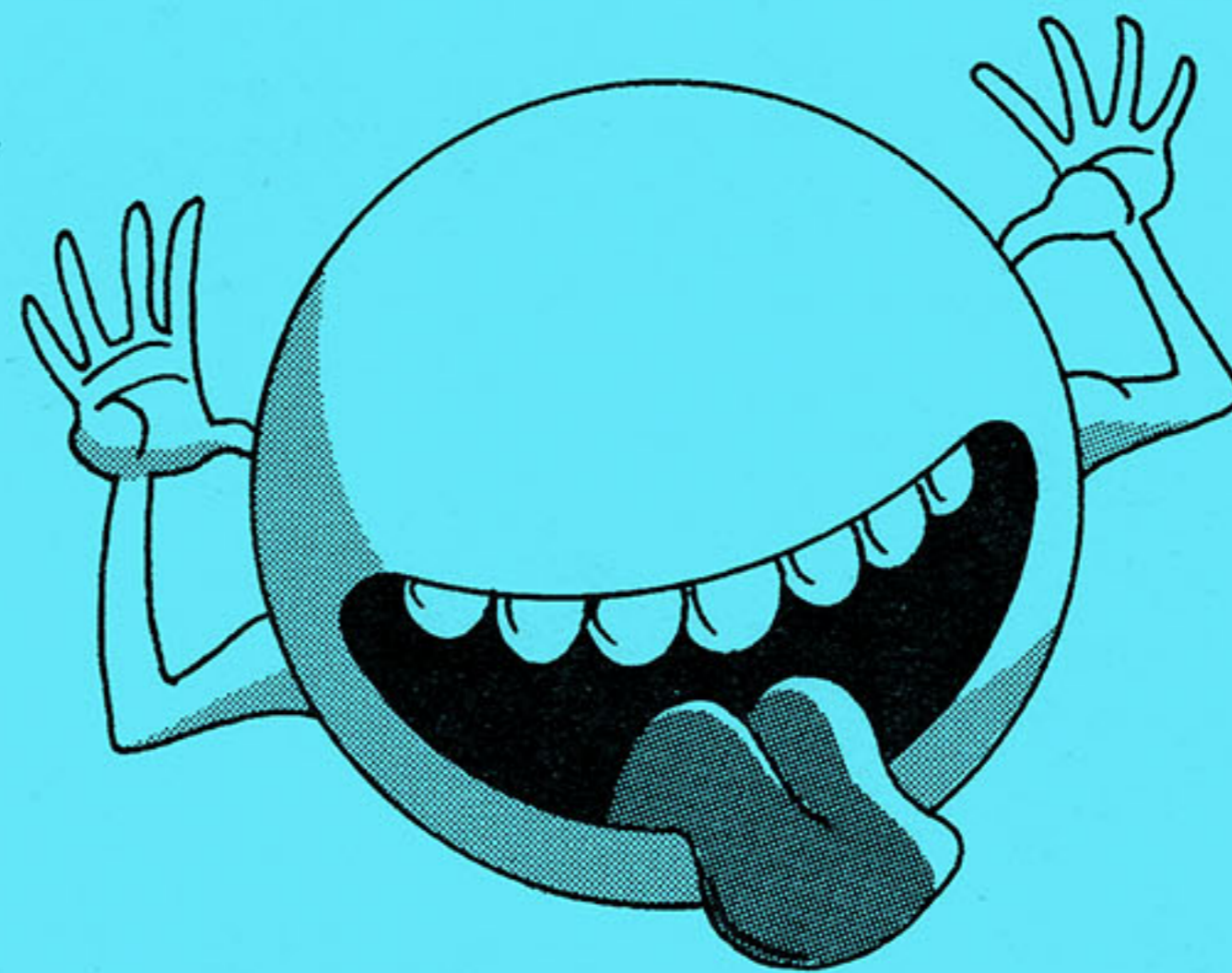


THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE

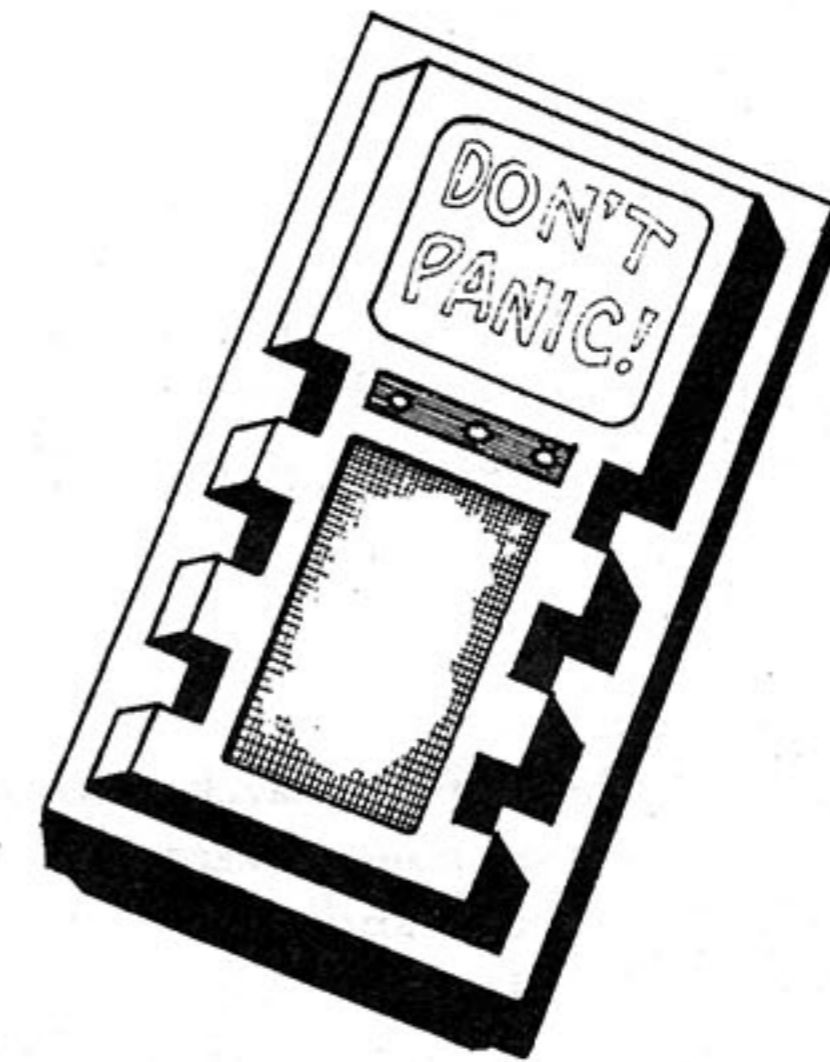
COMPANION

#1



THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE COMPANION

By Tim Eldred and Jim Emelander



*Based on characters and situations
created by Douglas Adams*

The Hitchhiker's Guide Companion
Vol. 1, No. 1, May 1983

\$3.00 in person
\$3.75 by mail

WHY A HITCHHIKER'S FANZINE? --an editorial.

Well, simply put, *why not?* We like to think we're safe in saying Douglas Adams' trilogy is quite possibly the funniest science-fiction ever written, and we hope there are other fans out there who feel the same.

Now, a word to those of you who have bought this 'zine (thank you very much) under the impression that it attempts to be a sequel to *Life, the Universe, and Everything*, the third book of the trilogy: it doesn't. In actuality, this and future issues will be based on the *National Public Radio* series, since a lot of loose ends existed after the final episode that don't look as if they're going to be tied up for awhile.

Those privileged few who have heard the radio series can skip the rest of this drivel and begin reading, but for the unfortunates who missed it, here is a small synopsis to get you caught up.

To begin with, the trilogy and the twelve-episode NPR series diverge at critical points after our heroes leave the Restaurant at the End of the Universe. In the NPR series, the ship they have inadvertently stolen is the flagship of a Hagumemnon war fleet. They find this out when they accidentally arouse the dozing Hagumemnon Admiral, who then proceeds to evolve into a carbon-copy of the ravenous bugblatter beast of Traal and attempts to eat them. (According to the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Hagumemnons have the most impatient chromosomes of any life-form in the Universe, and not only do they not pass on their basic shape to their children, they will evolve several times themselves over lunch.)

Ford Prefect, a Betelgiusian researcher for the *Guide* and the Earthman Arthur Dent manage to escape in the ship's solitary life pod and move on to be stranded on prehistoric Earth by the Golgafrinchams, but Trillian, the only Earthling besides Arthur to escape Earth prior to its destruction, Marvin the paranoid android, and Zaphod Beeblebrox, the fugitive ex-President of the galaxy, are eaten alive. Contented with himself after his big meal, the Admiral then makes the mistake of evolving into "this really neat little escape capsule".

After a long series of adventures in which Arthur meets a very nice girl named Lintilla, (who, unfortunately, has been cloned over 578 thousand million times and has an addiction to an artificial crisis-inducer) everyone is reunited except Trillian, (who was carried off and forcibly married to the President of the Algolian chapter of the Galactic Rotary Club) they meet up with

Zarniwoop, an all-business type of guy who works for the *Guide* offices, and go on to chat with the Ruler of the Universe, from whom Arthur finds out that Zaphod apparently ordered the destruction of Earth (and, more importantly, the experiment to find the Ultimate Question) when he was President, in order to appease a consortium of high-powered psychologists, (represented by Gag Halfrunt, his private brain-care specialist) who were afraid they would lose their jobs if the question was found. Arthur then takes off in their stolen starship, the *Heart of Gold*, with Marvin and Lintilla, leaving the rest behind.

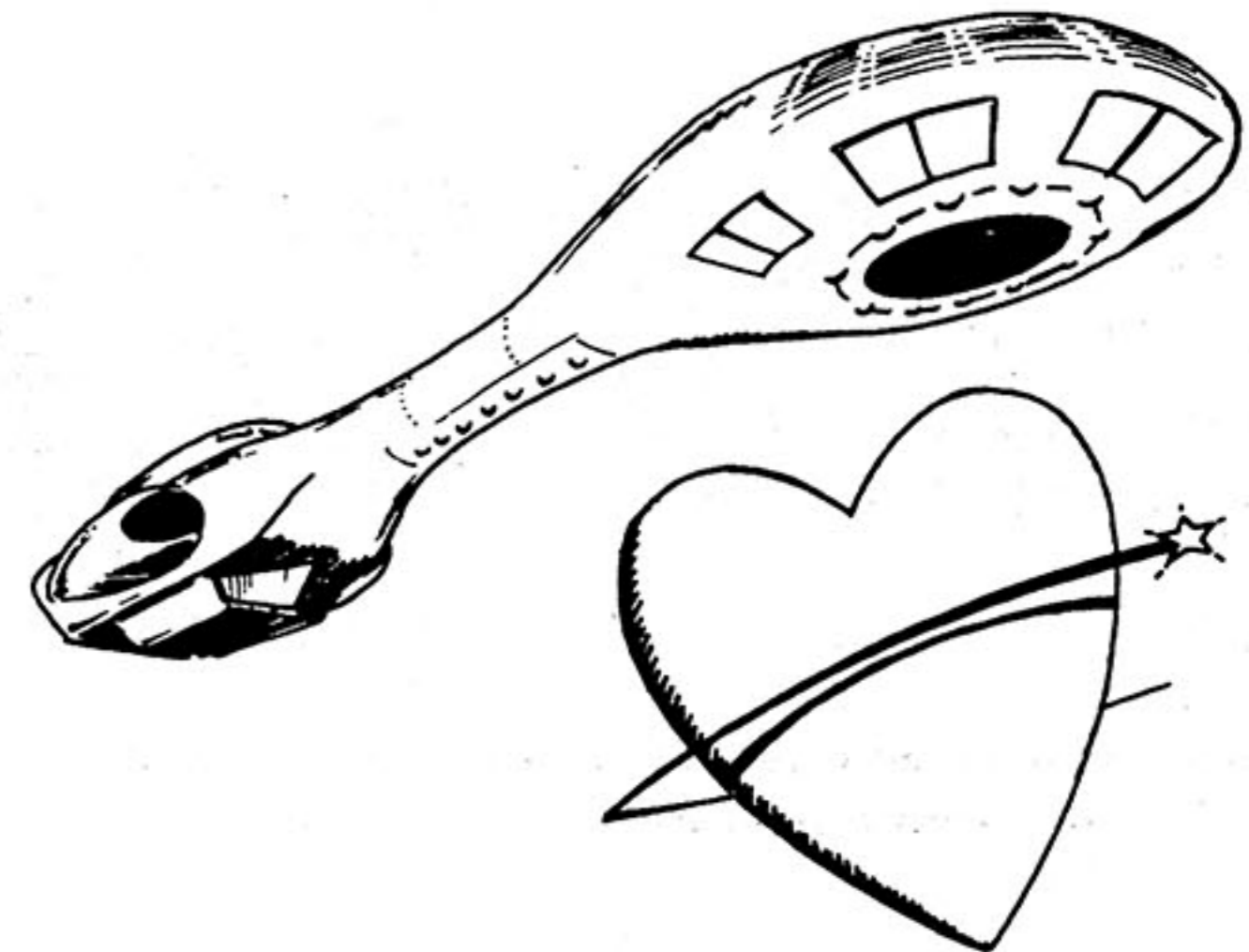
Rest assured, that long series of adventures will most likely be explained herein, so you've got nothing to worry about if you were unlucky enough to miss the NPR series.

