



The Human Division

John Scalzi

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Following the events of *The Last Colony*, John Scalzi tells the story of the fight to maintain the unity of the human race.

The people of Earth now know that the human Colonial Union has kept them ignorant of the dangerous universe around them. For generations the CU had defended humanity against hostile aliens, deliberately keeping Earth an ignorant backwater and a source of military recruits. Now the CU's secrets are known to all. Other alien races have come on the scene and formed a new alliance—an alliance against the Colonial Union. And they've invited the people of Earth to join them. For a shaken and betrayed Earth, the choice isn't obvious or easy.

Against such possibilities, managing the survival of the Colonial Union won't be easy, either. It will take diplomatic finesse, political cunning...and a brilliant "B Team," centered on the resourceful Lieutenant Harry Wilson, that can be deployed to deal with the unpredictable and unexpected things the universe throws at you when you're struggling to preserve the unity of the human race.

Being published online from January to April 2013 as a three-month digital serial, *The Human Division* will appear as a full-length novel of the *Old Man's War* universe, plus—for the first time in print—the first tale of Lieutenant Harry Wilson, and a coda that wasn't part of the digital serialization.

The Human Division Details

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Author : John Scalzi

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From Reader Review The Human Division for online ebook

Mayim de Vries says

“This is now. We’ve lost Earth. Now we have to learn to deal with it.”

After the atrocious Zoe’s Tale, I have fully expected to hate the Human Division. It turned out to be OK, just a kind of a cash grab. It still disgusts me, but I am an honest enough reader to admit that Mr Scalzi is a skilled writer and can get away with it.

Why a cash grab? Two primary reasons: Firstly, the fact that Human Division is branded as the fifth instalment in the Old Man’s War series is misleading. **This is not a continuation, it is a spin off** milking the series’ immense success; calling it a companion novel would be more appropriate if it could be called a novel. I don’t know if thirteen novellas loosely connected with each other either by the tiniest thread of the overarching theme and the fact that they sport a similar cast of characters merit that name.

Our primary **protagonists are lower echelons of the Colonial Union diplomatic corps, and technical staff** including Lieutenant Harry Wilson (one of the original Old Farts,) Ambassador Ode Abumwe (my absolute favourite), Hart Schmidt an aide/assistant, Captain Sophie Coloma plus few other names that appear on the story roster. If you got as far in the story, you will not be surprise by this vibe change: since there is a **fallout between Earth and the Colonial Union, and the Conclave drums up an intergalactic government, humans cannot solve all their problems by sending Colonial Defence Forces everywhere. The era of the diplomats has begun;** hence the setup.

But here comes the second proof that the Human Division is just a profit making scheme. When reading I had a feeling I am in fact looking through **a kaleidoscope. You know what it is, right? An optical tube with cunningly placed mirrors that allow forming various patterns out of coloured pieces of glass in an ever changing landscape of precisely the same elements.** Some of the novellas were funny, some were sad. Some were rather boring. All of them had precisely the same elements in slightly different configurations. But **essentially, these novellas never had to end. Ever.** And in fact, there are no answers to the main intrigue sketched throughout the episodes, because why would you kill the cash cow just like that?

In essence, **Human Division is to the original Old Man’s War series what the Pottermore fan fiction is to the Harry Potter books. If you like this kind of writing, you should be satisfied. If, like myself, you have higher expectations regarding your novels, just leave it be.**

In fact, I am leaving the series altogether. And I do not expect to return to Mr Scalzi in near future.

Also in the series:

1. Old Man's War ★★★★★
2. The Ghost Brigades ★★★★★?
3. The Last Colony ★★???
4. Zoe's Tale ★????

Eric says

There are 13 "episodes" that author John Scalzi has broken this book down into, and they are being released weekly for the next few months. Instead of writing thirteen separate reviews, I will review each self-contained episode here, which will, eventually, be a review of this entire work.

'The B-Team'

Well this is certainly off to a hell of a start. Not only does Scalzi give the requisite background information on the "Old Man's War" universe without being boring or summarizing his previous books, he also tells a very compelling story about a ragtag group of low-level diplomats who are forced into a dangerous, last-minute replacement mission of dire importance to the Colonial Defense Forces.

