



The End of All Things

John Scalzi

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Hugo-award winning author, John Scalzi returns to his best-selling Old Man's War universe with *The End of All Things*, the direct sequel to 2013's *The Human Division*.

Humans expanded into space...only to find a universe populated with multiple alien species bent on their destruction. Thus was the Colonial Union formed, to help protect us from a hostile universe. The Colonial Union used the Earth and its excess population for colonists and soldiers. It was a good arrangement...for the Colonial Union. Then the Earth said: no more.

Now the Colonial Union is living on borrowed time--a couple of decades at most, before the ranks of the Colonial Defense Forces are depleted and the struggling human colonies are vulnerable to the alien species who have been waiting for the first sign of weakness, to drive humanity to ruin. And there's another problem: A group, lurking in the darkness of space, playing human and alien against each other--and against their own kind --for their own unknown reasons.

In this collapsing universe, CDF Lieutenant Harry Wilson and the Colonial Union diplomats he works with race against the clock to discover who is behind attacks on the Union and on alien races, to seek peace with a suspicious, angry Earth, and keep humanity's union intact...or else risk oblivion, and extinction--and the end of all things.

The End of All Things Details

Date : Published August 11th 2015 by Tor Books
ISBN :
Author : John Scalzi
Format : Kindle Edition 384 pages
Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Space, Space Opera

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From Reader Review The End of All Things for online ebook

Mark says

Somewhere along the way, the Old Man's War series lost its heart. I suspect this happened some time after the third book, when it seemed that things were going to come to a conclusion in a trilogy, only then Scalzi kept revisiting the universe because there is money to be made. The fourth book, Zoe's Tale, was possibly the most naked cash-in I have ever encountered. I actually thought the previous volume, The Human Division, breathed a bit of fresh life into the series with its interconnected short stories and it could have worked as a palette cleanser as the series transitioned into different ideas.

Unfortunately, we never quite get there. In this sixth volume, we again have the interconnected short story idea going on, although in this case it's four novellas, so each individual story has a bit more meat to it. None of these stories connect back to the Perry family, who provide what I feel is the emotional center of this whole universe.

There is no real sense of the stakes for most of this volume, the titular potential End of All Things - for humanity, that is, which could be wiped out as the balance of power was shaken with the happenings from the previous book. Even with catastrophic consequences possible for Earth, the home world of humanity in this crazy outer space, there's no feeling it. There's no caring! There's only four different narrators in four different stories, two of which are male and two of which are female; two normal humans, one human brain in a box, one alien, all of whom nonetheless maintain *exactly the same ironic detachment and snark* at all times. To me they really felt indistinguishable from one another.

Once again, I feel as if I have tread upon this ground recently in reading James S.A. Corey's The Expanse series, the most recent book of which, Nemesis Games treats with similar things and does so, so much better in doing so. It's a night and day comparison. That is a book where you can feel tension, where the stakes are apparent, and where, when bad things are happening, they are happening to characters we know and care about.

This did not rub me as being the kind of cheap cash-in that was Zoe's Tale, but nonetheless I just kind of get the feeling that Scalzi doesn't want to write about this stuff any more and feels like he can't leave that money on the table. At least in comparison to Zoe's, The End of All Things treads on new ground rather than giving us different POV characters and re-explaining what happened before. But when you turn in your second straight connected short-stories-as-novel in a row, like, what are you doing, really? The plot advances, two books worth now, without ever giving the reader much investment in the larger story that is being served.

There were some good parts. The first of the novellas is probably the best of the four and it does do a decent job of laying the foundation for what is going on underneath the other three stories. Others... ehh. Maybe I'm just a hater, I don't know. If every novel was written in the same way as every other novel, that would be boring. Maybe this connected short story thing is trying to explore new ground? But it does not feel that way to me - especially since I just recently read some bold new writing ideas for spreading out POVs in Joe Abercrombie's Shattered Sea trilogy. A story is stronger when you can carry out each POV through the whole story and have them connect to one another at different times throughout.

