

PROLOGUE

Indian tom-tom heard in distance

Narrator: The drums of war started to sound in the distance.

As the months passed, they came closer and closer. (Tom-tom gets louder)

Not that close! Finally, Congress made a desperate attempt to stem the rising flood of panic. They passed a law. This law stated (and I quote) "It is hereby resolved that any statement concerning advanced and/or futuristic weaponry and/or diplomatic disagreements shall henceforth be considered illegal and/or an act of treason against this country and/or people and shall be punished by death by hanging and/or electrocution." When news of this was made known, the public was dumbfounded. Congress had actually done some work! After the initial shock wore off, however, certain members of the Science Fiction Writers of America (hereinafter known as S.F.W.A.) became upset at this blatant infringement of the first amendment. A wave of protest rose on the sea of discontent. On the crest rode one who represented Truth, Justice and the American Way; Mom, Dad, the girl next door, the boy next door, political graft, baseball, hotdogs, apple pie and a well-known American car manufacturer. On a soapbox, (Possibly two, or no one would be able to see him) stood.... (drum roll)

Harlan Ellison!

SCENE ONE

The stage is dark. A single light illuminates one man sitting alone. This is Harlan Ellison. He is staring into space, maybe typing idly at a typewriter. He is obviously exhausted.

A young messenger enters from one side, out of breath.

SECRETARY

Mister Ellison! Mr. Ellison!

ELLISON

Yes?

SECRETARY

They need you at the meeting, Mr. Ellison!

ELLISON (disgustedly)

What is it this time?

SECRETARY

They're voting on whether they should change the standard typing paper size for manuscripts from 8½ by 11 inches to 212 by 275 millimeters.

ELLISON (Incredulous)

Great Ghu!

He gets up and runs off stage. The lights come up on what is obviously a SFWA meeting that has been going on for a while. Small groups are talking everyone is disheveled. Harlan enters from one side as the chair says...

PRESIDENT (Slamming gavel)

So ruled!

ASIMOV

You missed it, Harlan.

ELLISON

Did we join the rest of the world?

ASIMOV (shaking his head)

SF is the writing of new
Ideas so just guess what they'd do
When they were asked
If they'd leave the past
They replied, "It's too soon to pursue."

Harlan reacts by swinging into action.

ELLISON

Gentlepersons, gentlepersons....

Everyone quiets down.

I have come to the conclusion that one science fiction
writer is an embarrassment, that two are a drunken
orgy, and three or more constitute the quorum for a SFWA
meeting. And by Ghu, I have had this meeting till I
feel like I am ass deep in....

SFWA

Sit down, Harlan! Sit down, twirp!
For Ghu's sake, pest, sit down!
Sit down, Harlan! Sit down, shrimp!
For Ghu's sake, punk sit down!

DICKSON

Someone ought to open up a bottle

SFWA

Three days we've been here, I'd kill for a beer
Shut up, you pest! We need a rest, Sit down.

DICKSON

Someone ought to open up a bottle!

ELLISON

I say vote yes, vote yes,
vote for free expression now.

SFWA

Someone ought to open up a bottle!

ELLISON
I say vote yes!

SFWA
Sit down punk!

ELLISON
Vote for free expression, now!

DICKSON
Someone ought to open up a bottle!

$\frac{1}{2}$ SFWA
No! No! No! Too many drunks,
too many drunks.

OTHER $\frac{1}{2}$ SFWA
Shut up you prig, I need a swig
of beer!

DICKSON
Is someone going to open up a bottle?

$\frac{1}{2}$ SFWA
Gordy, look you're plastered!

ELLISON
Vote yes!

SFWA
NO! Squelch the little bastard!

ELLISON
Vote Yes!

SFWA
Oh for Ghu's sake, Harlan, SIT DOWN!

ELLISON
(spoken)
Gentlepersons, you should consider
yourself lucky you have Harlan Ellison
to kick around, for no sane person would
tolerate it!

SFWA
Ellison, you're a bore. We've heard
this before. Now for Ghu's sake,
Harlan, Sit Down!

ELLISON

I say vote YES!

SFWA

NO!!

ELLISON

Vote YES!

SFWA

NO!!

ELLISON

Vote for free expression now!

SFWA

Someone ought to open up a bottle!

ELLISON

I say vote Yes!

SFWA

Sit down, Harlan!

ELLISON

Vote for free expression now!

SOMEONE (speaking)

Will someone shut that dwarf up?

ELLISON

Never! Never!

He storms off to one side of stage and sits down on box with spotlight (or some other form of illumination) on him, while everyone else quietly files off stage.

ELLISON

Great Ghu!" For ten solid months, they've been sitting here.... Ten solid months, doing nothing --Except drinking

I do believe you've laid a curse, please tell me why that's so!

