

The combination is not one which delights a prospective father-in-law.

I had an idea for a large writing project, what turned out to be the four books of the Videssos Cycle (had I known at the outset *how* large the project would end up, I never would have had the nerve to tackle it). Before I started work, I took out my copy of the January 1974 issue of *Analog* and reread, for the umpty-umph time, Heinlein's guest editorial there, "Channel Markers." Among other things, Heinlein offers in the editorial what he calls "Five Rules for Success in Writing." They are the best—and simplest—(utterly characteristic of Heinlein to do both at once) writing rules I have ever found. For those who have not been fortunate enough to encounter this editorial, I repeat them here:

First: You must *write*.

Second: You must *finish* what you write.

Third: You must refrain from rewriting except to editorial order.

Fourth: You must place it on the market.

Fifth: You must *keep* it on the market until sold.

I can't pay Robert A. Heinlein back for the favor he gave me through those rules. If one of my readers takes them as seriously as I did, I'll have paid some of that favor forward instead. I think Heinlein would have preferred it that way, anyhow.

As I said, I'd read "Channel Markers" many times before. It had encouraged me to keep in the mail those pieces I managed to produce, and thus was partly responsible for the few sales I'd already made. Now, reading it again, I told myself I would seriously apply Heinlein's first and most important rule: you must *write*. I resolved to write for an hour a day, every day, until the story I had in mind was through.

At first it seemed easy. Not only was I fueled by the initial burst of enthusiasm a new tale brings, I was also single, otherwise unemployed, and living by myself. Day