

● T1 The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

By Douglas Adams

This is the introductory chapter to the second book in the science fiction trilogy in four parts: "The Restaurant at the End of the Universe". It summarises some of the events that occurred in the first book, in which Arthur Dent is saved from destruction when the building of a hyperspace bypass destroys the planet Earth. The extra-terrestrial aliens mentioned here are, of course (or maybe?), creations of Douglas Adams's science fiction imagination.

Chapter 1

The story so far:

In the beginning the Universe was created.

This has made a lot of people very angry and been widely regarded as a bad move.

Many races believe that it was created by some sort of god, though the Jatravartid people of Viltvodle VI believe that the entire Universe was in fact sneezed out of the nose of a being called the Great Green Arkleseizure.

The Jatravartids, who live in perpetual fear of the time they call The Coming of The Great White Handkerchief, are small blue creatures with more than fifty arms each, who are therefore unique in being the only race in history to have invented the aerosol deodorant before the wheel.

However, the Great Green Arkleseizure Theory is not widely accepted outside Viltvodle VI and so, the Universe being the puzzling place it is, other explanations are constantly being sought.

For instance, a race of hyperintelligent pan-dimensional beings once built themselves a gigantic supercomputer called Deep Thought to calculate once and for all the Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything.

For seven and a half million years, Deep Thought computed and calculated, and in the end announced that the answer was in fact Forty-two – and

so another, even bigger, computer had to be built to find out what the actual question was.

40 And this computer, which was called the Earth, was so large that it was frequently mistaken for a planet – especially by the strange ape-like beings who roamed its surface, totally un-

45 aware that they were simply part of a gigantic computer program. And this is very odd, because without that fairly simple and obvious piece of knowledge, nothing that ever hap-

50 pened on the Earth could possibly make the slightest bit of sense. Sadly, however, just before the critical moment of readout, the Earth was un-

55 to make way – so they claimed – for a new hyperspace bypass, and so all hope of discovering a meaning for life was lost for ever.

Or so it would seem.

60 Two of these strange, ape-like creatures survived.

Arthur Dent escaped at the very last moment because an old friend of his, Ford Prefect, suddenly turned out to be from a small planet in the vicinity of Betelgeuse and not from Guildford as he had hitherto claimed; and, more to the point, he knew how to hitch rides on flying saucers.

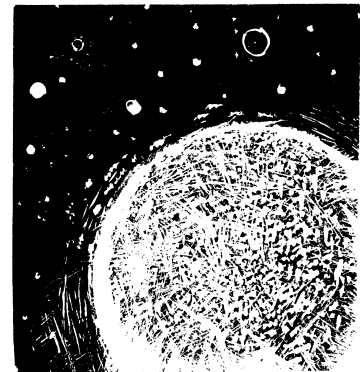
70 Tricia McMillian – or Trillian – had skipped the planet six months earlier with Zaphod Beeblebrox, the then President of the Galaxy.

Two survivors.

75 They are all that remains of the greatest experiment ever conducted – to find the Ultimate Question and the Ultimate Answer of Life, the Universe, and Everything.

80 And, less than half a million miles from where their starship is drifting lazily through the inky blackness of space, a Vogon ship is moving slowly towards them.

Quelle: Douglas Adams: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: A Trilogy in Four Parts*. Heinemann: London, 1979–1994, pp. 155–156.



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ANNOTATIONS

aerosol deodorant – a spray to prevent body odour

Arthur Dent – the Earthling protagonist of the trilogy. The story is told largely from his point of view.

bad move – not a good event

bypass – a highway that goes around an obstacle like a city

to compute – to calculate

to drift – to move leisurely or sporadically from place to place, especially without purpose

Ford Prefect – Arthur Dent's best friend and a visitor from an alien planet. His name comes from a small 1950s Ford car.

Guildford – county town 30 miles southwest of London

hitherto – until now/then

hyperintelligent – extremely intelligent

hyperspace – space of more than three dimensions

pan-dimensional – having more than four dimensions

perpetual – lasting forever

readout – the printed results of a computation

to roam – to travel without a fixed purpose or direction

sought – past participle of seek

to skip – to leave hastily or without notice

to survive – to remain alive after the death of someone else

vicinity – surrounding district or neighbourhood