







ICE AGE #4 is published for the 100th FAPA mailing by Larry and Noreen Shaw, 16 Grant Place, Staten Island 6, N.Y., who are sorry they have missed so many mailings recently but hope to hit every one in the future, even if it is with only a few pages of mc's.

WHAT TIME DID YOU SAY IT WAS?

We have reached our centennial mailing. Our traditions are proud and noble, and we face the future, as trufans always have, with the cold clear eyes of seekers of wisdom and truth. I can see no reason why we can not anticipate an organization that is not merely as good as the present one but actually vastly improved by the time of the bi-centennial.

To achieve this, however, we must do two things. We must solve the problems currently plaguing us, and we must avoid stagnation. I modestly suggest that we can accomplish both of these objectives by the adoption of a simple amendment.

It has been suggested frequently that we raise the number of members of FAPA. Just as frequently, the suggestion has been argued down by members who object to the increased work and expense that would ensue. They point out, quite rightly, that a jump of even ten in the hallowed list would result in sizable additional burdens in the forms of crank-twirling, postage and the like.

My plan is ridiculously simple. It involves raising the membership limit not by 35 or ten or even five--but by one. Yes, just one member would be added to the roster. However, there is an additional feature, which is that this would happen every mailing. That is, assuming the plan were adopted immediately, the 101st mailing would find us with 66 members, the 102nd with 67, and so on.

By doing it this way, the additional burdens would be so minute as to be virtually unnoticeable. Who could possibly object to turning the crank one extra time per page, or in collating and stapling one more copy--particularly when the accruing benefits would be so immense?

It might seem at first that the greatest benefits would be to the waiting listers. Each of them would know that his chances of getting into the organization someday had been greatly increased. With his worries reduced, he would naturally put more enthusiasm and care into his pre-entry activities, and thus even fandom at large would be enriched.

But so would the present membership. We would constantly gain new talent, with the automatic assurance of bigger and better mailings, more enlightened discussions, etc. And we would remove the darkly hovering threat that the current waiting list might pack up and form their own apa. This last possibility is too horrible to contemplate; I don't think fandom can stand one more apa.

Besides, who wants to contemplate the 200th mailing of a FAPA with exactly the same membership as it has now?

--LTS

## FANZINES FOR BREAKFAST

Noreen comments on the 99th Mailing.....modestly and neatly.

FANTASY AMATEUR - I just don't like any cover on the FA, so sue me.

HORIZONS - Warner: Why is "New York out of the question for every other reason" as a city to migrate to? Have you ever been to NY, Harry? If not, don't be put off by something you may have heard or read. Find out for yourself. When I used to visit New York, I hated it, but since I have lived here, I love it. There are as many New Yorks as there are New Yorkers - the trick is to find your special one...You are in luck with your fan history. It may interest you to know that the only two eye witnesses to Jim Harmon knocking down a panel of Harlan's door are right here in FAPA. Sally Kidd and I were seated in a large chair facing the hall and Harlan's room was directly across from us. Jim did just knock out a panel and Harlan had incited him to it...

SALUD - Elinor Busby: Where is the pretty yellow paper? I almost didn't recognize SALUD...I also prefer Tolkien to Peake, although Larry is a Peake fan. Pat Lupoff and I have absolutely identical tastes in books, especially in regard to mysteries and borderline fantasy...Speaking of clams, I have been in at least every Howard Johnson's between here and Chicago and have never yet seen anyone order their speciality "Tendersweet fried clams". Has anyone ever had them?...I think Sylvia White is too young for Goldberry. Djinn Faine as she was 6, 7 or 8 years ago would have been a perfect Goldberry...I don't care how the male members of FAPA feel, but I personally love to read about the clothes you plan to take to Chicago. I may get a new dress for the banquet, and have something black and glamorous in mind...You are correct, Mrs. Moskowitz is not a member of FAPA, she just acts like one... Please, people, Ingrid Bergman is the lovely actress; Ingmar Bergman is the Swedish director of stage and film renown. I recommend, without reservation his movies "The Seventh Seal", "Wild Strawberries" and "Smiles of a Summer Night". We haven't seen "Through A Glass, Darkly" yet. I would really like to know if you and Buz did go to see it and what you thought of it.

NULL-F - White: But it's Breen we're talking to here...on the subject of ale and the ancient Egyptians, you might check "Alcohol" by Berton Roueche. It's a very interesting book and has a lot of material on fermented products and ancient peoples.

VANDY - Coulsons: I would adore lavender mimeograph paper. It's my favorite color. I always get sensational ideas for special issues of fanzines on wild colored paper, but nothing ever comes of them because I never get to a really complete mimeograph supply store. Like a Valentine's Day fanzine done entirely on pink and red with lace pasted on the cover. Oh, well, most people probably wouldn't like it anyway...I have long felt that we (Americans) aren't really a bit similar to the English at all. It's as if we are two parts of a puzzle that don't quite fit together - the edges overlap in one place and don't meet in another at all. Our common language only makes it harder for us to understand each other.



Buck, you and I agree completely on the dubious worth of the Cult. Who needs it or cares about it? Your reply to George Price on the HUAC is the best, most concise one I have seen. Juanita - I'm in agreement with you too, the world is full of men who seem to think that just the accident of being born men gives them some kind of God-like rights. I'm not a mad suffragette, but I would like to see a little less of the "Wait on me, you lucky creature!" attitude. I'm glad I don't live with it.

LIGHTHOUSE - Graham: Yes, the Shaws are the first to agree that it was absurd to list us as #3 publishers on the basis of WHY IS A FAN? Extremely unfair...

