Have Space Suit - Will Travel by Robert A Heinlein

A Showcase Of Heinleins Storytelling Prowess

One minute Kip Russell was walking about in his backyard, testing out an old space suit and dreaming about going to the Moon -- and the next he was out cold, the captive of an insidious space pirate. The whole thing seemed like a bad dream until Kip discovered there were other prisoners on board, and they were all on their way to the Moon -- and a fate worse than death!

My Personal Review:
Have Space Suit--Will Travel represents Heinlein at his storytelling best. Free of the esoteric themes that would appear in his later writings, this book is pure science fiction seemingly written solely for the enjoyment of the reader. Originally published in 1958, the story stands up well even today and will surely be read and enjoyed by untold generations to come. I am sure that many a young person read this book and yearned to reach the moon in the decade before the Eagle finally landed. This is generally classified as one of Heinleins juvenile books, but Heinleins writing is for all ages. I am sure the book appeals to many young people because its protagonists are themselves young people: Kip is a high school senior, and Peewee is a girl of about twelve. Kip develops an overpowering urge to go to the moon, and he is lucky enough to win a real space suit in a contest. Heinleins description of the many different features of the suit is fascinating. Resigning himself to selling the suit for college tuition money, Kip goes for one last walk; somewhat playfully calling out on the radio, he is surprised to hear an answer to his call. He is amazed when a space ship soon lands in his backyard and a decidedly alien creature comes out and collapses. A second ship lands, an entity gets out and conks Kip on the head, and the next thing Kip knows he is trapped inside a space ship on his way to the moon, suddenly in the company of a little girl. His captors are Wormfaces, a species of alien that has been in hiding on the moon, looking at the earth with evil intentions. Peewee introduces Kip to the Mother thing, a Vegan entity (and interstellar policeman) who radiates love and warmth, effectively communicates with the pair in a bird...
song type of speech, and inspires undying love and devotion. The book revolves around the youngsters attempt to rescue the Mother Thing from the Wormfaces and eventually return to earth. Along the way, they endure captivity on Pluto, stare death in the face a few times, and ultimately find themselves representing Earth in an interstellar courtroom, the very future of earth shakily balanced in their own young hands.

There are juvenile elements here, such as Kips tendency to hold back-and-forth conversations with his space suit (whom he dubs Oscar), but Robert Heinlein does throw in several sections full of mathematical formulas, high-level theorizing, and advanced scientific concepts. I dare say that these areas of tecnospeak will turn off some young readers and may well stymie a good number of adults. Aside from the mathematics of the thing, Heinlein can make any kind of scientific notion sound feasible and believable, and that is part of his magic and effectiveness. Most of all, though, Heinlein presents vividly real characters doing exceedingly interesting, heroic things. Heinleins couple of technical forays may be literary speedbumps, but young readers will revel in and be inspired by this book. Adults who have not yet lost all of their imagination will also relate to the main characters well and delight in a good story line which takes the reader from the earth to the moon to Pluto to another galaxy and back again.