'Walk the Plank'

After finishing the first story, I wasn't sure what to expect with the second. Possibly a continuation of B-Team's story? A shift to other characters from that story? Something from the Earth's point-of-view? What I definitely did not expect -- an as-of-yet unrelated tale of disaster at a "wildcat" colony -- is exactly what I got, and in the form of a one-act play, nonetheless (this was done as a transcription of a tape recording). It was a bold shift that has me excited to see where exactly the rest of this experiment is going.

'We Only Need the Heads'

We're back to the main cast of characters from the B-Team, and the momentum from the first episode carries right through this one, and neatly ties in the disaster at the "wildcat" colony. I love how this is shaping up so far, I wish I didn't have to wait week-to-week to read on.

'A Voice in the Wilderness'

This episode shifts back to Earth, giving us the perspective of a media personality who has a radio talk show. I love these different vignettes are both self contained and satisfying but are also adding to the plot and tension of the overall narrative.

'Tales from the Clarke'

The overall story arc is beginning to become clear, and at the same time, each individual episode remains interesting in its own right. Having a plot element in this episode revolve around the play of Chicago Cubs back on Earth was genius.

'The Back Channel'

This episode brings us the interesting point-of-view of General Gau, the leader of the Conclave, and the political and diplomatic webs being woven in his court. Not the most action packed or exciting episode, but it gave interesting insights into the antagonists, and can also be read as an allegory on human racism.

'The Dog King'

The episodes featuring Colonial Forces technical consultant Harry Wilson and deputy ambassador Hart Schmidt, such as this one, are quickly becoming the highlights of this serial for me. Wilson is like an intergalactic MacGyver, and to really muddle analogies, Schmidt is his Watson.

'The Sound of Rebellion'

This episode shifts to another CDF soldier, Lieutenant Lee, who has been abducted by a rebel faction on the CDF-controlled planet Zhong Guo, in an attempt to interrogate her. Her character was pretty bad-ass and I hope she is revisited later.

'The Observers'

Back to Harry Wilson and the diplomats on the Clarke -- and this time for a closed spaceship whodunit. Another great quick read. The sheer variety of stories in this episodic adventure is astounding, and without having any that fall flat is even more impressive.

'This Must Be the Place'

And Scalzi has done it again. Just when I thought there was no other places this episodic novel could go, he starts channeling Raymond Carver. In a space opera. Well played, sir.

'A Problem of Proportion'

Back aboard a spaceship in this episode, which reads like an episode of Star Trek -- a really good, particularly touching episode where you see what a big heart the protagonist -- in this case, Harry Wilson -- has.

'The Gentle Art of Cracking Heads'

This is the penultimate episode in this serial novel, and I am already lamenting its impending ending. Sigh. Also, I'm having trouble figuring out how it will wrap in only one more story. On an unrelated note, Scalzi worked the following line into this episode's dialogue: "I have no idea, Jim... I'm a doctor, not a private investigator." Homage paid.

'Earth Below, Sky Above'

A fitting, exciting double-length segment to wrap up this episodic novel. My only complaint would have been that it left some loose ends, but alas, Scalzi announced today on his blog that "The Human Division has been renewed for a second season." I am already looking forward to the as-of-yet unwritten sequel.

Veronique says

When I heard that this volume consisted of short stories, I wasn't sure if I was going to like it, especially after the strong narrations of the previous books. I expected vignettes set in the same universe but otherwise quite separate. What Scalzi offers is episodic but tightly connected - to the point that I forgot its nature, although if I had had to wait for each instalment, that wouldn't have been so much the case...

The cast is wide but features recurring characters, especially the B-team, which I loved. All these disparate personalities, often at odds with each other, that end up working amazingly well together in the face of impossible situations! Wilson and Hart have the strongest voices, their friendship shining, followed closely by Abumwe and the rest of the crew of the Clarke, but also Hafte Sorvalh and Lowen.