MELANGE - Trimbles: I enjoyed the Burbee quotes very much. I like the entire range of orchid, blue-purples and corals. I wonder what that makes me? (Don't tell me.) I have always been mad for lavender, but it is a very hard color to wear. Once you're over 25, it sort of sets your face in an unflattering glow.

SELF-PRESERVATION - Hoffman: I've seen Rod Serling a few times on TV and have decided that he's a frustrated actor. He doesn't really want to write that show, he wants to star in it. He was doing commercials for some beer company the other night. I wonder what there is about him that makes the company think he can sell beer?...I'm always walking past people without saying hello for 2 good reasons. 1) I can't see more than 2 inches and 2) my mind is miles away. One of the most frequently heard phrases of my childhood was (said to my mother) "I saw that daughter of yours on the street and she didn't even say hello!"

A FANZINE FOR.... - Jacobs: I would imagine that the attempt to remove Jane from the waiting list originated because she has never demonstrated any interest in fandom, FAPA, publishing or writing. I don't believe it was in any way connected with your divorce.

WRAITH - Ballard: Along with the rest of the nation, I had been under the misapprehension that a sonic boom occurred only when a plane broke the sound barrier. Not so, says my friendly daily paper, it occurs all the time the plane is going faster than sound and spreads out for miles in each direction. Sometimes it can be heard in 3 states simultaneously...You're quite right, of course, some day Terry Carr will drive us all mad. I've about had it up to here with novels about sensitive young things coming of age in a cruel world. It is part of man's conceit that each person thinks his experiences are unique. Unfortunately, those who are literate insist on telling the rest of us about it so you get these coming-of-age things repeated endlessly.

SERCON'S BANE - Busby, F.M. - Ah yes, the "why aren't you leading your class" bit. I can tell you why I wasn't leading mine; because I can't add, that's why. When it came the sheer vocabulary and reading comprehension tests, I izzed along, but then they'd slip in two trains going 20 miles an hour meeting etc. and I was back not leading my class.

# THE INTELLIGENT LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO REVOLUTION

by

Robert J. Shea

## I

Ironically, Dr. Isaac Asimov, whom students of psychohistory venerate even as students of psychoanalysis venerate Dr. Sigmund Freud, has done much to discourage the advance of psychohistory in our time. In those works which laid the foundation for the science of predicting history, the Good Doctor repeatedly states that psychohistory will only be possible when the human population numbers quadrillions, at which point individual deviations will no longer interfere with the mathematical prediction of massive historical trends.

Fortunately, this is not so. With all respect to Doctor Asimov we cannot let the dead hand of outmoded theory rule with mulish obstinacy over the empire of knowledge. In any case, the Father of Psychohistory seems to have left the field to write encyclopedias or some such thing. Others must carry his work to its logical terminus.

We need psychohistory if humanity is to survive till it reaches the numbers stipulated by the Good Doctor. Just to understand the world we are trying to survive in, we Americans need psychohistory. Revolutions, for example, have been a great stumbling block for past and present administrations. We are surprised by revolutions in unexpected places, we help revolutionists who hate us, we hurt revolutionists who like us, and we foment revolutions that fail. Lacking a Science of psychohistory, we should have in some key position a man who naturally understands revolutions, someone like Edmund Burke.

If Isaac Asimov is the Francis Bacon of psychohistory, Edmund Burke was its Roger Bacon. In the dark ages before Asimov wrote, Burke was practicing a kind of alchemist's psychohistory. His Reflections on the Revolution in France foresaw the entire course of the French Revolution; in its earliest stages, while most other observers were still hailing it as a dawn of liberty and progress, Burke accurately predicted the Reign of Terror and the military dictatorship. Nor was the population he was describing anywhere near quadrillions. Nor did he have Hari Seldon's complicated mathematics; he used rule of thumb. The rediscovery of Edmund Burke as a psychohistorian shows that psychohistory is possible now.

But even more interesting and useful are observations which prove that psychohistory not only does not need a population in the quadrillions, but in fact can be practiced on any population of any size whatever--a million--a thousand--ten--possibly even two (psychohistory involving populations smaller than two becomes



psychobiography and is outside the scope of this essay). These new observations make psychohistory available not only to governments but also to fraternal organizations, chamber music societies, teen-age gangs, and science fiction fan clubs. This is more than a discovery; this is a breakthrough.

## II

Now we can all be Edmund Burkes and reflect fruitfully on revolutions. All revolutions follow the same pattern whether they involve a continent or a country club, rule of thumb psychohistory tells us. This pattern has been noted before, in the writings of George Orwell, Crane Brinton, and Doctor Asimov, all of whom found the pattern in large-scale examples such as the Russian, the French, and the Cromwellian. But now we know that the same pattern is visible on a smaller scale.

The first stage is the Honeymoon, during which the Old Regime, worried by popular unrest, cooperates with moderate reformers. But once the Old Regime weakens itself by making concessions, men of a more radical bent seize control of the revolution from the moderates and overthrow the Old Regime altogether. Power tends, following the overthrow of the Old Regime, to slither across the political spectrum from the less extreme revolutionists to the more extreme, till it reaches the most radical element of all, who bloodily wipe out both the Old Regime and all the other, more moderate revolutionists. This development is the Reign of Terror and Virtue, during which the extremist rulers demand rigorous civic virtue and impose savage penalties on those who do not measure up to the new standards. Out of the disorder of this period there emerges a Strong Man, whose program is to replace chaos with dictatorship. The Strong Man restores quiet, and there comes a period called Thermidor, from one of the months of the French revolutionary calendar. During Thermidor the people breathe a collective sigh of relief and go on a long binge; it is a time of vice, luxury, and the restoration of many abuses and personnel of the Old Regime. Soon the colorful revolutionists are all dead or deported, and government is run by a New Bureaucracy, the same sort of conforming careerists who served the Old Regime. Everyone now gets ready for the next revolution.

