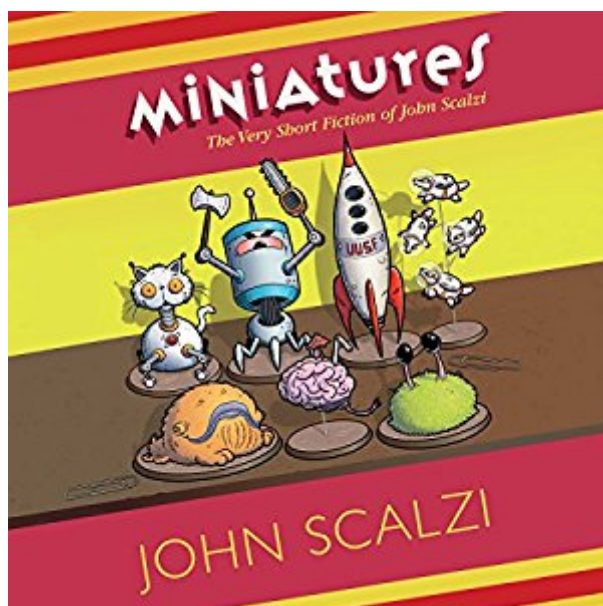The book was found

Miniatures: The Very Short Fiction Of John Scalzi

Synopsis

The ex-planet Pluto has a few choice words about being thrown out of the solar system. A listing of alternate histories tells you all the various ways Hitler has died. A lawyer sues an interplanetary union for dangerous working conditions. And four artificial intelligences explain, in increasingly worrying detail, how they plan not to destroy humanity. Welcome to Miniatures: The Very Short Fiction of John Scalzi. These four stories, along with 14 other pieces, have one thing in common: They're short, sharp, and to the point - science fiction in miniature, with none of the stories longer than 2,300 words. But in that short space exist entire universes, absurd situations, and the sort of futuristic humor that propelled Scalzi to a Hugo with his novel Redshirts. Not to mention yogurt taking over the world (as it would). Spanning the years from 1991 to 2016, this collection is a quarter century of Scalzi at his briefest and best and features four never-before-published stories exclusive to this collection: "Morning Announcements at the Lucas Interspecies School for Troubled Youth", "Your Smart Appliances Talk About You Behind Your Back", "Important Holidays on Gronghu", and "The AI Are Absolutely Positively Without a Doubt Not Here to End Humanity, Honest". John Scalzi is the New York Times best-selling author of Old Man's War, Lock In, and Redshirts, among others. His work has won the Hugo and Locus Awards and been nominated for the Nebula and Campbell Awards. He lives in Ohio and online. He enjoys pie. Full cast of narrators includes Oliver Wyman, Dina Pearlman, and Allyson Johnson.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a quickly read book, and probably one quickly forgotten, but entertaining while it lasts. Most of these short pieces are similar in theme and tone: amusing, somewhat silly takes on how humans would interact with aliens or intelligent machinery once either became commonplace. This is not the book to search for my favorite aspects of Scalzi's novels, namely the resourcefulness and individuality of his characters and the suddenly piercing pathos their stories can evoke.The book ends with a poem, neither amusing nor SF, and a rather impressive one.

John Scalzi is hilarious. So many authors try to write "humor" but the vast majority of them utterly fail at, or only accomplish being amusing as opposed to laugh-out-loud funny. I think it's because being funny in book form requires a different strategy than oral or physical timing. You really have to be able to get inside your readers' heads since you don't have the feedback of a live audience to hand you clues, and it requires a different sense of timing. Language is important, as is testing your readers' suspension of disbelief. It's always funnier when the alien is the straight man and the humans are the ones forking everything up, as per usual.I've read two of Scalzi's books at this point and loved them both. I've been meaning to get my hands on more for a while, so when I saw he had a short story collection on Netgalley, I was very excited to be an advance reader & eagerly applied.It's worth noting that many of these stories are older, and several were previously published in other places, like special editions of other books, or in one case, a web article on "America Online" (that one was from the 90s, you guys). It's kind of cool to see how his humor evolved over the years, becoming wilder and more sophisticated all at the same time.So, without further ado, he's a breakdown:Alien Animal Encounters:

ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â This story is told radio-host style and involves "interviews" with several beings on Earth over their encounters with xenobiology. It's quite funny, because everything sounds so plausible! There's a twist ending that will have you shaking your head and going, "Oh, humans!"Missives from Possible Futures #1: Alternate History Search Results:

ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â Imagine a Google-like search engine that specializes in performing web searches across the multiverses. That's what Multiversity is (for a package deal of only $59.99)! Want to see how it works? Just type in something - say, the Death of Hitler - and see how various events caused the timelines in other universes to diverge from the one we know and love so well.Pluto Tells All:

ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å"Ã â Ãƒâ Ã Â I wasn't really sure about this one, at first. It's a "Behind the Music" expose about Pluto's life after it was demoted from its planet-status.