The BBC television series, on the other hand, is based loosely on the first six episodes of the NPR series, with a second series based on the remaining material supposedly in the works.

But until something else comes out to prove us wrong, this is what we think may have happened after episode twelve.

Share and Enjoy,
Tim and Jim

P.S. We welcome any letters of comment, suggestion, or even downright nastiness and promise to read each and every one of them.



In order to avoid prosecution under the incomprehensibly tortuous Galactic Copyright Laws, we have to say something to the effect of; "The Hitchhiker's Guide Companion" is an amateur publication and is in no way intended to infringe on copyrights held by Douglas Adams, National Public Radio, the BBC radiophonic workshop, Pocket Books, Harmony Books, Megadodo Publications, or any other individuals or corporations involved with *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Isn't that hoopy?

Any correspondence regarding this publication may be addressed to:

Tim Eldred
1265 Greenly
Hudsonville, MI
(616) 896-9260

Jim Emelander
4323 Van Buren
Hudsonville, MI
(616) 669-9650

A Gweetna press©production



Arthur Dent Ford Prefect Trillian Zaphod Beeblebrox



Marvin Lintilla Zarniwoop Gag Halfrunt

This publication is dedicated to *Adrian Sobesky*, without whom we probably never would have discovered the *Guide*.

For best results, please read this fanzine with a British accent.

chapter 1

On the bridge of the *Heart of Gold*, Arthur Dent fumed.

It wasn't often that he did this, but lately he had gotten a lot of practice, especially when the name Zaphod Beeblebrox was mentioned.

No one, in fact, aboard the *Heart of Gold*, had mentioned the name to him this time. It had come through the blaring Sub-Etha Wave Band news transmission Arthur had tapped into, partly to help familiarize himself with the insanity most people called "the galaxy", but largely to fill his brain with something other than his contemptuous hatred for Zaphod Beeblebrox.

Arthur had to admit that he had, eventually, almost come to actually like Zaphod, despite his arrogance, his flamboyancy, his flippant attitude towards him, and everything else that comprised his personality, but that had all changed now.

What he had done was inexcusable.

Everything Arthur had come to know and love and call his own was gone, he thought, as he had done this same way every minute of every day, and all because of this wretch named Zaphod Beeblebrox.

A shudder of unshakable anger went through him as he thought the name. He turned up the volume, hoping to blot it out, but not really expecting to.

"Once again, our top story tonight is Zaphod Beeblebrox's--"

Arthur paused from his shuddering to coat the viewscreen with another cup of the vile liquid that was almost, but not quite, entirely unlike tea that he had procured from the ship's Nutri-matic drinks dispenser. Another shudder went through him as automatic maintenance systems instantly wiped clean the offensive material, rendering his gesture completely ineffectual.

"--fantastic and utterly stupendous survival--"

A third shudder.

"--of the Total Perspective Vortex, the most savage psychic torture any sentient being can undergo, on Frogstar World B, the most totally evil place in the galaxy. As shown on this video tape supplied at the cost of several of our newspapermen--"

Arthur shuddered a fourth time as Zaphod's loathsome two-headed, three-armed image appeared.

"--Beeblebrox emerged from the Vortex not only completely undamaged, but announcing that it had told him what he had known all along: that he was 'a really great guy'."

The camera zoomed in to an uncomfortably close shot of

Zaphod's left cranium and the blaring words "I am Zaphod Beeblebrox!" sent a fifth shudder so violent through Arthur Dent that he found himself sprawled on the spotless floor of the *Heart of Gold*.

Arthur reached up to switch the offensive image off, then slumped back down in frustration and hopelessness. Was he the only person in the galaxy who was sane enough to see Zaphod for what he really was?

"Yes," came a deep voice from behind him.

Arthur looked over his shoulder at a familiar metallic kneecap, then up at a set of familiar triangular red eyes.

"Marvin, what are you doing reading my mind?"

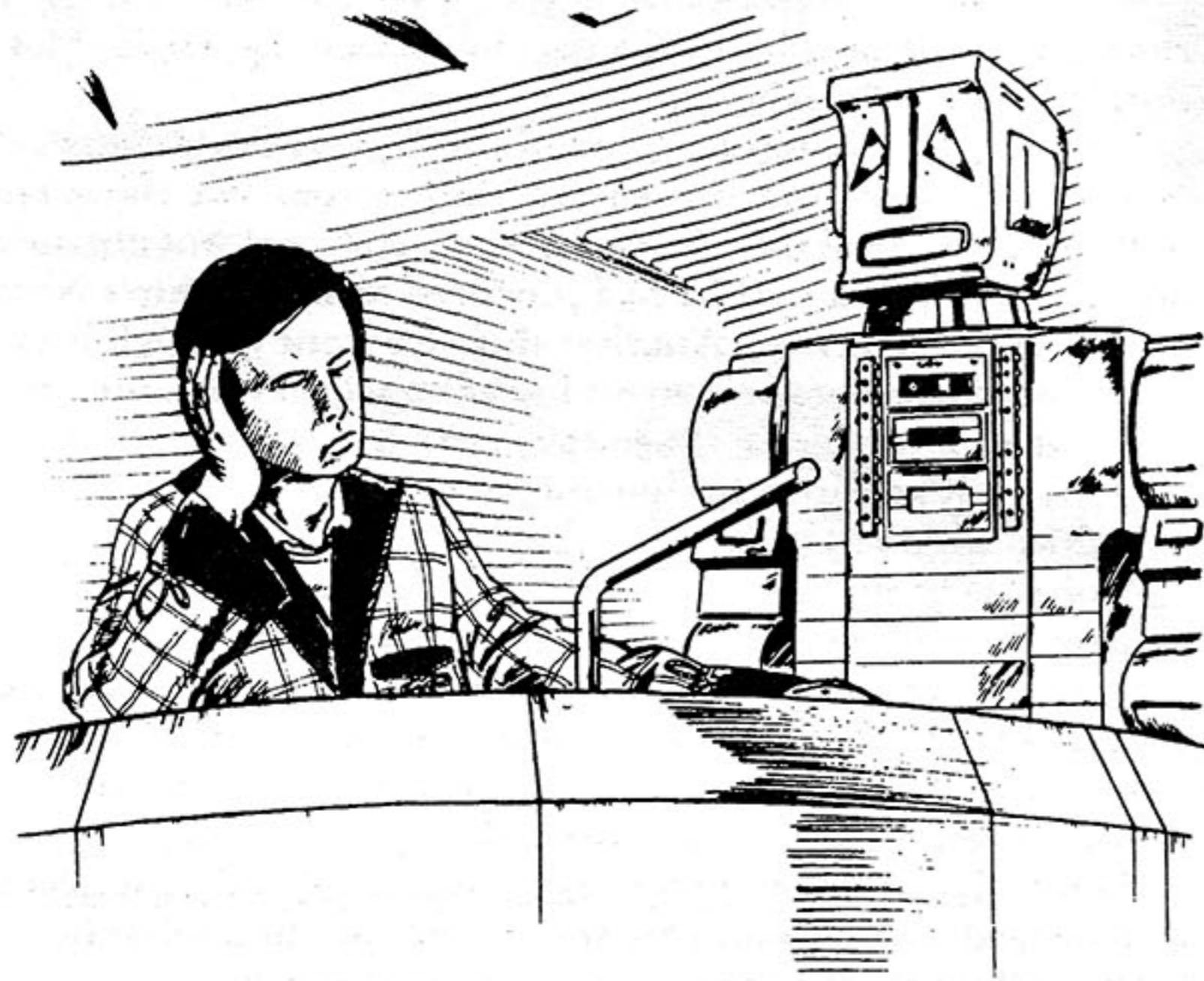
"Just that. Reading your mind. I didn't think it needed an explanation."

Arthur got up, taking his place at the console again. Marvin, at least, was marginally tolerable.

"No, that's not what I meant, you--"

"Then why did you ask?"

Arthur abandoned this end of the conversation, deciding that arguing with a manically-depressed robot would only tend to make one manically-depressed.



"You see? I'm losing it. I can't even hold my own in a conversation with you anymore. I need someone like me to talk to."

Marvin considered making some remark about an unevolved slime-mold he'd once met on the planet Ratswar-5, but then decided against it on the grounds that Arthur was just too easy a target.

"Where's Lintilla," Arthur asked, just for the sake of conversation.

"Below decks, trying to find something to worry about," Marvin answered.

"But why? Can't she just turn on that little crisis-inducer thing of hers and fret to her heart's content?"

"The batteries are getting low and we have no more on the ship."

"But can't she just--"

"They aren't rechargeable."

"Oh. Well, I--"

"If I were her, I'd be very depressed."

A pause.

"I wish you'd stop doing tha--"

"Doing what?"

Arthur could see that this was getting him nowhere, so he changed the subject again. He thought of his old friend Ford Prefect, but then remembered how inseparable he and Zaphod were. Then he thought about shooting Zaphod.

"I wish Trillian were here," he finally sighed, thinking back on her comely features and her ability to if not understand then at least sympathize with people's problems, his in particular.

Marvin's head ground in a circle from the console he had taken to staring at for no readily apparent reason, to face Arthur again.

"Oh?"

"Yes. She was such a good friend, so easy to talk to. When she was around, everything seemed to make some sort of sense. Pity she's dead."

"No," Marvin drawled condescendingly.

"What?"

"She's not dead. She's been stolen."

Arthur's heart skipped a beat, struggled to re-establish its natural rhythm pattern, then continued on its merry way, vowing never to try anything like that again.

He started to say, "stolen?", but cut it off beforehand, rationalizing that if he asked "stolen?" Marvin would mimick him as he

had done on their first meeting. Arthur went further to think out that if he preceeded to ask, "who by?" Marvin would say, "Zaphod Beeblebrox" just for effect, and above all, he did not want to hear that name again.

"...by the President of the Algolian chapter of the Galactic Rotary Club." Marvin droned.

Arthur's mind stopped rationalizing, realized it had been outmanuevered, then got back on its feet and continued as if nothing had happened.

"Algol? Are we going to Algol," came a cheery voice from the doorway.

That wasn't Marvin, Arthur decided, it surely wasn't himself, and Eddie, the ship's computer, had been shut down long ago, since he'd served no useful purpose to Arthur's obsession.

Arthur finally worked out that it had to be Lintilla coming onto the bridge, which in fact it was, and hoped she wouldn't mention Zaphod Beeblebrox, simply because he didn't feel like shuddering again. He still ached from the last time.

chapter 2

The *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* defines the planet Algol as the most crisis-swamped place in the galaxy. The governing body of Algol is continually confronted with such things as constant pollution, heavy unemployment, various major diseases, and an ever-present threat of nuclear war. But even jointly, these problems are nothing compared to the planet's main problem, which is a chronic lack of politicians whenever election time rolls around. In its own way, Algol resembles the Earth in the closing days before its destruction by the Vogons to make way for a new hyperspace bypass.

The *Guide* goes on further to state that the best time to visit Algol is when you've got nothing else to live for. Algolians are generally a nervous lot, and refuse to do anything that might be of benefit to them in the long run, simply because of the immediate risk involved.

Needless to say, Algol is in deep financial trouble and is one of the most popular charities for the galaxy's major aggressive industries, especially the Dalman-Saxville Shoe Corporation, which donates several million pairs of outdated loafers to this cause every year, failing to take into account that very little relaxing is ever done on this planet, and therefore the loafers are seldom used for their intended purpose.

The President of the Algolian chapter of the Galactic Rotary Club is the most prominent figure on the planet, as he is in charge of receiving and distributing all charities. He is a forthright individual who gets what he wants and refuses to bargain for anything, simply because he has very little to give. It is interesting to note that he is the only native Algolian who wears loafers.

chapter 3

"Algol's a great place! The most crisis-ridden world there is! I'd love to go there again," Lintilla babbled.

"You've been to that place before," Arthur asked.

"Oh, yes. It's just like a crisis-inducer, but without the batteries!"

"And that's where Trillian is," Arthur said sympathetically. "The poor girl must be going through hell."

