

The Science Fiction League

of

Extraordinary  
Fuggheads

Faan Fiction

By **Arnie Katz**



*The Magic Mimeo Is the One with the Fugghead at the Handle*

# The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads

## Author's Preface

### *A Love That's True —But Flawed*

The title came first and the story followed. No sense pretending otherwise. Once my mind churned out the play on “The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen,” I pretty much *had* to write a faan fiction story so that I could make use of it.

Some might say that this is pretty far to go for such a tiny joke, somewhat akin to cracking a walnut with a pylon driver or writing a nine-page letter of comment on *Nine Lines Each*.

I have never done either of those things, but I *have* written this loong faan fiction story. (Well, you'd think it was pretty strange if I simply sent out the title, no matter how catchy, without a story attached to it.)

This is convincing evidence that every fan sometimes does something that is strange, weird, willful and — have to say it — fuggheaded. In this case, my bizarre and irrational behavior has produced a story that I hope you'll find amusing and entertaining. And in the story itself, the salvation of fandom depends on

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the bizarre and irrational behavior of fans who can be relied upon for such abnormal behavior.

The Great Fans have always been great, unique characters. They came to the microcosm, because their maladjustment to the societal mainstream made it impossible for them to express their imagination and creativity and find true satisfaction.

Fuggheads are different only in degree. They are often vibrant characters who possess intelligence and imagination in as great a measure as the rest. What sets them apart is that they find it nearly as difficult to constrain themselves to fandom's mainstream. We treat them pretty much the way mainstream society treated us.

Yet a fugghead, even a habitual one, can be a true fan, can have the same deep-in-the heart feeling about fandom even if we feel that their understanding is flawed and their conduct is ludicrous or downright incomprehensible.

Some may wonder how closely this story parallels the comic book and the movie from which I derived the title. Since I've neither read the comic or seen the movie, I think it's safe to say that any similarities in plot and characterization are wholly coincidental.

*The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads* is meant to be fun and light.

Those who feel they have been unfairly tarred with the label of “fugghead” can prove it by showing how well they can take a joke. And if that proves difficult, recall that the author is not such a perfect person, either.

— Arnie Katz

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Member: fwa    Supporter: AFAL

I get a lot of email. Due to various professional projects and membership in about four listservs, I easily get 200 pieces a day. And spam? Well, let's just say if I want to buy prescription drugs, enlarge my penis or use it on 18 year old girls or roving

housewives, or become the wrong end of the "Spanish Prisoner" scam, I know where to go.

Truthfully, the "delete" key gets a big workout, especially first thing in the morning when I awake to find one hundred or so new messages. I skim down the list of newly arrived letters, highlight groups of unwanted mail and dispatching them to limbo with a single click.

I always scan the subject lines, just to make sure I'm not lopping off something important, like a letter from an actual friend. I've gotten pretty good at deciphering the subject lines and rarely have to open any of the trash-bound mail. I have become immune to solicitations from "About last night" to "your wife is cheating on you," which greatly speeds the process. I was merrily clicking away at the unwanted email when one subject line leapt out at me. It read "EMERGENCY: Mid-Year Corflu."

Mid-year Corflu? I hadn't even heard of such a thing. I looked at the send and saw the familiar FanmailAPH screen name that signifies Andy Hooper. I thought about the letter and what it might contain as I quickly finished the chore of culling the mail. Satisfied that I'd reduced the glut to a mere superfluity, I returned to Andy's letter with its provocative subject line.

The contents of the letter were hardly less surprising than the cover line suggested. It announced something called am

# Chapter One The Saga Begins

"Emergency Mid-Year Corflu" and pleaded with me (and Joyce) to be there.

When I ambled into the dining room, where Joyce has her office, I found she'd gotten an identical letter. We talked about it and finally came to a decision that if it meant so much to Andy, we'd go even if

we didn't quite understand his agitation.

"Andy's a hothead sometimes, but he not an alarmist," Joyce observed.

We're having a case of the Brokes these days, but we decided to cash in our frequent flyer miles from palmier days.

Early Thursday morning found us shlepping through McCarran airport toward our departure gate. The place is so vast these days that Joyce, never a robust physical specimen, had to stop for a short rest. If the path to the plane had been any longer, we'd have had to pack a box lunch.

There was nothing abnormal about the flight, unless you still haven't gotten used to being treated like a potential terrorist. Joyce and I tried to figure out what was happening with Andy, I read some of my Ah! Sweet Idiocy! and slept in my none-too-comfortable seat.



Joyce and I exited the cab and hurried into the coolness of the hotel lobby. Well, hurried as much as I could with two bulging suitcases, mostly jammed with as much of Joyce's wardrobe as she could jam into the cases.

"If fandom is going to hell, I at least want to look good for the trip," she had told me as I struggled to make one of the suitcases close before we started the trip.

I dropped the bags near the front desk and Joyce and I went through the rigmarole of checking into a hotel in the 21st Century.

"Arnie! Joyce! You're here, too," came a familiar voice from behind us.

I turned to see Ted White and rich brown. For once, the usual start-of-con, first-met-in-the lobby pleasantries took a backseat to the thing that was on all our minds: the strange summons.

"What the hell is a mid-year emergency Corflu?" Ted White demanded as he surveyed the hotel lobby. "I wouldn't have come if the invitation hadn't contained a plane ticket and prepaid reservations."

"You've got reservations?" I asked. They had sent me a computer map to the hotel and a good luck bus token.

"Yes, but I came anyway," Ted replied.

Ken and Aileen Forman, also bent on check in, joined our foursome. "Looks like a good turn-out, though," said Ken. "I don't know what this is about, but it looks like it'll turn out fine."

"Maybe so," I conceded.

Check-in completed and bags in the custody of a bellman, we didn't know what to do until Joyce spotted a sign that read: "Corflu

# Chapter Two The Stars Come Out

Registration on Fifth Floor," so that's where we went.

The six of us jammed into an elevator big enough for five people to ride comfortably - and there was already a chambermaid in the car when the doors opened. Joyce pressed the button

while Ken pressed up against a maid. She evidently lacked the right fannish spirit, because we never saw her again after that.

Sure enough, a table marked "Corflu Registration" filled the milling area directly in front of the elevator.

To my surprise, sitting behind the table was none other than Robert Lichtman. His brow was furrowed and he had a troubled expression on his long fannish face. I was pleased to see him looking so well and, frankly, so much like his normal self.

We all greeted Robert warmly, glad to see that this unprecedented circumstance had a friendly face. "So what's this about, Robert?" Ted finally asked, putting everyone's thoughts into words.

"I wish I knew, Ted," Robert replied with a sad shake of the head. "No one was here when I arrived, so I sat down to wait." He paused. "That was two days ago. Bless the Spirit of Trufandom that Cantor's delivers."

"But Robert, Cantors is more than 1,200 miles from here," Joyce said.

"I told them it was life or death," he explained. "They said they couldn't afford to continue if I died, so they sent me stuff by FedEx."

"That's all very well," Ted said, directing our attention back to the issue at hand, "but it doesn't explain what we're all doing here."

