squash him."



7/9/86



"Okay, okay, you guys have had your chance—the horses want another shot at it."

7/30/86



Appliance healers

July 21, 86

Dear Sir,
I have seen some rude, nasty, cartoons in my life, but this is the worst.

We are having a hard enough time trying to keep Christianity in the schools and other places. To publish a cartoon (I) like this slandering a man of God, is just about as low as you can get.

██████████ is a man of God and I have seen many miracles in his services. Lots of people love like him, but a lot don't like the type either.

Yours is rude and we called for
Kouls,
Routon P. Reed

P.S. I HAVE PAID NO \$
N CHA 7. STREET
HAPPENT YOU ?



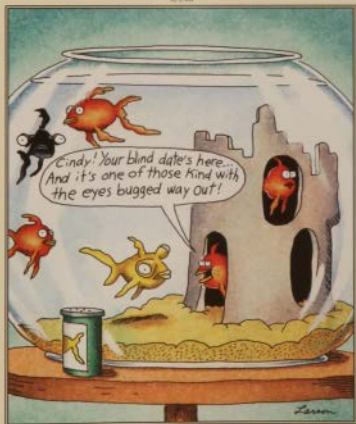
"Hold it right there, Frank! ... If you're gonna shake,
you do it in another room!"



8/1/86



8/1/86



Goldfish little brothers



"As I suspected, Mr. Sullivan—just a flesh wound, just a flesh wound."



"Coincidence, ladies and gentlemen? Coincidence that my client just *happened* to live across from the A-1 Mask Co., just *happened* to walk by their office windows each day, and they, in turn, just *happened* to stumble across this new design?"



"Egad! Willard's home early! Don't move—his vision's not very good, but his sense of smell and hearing are quite acute."



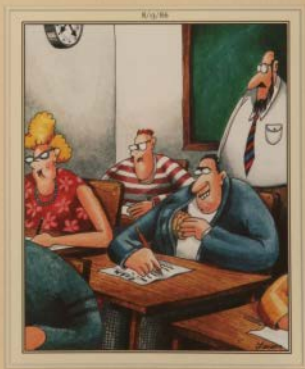
"Henry! Hurry or you're gonna miss it—ghost riders in the kitchen!"



"Skunk sandwich, Bill ... mmmm ... skunk sandwich. ... Trade for that banana?"



"You know, I wish you'd get rid of that hideous thing—and I think it's just plain dangerous to even have one in the house."



Midway through the exam, Allen pulls out a bigger brain.

R.10/86

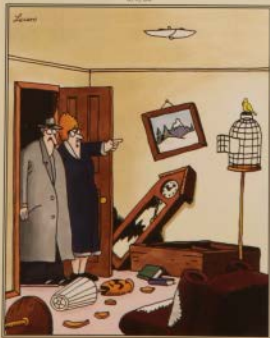


R.18/86



"Hey! That's milk! And you said you were all empty, you stinkin' liar!"

R.11/86



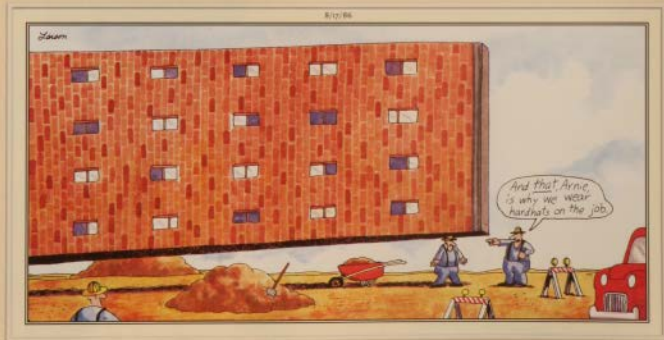
"Well! No wonder! ... Look who's been loose the whole evening!"



Whale fitness classes



The monster snorkel: allows your child to breathe comfortably without exposing vulnerable parts to an attack.





The Snakes of War



They weren't the most evil people in the world, nor the best. They were the Village of the Darned.



"Well, shoot! There's my herd! ... Thank you anyway, ma'am."





Their reunion was both brief and awkward, each still bearing the wounds from that ugly "Jane incident."



"He's dead, all right—beaked in the back ... and you know this won't be easy to solve."



