D L A B \_ T A G

T h e H I t c h H I k e r ' s G u I d e t o t h e G a l a x y

F a r \_ o u t \_ I n \_ t h e \_ u n c h a r t e d \_ b a c k w a t e r s \_ o f \_ t h e \_ u n f a s h I o n a b l e \_ e n d \_ o f

T h e \_ \_ w e s t e r n \_ \_ s p I r a l \_ \_ a r m \_ \_ o f \_ \_ t h e \_ G a l a x y \_ l I e s \_ a \_ s m a l l \_ u n r e g a r d e d

Y e l l o w \_ s u n .

O r b I t I n g \_ t h I s \_ a t \_ a \_ d I s t a n c e \_ o f \_ r o u g h l y \_ n I n e t y – t w o \_ \_ m I l l I o n \_ \_ m I l e s

I s \_ \_ a n \_ \_ u t t e r l y \_ I n s I g n I f I c a n t \_ l I t t l e \_ b l u e \_ g r e e n \_ p l a n e t \_ w h o s e \_ a p e -

D e s c e n d e d \_ l I f e \_ f o r m s \_ a r e \_ s o \_ a m a z I n g l y \_ p r I m I t I v e \_ t h a t \_ \_ t h e y \_ \_ s t I l l

T h I n k \_ d I g I t a l \_ w a t c h e s \_ a r e \_ a \_ p r e t t y \_ n e a t \_ I d e a .

T h I s \_ p l a n e t \_ h a s \_ - \_ o r \_ r a t h e r \_ h a d \_ - \_ a \_ p r o b l e m , \_ w h I c h \_ w a s \_ t h I s : \_ m o s t

O f \_ \_ t h e \_ \_ p e o p l e \_ \_ o n \_ \_ I t \_ w e r e \_ u n h a p p y \_ f o r \_ p r e t t y \_ m u c h \_ o f \_ t h e \_ t I m e .

M a n y \_ s o l u t I o n s \_ w e r e \_ s u g g e s t e d \_ f o r \_ t h I s \_ p r o b l e m , \_ b u t \_ m o s t \_ o f \_ t h e s e

W e r e \_ \_ largely \_ \_ c o n c e r n e d \_ w I t h \_ t h e \_ m o v e m e n t s \_ o f \_ s m a l l \_ g r e e n \_ p I e c e s

O f \_ p a p e r , \_ w h I c h \_ I s \_ o d d \_ b e c a u s e \_ o n \_ t h e \_ w h o l e \_ I t \_ w a s n ' t \_ \_ t h e \_ \_ s m a l l

G r e e n \_ p I e c e s \_ o f \_ p a p e r \_ t h a t \_ w e r e \_ u n h a p p y .

A n d \_ s o \_ t h e \_ p r o b l e m \_ r e m a I n e d ; \_ l o t s \_ o f \_ t h e \_ p e o p l e \_ \_ w e r e \_ \_ m e a n , \_ \_ a n d

M o s t \_ o f \_ t h e m \_ w e r e \_ m I s e r a b l e , \_ e v e n \_ t h e \_ o n e s \_ w I t h \_ d I g I t a l \_ w a t c h e s .

M a n y \_ w e r e \_ I n c r e a s I n g l y \_ o f \_ t h e \_ o p I n I o n \_ t h a t \_ t h e y ' d \_ a l l \_ m a d e \_ a \_ \_ b I g

M I s t a k e \_ \_ I n \_ \_ c o m I n g \_ \_ d o w n \_ \_ f r o m \_ t h e \_ t r e e s \_ I n \_ t h e \_ f I r s t \_ p l a c e . \_ A n d

S o m e \_ s a I d \_ t h a t \_ e v e n \_ t h e \_ t r e e s \_ h a d \_ b e e n \_ a \_ b a d \_ m o v e , \_ \_ a n d \_ \_ t h a t \_ \_ n o

O n e \_ s h o u l d \_ e v e r \_ h a v e \_ l e f t \_ t h e \_ o c e a n s .

A n d \_ t h e n , \_ o n e \_ T h u r s d a y , \_ n e a r l y \_ t w o \_ t h o u s a n d \_ y e a r s \_ a f t e r \_ \_ o n e \_ \_ m a n

H a d \_ \_ b e e n \_ n a I l e d \_ t o \_ a \_ t r e e \_ f o r \_ s a y I n g \_ h o w \_ g r e a t \_ I t \_ w o u l d \_ b e \_ t o \_ b e

N I c e \_ t o \_ p e o p l e \_ f o r \_ a \_ c h a n g e , \_ o n e \_ g I r l \_ s I t t I n g \_ o n \_ \_ h e r \_ \_ o w n \_ \_ I n \_ \_ a

small cafe in Rickmansworth suddenly realized what it was that

had been going wrong all this time, and she finally knew how the

world could be made a good and happy place. This time it was

right, it would work, and no one would have to get nailed to

anything.

Sadly, however, before she could get to a phone to tell anyone

about it, a terribly stupid catastrophe occurred, and the idea

was lost forever.

This is not her story.

But it is the story of that terrible stupid catastrophe and some

of its consequences.

It is also the story of a book, a book called The Hitch Hiker's

Guide to the Galaxy - not an Earth book, never published on

Earth, and until the terrible catastrophe occurred, never seen or

heard of by any Earthman.

Nevertheless, a wholly remarkable book.

in fact it was probably the most remarkable book ever to come out

of the great publishing houses of Ursa Minor - of which no

Earthman had ever heard either.

Not only is it a wholly remarkable book, it is also a highly

successful one - more popular than the Celestial Home Care

Omnibus, better selling than Fifty More Things to do in Zero

Gravity, and more controversial than Oolon Colluphid's trilogy of

philosophical blockbusters Where God Went Wrong, Some More of

God's Greatest Mistakes and Who is this God Person Anyway?

In many of the more relaxed civilizations on the Outer Eastern

Rim of the Galaxy, the Hitch Hiker's Guide has already supplanted

the great Encyclopedia Galactica as the standard repository of

all knowledge and wisdom, for though it has many omissions and

contains much that is apocryphal, or at least wildly inaccurate,

it scores over the older, more pedestrian work in two important

respects.

First, it is slightly cheaper; and secondly it has the words

Don't Panic inscribed in large friendly letters on its cover.

But the story of this terrible, stupid Thursday, the story of its

extraordinary consequences, and the story of how these

consequences are inextricably intertwined with this remarkable

book begins very simply.

It begins with a house.

DLAB\_END