"I think I can help you there, Ted," said

an approaching voice. I spun around. All seven of us executed the maneuver simultaneously, like an out-of-uniform drill team.

"Steve!" we all shouted in unison, just as we had so many years before when Steve Stiles would make his entrance at the Fanoclasts. This gesture of friendship surprised our now-revealed host, possibly because it was Andy Hooper who stood before us."

"It's me, Andy Hooper," he said, quite unnecessarily. Who could possibly fail to recognize fandom's top-rated humorist?

"We can see that, but what's this mid-year

emergency Corflu thing?" rich brown wanted to know.

"We can't discuss it here," Hooper said in a stage whisper. "Come to..." he looked around for eavesdroppers, "...room 1812 in 10 minutes."

"We'll be there," Ted promised, "though we've heard such overtures before."

With a puff of smoke, Andy Hooper disappeared. "Wish he'd shared," said Joyce taking a deep sniff of the suddenly obscuring cloud that cloaked Hooper's rapid retreat in the general direction of the elevators.

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Joyce and I snagged a couple of chairs and waited as the door to room 1812 opened and closed. Each time, two or three fans filtered into the room and found seats.

The living room of the suite was pretty much full when Andy consulted his list, nodded with satisfaction and announced that everyone had found their way to the meeting.

We looked at him expectantly. He rose to his considerable height and cleared his throat. This better not be a ploy to promote one of his collectible auctions, I promised myself, or he'd be eating MicroMachines for dinner.

"You're probably wondering why I called you here," he began. Laughter cut him off.

"All is allusion," said Lenny Bailes, pouncing on the reference to a hundred hack science fiction novels, short stories and movies. The laughter subsided, hastened by Andy's dark stare, and he resumed. "I'm sorry for the secrecy, but I didn't want them to know too soon that I am in the game. They

# Chapter Three Fandom's Last Resort

might've stopped this meeting - or saddled me with the TAFF Administrator job to keep me quiet and on the sidelines for the next two years or so."

"Cheeze, Andy, can't you get to the point without the melodrama?" Ted White asked.

"Melodrama?

What melodrama?" he said, twirling his invisible moustache in the Insurgent manner. "We don't need no stinkin' melodrama. We got plenty of stinkin' melodrama here in Fannac City, boss."

"Go on, Andy," prompted Robert Lichtman.

"Fandom is in crisis," Andy declared. "The forces of evil are on the march!" I could almost hear the Chapter Play music crescendo behind his fateful words. In fact, I did hear Chapter Play music build to a crescendo. I wondered who was riding volume of the portable stereo that was evidently located in the suite's other room.

"Does this have something to do with the worldcon rotation plan?" asked a suspicious

Joyce as she gathered up her handbag, poised to leave.

"No, this is real serious, not worldcon business meeting serious," Andy insisted. "Fanzine fandom as we know it is facing extinction."

Lichtman started to quote statistics from his annual review of fanzine publishing from TrapDoor, but a particularly penetrating look from Andy stopped him in mid-statistic. When the buzz in the room subsided completely, Andy resumed his speech.

"In recent years, we have seen fandom, the classic fandom of Burbee, Willis and Tucker, suffer one reverse after another. Fandom is getting bigger and more Mundane every month. The old values lie abandoned like an empty pizza box.

"Bureaucracy is running wild..."

"Whatcha gonna do when Bureaucracy runs wild on you!" I said in my best Hulk Hogan imitation. I struck a "most muscular" pose and grunted for added emphasis. It was reflex humor and I tried to look apologetic when Andy gave me the full Black Look.

"Bureaucracy is running wild," he repeated with heavier emphasis on every single syllable. "Fandom is filling up with worthless Mundane worker bees who need to be somewhere else doing something suitably soul-destroying."

"We know all this, Andy," said rich. "There's nothing new."

"Ah, but there is," said Andy, a note of triumph in his voice. "Something is about to happen that simply must not be allowed to happen!" Andy paused again and looked at us. Satisfied that he now had our full attention, he continued. "They have found The Enchanted Duplicator."

"I can give you six URLs for it right now, if you want," rich offered helpfully.

"No, not the allegorical prose epic of Fanzine Fandom. I mean the real and authentic, the one true Enchanted Duplicator."

"That's wonderful," Ken Forman blurted.

"I didn't even know it was missing and now they've found it!"

"Yes, Ken, they have, indeed, found the Enchanted Duplicator," Andy said, impatience dripping from every syllable. "The problem is who found it - and what they want to do with it."

"For chrissake, Andy, who found it?" Ted White demanded, showing a bit of impatience himself. He spoke for all of us.

"The Enchanted Duplicator was found by the Assistant Director of the N3F Welcommittee approximately 14 months ago." Gasps of horror filled the room! "Naturally, as one of the N3F's official experts on fandom, he knew nothing of The Enchanted Duplicator or its significance." He paused. "I guess the fact that he was Assistant Director of the N3F Welcommittee meant that nothing actually happened when he grasped the handle.

"The Neffer used it to turn out flyers about new members for a couple of months. That is a lamentable misuse of the artifact, but the worst was yet to come." He paused for effect. "SFFY and LASFS bought it from him for \$10, a photocopy of 'I Remember Lemuria' and a mostly complete set of Tightbeam."

"That's a good thing," Ken interrupted, earning yet another death ray stare. "Isn't it?"

"Alas, it is not," Andy contradicted in a sentence that ended with a stentorian sigh. "It might have been a good thing under other circumstances at other times. The amateur accountants at the LASFS and Skiffy see the machine as a fundraising opportunity."

"What's the worst they can do, sell it for \$4,000?" Joyce asked. "Or maybe just sell the right to put a nameplate on it, same price." The sinful fans of Las Vegas had long been fascinated by LASFS' ability to put a price on fame, respect and honor.

"They can, and will, do much worse, unless we stop them," Hooper retorted.

"They're going to carve it into little slivers of metal and fabric and sell them for \$5 a-piece

at SMOFCon 437 right here in this hotel the day after tomorrow!"

"That sounds ok to me," said Ken Forman. "That way, everyone will have a bit of The Enchanted Duplicator. This could be a rebirth of the trufannish spirit in fandom!"

"Not unless these wretches scratch themselves on their piece, get Tetanus and gafiate," Andy replied. "Don't you see? When they cut up The Enchanted Duplicator, it will be Gone. Our Holy Grail will cease to exist! The Spirit of Trufandom will vanish like self-control at a SNAFFU Halloween party."

Everyone jabbered at once. We all thought we knew how to stop this desecration of Trufandom's most sacred relic, if only we could force the others to listen.

And when the dust finally settled and we had used up that initial torrent of words, Andy again rose to speak. "You have all propounded excellent ideas, rational, logical, sensible plans. I have thought of some of them myself, but nothing has worked. They have no interest in discussing the matter. They see the chance to turn a profit on the Enchanted Duplicator and that's what they are going to do.

"Every rational method has proven ineffective," he summed up. "I've written letters, talked to them on the phone. I even offered to buy the machine from them... nothing."

