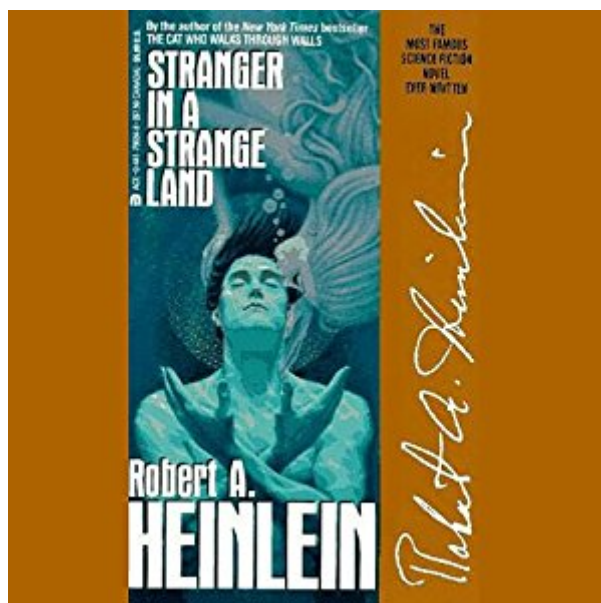


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# Stranger In A Strange Land



## Synopsis

Stranger in a Strange Land is the epic saga of an earthling, Valentine Michael Smith, born and educated on Mars, who arrives on our planet with "psi" powers - telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, telekinesis, teleportation, pyrolysis, and the ability to take control of the minds of others - and complete innocence regarding the mores of man. After his tutelage under a surrogate-father figure, Valentine begins his transformation into a kind of messiah. His exceptional abilities lead Valentine to become many things to many people: freak, scam artist, media commodity, searcher, free-love pioneer, neon evangelist, and martyr. Heinlein won his second Hugo Award for this novel, sometimes called his "divine comedy" and often called his masterpiece. Stranger in a Strange Land caused controversy and uproar when it was first published. Still topical and challenging today it is in the great tradition of stories that endure through the power of the author's imagination that stretches from Gulliver's Travels to 1984. This Blackstone audiobook is the "as published" version, read from an Ace paperback published in 1987. It is not the uncut, uncensored version that Heinlein originally wrote, but which wasn't published until 1991. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 16 hours and 21 minutes

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Version: Unabridged

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## Customer Reviews

I love this book, which is quickly becoming one of my all time favorites. But this is definitely not the uncut version. Since I was required to read the uncut version, I did some research to ensure this kindle version was right, and it definitely is not. I had to drive all over town to find what I needed, but. Am now reading them side by side to make notes in my kindle version for reference later, and I can

assure you of two things: the kindle version is not uncut, and the uncut version is far richer in language and content and just a better read. Many of the deep philosophical concepts Heinlein included in his novel are simply missing - or abbreviated to the point of near-invisibility - in the edited version. I had been wondering what all the fuss was about, until I retread the first five or six chapters in the uncut copy. This is truly a marvelous novel - if you read the right one.

I read *Stranger in a Strange Land* when it first came out in 1961. It was the most important and influential book I ever read. It changed my life, and the lives of millions of others. Inspired by SISL, I went on to create the real-life Church of All Worlds, which is still going strong over half a century later. The 1961 edition is the essential version, edited by Heinlein himself. The later unedited version issued by his widow is a travesty, as it is sloppy, and omits the single most important line in the entire original edition--Heinlein's definition of "Love" as "That condition in which another person's happiness is essential to your own." I corresponded with Mr. Heinlein extensively in the 1970s, and here are his own words regarding these two versions of SISL: "SISL was never censored by anyone in any fashion. The first draft was nearly twice as long as the published version. I cut it myself to bring it down to a commercial length. But I did not leave out anything of any importance; I simply trimmed all possible excess verbiage. Perhaps you have noticed that it reads 'I WILL FEAR NO EVIL' despite its length; that is why. I WILL FEAR NO EVIL does not read as 'I WILL FEAR NO EVIL' because it never received its final trimming; I became extremely ill and could not do it, and would not allow an editor to do it because my stories are fitted together like jigsaw puzzles and it is awfully easy, in trimming, to leave out an essential piece. So I WILL FEAR NO EVIL is not as good a story as SISL, in my opinion--too slow--even though, again in my opinion, what I have said in it is just as important. But I am pleased enough that I was able to finish it at all; it just missed being posthumous. (Mrs. Heinlein signed the contract; I was too far gone even to write my signature.) "The original, longest version of SISL is in a fireproof vault of the library of UCSC and can be seen there by any scholar who convinces the special collection librarian that he has a legitimate interest. But it is really not worth your trouble, as it is the same story throughout--simply not as well told. With it is the brushpenned version which shows exactly what was cut out--nothing worth reading, that is. I learned to write for pulp magazines, in which one was paid by the yard rather than by the package; it was not until I started writing for the *Saturday Evening Post* that I learned the virtue of brevity. (And I am still too wordy in a private communication such as this, or in conversation.)"(--Robert A. Heinlein to Oberon (Tim) Zell, 2/28/1972, personal correspondence)

This is a very readable novel and I don't have any major complaints with the writing. The story strikes me as almost idyllic: the magic Martian man hanging out with this Hugh Heffner wannabe lawyer, philosopher, novelist and his bunnies at this comfortable estate. One can almost imagine this being written by the poolside. But after a while this feels a bit too indulgent and you wish there were more conflict, more action, more excitement. The conflict ends up being mostly just the nebulous government guys conniving against the magic Martian protagonist. There is some action, which I won't spoil, but there is no adventure. I think people would say "well, it's an adventure for the magic Martian man", and that's true enough, but from the reader's perspective it's an anti-adventure where the protagonists basically hunker down and try to stay safe. Naturally, the magic Martian man is written as a really odd character, innocent and childlike, but he feels too much like a forced spectacle. Ultimately, what redeems this book is just that it's extremely readable and leaves you with enough quirky impressions for it to be memorable (e.g. the term "grok" has entered the collective vocabulary by now). It does seem to have an agenda in promoting free love and pantheism, but it wasn't preachy or heavy-handed so it's hard to be too annoyed by that. Indeed, a huge effort was made to portray the protagonists as innocent victims. While I doubt people would be too bothered by the free love message, the bigger issue is undoubtedly the lack of a robust science fiction atmosphere. And it's not a matter of hard vs. soft science fiction. It's just lack of science fiction content in general. Yes, there is the magic Martian man and his abilities, which are impressive though rarely used. But beyond that there really isn't much going on. It's focused more on dialogue and a sort of anthropological perspective with associated musings on society.

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