Curiously, after the plot's conclusion, Scalzi shares some uncompleted fragments from an original draft of the book. I don't know that I have seen this move often except with books that were posthumously published, sometimes based on the best idea of what the complete story would be rather than a definitive, author-decreed complete story. An uncharitable view of this decision would be that he wants you to see how hard he worked on the story because the old version that he had drafted kind of sucks and it is in fact the case that the

novel that was ultimately published, flawed and frustrating as it is, makes a big step up from what was originally being written in those very early drafts. A charitable view would just be that he thinks that people might find it interesting to see from where it came.

I don't doubt that he pulled up an OK book out of a bad beginning. I know he can do better. I know he can do worse. I guess I could be happy with OK. There are at least three fantasy series right now that I have read and I have waited multiple years for the next book. Maybe sometimes you need to just push out an OK book to get to the story you really want to tell. Maybe that story is still inside of Scalzi, and maybe the OMW series will move on to that in subsequent volumes. Maybe people out there really like this stuff. I don't know. He did win a Hugo for what was one of the worst books I have ever read all the way through.

In the end, a hearty meh, and what would probably be 2.5 stars if there were half-stars. I round up to three instead.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.com/2015/08/21/b...>

I won't lie, Old Man's War is probably one of my favorite books of all time. I've always been more of a Fantasy reader, and around the time that book came out, my Science Fiction reading was pretty much limited to Star Wars novels and the occasional Star Trek title thrown in. However, Scalzi's sense of humor along with the rollicking space action and adventure in these books really helped me along, showing me that there's a lot more to the genre than just hard science and media tie-ins. I've followed the Old Man's War series ever since, and all the books have brought me no small amount of entertainment.

So it was with great excitement when I heard that a sixth novel will be coming out in 2015, a direct sequel to The Human Division. And like The Human Division, the plan was for The End of All Things to again be serialized, except the proportions will be changed. Instead of getting sixteen episodes, this time we'll only get four, but each part will also be longer, so they'll be more like novelettes.

If The Human Division taught me anything, is that I don't mind the serialized format. There's a certain kind of pleasure to be had, watching a bunch of self-contained little parts come together to form one complete, coherent whole. And if anything, the smaller number of episodes as well as their greater length improved the overall flow of the story in The End of All Things. It was a good book, and a worthy addition to the series. The only real downside is that this would make a poor jumping-on point for new readers. So if you're fresh to the Old Man's War universe, you probably wouldn't want to start here; there's a lot of history you'll be missing, and not least because this book deals with a lot of the consequences of events from the last few installments. I recommend starting from the beginning, because you'll definitely want to know all the details – and because it's amazing.

Below you'll get my thoughts on each episode as well as a more detailed analysis.

THE LIFE OF THE MIND

This is the story of how our main protagonist and narrator Rafe Daquin became a brain in a box.

Yep. The Life of the Mind embodies everything I love about the Old Man's War series. Missing ships. Kidnapped pilots. A mysterious organization conspiring and gathering strength in the shadows. Daquin finds himself entangled in this mess, but even when he is captured by aliens and forced to do their bidding, his first

instinct is to fight back and find a way out of his predicament. The fact that he doesn't have a body anymore and is just a mass of brain tissue hooked up to a ship computer is just a setback. Just another problem to be solved.

The protagonist's personality and attitude made this one a winner. In the face of overwhelming odds, his optimism was infectious, even if it was sometimes driven by the desire to stick it to the alien Rraey. You know within the first few pages that he makes it out okay, but the conclusion to this section was still oh so satisfying. A really great intro episode to this novel that sets the tone and starts thing off with a bang.

THIS HOLLOW UNION

We switch focus in this one, following Hafte Sorvalh, the Chief Advisor to the head of the Conclave, General Tarsem Gau. She's probably the second most powerful being in the universe, but as she reminds us, being second isn't always all that it's cracked up to be.

I admit to feeling slightly disappointed when I realized this would be a more political story. But after some major twists, I changed my mind. This might not be my favorite episode, but it's undoubtedly the most important; something huge happens that will throw the entire Conclave into disarray and the ripples will be felt across the galaxy.