I try to get these fools to work
They tell me where to go!
A writer's block, a paper shortage
plagues of trekkies everywhere.

Even Isaac's rhyming insults
I'd accept with some despair.

But no, you sent us SFWA!
Great Ghu, sir, was that fair?

I say this with humility

PIANIST (hitting bad chord)

WHAT??

ELLISON (with more fervor, rushing on)

It cannot be denied.
It's your responsibility
Don't run away and hide.
If you don't want to see us frying
for some story that we wrote...
If you don't want the voice of free expression
stifled in its throat...
Then Ghu, sir, get thee to it,
For SFWA surely won't!

You see they swizzle, guzzle, and resolve
Not one damn thing do they solve
Swizzle, guzzle, and resolve
Nothing's ever solved
In this
Soused, sodden, soaked, sloppy, soggy
State that they are in.

DICKSON (off stage)

Someone ought to open up a bottle!

ELLISON

Great Ghu!

(sings)

They may sit here for beers and beers.
There is no hope in sight

These indecisive guzzaliers --
they will not see the light

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They can't agree on what is right or wrong
Or what is good or bad
I'm convinced the only purpose that this meeting
Ever had
Was to gather here specifically
to drive Harlan Ellison MAD !

You see they swizzle, gussle, and resolve
Not one damn thing do they solve
Swizzle, guzzle and resolve
Nothing's ever solved
In this
Soused, sodden soaked, sloppy, soggy
State that they are in.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

It's three days later. The booze has arrived and is scattered around the stage. Everyone, except Isaac is in various stages of drunkenness and recovery. Gordy Dickson, in a sudden flood of panic, stands, whispers to a neighbor and makes a wild dash ofr door.

PRESIDENT (rousing out of stupor)

It's time to vote on Kate Wilhelm's amendment to Andre Norton's amended version of Joe Haldeman's amendment to the earlier version of the motion by Poul Anderson.

ZELAZNEY (stands)

Mister President, I would like to propose an amendment to...

SFWA (Throwing whatever is handy at Zelazney...)

No!!

ZELAZNEY

I withdraw my motion

PRESIDENT

In that case, will the secretary call the roll?

SECRETARY

Mister Anderson?

ANDERSON

Aye.

SECRETARY

Mister Anderson votes aye.

SECRETARY

Mister Dickson?

(silence)

Mister Dickson?

Sound of flushing toilet is heard

SECRETARY

Mr. Dickson passes.

Entire room goes into gales of laughter. Issac grabs Ellison and propels him from the room. In the background, vote continues.

ELLISON

Issac, where the hell have you been?

ASIMOV

Getting preserved for posterity...(holding up painting for inspection) How do you like it?

ELLISON

It stinks."

ASIMOV

As ever, the soul of tact

ELLISON

Issac, you heard what is going on in there?

ASIMOV

Heard? Of course, I heard...along with the rest of the city. God, your voice is piercing!

ELLISON

I wish my arguments were

ASIMOV

...Harlan, why don't you give it up? Nobody listens to you, you're too obnoxious and disliked.

ELLISON

I'm not promoting Harlan Ellison. I'm promoting free expression.

ASIMOV

Evidently, they can't separate the two.

ELLISON

What have you got in mind?

ASIMOV

Harlan, ... In this, a significant bout
Your role is the largest, no doubt
But if you propose
The petition's foes
Will bury the bill in the rout

ELLISON

Someone else make the motion? Never!!
....Who do you think you can get?

Wilson Tucker bounds in enthusiastically.

ELLISON

TUCKER??!!

ASIMOV

Oh, Wilson! C'mere a minute... have some bourbon.

TUCKER (downs it straight without batting eyelash)

Mm-mm-mm-mm. That's smooth....

ASIMOV

You know we've been having problems getting this motion
on free expression passed!

TUCKER

That's because Harlan here is obnoxious and disliked.

ASIMOV

Now, if we could think of a Midwest fan with enough influence to go out there and drum up support --

TUCKER

Why, hell, I'll leave right now if you like! You've come to the one part of fandom that can get the job done -- the Midwest!

ELLISON

What makes you so sure you can do it?

TUCKER (sings)

My name is Wilson Tucker, the Midwest is my home.
My name is Wilson Tucker, the Midwest is my home.

And may my bourbon turn to glue if I can't deliver up to you
A resolution on free expression now!

For we're the Midwest fans,
The staunchest in the land,
And we'd like to lend a hand to defend ya!
Yes, the Midwest fans
We'd like to lend a hand
And we'll always take a stand to defend ya!

May my publisher pulp my books
If I can't place in your hooks
A resolution on free expression now!

Y'see, it's here a fan, there a fan
Everywhere a fan, a fan.

