## Crab Canon from Douglas Hofstadter: Goedel, Escher, Bach

Achilles and the Tortoise happen upon each other in the park one day while strolling.

Tortoise: Good day, Mr. A.

Achilles: Why, same to you.

Tortoise: So nice to run into you.

Achilles: That echoes my thoughts.

Tortoise: And it's a perfect day for a walk. I think I'll be walking home soon.

Achilles: Oh, really? I guess there's nothing better for you than walking.

Tortoise: Incidentally, you're looking in fine fettle these days, I must say.

Achilles: Thank you very much.

Tortoise: Not at all. Here, care for one of my cigars?

Achilles: Oh, you are such a philistine. In this area, the Dutch contributions are of markedly inferior taste, don't you think?

Tortoise: I disagree, in this case. But speaking of taste, I finally saw that Crab Canon by your favourite artist, M.C. Escher, in a gallery the other day, and I fully appreciate the beauty and ingenuity with which he made one single theme mesh with itself going both backwards and forwards. But I am afraid I will always feel Bach is superior to Escher.

Achilles: I don't know. But one thing for certain is that I don't worry about arguments of taste. De gustibus non est disputandum.

Tortoise: Tell me, what's it like to be your age? Is it true that one has no worries at all?

Achilles: To be precise one has no frets.

Tortoise: Oh, well, it's all the same to me.

Achilles: Fiddle. It makes a big difference, you know.

Tortoise: Say, don't you play the guitar?

Achilles: That's my good friend. He often plays, the fool. But I myself wouldn't touch a guitar with a ten-foot pole. (Suddenly the Crab, appearing from out of nowhere, wanders up excitedly, pointing to a rather prominent black eye.)

Crab: Hallo! Hullo! What's up? What's new? You see this bump, this from Warsaw - a collosal bear of a man - playing a lute. He was three meters tall, if I'm a day. I mosey on up to the chap, reach skyward and manage to tap him on the knee, saying, "Pardon me, sir, but you are Pole-luting our park with your mazurkas." But WOW! he had no sense of humor - not a bit, not a wit - and POW! - he lets loose and belts me one, smack in the eye! Were it in my nature, I would crab up a storm, but in the time-honored tradition of my species, I backed off. After all, when we walk forwards, we move backwards. It's in our genes, you know, turning round and round. That reminds me - I've always wondered, "which came first - the Crab or the Gene?" That is to say, "Which came last - the Gene, or the Crab?" I'm always turning things round and round, you know. It's in our genes, after all. When we walk backwards we move forwards. Ah me, oh my! I must lope along on my merry way - so off I go on such a fine day. Sing "ho!" for the life of a Crab! TATA! Ole! (And he disappears as suddenly as he arrived.)

Tortoise: That's my good friend. He often plays, the fool. But I myself wouldn't touch a ten-foot Pole with a guitar.

Achilles: Say, don't you play the guitar?

Tortoise: Fiddle. It makes a big difference, you know.

Achilles: Oh, well, it's all the same to me.

Tortoise: To be precise one has no frets.

Achilles: Tell me, what's it like to be your age? Is it true that one has no worries at all?

Tortoise: I don't know. But one thing for certain is that I don't worry about arguments of taste. Disputandum non est de gustibus.

Achilles: I disagree, in this case. But speaking of taste, I finally heard that Crab Canon by your favourite composer, J.S. Bach, in a concert the other day, and I fully appreciate the beauty and ingenuity with which he made one single theme mesh with itself going both backwards and forwards. But I am afraid I will always feel Escher is superior to Bach.

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Achilles: Good day, Mr. A.