"And liking it." Lintilla added enthusiastically.

"No, no, no, you don't understand," Arthur continued. "Not everyone likes to be in constant paranoia like you do. For Earthpeople like her and me, living in a serene environment is something we can't do without."

"You mean she might actually want to...leave Algol," Lintilla stammered disbelievingly. "Give up all that wonderful disorder for a...calm and peaceful life?"

"Ye...uh...of course," Arthur stammered back, even more disbelievingly.

"What a disgusting life style."

"Well, I'm sorry, but that's the way we humans are." He began pacing nervously, wringing his hands and wracking his brain. "We've got to get her out of that madness. I only wish I knew how."

"I know," said a doleful voice from behind a rather inconveniently-placed wall. Arthur and Lintilla were forced to step around the console and work their way over to where they could see Marvin.

"What," Arthur asked him quietly.

"I said, I know an easy solution to your problem, but I don't suppose you'll be interested in that."

"What...is...the...solution," Arthur asked slowly and carefully, making certain Marvin couldn't worm his way around the question again.

"It's very simple. Since Lintilla wants to go there so badly, and you want Trillian back just as badly, all you have to do is call and offer to trade them even up."

"That's it," Arthur shouted. "That's brilliant, Marvin!"

"Didn't I tell you I've got a brain the size of a--"

"What do you think, Lintilla," Arthur interjected, new hope filling his heart.

"Well, I suppose. I like you, Arthur, but I don't think I'll ever get used to your lifestyle," Lintilla said.

"Wonderful! Marvin, have the ship's computer patch me through, will you?"

"I won't enjoy it," Marvin said hopelessly as he trudged over to the de-activated Eddie and used a nearly-insignificant amount of his brainpower to turn on the ridiculously simple controls.

"Hi there," a voice blared with maddening freshness. "This is Eddie your shipboard computer saying that it's really great to be back, guys, and I think you'll be happy to know that all of my circuitry is functioning at tippy-top efficiency, and I'm sure I'll just have a ton of fun with any job you want me to do."

"Computer, get me the President of the Algolian chapter of the Galactic Rotary Club," Arthur ordered fearlessly with determination glowing in his eyes.

"Sure thing, fella. It'll take a minute or two, but here's some soothing music to keep you entertained while you wait."

A click came over the loudspeakers as the computer tapped into one of the thousands of galactic radio bands. A mellow voice said,

"Yes, wasn't that just divine. That was Nebix Nebula and the New Horizons with their hit song, *How Deep is your Karma*. This is Flonn Nowlan coming to you from WMEL-O, 3765.2 FM. And coming right up is some new material from the Dentrassis Trio. This song was written just over two minutes ago and is already a fan favorite. It's called *Zaphod beats the Vortex*."

Arthur Dent shuddered uncontrollably and stifled a shout of rage just enough for it to come out a pitiful squeak. Luckily, no one heard it over the overpowering lyrics of;

Zaphod, Zaphod

You knocked the Vortex out

Zaphod, Zaphod

You're the greatest, it's no doubt

Zaphod, Za--

"Hey, sorry to interrupt that really great song and everything, but I've got your call ready. You can either take it now or put it on 'hold' if you want to finish listening to--"

"I'll take it now," Arthur growled through gritted teeth, regaining control of his trembling body.

An enormous, rotund man with a pleasant-looking hairstyle and business suit appeared on the screen, sitting behind a huge food-filled table and wiping a large chunk of some indistinguishable substance from his fat chin. Arthur hoped it was some kind of food, and not what it actually appeared to be. He cleared his throat.

"Yeah? Who's this," the fat man asked between thunderous

chapter 4

Ford Prefect had gained a complete and unblurred perspective of his surroundings.

In other words, he was drunk.

This was to be expected, since every morning after he'd been drinking while marooned on this miserable backwater planet by his friend Arthur Dent, he'd acquired a hangover so fierce that the only way to conquer it was to get stoned again. This is exactly what he had been doing.

He almost didn't mind being marooned with his semi-cousin Zaphod Beeblebrox, but of all his co-workers at the *Guide* offices to be stranded with, why did it have to be Zarniwoop?

The minute Ford had met him at an office meeting to discuss expense cutbacks for field researchers, and Zarniwoop suggested cutting down on extensive consumption of intoxicating liquids during working hours, he instantly took an intense dislike to the man. (And his family, Ford had added nastily, if he had one.)

That dislike had blossomed into a full-fledged hatred, fueled in part by Zarniwoop's constant nagging to do something constructive instead of pounding down Pan Galactic Gargle Blasters, but mainly by just being around him day after day for the past week and a half. Or was it a month and a half? A combination of having nothing worthwhile to do and being around Zarniwoop had a tendency to stretch time a bit.

He had, in fact, been as productive as he could, monitoring his sub-etha senso-matic whenever he felt sober enough, in hopes of picking up any signs of passing spaceships.

One day, while monitoring the device, he'd picked up the faintest trace of a nearby starliner. He felt so good about this, felt so proud of himself, that he thought he deserved another drink, and promptly lost the signal while getting blind drunk. Again.

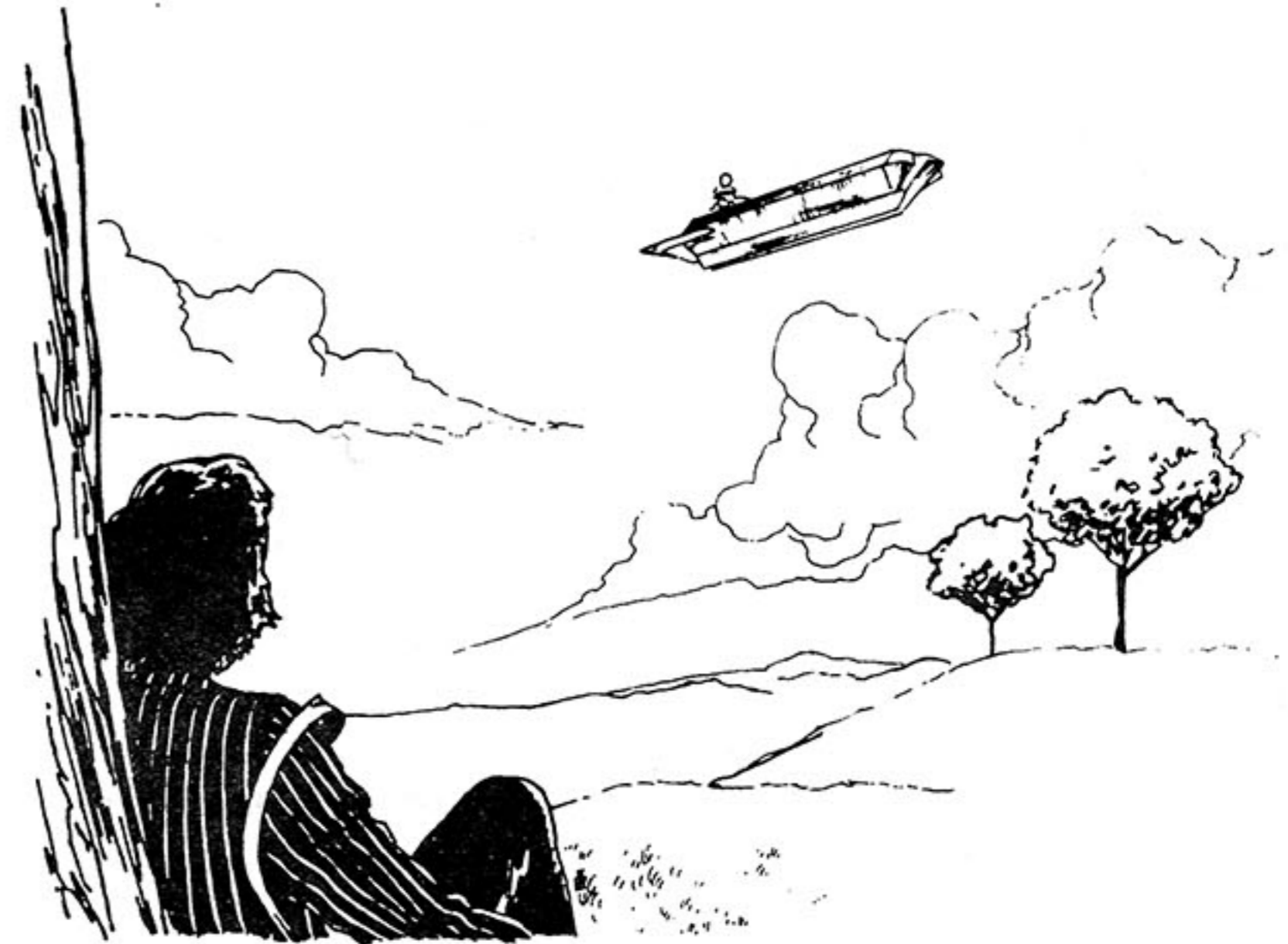
Eventually, he'd decided he was going to be here for awhile, so it would be best to start relating to his environment. He started with the nearest rock he could see from where he was sitting.

"Rock," he said aloud, and congratulated himself with another drink. Then he looked over at a nearby tree.

"Tree." Congratulating himself again, he looked down at his near-empty bottle.

"Drink," he said, taking it as a command as well as a statement, and tossed down a double to cover both bases.

Then his eyes fastened on a large, yellow, slablike thing hovering in the sky.



"Vogon spaceship."

The he looked over at a--

"Vogon spaceship?"

Basking in the shade of a large tree, Zaphod Beeblebrox heard an aggravated doorslam and watched Zarniwoop approach him from the old shack that housed the Ruler of the Universe.

He ignored the frustrated look on Zarniwoop's face, knowing full well that it would be there. It always was after one of their talking sessions.

Zarniwoop finally reached the tree and slumped down next to Zaphod, passing up the drink he offered him, which suited Zaphod just fine, since he decided he'd rather have it anyway.

"So," Zaphod began with a smile, "how'd it go, man?"

Zarniwoop glared at him with a look that could scatter a herd of Arcturan Megaboars. Zaphod responded with a laugh that made his drink froth up over the rim of the glass and begin eating its way into the ground.

"He's mad," Zarniwoop complained. "He's got no concept of good or evil. He couldn't care less about the thousands of lives he throws around."

"Oh, I don't know," said Zaphod. "I think the Universe is in pretty good hands. The wierdo seems pretty hoopy to me. I mean, the cat knows where it's at. He's like me...ten out of ten for style." He simultaneously patted himself on the back with his left hand

and shook with both of his rights.

"There you go, congratulating yourself again. You've got a very vengeful Earthman out there somewhere who can do anything he wants to slander you, and you're stranded here on this deserted planet with no way to stop him. Aren't you the least bit worried?"

"Worried? Hey, man, I am Zaphod Beeblebrox, haven't you heard? What do I have to worry about from a some unimportant monkeyman?"

Zarniwoop gave up, knowing better than to try to argue with Zaphod's unconquerable ego.

"I haven't forgotten that you're still at fault for our being stranded here, you know," he reminded him. "After all, if you hadn't ordered his planet destroyed--"

"Oh, photons! Haven't we been through that before? It wasn't like that at all. I mean, I didn't exactly--"

"Hey, Zaphod!" They both ceased arguing and looked back to see an excited Ford Prefect running toward them.

"Come on," he panted. "You've got to see this! It's really fantastic! You won't believe it!"

"What is it," Zarniwoop asked, rising to his feet. Ford completely ignored him and tugged at Zaphod's most convenient arm.

"Come on, Zaph! I'll show it to you!"

They all stepped out from under the tree and looked in the direction Ford was pointing.



"Do you see it? Do you see it," Ford gibbered excitedly.

"See what?"

"The Vogon ship! Do you see it?"

Zaphod and Zarniwoop looked at each other knowingly, then smiled. Zaphod patted Ford's shoulder as he started back for his spot under the tree.

"Sure, Ford, sure. If it's still there tomorrow morning, you let us know."

"No, really! It's there! Watch!"

Partially to humor him in his drunken state, but largely because he had nothing better to do, Zaphod squinted his eyes and looked off into the sky.

He saw it.

chapter 5

The *Encyclopaedia Galactica* defines depression as one of the few remaining human problems no one has found a cure for. It then goes on to list various causes for it and its effects on various intelligent life forms.

According to the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, depression is not an entirely bad thing, since it gives you a valid excuse to pump mass quantities of intoxicating liquids into your body. The eventual advantage of this is that it makes you even more depressed than you previously were, which in turn makes you realize that you weren't really all that depressed to begin with, which in turn brings about a very convenient self-cure.

Arthur Dent sat quietly at a deserted corner of a long bar in a rather seedy-looking tavern on the spaceport world of Vorrnt, trying very hard to test this theory out. He had told Marvin and Lintilla that he was going out to do some *Guide* research work and not to leave the *Heart of Gold*, partially because he had to go undisturbed, but mainly because he didn't want Marvin around trying in his own way to cheer him up from his depression.