What about the plot? After the explosive events at the end of the previous book, Earth discovered that the

Colonial Union had kept them in the dark in order to use their human resources. Hence the division of the title - humans on Earth feel betrayed while the Union would desintegrate without its supply of soldiers, which would mean that humans in general, and especially the colonists all over space, wouldn't have any defense. Add to this that the Conclave have invited Earth, and this becomes a diplomatic nightmare. However, and this is a big However, another party, unknown to all, is trying to raise pandemonium by laying crazy and yes, evil, traps, with the goal of setting these three sides against each other. Luckily, our charming characters face all of these with fervour, and humour.

Note of caution: although the narrative doesn't end in a cliffhanger per se, the story is not finished and you'll need to get the next novel.

Christian says

PART ONE - March 16

Dun Dun DUNNNNNNNNN...

Is how each part of John Scalzi's experiment in Dickensian Science Fiction would end if the author had stuck to Chucky D's well-established method of chopping what we now know as classics into weekly or monthly episodes - "please sir - can I have some more?" Next week, child, next week - assuming you can pony up another 99c for Audible.

But no – Scalzi wants to have his cake, eat it and still have the abs of a Men's Health cover model. *The Human Division* consists of 13 weekly parts (the week now officially runs, Monday, Scalziday, Wednesday, etc) which the author is hoping will work both as an overall narrative arc when read in sequence, but also on their own as standalone shorts.

We can't accuse the man of thinking small...

Oh, just one small detail. Fair's fair John - if you get to deliver the story in multiple parts, then we get to slice up our take on your novel. Go with throttle up people - here's part one of my review.

Episode 1, *The B-Team*, cold opens in space with a Colonial Union diplomatic ship arriving early for an inter-galactic meet 'n' greet which plays out as a far less pleasant rendezvous than expected and thus our titular B-Team are dispatched to find out more.

Chronologically, *The Human Division* sits after the Old-Man's-War-trilogy-plus-spin-offs, starting with a double-length opener as Scalzi's got some serious backstory heavy lifting to do.

In line with the "standalone" ethos, those who haven't read Old Man's War et al get the basics explained to them - a BrainPal definitely isn't the back-office system for an online payment empire. And, while Earth and the Colonial Union aren't quite in couples counselling, Earth is considering a couple of lessons with that handsome Conclave tennis coach, whilst the Colonial Union sort-of realises his life will be over if he lets Earth slip away, but still can't stop being emotionally manipulative and secretive. This all works just fine - it feels more like the repeat listen of a greatest hits CD than a full-on, cold-cocked InfoDump.

As the story unfolds we get a tense race against the clock to figure out who wants who dead - if not the why, then certainly the how is key here and *The B-Team* delivers a quality B-Movie sci-fi matinee experience as

well as kicking-off the longer plotlines.

From this opener, the episodes go far and wide - from a very non-space Earth-based radio show, through the fear and pain of a pointless death on a wildcat colony, to a nice, played partly for laughs "she's a wreck but we can get her going" episode.

We get a lot of Scalzi's trademark one-liners and arched eyebrows delivered by a couple of old-hands from the past, as well as the expected set of new cast members. This reviewer didn't quite stick with the rules though, saving up six episodes from Audible before going straight through them netflix-gluttony style.

So, almost half-way through, are there any parts where Scalzi's structural integrity is failing?

Well, not really - I only got to call BS once - a delegation from Earth voyages out into space to accept what is probably the most important technology transfer in human history, and guess what - they're all from the United States or Canada. I get why we need to accidentally lose France's invite in the post, but are those galaxies far, far away really NAFTA-only in ScalziLand? Minor fail John, minor fail.

However, this is a relatively minor quibble and neither am I going to judge if *The Human Division* succeeds on its "all things to all men" mission statement until the end of episode 13. So far this is a well put together piece of modern scifi which, though laced with Scalzi humour, can handle the straight-faced stuff as well with a surprising degree of emotional power, particularly in the second piece, *Walk the Plank*.