CAN LONG ENDURE

Can Long Endure was probably my least favorite episode, but it also showed a very different point of view. In this story, the focus shifts yet again, this time on a group of Colonial Defense Force soldiers who are now busy scrambling from planet to planet, stomping out the sparks of rebellion before they can catch fire and spread. But the will of a huge administrative entity like the Colonial Union is one thing. What about the lives of its soldiers with their boots on the ground, carrying out orders from on high?

This episode lacked the scope of the previous two, perhaps, but it was also the most "human". It's a very intimate look into the mind of a CDF officer Heather Lee, just another grunt doing her duty for the good of the CU. But she's her own person too, and the costs of her government's decisions are beginning to open her eyes to some ugly truths. And it's time for Heather to make her own choices.

TO STAND OR FALL

This final episode brings the story to a conclusion. There's a marked difference in tone from the beginning of the novel, in stark contrast to Rafe Daquin's snarky attitude and spirited narration. Instead, a certain gravitas surrounds the story, which is fitting I suppose.

In this story, we see the return of several familiar faces here, including a couple beloved personalities. We are also presented the resolution to the problem posed by the shadowy organization calling itself Equilibrium. Given all the build-up, this finale should have been epic and glorious. Unfortunately, we didn't quite get that. That's not to say it wasn't a good ending, because it was. I just couldn't help feeling it should have been more.

This final episode was not what I expected, but it did its job nonetheless. To Stand or Fall was a punchy and cleverly executed conclusion to The End of All Things, as well as a pretty solid offering as the latest piece of the story to the Old Man's War saga thus far.

Lindsey Rey says

I don't know how Scalzi does it, but I feel like this series just gets better and better!

Veronique says

“And so we learn how simple it is to change the history of the universe,” Sorvalh said. “All you need is for every other thing to have gone so horribly wrong

This was a straight continuation to The Human Division with my favourite characters back. Once more the narration is divided between several different points of views but this time each section is much longer. This made it a little of a shock at the first transition, for me, but then I just focused on the story. Scalzi of course does it again, juggling all these plot threads and finding a believable way of tying them off :0)

Kevin Kelsey says

A nice conclusion to the story arc that really began with the ending of The Last Colony. The four novella structure of this one didn't work for me quite as well as the thirteen short story structure of The Human Division. Mostly, because there were a couple moments where it just didn't seem like there was enough story to justify a novella, particularly with This Hollow Union. That novella could've very easily been a short story instead.

It does all nicely come together in the last novella, which I was pretty impressed with. My favorites of the four were definitely The Life of the Mind, and Can Long Endure.

The Life of the Mind: 5/5

This novella is Scalzi firing on all cylinders. Transhumanism, some cyberpunk elements, and a grounded human story all wrapped into one.

This Hollow Union: 3/5

Exposition conversations, some explosions, aliens playing the politics game, and a pivotal story element near the end. It wasn't bad, it was just kind of boring for what it was. Maybe it's doing some heavy lifting for a later story in the Novella collection/novel?

Can Long Endure: 5/5

I loved this one. The structure of it is so good, and I genuinely connected to the characters and their banter about the ridiculousness of Pizza Mon/Taco Weds. Reminds me of my experience reading Old Man's War for the first time.

To Stand or Fall: 4/5

Nice conclusion to the first three novellas and The End of All Things as a whole, as well as the narrative that began with the end of The Last Colony.

Lata says

I am glad I decided to read this series. I've enjoyed each instalment a little more than the one previous, and the team-up of Ode Abumwe and Harry Wilson (and Hart Schmidt) has been terrific in this and the previous book. The B-Team came through beautifully and did amazing things.

I liked how each novella in this book changed point of view, and how each character showed the impact of the worsening situation within the Colonial Union.

And Ode Abumwe and Hafte Sorvalh--I just loved both women.