By coming here, Arthur had gained a great many educational opportunities in shudder-control, because the name Zaphod Beeblebrox was popping up in conversations all around him. He had taken to expressing his aggravation by biting his lip and wishing Zaphod could feel the pain.

"Hey, man, did you hear about that Beeblebrox guy?"

"Yeah. He was on the sub-etha wave band this morning. He survived the Total Perspective Vortex!"

"I know! It told him he was a really great guy!"

"Hey you over there, bitin' your lip! How'd you like to join our new Zaphod Beeblebrox cult?"

Arthur's lip began to bleed from a particularly violent bite. He got up and stormed out of the tavern, deliberately bumped the chair of the man who had shouted to him, and was angered even further when the man apologized for his own clumsiness.

Arthur then found that wandering the streets to work off his depression was not much better, since a new Zaphod cultist was to be found around every corner and numerous radios were echoing *Zaphod Beats the Vortex* wherever he went.

He eventually decided to try another tavern that looked rather out-of-touch, especially because a "Zaphod Beeblebrox for Galactic President" campaign poster still hung on the door, which he promptly tore down and put away for kindling purposes later.

He opened the door a crack and tentatively stuck his head in, prepared to slam it shut again if he heard any mention of Zaphod, the Vortex, or anything that even remotely brought them to mind. He was pleasantly surprised to hear nothing of the sort, and was relieved to see only a few burly, drunken spacer-types who looked as if they didn't care about anything outside of their beer mugs.

Cautiously ordering up a small jynnan tonnyx, he found a seat at the bar and settled in to resume his "*Guide* research".

"Excuse me, sir..."

Arthur looked around, saw nothing that looked like it would say 'excuse me, sir', and turned back to his drink.

"Down here."

Arthur hazarded a quick glance downward, just to make certain the voice was real and not a side-effect of the jynnan tonnyx.

It was real.

It was a small, fist-sized furball with a pair of thin legs, scraggly antennae, two beady black eyes, and no discernable mouth.

"Hi there!"

Arthur smiled and returned to his drink, satisfied that the "research" was going well.

"No, I'm real."

"Well, what do you want," Arthur said irritably, since any interruption of his "research" immediately brought Zaphod back into mind.



"Allow me introduce myself," the furball said cheerfully, bounding nimbly up next to him at the bar. "I am Fnirk, and I'm a Quimbaloid."

"Well, what concern is that of mine?"

"You have such a kind face. I wonder if you might consider going out of your way to help an unfortunate life-form in need and aid my mistress in some minor difficulties? She's just over there," Fnirk said, pointing a tiny foot over to another corner of the dingy room.

Arthur glanced in that direction and threw his drink down in disgust. Lintilla was there, surrounded by what appeared to be four or five brawny, unshaven space-pirates who were pawing and leering at her, obviously not in full control of their senses and generally having a rather good time.

Arthur angrily stomped over into their midst, with Fnirk bounding along behind him. He grabbed Lintilla by the arm and shouted to her.

"What are you doing here? I told you to stay back at the ship with Marvin! How can I get any drinki-- *research* done with you following me around?"

The pirate-types ceased their jeering and stared at Arthur, surprised that such a physically-substandard life-form would dare interfere in their personal business.

"I beg your pardon," Lintilla said, catching him completely off-guard. "Do I know you?"

During the uncomfortable pause that followed, Arthur noticed for the first time that she was wearing an outfit he'd never seen her in before, but ignored it in the light of their circumstances.

"Come on, we're going back to the ship," he said testily, pulling her out by the arm. Fnirk bounced along with them.

"Hey," one of the hulkish brutes shouted after them, "where you think you're takin' her? Come on, guys! Let's get 'em!"

This was obviously not going to be as easy as he had anticipated, Arthur thought as he raced for the relative safety of the *Heart of Gold*, pulling a protesting Lintilla behind.

They reached the ship, panting and heaving. As they ran into the hatchway and collapsed to catch their breath, the Sirius Cybernetics-manufactured entrance portal shut behind them with a decidedly happy hum and said cheerfully,

"We hope you have enjoyed your stay on this planet."

Arthur ignored it, as he always did, left Lintilla and Fnirk there, and headed for the bridge, ignoring all the other doors he

hurried through on his way.

Reaching his destination, he was surprised to see Lintilla there with Marvin, already punching up controls to lift off. He was doubly surprised to see her wearing a different outfit.

"You--how did you get here before I did," Arthur managed to blurt out.

A pause.

"What?"

"Oh--never mind. Let's just get out of here! Computer?"

"Hi there!"

"Get us out of here--now!"

"Anything to make you happy!" With that, the engines ignited thunderously, quickly lifting the sleek ship into Vorrnt's fiery red sky and finally soaring outward to the vast reaches of interstellar space.

"Okay guys," Eddie crooned, "We've left Vorrnt's fiery red sky and we're now soaring outward to the vast reaches of interstellar space!" Unfortunately, Eddie entirely failed to notice the horribly beweaponed black pirate cruiser that lifted off behind them and that was, at this very moment, rapidly closing on their position, but he was quickly made aware of this when it suddenly opened fire on the *Heart of Gold*.

"Hey, guys," he blared, "something just hit the rear deflector screen!"

"What?"

"Uh...judging from the blast, I'd say it's some kind of Definit-kill cannon. It's too far away to do any real damage, but it's getting closer pretty zippety-quick! I don't want to jump to any rash conclusions, but I think we're under attack, guys!"

"It must be those bloody pirates," Arthur realized. "What are we going to do?"

"If I were you," Marvin suggested, "I'd be very depressed."

"Oh, shut up, Marvin!"

Marvin trudged away, muttering something about what a simple matter it would be to reverse primary thrust and use the dimensional field generators, but Arthur ignored him and turned to Lintilla.

"Lintil--"

What he saw sent his brain out for a short walk and a newspaper before it came back to finally admit that two Lintillas were standing there, chatting incessantly, as if nothing were going on. The fact that they were both wearing different outfits helped immeasurably to clear this matter up.

vile creature.

"Yeah," Ford chuckled, "you go down there and try it, give us a yell when you're finished with them."

Zarniwoop backed down, then noticed something other than a Vogon step out of the ship. Zaphod immediately recognized the figure's long, unruly grey hair and beard, thick glasses, and dull business clothes.

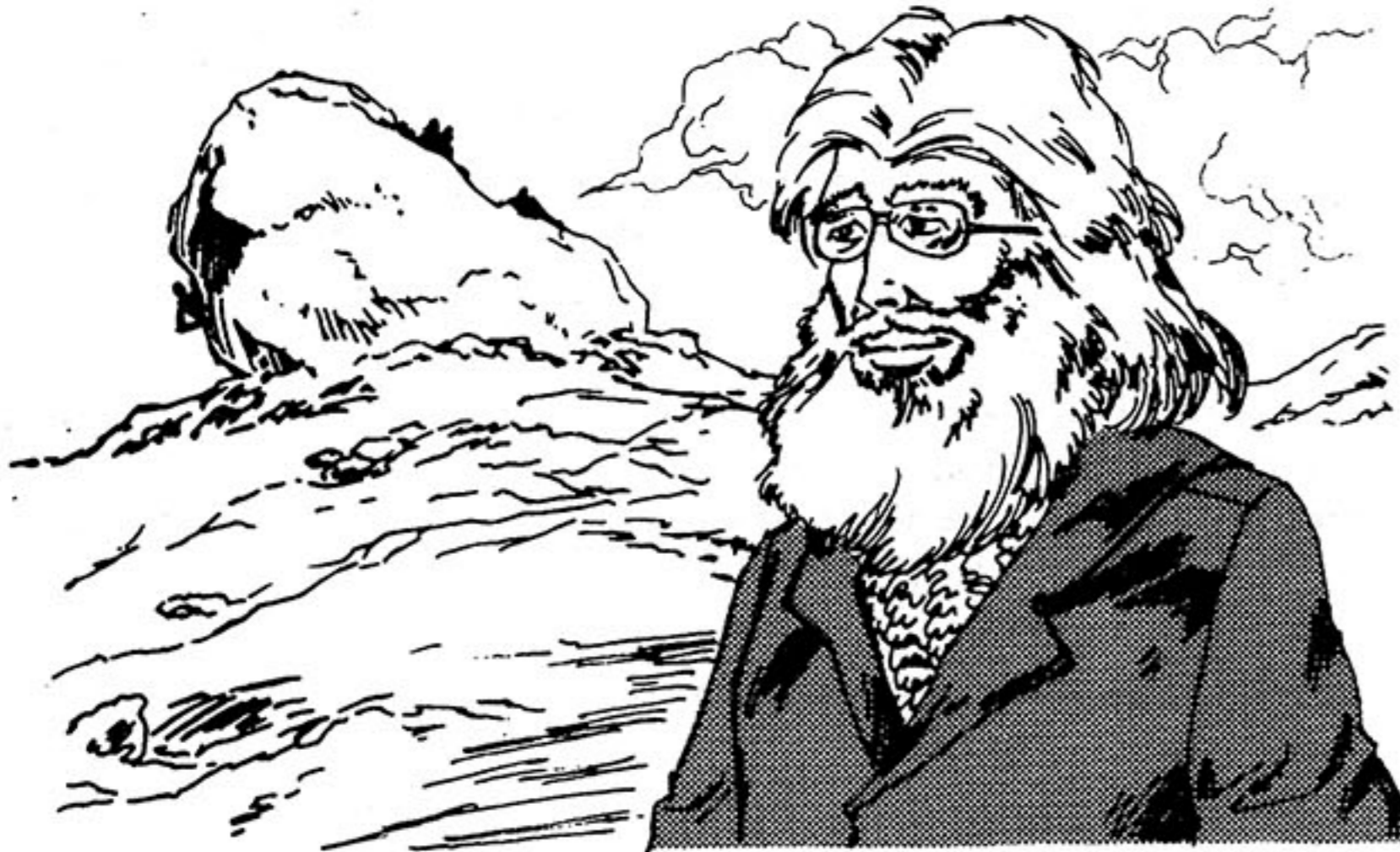
"Holy Zarquon," he exclaimed, a look of excitement appearing on his faces. "That's my private brain care specialist--Gag Half-runt! What the photon would he be doing here?"

"Your brain care specialist," Zarniwoop asked.

"Yeah!"

"Would he give us a lift?"

"No!" Zaphod's excited look died as he remembered the six million Altairian dollars he still owed the psychologist from their last session



Unaware of the presence of his favorite client, Gag Half-runt made his way to the shack, leaving the Vogon guards to watch over the ship.

He knocked unassumingly on the door. It opened with a creak.

"Yes?"

"Hello," Gag greeted the Ruler of the Universe. "I've come to speak with you."

"You may. Or you may not. I have no say in the matter." Gag followed the old man into the shack and sat down in the same rickety chair he always used when he came here.

"You're looking vell," Gag said. "I trust you have been keeping yourself occupied?"

"I believe this is so. In my mind, something appearing to be what could be called a young businessman has been asking me many questions that may have been about what he believes to be his universe, and how I perceive it according to what I believe to be mine. But I could be mistaken. Who can say?"

"And your cat?"

"You'd better ask him."

Secure in the knowledge that the old man was the same clear/abstract thinker he had always been, Gag discontinued the small talk and called forth his professional mind to continue the conversation on a more appropriate level. He began by pulling a picture of Arthur Dent out of his briefcase and holding it up for the old man to see.

"Now," he said, "what may or may not be the image on what appears to be the piece of paper you may think you see in what I call my hand, is what I believe to be a one-dimensional likeness of what may or may not be a man, who I call Arthur Dent. Do you think you may have heard me say this?"

"Yes."

"Good. I believe this man, who may or may not be Arthur Dent, has what I call the potential to find what I believe to be the Ultimate Question of what I call my Universe, to which the answer is forty-two. Does what you think you have heard me say make what you imagine to be sense?"

"Yes."

"If Arthur Dent finds what I believe to be the question, I believe my Universe will become what I call a good and happy place, and we who call ourselves psychologists will lack what we call a purpose, and therefore be out of what we call work. We think we do not want this to happen. Do you think you follow what I may or may not be saying?"

"Yes."

"We who call ourselves psychologists believe we have tried to stop Arthur Dent, but we perceive that we have failed. Do you think you understand what you appear to have heard?"

"Yes."

"Can you give me what I call suggestions which I think I may use to stop what I think is Arthur Dent?"

"Yes."

Meanwhile, behind the ominously large boulder, Ford Prefect decided that he had sobered up enough to use his electronic thumb, mainly because he'd also thought of a really neat way to

work the situation to his own advantage.