"What about sending out a fanzine with the whole story?" Lichtman said. "Maybe a petition..."

"That might've

worked in the old days, when Bruce Pelz' elephantine boots strode across the fan world like a colossus," Andy replied, "but these people don't read fanzines. I'm not entirely convinced they would recognize one if they found themselves locked in a bathroom with nothing else to read"

"There must be something," Aileen Forman insisted.

"No, there isn't." Andy's voice had a finality about it that sent chills down my spine. "All normal, intelligent channels have come up the same... zero."

"Mother of Fanac, is this the end for Trufannishness?" said a stunned rich brown.

"There is one possibility, one longshot, that has a tiny chance of success," Andy said. "When intelligence and logic fail, the last resort is illogic and stupidity."

"What do you mean, Andy?" Ted demanded.

"I have tried every honorable, Trufannish way known to me to reclaim our fannish birthright, The Enchanted Duplicator. None of them work because these people are accountancy clerks, not Trufans. We have only one possible resource at our disposal and we must use it, however much it lacerates our pride."

"And what is that?" Joyce said.

"If we can't save The Enchanted Duplicator, we must turn to Trufandom's hidden resource... the Fuggheads!"



"Are you calling us fuggheads?" Aileen asked.

"No," Andy replied, "and that's precisely my point."

"What's precisely your point?" Joyce shot. "I've been listening and I'm fairly sure I didn't hear one."

"Forgive the vagueness of my speech, Madam," Andy snarled. "I meant to express the hope that I would be allowed to reveal the point."

"Let's not get testy," Ken said. "It is at times like this that the brotherhood of all fans must come to the fore."

"The point," Andy said and paused to look menacingly at Joyce, "is that we are not fuggheads." Murmurs of assent. "We are not the horrible people we have lampooned and excoriated in our fanzine musings."

"We are not Fuggheads. We are intelligent, rational, well-balanced and highly perceptive individuals," he continued. "Most of the time, at any rate." He looked at me. "Well, most of us are not Fuggheads most of the time."

"So we're not Fuggheads," rich said. "I think most of us sensed that."

"We have done what rational and sensible fans may do to attempt to rescue this unpleasant and injurious situation," Andy declared. "In these desperate times, when the ineffable zeitgeist of fandom dangles over the dizzying abyss of extinction, we must embrace the irrational, the unbalanced, the downright stupid. In short, we must look to the Fuggheads-for-fandom's ultimate salvation!"

Like everyone else in the room, I got too involved in the multi-path argument to accurately recount the many things said in the wake of Andy Hooper's astounding proposal. The

# Chapter Four

## The Fan With the Plan

gist of the squabble was the strongly, but not universally, held belief that Fuggheads are fandom's cross to bear and that no good can be expected from such creatures.

"Friends, I put it to you simply: We have no other choice." Andy's words quieted the

last of the debate. "Fuggheads are the only resource we have left."

"And so, let me introduce to you, the Fuggheads you've known for all these years... The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads."

Did I hear the blare of distant trumpets as Andy opened the connecting door between the suite's parlor and the adjacent bedroom? No I did not. This is serious, hard-hitting faan fiction, not some trumped up fantasy trifle.

The door opened and in walked -- Victor Gonzalez. He didn't have his own logo, much less a theme song, but he did have on a doctor's white smock.

"Hey, he's not a Fugghead, he's a hound!" someone said. Murmurs of agreement raised the noise level.

"Here is Professor Gonzalez to explain the latest miracle of Seattle Science," Andy's arm swept grandly in the direction of his former co-editor.

*Hmmm... Former co-editor. This would be Randy Byers if I knew Randy Byers, which I don't. So it's Victor Gonzalez. I like Victor. Besides, I have Luis Gonzalez and Juan Gonzalez on my baseball simulation team. Makes you think, don't it?*

"The easiest way to do this is to first in-

roduce you to Seattle Fandom's greatest creation... The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads!" Victor reveled in his role as Master of Ceremonies, even in such a stressful situation.

"So let's avoid throwing trash for..." he pointed to the connecting door through which he had entered the room. "...The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads!"

As every eye in the room swiveled in that direction, Victor began his build up for the first member.

"He's the scurrilous Swede, the man who scanned the scandal in Scandinavia, the scourge of the listservs and the bane of John-Henri Holmberg... Ahrvid Engholm!" He walked in the room, looked at us enquiring as though he expected a round of applause. "Hello Bobby-Lobby!" he said to Lichtman. Fortunately Robert had swooned in his chair and so didn't take the full brunt of Engholm's mock civility.

Victor cleared his throat and gestured grandly toward the door. "Some fuggheads are made, not born. This member struggled successfully against native intelligence and sanity to emerge as one of the most prominent fuggheads of the current age... Robert Briggs!"

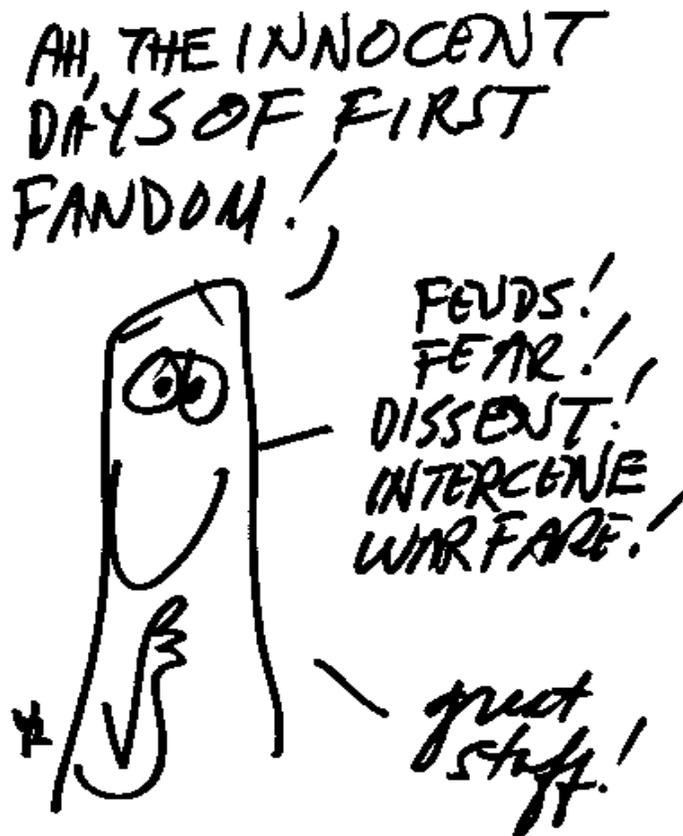
As Briggs sauntered into the room, Ted White began a vigorous protest against designating Briggs, an old friend of his, as a fugghead. Robert Briggs silenced Ted with a curt, "I heard you married one of them Jewesses, Ted, so now you're tainted, too, Jew-lover."

"And how could we have a group like this without the Mother Courage of Fuggheads, the woman who hated Willis. Yes, it's Dirty Gertie herself... G.M. Carr!" The still surprisingly spry Mrs. Carr piloted her wheelchair through the narrow doorway without a scrape and rolled to a stop in line with the first two members.