I'll stick to the rules from now and find out if one episode a week delivers the same satisfaction as the "all-at-once" approach. So that's part one of the review, what can I say except:

Dun Dun DUNNNNNNNNN...

PART TWO - 2 May

Finished!

As I made it through the final couple of parts of *The Human Division*, it slowly became clear where we were, or more importantly weren't heading and all John Scalzi's great work with tone, character, world-building and humour steadily began to unravel.

I ended this one somewhere between disappointed and annoyed. *The Human Division* opens with a great set-up - an interstellar mystery on many levels - and develops a nicely complex cast of interrelated protagonists. 13 episodes later it closes with the same mystery at **almost EXACTLY the same point**. Nothing gets resolved - The Who, The Why and a whole lotta The How are all still chillin off-stage left, awaiting directorial command.

Scalzi DOES NOT have Form on this one - the core of the Old Man's War series is a trilogy, and each part is an entirely satisfying standalone read - a great example of how to pace a SciFi novel series and satisfy readers. So why do it now?

Also, there's zero doubt that the *FORM* of *The Human Division* contributed hugely to this reader's frustrations - had I barrelled through the whole set of stories over a wet winter weekend then this might have been more a "meh" moment. But nope, I was in this one for A QUARTER OF A YEAR - I started listening to it so long ago that Lance Armstrong still had 7 Tour De France titles...

Scalzi's star is clearly still on the rise in popular sci-fi, but this experience has certainly nudged him off my

"instant one-click buy" list. Sorry, John.

Tom Negrino says

I'm an unhappy customer after reading *The Human Division* in its serialized run. It was clear by around episode 8 that Scalzi would not be able to wrap up all the threads of the story, but (no spoilers) the book ends with an epic battle and no resolution of the main plot, and with smoking guns littering the stage. The day of the final episode's release, Scalzi announced that there was going to be a sequel (or perhaps sequels, given how he's likening *The Human Division* to a TV series), which he'd just been signed to write, and which therefore may be more than a year away.

I'm a big fan of Scalzi's work; I just gifted a friend with paperbacks of *Old Man's War* (OMW) and *Redshirts*. But this time around, the work, and the process of getting the work to his readers, disappoints.

The Human Division is the latest novel in the OMW universe, and for the most part it is enjoyable. I felt that Scalzi has turned up his trademarked Banter-O-Meter a bit too high this time, to the point where many of the characters tended to talk too much alike. For example, if you take lines of dialog from two characters, say Harry Wilson and Hart Schmidt, and place them on a page by themselves, it would often be difficult to know which character was speaking, because they use the same snappy banter style. I like the banter, but banter isn't quite the same as characterization.

In terms of plot, there's plenty of it, and clearly there was too much for one book to contain. The book slams to a halt after a huge, masterfully written battle, then ends with a brief coda, with all the major plot threads hanging. Since I didn't know in advance it was going to be a multi-parter, I felt as though I only got half a book for my \$13.

The Human Division was first available as a buck-a-week serial, and the book suffers from it. Scalzi says it's his longest book by word count, yet it felt much shorter; some of the individual episodes could be read in 10 minutes. I think being chopped into so many pieces hurt the overall feel of the book. The book felt smaller than OMW.

I've crystallized the big issue I have with the serialization format. I'm fine reading series, either serializations a la *Analog* magazine in the 70s, where I read a lot of great novels split up into three or four chunks, or current book series, like James S.A. Corey's *The Expanse*. I was happy to read *Leviathan Wakes* knowing that it was the first in a series, and the book kicks so much ass it is effectively stand-alone.

The difference between the serializations of the 70s and today is that now we have Internet reviews, which would have alerted me that *The Human Division* was not a complete novel. Had I known that, I would not have bought it now; I would have waited until the second volume was released. I just did that with the Benford/Niven book from last year. Because of the nature of this experiment in serialization, Tor/Scalzi (I'm not saying maliciously) withheld reader information that I for one have come to rely on. As a result, I ended up as an annoyed customer, rather than a happy one. I look forward to reading the next installment of *The Human Division*, but I won't buy it serialized, and I won't buy it if reviewers say it doesn't wrap up the plot lines. I signed up to read a novel, not watch *Lost* (I did watch that, and you see where that got me).

