

ROBERT A.

Feinfein

AUTHOR OF *STARSHIP TROOPERS*

"One of the
grand masters of
science fiction."

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Bestseller

FRIDAY

“Ugh. Boss, when I said that I wanted to punish him before I killed him, I didn’t mean anything as horrible as burning him to death.”

“Had he not behaved like a horse running back into a burning barn, he would have died as the others did...quickly, from laser beam. Shot on sight, for we took no prisoners.”

“Not even for interrogation?”

“Not correct doctrine, I so stipulate. But, Friday my dear, you are unaware of the emotional atmosphere. All had heard the tapes, at least of the rape and of your third interrogation, the torture. Our lads and lassies would not have taken prisoners even if I had so ordered. But I did not attempt to. I want you to know that you are held in high esteem by your colleagues. Including the many who have never met you and whom you are unlikely ever to meet.”

Boss reached for his canes, struggled to his feet. “I’m seven minutes over the time your physician told me I could visit. We’ll talk tomorrow. You are to rest now. A nurse will be in to put you to sleep. Sleep and get well.”

I had a few minutes to myself; I spent them in a warm glow. “High esteem.” When you have never belonged and can never really belong, words like that mean everything. They warmed me so much that I didn’t mind not being human.

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Friday

**Robert A.
Heinlein**

**DEL
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This book is for

Ann	Elinor	Pepper
Anne	Gay	Polly
Barbie	Jeanne	Roberta
Betsy	Joan	Tamea
Bubbles	Judy-Lynn	Rebel
Carolyn	Karen	Ursula
Catherine	Kathleen	Verna
Dian	Marilyn	Vivian
Diane	Nichelle	Vonda
Eleanor	Patricia	Yumiko

and always—semper toujours!—for Ginny.

R.A.H.

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About the Author



As I left the Kenya Beanstalk capsule he was right on my heels. He followed me through the door leading to Customs, Health, and Immigration. As the door contracted behind him I killed him.

I have never liked riding the Beanstalk. My distaste was full-blown even before the disaster to the Quito Skyhook. A cable that goes up into the sky with nothing to hold it up smells too much of magic. But the only other way to reach Ell-Five takes too long and costs too much; my orders and expense account did not cover it.

So I had been edgy even before I left the shuttle from Ell-Five at Stationary Station to board the Beanstalk capsule...but, damn it, being edgy isn't reason to kill a man. I had intended only to put him out for a few hours.

The subconscious has its own logic. I grabbed him before he hit the deck and dragged him quickly toward a rank of bonded bombproof lockers, hurrying to avoid staining the floor—shoved his thumb against the latch, pushed him inside as I grabbed his pouch, found his Diners Club card, slid it into the slot, salvaged his IDs and cash, and chucked the pouch in with the cadaver as the armor slid down and clanged home. I turned away.

A Public Eye was floating above and beyond me.

No reason to jump out of my boots. Nine times out often an Eye is cruising at random, unmonitored, and its twelve-hour loop may or may not be scanned by a human before it is scrubbed. The tenth time—A peace officer may be monitoring it closely...or she may be scratching herself and thinking about what she did last night.

So I ignored it and kept on toward the exit end of the corridor. That pesky Eye should have followed me as I was the only mass in that passageway radiating at thirty-seven degrees. But it tarried, three seconds at least, scanning that locker, before again fastening on me.