"He fought the fanzine snobs and championed dear old N3F," said Victor. A bell began to ring in the other room and, as the door opened, it grew louder. Suddenly, I wanted a Chocolate Crunch Good Humor in the worst way. "...Seth Johnson!" Well, that would be the worst way, I chided myself, silently, as Seth passed out ice cream bars and cones to each of us.

"Next we have the man with the plan, the man with the power, the savior of the hour, too sweet to be sour. Let's hear it for the fan who never heard a project he didn't like... Walter Daugherty!" The big man came through the door, looked at the assembled fans and seemed to be waiting for a round of applause. "That's Walter J Daugherty, Vito," he said to Victor as he walked past him and then had to circle back to stand behind him. Who better than Dougherty to throw his enormous energy into a project as nuts as this?

"Finally we have arguably the greatest fugghead of all time. A fan who only lies



when his mouth or his fingers are moving. I give you the rebellious lad from Poplar Bluff, Missouri, by way of New Castle, Indiana... Don Rogers!" He elongated the name, like Michael Buffer bellowing, "Let's get ready to rumble!" Don Rogers, better known under his alias Claude Degler, walked into the room and stood behind Victor.

"This is ridiculous," Aileen said. "Some of these fans are dead, aren't they?"

Victor made elaborate shushing noises and hand signals. "We don't like to discuss that in front of the members. It sometimes upsets them." As if on cue, Daugherty began to whirl in place while emitting a strange beeping sound.

"Come on, Victor, do you expect us to believe that these are Degler, Daugherty and the rest!" Frank Lunney said. Seth Johnson started ringing his bell again.

Victor pulled a whistle from his pocket, blew a short sequence of tones. To our surprise, all of the members of the Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads froze in place. Their eyes glazed over and they appeared oblivious to their surroundings.

"That will hold them for a few minutes," Victor observed. "Now let me explain..."

"Don't try to sell us the idea that Seattle Fandom has raised the dead," said a skeptical Lichtman.

"Or maybe you accidentally discovered the secret of time travel?" Joyce challenged.

"No, no nothing like that," Victor assured us, "it's nothing supernatural or a violation of the laws of the universe as set down in the editorials of John W. Campbell." That was still a good deal more latitude than I liked, but I said nothing. Frankly, I wanted to see what would happen next.

"I hate the hard science part of those Analog stories," said a relieved Joyce. I felt a little better about this now that Vince had banished both necromancy and pseudo-science. And I don't think I was alone.

"What you have seen is not some cheap masquerade or bogus pantomime," Victor said. "We have developed cutting edge mind direction," he chuckled self-consciously, "to, shall we say, 'reprogram' six brave volunteers to think and act in every way like the fuggheads we mean them to represent."

"I thought Daugherty looked like Mark Manning!" said rich brown.

"You've got a sharp eye, rich," said Victor. "Mark has indeed given of himself for the good of fandom. We have used behavior modification therapy, hypnotic suggestion, herbal medicine and a charming blend of several extremely rare imported coffees to complete obliterate the fan's real personality and imprint the fuggheaded personality."

"So this is like one of Andy Hooper's fan theatricals?" offered Robert Lichtman.

"Yes and no," Victor replied. "They are not the fuggheads whom they represent, but they are far more than actors. These six noble fans now truly believe they are the fans whom we have programmed them to simulate."

We talked it back and forth, with many an eye cast toward the zoned out sextet, though Victor constantly reminded us that the trance-like state wouldn't last forever.

Ted White made a suggestion that seemed so sensible that even Andy and Victor deemed it worthy of a change of plan. "Someone should follow them, record it all for fannish posterity."

We all turned to look at Ted. "Not me," he said. "Definitely not me." He looked around the room: "Let's send Robert and Arnie."

"Right," said Ken Forman. "Robert for intelligence, wisdom, judgment, well-balanced restraint..."

"And Arnie for... for," said my ever-loyal wife, "Well, he's tall."

And so, in a vote hastened by obvious signs of wakefulness from the superior six, they confirmed Robert and I as observers.

"Chaotic" is the best adjective to describe the first (and so far as is known, last) meeting of The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads. Robert and I sat on folding chairs against the wall, well out of range of the vituperative exchanges that constituted the strategy session.

The very things that made them fandom's prime fuggheads also made it nearly impossible for them to work together harmoniously.

Robert Briggs objected to the "two Jew-boys" shadowing the group. He had some complicated theory about the Elders of Zion and stolen Nazi gold, but I tuned him out. Lichtman tried to convince him we weren't really good Jews. "I haven't gone to the Synagogue except for weddings and funerals since Aaron conducted the services," I assured him, somewhat hyperbolically. Eventually, we had to settle for me explaining that I would beat the crap out of him if he didn't let it rest.

GM Carr didn't seem to care much about The Enchanted Duplicator, dismissing it as some kind of "Irish Fandom trick." Lichtman swung her into line by pointing out that, whatever its origins, The Enchanted Duplicator now belonged to American Fandom, "because God and his right-hand man..." Lichtman said.

"You mean...?" GM said.

"Yes, God and his right-hand man, United States Senator Joseph McCarthy, looking down from heaven, want American Fandom, God's Fandom, to have that Enchanted Duplicator," Lichtman improvised. "Yes, indeed, Fightin' Joe, looking down from On High, where there are no Communistic Pinko Traitors, wants you to do this. Now I know you

# Chapter Five

## The Land Of Enchantment

are not going to disappoint Joe McCarthy or even God."

She swore on the sainted head of Calvin Coolidge that she would save the Magic Machine from the conspiracy of one-worlders, freemasons and communistic fellow travelers.

elers.

Walter Daugherty had great ideas for everything from a logo for the group to a swell design for Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads stationary. In a scene eerily parallel to one in Ah! Sweet Idiocy!, Walter spent the best part of an hour pantomiming the construction of a cabinet and storage area for The Enchanted Duplicator. He did get a little bogged down on the issue of the wording of the nameplate that would be affixed to the machine and the exactly location where it should be attached.

We put Daugherty in charge of the Victory Dinner and won his allegiance to the mission with the slogan, "Fuggheads 100% behind The Enchanted Duplicator."

Ahrvid Engholm had a lot to say about everything, but for some reason he felt he had to say it all in Swedish. Who knows what starkly original (and undoubtedly befuddled) observations he might've made. I definitely heard Ahrvid say "Bobby Lobby" a few dozen times, which didn't make Lichtman any happier about being in the same room with the international troublemaker.

Seth Johnson just rang his bell and tried to discuss the effect of fanzine snobs on the price of re-usable typewriter ribbons. It took Robert two hours, and all of his noted patience, to explain how those LASFS fanzine snobs tricked his beloved NFFF out of The

Enchanted Duplicator. (The fact that LASFS does little in the realm of fanzines outside APA L and LASFAPA troubled me even less than it troubles them.)