Marijan says

skupina pri?a, povezanih manje više istim likovima, koja kronološki slijedi dosadašnje knjige, a kvalitetom ne zaostaje.

Lindsey Rey says

My favorite in the series so far! Loved all of the diplomacy and the B-team!

Xabi1990 says

Hace poco comentaba Xan (del grupo de CF en Español) sobre la nueva saga de Space Opera de Scalzi que leerlo era como “comer palomitas”, algo siempre agradable, asociado a ratos de diversión -si queréis un poco descerebradas- en torno a una peli con la que sabes que vas a pasar un buen rato.

Pues eso mismo se aplica a esta novela.

Volvemos al universo de Space Opera de la Tierra, la Unión Colonial y el Cónclave. De los soldados de piel verde con CerebroAmigo y las intrigas a nivel galáctico, de las situaciones y diálogos con humor e ironía. ¡Y cómo me divierto con esa vuelta!

A las críticas habituales a Scalzi sobre superficialidad, personajes estereotipados, alienígenas con psique humana (y por tanto no creíbles) y demás asociaciones a “escritor de serie B” no les quito razón ni se la doy. Sencillamente yo disfruto leyéndole. Y, si tengo a mano, como palomitas.

Krbo says

Originalno ova knjiga je zbirka pri?a (13) objavljenih u e-obliku tijekom nekoliko mjeseci. Tu su i dvije dodatne.

No nema nikakve brige oko toga, ?ak je i zanimljivo kako je svako poglavlje (pri?a) lijepo zaokružena. Ve?inom su to razli?iti slu?ajevi pa je osigurana visoka dinamika radnje - pred kraj se po?inje provla?iti i jedna zajedni?ka tema koja ostaje neriješena. (ho?e li ju nastaviti i u najnovijem nastavku ostaje vidjeti no dobra je pa bi bilo OK)

Wilson je zanimljiv lik, a humor je dosta prisutan. Neka se Perry samo odmara, nije nedostajao.

Dosta mi se dopalo - ?etvorka.

aha, vidim sad ovdje kako je šesti dio direktan nastavak, fino - nek se još malo kiseli, odoh odmoriti od engliša

Silvana says

What a useless, puerile, asinine sequel. Ditching the series because it became completely unengaging, formulaic and not funny. I am tired. I don't think I will read any Scalzi in the next few years. I will just think of every character in OMW and Lock In series to live snarkily ever after. The end.

Tim says

After an interesting beginning, this story drifts like a ship without much power in space. Once Scalzi starts writing about dogs, whiny mothers and takeovers the novel wanes and interest is lost. 3 of 10 stars

Rob says

Executive Summary: This might be my favorite book in the Old Man's War universe yet. Though it's not really a book, so much as a collection of short stories. Either way, I can't wait for the next one!

Audio book: William Dufres is a great fit for this series. I really like Wil Wheaton for Scalzi books, but I was really missing Mr. Dufres for Zoe's Tale (though I totally understand why they didn't use him). He does a great job delivering the snark and really just the dialogue in general that I'll continue to listen to this series despite all the "saiDs".

Full Review

Not really a novel, but a collection of short stories. Though not exactly that. Mr. Scalzi liked it to episodes in a season, and that seems a good fit. This book collects 13 "main" stories along with 2 bonus stories.

Some of these stories are far better than others. The lengths vary quite a bit. I'm not sure if I would have been happy about buying each story individually. It's not really a price thing either, they seemed to have been reasonably priced. But much like TV and Netflix, I think I prefer binging on a season rather than doing one/week.

This story has far less action than many of its predecessors, but it's far from devoid of it. It instead focuses more on the politics and aftermath as a result of events in The Last Colony.

One of the main character is a familiar face from Old Man's War, in Harry Wilson (one of the "Old Farts") whose on special assignment to the Colonial Union diplomatic core. The stories focused on Harry and company are the better ones, and I found most of the ones covering other locations/characters not nearly as enjoyable.