A minute-scale example of this pattern in operation is Omega Lambda Phi. Olphi was an anti-fraternity fraternity, founded to

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See my essay "We Unhappy Few" in Ice Age 4

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force existing fraternities to give up blackballing and pledging by setting up a model no-blackballing, no-pledging fraternity to compete with them for campus power and prestige. Olphi's theoreticians, Khrushchev-like, proclaimed that because ours was the better system we would quickly and inevitably become top fraternity.

The Honeymoon period of this small revolution preceded the formal founding of Omega Lambda Phi; in this stage the revolutionaries were a large, loosely connected group who called themselves Tau Sigma. Their aims were humorous--T.S., get it? Mock rituals were conducted in local bars and mock titles conferred

on officers--Grand Exalted Seahorse, Beneficent Four-Armed Monster. The Old Regime fraternities understood that this was in fun; in fact some fraternity men also belonged to Tau Sigma, the Old Regime cooperating with moderate reformers.

Then someone counted the number of "brothers" Tau Sigma had acquired, close to two hundred. If it attracted that many, couldn't more serious ends be achieved with real organization? Five T.S. men, Feeps, Durstine, Volney, Segura, and Telemachus (fictitious names) drafted a constitution, junked the Tau Sigma joke, and adopted the serious name Omega Lambda Phi. The constitution, excluded members of other fraternities, the first

purge. Olphi's aim was now to overthrow the Old Regime fraternities.

A radically austere three pages, the constitution required that sixty percent of the membership vote "yes" for a candidate to be accepted into Olphi, but everyone was so opposed to the blackball that during this early period there were no "no" votes. Instead of going through eight weeks of pledging, a man simply was voted on and then asked to join. There were no rituals; new members heard informal revolutionary harangues usually delivered by Volney, who was the best speaker among the founding five. Meetings were chaotic, deliberately eschewing the formality of parliamentary procedure. Nor was joining Olphi expensive; while in other fraternities pins were jewel-studded affairs costing at least thirty dollars, Olphi pins cost only three dollars.

But the free, democratic spirit in which Olphi was conceived freed most members from any sense of obligation to the fraternity, and the organizational chores that build a fraternity's power and prestige were neglected. Despite predictions that Olphi would bury the blackballing, pledging fraternities, they continued to flourish and to see Olphi as a joke.

Segura and Telemachus demanded that measures be taken to strengthen fraternal discipline. Volney, Durstine, and Feeps, insisting that Olphi remain as it was, true to its individualistic ideal, were now conservatives in relation to Segura and Telemachus. Segura, fraternity president, announced that the fraternity needed a banner. Durstine, fraternity treasurer, refused to turn over money to buy the banner. Telemachus led the fight to impeach the treasurer; Volney and Feeps defended Durstine. But power had slithered from conservatives to extremists. Durstine was impeached. The Reign of Terror and Virtue instituted by Segura and Telemachus could not involve bloodshed as the college administration would have objected, but Volney, Durstine, Feeps, and their followers were bloodlessly purged from the fraternity.

A new constitution thirteen pages long, bristling with regulations and penalties, was adopted in place of the old libertarian document. Telemachus, succeeding Segura as president, became the fraternity Strong Man and railroaded through a series of laws giving extraordinary powers to the presidency. Segura rewrote the official fraternity history reducing the



number of founders to two, himself and Telemachus.

But these struggles took two years, and even Segura and Telemachus were getting tired of the fraternity. They took to spending their free time drinking and chasing women. Into the power vacuum of this Thermidor period stepped the men of Olphi's New Bureaucracy. These were younger members, valued by Telemachus and Segura for their hard-working, conforming temperaments. Humorless, colorless, not too bright, the New Bureaucrats administered the fraternity and its thirteen-page constitution with thoroughness but without inspiration. They worked earnestly, not to compete with the other fraternities, but to have Olphi accepted as just another member of the respectable fraternity community.

Today prospective members of Olphi are called "pledges" and must survive an eight-week period of probation. They must get the "yes" votes of eighty-five percent of the brothers to be accepted; if twenty brothers are voting, four "noes" are enough to keep a man out. Rituals are long and elaborate. Olphi pins are jewel-studded affairs costing at least thirty dollars.

The membership of this organization at any one time has never exceeded forty. And the Good Doctor called for quadrillions.

### III

Revolutions in science fiction fandom occur on a scale, not minute as with Olphi, but merely small. On this scale one finds instances of the standard revolutionary pattern at different stages, in many places, and on many levels. Fandom is a permanent revolution.

Fandom as a whole is a revolution against the rest of the world. The first fans resented the fact that other people do not read science fiction. Before fandom, each science fiction reader was an island alone in a sea of ridicule. When fandom began, moderate fans wanted to remain friendly with the rest of the world and "just read the stuff". Their plaintive voices were drowned out by the roars of extremists leaping to the seats of power. The Old Regime in American letters must fall. Science fiction must be acclaimed by the masses and accepted by the critics.

A Reign of Terror and Virtue followed. Fans being highly individualistic, however, individual fans conducted their own personal campaigns to terrorize other fans into being virtuous. These came to be called "fan feuds".