It took quite awhile for Robert and I to convince Claude Degler that The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads didn't need any local, state or regional subsidiaries or affiliates. He found it hard to believe that we would be against it, since he'd appointed Robert as Sector Vice President of the California Fan Hegemony and had conferred upon me the gaudy title of High Fal-lutin of the Las Vegas Fantasy Fictioneers.

After we'd pounded home the message that the simple, ad-hoc organization would be sufficient in this case, Claude had little trouble grasping the essentials of the situation. "The Enchanted Duplicator is a fannish relic of great power," he orated as much to himself as to the others. "Now the Mundanes who masquerade as fans but lack our broad mental horizons, the loathsome LASFS and its damnable SFFY, want to defile and destroy it. This is the time for all Cosmen to rally together, for all members of the Race of Tomorrow to demonstrate their starbeggotten superiority. We must stop at nothing to reclaim The Enchanted Duplicator and wipe these blasphemers from the face of the earth!"

Don Rogers' eloquence had moved some of his teammates. GM Carr kept shouting, "Wipe 'em out! Wipe out those Red Bastards!" and Seth Johnson seemed pleased by Degler's paranoid slant on things.

The Planning Meeting turned out to be a good news/bad news thing. While the group on which we placed all hopes for fandom's salvation didn't Balkanize into six one-person organizations, the mighty minds of the SFLEF didn't come close to a coherent, workable plan. Hell, they didn't come within a light year of an incoherent, unworkable plan.

"Should we take control of this train wreck?" I asked Robert. I had to scream to

make myself heard over the frenzied shouts of "Kill! Kill! Kill them all!" from several of the more enthusiastic members. "We could concoct a plan and use our Fine Fannish Minds to insinuate it into these six off-center brains."

"It's an appealing thought, but we can't do it," Lichtman said, sadness in his voice.

"Why not?"

"Because even if we could con them into following our plan, it would be our plan. If we want to tap into this mother lode of fugg-headedness, Meyer, we have to let them do what comes naturally."

I didn't laugh at this seemingly absurd statement. When Lichtman called me "Meyer," it meant he was really serious. As I thought about it, I saw his point and told him as much. "Still, we ought to set some rudimentary limits, don't you think?"

"Like what?" Lichtman asked.

"Well, like 'no killing' and, if we can get them to agree, 'no maiming.'"

"Maybe we ought to specifically prohibit arson and the use of firearms or blades in general," Lichtman suggested.

"Sure... It only makes sense," I replied. "These are Fuggheads, not refugees from some Ren Fair."

So we sat back, occasionally cringing at the things the six of them said and did. At the proper moment, we introduced the guidelines. Eventually, we got them to agree on "No Killing" and, with some grumbling, "no weapons."

"I hope that doesn't restrict them too much," murmured Lichtman.

At one point, they almost united behind Robert Briggs' plan to blackmail the Secret Congress of Rabbis into forcing the return of The Enchanted Duplicator, but the sponsor soon turned against his own idea. "We already have two of them right here," he said, nodding toward Lichtman and me, "and they aren't doing anything for us."

Briggs carried on in that vein for a while.

Not surprisingly, his vehement opposition to his own proposition proved just as effective as his former advocacy. In the end, they tabled Briggs' proposal. They tentatively assigned further discussion of the idea to a Study Committee that Degler created on the spot. At the insistence of Seth Johnson and GM Carr, control of the Trans-Galactic Study Forum was bestowed upon the N3F.

"Reluctantly, I am forced to the conclusion that we must all agree to disagree on the best method for retrieving The Enchanted Duplicator," said GM Carr.

"The important thing is that we have to do it now!" Degler declared.

I groaned. Lichtman suffered in silence. An Unknowing Fandom drifted helplessly toward Brink of Doom.

After wishing "good night" and "sweet dreams," to each of the six members of The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads, we locked them in their rooms - the hotel didn't have cells to rent as such -- and headed off to our accommodations. At Aileen's suggestion, we'd rented rooms under assumed names on another floor to get some rest.

I believe the hotel's security department only had to deal with two emergency calls, neither involving a fatality. That was better than I could've hoped for after spending the day with the six of them. Hell, there wasn't even a felony, though Degler had a court appearance in a couple of weeks.

The sun rose all too soon upon the Pre-Opening Day of SMoFCon 437. Although the convention didn't start until the next day, it looked like all of the attendees had already arrived. "They're such Smofs," Robert explained as we headed toward the Registration Area, "that they can't bear to miss the pre-con in-fighting. Of course you know, Meyer, that the really big SMoFs were already here yesterday."

## Chapter Six Fuggheads In Action

"If not the night before, eh?" I offered.

Lichtman and I attempted to pass as nameless SMoFs loitering shiftless in the Registration Area, unobtrusive yet positioned to see events and record them for posterity. Assuming the Science Fiction League of Extraordi-

nary Fuggheads succeeded and fandom (as we know it) had a posterity.

We heard Gertrude M. Carr before we saw her. Fittingly, she was giving someone hell. Lichtman and I exchanged Meaningful, yet Fannish looks. It seemed that whatever it was our sextet planned had gotten underway.

"What do you mean the convention doesn't have an American Guest of Honor?" GM Carr bellowed at someone wearing three ribbons, two badges, a headset and a sash with "SMoFcon 437" embroidered in gold.

"You're the chairman here, act like one!"

I asked Robert how she had picked out the chairman from among so many similarly festooned confans. "I think it's his winged helmet and ceremonial saber," said my companion, ever a source of enlightenment. I don't call him "the Sage of Glen Ellen" for nothing. (Lichtman stopped paying, so I

stopped calling him that.)

"W-we d-don't h-have a g-g-g-guest of honor," said the wretch as he shriveled under GM Carr's fusillade of stentorian invective. Her self-assured manner had instantly thrown him back to his troubled teenage years when his Mom had screamed incessantly about all the money he spent on videos and, of course, his winged helmet.

"And you sound like you are proud of that, too, aren't you?" she challenged. "You've disgraced your country, the land that gave you birth and made you what you are today," she shouted without a trace of irony. "The United States of America!"

"Actually, I'm Canadian," the chairman said sheepishly.

"Attention all good and loyal American fans," she thundered at the crowd. "This convention is chaired by an avowed Un-American!" Sharp intakes of breath and heated murmurs shot through the throng as the massed confans ruminated upon this bulletin.

"I'm a non-American," he said, "if by 'American' you mean a citizen of the United States."

"Now isn't that like a typical foreigner?" GM declared, playing to the suddenly turbulent crowd. "When you catch them in a filthy deception, they just want to split hairs!"

"I don't think I've ever heard a convention chant, 'USA! USA!' before," Lichtman confided. Neither had I, except at the wrestling matches.

The SMoFCon 437 chairman, now white-faced and with his sash askew, staggered down the hall in the general direction of the hotel's front door.

"Well, they've gotten rid of the guy in

**"BECAUSE YOU CAN  
DO IT" IS NOT A  
JUSTIFICATION  
FOR DOING IT.**



charge," I observed. "Now the con won't be quite as well coordinated."

