

# The Sentience Sentry



Zwarbbz was justifiably proud of his state-of-the-art Mark II Hyperspacecraft. It could travel in two different dimensions simultaneously, zip across the universe at twice the speed of light, and generate sufficient antimacassarmatter to pass in and out of black holes without so much as ruffling the pilot's cranial tendrils. Plus, it featured dozens of accessories expressly designed to enhance the comfort of the ride. The combo asteroid defibrillator and travel mug, for example. And yet, for all of its highfalutin gadgetry, the Mark II was a total cow when it came to parking. Just now, Zwarbbz had tried to put the craft down in a field behind a reconnaissance structure on a planet in the Zabmar Quadrant where it wouldn't attract undue attention. But at the last second, the Mark II swerved, clipped a security fence, and came to rest on a nice, paved area next to the field. Straightaway, a crowd of snoops gathered, and Zwarbbz was forced to make First Contact with the race of spongelike creatures 260 years ahead of schedule. This would *not* look good on his personnel record, and he was now justifiably mad at his so-called state-of-the-art Hyperspacecraft. Only later did Zwarbbz discover that the landing hadn't been a gaffe at all. The Mark II's Sentience Sentry™ had overridden pilot control when it sensed it might get its landing gear soiled, a deep-seated artificial intelligence issue that was to persist for, coincidentally, another 260 years.