Revolutionary leaders, known as "big name fans," rose and fell. Would-be Strong Men appeared; their names are legendary among fans one consults today. Tales are told of a Begler, who advocated a universal fannish empire headed by himself, on the grounds that fans are a superior race. A Strong Man named Michel pressed the claims of "Michelism," which aimed at combining fannish revolution with proletarian revolution, only to be thwarted by counter-revolutionaries. Strong Man Harlan Allison attempted to vault to supreme power on a Seventh Fandom Movement,

but as kneed in the groin by mad dogs before he fairly got off the ground. A recent attempt to organize all fandom into a world-wide corporation was clearly intended to preclude seizure of power by a Strong Man.

With continuous Reigns of Terror and Virtue and Strong Men constantly arising in fandom, it is to be expected that there also be a perpetual state of Thermidor. Binges and ancient vice mark fan gathering, though true Thermidorean luxury is rare, fans being mostly poor. Cries of "Mr. Chairman--when do we buy vodka?" are characteristic of fan groups in a period of Thermidor. This non-seriousness naturally breeds a reaction among lovers of order. Even in fandom there are lovers of order. They set about forming a New Bureaucracy, aiming to set things straight through constitutions, by-laws, and parliamentary procedure. Some historians hold that the movement to incorporate fandom was the work of a New Bureaucracy rather than a Strong Man conspiracy. I disagree because the other view supports my theory better.

Fans distinguish nine periods of fandom, each a revolution against the preceding period, each in turn overthrown by an emergent period. Ninth Fandom, for example, was recently proclaimed as a rebellion against Eighth Fandom's consuming interest in social criticism. When a group of fans announced their preference for comic books, the Old Regime admonished them: "All around you is a society seething, begging not only for a critical evaluation of its fundamentals but for a re-construction of those very fundamentals..." This is interesting as a clear statement of the fans-against-the-world point of view, imposing on fandom the duty of overturning the fundamentals of society, but while Eighth Fandom moves against the world, Ninth Fandom moves against their movement. As one fanish authority put it with evident relish: "Fandom is changing. If you can't join it in changing, you don't even have to bother to leave--you'll get left." One can imagine Lenin speaking thus to Kerensky. Fandom is not only a permanent revolution; it is a constant flux.

Each year, at the World Science Fiction Convention, there are mutterings among the fans as they discover that this year's convention is bounded by dull ritual, rigid scheduling, and inflated oratory--in short, is over-organized. A feature of each convention being a competition over what city will host next year's convention, some group of civic boosters will make use of the groundswell of discontent.

"We are not organized," they will say. "We understand that fun comes first. Choose our city and there will be parties, booze, conversation, pretty girls, crazy fun. But there will be no dull rigmarole of panels and programs, no slide shows and speeches." But should their city be chosen as the site of next year's convention, the pattern will set in.

It may start with inviting as guest of honor Shepard Gaurin (fictitious name), cloistered eccentric widely considered the world's leading science fiction writer, who has not been seen in public for twenty years. This is meant as a gag; this devil-may-care convention committee (but notice, they are



already calling themselves a committee) doesn't really want to have a guest of honor. It happens, however, that the great man enjoyed the one romantic experience of his embittered life in this city, and, moved by the memory, he agrees to attend.

A sense of responsibility now mantles the convention committee. This may be one of the outstanding conventions of all time, but it will take work. Panels must be organized. Top prozine editors must be persuaded to come and debate with one another. Lecturers must be recruited. The program must be fully packed, fast-moving, thoroughly planned. To fill in between major events, home movies and slides of last year's convention are scheduled. Certainly such an excellent convention should be publicized in all media. Perhaps great numbers of non-fans will be attracted, many to stay and be converted; every effort must be made to make the convention interesting to the general public; the fans will come anyway.

A battle is fought at every step of the convention's evolution. Those who will not support the great, growing structure are purged.

And when Labor Day comes and world fandom sweeps into town, the rebellious mutterings will be heard: "This convention is too damned organized. Now if you come to our city next year, we'll have a really fanish convention."

Even the microcosm of the individual club displays the revolutionary pattern. If a club is the only one in its locale, it will start with a fans-against-the-world outlook. If there is another club in the area, the new club is an insurgent movement against the old club's clique-controlled bureaucracy. The new club, minimally organized, is controlled by no one, but some members begin to agitate for the club to do something. To do things, organization and leadership are needed. Those who cling to the old disorganized ways are soon purged, and set about starting a revolutionary club of their own.

We may need a galactic civilization on which to base a mathematics of psychohistory, but the rules of thumb, applicable on any scale, can now be stated:

1) Irony is the principle characteristic of revolution. If a revolution begins with the aim of overthrowing tyranny, it will end in tyranny. If it proclaims the brotherhood of man, there will be bloody purges. If it aims to be rid of bureaucracy, it will recruit innumerable officials and committees to do the job.

2) Moderation is suicide. Once the Old Regime breaks down power slithers from moderate reformers to extreme revolutionaries. And the first use an extremist makes of power is to destroy the moderates.

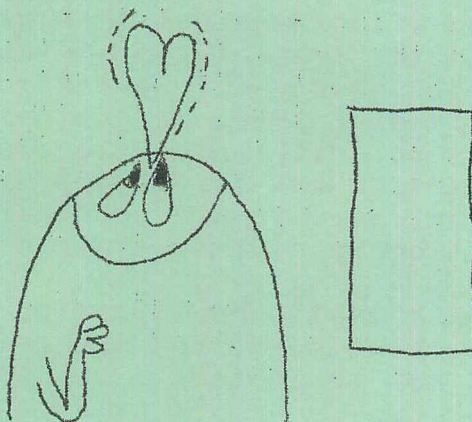
3) Extremism is suicide. No one is safe. When the Strong Man arises, his first use of power will be to destroy the extremists.