"Ah, Meyer, you forget that we are in confan country," he said with less enthusiasm than I'd expected. "Some of these people dream about situations like this. A con in trouble. An intrepid confan rises to the occasion, takes over the con and saves the day. It's a File 770 front pager."

"That sure is a true thing you said right there, bhoys," I admitted, "but that could work to our advantage, too. This is a convention full of people like that. If six or seven of them rise up to save the day, they'll spend so much time fighting with each other that no one will take control."

Suddenly, Walter J Daugherty seemed to be everywhere at once, pouring drinks, telling jokes, handing out little brochures about the sights and restaurants of the host city. He claimed the pamphlets were "courtesy of the National Fantasy Fan Federation," but that didn't stop people from taking what Daugherty persisted in calling a "fanphlet." Since most SMoFCon 437 attendees had never heard of the NFFF, the effect of guilt by association proved negligible.

In Ah, Sweet Idiocy! Francis Towner Laney wrote that few, if any, fans were more fun than Walter J Daugherty at a non-fannish gathering. In these AP (After Pelz) days, you could go far before you ran into a less fannish group than the cabal in charge of SMoFCon 437.

They were drawn to WJD like a Seattle fan to a Starbucks. And with his penchant for fan politics, it wasn't long before he had gathered around himself the cream of SmoFdom.

And when Daugherty led an entourage out the door to find a Chinese restaurant mentioned in his fanphlet, the rest of the

convention leadership (the chairman having already departed) left in his wake.

We smelled Degler before we saw him. It was just as well that we had some warning, because Cosmic Clod was dressed strangely even by confan standards.

*Is "confan standards" an oxymoron, like "organized Vegas fandom"? Having walked my full share of convention corridors, I shudder to think how those standards of dress and deportment would be codified.*

"I have received an email from space!" Claude announced grandly after he leapt to the top of the registration table. He waved the telegram triumphantly.

*All I ever get are spam letters that offer 18-year-old girls, penis enlargement and Viagra. Some day, I will answer one of each type and live happily (and erectilely) ever after.*

Several people looked his way and saw a man dressed in a tinfoil suit - or maybe "toga" would be a better description of his apparel. It must've been hot inside all that wrapping and it was very obvious to anyone within 20 yards that Degler had not bathed in a very long time.

"Our space brothers have reached out to us from the vast reaches of the infinite cosmos!" he screamed, his eyes bugging out of his head. His enthusiasm mesmerized the confans, who started edging closer to him, while maintaining some distance out of respect for his considerable odor. "Our starbeggotten brothers and sisters are coming to Earth for the only thing they consider important, the only

thing worthy of interstellar attention - bidding for the Worldcon!"

"Is it 1941 already?" Lichtman deadpanned. "Didn't he do something like this at the Denvention?"

"That time the con committee got the telegram," I said, "but Degler was there and professed to believe it completely. That was his first brush with fannish notoriety. The bit about bidding for the worldcon is new, though," I admitted.

"They should have known this would happen when they did away with the rotation plan," said Lichtman. He chuckled appreciatively. "I wonder if any of the aliens like fanzines?"

"Come hear the glorious news," said Claude. "The Cosmic Prophecy of Fandom is redeemed!" The confans, conditioned to following shouted orders without hesitation, moved closer to this odd orator.

They listened raptly as Claude extolled our (alleged) cosmic brothers and other aspects of his personal world vision. So thoroughly did Claude monopolize their attention that no one noticed Robert Briggs and Ahrvid Engholm slipping through a door with a "No Admittance" sign.

Degler was scoring quite a hit with the multitudes, who now ignored prevailing winds to cluster tightly around him. Nearly illegible photocopies of the Email From Space were being bought for \$5 a pop by the gullible and Cosmic Circle memberships also appeared to be doing a brisk business.

Lichtman and I left Degler to his inscrutable purposes and followed the other two through the unwatched door.



Robert and I had barely started down the long corridor when we heard a commotion at the far end. We hung back and watched as Briggs and Engholm confronted two portly Creative Anachronists. These worthies, given the thankless task of "guarding" a door to

a storeroom, had poured their essence into the assignment. They stood with drawn swords, ready to defend the portal with each other's lives if necessary.

"No one getteth through the door to your treasure room!" one of the swordsmen said menacingly. Well, it would've seemed a tad more menacing if he had been able to hold the blade steady. His wrist repeatedly buckled under its weight as he tried to wave the blade around in the general direction of Briggs.

Honestly, I can't tell you exactly what they were saying to each other. We were a good distance down the hall in what Robert dubbed "The Zone of Safety." I heard "conspiracy" and several synonyms for what the more polite bigots call "Jewish influenced."

Soon, both of the guards were in hot debate with Briggs. That's when Ahrvid put an end to the wrangle. He didn't so much mediate as conk them over their head with his bottle of liquor. Give him this: his tactic was persuasive. One minute they were shouting at Briggs, red-faced and angry, and the next they were peacefully folded up next to the door they'd watched with so little success.

"Come on, Jewboys, we may need you for something," Briggs shouted to us. "

Lichtman and I exchanged looks. We both nodded. This was not the time to battle for our ethnic heritage. "We'll have the vic-

# Chapter Seven

## At the Gate

tory dinner at Cantor's, Meyer," he whispered.

We hurried down the hallway to the now unguarded door.

"The Enchanted Duplicator is in there," Briggs assured us. Ahrvid bashed his bottle against the door in a futile bid to open

it. The bottle shattered and its contents poured out onto the carpet.

Briggs broke into a tirade against "bagel-eating locksmiths" when Lichtman reached out, wordlessly, and turned the handle. He pushed it open.

We entered the room, the two Fuggheads leading the way and we observers hanging back.

"I think this is it!" Ahrvid exclaimed as he pointed at the shiny machine in the center of the room. "We have found The Enchanted Duplicator!"

"No, Ahrvid, I think that is a commercial quality coffee maker," Briggs corrected his compatriot. The two of them scanned the room for what seemed like hours. They peered hopefully into the little cabinet that held the fire extinguisher, minutely examined the window and looked behind the cork bulletin boards on the walls in a foredoomed search for The Enchanted Duplicator.

"It's that hulk over there against the wall," Lichtman said, breaking his own Prime Directive because he couldn't bear to watch them miss-identify every object in the room as The Enchanted Duplicator until they stumbled across the genuine artifact.

"It's not much," Engholm said. "Some pothead must have written it up."

Lichtman and I, both eager to impart some lessons in fanhistory, restrained each

other. "This is their show," Lichtman scolded me.

"And so far, it's working," I shot back. "We can be bad to them later," I promised.

"You Chosen People are supposed to be so smart..." Briggs said suddenly.

Lichtman and I exchanged Knowing Looks. It was hard for either of us to argue with such perception, but we didn't delude

ourselves that it came from a good place.

"What's the bottom line, Briggs?" I said. I hoped I could cut off whatever anti-Semitic BS he had in mind.

"We've got a little problem..." Briggs began.

"Problem?" Lichtman asked.

"We've got The Enchanted Duplicator, but now how do we get it out of here?" Briggs posed.