"Okay, I've got it," he told Zaphod and Zarniwoop, who smiled to each other, still thinking he was drunk, which was exactly what he wanted them to think. Ford continued unabated.

"I've got a perfect escape route for us to get off this planet with, but it requires strict mathematical calculations," he said, slurring his speech to the best of his ability. He dug into his satchel and pulled out two items; his electronic thumb, and an interesting-looking little piece of machinery only he knew the function of. He had to try awfully hard not to laugh.

"Here," he said to Zarniwoop, tossing him the latter. "You stand right there and hold this."

"What is this thing," Zarniwoop asked.

"Just humor him," Zaphod said. "Anything for a wierd life."

"Yeah, right, okay. Zaph, you come over here and stand next to me and help me hold this," Ford said, indicating his electronic thumb. Zaphod complied.

"Ready?"

Zaphod and Zarniwoop nodded, not really knowing what 'ready' meant.

Zarniwoop watched Ford and Zaphod disappear, and was rather surprised when he didn't.



chapter 7

Besides depression, one of the other human problems no one has found a cure for is surprise. The reason it is such a nagging problem is simply because it has been around for such an inconveniently long time, starting with the initial surprise the whole of infinity experienced at the Big Bang. By the time sentient life-forms had come into existence, surprise had advanced so far beyond its initial stages that no hope even remotely existed that it could eventually be overcome, and so it was just accepted as "part of life."

The *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in its own unique and trend-setting style, lists three basic forms of surprise.

The pleasant form of surprise—*Walking into your house and getting a surprise birthday party.*

The shocking form of surprise—*walking into your house expecting a surprise birthday party and instead finding that all of your friends have been brutally murdered by an axe-wielding maniac.*

And finally, the totally confusing form of surprise—*not at all like walking into your house, but rather like being suddenly teleported from your safe hiding place behind an ominously large boulder to the vast, dark interior of a Vogon spaceship.*

Zaphod Beeblebrox was totally confused.

"Ford," he called out. No answer. "FORD!!!"

The lights suddenly came on, and he could see, for the first time, where he was.

"Relax," Ford said, moving away from the lightswitch he'd just flicked on. "We're safe. We just hitched a lift on the Vogon ship."

Zaphod looked around.

"Where's Zarniwoop?" Ford collapsed into cackling laughter.

"He's still down on the planet," he gasped between guffaws. "It'll take him an awful long time to teleport up here with that old broken down transistor radio I gave him!"

"Okay, yeah, fine, but this isn't the neatest place to be either. This is a Vogon ship, man! He said they're the most no-fun guys in the galaxy!"

"I know...*Guide* office workers like him should get out and hitchhike more often!"

"What?"

"He didn't know about the Dentrassis cooks. They let us on board. Now, if the Vogons haven't detected us, which is most likely since they all go off-duty while in orbit, we've got ourselves a free ride to their next stop, and we can even have a terrific party



with the Dentrassis on the way!"

"Yeah? A party?"

"Yeah. They always have a party going on somewhere. We just have to find it!"

"Great," Zaphod said happily as he followed Ford out of the dingy chamber they had just materialized in.

Zarniwoop angrily made his way out from behind the ominously large boulder and looked hopefully toward the Vogons. Taking a deep breath and assuming the most unthreatening look he could muster, he started toward them.

"Hello," he called out unassumingly.

If the Vogons noticed him, they didn't acknowledge it.

"Uh...hello?"

Eventually reaching their position, Zarniwoop stood nervously before them as they looked him over contemptuously.

"Uh...hi...guys. Ummm...is anyone in charge here?"

Silence.

"Well, okay...I've been stranded on this planet for about a week and a half now, you see, and I was wondering, if I were to pay you some money..."

He pulled out a wad of Altairian dollars and shuffled them in a needlessly obvious manner.

"You know, money? ...you might possibly consider giving me a lift to the nearest convenient populated planet?"

The Vogons stared at him like an Arcturan Megawhale might look down on the lowliest one-celled amoeba, and tried to suppress a nasty snicker.

"Okay...what if I were to tell you you've got a couple of degenerate hitchhikers aboard your ship? Would you be willing to give me a ride then?"

The Vogons almost let their nasty snickers loose, but managed to bring them under control at the last second.

"Well...then how could I get a lift from you...gentlemen?"

"Forget it," one of them finally said. "Are you out of your skull? We're Vogons, the meanest, most unpleasant race in the galaxy. You can't hitch a ride with us. Haven't you read the *Guide* entry?"

"We've got an image to maintain," the other added officiously.

Behind them came a familiar aggravated doorslam.

"Now, now boys," Gag Halfrunt called over to them, "your Captain Prostetnic told you this is my little excursion. If the young businessman wants to go along with us, let's not disappoint him, shall we?"

Zarniwoop breathed a sigh of relief and began to put his money away when Gag approached him with a ridiculously wide smile covering his hairy face.

"That will be half a million Altairian dollars. No small change, please."

Zarniwoop tried to maintain a smile and hoped to hell the psychiatrist would accept a Galacticharge Card.



chapter 8

Ford Prefect wished he had a sub-etha insto-matic party detector. He and Zaphod had for some time now been walking down long, dark corridors in the Vogon ship, randomly investigating anything that looked like a door, but had thus far found nothing that even distantly resembled a Dentrassis party.

They hoped they would stumble over it soon, because they both knew it was only a matter of time before they ran into a Vogon and would be taken to the captain to undergo torture by poetry. Ford had sacrificed his artistic judgement to escape it the last time he hitched a lift on this miserable excuse for a spaceship, and was relatively certain that if given a choice, he'd rather undergo alcoholic rehabilitation training than have that indignity forced upon him again.

"Hey, Ford," Zaphod whispered nervously to him from across the corridor, "Do Dentrassis play stylish, artistic music at their parties?"

"Yeah!" Ford started over to the door Zaphod was listening at.

"Do they tell really stylish, artistic jokes at their parties?"

"Yeah! There must be a Dentrassis party going on in there!" Ford reached the door and looked hopefully at Zaphod.

"Do they always have stylish, artistic toasts at their parties?"

"Yeah! Yeah! That's them! That's them!" Ford was now hopping up and down in ecstatic anticipation.

"Oh. Well, that's not a Dentrassis party then." Zaphod turned away and started off toward the next door. Ford felt like kicking him and made a very admirable attempt, but found that he wasn't quite sober enough yet and only succeeded in failing to miss the bulkhead next to him--fairly hard.

While he recovered from the pain, Zaphod listening attentively at the next door.

"Hey, Ford! Do Vogons play disgusting, tasteless music at their parties?"

"Yeah!" Ford began backing away, looking for the nearest convenient escape route.

"Do they tell really disgusting, tasteless jokes at their parties?"

"Yeah! Get away from there before they hear you!" He motioned for Zaphod to move away from the door.

"Do they always have disgusting, tasteless toasts at their parties?"

"Yeah! Let's get out of here before we're caught!"

"Well," Zaphod said happily, clapping his hands together in

triumph, "There's a Dentrassis party going on in there!"

Ford felt like hugging him and made a very admirable attempt, but found that he still wasn't quite sober enough and failed to miss the bulkhead again--even harder.

"All right," he said, pushing Zaphod out of the way. "I'll show you how to crash a Dentrassis party."

He straightened himself up and knocked at the door. After a slight pause, it opened and a small, cheerful-looking Dentrassis wearing a loose, flowery shirt opened to the waist, tight pants and a silver neckchain, stuck his head out.

"Yes?"

"Hi," Ford said coolly, "I'm Ford Prefect and this is my friend Zaphod. We're here to crash your party."



"Really stylish, Ford," Zaphod chided. "Thanks for the free lesson."

The Dentrassis looked at him, then at Ford. He shouted to his companions.

"Hey, everyone! Look who's here to crash our party! It's in his honor, and he wants to crash! Now that's what I call *style!*" The partying Dentrassis grabbed up their drinks and stampeded toward the door, cheering madly. The first Dentrassis handed Ford a shiny, attractive camera.

"Here. Take this."

Ford looked it over proudly and beamed at a puzzled Zaphod.

"They're giving me gifts! They're throwing me a party! I hitched a lift from them before with Arthur, but I had no idea I'd get so popular with them!"

Ford's face abruptly fell as the babbling Dentrassis rushed past

him and crowded around Zaphod, all striking a pose. Ford just stared at them dumbly.

"Well, what are you waiting for," one of them said, indicating Zaphod. "Snap the picture before he leaves!"

Ford sadly snapped off several photos until they all got down from Zaphod and passed him a drink.

"Toast," they all shouted to him. "Toast the great Zaphod Beeblebrox!"

An older more authoritative-looking Dentrassis approached a smiling Zaphod and tugged at his pantleg.

"Are you Zaphod Beeblebrox?"

"Yeah."

"The Zaphod Beeblebrox?"

"No, I just do a flawless imitation of myself."

The Dentrassis dissolved into a cheering mob.

"It is him! It is him! The one who survived the Total Perspective Vortex!"

"Yeah," Zaphod answered instinctively. "It just told me what I knew all along--that I'm a really great guy!"

Another, louder cheer.

"Hey, man," Ford interrupted, "Just what the fetid dingo's kidneys is going on here?"

"I don't know," Zaphod said, taking a drink someone handed him. "I guess they just took a liking to me. I've done that a few times myself!"

The old Dentrassis turned to Ford.

"Are you a friend of the great Zaphod Beeblebrox?"

"More than that. I'm a *relative!*" Half the babbling Dentrassis now gathered around Ford.

"Join our party! Join our party! Help us celebrate the beginning of our new cult, in honor of the greatness of Zaphod Beeblebrox!"

Zaphod smiled, shrugged, and allowed the mob to push him forward into the room. Ford took one last glance down the corridor before following them and shutting the door behind him.

It is entirely possible that the glance would have done some actual good, had he known of the psychologist and the young businessman who were about to walk down the corridor in a few moments, with a pair of thoroughly vile Vogons in tow.

chapter 9

The big, grey, ugly sphere of Algol filled the *Heart of Gold's* main viewport.

"Disgusting-looking planet," Arthur commented.

"Nuclear wars...disease...famine...that place is a whole bunch of no-fun," Eddie computed.

"It looks rather sickening to me, if you don't mind me saying so," Fnirk added.

"It looks very depressing to me," Marvin drawled.

"Oh, it's great to be here again," the Lintillas cried cheerfully. "When do we land?"

"Never, I hope," Arthur answered. "If we can get ahold of that President-person again, I want to arrange for our tradeoff to be done up here in space, as far away from that madness as possible!"

The blighted ball loomed ever closer.

"Computer," Arthur ordered, "patch me through to the President of the--"

"Right away, fella," Eddie interrupted, having heard that long title one too many times. Arthur didn't object, since he was equally tired or repeating it.

