

FAR OUT IN THE UNCHARTED **backwaters** OF THE UNFASHIONABLE END

OF THE WESTERN SPIRAL ARM OF THE GALAXY LIES A SMALL

UNREGARDED YELLOW SUN

ORBITING THIS AT A DISTANCE OF ROUGHLY **ninety** - **8** **million**

MILES IS AN UTTERLY INSIGNIFICANT LITTLE BLUE - GREEN PLANET WHOSE

APE - DESCENDED LIFE FORMS ARE SO AMAZINGLY PRIMITIVE THAT THEY

STILL THINK DIGITAL WATCHES ARE A PRETTY NEAT IDEA

THIS PLANET HAS - OR RATHER HAD - A PROBLEM, WHICH WAS

THIS MOST OF THE PEOPLE LIVING ON IT WERE UNHAPPY FOR PRETTY

MUCH OF THE TIME - MANY SOLUTIONS WERE SUGGESTED FOR THIS PROBLEM

, BUT MOST OF THESE WERE LARGELY CONCERNED WITH THE MOVEMENTS OF

SMALL GREEN PIECES OF PAPER , WHICH IS ODD BECAUSE ON THE WHOLE

IT **wasn't** THE SMALL GREEN PIECES OF PAPER THAT WERE UNHAPPY .

AND SO THE PROBLEM REMAINED ; LOTS OF THE PEOPLE WERE MEAN ,

AND MOST OF THEM WERE MISERABLE , EVEN THE ONES WITH DIGITAL

WATCHES .

MANY WERE INCREASINGLY OF THE OPINION THAT THEY 'd ALL MADE A

BIG MISTAKE IN COMING DOWN FROM THE TREES IN THE FIRST PLACE .

AND SOME SAID THAT EVEN THE TREES HAD BEEN A BAD MOVE , AND

THAT NO ONE SHOULD EVER HAVE LEFT THE OCEANS .

AND THEN , ONE THURSDAY , NEARLY TWO THOUSAND YEARS AFTER ONE

MAN HAD BEEN NAILED TO A TREE FOR SAYING HOW GREAT IT WOULD BE

TO BE NICE TO PEOPLE FOR A CHANGE , A GIRL SITTING ON HER OWN

IN A SMALL **café** 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 TERRIBLE , STUPID CATASTROPHE OCCURRED , AND

THE IDEA WAS LOST FOR EVER .

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

Hitchhiker ' S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY — NOT AN EARTH BOOK

, NEVER PUBLISHED ON EARTH , AND UNTIL THE TERRIBLE CATASTROPHE

OCCURRED , NEVER SEEN