ASIMOV

SF

TUCKER

Fans

ASIMOV

Fanzine

TUCKER

Fans

ASIMOV

Burroughs

	TUCKER
Fans	
	ASIMOV
Fantasy	
	TUCKER
Fans	
	ASIMOV
Hard core	
	TUCKER
Fans	
	ASIMOV
New Wave	
	TUCKER
Fans	
	ASIMOV
Convention	
	TUCKER
Fans	
	ASIMOV
Consumer	
	TUCKER
Fans	
	TUCKER & ASIMOV

The Midwest Fans!
The finest in the land
And we'd like to give a hand to defend ya!

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TUCKER

And may Midwescon be a bore
If I can't deliver on the floor
A resolution on free expression now!

ELLISON

Spoken Fannishly, Ghu help us.

ASIMOV

Oh, he will. Harlan, he will.

TUCKER

They say that sf fandom is everybody's home.
I'll admit that sf fandom is everybody's home.
But, I tell you, Harlan, with pride
Fandom leans a little on the side of the fans --
The fans of the Midwest

Y'see, it's here a fan, there a fan
Everywhere a fan, a fan
Here a fan, there a fan, Everywhere a fan, a fan

Look out! There's Robert Asprin, Robert Hillis
Doc and Ann Passavoy, Russ Pavlak, Rusty Hevelin

ASIMOV

Wilson Tucker?

TUCKER

That's me!
And may I be struck down by Ghu
If I can't deliver up to you
A resolution on free expression now!

Yessir, by Ghu, it's here a fan, there a fan
Come on, boys and lend a han --

ALL THREE

Here a fan, there a fan

ASIMOV

What kind of fan?

TUCKER

Active fans

ALL THREE

Here a fan, there a fan--

ASIMOV

Any other fans?

TUCKER

Big name fans

ALL THREE

Here a fan, there a fan

TUCKER

And I'll come back to make a stand --

ALL THREE

Here a fan, there a fan, everywhere a fan, a fan --

TUCKER

Forward ----- Oh!!-----

BLACKOUT

Scene Three

The meeting, much as we left them....

PRESIDENT

The two hundred and twenty first session of the meeting of the Science Fiction Writers of America for the purpose of responding to the actions of the United States Congress, is now in session. Will you please read the minutes of the last session?

SECRETARY

Minutes of the two hundred and twentieth session of the meeting of the Science Fiction Writers of America for the purpose of responding to the actions of the United States Congress, the Honorable _____ presiding.

"The reading of the minutes of the two hundred and nineteenth session of the meeting of the Science Fiction Writers of America for the purpose of responding to the actions of the United States Congress was waived..."

HALDEMAN

Sir, I move that we dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last session.

NORTON

I second the motion!

PRESIDENT

All in favor say aye.

ALL

AYE!

PRESIDENT

Opposed?

(Silence)

The motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the two hundred and twentieth session of the meeting of the Science Fiction Writers of American for the purpose of responding to the actions of the United States Congress is approved unanimously.

SECRETARY

Special message. Due to the fact that his bill for the past week has exceeded the amount allotted for this meeting for the entire month, Mr. Dickson's open bar privileges have been suspended....

DICKSON

WHAT??!!

SECRETARY

For the period of one week.

DICKSON

Mr. President, I would like to protest this flagrant...

**** At this point, murmurs sweep the meeting as three individuals enter the room. All eyes turn to them.

LE GUIN

We're the delegation from the Northwest. We would have been here sooner, but we were on the twenty-third floor of the Worldcon hotel, and were waiting for an elevator all this time.

*** Laughter ripples across the room.
Harlan rushes to the delegation from his seat...

ELLISON

Who's in charge here?

LE GUIN

I am

ELLISON

And you are...

LE GUIN (sings)

I'm Ursula K. Le Guin
And I wrote the Lathe of Heaven...

ELLISON

Tell me, how do you stand?

LE GUIN

What?

ELLISON

On the anti-censorship resolution, how do you stand?

LE GUIN

Oh, that. There's no question...we're for the resolution.

*** The pro-resolution forces burst into excited noise. Harlan moves around lining up commitments. Others gather around Dr. Asimov. In the midst of this runs Wilson Tucker, out of breath.

TUCKER

Mr. President, I have a motion to make from the fans of the Midwest. By unanimous consent, we move that the Science Fiction Writers of America challenge the congressional censorship in a court of law for the purpose of re-establishing our right to write anything we please as promised by the first amendment to the constitution!

ELLISON

I second.

POURNELLE

And once more, I move that the motion be tabled indefinitely.

ELLWOOD

I second.

PRESIDENT

Debate?

***** Everybody mumbles and looks around, but nobody speaks up.

In that case, will the secretary call the role?

SECRETARY

Mr. Anderson?

ANDERSON

Aye

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SECRETARY

Mr. Anderson votes aye. Dr. Asimov

ASIMOV

Nay.