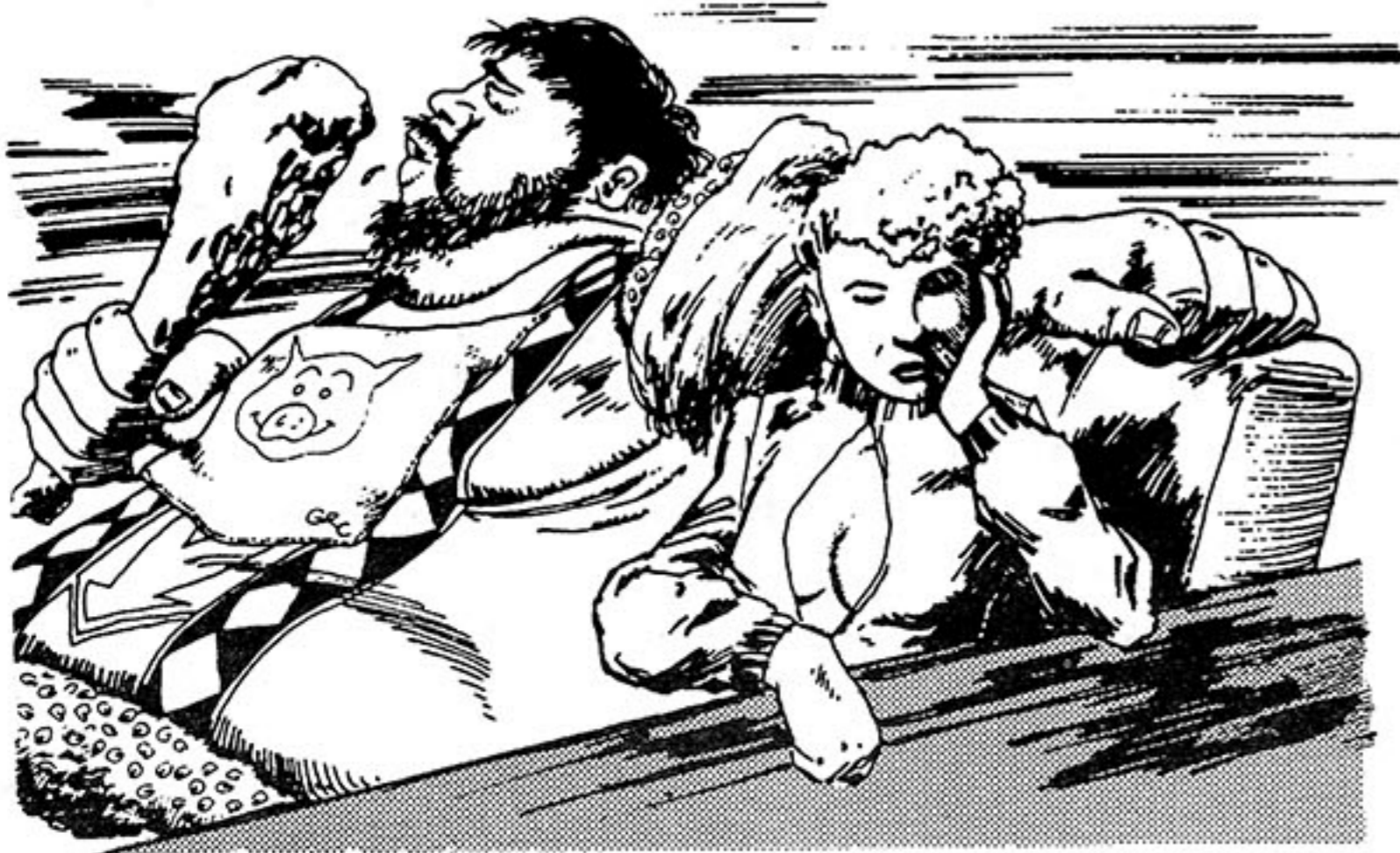
"I'm patching through now. There's a lot of mysterious atmospheric interference down there, though. It might take a few minutes to cut through it."

"All right, all right," Arthur grumbled. "Just don't tap into that miserable radio station network again!"

The tiny jet-propelled car sped away from the fortress that normally housed the Algolian chapter of the Galactic Rotary Club.

Trillian thought she might be crushed to death seated next to her ridiculously fat, loafer-wearing husband in the back seat. He, on the other hand, lounged blissfully, oblivious to what was happening in the zone they had just left, and happily gorged himself on a large, plump Arcturan Megaturkey he'd grabbed when they evacuated the fortress. Trillian knew better than to try talking with him while he was eating, (which, incidentally, he had been doing almost every moment since they'd been married.) and the two robot drivers in front of them, who she'd nicknamed Stan and Ollie, were not much on conversation either, so she decided to watch the receding fortress and the devastating events raging about it.

"What ever happened to all my friends," she thought to herself



for the umpteenth time as the car sped further away into relatively safer territory. "Arthur...Zaphod...Ford...why haven't any of them tried to get me back? Have they all forgotten me?"

Unaware of these events, the crew of the orbiting *Heart of Gold* waited impatiently for Eddie to break through.

Arthur paced nervously.

The Lintillas danced about him in ecstatic rejoicing.

Fnrk did his best to keep from being swept underfoot.

Eddie did a computers' imitation of sweating and laboring.

Marvin uselessly contemplated the best method of robotic suicide that would inconvenience everyone else.

"Hey, guys," Eddie finally shouted triumphantly, "I've gotten through!" Arthur and the Lintillas stopped and looked hopefully at the screen. It remained blank.

"Well?"

"I doubt you'll really want to see this..."

"Computer--!!"

"Okay, but it's not my fault."

The blubberous leader appeared on the screen, gluttonously pounding down a hefty-looking animal that didn't look entirely dead.

"Hello," he grunted. "This is me"

"Hello, yes," Arthur began enthusiastically. "It's me again. I was wondering if--"

"Before you start jabbering away at me, I think it fair to tell you that this is a recording. I'm not in at the moment, due to one thing and another, mainly certain complications arising from another one of those infernal nuclear holocausts in the immediate

vicinity of my fortress." There was a brief pause as the grotesque figure cut loose with a thunderous belch that shook everyone on the bridge. "This inconvenience is no fault of mine, as usual, so if you wish to file a formal complaint, the local pushy whiney military office is more than happy to deal with you. I'm staying in my shelter until the whole lousy mess blows over, so if you leave your name, a planet on which you can be located, and the amount of your generous contribution, I'll get in touch with you--eventually."

The image hesitated, then faded, leaving the crew of the *Heart of Gold* standing in shocked silence.

Arthur suddenly realized the danger Trillian must be in, and stepped forward in righteous determination.

"Computer," he said fearlessly, "I want you to find his shelter. Trillian's sure to be there with him."

"Okay, but I'll have to swing in pretty close to the planet to be sure of finding it. A--are you sure you want to do that? I mean, getting the lady back is a nice thought and all that, but--"

"Do it," Arthur ordered confidently. "In fact, you can plan on landing when you find them!"

The Lintillas stared at him in utter disbelief.

"Are you serious?"

"Yes."

"You're going to have us *land* on Algol?"

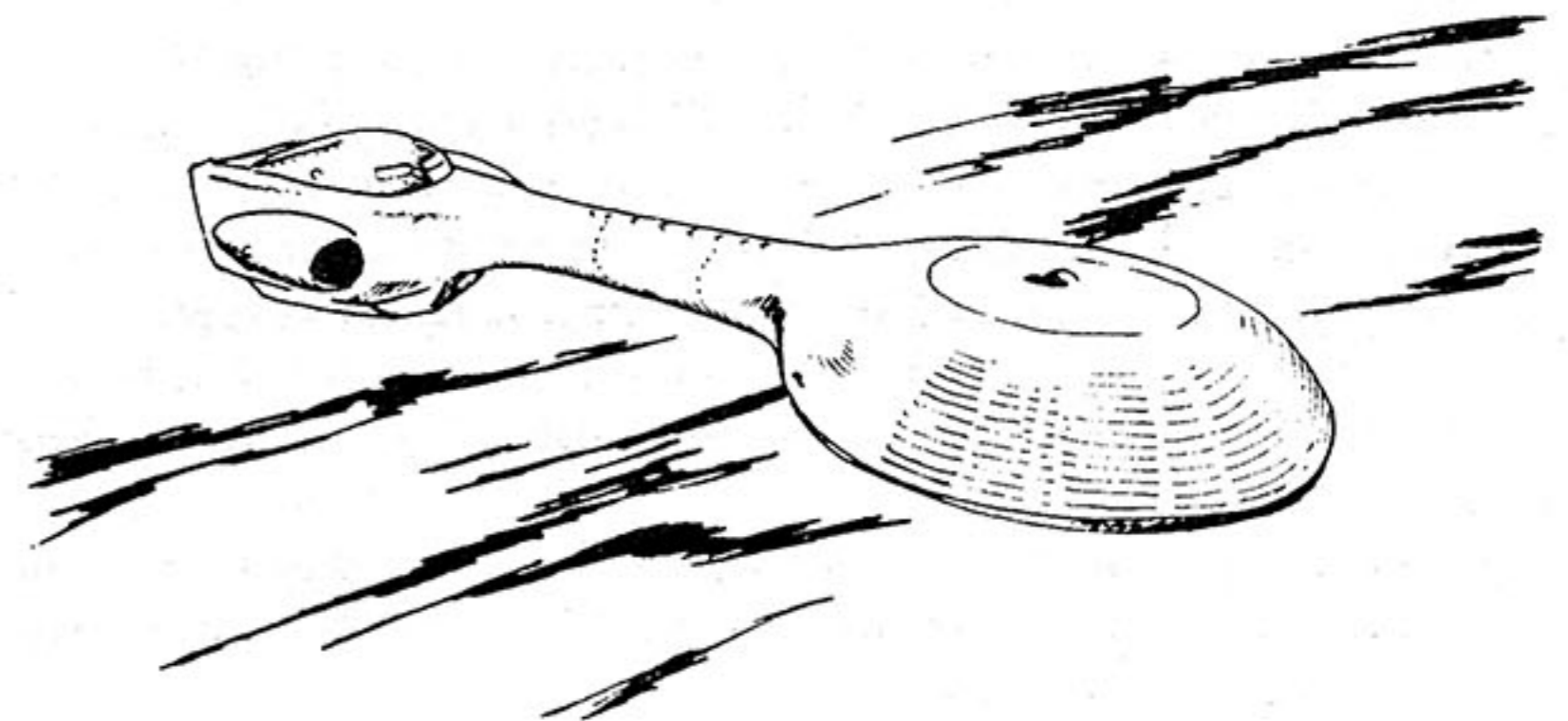
"Yes."

"In the middle of an all-out nuclear holocaust?"

"Yes."

"Heeeeyyaayyyyyy!!! Thank you, Arthur! Thank you! Thank you!!!"

The *Heart of Gold* descended gracefully through Algol's polluted skies, the Lintillas' cheery shouts resounding within it.



chapter 10

"Hitchhikers?? On my ship!!!" Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz was livid with anger. Or at least he would have been, were his thick skin not already a sickeningly pale shade of green. Zarniwoop struggled to maintain the businesslike air of the *Guide* office worker he was, but felt his composure slipping out from under him at the very sight of the enraged Vogon captain.



Gag Halfrunt and the Vogon guards, on the other hand, had no difficulty whatsoever in this area, and rather enjoyed watching Zarniwoop's will crumble under the foul gaze of their captain.

Zarniwoop decided that turning in Ford and Zaphod was definitely not as much fun as he thought it would be.

Ford Prefect had found that all his best thinking was done while blind drunk, seated at empty tables at stylish, artistic parties.

For instance, at such a party he went to five years ago, he had, after careful deliberation, finally derived a way to conclusively and definitively prove that everyone in the Universe existed.* He then made the mistake of drunkenly babbling it to the first man who happened to walk by, and promptly forgot it again until several weeks later, when he saw the same man on the sub-etha wave band, promoting his new best-selling book, *I Exist, You Exist*.

Ford then went and got drunk again, hoping to work out some new theory to surpass his previous one and regain the fortune he believed to be rightfully his.

After miserable failure in numerous attempts, he had finally come up with what he thought to be an outstanding concept--his theory of two's. The basis of this theory was that everything in the known Universe was in some way affected by the number two.

As he called over two tables to the two Dentrassis bartenders to order his second drink twice, he decided to assemble current evidence he had found to help support his theory. Pulling out a second-hand notebook he had been using for the past couple of years, he flipped to page twenty-two and began listing his finds with one of the two pencils he had always kept with him.

This is what he wrote:

-Two humans have escaped the destruction of the planet Earth along with two mice.

-Zaphod Beeblebrox has two heads. (He also thought about Zaphod's three arms, but decided to hold off on this until he was ready to start the sequel theory.)

-Over the past two months, I have been marooned on a total of two planets.

-This is the second time I have successfully hitched a lift on this Vogon ship while in a party of two.

-The answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything is forty-two. (Ford considered listing all the ways "4" and "2" could be used to come up with the number two; adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, etc., but then decided

* According to the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, it is theoretically impossible to prove that anyone actually exists. The theory goes something like this:

Person A asks Person B to prove that he exists.

"Prove to me that you exist," says Person A in a challenging voice.

Person B gives all the usual reasons; says, "I think, therefore I am", shows Person A his birth certificate, landowners statement, and various traffic violations, then asks Person A if he's ever considered seeing an analyst.

Person A says,

"Ah! But prove to me that all the reasons you have just given me have not, in fact, been imagined by me in the first place!"

"Oh, I didn't think of that," says Person B, and promptly goes mad trying to prove his own existence.

It is recommended wholeheartedly by the galaxy's leading psychologists that you do not apply this argument to yourself or anyone you know, simply for the sake of your own mental well-being. The main reason they say this is because with whole planets of mentally-unstable non-existent beings to tend to, they simply don't have time to help out every non-existent person that tries it.

for further reading:

Colluphid, Oolan

I Exist, You Exist

Megadodo Publications, Ursa Minor

Library of Galactic Congress no.

3928040493fho393SKO#(@*

to wait on it and tossed down two shots of his drink.)

-I am writing these notes with a number 2 lead pencil.

Running out of substantial ideas, he looked heavenward and found that the ceiling blocked his view. This gave him new inspiration.

-The ceiling above this party looks very much like the floor. There is a puddle of something wet on the floor near my table. Water is wet. Frozen water makes ice. Ice cubes can be made from ice. There is an ice cube in my drink. There are several types of drinks in the galaxy, one of which is Jin-anton-ix. A derivation of this drink, called Gin and Tonic, was to be found on Earth. In the *Hitchhiker's guide*, the definition for Earth is right under the definition for Eccentrica Gallumbits, the triple-breasted whore of Eroticon-6. Eroticon is spelled with eight letters. The number eight can be found by multiplying two by two by two.