4) The way to achieve power during a revolution is to pervert

its aims. Actually, inevitable historical forces will do the perverting, but those who work with these forces will be on the winning side.

5) When public interest turns from political parties to parties, the worst is over. Though they may conspire in secret for years, revolutionists once they have achieved celebrity become incapable of functioning without an excited, appreciative audience. But even a daily procession of victims to the guillotine grows tedious. Once the ultimate fillip, sending the executioners to the guillotine, has been used up, the audience turns to new amusements: fashions, drink, sex. The surviving revolutionary leaders find themselves playing to empty seats and relinquish the stage of government to bureaucratic types who prefer to work unobserved.

With rule-of-thumb psychohistory anyone can survive a revolution. Science itself, shielded by foreknowledge from the dislocations that accompany revolution, can flourish in peace. We may expect an explosion of new knowledge. I modestly suggest that science show its gratitude by embarking on a crash program to advance psychohistory. Clearly the next necessary step toward a truly scientific psychohistory, since rules of thumb are more amenable to abstract analysis than are people, will be a science of rules of thumb. Anybody want to hitch a ride on that?



(WRotsler)

##

Editors' Note: The play on the next ten pages was written, as internal evidence indicates, over two years ago. The original idea for it was Noreen's, and we planned to collaborate on the writing and hoped to produce it at some future convention. When we mentioned it to A.J., he was seized with inspiration and wrote it practically overnight. We're glad he did, even though we had envisioned a somewhat more fannish plot. And we still think the result should be produced, although we suggest that anyone wishing to put it on contact A.J. for permission and possibly for help.

--L&N



## INSIDE STORY:

A tragedy with music

Book & lyrics by A.J. Budrys

Music by Leonard Bernstein

Arranged by Mr. Budrys

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## OVERTURE . . .

### ACT ONE: Scene One:

Frank True, a young science fiction writer dressed in shabby clothes, is leaning against a blank brick wall. A panhandler shuffles past. He looks at True beseechingly, holding out his hand. True shakes his head sadly.

TRUE: "I'm sorry, sir, but I'm a young science fiction writer by trade."

The panhandler commiseratingly presses a crumpled dollar bill into his hand, then shuffles off as

Gulden Fraction comes bounding in briskly, dressed in a new Brooks Brothers suit and carrying a walking stick.

FRACTION: "Ah, there, Frank True! I was just looking for you!"

TRUE: (Eagerly) "Gulden Fraction, my literary agent! Is--is there something for me?"

FRACTION: "Indeed there is!" Opens a fat wallet, leafs through it, and extracts a pink slip of paper. "Here's a publisher's check for five hundred dollars!" He holds it up for True to look at.

TRUE: "Is--is it real?"

FRACTION: "Absolutely!" He claps True on the back. "What do you think of that, hey? Now aren't you glad you left the farm and came here to New York to pursue your career?"

TRUE: (Exhilarated) "My career!" He sings:

Career! Career! Career!  
The most beautiful sound I ever heard!  
Career! Career! Career!  
Career! I just started on my career!  
And suddenly I feel that all my hopes are real and true!  
Career! From now on there will be no fear  
Of working in a store, or selling door-to-door--  
That's through!  
Career! Say it loud and your hopes embolden!  
Say it soft and it's like money folding!  
I'll never give up my career...  
Career! Career! Career!

FRACTION: (Beaming) "That's it, boy! That's the spirit! Now."  
(Businesslike) "Let's just itemize this and I'll give you my check for the full amount--less commissions, of course."

He whips out his ledgers and begins leafing through them.

FRACTION: (Muttering) "True...True...True, True--Ah! Here you are! Hmm. Let's see, now: Five hundred dollars less ten percent is \$450.00, less 10% foreign sales commission is \$400.00, less postage is...hmm...yes...less overhead...less bookkeeping...less accountant's fees...less office rent...less phone calls...less overseas postage...less overseas phone calls...less export duty...less tariff...ah, yes, that's about--" His pen breaks. He shakes it impatiently, shrugs, throws it away, and takes out another one. "Less office equipment upkeep, and so...yes..." He writes out an office check with a flourish. "Here you are, my boy--Three dollars and eighteen cents!" He claps True on the shoulder once more and begins to bounce off.

TRUE: (Staring down at the check.) "Wait! What was this money for?"

FRACTION: "Why--why that's your novel, boy! Your trilogy--the one you worked on for six years. I just sold it to Las Cuentas Fantasticas. It'll be thrilling to see your work in print, boy! Thrilling! I'll sell you a copy when it comes out!"

TRUE: (Dumfounded) "Thanks...thanks, Mr. Fraction."

### THE CURTAIN FALLS

#### Scene Two:

A group of science fiction writers--a scurvy lot--are gathered in the Instant Check Cashing Emporium. Willard Machine, a hard-bitten old pro, is addressing the crowd:

MACHINE: "This is for the birds! I've been in this science fiction racket for fifteen years, and where am I? Where are any of you?"

CROWD VOICE: "We're in the Instant Check Cashing Emporium!"

MACHINE: "Very funny! Very funny! But I'll tell you something--we don't watch out, we'll still be here ten years from now--if we're lucky! The rates are worse every day. I'm telling you--there's no future in science fiction."

CROWD MUTTERS: "Yeah!" "He's right!" "None of us are getting any younger!"

