



Everything but the Squeal

John Scalzi

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In the not-so-distant future, life is good... if you're one of the lucky few to live in the new, ecologically-minded city-states that dot the landscape. Outside their walls, in the "wilds" -- the rotting suburbs and exurbs of America -- things have become rather more precarious.

Benjamin Washington is a kid in New St. Louis, who is on the verge of getting the boot into the wilds if he doesn't take a job. In a last-ditch effort, he takes the only gig available to him: Biological Systems Interface Management... which is to say, he's about to become a high-tech pig farmer.

It's a letdown for Benjamin, who has always expected better things for himself. But then comes the day when New St. Louis is under attack, from without and within. The only person standing between attackers and their goal is one young pig farmer, who never even wanted to be there... but who now has to make a choice whether to co-operate with the intruders, or make a stand for his city.

Everything but the Squeal Details

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Sean Randall says

utterly enjoyed this, as is almost inevitable. A clever trick, too, having more authors set in the world, so I will have to go and track down the rest of the stories here. Solid writing, characters on point and a dash of the irreverence Scales good at.

Tammy says

Interesting world, and fun story.

The story is part of the first book, METAtropolis: The Dawn of Uncivilization, of a series of anthologies (currently, 3) although it is named "Utere Nihil Non Extra Quiritationem Suis" in it. I'm not generally a fan of anthologies, but I'll put it on the maybe list. It would be cool if there were full novels in the world / with the characters in the future. I'm slightly annoyed that I hadn't realized this story was part of the anthology when I bought it since it's \$5 for the story and \$8 for the set.

Same as: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1...>

(view spoiler)

Lukas Lovas says

Short and fun, classic Scalzi. I love his books, and this one has been quite enjoyable, as always :)

Eric Wallace says

Oddly, this short story reads more like something by Cory Doctorow (linear story, rather didactic, and slightly preachy approach to cultural issues) rather than John Scalzi (non-stop wit and standout characterization). But hey, I like them both, and it was an interesting short read.

Ben Stoutenburgh says

The story was kinda funny and had hints of Scalzi's style but I didn't feel like it got his full attention. I am interested in the world that it takes place in and wonder if I would have liked it more if I read it as part of METAtropolis: The Dawn of Uncivilization as intended.

G33z3r says

This is one of Scalzi's humorous short stories, unrelated to any of his other works. In the future arcology, everyone needs to take a job by age 20 or lose their citizenship (and thus be expelled to the wastes.) Our slacker protagonist waits till the last minute and ends up in Biological Systems Interface Manager (which the text sometimes decides is actually Biological Systems Integration Manager, but either way means pig farmer.)

Bought this when Amazon recommended since I didn't recognize the title, but it didn't take more than two pages before things started feeling familiar and eventually realized I'd read it before in the anthology METAtropolis: The Dawn of Uncivilization; So crap, I bought it twice. :(

Cale says

This novella manages to make pig farming interesting. And futuristic. A spoiled child ends up with minimal options in required employment, but manages to make the best of it. In humorous ways. It's got the Scalzi humor, but the exploration of the impact of self-sustaining cities on the world around them seems a bit prescient. It's a pretty quick read (less than 45 minutes), and managed to make pigs interesting, even if it does have some questionable porcine behavior. Note - this is the same story that is in the Metatropolis collection, just renamed.

Steve Tetreault says

What it's about: In the not-too-distant future, Benji is living a life of ease. He's never really had to prove himself or take responsibility. But he's reached a point where he must apply for a job within his city, or he will be exiled to the wastelands outside the self-sustaining, zero-emissions, care-free world he's used to. But Benji's estimates of his abilities do not match up with the city's, and his job assignment is not quite what he'd hoped.

What I thought: I love much of Scalzi's work. In this particular case, I found myself more curious about the other stories from this anthology than about this particular story. Benji is such a jerk at first that it's hard to get on his side. But Scalzi is a good enough writer and his ideas are interesting enough that by the end of this short work, I was pretty on board with what was going on. It just took a while to get where it was going, and it didn't continue on long enough to firmly plant this one in my mind as one of Scalzi's better works.

Why I rated it like I did: The protagonist is a bit of a spoiled brat, so it's a little tough to be completely on his side. He does eventually come around, but he's tough to like at first, so this was not one of my favorite Scalzi works.

Hilary says

With his usual style, John Scalzi introduces a teenaged procrastinator for whom time has finally run out. Unqualified for most of the available jobs, Benjamin finds himself taking a role he never even imagined,

doing tasks he'd rather not think about and learning what being an adult actually means.

I like authors - and directors, for that matter - who leave things to my imagination rather than spelling them out. I was not disappointed here, and the narrator (Alessandro Juliani did a great job of being a somewhat sulky but also bright Benjy.

rick. says

The refreshing thing about this particular hero's journey is that it takes us from entitled slacker to honest respectful man. Everything about this story is grounded in reality, which provide a foundation for the more fanciful entries in METAtropolis's shared world anthology.

Indah Threez Lestari says

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Linus says

This short story taken from the "Metatropolis" anthology, a shared-world set of future tales by a group of writers, is long enough to tell a tale and too short to dive too deeply into. It's a good piece, a quick read, and solid all around, with a particularly nifty opening.

Dragana says

Ok so objectively this story is not 5 star read. Probably solid 4 stars. But I simply don't care. And hey this rating is about my taste not literal value of the book.

John Scalzi just knows how to write a story I will enjoy. I love his writing style and his humor. It's easy to read but it's not all fluff and action. In 50 pages he delivers more world building and character development then some novels with 500 and more pages.

Recommended if you are looking for short and fun science fiction story.

Dave Withe says

A Porcine "Checkov's Gun", wow; well played John.

A good morality play / romance wrapped up in a fun Eco-Future SpecFic novella.

A good read. Good style, as expected, a fun, fast moving story that never bogs down. Well executed story

telling with a snappy ending that "closes the loop" well.

I only gave 4 stars because IMHO it should have been a full novel.

Highly recommend.

Brian Palmer says

Amusing short story set in a world beset by ecological disaster. Citizens of one of the zero footprint ecologies are able to make do, but the "wilds" -- the rest of the country, locked out of the ecologies except for strictly controlled immigration -- aren't so lucky. Teenagers must take an aptitude test that filters them to jobs they're suited for; this is the story of one privileged teenager who doesn't take it seriously and so ends up in a job he never expected.