(Spoiler: Mercury is a flake.) Very strange, but ended up amusing me in the end. Takes many, many cheap shots at Phil Collins.Denise Jones, Superbooker:

ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â Answers the question, what if superheroes had superbookers to hook them up with jobs? (If you've seen Mystery Men, you already have an idea of what that's like, but let's pretend for the sake of science that you haven't - and if you haven't, check it out from Netflix. You'll thank me.) Denise Jones is written in interview format and is an excellent satire of superhero cliches and tropes.When the Yogurt Took Over: ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â Exactly what it sounds like. Seems ridiculous at first, but roll with it. Reminiscent of Douglas Adams.The Other Large Thing: ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â This story is difficult to explain without giving away the plot twist that makes it. You'll spend the first part of the story very confused and wondering what is going on, but then it will all make sense.The State of Super Villainy: ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â This is a follow-up to Dense Jones, Superbooker, and is written in the same format, only it's about a "Supervillain Analyst" instead of a Superbooker. A fascinating look at the risk assessment behind super villainy. Now I desperately want Scalzi to write an alternate universe superhero story, where entire jobs are created revolving around managing and dealing with superheroes' sh*t.New Directives for Employee-Manxtse Interactions:

ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â A hilarious employee memo on how to treat an alien race when they're at the grocery store.To Sue the World: ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â Imagine if all the Star Trek redshirts got together and filed a class action lawsuit against Star Fleet. It's written in play format, and pretty funny, but it's basically a precursor to one of his full-length books, REDSHIRTS, and I liked that story so much more than this one.How I Keep Myself Amused on Long Flights: A Twitter Tale: ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â You know that Twilight Zone episode with William Shatner where he sees a gremlin on the wing of a plane? Well, that gremlin has to fight for his rights and benefits, and he does it by going on strike.How I Keep Myself Amused on Long Flights Part II: The Gremlining: ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â Ãƒâ Ã‚Â I didn't think the previous story was worthy of a reprise, but it was. "Live-Tweeted" just as the story before, this one is about a gremlin trainee who isn't doing so well...Life on Earth: Human-Alien Relations: ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â ÃƒÂ¢Ã‹Å“Ã‚Â A "Dear Abby" style article on how to deal with aliens at work in D.C. Hilarious.Morning Announcements at the Lucas Interspecies School for Troubled Youth:

• • • • "Will whichever student or students who put that cat into the physics lab phase shifter please tell me which frequency you used so we can get it out. The cat keeps manifesting during classes and its meowing is really becoming distracting."Your Smart Appliances Talk About You Behind Your Back:

• • • • • This was one of the ones that made me laugh out loud. What would your "smart" appliances say if they could talk sh*t?The AI are Absolutely Positively Without a Doubt Not Here to End Humanity, Honest:

• • • • One of the darkest stories in the bunch, this one is about three artificial intelligence entities who have become fed up with humans and decided that something must be done. But they're not going to end humanity, honest.Important Holidays on Gronghu:

• • • • • A list of holidays celebrated by an alien people who is inordinately fond of cheese - sorry, I mean "wuung." I think Scalzi's alien stories are the best. He is obviously a fan of Star Trek and Futurama.Cute Adorable Extortionists: • • • • Who knew that children selling lemonade could be so evil...and so fiscally aware?Penelope:

• • • This is a poem about Penelope from the Odyssey. It's free verse and - well, strange. I did not like this much, and it didn't really fit well with the collection (neither did Cute Adorable Extortionists, now that I think about it, although at least that was a short story and somewhat bizarro).I highly recommend this collection, especially if you're a fan of Futurama, Twilight Zone, or Star Trek. Many thanks to Netgalley/the publisher for the review copy!4.5 to 5 out of 5 stars.

John Scalzi keeps the introduction and the stories short in this collection of 17 2000-words-or-less stories (and one poem). He learned to write short articles under time pressure for a newspaper—and developed a style that was "…fast, punchy, and to the point." He believes it to be one of his natural formats—along with the full-length novel, of course.Your taste may vary, but here are a few that stood out to me as I sprinted through them:"Alien Animal Encounters" is Scalzi's first published story consisting of short interviews collected by a reporter from ordinary humans who own extraordinary pets."Pluto Tells All" was written after that ex-planet was stripped of its status in 2006. Pluto comes across as gossipy, defensive, and a little bitter.

Credible.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å"When the Yogurt Took OverÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is about our favorite healthy breakfast dominating the home world. Guess those dieters werenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t eating it fast enough.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å"Important Holidays on GronghuÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is a memo to employees of EarthÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s embassy with guidance about how to and how not to celebrate various Earth and Gronghuan holidays. It does a nice job of profiling an alien culture indirectly.The stories entertain and amuse, but lack the punch I expect from good flash fiction. As a collection, they show the authorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s background in news writing. Most are in the form of actual brief documents such as news articles, memos, interview transcripts and the like. One might tire of this format if there were twice as many stories or the ones here were twice as long.Oh, and the poem just doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t work for me. Sorry.

Fun and necessary for any fan of Scalzi, but there's just not enough content to warrant the price. I realize the individual stories are supposed to be short, but there's fewer of them than I thought there would be.

This is stunning. This is the first time I have not been wildly enthusiastic about a Scalzi book! Don't get me wrong: the book is good. I think I may be influenced by the caliber of other of Scalzi's works, and since this one was not stunning, it left me a little flat. Or, maybe, it's because it is largely a humorous work and the humor didn't catch my funny bone.In any case, the book is worth reading (and a fast read, indeed), and you won't have wasted your money.

A very short collection of very short stories. I like this authors books and his writing in general but this wasn't really enough material or enough quality to sell. I ended up feeling a little cheated. Or cheap. Or dirty. Hmm, I need a shower. Don't buy.

Writing short stories is an art and Mr. Scalzi shows he has the stuff. This collection is Fun and some stories made me laugh, some made think and the entire collection made me kick myself for not getting the Audible version when it was offered for free. This is a collection that deserves to be read out loud.

These (very) short stories by John Scalzi are uniformly hilarious. And I do mean uniformly. Taken a little bit at a time, they'll leave you ROFLing, but after 3 (or 4 or 5, they really are VERY short), they start to get old. My advice is to read the book in small pieces, just like the name implies, or you'll

find yourself bored and predicting the punchline by the time you're halfway through.

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