Tim says

The beginning and end are well written. The rest is meh. 6 of 10 stars

Ashley says

I love this series! This one wasn't my favorite, but it does a great job finishing off the arc started way back in *The Last Colony* and escalated in *The Human Division*. Whenever Scalzi comes back to this series, he'll have a brand new universe to play around in. Also, it's chock full of Scalzi's smart, irreverent voice.

So this is the sixth book in Scalzi's Old Man's War series. The first three books are a trilogy, #4 is a weird re-telling of #3, and then *Human Division* and this one. The last two are in the more experimental vein, both being told in "episodes" instead of one long story. The episodes in *Human Division* were smaller (there were thirteen of them), but here there are only four, longer novella-length ones. They all serve their purpose in the larger story, but can also be read on their own individually (why you would want to do that escapes me).

The main arc in this book (really, carried over from the last two proper books) is the predicament the galaxy has found itself in now that Earth is clued in to the fuckery the Colonial Union has been getting up to over the years, subjugating and killing alien races to colonize planets, using Earth as a soldier farm without letting anyone on the planet know what's actually going on in the galaxy, and just generally being shitty galactic neighbors. In response, most other aliens in the galaxy formed a union of their own--The Conclave--to protect themselves against the CU. So now the CU has to live with the consequences of its actions, and not only find a way to get along with everyone, but to repair the damages their past actions have caused.

And as if that wasn't hard enough of a task, there's an invisible third party out there stealing ships and committing acts of terror against both sides to escalate the tension between the two groups AND the humans back on Earth as well.

But that's just background. The meat of this book is in its four novellas, each of which tell a complete story in a different way, featuring different main characters, but which all fit into the universe he's created and move the over-arching plot along. My favorite was probably the very first one, because the narrator was super sassy and clever, and was also a dude with his brain in a box. We also get one from the POV of the assistant to the leader of the Conclave, one about CU soldiers who are seeing firsthand as the CU's power erodes, and the last one brings it all to a head, ending with events that effectively change the universe Scalzi is writing in forever. I really love the first three Old Man's War books and their focus on one story with one or two POV characters, but I'm also super digging this episodic format and what it does to Scalzi's storytelling. It's such a neat way to bring across these super large and massive changes, and it's such a

pleasingly economic way to approach storytelling.

I will look forward to the next book in the series being out within a couple of years, but I wouldn't mind re-visiting all six of these in a row, just so I can see how the whole thing fits together, either.

(As a note, I read this on audiobook, the first of the OMW books I've done that with. I liked the experience and the dual narrators Tavia Gilbert and William Dufres, although I did miss Scalzi's usual Wheatoney narrator. He just does Scalzi's narrative voice so well.)

[4.5 stars]

Bradley says

The End.

The Old Man's War series was one hell of a ride, from decanting brains out of old people into nice young military types to decanting brains into spaceships against one's will, from never-ending expansion to civil war between Earth and the Colonies to the possible collapse of all human space against the rest of the aliens we didn't try to get along with.

It's pretty epic.

But you know what I like most about this whole thing?

Scalzi's light-hearted humor.

Sure, there's a lot of great competence porn and even better SF ideas and deeper philosophical statements studded throughout a wild space opera adventure full of down-to-earth characters and politics and great funny moments, but it's the voices of the characters that made it shine. They're light and easy reads that always manages to say something important.

This novel is actually four novellas and they all do a bang up job wrapping up the whole shebang. Will humanity survive its follies? We've managed to piss off practically everyone and ourselves, so is there really a hope for us?

No. I guess not. :) But then there's Wilson so I guess we're not that bad. :)

Adah Udechukwu says

The End of All Things was awesome. Totally awesome. I loved every moment

Neil Hepworth says

Certainly not bad with a capital B science fiction (heaven knows I've read enough of that this summer), but there is no pop, no fizz, and nothing that you'll remember in a week...unless you're prone to hang onto your

disappointment like I am. This novel is a lot like *The Phantom Menace* - scroll down a bit to find out why.