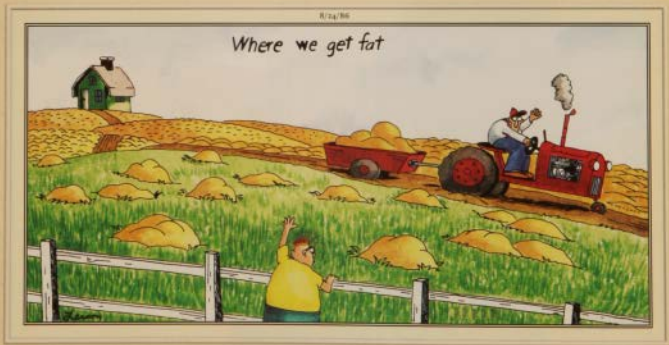
"For the love of— ... Somethin's been messin' with these chickens!"



"Hey! I think I'm getting Orange Crush over here."



"Holy moley, Loretta! Not only is it still there,
look what it did to the end of my stick!"





"Allen, you jerk! Dad told us not to do that or we'd scare the fish!"



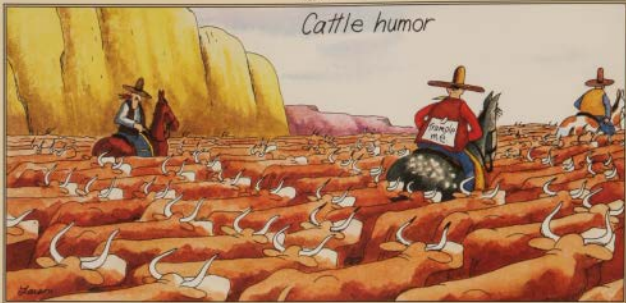
Inside the sun



"Randy, you idiot! Never take an elevator in an emergency!"

8/9/86

Cattle humor



8/18/86



"Stimulus, response! Stimulus, response!
Don't you ever think?"



Dirk brings his family tree to class.





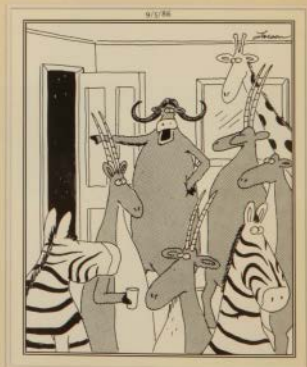
"You know what I think, Vernon? I think you're hiding one of those things the Indians bury up to their necks—that's what I think!"



Just another old wives' tale



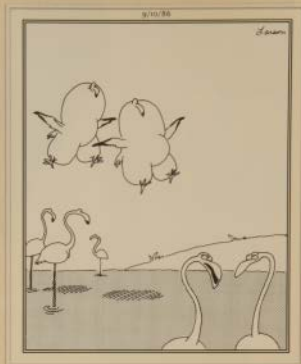
Never put your tongue on a glacier.



"Out! Everyone out! ... I've had it with this 'sybiosis' baloney!"



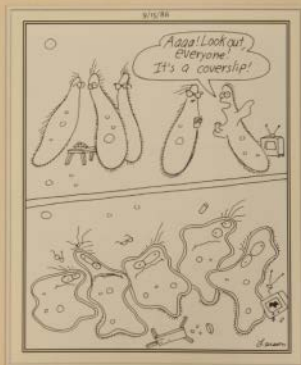
Skin orchards



"Gangway! ... Here come the Morrison brothers."



"You know, I bet your kids and Bruno would like to go outside where they'd have room to really play."



Life on a microscope slide

9/4/86



In that one split second, when the choir's last note had ended but before the audience could respond, Vinnie Conswego belches the phrase, "That's all, folks."

9/8/86



"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused? My brain is full."

9/12/86



Well, there goes your brother again... filling the kids' heads with those stories.

...so this package arrives out of no-where --no return address or nothin'-- just one word smeared across it-- "giblets!"

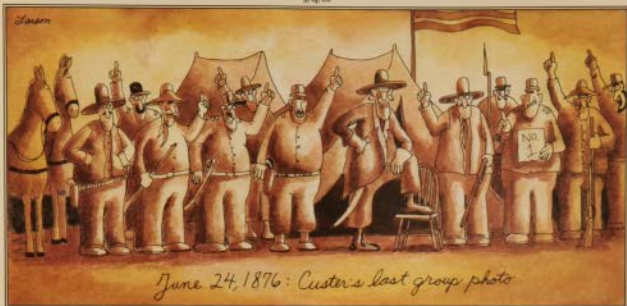
9/15/86



And! There's the ol' gall bladder. Dang it, Lois! Would you knock off all this squirmin' around business?