I started to say something, but Lichtman cut me off with a terse comment about us being only observers and not strategy makers. Not that he put me off; I was only going to vamp with a lot of meaningless words while I tried to figure out something actually helpful to say.

Lichtman, as usual, was right.

We encouraged Briggs and Engholm to do whatever felt right. I guess that makes us partly responsible for what happened next, though I think both Robert and I would like to place the blame solidly on Ahrvid and his fellow members of The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads.

Ahrvid slipped through the door and closed it behind him. I heard some angry voices and then a pair of heavy clunks! Almost instantly came two heavy thuds. When Ahrvid eased back into the room, again closing the door, I guessed he had laid out the

## Chapter Eight The Road Back

guards again.

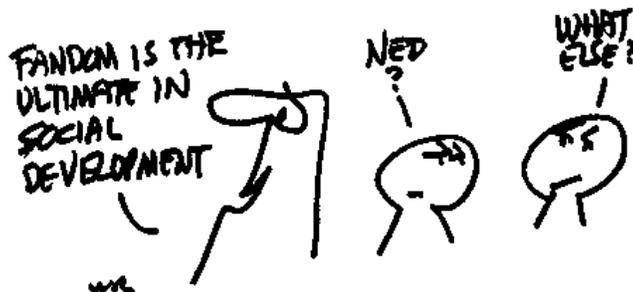
His explanation confirmed my hypothesis. Evidently, Engholm had decided to emulate a hundred sitcom episodes and tried to convince the guards that they'd fallen asleep and dreamt the earlier incident.

It didn't work very well. Sadly,

they guards, though woozy, insisted on recalling the attack as it actually happened. Alas, their independent memories reinforced their conviction that Engholm and Briggs weren't merely hallucinations. His plan thwarted, Engholm had resorted to the same method of persuasion that worked so well earlier - and with essentially the same results.

"They were not as easy to persuade as I had hoped," Engholm volunteered. "I feel they agree with me now, because they have stopped protesting."

"We better not be here to ask them about that when they wake up," Briggs said. "I don't think we'd like their answers." I could've kissed the cranky old Jew-baiter.



Engholm lurched across the room and rolled the cart with The Enchanted Duplicator to the door.

"We'd better cover it with something," Briggs said. "Somebody might wonder why we have this equipment. Someone might even recognize it."

Briggs followed his own command. He



pulled the tablecloth off a display of "Hands Free Phones of the Great SMOFs" and draped it over the magic mimeograph.

"That won't do," Ahrvid judged. I nodded to Lichtman. He had a point. It looked like we were hiding something on a rolling cart. The unadorned machine might've gotten less notice than the intriguingly mysterious lump under the yellow cloth.

Engholm smiled with maniacal delight. He seized one of the bulletin boards and ripped it off the wall. He moved quickly to the next bulletin board and did the same. It wasn't a great feat of strength, because they were just temporary fixtures of the room, meant to be relocated somewhere in the con's public area, but it took us by surprise, nonetheless.

Ahrvid taped a bulletin board to one side

of the wooden cart on which The Enchanted Duplicator sat. He did the same on the opposite side and then taped the tops of the boards together to form a rough sort of pyramid that obstructed the machine in the bed of the cart.

I had to fight the impulse to ask him what the hell he thought he was doing. It might disrupt the flow of fugghead energy and, I kept telling myself, we couldn't have that happen.

Ahrvid produced a fat manila envelope from which he carefully extracted a thick sheaf of... Swedish Fanzines! He quickly tacked the covers to the bulletin boards with the pins that previously affixed displays of convention badges to them.

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of faan fiction, I shall not make a joke about how "We don't need no stinkin' badges" even though I have set it up beautifully and made it a semi-reasonable outgrowth of the story. Sometimes it's such a responsibility being me.*

"It still needs something," Briggs said as he inspected the results of Ahrvid's brainstorm. He retrieved the rectangular cardboard sign from the discarded "History of Convention Badges" displays. "We don't need any of the rest of this stinkin' crap," he said. Briggs turned over the sign and wrote something. He pinned it near the top of one of the bulletin boards. "I give you... the History of Swedish Fanzines" he announced grandly.

"It's not very complete," Lichtman whispered. "I don't see any of John-Henri's fanzines."

"I don't think Ahrvid saves them after he writes the attacks," I replied. "Besides, I don't think this display will be around long enough to get judged."

"This is true, Meyer," he said.

While we had this discourse on fanhis-

torical accuracy, Briggs and Engholm had huddled in urgent conversation. "Get going, Ahrvid!" Briggs said, snapping our attention back where it belonged.

Ahrvid began pushing the cart forward toward the door and then through it into the corridor. The guards were still sprawled on the floor, undoubtedly dreaming thoughts of fan domination, so they posed no threat.

On the other hand, Ahrvid was making quite a commotion. He shouted curses in Swedish as he pushed the cart ahead of him down the hall. I guess the new plan didn't call for sneaking past the confans. At least I hoped it didn't, because that meant we were sunk and Fanzine Fandom was going to take the Big Flush right along with us.

Suddenly, Briggs started down the hall after Engholm, though I noticed he made no effort to actually catch up with Ahrvid. "Get out of here you un-American spy!" Briggs shouted after his teammate. We trailed behind them, hanging back a more-than-discreet distance.

Ahrvid burst through the door into the lobby like an EMT steering a crash cart in a hospital. Of course, the door didn't have quite the same "give" as those hospital doors and I guessed someone would ultimately have a repair bill to pay.

Still fulminating Swedish profanity at stentorian volume, Ahrvid raced toward the door. He moved so fast that he was considerably more than halfway across the lobby before the Smofs even noticed him despite the racket he and Briggs were making.



**BIG QUESTIONS ONLY EVOKE OTHERS**

"Get out of here you miserable spy!" Briggs shrieked, pretending to chase Ahrvid in the direction he so desperately wanted to go. "Go back to the Evil Empire of Sweden and trouble us right-thinking American fans no more!"

Remember, by this point, the Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads had already removed the

con chairman and his entire committee from the lobby registration area. The other SMoF-Con 437 attendees had sensed the power vacuum and rushed to fill it.

They were so busy forming ad hoc committees and filling rooms with C. Everett Coop brand Health-Risk-Free smoke for the important negotiation meetings to come, they barely noticed the irate fan leaving in a huff and taking his messy, and incomprehensibly esoteric, display with him.

The few who did notice Engholm and Briggs gave them only a split-second's attention before turning back to the more interesting matter of who would get to lord it over the rest for the weekend. The fact that it was a fanzine display may have even shortened that fleeting moment of awareness.

Engholm and Briggs took their movable farce through the lobby and onto the street. Lichtman and I strolled a discreet distance behind them as inconspicuously as possible.

I couldn't believe it when I saw it at the curb, right in front of the hotel. Seth Johnson, resplendent in his sparkling white uniform, stood next to a sparkling white truck decorated with a sign that read: "Uncle Seth's Ice Cream.