Since this is a Szalzi book there is of course a high amount of snarky humor and far too many occurrences of the word "said". It's fast paced and fun and really breathes life into a series I felt was losing some of it's steam with The Last Colony and especially Zoe's Tale.

I think the first story "The B Team" is the best of them, but "The Observers" is a very close second, and none of the stories are bad by any means.

I'm eagerly awaiting The End of All Things, and need to decide if I can put up with doing the weekly episodes, or if I'll wait for the final collection.

Main Story Ratings

The B Team- 4.5 stars
Walk the Plank - 3 stars
We Only Need the Heads - 4 Stars
A Voice In The Wilderness - 3.5 stars
Tales From the Clarke - 4 Stars
The Back Channel - 3.5 Stars
The Dog King - 3 stars
The Sounds of Rebellion - 4 Stars
The Observers - 4.5 Stars
This Must Be the Place - 3.5 stars.
The Problem of Proportion - 4 stars
The Gentle Art of Cracking Heads - 4 stars
Earth Below, Sky Above - 4 stars

Extra Story Ratings

After the Coup - 3.5 stars
Hafta Sorvalh Eats a Churro and Speaks to the Youth of Today - 3 stars

Fred Hughes says

Author John Scalzi has answered our wishes to read more stories based on the Old Man's War series with this book of 13 superb short stories in that universe. While each story is a stand alone story our protagonists appear in most of the stories.

The back ground to the stories for those not yet enlightened by the Old Man's War series is that when you reach 75 years old you can join the CDF and have your consciousness transferred into a young body with enhanced capabilities. The main condition to this happening is that you have to leave Earth, and YOU NEVER GET TO GO BACK. You become an enhanced, sort of human. soldier with a 75% chance of being killed during your 10 year term with the Colonial Union. But you are young again.

The main character is a soldier in the Colonial Defense Force (CDF); Lieutenant Harry Wilson who although he is an enhanced warrior has in fact been doing desk work with technology for the past few years. The main diplomat in the series of stories is Ambassador Abumwe who we find is part of the "B" team in the diplomatic corp.

Ambassador Abumwe and Lieutenant Wilson are soon sent all over the universe to negotiate various treaties. Inevitably these negotiations are never straight forward but always with an adventure attached.

Great character development and story arcs make each short story a delight to read. As a bonus there is a 14th story thrown in for good luck.

RECOMMENDED HIGHLY.

If you like the temp and nature of these stories be sure to check out the entire Old Man's War series

including: Old Man's War – The Ghost Brigades – The Last Colony – Zoe's Tale.

Connor says

Yep, this series is still totally awesome. It's definitely a different kind of formatting, but I really enjoyed the change. I had a couple of areas where I wished I'd gotten a little bit more information, but overall, I loved this. I skipped Zoe's Tale because I'd heard it's just The Last Colony rewritten in Zoe's perspective, but I'll go back and read it eventually.

Bradley says

I admit I stopped reading the series for years after I realized that this installment was a serialized novel. I just stopped. I wanted full novels and I got pissy.

Well, fortunately, I got over it. Mostly because I have friends in buddy reads who made me feel guilty as hell. But even more, I have a lot of fond memories for the series as a whole and I think I may have been plain WRONG.

Yeah. So. Eating crow now.

These are a bunch of great short stories here that don't feel all the connected at first but wind up being very connected, indeed. All the events take place after the Colonies and Earth part company, and while not all characters follow along within these thirteen stories, a few do. Wilson, for one, was someone I was always very happy to see. Even if he does like to electrocute dogs. :) That one was very funny.

And while a lot of these had the light Scalzi humor I've grown to love, not all were light. Some were very sad. All of them were very interesting.

Not all novelists can write short stories, but Scalzi is pretty fantastic at it... He's able to make tight tales that are perfectly standalone that also tie in perfectly to make a complete work that, read together, feels like a complete novel with thirteen chapters. Color me impressed.

I'm fully back on track to read the rest of this series and I'm hitting myself for taking so long.

This universe is fascinating.