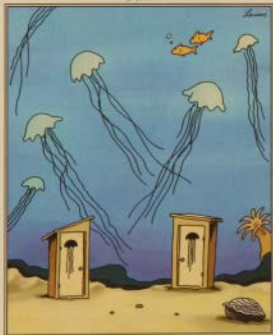
Volume five in a series

9/14/86



June 24, 1876: Custer's last group photo

9/17/86



Only they know the difference.

9/19/86



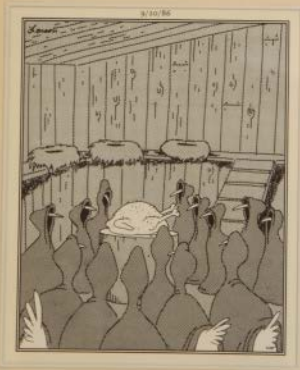
Early chemists describe the first dirt molecule.



"You can run, Thomas, but you can't hide."



The door swung wide, and there, to the horror of the other pirates, stood Captain Monet—unmistakable with his one eye and pegbody.



Chicken cults



Venom pushers

9/21/86

J. Anwar



9/29/86

J. Anwar



"Of course, long before you mature, most of you will be eaten."

9/30/86



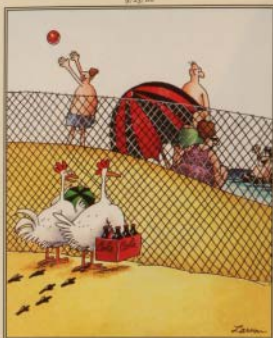
Seconds later, Mrs. Norton was covered with ink.

9/22/86



Inadvertently, Roy dooms the entire earth to annihilation when, in an attempt to be friendly, he seizes their leader by the head and shakes vigorously.

9/23/86



"Well, wouldn't you know it—we've come all this way to our favorite beach and someone's strung chicken wire around it."

9/24/86



God as a kid tries to make a chicken in his room.

9/25/86



"Ooo! This is always amusing. ... Here comes Bessie inside her plastic cow ball."

9/25/86



9/26/86



"Go back to sleep, Chuck. You're just havin' a nightmare—of course, we *are* still in hell."

UPS/AMP MEMO

TO: [] FROM: []
 DATE: []
 SUBJECT: []
 BY: []

Each article of the Universal Syndicate, called "articles" which appeared in each member's first AMP edition. They have had over 1000 items published the end of the year, 1985 and this according to the syndicate the best "article" ever published. I would like to be named a writer for the best "article" ever published. I would like to be named a writer for the best "article" ever published. I would like to be named a writer for the best "article" ever published. I would like to be named a writer for the best "article" ever published.

John

**UNIVERSAL
PRESS
SYNDICATE**

400 West 10th Street, Dallas, Texas 75202 • Phone (214) 353-8800

October 13, 1986

Jack Lottice
 Assistant Editor
 The Houston Chronicle
 801 Texas Station
 Houston, TX 77002

Dear Jack:

No, but your readers are single-minded! "To explain" is not one of a number of definitions of "norm." The UPS gives advice, news, and information, not news and advice. Besides, you can't explain with a "limit."

Best personal regards.

Sincerely,

 Bob Selig
 Editorial Director

10/3/86



Suddenly, the living room was flooded with light and the angry sounds of an engine being revved. And everyone knew: The cat was back.

10/1/86



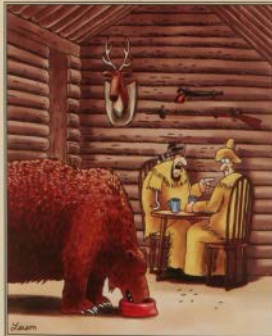
"Uh-oh. ... The Beaumonts' mouth is on fire."

10/2/86



"Just a word of warning, Myron—if you miss, I'm comin' after your big hazel."