MACHINE: "That's no lie--and I'm getting pretty bored, I can tell you!" He sings:

To write, to write, when I began to write,  
My brain would teem with ideas for plots.  
To write, to write, to sit me down and write,  
Gargling out of me in carload lots...  
But now, it's different,  
Now I'm tired, and Randy Garrett haunts all my dreams  
And Silverberg...  
They write, they write, while Campbell sinks from sight  
'Neath the piles  
They write.

Crowd Voice, an argumentative man, steps forward.



CROWD VOICE: "You're just afraid you're slipping, Machine! There's a lot of life left in the field, yet. You old hacks just got tired, is all. Why, there're all kinds of new approaches that haven't been explored yet! I'm telling you, the science fiction of tomorrow is yet to come!"

CROWD MUTTERS: "Aw, horsefeathers!" "Him and his big ideas!"  
CROWD VOICE begins singing. CROWD MUTTERS sing against him.

CV: Science fiction, you lovely art form--  
Medium of high inspiration!

CM: Science fiction, you hack profession!  
Source of all exacerbation!

CV: Gripped by its imagery enthralling!

CM: Collared by creditors come calling!

CV: And its high potential!

CM: It don't pay the rent!

We want to live like our neighbors can,  
Making as much as our laundryman!  
What it comes down to, it's real absurd  
Pounding it out at a cent a word!

CV: I like to polish my great prose!

CM: Shining the seat of your old clothes!

CV: I read it over with such pride!

CM: By then you've starved and up and died!  
We're getting out while the getting's good!  
We're going where they pay like they should!  
Right now they tell us, it's all the vogue,  
Knocking out pieces to sell to Rogue!  
So live in a loft if you feel you must!  
Cuffing the grocer on misplaced trust!  
Hocking your watch so the light bill's paid,  
We're gonna play, boy, where playing's paid!

They turn on Crowd Voice and shout him down. He turns his back and goes to sit by the door, staring grimly off into space. Suddenly the door flies open, and Tom Prolific bounds in.

PROLIFIC: "Hi! Gang!"

CROWD: "Tom Prolific! There he is! Tom Prolific--how's it today, Tom boy?"

Prolific saunters over to the cashing window and begins hauling checks out of every pocket, endorsing them and shoving them across to Max Instant. He turns to the crowd.

PROLIFIC: "Oh, fair, fair."

MACHINE: "Fair! Listen to him! He's the only guy in the business who's making any money! And that's because he's got the market flooded. Nobody else stands a chance!"

PROLIFIC: (Grinning goodnaturedly) "Also, I'm good."

The door bursts open again, and a mixed Chorus of Fans charges in. They swarm over Prolific, shouting: "It's him! It's him! I told you I saw him duck in here!"

MACHINE: "Hoo boy, there'll be no living with him at all, after this!"

Prolific swells with pride. He disengages himself from the Chorus of Fans and steps forward graciously, to sing:

I'm terrific! Scientific!  
Fictional, futuristic, and bright!  
I'm astounding this whole planet with the stuff I write!  
It's a wonder--thrilling wonder--  
Two complete science adventure books,  
Three short stories and a dirty poem this week, gadzooks!  
See the pretty prose as I turn it out!  
How can such amazing skill be?  
See the other worlds--  
Ain't they fantastic?  
What a clever me!

CHORUS OF FANS:

Just who does he think that he's kidding?  
He's a hack like the rest of them are.  
When he comes to our conventions  
He spends all his time guzzling down in the bar.

My imagination's startling!  
Science fiction plus literacy  
Mark my talents, which extend beyond infinity!  
Space adventures, great new ventures  
In each magazine of fantasy  
And science fic-  
Tion that's published in this galaxy!  
These are all my doing without a doubt.  
Who're all these other unknowns?  
They can't write as well,  
Anyone can tell,  
No one writes like me!

CHORUS OF FANS:

How long can we stand for this hogwash?  
Why don't he write his epitaph?  
But wait, now, before we all kill him,  
What say we all ask him for his autograph?

They pounce on Prolific and fall on him in a screaming tangle as

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO: Scene One:

Frank True is leaning against the same wall, studying his check dazedly. Priscilla Nonphan and her mother, Ogre, enter without noticing him. Frank looks toward his sweetheart. He whispers: "Priscilla!" But he goes unheard. Priscilla and her mother are quarreling.

OGRE: "What do you want to go fooling around with that crazy True boy, for? He's a kook!"

PRIS.: "I love him! And he loves me! Of course, he is a little odd."

OGRE: "Odd! He's a maniac! A maniac, I tell you!"



PRIS.: "I do wish he was in some other line of work. But--" She sings bravely:

I have a love who is strange but all mine--  
He'd stay home,  
He'd be there by my side....

OGRE: A man like that is awfully funny.  
He talks of art, but writes for money.  
He's off his noodle,  
He'll treat you rude, he'll  
Crack.

PRIS.: He sits around, staring down at the floor,  
He says: "Damn!"  
He kicks the wall and groans....

OGRE: A man like that is bound to hurt you,  
The day will come when he'll desert you--  
He'll go to Mars or  
He'll hit the bars or  
Dope.

PRIS.: He locks the door and he pounds that machine,  
Days go by,  
He comes out with a beard.

OGRE: Well, there you are--he isn't normal.  
And there's no hope that he'll reform. I'll  
Bet he wouldn't,  
I'll bet he couldn't,  
Work.

PRIS.: He gives me things that he's written, to read.  
They're so strange--  
They simply don't make sense.