Briggs and Engholm pried apart the two bulletin boards. Johnson opened the big hatch in the side of the old-fashioned ice cream truck and his teammates hoisted up The Enchanted Duplicator and slid it into the compartment. Johnson slammed the door

and jumped behind the wheel. Briggs and Engholm hopped in beside him and the truck pulled away from the curb.

"Follow that ice cream truck!" I shouted to the cab driver as Lichtman and I piled into the car.

"If you want ice cream, buddy, I can take you to a Baskin Robbins easy," the hackie said.

"Just follow the vehicle and we'll make it worth your while," said Lichtman. His reassuring voice did its work and we were soon in motion, only a few car-lengths behind the ice cream truck. (We would've lost them around the first corner if Seth hadn't stopped to sell two cones and a fudgesickle.)

The Ice Cream truck, which had finally stopped jingling its bell, gradually accelerated. When our cabbie showed signs of indecision, Lichtman and I each threw a \$20 into the little receptacle that permitted transfer of money from the back seat to the front seat through the otherwise solid glass partition that separated the driver from the passengers.

"Just stay with him," Lichtman told the driver. "That's just your tip."

"Part of the tip," I seconded.

The cabbie emptied the window and the two twenties disappeared never to be seen by either Robert or me again. It got him involved in our situation and I felt the cab surge forward.

# Chapter Nine

## The Great Getaway

Seth got the truck up to a respectable speed for city driving as he piloted the gleaming white vehicle down a large avenue, made a right and roared down an even wider and busier thoroughfare.

We hung with him. Lichtman and

I kept glancing back through the rear windshield to see if SMoFcon had mounted any kind of pursuit. There were plenty of cars, but none seemed interested in the Ice Cream Truck.

"I think they're gonna get away with it," I chortled to Lichtman. "Who'd have thunk it?"

"Not me, Meyer," he agreed. "If it's a win, we'll take it." I nodded.

We were now miles from the hotel, heading to the riverfront section on the opposite side of town. The Ice Cream Truck didn't slow down at all as it negotiated the twisty streets of the dock area.

"Why doesn't he slow down?" I asked Robert.

"Is that rhetorical?" he queried. "Or are you really asking me to interpret the motives of Seth Johnson, Ahrvid Engholm and Robert Briggs?"

I shrugged and turned my attention back to the Ice Cream wagon, which seemed to be pulling away from us as it rocked and rolled down progressively smaller streets that led to the piers.

"What the hell is this guy doing?" the cab driver demanded. Another pair of \$20 bills in the little compartment satisfied his curiosity and kept our car from falling too far behind.

Our counterfeit Seth drove the truck with the same practiced skill as the original. He

couldn't push the white monster over 45 mph, but he made up for it with sudden turns and serpentine lane changes.

Suddenly, the Ice Cream Truck hung a sharp left and barreled down a gently sloping road that led to a dock.

"We've got him now!" the cab driver shouted triumphantly. An \$80 tip had made him our brother, apparently.

I would have said the same as the taxi turned onto the road, effectively blocking the Truck's only possible exit. I still didn't know why Seth Johnson kept going, but now, surely, everything would wind back down to something approximating normal.

The three of us - Lichtman, the cabbie and me - watched goggle-eyed as the Ice Cream Truck got to the end of the road and went right up onto the pier.

"He's not slowing down!" Lichtman said, "If he doesn't stop, he's gonna go right in..." His voice faded to silence as he watched the Ice Cream Truck zoom down the pier - and off the end of it into the murky, bottomless depths of the river.

Our cab went from the road to the landward end of the dock and stopped with a squeal of maladjusted brakes. Only the top of the truck remained visible above the churning, bubbling water. The vehicle's freezer compartment provided some buoyancy, I surmised, but the truck's tremendous weight pulled it down inexorably.

Lichtman and I hit the doors and hurried down the pier. I felt like it was my dream that was sinking below the waves. The Truck, en-

tirely submerged now, roiled the surface water as the last air pockets bubbled to the surface, as it grew less and less visible through the muddy, polluted water.

In his report, Lichtman says he saw a mist-laden updraft just as the truck took the final plunged to the river's muddy bottom. I thought the vaporous plume looked like a woman in a flowing gown with a scepter in her hand, Lichtman has far better eyesight, so his account is probably correct. Think I'll hang onto mine, though.

We'd just reached the seaward end of the dock when Lichtman pointed to something in the water. "I see them!" he said. "There they are!"

Sure enough, Johnson, Briggs and Engholm were bobbing in the water, thrashing about in confusion. They must be all right, I reasoned, if they had the strength to moan so loudly.

With the cabbie's help, we used a coil of thick rope to drag them, one at a time, to the dock and hoist them up to the pier. As we had more people to pull the rope, it got easier, so it didn't take more than a half hour to rescue

the waterlogged, but essentially unhurt, members of The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fugg-heads.

"I just have to ask you something and now that the mission is over, I can," said Robert Lichtman as the five of us crowded into the taxi. "Why did you drive off the dock?"

"I didn't plan on it, but I thought you were the SMoFCon chasing us," Johnson explained.



"...and The Enchanted Duplicator, locked inside the truck's ice cream freezer, sank out of sight into the river," Lichtman finished. He looked around the hotel suite's parlor, Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez had first unveiled their fantastic plan to save Trufandom's most precious relic.

"Thank you, Robert and Arnie," said Victor Gonzalez. "Everyone appreciates your accounts..."

"...you'd better," I muttered, "since we can't publish any of this."

"... even though you can't publish them" Victor continued. "It's just a shame that our scheme to save Trufandom didn't work."

"It didn't?" rich brown said.

"For crissakes, rich, they sunk The Enchanted Duplicator," said Ted White. "They certainly lived up to the name 'The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads.'"

"But it's in an air-tight compartment, so it's in no immediate danger," rich countered.

"We can't get it," Ted persisted. "The river has a muddy bottom and that truck is probably 10 feet down inside it."

"It probably is," said rich. "I'll tell you what it's not, though."

# Chapter Ten

## The Aftermath

"What's that?"  
"It's not cut up and sold to a bunch of know-nothing confans," said rich.

"So we didn't fail," Andy Hooper said, brightening perceptibly. "We didn't have The Enchanted Duplicator when we started and we still don't have it. Nothing's

changed, except those guys didn't desecrate it."

"The Enchanted Duplicator is still out there, somewhere in the mud, ready to come back to us when Trufandom has need of it," Joyce said. "And the ideals it represents are imperishable and timeless and they will always be with us."

"And so, too, my friends, is The Science Fiction League of Extraordinary Fuggheads," Andy assured us. "We have returned all six to their normal selves. Soon their exploits will be patchy dreams of fannish glory."

"Yet the conditioning remains in place and the skills they have acquired in their fugghead personas are intact. If Fanzine Fandom ever needs their special touch, they will be ready."

--Arnie Katz  
Las Vegas 2004

Attention Fans  
Watch for  
The Science Fiction League  
of Extraordinary Fuggheads...

They *might* return when you least expect it!



YOU METU  
FANDOM IS  
STILL ALIVE?