A Review of Each of the Four Stories Found in *The End of All Things*:

“The Life of the Mind” - Not bad. An interesting start about a brain that used to be in a body but now lives in a box. Don't worry, I didn't just spoil anything, I'm mean, we're told this little nugget of info in the first sentence. "The Life of the Mind" was the longest of the four, and the first half of it was pretty interesting, but once the brain gets in the box the only way to get information is to download info from a PDA and have the hero-brain-in-the-box play scenes of recorded meetings. WAY too much information is divulged in this manner. I admit, the ending, though quick, is nicely entertaining. This is a good story to start with and if the following stories had progressively gotten bigger, better, badder and more exciting, then we'd have a great book on our hands. But we don't. 3 out of 5 stars.

“This Hollow Union” - Turn on C-SPAN and slather the politicians with an extra dose of superiority complex and you'll have a pretty good idea what you're in for in story number two. During which story is a brief, albeit exciting rescue scene. Then we go back to C-SPAN. Hollow indeed. 2 out of 5 stars.

“Can Long Endure” - Finally, we return to the green men of the CDF, which is (I think most of us would agree) the reason we all latched on to the Old Man's War universe in the first place. After a three-book hiatus, the green men who kick asses are back. At last there is some action in the story...but never fear, all of the it is just thinly disguised (and completely nuanced-free) commentary on the current wars going on in 2015 in the Middle East - a healthy dose of guilt to go along with your action. And no, all of the talk about “root causes” does not qualify as nuance.

Unfortunately, as other reviewers have pointed out, our super-cool-amazing-green-men all speak with the typical Scalzi snark, and so all of the green men sound the same...in fact they sound just like the aliens from the last story...who, in fact, also sound the same as the head in the box from the first story. I'm glad I didn't have to endure for too long. 2 out of 5 stars.

“To Stand or Fall” - The end is nigh, and so we start the last chapter with a lengthy, yet compassionate, interrogation. There's a meeting in this room, and then a meeting in *this* room, and *then* a conference in *this* room wherein everyone pulls together and *talks it out so that peace can exist!* **And the exciting scene you think is going to end the novel is successfully avoided.** Whew - really dodged a bullet there. 2.5 stars out of 5.

Final thoughts: the emotional scenes, the loss of life and character - I didn't care about any of them. I didn't grow to love any of the characters, I didn't find them endearing, I didn't find them thoughtful. I found them pedantic and irritating. And the book, it just has no substance.

How Old Man's War is a lot like Star Wars:

The End of All Things is the *The Phantom Menace* of OMW - just enough action and snappy dialogue to make for a good trailer, but when you sit down in the movie theater, it turns out to be just a bunch of dudes and dudettes (and aliens) sitting around and politicking. *The End of All Things* even has George Lucas's signature level of social critique leveled against the United States.

(...which is not to say the United States doesn't *deserve* critiquing, only that the depth of analysis of our problems comes across with the intelligence of an enthusiastic high school freshman who's just found

CNN...)

The End of All Things relies on characters who, I'm sure Scalzi thought were clever, but after pages and pages of banter and drivel, the dialogue begins to weary the ear. At least George Lucas tossed in an epic lightsaber duel and space battle at the end of *The Phantom Menace* to compensate the audience for sitting through two hours of political bickering and motions. In this novel, Scalzi doesn't even give us that. To be fair, Scalzi didn't create a Jar-Jar Binks, so I guess he's got that going for him.

Actually, Old Man's War as Star Wars works on a few more levels, too. Just like Star Wars, I read Old Man's War and *The Ghost Brigades* many years ago and fell in love with the OMW universe (and Scalzi, too). The characters, the space, the spaceships, the action, the intelligent plot were all fresh, engaging, and most of all, entertaining. Then came *The Last Colony*, which was less, *much* less than its predecessors. Then came *Zoe's Tale*, which was less, *much much* less than *The Last Colony*. The Human Division breathed some life back into the OMW's universe and put some action back in the game, a little bit like *The Clone Wars* did - it even came in episodic format. But now, at *The End of All Things*, the joy is gone. No more memorable characters, no more rousing action scenes, no more insight - just people and aliens standing (or sitting) around and talking for the sake of hearing their own voices. George Lucas, what have you done to my childhood?