SECRETARY

Dr. Asimov votes nay. Mr. Dickson?

***** Harlan passes Gordy a bottle behind his back.

DICKSON

Um-mmm-mm.....Ah..... No!!

SECRETARY

Mr. Dickson votes nay.

***** Stage lights dim to show passage of time. Lights back up

...votes yes. Mr. Zelazney?

ZELAZNEY

No.

SECRETARY

Mr. Zelazney votes no....

The vote stands 147 in favor of Mr. Pournelle's resolution,
147 opposed, the motion is tied.

PRESIDENT

The motion to table having been tied, I must cast the deciding
vote. I vote nay. The resolution by Mr. Tucker now comes under
general debate

***** The pro-Ellison faction again bursts into cheers.

ELLISON

About time.

POURNELLE

So Harlan, you've finally gotten your resolution on the
floor for all the good it will do you. It'll never pass, you know.
The Science Fiction Writers of America are never going to endorse a reso-
lution contrary to that country's best interests. Yes, it does place

some constraints on our writing, but would you have some wild-eyed radical yelling fire in a tinderbox? Who knows what kind of panic that could cause?

ELLISON

It is the price we pay for freedom. Was the danger any less real when the first amendment was written?

POURNELLE

When the first amendment to the constitution was written, Harlan, man didn't have the wherewithall to destroy his species.

ELLISON

People die by the millions daily. Through hunger, crime and disease and hunger, which we've ignored while people like you promote spending 200 billion dollars a year on bigger and better ways to kill more people. Are the guardians of the sword so afraid of the power of the pen that they must suppress it? If so, you have put the first nail into the coffin of the nation all those weapons were supposed to protect.

POURNELLE

Enough of this. Mr. President, I would like to move that the vote on this resolution require a 3/4 vote of the total membership of this meeting for passage.

ELLISON

What?! That's ridiculous, we can't

ELLWOOD

Second !!

POURNELLE

I call the question.

PRESIDENT

Call the roll!

***** Fade out to show passage of time.

The vote being 147 in favor of Mr. Pournelle's resolution and 147 against, I must cast the deciding vote.

***** Harlan looks smug, confident of the outcome

PRESIDENT

I regret I must vote for the resolution. Aye.

ELLISON

What?! How could.....

PRESIDENT

Harlan, how much moral force would this lawsuit have if even our own group was split. If free expression is going to stand or fall based on our actions, It must stand or fall here first.

**** The whole place breaks into excited confusion

POURNELLE

I call Mr. Ellison's question. So we can get the whole thing over with once and for all.

ELLWOOD

Second

PRESIDENT

You don't need to second a question call, Mr. Ellwood.

ELLISON

But wait..We can't vote on this now. We need...uh...we need... Isaac, what do we need?

ASIMOV

How about a writ?

ELLISON

That's it!! A writ of certiorari. That's right, you can't go to court without a writ. Mr. President, I move a committee be appointed for the purpose of writing a writ of certiorari for the consideration of this body.

ASIMOV

I second the motion.

POURNELLE

I have no objection.

PRESIDENT

Are there any? Without objection, so ruled. The committee will be....Harlan, of course. Ted Sturgeon, Harry Stubbs, Dr. Asimov, and...how about you, Larry?

NIVEN

Not me, I'm busy on the sequel to Ringworld.

PRESIDENT

Okay...David Gerrold?

GERROLD

I have to get that first draft of Star Wars IV finished.

PRESIDENT

There's got to be someone... Spider Robinson, how about you?

ROBINSON

Huh?

PRESIDENT

Fine, that's the committee. Report back to the full meeting in one week. Adjourned!

***** There is a mad panic as everyone leaves the hall.

ELLISON

Marvelous. There's about as much chance of getting unanimity in this bunch of individualists as there is of getting a confession out of Richard Nixon.

ASIMOV

Harlan,
Always remember that when
It seems things are hopeless, well then
Just muddle along
Because if you're wrong
We always can try once again.

And again, and again, and again.....

ELLISON

All right, already, let's get on with it.

Gentlemen, who will write our writ of certiorari?

STURGEON

Our what?

ELLISON

Our legal brief.

ASIMOV (sings)

Mr. Ellison, I say you should write it
To your scathing wit and brilliance we defer.

ELLISON

Is that so?
Well, if I'm the one to write it,
They'll never expedite it.
I'm obnoxious and disliked, you know that, sir.

ASIMOV

Yes, I know

ELLISON

I say you should write it, Asimov. Yes, you.

ASIMOV

Hell, no!

ELLISON

Yes, you, Dr. Asimov, you!

ASIMOV

But!

ELLISON

You!

ASIMOV

But!

ELLISON

YOU!