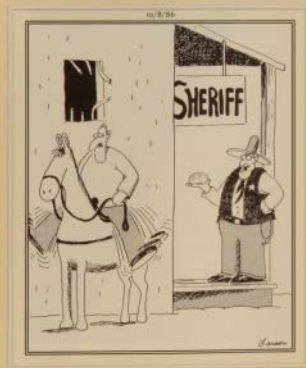
10/4/86



"Raised the ol' girl from a cub, I did. ... 'Course, we had to get a few things straight between us. She don't try to follow me into town anymore, and I don't try and take her food bowl away till she's done."



Alien family dinners

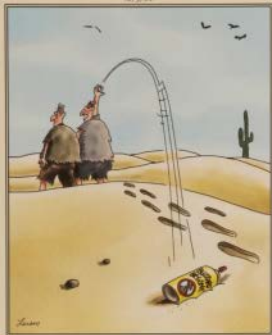


"Ha! Figured you might try escapin', Bert—so I just took the liberty of removin' your horse's brain."



Auditions for the Lone Ranger's horse

10/1/86



"And now that's the last of that."

10/1/86



"Say, ain't you a stranger in this part?"

10/1/86



"Ringworm around the collar ... Ringworm around the collar!"

10/1/86

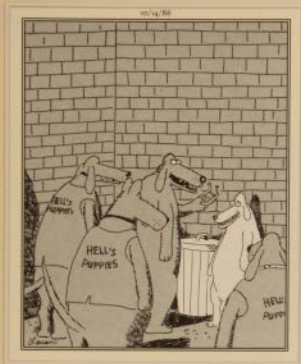


"Primordial soup again?"



"You wanna have some fun, Fred? Watch. ... Growling and bristling, I'm gonna stand in front of the closet door and just stare."





Treehouse nightmare

"Well, whatta y'know, boys. All this time Mr. Tough Dog here was just wearing one of these fake-a-snarl contraptions."



Washington crossing the street

10/17/86



"Hey! C'mon, Jed! ... Ease up on them hammers!"

10/20/86



"Wawa!"

10/22/86



"Randy! Just sit down, eat your cereal, and look for that thing later!"

10/28/86



The Pillsbury Doughboy meets Frank's Asphalt and Concrete Paving Service.

10/19/86



10/21/86



"Again? What is it with you that as soon as you put one fin on the land you have to go?"

10/23/86



The operation was a success: Later, the duck, with his new human brain, went on to become the leader of a great flock. Irwin, however, was ostracized by his friends and family and eventually just ambled south.



"What can you do for my neck?"



"Ha! Thak get short straw! ... Thak go see if Zog still live here."



10/22/86



10/25/86

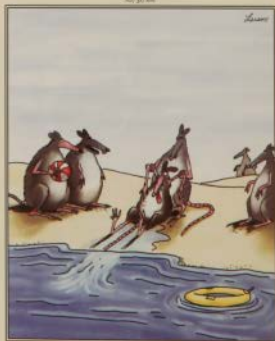


Snake horror stories

10/30/86



10/31/86



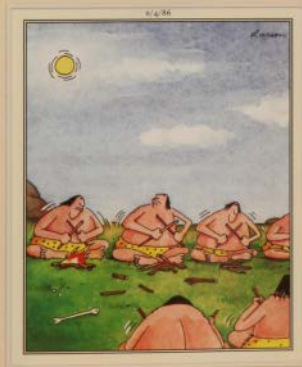
"Boy, he even looks like a drowned rat."



Airplane mimicry



Classroom afflictions



Early clock-watchers



"Up! Up! Bring me up!"

11/6/86



Business lunch

11/7/86

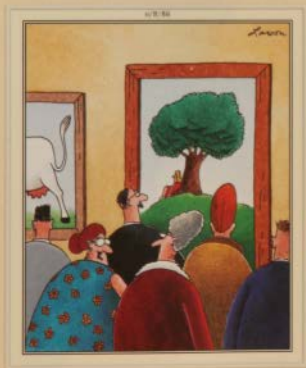


Robby works his ant farm.

11/1/86



The short-lived fiasco of the inflatable fort



"My boy made the frame."



"Hold it! There's a car across the street—you sure you weren't followed, Mary?"



"So, Carl—attacked by any giant carrots lately?"



