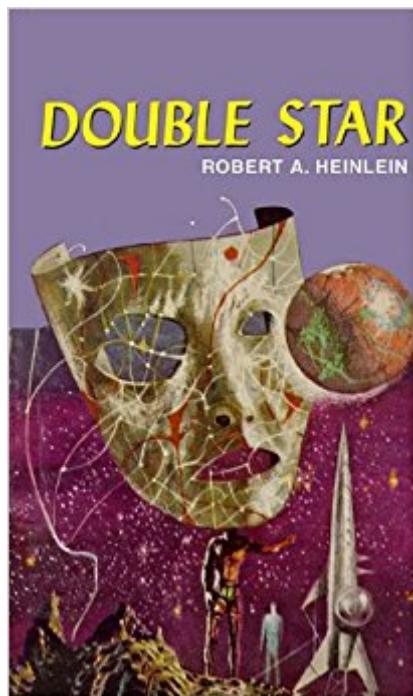


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Double Star



Synopsis

One minute, down-and-out actor Lorenzo Smythe is in a bar, drinking away his troubles. Then a space pilot buys him a drink, and the next thing Smythe knows, he's shanghaied to Mars. Smythe suddenly finds himself agreeing to the most difficult role of his career: impersonating an important politician who has been kidnapped. Peace with the Martians is at stake, and failure to pull off the act could result in interplanetary war. Smythe knows nothing of the issues concerning interplanetary trade and equal rights for aliens, but the handsome compensation is impossible to refuse. He soon realizes, however, that his masquerade could be permanent.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like many people, I go way, way back with Heinlein. My very favorite book (and one that stands out in my mind--and with much affection--to this day) is *Tunnel in the Sky*. I really, really wanted to go off to explore new worlds with a covered wagon and horses, like the hero does at the very end of the book. But one of the nice things about Robert Heinlein is that he's got something for everyone. One of my best friends has a different favorite: *Podkayne of Mars*. Go figure. --Shelly Shapiro, Executive Editor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One minute, down and out actor Lorenzo Smythe was -- as usual -- in a bar, drinking away his troubles as he watched his career go down the tubes. Then a space pilot bought him a drink, and

the next thing Smythe knew, he was shanghaied to Mars. Suddenly he found himself agreeing to the most difficult role of his career: impersonating an important politician who had been kidnapped. Peace with the Martians was at stake -- failure to pull off the act could result in interplanetary war. And Smythe's own life was on the line -- for if he wasn't assassinated, there was always the possibility that he might be trapped in his new role forever! --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A great story with Heinlein at the top of his game. Even though I own the paperbacks I've started to download the Kindle versions because the more recently released ones contains a Forward or Afterward on Heinlein writing the book or a commentary about the book overall. I find them to be worth the Kindle download and a great time-pass if I get stuck somewhere. Double Star was written when Virginia and Robert had moved to Colorado and Virginia had gotten the community theater bug. Without spoiling the rest of the story, Robert got interested as well as this was the push for this tight (only 100 pages or so), well written book when he was in his writing prime. His first Hugo winner. Many may have differing opinions about his other books but this one is universally loved and enjoyed. If you haven't read it in a while, read it again, it's worth it!

I first read Double Star at nearly fifty years ago. Heinlein was my favorite author as a youth when I was first discovering the worlds of Science Fiction, along with Asimov, Clarke, and many others. I've read pretty much everything he has written, most of them more than once. Double Star is one of the early Heinlein novels, originally published in 1956. It won the Hugo Award for that year as well, the first of five Heinlein Hugos. In fact, Heinlein has received the most Hugo wins (five, including one Retro Hugo) and nominations (eleven) of any author (his Hugo winning books are Double Star (1956), Starship Troopers (1960), Stranger in a Strange Land (1962), The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress (1967), and Farmer in the Sky (1951, Retro Hugo awarded 2001)). Double Star relates the story of Lorenzo Smythe, a down-on-his-luck actor who finds himself hired to stand in for the kidnapped political leader John Joseph Bonforte. One of Bonforte's strengths is his support of non-humans (Martians, for example) being given the vote within the still human dominated Solar System. Particularly interesting to me were the portions of the story involving Martians, foreshadowing Stranger in a Strange Land that would be published just five years later. The title is really a play on words, 'star' in this case referring to the actors role and not a planetary object as one might initially expect. Like all of Heinlein's novels, this one includes a few factual references that are fascinating to learn - I remember first learning of the Farley file ** when I

read this novel in my youth. This is a very enjoyable book to read even today, just over sixty years after its first publication.** A Farley file is a set of records kept by politicians on people they have met previously; named after James Farley, campaign manager for Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

This is the Master writing one of his best-ever works. Not a word is wasted. In his later volumes, Heinlein has let his philosophy slow down the story. Not here. Lots of issues are raised but they enhance the story of an actor called upon to impersonate a politician who has been kidnapped. I am deliberately not going into more detail. Read the book and watch the story unfold to its majestic conclusion. The book could be used in an advanced college course to show the construction of a novel and yet it is very entertaining. Heinlein needs to be separated in, at least, his novels by the 1950-64 period and post 1965. In the former he was edited which improved his writings. Thereafter he became so dominating that he was above the editor and his work, while still very, very good, could have been improved. There are also the "so-called" Heinlein juveniles culminating in "Starship Trooper" where he stretched the definition of what could be in a "juvenile" book. All are very readable and enjoyable. And there are collections of his short fiction much of which has been collected in his "future history" collections. Again highly recommended.

Lawrence Smith is an unknown, untalented actor who gets a lucky break. He looks just like a prominent politician and is offered a job to pose as his look-a-like while the politician is off on a secret errand. Initially reluctant, Smith is pressed into service by a crisis. And then he becomes trapped in the role indefinitely. The twin-of-somebody-famous plot is as old as *The Man in the Iron Mask* and has been explored by practically every television sitcom at some point. Robert Heinlein pulls it off reasonably well. The book explores the limits of what people actually know about each other, long-term consequences of living as an impostor, and how alliances based on deception can evolve over time. It tells a pretty good story, too. The plot trajectory is often predictable, but it was probably less so when the story was originally published. Read this one if you are a diehard Heinlein fan who has not yet experienced it. Or if you want to think a bit about issues of identity and pretense.

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