ASIMOV

BUT,
Mister Ellison, But Mr. Ellison
I'm only interested in writing simple levity
I'm too busy writing book 370
Dr. A's Encyclopedia of Depravity!

OTHERS

Depravity, Depravity, 370 by Dr. A.....

ELLISON

Mr. Sturgeon, I say you should write it.
You famous law is of the highest caliber

STURGEON

This is true.

ELLISON

Whereas if I'm the one to write it,
They'll strike it down and smite it,
I'm obnoxious and disliked, you know that, sir.

STURGEON

Yes, I do.

ELLISON

So I say you should write, Sturgeon.
Yes, you.

STURGEON

Great Ghu, no!

ELLISON

Yes, you, Ted Sturgeon, you!

STURGEON

But!

ELLISON

You!

STURGEON

But!

ELLISON

You!

STURGEON

But!

Mr. Ellison, but Mr. Ellison,
I can't put out my genius effort on just any day
I can only work in California, far away.
9/10 of it most likely would be garbage anyway.

OTHERS

Anyway! Anyway! 9/10 would be shit.....

ELLISON

Ahhh. Mr. Clement, maybe you should write it.
There is no one else to whom we'd rather go.

CLEMENT

That's absurd.

ELLISON

But, if I'm the one to write it,
They certainly would spite it.

OTHERS

He's obnoxious and disliked,
Or did you know?

CLEMENT

I hadn't heard.

ELLISON

So I say you should write it, Harry,
Yes, you.

CLEMENT

Not me, Harlan!

ELLISON

Yes, you. Hal Clement, you!

CLEMENT

But!

ELLISON

You!

CLEMENT

But!

ELLISON

You!

CLEMENT

BUT

Mr. Ellison, Dear Mr. Ellison.

I have a pressing project that I must be working on.

The airplane leaves tonight, and I will soon be gone.

For I have a speech I'm giving at a Star Trek Con.

OTHERS

Star Trek Con. Star Trek Con.

Hal's going to give a Speech.....

ELLISON

Mister Robinson...

SPIDER

Mr. Ellison, leave me alone.....

***** Others sing quietly and blithely in background (La, La, La,.....)

ELLISON

Spider....

SPIDER

Harlan, I haven't seen my typewriter in 10 months.

25
ELLISON

Magnificent! Why, you write twice as well as any person in SFWA, excluding me. Now then, sir, will you be a patriot or a columnist?

ROBINSON

Columnist. It pays better.

ELLISON

NO!

ROBINSON

But I'm losing the ability, Mr. E!

ELLISON

So am I, Mr. R.

ASIMOV

I'll say.

CLEMENT

By God, he admits it!

STURGEON

He hasn't written anything good in years.

ELLISON

Mister Robinson

Dear Mister Robinson

Even geniuses like me can be irregular

But more than not, I often have a great success occur.

Why, just last year, I won three Hugos and a Nebular.

OTHERS

Nebula, Nebula, Three Hugos and a....

ELLISON

ENOUGH! It's your duty, dammit, your duty! Now, you'll write it, Mr. R.

ROBINSON

Who will make me, Mr. E?

ELLISON

I!

ROBINSON

You?

ELLISON

Yes!

ROBINSON

How?

ELLISON

By physical force, if necessary!

ROBINSON

Mister Ellison,
Damn you, Mr. Ellison
You're obnoxious and disliked, that cannot be denied.
You would keep me from my column. That I can't abide.
Oh, Mr. Ellison, you are driving me to homicide!

OTHERS

Homicide, homicide.....

ELLISON

QUIET! The choice is yours, Mr. Robinson; do with it
what you will.

OTHERS

We may see murder yet.....

BLACKOUT

Scene Four

Spider sits alone, pounding on the little manual typewriter Harlan has given him. He starts, rips out the sheets, starts again, fails again.

ROBINSON

Damn!

(sings)

It's impossible, I say.
I despise every word, every letter.
I hope to find a way to make it come out better.....

I'm waiting for the light bulb flash
of an idea being born.
Waiting for ideas to hatch
On this boring Monday morning...

He types a few words, the typewriter jams.

(Speaking) Shit! At least, Harlan could get me a decent machine,
not this manual monstrosity.

Crosses stage to phone to make long distance call. Lights up on Jeannie across stage. She is on the other end of this long distance call.

SPIDER

Jeannie, I miss my typewriter...

JEANNIE

Do you, Spider. Well, as long as you miss your typewriter, don't you sort of miss mine beside yours?

SPIDER

Don't be unreasonable, Jeannie. You're as bad as Harlan

JEANNIE

IS Harlan unreasonable, dear? You'll have to put that in your column, too.

SPIDER

Column?

JEANNIE

The column about Harlan's faults that you were going to write.

SPIDER

Oh, that was just talk....

JEANNIE

The column about his highflown, high-brow style only appreciated by academics in ivory towers?