Second to the last of the Mohicans



"I hear 'em! ... Gee, there must be a *hundred* of the little guys squirmin' around in there!"



"And here we are last summer going south. ... Wait a minute, Irene! We went *north* last summer! The stupid slide's in backwards!"



"Oh, wonderful—you're early."



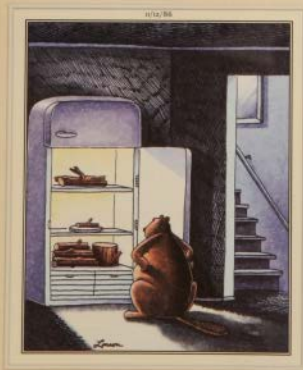
Tantor burns up on I-90.



"It's 'Them,' gentlemen."



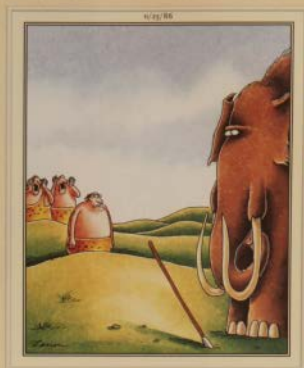
At the Strategic Pie Limitation Talks



"And this report just in—apparently, the grass is greener on the other side."



"Give me a hand here, Etta ... I got into a nest of wiener dogs over on Fifth and Maple."



"Aairrrr spearrrr ... aairrrr spearrrr! ..."

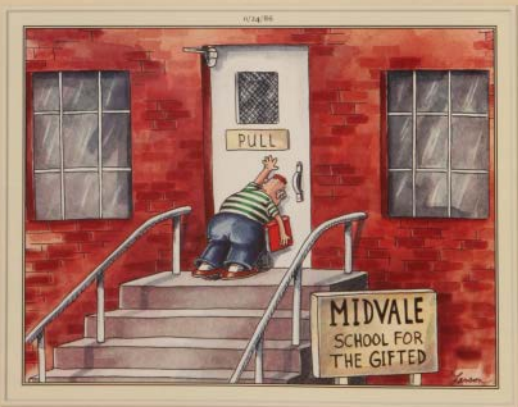




Professor Gallagher and his controversial technique of simultaneously confronting the fear of heights, snakes, and the dark.



"I tell you, a crib is just plain worthless—what we need around here is a good cardboard box."





"Barbara! I'm going for help—tread soup!"



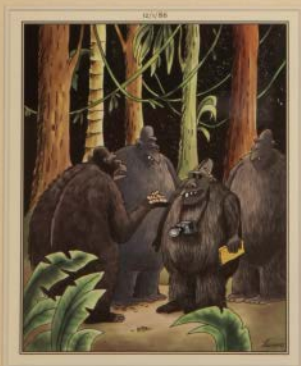
"Whoa! Watch where that thing lands—we'll probably need it."



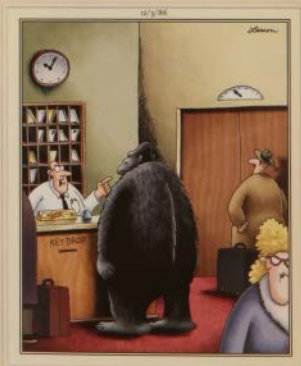
At a critical moment, Zak's club jams.



"Well, from across the hall I could hear this heated argument, followed by sounds of a scuffle. Suddenly, there was this tremendous, bloodcurdling 'quaaaaacck!' That's when I called."



"So, you're a *real* gorilla, are you? Well, guess you wouldn't mind munchin' down a few beetle grubs, would you? ... In fact, we wanna see you chug 'em!"



"Look, I'm sorry ... if you weighed 500 pounds, we'd certainly accommodate you—but it's simply a fact that a 400-pound gorilla does *not* sleep anywhere he wants to."



The world was going down the tubes. They needed a scapegoat. They found Wayne.



Buddy's dreams



Moby's parents



Bobbing for poodles



Night of the Crash-Test Dummies



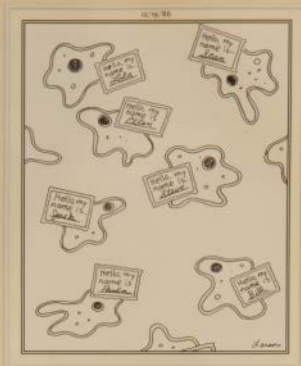
"I'm sorry, ma'am, but his license does check out and, after all, your husband was in season. Remember, just because he knocks doesn't mean you have to let him in."



