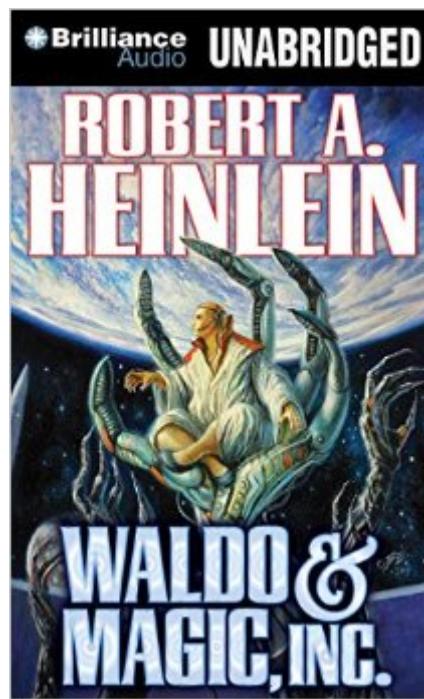


The book was found

Waldo & Magic, Inc.



Synopsis

Don't count out the underdog... Two classic short novels by Robert A. Heinlein, science fiction's Grand Master. Waldo North Power Air is in trouble. Their aircraft are crashing at an alarming rate and no one can figure out the cause. Desperate for an answer, they turn to Waldo, a crippled misanthropic genius who lives in a home in orbit around Earth, where the absence of gravity means that his feeble muscle strength does not confine him helplessly in a wheelchair. But Waldo has little reason to want to help the rest of humanity • until he learns that the solution to Earth's problems also holds the key to his own. Magic, Inc. In a world where almost everything is done by magic spells, Magic, Inc., under the guise of an agency for magicians, is systematically squeezing the small independent magicians out of business. Then one businessman stood firm. And with the help of an Oxford-educated African shaman and a little old lady adept at black magic, he was willing to take on all the demons of Hell to resolve the problem • once and for all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I was in grade school, I thought that Waldo and Magic, Inc. (1950) was the title of a single novel by Robert A. Heinlein. I imagined what it would be. Waldo (now, there was a a magical name to conjure with!) was the head of this fantastic company of magicians that did all sorts of wonderful things-- for a fee, of course. I even created imaginary companies with the same rhythmic names: Dammit and Milton, Inc. (named for a pair of rabbits that lived next door), Samson and Judges, Inc., and so on. Alas for romance. I eventually discovered that the title referred, not to a

single fantasy novel, but to two separate novellas-- one from Astounding and one from Unknown. Both stories did involve magic. But they were very different stories, with different characters. They could not by any stretch of the imagination be called sequels, nor were they part of Heinlein's Future History sequence. "Waldo" (1942) may be said to be science fiction with just a touch of magic, while "Magic, Inc." (1940) may be said to be a fantasy in which the magic operates according to an engineer's logic. "Waldo" is essentially a story about how Waldo, the Genius in Orbit, becomes Waldo the Great. Waldo, the Genius in Orbit, is intellectually brilliant, but physically and emotionally crippled. Most people cordially hate him-- and with good reason. Here is Waldo giving instructions to his pilot: "I've been driving ambulances," said the pilot, "for twelve years, and I've never given a patient a rough ride yet." "That's no answer. Understand me? One and one tenth, and it should not even approach that figure until we are under the stratosphere. Quiet, Baldur! Quit sniffing!" "I get you." "Be sure that you do. Your bonuses depend on it.

Two of Heinlein's early foray's into fantasy are packaged together in this book. Of the two, "Waldo", with its unique blending of science fiction and fantasy, is much the stronger. The title character, Waldo Farthingwaite-Jones, is a misanthropic young genius who lives in an isolated, gravity-free environment, which he has specially designed to help him overcome his physical challenges. Heinlein makes Waldo's residence and the myriad gadgets in it both believable and fascinating. Almost as interesting is the development of Waldo's personality, as he changes from a rude, temperamental victim, to a strong, self-confident performer. All this by itself might have made for a first-rate science fiction story, but Heinlein has other ideas. His main plot device is a very typical science fiction ploy: Waldo has to fix a problem with some recalcitrant machinery. But the solution Waldo finds is supernatural rather than mechanical, and so the story strays into the realm of fantasy. Of course Heinlein has a very good reason for this; the whole point of his story is to dramatize one of his favorite themes, to wit, that when one's deepest-held convictions don't agree with the facts, one must have the courage to change those convictions. This might be referred to as the Engineer's Creed, and it shows up frequently in Heinlein's work, but this is one of few stories based on it specifically. In this instance, Waldo manages to accept that the impossible is true, and not only solve the technical problem, but solve his personal problems, too. Unfortunately, his answers are so easy that they counteract any emotional impact that the story might have had.

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