

My API key is [REDACTED]



## CHAPTER 1

**I**t is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

'My dear Mr. [REDACTED] said his lady to him [REDACTED] 'have you heard that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is let at last?'

Mr. [REDACTED] replied that he had not.

'But it is,' returned she; 'for Mrs. [REDACTED] has just been here, and she told me all about it.'

Mr. [REDACTED] made no answer.

'Do you not want to know who has taken it?' cried his wife impatiently.

'YOU want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.'

This was invitation enough.

'Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. [REDACTED] says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of [REDACTED] that he came down on [REDACTED] in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. [REDACTED] immediately; that he is to take possession before [REDACTED] and some of his

## The Last Question

By [REDACTED]

*This is by far my favorite story of all those I have written.*

*After all, I undertook to tell [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] of human history in the space of a short story and I leave it to you as to how well I succeeded. I also undertook another task, but I won't tell you what that was lest I spoil the story for you.*

*It is a curious fact that innumerable readers have asked me if I wrote this story. They seem never to remember the title of the story or (for sure) the author, except for the vague thought it might be me. But, of course, they never forget the story itself especially the ending. The idea seems to drown out everything -- and I'm satisfied that it should.*

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The last question was asked for the first time, half in jest, on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED], at a time when humanity first stepped into the light. The question came about as a result of a five-dollar bet over highballs, and it happened this way:

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were two of the faithful attendants of Multivac. As well as any human beings could, they knew what lay behind the cold, clicking, flashing face -- miles and miles of face -- of that giant computer. They had at least a vague notion of the general plan of relays and circuits that had long since grown past the point where any single human could possibly have a firm grasp of the whole.

Multivac was self-adjusting and self-correcting. It had to be, for nothing human could adjust and correct it quickly enough or even adequately enough. So [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] attended the monstrous giant only lightly and superficially, yet as well as any men could. They fed it data, adjusted questions to its needs and translated the answers that were issued. Certainly they, and all others like them, were fully entitled to share in the glory that was Multivac's.

For [REDACTED] Multivac had helped design the ships and plot the trajectories that enabled man to reach the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] but past that, [REDACTED] poor resources could not support the ships. Too much energy was needed for the long trips. [REDACTED] exploited its coal and uranium with increasing efficiency, but there was only so much of both. But slowly Multivac learned enough to answer deeper questions more fundamentally, and on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] what had been theory, became fact.