And for two excruciating months, he was simply known as "Skinhead of the Jungle."



When snakes dream they're crawling



Amoeba conventions



"YO! FARMER DAVE! LET'S GO, LET'S GO, LET'S GO! ... YOU GETTIN' UP WITH US CHICKENS OR NOT?"



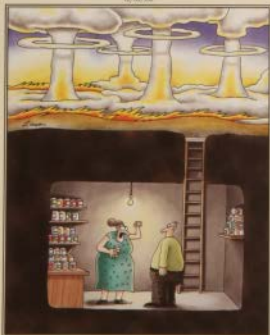
"Sorry to bother you, sir, but there's another salesman out here—you want me to tell him to go to heaven?"

12/14/86



Primitive demolition derbies

12/18/86



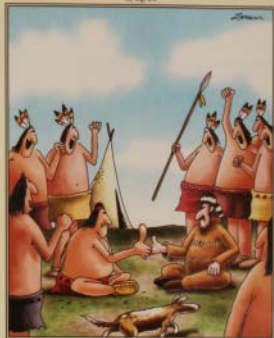
"How many times did I say it, Harold? How many times? 'Make sure that bomb shelter's got a can opener—ain't much good without a can opener,' I said."

12/17/86



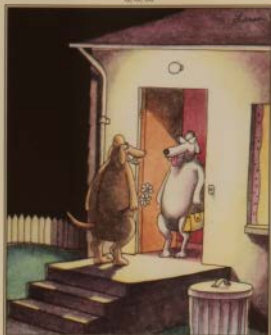
"And another thing! I'm sick and tired of you callin' me 'new kid' all the time!"

12/14/86



To win the tribe's respect, Jed first had to defeat their best thumb-wrestler.

12-16-86



"Oh, Ginger—you look absolutely stunning ... and whatever you rolled in sure does stink."

12/21/86





"Just think. ... Here we are, the afternoon sun beating down on us, a dead, bloated rhino underfoot, and good friends flying in from all over. ... I tell you, Frank, this is the best of times."



The Headless Horsefamily

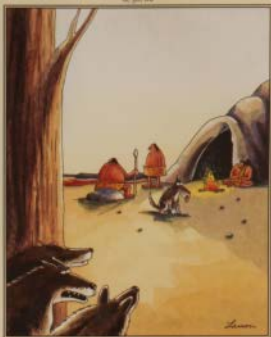


Vern waited, hoping to God for one moment—one precious moment—when the herd would cluster together.



"Carl, maybe you should just leave your flashlight off. We're trying to scare these kids, not crack 'em up."

12/20/86



"It's Bob, all right ... but look at those vacuous eyes, that stupid grin on his face—he's been domesticated, I tell you."

12/21/86



The portrait of Dorian Cow

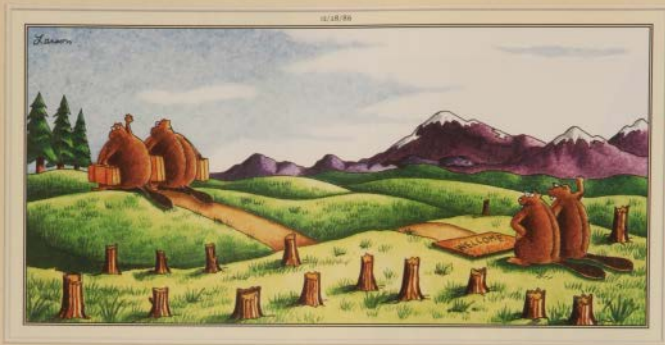
12/21/86



12/27/86



Some of the non-vital organs



And the Von Schnells were never invited back again.





IT'S EVERYBODY'S
Problem!
For More Details



THE WAX
BUTCHER
MUSEUM



absolutely
NO
WICKENS

Bob Sucks
sucks on
electric fence

Sum - Cow
60 - 1000





Bovinnie's
HELPERS
HELPERS
HELPERS!