SPIDER

A compliment, if you think about it properly.

JEANNIE

The column commenting on his odd story construction ?

SPIDER

Well, it keeps the interest of the reader...

JENNIE

The column criticizing him for getting his politics, professional image and personal feelings all mixed up?

SPIDER

Jane Fonda gets away with it.

JEANNIE

The column that was going to be filled with short people jokes ?

SPIDER

Well, there you have me, Jeannie. Harlan is short.

JEANNIE

Spider, why do you stay there? Come home to Nova Scotia and your column. It's only _____ miles. If you left this evening, you could be here by tomorrow afternoon.

SPIDER

How can I do that, Jeannie? I have an obligation to Harlan, damn the little twirp. Jeannie, how's it going with you?

JEANNIE

Not well, Spider. Not at all well

(Sings)

My writing is bad when I'm lonely
Writers block, typos, I hate it

And you, dear?

SPIDER

The column is slow when I'm lonely
Ditto, Ditto, I hate it

JEANNIE

Write with me of scientific illusions
Let me revel in your column's effusions

SPIDER

Do you still steal my bond paper and my pens?
And is the ribbon in my typewriter gone again?

JEANNIE

What was there, dear, still is there, dear.

Come soon as you can to your S'lectric
It's forgotten the feel of your hand

SPIDER

Soon, Jeannie, we will pound our IBM's together

SPIDER & JEANNIE

Then we'll gladly sever these outside lines.

Til then, til then
I am as I ever was and ever shall be

Yours, yours, yours, yours, yours....

(fade out)

SCENE FIVE

In the meeting room, as before. The meeting is in session, although in a rather loose manner since the writ is being writ elsewhere. The secretary is droning on, and nobody much is listening.

SECRETARY

...and what follows is a complete and up to date list of the committees of the Science Fiction Writers of America now sitting, about to sit, or having just sat: a committee to investigate a complaint on the size of typing paper designated as the paper committee. A committee formed to consider the most effective method of dealing with copy editors, designated as the copy editors committee. A committee formed to think, perhaps to do, but in any case to gather to meet, to confer to talk, and perhaps even to resolve that each con committee be allowed at least one filksinger, one millionaire, and one bag of potato chips, herein known as the Filthy, Wealthy and Wise committee. A committee formed to...

Asimov and Sturgeon enter the room and look around

ASIMOV

Look at it...democracy! What Plato called a "charming form of government, full of variety and disorder." I never knew Plato had attended a SFWA meeting.

STURGEON

Of course, he did, Isaac. It's right there in Asimov's Guide to Plato.

ASIMOV

But I haven't....

STURGEON

You will, Issaac, you will.

Wilson Tucker ambles over.

TUCKER

Isaac, I want you to see some cards I had printed up to save everyone around here a whole lot of time and effort, considering the mutual adimation society we have going....

"Dear Fellow Member: You are, without a doubt, a rogue, a rascal, a villan, a thief, a scoundrel, and a mean, dirty, stinking, sniveling, sneaking, pimping, pocket-picking, plot stealing, thrice double-damned, no good son-of-a-bitch." And then you sign your name. What do you think?

ASIMOV

Wilson, I'll take a dozen right away!

SECRETARY

...The committee formed to answer all Association correspondence, designated as the Association Correspondence committee

Harlan walks in

ELLISON

Alright, Isaac. That's enough time plugging your next dozen books, there's work to do!

ASIMOV

Good morning, Harlan.

ELLISON

What? Oh...(waves it aside) Good morning, good morning. Now then, let's get to it.

ASIMOV

To what?

ELLISON

That real majority, of course. Isaac, we just can't sit around talking. We have to work on it, Now...one foot after the other.

ASIMOV

I believe I put it a better way in Asimov's Wise Old Sayings. "Never put off until tomorrow that which you can do..."

ELLISON

That's Benjamin Franklin, Isaac!

ASIMOV

Really? Well, great minds work in similar directions.

BLACKOUT

SCENE SIX

Same place, later. From different directions, Asimov and Harlan stride in, others are talking with each. They meet stage center.

HARLAN

Well?

ASIMOV

Fifteen more votes, New England and Mid-Atlantic. How about you?

HARLAN

Err...enough

ASIMOV

How many, Harlan?

HARLAN

Twelve.

ASIMOV

Pay up!

Harlan reluctantly passes some money to Asimov, to pay off their bet. Side bets by others are also paid off.

HARLAN

The important thing is that we have enough votes to pass the writ

ASIMOV

You're only saying that because you lost the bet.

PRESIDENT

The secretary will now read the draft of the writ of certiorari on the subject of challenging the actions of the United States Congress.

SECRETARY

...There are times in the lives of free men and women when the greater good of the nation of which we are citizens overrides our loyalty to follow the will of the elected representatives. It is in such times that the system of checks and balances incorporated by the founding fathers in the Constitution...