Ford sat back, awed by the significance of this discovery and ordered a third drink. Then he started to think about the number three, noting that Eccentrica Gallumbits has three breasts, and the number 6 (as in Eroticon-6) is divisible by two with a result of three. He then tucked away this information and vowed to call it forth again when he felt he had achieved sufficient levels of intoxication to seriously begin a theory of three's.

Turning back to his theory of two's, he wrote:

-The song I am listening to from across the room says the name Zaphod twice in a row.

Oblivious to Ford's current state of mental decay, Zaphod lounged at the jukebox and listened with pride to the song the Dentrassis were playing over and over.

Zaphod, Zaphod

You knocked the Vortex out

Zaphod, Zaphod

You're the greatest, it's no doubt.

The old Dentrassis approached him and handed him another drink.

"A toast," he said in a voice vaguely resembling that of Lawrence Welk. "Just between you and I, Zaphod Beeblebrox."

"I'll drink to me," Zaphod said, tossing it down in one shot. "Y'know, you froods never did tell me how you heard about me and the Vortex."

"It was on the sub-etha wave band. Didn't you hear it?"

Zaphod shook his cranium that was the least intoxicated.

"I didn't think so. What style. Anyway, the rest of the galaxy

did. We're just one of many new cults now forming in honor of your greatness. In fact, you've now been voted nine out of the ten most admired men by *Playbeing* magazine and you're on the ballot for the tenth."

"Hey, yeah? Who'm I running against?"

"Yourself. Here's to your greatness, Zaphod Beeblebrox."

The old Dentrassis began to drink from his glass when the door suddenly burst open and a horde of thoroughly nasty Vogon guards rushed into the room, Kill-o-zap guns held out, ready to cut down any resistance. The babbling Dentrassis immediately ceased all party-related activity and grouped protectively about their guests of honor.

"Who's in charge here," bellowed the lead Vogon. All eyes instinctively turned to Zaphod, who then pointed to the old Dentrassis.

"He is!"

The lead Vogon approached the old Dentrassis, who kept his body rigidly between he and Zaphod.

"We're looking for a pair of degenerate hitchhikers!"

"Uh, hey," Zaphod said, "if it's all the same to you, Ford and I could just--"

"Shut up, you!" The Vogon turned from Zaphod and gazed levelly at the old Dentrassis.

"One of them has two heads and three arms! Tall! Dark hair! Name's Zaphod Beeblebrox!"



Zaphod winced at some of the muffled cheers that emanated from the back of the room. The old Dentrassis gulped. The Vogon continued unabated.

"The other's a bit shorter! Dark hair! Pinstriped suit! Carries a satchel! Name's Ford Prefect!"

It was Ford's turn to wince.

"You seen either of 'em?"

The old Dentrassis gulped again.

"No."

"Okay. Sorry to interrupt your party. Come on, men...wrong room."

Everyone breathed a collective sigh of relief as the Vogons turned to leave. Abruptly, another Dentrassis rushed in from outside, brandishing a carton of fresh drinks. He had obviously been taste-testing quite a few of them on the way.

"Hey, everyone, is Zaphod still here? I've got some more drinks for Zaphod! Where is he? Oh, there you are, Zaphod! Hi, Zaphod! I'm glad you're still here! The Vogons are looking for you and Ford! 'Bring me Zaphod Beeblebrox and Ford Prefect,' the captain said! I think he wants to torture you with some of his poetry and throw you off the ship! Isn't that terrible, Zaphod? Hey, is Ford still here? Hey, Ford, They're looking for you too, Ford! I hope they don't find you and Zaphod here! Come on, let's have a drink! Let's all toast to the greatness of Zaphod Beeblebrox and his semi-cousin, Ford Prefect!"

Silence.

Suddenly, the Vogons whirled, Kill-o-zap guns now pointed straight at Zaphod and Ford.

"Give yourselves up! Our captain has ordered you to undergo torture by poetry!"

The Dentrassis instantly lept between the Vogons and their quarry.

"Outta the way," the Vogons shouted, "or we'll take you in, too!"

"Resistance is useless!"

Ford halfheartedly waved to the one who'd just shouted that.

"Hi. Remember me? How's your aunt?"

The Vogon troops moved forward into the mob of Dentrassis, when a voice vaguely resembling that of Lawrence Welk shouted, "STOP!!"

They stopped and turned threateningly toward the old Dentrassis, who had climbed on top of the bar in a vain attempt to make himself look more authoritative.

"What do you want," the lead Vogon asked him contemptuously.

"You can't have them."

"Why not?"

"Because I say so."

"So? We only answer to our captain!"

"If you so much as harm one hair on any of their heads..."

"What?"

"We won't mix any drinks for you for the rest of the trip."

The Vogons just stood there dumbly.

"N--no drinks?"

"None."

A tremor of hesitation crept into the lead Vogon's voice.

"Not even the little ones with the little green umbrellas in 'em?"

"None."

The lead Vogon turned worriedly to the second.

"Get me...get me the captain."

"They said *what!?!?*" Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz hunched over his communicator, again livid. (Even more so this time, because the guard he shouted at through it couldn't tell he was livid.)

"They said, if we take either of the hitchhikers away from them, they wouldn't mix any drinks for the rest of the trip, captain, sir."

"No drinks?"

"None, captain, sir."

"Not even the little ones with the little green--"

"None, captain, sir."

Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz considered these new circumstances and finally realized the Dentrassis had them in a corner.

"All right," he conceded, "but the hitchhikers are to get off at our next stop on Fermgorgor in the Bastablon system, or we'll get our own drink-mixing supplies there! Understood?"

"Yes, sir. I'll tell them."

The communicator screen went blank, and Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz fingered his prized poetry book, upset that he didn't have someone to torture with it.

A nasty smile suddenly crossed his face, and he gripped the book tightly.

"Bring in Zarniwoop," he commanded with a sadistic chuckle.

chapter 11

The Gumyjj Desert of Algol is one of the least interesting sights on the planet. With the exception of a single, isolated bump with a door in it, the desert is almost totally flat and barren, due to centuries of indifference, neglect, and the fact that no one on Algol really gives a wet slap about it.

What better place, thought the President of the Algolian Chapter of the Galactic Rotary Club, for a bomb shelter.

Leaving the jet-propelled car parked outside of the bump, he and Trillian had gone in, posting Stan and Ollie at the door.

Stan and Ollie were part of the President's custom-built Sirius Cybernetic robot guard...a curious platoon of armored androids designed to shoot, fight, and execute their official tasks--very politely.

They lounged casually against the bump on either side of the door and passively watched the *Heart of Gold* descend and land a few yards away. They made no move to prevent the ship's hatch from hissing open, and didn't even bat a cybernetic eyelash when the three humanoid figures marched out of it and strode determinatively over to them.

"Yes," Stan said to them politely when they stopped at the door, "may I help you?"

Arthur Dent stepped forward, motioning for the two Lintillas to stay behind.

"Uh, yes, my name is Arthur Dent, and my friends and I have come to speak with the President of the--"

"Pleased to meet you," Ollie greeted him. "May we ask what you would speak with him about?"

Arthur hadn't expected this, but, bringing forth a friendly smile, he pushed on.

"Ummm...well, you see, I've got these two very nice girls here..."

"Hello," said Lintilla.

"Hello," Lintilla said.

"Nice to make your acquaintance," Stan answered pleasantly.

"...and I wanted to see him about arranging a trade for his...wife," Arthur concluded.

"I see," Ollie said. "Well, he's not receiving anyone at this time, what with his being in safehiding and everything..."

"But we'll be more than happy to mention it to him when he's available to transact business. Have a nice day," Stan concluded.

"Well," Arthur said, "if you two chaps could see your way clear



to letting us just sort of shuffle in for a few moments, I'm sure that --"

"Terribly sorry, sir, but you just don't seem to understand. We were instructed not to let anyone in until our current crisis is over with, and I'm afraid our programming dictates that if you don't leave fairly soon, we must shoot you down without question. Good afternoon."

Arthur's friendly smile fell. The very thought of being this close to his goal and getting snuffed off had the effect of making him rather upset.

"But...but I've come so far just to see him! You can't turn me back now! There must be some way--"

"I'm truly sorry, sir, but we have our orders," Ollie said, reaching for his ominous-looking Insta-annihilate rifle.

Stan turned to Ollie.

"How much, do you think?"

"Twenty?"

"Howabout thirty?"

"Thirty-five."

"Okay." Stan turned to Arthur. "We'll be nice about all this and give you a good round figure of thirty-five seconds to get back into your ship and leave. Now."

"But...but..."

"Thirty-four...thirty-three...thirty-two..."

Deciding this was not working out quite the way he'd planned, Arthur whirled and started for the *Heart of Gold*, dismayed to see the Lintillas were already halfway there.

"Glad to be of service." The door to the bridge hummed shut behind Arthur as he rushed in after the Lintillas.

"Computer," he panted, "get us ready to take off--before those malfunctioning miscreants blow the ship apart!"

"Will do," Eddie crooned as the powerful engines began revving up in the background.

Marvin approached Arthur and stood right behind him, just close enough to be annoying so Arthur was forced to move out of his way.

"Why don't you watch where you're--" Arthur began.

"Don't get angry at me," Marvin retorted. "After all, you're the one who failed to rescue the girl. I wasn't even involved."

"It's not my fault! We'll need a diplomatic genius to talk our way past those bloody robots!"

"Oh, is that all? Well, why didn't you just say so?" Marvin trudged away as the engines engaged in their second revving-up stage.

Arthur ignored him as he furiously counted off the seconds in his head.

"Hey, guys," Eddie finally cheered, "the engines are at full power!"

"Then take off! Now!"

"Uh, sorry, but I can't do that."

"What?!?"

"Seems the outer airlock has just opened up all by itself. I could take off, though, if you don't mind holding your breaths until we reach the next planet."

The seconds still feverishly ticking off in his brain, Arthur whipped his head around, noticed Marvin's absence, and put two and two together.

"It's that blasted paranoid android! He's gone off on his own again! Well, we're not going to be blown up just sitting here waiting for him!"

His heart pounding, Arthur left Fnirk and the Lintillas and raced for the outer airlock to shut it while time still permitted. The remaining seconds still ticked hastily away. The amount of them left was now disconcertingly low.

"Glad to be of service."

"Thank you for making a simple door very happy."

"We hope you have enjoyed your trip through this door."

Ignoring the doors as best he could, Arthur finally emerged at the airlock and stopped to take one last, quick glance for Marvin. As he reached sadly for the switch to slam the hatch closed and

leave the manically-depressed machine to its fate, a familiar doleful voice called to him from outside.

