



This Must Be the Place

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The tenth episode of *The Human Division*, John Scalzi's new thirteen-episode novel in the world of his bestselling *Old Man's War*. Beginning on January 15, 2013, a new episode of *The Human Division* will appear in e-book form every Tuesday.

Colonial Union diplomat Hart Schmidt is back home for Harvest Day celebrations—to a family whose members wonder whether its youngest son isn't wasting his life clinging to the lowest rung of the CU's diplomatic ladder. When his father, a legendarily powerful politician, presents him with a compelling offer, Schmidt has to take stock of his life and career.

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This Must Be the Place Details

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From Reader Review This Must Be the Place for online ebook

Alice says

This is the tenth of thirteen episodes in *The Human Division*, John Scalzi's serial SF novel. So far, the even-numbered episodes have deviated from the main plot, and this is no exception.

This story follows Hart Schmidt, Ambassador Abumwe's assistant, on a trip home to the planet of Phoenix. In the Colonial Union's world, it's an important planet, and, it turns out, Schmidt's family is an important part of that planet, deeply entrenched in its politics. It's hard to believe Schmidt is okay playing lackey, having come from such a family, and the narrative addresses that very point.

There are also hints of a sea change in politics, and of Schmidt's father's machinations to keep Phoenix in the family, so to speak.

The holiday Schmidt is going home to celebrate is a Thanksgiving analogue, and much of the narrative plays out like a much-traveled son returning home for Thanksgiving dinner. You have the siblings falling into assigned roles within the family, the nagging from well-meaning parents, the attempted matchmaking, the sneering at his chosen career path, and the inner debate on the son's part of whether the family has a point.

I'm surprised to learn others have intensely disliked this installment. To me, it fits nicely with the pattern of the story thus far, and it gives deeper insight into a character that's been important, in his own fringe way. I liked learning more about Schmidt, seeing his family, and learning about where he comes from.

Once again, I listened to the audio of this story, narrated by William Dufres. Once again, I found it a good investment. Audible members wind up paying less per episode than Kindle readers, which feels like getting away with something.

Joe says

This installment is one with no direct diplomatic mission or military warfare. Instead it's a vignette about the life & thoughts of Hart that would seem unrelated until the ending which explains WHY those who've chosen to serve in either service despite the dismal food, atrocious living conditions and poor pay do so despite personal hardship, risk and danger combined with a total lack of recognition or respect from the majority who either are unaware or will never understand Sir Winston Churchill's words when he said "We sleep soundly in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm."

Some of us DO understand, and chose accordingly. I'll step off of the soap box now, since readers either agree or choose not to, and nothing further will change their thinking.

j says

If I am buying John Scalzi's pitch that this serial novel is akin a to a TV show, this is that late-season episode

where they just figured out that they need a week of filler so they can time the actually interesting episodes for sweeps.

Karlyn says

I enjoyed the series more as I went through each episode. At first I struggled because it seemed like random stories set in this universe. But as it continued and I realized it was interwoven story lines I enjoyed them more. The main characters were enjoyable. It's pretty traditional sci fi fare but still worth the read.

Scott says

Don't let the 3 star rating throw you off - I enjoyed this quite a bit. Schmidt goes home for Harvest Day and the story revolves around his father wanting him to give up the Colonial Union for politics on Phoenix Station.

I don't see where this fits in the big story arc (other than to give us backstory or character development) but it was a nice tale. I care more about Schmidt than I ever have and let's be serious here - Scalzi can write! He makes you feel things that you shouldn't feel. The guy is a true master.

But the 3 star review is 100% due to the fact that this is episode 9 of 13 and there should be a climax coming up, there should be tensions rising, there should be something that looks like the end of the story and this was mainly backstory so I'm confused.

But

I trust him and will keep turning the pages because he's never let me down so far (take that Robert Jordan!)

Lis Carey says

Hart Schmidt, Ambassador Abumwe's B-Team diplomatic aide, is on his home planet of Phoenix for a Harvest Day visit with his family. His politically active and powerful family is by no means convinced that their youngest son is making the best use of his talents as a low-ranking diplomat for the Colonial Union. Hart loves his family, but he's quickly reminded that it's not just the distances involved that cause him to limit his visits to the annual Harvest Day holiday. As he struggles with the normal family dysfunction around him, his father takes him aside and makes him an offer--if he'll just resign from the diplomatic corps and come home for good--that's awfully hard to refuse.