OGRE: So drop him now, before he's taken  
By men in white coats, or you'll awaken  
Some early morning--  
Without a warning--  
Dead.

PRIS.: Oh, I don't think he's homicidal--  
He's kind of wild, but deep inside I'll  
Find sterling features--  
They're gentle creatures, men.  
Then I'll have a love who's like all other men--  
He'll be tamed,  
He'll go and get a job.

FRANK TRUE: "I'll go and get a job!"

PRIS.: "You'll go and get a job!"

OGRE: "He'll go and get a job?"

{ FRANK: Then I'll be a love who's like all other men--  
and I'll be tamed, I'll go and get a job.

PRIS.: Then you'll be a love who's like all other men--  
You'll be tamed, you'll go and get a job!  
Oh, love!

OGRE: "Hah! Let's see you do it! Come away from here, Priscilla!"  
She drags Priscilla out of Frank True's arms.

Frank True stands bereft. He looks after Priscilla and Ogre,  
then down at his check. He sings:

There's a place for me,  
Away from space for me...  
Where the rocketships never fly  
There's some place to escape the sky--  
Somewhere,  
Somehow,  
Someway.

The Chorus of Fans has come in behind him, straggling down from the check cashery. They sing:

There's no place for you,  
SF will follow you,  
Search and turn though you try and stray,  
Moebius strips loop and block the way  
Nowhere,  
Nohow,  
Noway

TRUE: There must be a way  
To find a hideaway,  
In Pellucidar's jungled core,  
On Barsoom, or Atlantis' shore....

FANS: Nowhere,  
We're there  
With you.

True, choked with despair, stumbles off, muttering: "I have to go cash this."

FAN VOICE: (Menacing) "Just forget that escape business, True!"

The Fans sing:

When you're in stef, you're in stef all the way--  
From the Big Little Books to a pad in L.A.--  
When you're in stef you're incurably in--  
You've got stef in your blood, you can't quit, it's a sin!  
You're never alone, there's others all around you,  
All reading your stuff, if you should stop they'd hound you--  
Their ties have bound you!

When you write stef it's like nothing on Earth--  
Though your subject's atomics or Slans giving birth--  
When you write stef fans sit up by the hour  
Making sure it's all right, that you haven't gone sour.  
Your critics will crowd to carry out their mission,  
To point out your lapse, be it in nuclear fission  
Or parturition!

When you're in stef you stay in stef!

#### THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO: Scene Two:

Gideon Nightshade enters the Instant Check Cashing Emporium.  
There is instant raucous recognition.



CROWD VOICE: (Bitterly) "Well, if it isn't Gideon Nightshade,  
the famous science fiction critic!"

NIGHTSHADE: (Looking around) "What a sorry lot you are! Call  
yourselves science fiction writers?"

CROWD VOICE: "May we have your suggestions on improving ourselves  
--again?"

CROWD MUTTERS: "Heck, we can do that ourselves! Watch!"

The crowd forms ranks around Nightshade, singing:

Dear, kindly Mr. Nightshade, you gotta understand.  
Our stuff ain't bad on purpose--that ain't the way it's planned.

We try to do our best, sir, but somehow it goes poo--

-- Holy Klono, what're we to do?

Gee, dear Mr. Nightshade, we're really not hacks,

We know that there is something that our writing just lacks!

We try to provide it, we worry so much!

Maybe that's why we are all in dutch!

C. VOICE: I'm in dutch!

C. MUT.: We're in dutch, we're in dutch, 'cause we think too much  
About literature, and art and such!

C. VOICE: That's a heart-rending story! Let me sell it to the  
New Yorker!

MACHINE: Try and sell it to Sam!

They all mill around and form ranks in front of one of their  
number, who impersonates Ham Samwitch. They sing:

Dear, kindly Mr. Samwitch, we come on bended knees,  
No matter how we polish, our writing doesn't please!  
The readers all are yawning, our sales have gone to hell--  
Roscoe's name, sir, tell us what would sell!

SAM: Gee, Nightshade, you're crazy to bring 'em to me!

'Cause stef ain't been the same since nineteen thirty and three,  
When Coblentz quit writin' and Wonder went bad--

It's fantasy, not science, and it's sad.

C. VOICE: It's so sad!

C. MUT.: It's so sad, it's so sad, it's so awfully sad,  
'Cause it's 1960, and that's bad!

SAM: How you 'spect t' write about the future, you ain't  
livin' in the past?

MACHINE: Hey, I'm the victim of a chronoclastic infidibulum!

SAM: So get him to a John!

They mill around again, and form up in front of a writer imper-  
sonating John. They sing:

I read you as a youngster, I learned it all from you,  
When I was just a punk, sir, I swore I'd sell you too--  
I studied up on Heinlein, I memorized van Voght--  
What's my trouble, in the name of Ghod?

JOHN: Look, fellow, you're wrong there, it wasn't like that.

I'll tell you how to fix it all in half a second flat!

You don't look around you to see what's been done--

Why, we've got science on the run!

C. VOICE: On the run!

C. MUT.: On the run, on the run, it has turned and run  
While we stroke our sticky plates for fun!  
JOHN: What're you doing writing about the future, instead of  
what's wrong with today?  
MACHINE: Hey, the trouble is I wanna write wild stuff about the  
future!  
JOHN: So go get this kid straightened out!