Luke Jones
Has Hoop
and Mouth
Larsen

THE
SUN LATE PLAY

NOW
PLAYING:
101
DEAD
MATADORS

The
HOORAY PLACE

BARN-
LESS

EAT
HAY
#DIE

MADRID STAFF

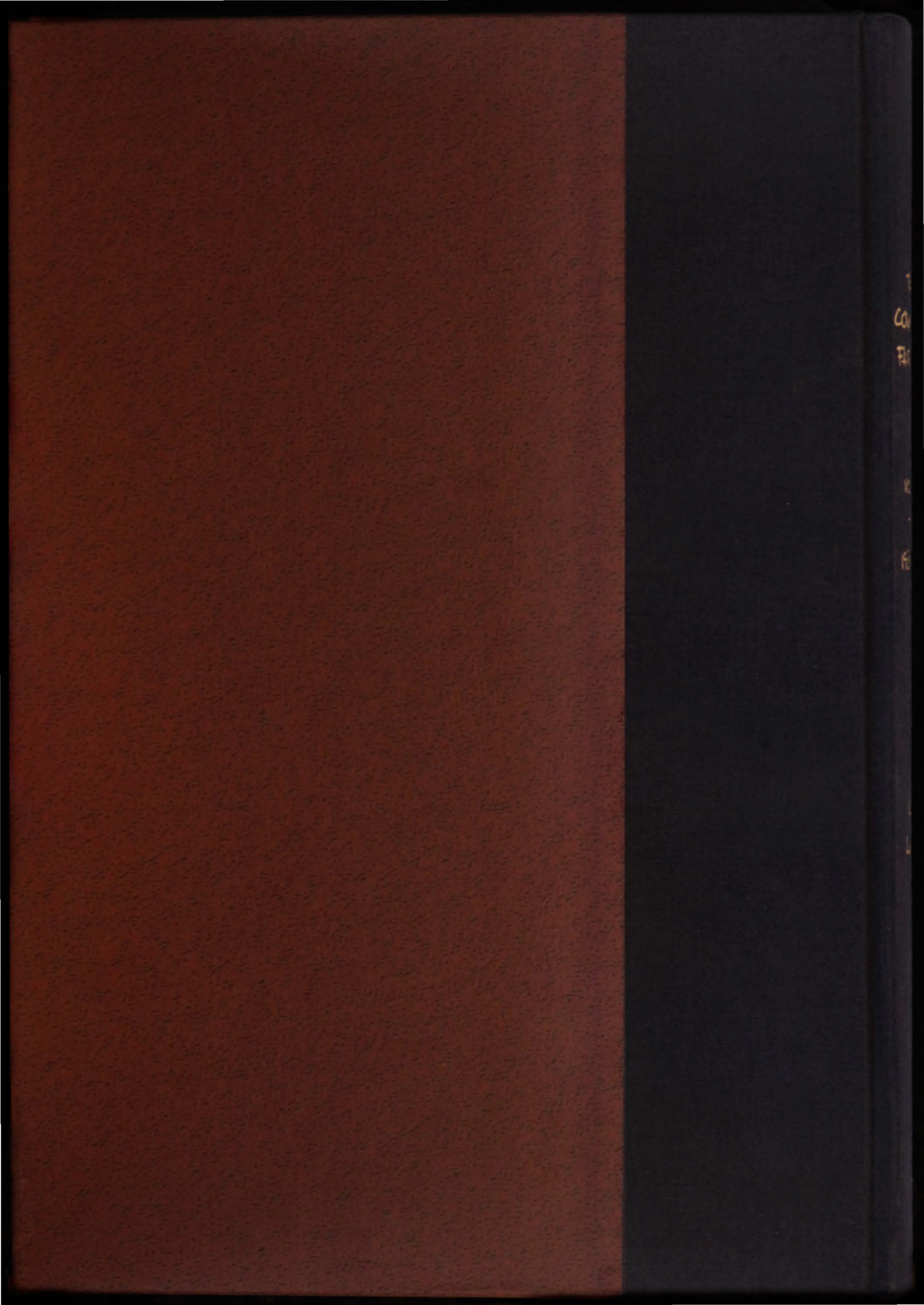


Club Club
Club Club

APPEARING
AT THE
BLOWFLY TAVERN
THE
DEATH CALVES

Judy has the
alfalfa breath
FRANK MOODY HAZ
OATS FOR BRAINS





7
CO
FL
R
H