Hart, whom we normally see mainly as a secondary character and Harry Wilson's foil, is center stage here, re-evaluating his life and making critical decisions about his values, his career, and his future direction.

Recommended.

John says

This review is for the entirety of The Human Division, comprised of The B-Team; Walk the Plank; We Only Need the Heads; A Voice in the Wilderness; Tales From the Clarke; The Back Channel; The Dog King; The Sound of Rebellion; The Observers; This Must Be the Place; A Problem of Proportion; The Gentle Art of Cracking Heads; Earth Below, Sky Above.

My first thought about this, the latest story in the Old Man's War universe from John Scalzi, was annoyance that I hadn't read it whilst it was being released. The individual episodes each come to around 25 or 30 pages on my Nook (except for the first and last parts) and it would have been fun to read them and have the cliffhangers as it happened. In the end, though, being able to read the entire thing in one go was also pretty cool.

At the end of The Last Colony, John Perry and the Conclave revealed the nature of interstellar warfare and diplomacy to the citizens of Earth. This story details some of the fallout from that decision, dovetailing neatly with the B-team mentioned in the first episode and their attempts to remedy the diplomatic events that occur as a result. It's a welcome return to the universe from Scalzi, who has mostly stayed away from writing more tales here for the last five years (since the the publication of Zoe's Tale). I really enjoyed catching up with the universe, and the episodic nature of the story was handled extremely well.

Looking forward to reading Scalzi's next works in this direction, both from the perspective of this universe and the perspective of episodic storytelling.

Ron says

It was . . . okay. In depth background on a secondary character about whose background the reader probably doesn't care.

Nikki says

I'm sure Scalzi knows what he's doing and is not an idiot, so somehow this will all come together, but argh. Right now I want to shake him. Stop side tracking! Entertaining as it is, there are bigger things on the line!

Dan says

A visit home for the annual Harvest Day holiday for Hart Schmidt means the usual family dysfunction that most of us deal with around holiday time. Long travels followed by bickering sibling and parents pressuring their grown children into living the kinds of lives they think would better suit said grown children. The difference comes in that the Schmidt family is one the most powerful families on Phoenix, human-kind's largest population center and civilization beyond Earth. Hart has to justify to his family why he thinks that staying in the CDF and working for the Colonial Union is the best job for him and how he thinks he can best contribute to society.

Meghan says

A nice chapter but it makes me wish this was compiled into one book. It's a bit annoying to have to read piecemeal. I suppose it's like the old radio days. But at times it's just like, let's get on with it already.

Pierre says

This is a review for the series of the Human Division. I have read all the 13 books in a row, this was my first time reading John Scalzi.

I was at first disturbed by the series: more than 400 different races, some with very unfriendly intents toward each other, but all at about the same technological development level and strength which makes it none really prevails? It just does not fit with my idea of technological advancement and species competition. Anyway, I decided to forget about the impossibility of this situation and focus on the story, which I must admit is quite good and interesting.

The concept of releasing several stories, which at first sounds independent from one another is also quite attractive.

This book will not be among my most favourite books, but still a good read which makes me want to discover more the work of John Scalzi.

Annabeth Leong says

This story felt like the moment in a war movie when a soldier shows his family photos right before he gets blown away. I like Hart but wouldn't find much value in the downtime of this episode if it didn't feel like foreshadowing that he's about to pay a huge and potentially lethal price. Scalzi said on his blog that the pace is about to pick up in a big way for the last three episodes -- really looking forward to that.

Jay Collins says

2.5 Stars

Randy says

Hart Schmidt is home on Phoenix for Harvest Day. Not looking forward to spending the week with family because he knows what's coming. Part of the privileged, the Schmidt family is heavy into politics. Dad's party lost big in the last election, one son is a wastrel, one likes being around politics, just not the job, and his sister will one day rule the planet.

And his father will try to get him to leave the Clarke, the Diplomatic Corps, and come home to the family

business.

Hart will have a decision to make.