They all swarm around, and wind up with Machine stretched on a couch in front of a writer pretending to be Socrates Horace. They sing:

Dear, friendly Mr. Horace, we sure are glad we're here,  
It seems our mind's a morass, please won't you shed a tear?  
We don't know what to write now, or even what to think--  
Foo-Foo loves us, but we're right on the brink!  
HORACE: Come, come now, your trouble is easy to see--  
What you need are some story conferences with me.  
A year's consultation will patch up your blues--  
Your trouble is you should be selling shoes!  
C. VOICE: Selling shoes!  
C. MUT.: Selling shoes, selling shoes, we'll forget our muse,  
Stuff some olives and go sell some shoes!  
HORACE: You've just got to work at something you can do without  
straining. You're in fragile condition. Very  
fragile.  
MACHINE: Hey, what's wrong is I'm cracked!  
NIGHTSHADE: Well, there's only one job for people like that!  
You're all obviously born science fiction writers!  
C. MUT.: The trouble is we're thinking!  
C. VOICE: The trouble is we ain't!  
MACHINE: The trouble is we're stupid!  
NIGHTSHADE: I think I'm going to faint!  
C. MUT.: Gee, Nightshade, we're sorry to cause this to-do...  
Dear Mr. Nightshade--  
C. VOICE: We extend our most sincere apologies, and heartily pro-  
mise to do better as far as it may lie within our  
power to do so.

Nightshade flees amidst laughter. Frank True drags himself in, and is greeted kindly.

C. VOICE: "Hi there, Kid? How's the ol' career coming along?"

Frank looks at him painedly and sings:

Career! That and a dime buys small beer!  
But here I am entrapped to write a lot of stuff  
For dough.  
Career! You call this treadmill a career?  
I sweat and slave all day,  
I bleed until I'm gray  
With woe.  
Career! Say it loud, like a jackass braying!  
Say it soft, and it's like teeth decaying.  
Career! I'll never stop cursing career!  
Career! Career! Career!



Crowd Voice puts his kindly arm around Frank True's shoulders.

C. VOICE: "Aw, come on, kid, it's not that bad! After all, you're an independent craftsman in a proud profession! Hold up your head! Be proud of yourself!"

TRUE: "Gee--do--do you really feel that way?"

C. VOICE: "Of course!"

Merton Editor enters, followed by the Fan Chorus.

CROWD MUTTERS: "Merton Editor!"

EDITOR: (Looking around imperiously) "I thought I'd find you all here! I need twentyfive thousand words by five o'clock. I'll pay a flat three dollars and eighteen cents!"

There is a riot among the writers. But Crowd Voice, with a display of Judo, wins through to Editor's side and hauls a manuscript out of his coat.

C. VOICE: "I--I just happen to have something in that length!"

EDITOR: (Riffling the ms. beside his ear, then handing it back)

"I'm sorry, Voice--it just doesn't sing."

VOICE: (Reaching in another pocket) "Here's another! And another! And another! Take one! Take them all! Take any of them!"

EDITOR: (After weighing each manuscript, smelling it, dismissing some for wrong color paper, bad texture, etc.) "Oh, all right --I'll take this one. I'll send you a check."

VOICE: (Eagerly) "Couldn't--couldn't I have it now, please, sir?"

EDITOR: "That's not very businesslike, Voice."

VOICE: (Abashed) "I--I know that, sir."

EDITOR: (Fondly tousling Voice's hair) "You're a pretty good boy, Voice. I've always enjoyed working with you."

Voice, blushing, sings:

Make of my checks,  
Big checks,  
Read my stuff fast,  
Buy it!  
Pay on acceptance, if you can--  
All my kids are hungry now.

EDITOR: I'll make your checks  
Quick checks,  
Though they be small,  
They're fast.  
You'll stay alive, just long enough--  
To turn me out another piece.

They and all the others sing together: ..

Thanks to these checks,  
Cashed in  
By obscure souls  
In drab stores,  
We'll carry on, we'll win through--  
We'll live, we'll rest--  
'Til next time the rent is due.

FRANK TRUE: (Stricken) "I'm going! I'll never write again!" He exits as

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO: Scene Three:

In the alley in front of the brick wall, Frank True stops, stricken, as the Chorus of Fans closes in on him with silent deadliness. "We warned you!" Jimmy Taurasi snarls as he opens his switchblade. They surround True. There is a shriek. Then they scatter, leaving True in a pathetic huddle on the street.

PRISCILLA NONPHAN: (Running on) "Frank! Frank! Where are you? I just read my first copy of The National Fantasy Fan, and I understand it all, now! I love you, Frank! I love you! Frank!" (She shrieks.)

True raises his head. "Too late, Priscilla! Too--too late!" He coughs and clutches his chest.

PRIS.: "Frank! Frank!" She holds his head in her lap, rocking back and forth. She sings:

There's a place for us--  
In tales of space for us!  
Though the world might not see  
What could have so attracted me--  
I'll stay,  
Always,  
With you!

MIXED CHORUS OF FANS AND WRITERS: (Filing onstage with Ogre)

It's too late for these  
Unfortunates, but please,  
Learn a lesson for future's sake--  
Abandon stef and your heart will break--  
Somewhere,  
Somehow,  
(Fans flourish switchblades) Someway.

Frank looks blindly up into the sky, his face suffused with light, as Priscilla breaks down in sobs, comforted by Ogre, who gets a sly wink from Tom Prolific.

FRANK: "I can see it! I can see the vision of the future! Newsstand after newsstand after newsstand!" (He reaches up toward his vision) "I'm coming! I'm coming! Ten--nine--eight--seven--six--oh..." He crumples and dies, and is borne off in state by the chorus, who sing:

It's a way of life,  
Away from storm and strife.  
Fellowship's sacred bounds confine  
All that's yours is the same as mine!  
Science  
Fiction  
Goes on!





