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Friday



Synopsis

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES ONLY. In a Balkanized North America of the near future, threatened by imminent extinction, a strikingly beautiful and resourceful interplanetary secret agent--an Artificial Person named Friday--tries to survive a gigantic human comedy. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

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Authors, A-Z > (H) > Heinlein, Robert A. #26398 inÂ Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy >

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Customer Reviews

After reading many of the reviews here, I note that opinion seems divided on whether it's truly a good Heinlein book or not. Most still consider it a pretty fair Heinlein yarn, and yet all the reviews I read missed one of the main points of the novel--which is the main reason why it's so interesting--whether it's a great Heinlein novel or not. Many have already commented on the various themes of the book, most of which will already be familiar to Heinlein fans. The one that was new was the bigotry against the main character, an artificial and genetically enhanced human. It seems most readers found this reaction unlikely, although this theme pervades the entire work. One reviewer asserts that it's even the primary idea of the whole book. Another important theme is the revolt against authority which many Heinlein readers will certainly know from his other books such as *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, *Double Star*, *Citizen of the Galaxy*, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, *Sixth Column*, *Revolt in 2100*, and others. The theme of the competent man also takes center stage in this book, another famous and familiar Heinlein theme, although in this book it's a competent, genetically enhanced female. However, all these interpretations, although true, miss one very important point. In Heinlein's novels, the world is often a very unstable and even dangerous

place--but there is always hope, and optimism that conditions will be better in the future. Often the main characters in Heinlein's books are intimately involved in the struggle to overthrow oppressive governments--and usually succeeding--and thereby creating a better life for themselves.

I admit it. I'm a Heinlein junkie. I'm not sure if there is a rehab or a self-help group out there for me, but even if there was one, I'm not sure if I would even want to go to it. It's Heinlein after all! I've read everything from his lesser-known earlier works like "Orphans in the Sky", to his Juveniles like "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress", to his Lazarus Long series, even his famous "Stranger in a Strange Land", to even his non-fiction work. And although I love them all, I must say, that Friday is undisputedly my favorite. What makes Friday so alluring? It is a tale of acceptance and belonging and what is the human soul. It is a story of an "artificial person", Friday Jones, whose "mother was a test tube, and her father a knife". She is a professional courier (that is to say, she is a carrier pigeon for top-secret documents and important information), who seems to be normal and well adjusted in every way. However, underneath her cheerful and charming exterior lays a frightened little girl who seeks acceptance in the most desperate ways, but fails in her quest to find a family. During these chronicles, she discovers many things about herself. Small, personal bits of information, a strength and resourcefulness that she never knew she had. Eventually, she finds a family and as she says, she finally "belongs". The story is quite simple, so why is this story so spellbinding? Besides the beautiful blend of technology, history, and characterization, there is also a cohesive story line as well as a thrilling plot. Friday asks the age-old question, what is a soul? What makes a human, a person? Although she is beautiful, accomplished and talented, once she reveals that she is an AP, she is outcast and sneered at.

This late-period Heinlein novel is at least better than the one it followed (The Number of the Beast). Most of it is fun to reread. The protagonist here is an Artificial Person (AP) named Friday Jones, who works as a courier for the organization headed up by Hartley 'Kettle Belly' Baldwin (last seen in the 1949 short story 'Gulf'). Friday's very cool all around but she has a little self-esteem problem owing to the fact that much of the world thinks APs aren't genuinely human. Well, of course they are; they're genetically engineered to be able to outperform us ordinary mortals in strength, speed, and intelligence, but they're human (genetically and otherwise) all the same. (So you should ignore reviewers' comments describing Friday as a 'cyborg'. She's no such thing.) And that's really the heart of this novel -- Friday's long and sometimes excruciating journey to belonging. (In this respect, the novel very nicely undoes all of the Uebermensch crap Heinlein

wrote in the 1940s.) That's the heart, but the novel has a couple of spots on its soul. As other readers have noted, Friday's response to her rape (and her rapist) is more than a little jarring, and I don't think it's possible to explain it away as a result of her upbringing and genetic enhancements. And I could have lived without the several pages of astrologation and starcharts (although I do enjoy Heinlein's little doodle of a centaur). The sequence of events starts off well enough, but it sort of rambles and meanders. Oh, well; most of it is interesting, anyway, although the secret-agent intrigue peters out partway through. And there are memorable characters -- nothing quite at the level of the Long family, mind you, but still some pretty interesting people.

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