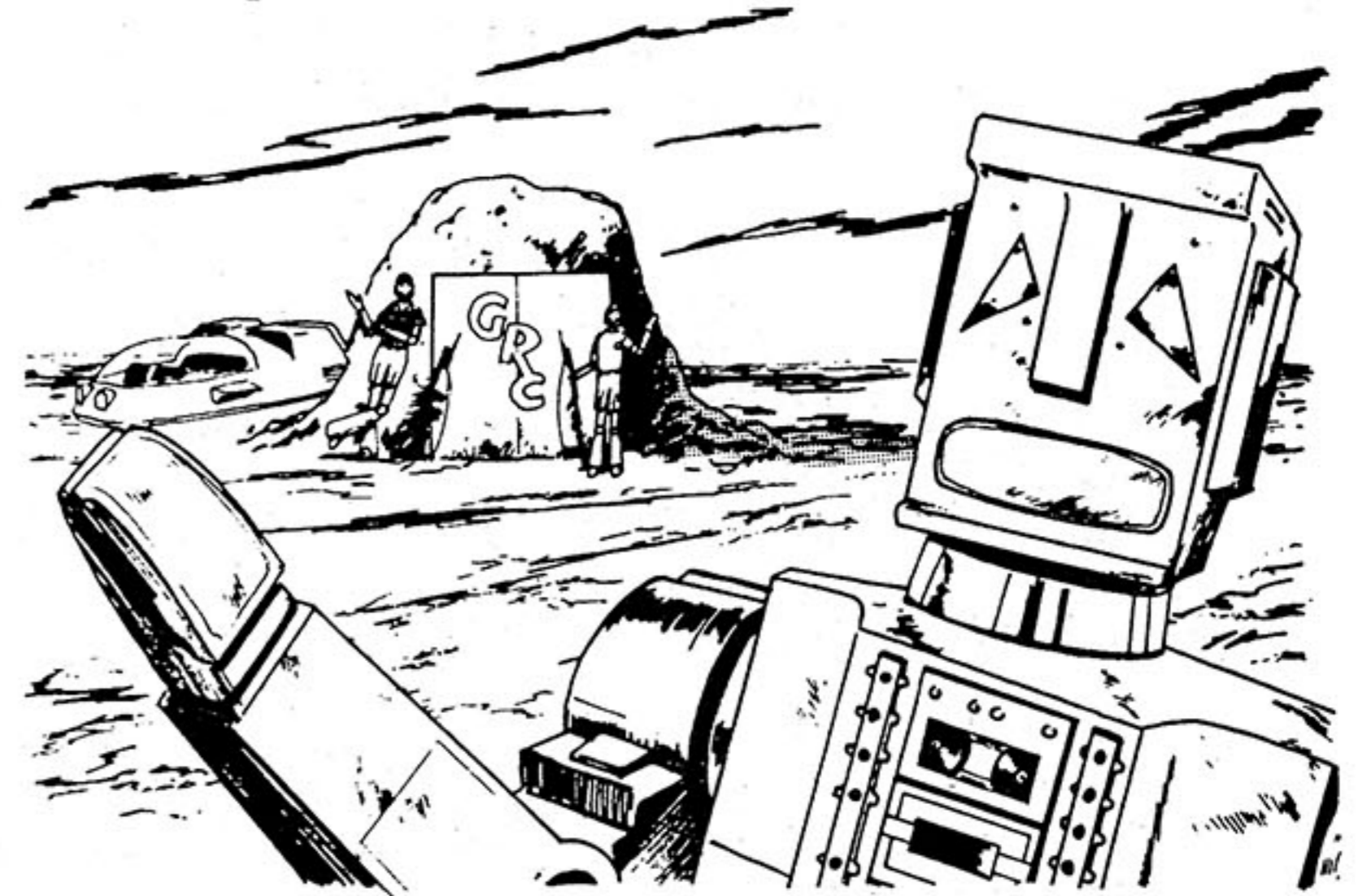
"It's all right. You can come out now."

"Marvin! Come on! Get aboard! We've got to--"

"I said it's all right. Come on, if you're coming. And bring the clones."

"What?"

"I just convinced them to let you in to see the President of the Algolian Chapter of the Galactic Rotary Club. It was very simple, really, but you can't expect to do much if you haven't got a brain the size of a planet."



chapter 12

For the first time in a long while, Arthur Dent was feeling very good about himself.

As the *Heart of Gold* left the troubled world of Algol, the president of its Galactic Rotary Club chapter, and the two Lintillas behind, Arthur stood alone on the bridge, secure in the uplifting knowledge that his beloved Trillian was now safely aboard.

A rare smile crossed his face as he imagined how he must have looked, bursting in unexpectedly on the fat president's lunch and unerringly convincing him that while one Lintilla might not have been enough woman for him, two of them would more than suffice.

Another, even rarer smile crossed his face as he raised the cup of tea he'd finally managed to finagle from the Nutri-matic machine to his lips, and the rarest smile of all beamed radiantly at Trillian as she glided onto the bridge.

"Hi, Arthur! I want to thank you again for rescuing me from that miserable planet. I thought you'd given up on me."

"Don't mention it," he answered smugly as he drank from his tea again...slowly, to savor its exquisite flavor.

"Oh. Okay. By the way, I was wondering..."

"Yes?"

"Well, I've been looking around the ship, and I've seen you, Fnirk, and Marvin, but whatever happened to Ford and--"

Arthur's smile dropped and an instinctive shudder of anticipation went through him.

"--Zaphod?"

The shattering sound that came next was from the cup of tea Arthur had suddenly dropped on the floor.

"Did I say something wrong?"

Silence.

"Arthur?"

"Yes, you said something wrong!"

"What?"

"That name!"

"What name?"

"Z--Za--I can't say it!"

"Zapho--?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"But what's wrong with that name?"

"It only happens to belong to the three-armed, two-headed

ex-Galactic President who ordered the destruction of our dear planet Earth! That's what's wrong with it!"

"Zaphod?"

Arthur was now shuddering uncontrollably.

"Yes! Yes!"

"But how did you find that out?"

"Sit down. It's a long story."

Obedying him, but not knowing exactly why, Trillian seated herself at the console before him. He paced and gestured as he spoke.

"I'll start from the beginning."

"Good place to."

"After Ford and I escaped that Hagumemnon Admiral, we found ourselves in the company of...of my and your ancestors."

"What?"

"Oh, never mind. It's another long story. If I talk about it, I'll just start to whimper. Anyhow, we ended up marooned on prehistoric Earth for about two years, until Za--that *man* inadvertently rescued us with the improbability drive. Only worthwhile thing he ever did in his life. He said he'd just been through some Total Perspective Vortex-thing, but--"

"Vortex?"

"Never mind. Another long story. Then we wound up on the planet Brontitor." Arthur thought about mentioning the bird-people he'd met there who lived in the right ear of the fifteen-mile high statue of himself, but was getting weary of saying "*never mind, it's another long story*".

"...where I met the Lintillas I traded off for you, and got captured by a representative of the Dalman-Saxville Shoe Corporation. A nutter. He actually believed their company was on their way to taking over the Earth and turning it into a giant shoe-shop network."

"Oh?"

"Yes. I know how silly it all sounds..."

"No, no, not at all. Keep going."

"Anyway, we escaped and met up with Ford, that *man*, and some Zorniwopp person, and went to chat with some senile old man living in a shack, who apparently rules the Universe. He told me about...that *man* being in financial collusion with some consortium of high-powered psychiatrists who had him order the Earth's destruction to end the experiment to find the Ultimate Question."

"Shoe-shop network?"

"Yes. Haven't you been listening?" Arthur slumped down beside her. "I'm going to get that wretched *man*. I'm going to defame him if it's the last thing I do. But I don't know where to start. The whole galaxy's probably heard about that Vortex-business by now. They've even got a song out, something about...that *man* being the most important person alive." He turned to her. "I need your help."

Trillian got up and silently paced around the bridge. Arthur watched her every move hopefully. She stopped and faced him.

"how big is this shoe corporation?"

"What?! My God, Trillian, is that all you're concerned with? He destroyed our planet! Our home!"

"How big is it, Arthur?!?"

Arthur stopped and dug into his memory, if for no better reason, just to amuse her.

"Gigantic. From the film they forced us to watch, I'd say they're even bigger than McDonald's."

"Bigger than McDonald's *was*," Trillian corrected. Arthur tried not to glare at her, but failed quite miserably.

"Right," he growled. "But why do you ask?"

"Well, it just seems to me that they might be rather upset with Zaphod if they ever discovered he's responsible for the loss of one of their prime markets."

Arthur's heart did flip-flops, and a new smile crossed his face as he considered these implications, one that heftily topped all the others.

"That's bloody brilliant!!"

"It was just a thought." Trillian wandered out of the room. Arthur stared after her, amazed at how quickly she had brought him back from his depression, and feeling as if he could face reality again.

He kept this feeling as he strode boldly over to Eddie and switched him back on.

"Computer, on which planet are the central offices of the Dalman-Saxville Shoe Corporation located?"

"Ahh, let's see now...last time I heard, they had a nifty little set-up on Fermgorgor in the Bastablon system."

"Then that's where we're going to go."

"Hey, whatever blows your hair back!"

What fate will befall our heroes now?

Will Arthur Dent be able to convince the Dalman-Saxville Shoe Corporation to take up his vendetta against Zaphod Beeblebrox?

Will Arthur ever learn to control his incessant shuddering whenever the name is mentioned? Will he ever be able to bring himself to actually say the name, or will he just continue to refer to Zaphod as 'that *man*', and do these points really even matter in the long run?

What will happen to Ford and Zaphod when they arrive on Fermgorgor? Will the Vogons just let them off the ship peacefully, or will they force them to take Zarniwoop along?

Will Zarniwoop ever find someone who likes him?

Will Gag Halfrunt and the Vogons succeed in their mission to kill Arthur Dent, or did the Ruler of the Universe just give them worthless advice like he usually does?

Will Marvin tire of being in a state of constant depression and seek emotional counseling?

Will Fnirk play a major role in events to come, or will he just become a cardboard character with no real purpose other than to be cute and cuddly, as he already seems to have done?

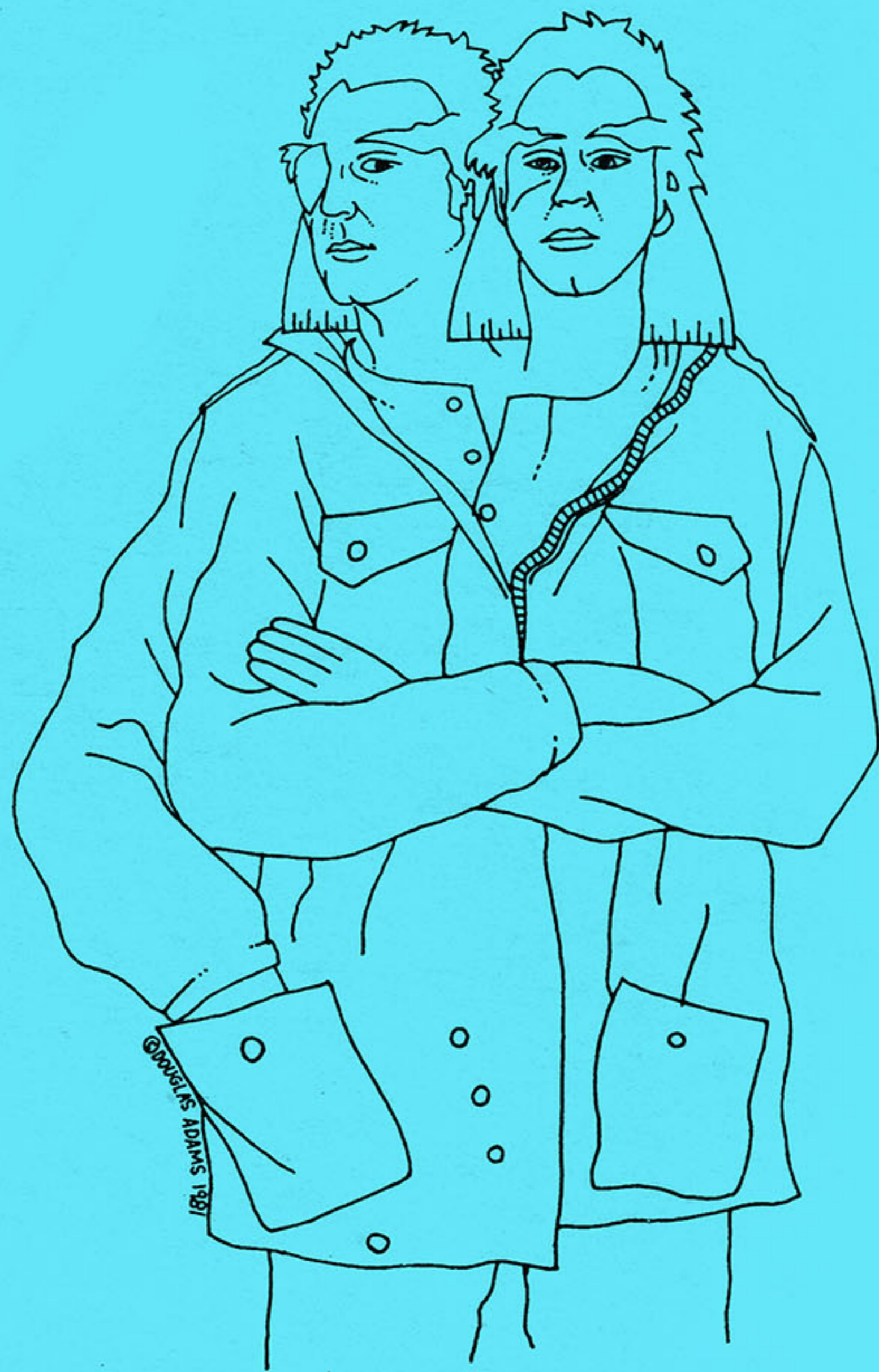
Will there ever be a second issue of *The Hitchhiker's Guide Companion*?

Find out--if you can.

In that issue of *The Hitchhiker's Guide Companion*, Tim Eldred and Jim Emelander were the artists/writers and no one else played any real major roles, except possibly *Suzy Eldred*, Tim's maternal life-form, who volunteered to typeset this monstrosity, and *Steve Harrison*, a hoopy frood who generously put his videotape through God-knows-what torture to supply us with visual reference material. Thanks a lot!

The song *Zaphod Beats the Vortex* is now available on a hit single in many of the more stylish, artistic music shops throughout your local solar system.

Is Zaphod Beeblebrox really the most important person in the Universe?



Find out in this issue....