BLACKOUT showing passage of time.

FADE IN....

SECRETARY

...secure in our belief that no misunderstanding is possible of the phrase "Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech...or of the press." And to that principle, we, as our forefathers, pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

Silence, prolonged silence broken by...

PRESIDENT

Thank you. The meeting has heard the report of the writ committee. Are there any who wish to offer amendments, deletions, or alterations to the writ?

Suddenly, every hand except Isaac's, Harlan's, and Spider's shoots up.

SFWA MEMBERS

Mr. President...

Here, Mr. President..

I have one....

(so forth and so on, clamoring)

PRESIDENT

Please! (pounds gavel) PLEASE! We must have order! Ms. Le Guin, I believe your hadn was up first.

BLACKOUT

FADE IN....

PRESIDENT

...then it is agreed that we will change the word condemn the action to deplore the action. Alright, Harlan?

Harlan nods. Something is scratched out and changed.

Now, there have been 57 changes, additions, deletions, and other amendments to this document...are there any more?

He starts to smile as he sees none, begins to turn his back, then Joanna Russ rises.

RUSS

Mr. President! Mr. President!

He spins back around, pounds his fist in the air and mouths "shit"!

PRES
(dejectedly)

Yes, Ms. Russ

RUSS

Mister President, I am appalled to find the following passage in the writ still intact after all 57 changes you mention. Here we style ourselves "prophets of the future vision" and yet, from the writ, I quote "...even extending to that material of sexual orientation which may be called lewd, pornographic, or prurient. Any stem in the free flow of information can be an excuse for future censorship. It is an abominable corruption of the original spirit of our founding fathers."

No! Defending the display or depiction of another human being's body in poses of abject servitude or bondage is the abomination. Degradation of the human spirit, whether male or female, was not part of the original spirit of the founding fathers. Accepting, condoning the material mentioned here would be a betrayal of our dignity. I can't support that; nor will a major part of this group be able to. You must know that.

ELLISON

Great Ghu, woman! Must you bring in your own personal banner to wave?

RUSS

It's your cause, too, Harlan.

ELLISON

Freedom is absolute. the Constitution is absolute, our writ must be absolute.

RUSS

You're talking about Constitutional rights. I'm talking about human rights.

ELLISON

You can't argue my record or SFWA's!
S-F writers ...

RUSS

...have the same cultural prejudices as all men.
(music up)

...as a class...maybe worse.

RUSS

From Orion to Mudd, wr're slaves
Being witless is never a fault
In an SF plot
It's dumb women you've got
For the conquering male hero to save....

Who writes the novels from Daw Books?
Of women kept naked and chained.
And shall we keep score
of the captives of Gor?
See, Harlan? Or do you need it explained?

The publishers have you all trained!

With our legs and our tits, we're slaves
Tisn't smarts, 'tis endowment that saves.
The bigger you are
The more you'll go far
Down the road that Society paves....

Who writes the sword and the sorcery
packed full of virginal flesh?
Who draws the belles
On the covers of Del's?
Hail Frazetta, Vellejo, and Freas!
Naked women for monsters to seize.

Even as writers, we're slaves.
Dorothy changes to DC.
Catherine becomes C.L. Moore
Andre Norton puts forth
also as Andrew North
'Cause it opens the editor's door....
Harlan, I'll tell you what's craved.
These women.
All women
As slaves!

She and all women march out, muttering angrily.

ASIMOV

Don't worry, Harlan, They'll be back.

HARLAN

Sure, to vote us down.

Some of the men begin to drift out.

HARLAN

Gordy, Where are you going?

DICKSON

The bar. If you need me, I'll be there.

HARLAN

Sturgeon...Harry....

STURGEON

What's the use, Harlan? The vote's tomorrow morning.

CLEMENT

There's less than a full day left.

STURGEON

Face facts, Harlan. It's finished.

They leave...Harlan is alone except for Asimov and Robinson.

ASIMOV

We've got no choice, Harlan. The pronography clause has got to go.

HARLAN

Isaac, what are you saying!

ASIMOV

When it looks like our statement is floored.
By a group, whose views can't be ignored.
Then no matter the cost,
The clause must be tossed.
It's a luxury we just an't afford.

ELLISON

A luxury? Our nation stands on the edge of despotism; and Dr. A calls it a luxury?

ASIMOV

The issue here is freedom of speech, and that blasted censorship law. Maybe you've lost sight of that fact, Harlan; but I have not. How dare you jeopardize our cause when we've come so far? Those women, no matter how much you disagree with them, are not objects to be ordered about! They're proud, accomplished writers, and they are part of this organization, some of them longer than you! Either start learning to live with them, or go home! But, in any case, stop behaving like some swaggering tin-plated dictator with delusions of godhood!