I love Star Wars, and I'm still gonna go see *The Force Awakens*. I loved John Scalzi and his OMW universe, and I'm not going to read another novel set there.

To be sure, just like Star Wars, OMW will continue on long without me. Scalzi just signed a nicely sized deal for a nicely sized chunk of cash, and good for him - I won't not admit that it makes me jealous (both the money and the fact that he can write novels and I cannot). He'll keep writing OMW books, and lots of people will keep reading and enjoying them - I just won't be one of 'em.

Mike says

My reviews for the constituent parts:

Life of the Mind

This Hollow Union

Can Long Endure

To Stand or Fall

I greatly enjoyed this book. Scalzi did a great job extending the events from *The Human Division*. I loved the first three installments, where we got to spend time with secondary or completely new characters, but found the last installment lacking (for reasons I laid out in my review of *To Stand of Fall*). I think Scalzi wanted to use this book as a pivot to a new galactic dynamic. We saw how much things had been thrown out of the status quo in the *Human Division* and now Scalzi has reset the board, allowing him to explore different parts within this new paradigm.

I did feel like this book was a bit shorter than *The Human Division* and didn't quite delve as deeply into the nooks and crannies of the universe but there was plenty of interesting reflections and characters. All in all this was a great addition to the Old Man's War universe.

Marijan says

I tako završava ciklus staraškog rata. Sve što sam već napisao o Scalzijevim djelima stoji i dalje. Osvježavajuće, novo zanimljivo, a opet s toliko klasičnih elemenata da budu prepoznatljivi. Uostalom, tko god je u stanju bešavno uklopiti 'damn it Jim...' momenat u svoju knjigu zaslužuje od mene naklon.

Eric says

Following a similar approach to author John Scalzi's last novel in the series, *The Human Division*, which was broken into thirteen segments, this was broken into four novellas, which are being serialized weekly over the next month. Instead of writing four separate reviews, I'll just collect the four novella reviews here.

'The Life of the Mind'

An interesting, if unexpected, start to the novel, having it be the memoir of another person turned "brain-in-a-box" ship -- except, unlike the one we previously encountered in *A Problem of Proportion*, this one quickly learns to fight back.

'This Hollow Union'

For this installment, the focal point is Conclave second-in-command Hafte Sorvalh and her dealings with humans -- both from Earth and the Colonial Union. The behind-the-curtain political machinations were interesting, as was the introduction of Conclave head of intelligence Vnac Oi. It is fun to see the scope of what Scalzi can do using these shorter length novellas from different points-of-view instead of a linear story following one cast of characters.

'Can Long Endure'

A look at a platoon of rank-and-file Colonial Union soldiers during an exhausting stretch of them quelling endless uprisings and rebellions from their own colonies. It brings up some interesting philosophical points regarding how the CU should be handling their position. I'm a bit surprised that Harry Wilson, Hart Schmidt, and Ambassador Abumwe have only been tertiary characters until this point, but maybe they are being saved for the grand finale.

'To Stand or Fall'

The final installment follows Lieutenant Harry Wilson from right after the events of *Can Long Endure*. It does an admirable job of tying the first three parts of the novel together, and of concluding the overarching story begun in *The Human Division*.

Where *The Human Division* felt like a thirteen-episode television show, this felt much more like a four-episode mini-series that delved deeper into fewer topics. Both of these experiments in serialization prove that Scalzi is a master of his craft and one of the best sci-fi authors working right now. I look forward to his future work, of which there is a surprising amount of clarity, since he just signed a ten book deal with Tor.

Krbo says

ugodna zabava

nastavak događaja oko Kolonijalne unije, Konklave i Zemlje kroz nekoliko općom radnjom povezanih priča uz alternativnu prvu (i najbolju)

alternativa mi se uopće nije svidjela pa sam ju malo probao i preskožio.

skoro pa četvorka