Isaac exits, leaving Harlan and Spider alone on stage.

ELLISON

What about you, Spider? You haven't said two words to defend what you wrote all day.

SPIDER

I thought it would defend itself.
You hungry, Harlan?

ELLISON

No, I'll sit here awhile.

Spider leaves...Harlan is alone...Stage darkens with only a spot on Harlan as he crosses to phone. Harlan picks it up

Hello? Room service?

The phone is dead. Harlan rattles cradle but there is no answer.

Is anybody there?

He tosses it down, thinks, then more quietly...

Is anybody there?
Does anybody care?
Does anybody see what I see?

They want me to quit,
They say, "Fool, give up the fight!"
Still to SFWA, I say
"I'm right, goddammit, I'm right!"

For we have reached our Rubicon.
If we don't cross now, we're finished!
Fight, I say.
Start today.
COMMITMENT!

Those jokers all say, we'll rue the day.
There'll be hell to pay before we conclude this story.
Soon, I'll see free expression's doom.
Or I see the rays of truth-giving light and glory....

IS ANYBODY THERE?
DOES ANYBODY CARE?
DOES ANYBODY SEE WHAT I SEE?

Time's running out.
There's not a moment to spare.
1984's here.
Stand up, stand up and declare.

Come on and cross the Rubicon
Let the bridge be burned behind you.
Come what may.
Come what may...

How silent, How silent the ballroom is.
How silent, How silent the ballroom is.

Is anybody there?
Does anybody care.
Does anybody see what I see?

BLACKOUT

SCENE SEVEN

As the lights come up, SFWA is once again in session.

PRESIDENT

Mr. Zelazney?

ZELAZNEY

Aye!

PRESIDENT

Mr. Zelazney votes aye...we come to the passed votes.

RUSS (stands and glares at Harlan)

Well, Mr. Ellison

ELLISON (Stands and returns the glare)

Well, Ms. Russ?

RUSS

You must believe I will do what I have promised to do.

LONG PAUSE

ELLISON (ungraciously)

What do you want?

RUSS

Remove the offending passage.

ELLISON

If we did that, we'd be guilty of a hypocrisy as bad as that we're fighting.

RUSS

Nevertheless, remove it; or the writ and your court battle are dead. Now and forever.

ELLISON

I'm on your side, dammit! Remember Iguanacon, and the....

RUSS (implacable)

Remove it!

ASIMOV

Harlan, I beg you to consider what you're doing.

ELLISON

Mark my words, Isaac. If we give in on this issue, history will never forgive us.

ASIMOV

If you don't, there may be no one to write it.
This law, this case, this time! That's the important thing now.
If we don't fight this, all the rest won't matter.

ELLISON

Spider, say something!

ROBINSON

What else is there to do?

ELLISON

But, dammit, man! You wrote it.

ROBINSON

I wrote all of it, Harlan.

Harlan realizes he lost, walks to the document and scratches out the passage in the President's copy

ELLISON

There! Now vote!

RUSS

Mr. President, I move that the writ be accepted by acclamation

LE GUIN

I second.

PRESIDENT

In favor?

SFWA (roars with a mighty majority!

AYE!!!

PRESIDENT

Very well, so ruled...Now, are there any objections to the writ being used as written?

ELLISON

I have one.

PRESIDENT (Helplessly)

You, Harlan?

ELLISON

Yes. Here, Spider, where you quote, the word is unalienable, not inalienable.

ROBINSON

No, I checked. Inalienable is correct.

ELLISON

I used the Encyclopedia Britannica.
What was your source?

ROBINSON

Asimov's Guide to the Declaration of Inde....

ELLISON

His what?.....

They argue, ad lib, behind the voice of Asimov, who says....

ASIMOV

When opinions of two people meet
here at SFWA, or out on the street
The one thing that's clear
through the shouts and the beer
Is that hist'ry does always repeat.

BLACKOUT

THE END

ALTERNATE EPILOG ENDING

The stage is black, a voice is heard.

VOICE 1

It was announced today that the supreme court has okayed police searches of newspaper offices in case of....

VOICE 2

A reporter is spending his 34th day in jail for refusing to reveal the source of his story on drug dealings in....

VOICE 3

A congressional subcommittee today took up placing addition restrictions on material gained through the freedom of information act, sources within the...

VOICE 4

...slapped a restraining order on the Times, forbidding it from printing any further excerpts from the pentagon papers...

Lights start up
(spot)

people
joining
in

ELLISON

Time's running out
there's not a moment to spare
Tomorrow is here
Stand up, stand up and declare
For we have reached our Rubicon
If we don't cross now it's finished
Don't delay, start today...

IS ANYBODY THERE!
DOES ANYBODY CARE
DOES ANYBODY SEE WHAT I SEE!