



Human for a Day

Martin H. Greenberg (Editor) , Jennifer Brozek (Editor) , Laura Resnick (Contributor) , Jean Rabe (Contributor) , Tim Waggoner (Contributor) , Eugie Foster (Contributor) , Jody Lynn Nye (Contributor) , Kristine Kathryn Rusch (Contributor) , more... David D. Levine (Contributor) , Jim C. Hines (Contributor) , Ian Tregillis (Contributor) , Jay Lake (Contributor) , Seanan McGuire (Contributor) , Anton Strout (Contributor) , Fiona Patton (Contributor) , Erik Scott de Bie (Contributor) , Dylan Birtolo (Contributor) , Tanith Lee (Contributor) ...less

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Here's an anthology that examines what it means to be human in all its positive and negative aspects. If you were an intelligent robot, would the opportunity to become human for a day be worth the risks? If a magic spell switched the bodies of a vampire and a teenage girl, would both savor the experience or search for a way to undo the enchantment? What tests would an angel face if transformed into a mortal for a day? These are just a few of the inventive stories-some humorous, some sad, many thought-provoking, and all unique-to be found in Human for a Day.

Human for a Day Details

Date : Published 2011 by DAW Books

ISBN : 9780756407001

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Format : Paperback 307 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Anthologies, Short Stories, Fiction, Science Fiction

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From Reader Review Human for a Day for online ebook

Janet says

The short stories all feature some sort of being that become human for just one day. I adored Ian Tregillis' golem-robot love story, *_The Mainspring of his Heart, the Shackles of his Soul_*. Seanan McGuire's *_Cinderella City_* is a love story to San Francisco, and has some a lovely magic of a place. Quite a change from her shambling zombies! David D. Levine's *_Into the Nth Dimension_* pulls a fun change-up, making me look at things in a different way (I'm avoiding a spoiler here), and works in a love story, too. Kristine Kathryn Rusch does a wonderful job of channeling a cat, on a cat's terms. Jean Rabe's vigilante statues are hilarious, if a bit alarming.

Cathy says

This was one of the best anthologies I've read. Almost every story was good, and it had a very good balance and flow overall. I did read it slowly over quite a period of time, putting it down and picking it up again many times, but I think this one would have held up pretty well for a straight read through.

Ian Tregillis - *The Mainspring of His Heart, The Shackles of His Soul* - A very good story, an intriguing alternate history and a moving story perfectly sculpted to fit the time available. I don't always like heart-tugging stories, I don't like feeling manipulated, and it's so easy for an author to cross that line. But this one work for me. It was a good opening for the book, setting the tone for the theme very well.

Jay Lake - *The Blade of His Plow* - The point of view changes weren't useful. Sometimes it's first, then it's third, it's too short of a story for that and it didn't add anything to it. And I just didn't buy into his motivation for being a soldier, for being killed and killing over and over again. I didn't like him, or feel sorry for him. I didn't actually feel much of anything, I just didn't connect with this one. If it had been a more original idea it could have saved it but I've read a ton of wandering Jew stories so it was all about the emotional impact.

Seanan McGuire - *Cinderella City* - This was a very enjoyable story, a good idea and well executed. It made me hope that the characters were a part of a series. I later found out that McGuire had written a previous short story about these characters in *After Hours: Tales from Ur-Bar* as well. This story didn't have the emotional depth that the first story in this book had, but it did have a cool idea and a sense of wonder that was a lot of fun, and it was a good change of pace for this point in the book.

Anton Strout - *Tumulus* - It was OK. It was good editing to have something a little darker at this point, the book was flowing well. I'm a fan of his but this wasn't my favorite thing he's done.

Fiona Patton - *The Sentry* - I found it hard to believe that a young woman (a girl really) could masquerade as a World War I soldier for more than a day or two without being caught. They didn't exactly have private latrines in those foxholes, much less in the barracks where they trained or anywhere else. It took away from the impact of the rest of the story, which was supposed to be very touching. Remember what I said about being a grumpy curmudgeon who doesn't like to be manipulated? It was still kind of touching.

Erik Scott de Bie - *Ten Thousand Cold Nights* - I'm glad I read the information about the author at the end of the book before reading this. It explained that the story draws upon the Japanese myth about the legendary

competition between masters Muramasa and Masamune. In a test, Muramasa's blade was so bloodthirsty that it cut everything in its path including water and even air. Masamune's did not cut any of the things that Muramasa's did. Master Masamune's blade was declared the victor because it did not cut that which was innocent and deserving of preservation.

So, knowing all of that wasn't necessary going into the story, but it made it resonate more. It was a very good story, with a strong feeling of being firmly in the crossroads of historical fiction and fantasy, a legend of what might have been.

Dylan Birto - *Mortality*- I've read too many stories like this angel come down to Earth tale to enjoy this one. It was very predictable. It's just a story I've read in so many novels explored with so much more nuance (of course, they're longer). But it did fit the theme.

Tanith Lee - *The Dog-Catcher's Song* - A good story for the theme. A little creepy to think that one of our dogs might look at us romantically. But if it was turned into a human those loving emotions could certainly change. The teenage hormone point helped. I'll go with it for the sake of the story. I just read a story by Caitlin R. Kiernan because it was a finalist for the 2014 Locus Award that said that we shouldn't pick fairy tales apart with too much logic or fact and she was totally right. Anyway, it was kind of sad and sweet, a good fit for the book.

Laura Resnick - *Mortal Mix-Up* - This one was very disappointing. I'm a fan of her Esther Diamond series. She always balances adventure and humor in those books. But this wasn't funny and didn't go anywhere, it was just stereotypical and irritating. I hope it tickled other people's funny bones.

Jean Rabe - *Band of Brothers* - Such a bloodthirsty tale! I lost track of the number of broken arms, 30 dead men, and a dead-ish duck. But an original idea that I won't soon forget. The last line was great.

Tim Waggoner - *Zombie Interrupted* - This is more of an advertisement for his series than a real story, it felt like a tour guide of all of the different sites and creatures in Nekropolis than much of a story itself. I'm sure it intrigued some people into reading the series. I'm kind of intrigued, it sounds fun, a lot like the Dan Shamble books by Kevin J. Anderson but these came first by a lot of years. Usually the anthologies that I read, filled with stories by popular authors, are supposed to serve the dual purpose of entertaining you now and getting you to read more of the authors' works later. This didn't feel like so much that kind of a book, the stories are really strong, more the kind that get nominated for awards than just fun stories or between-the-book stories by popular authors that sell books. So this story seemed out of place. It was fine, it fit the theme, it just wasn't a story that would stand on its own so much the way the others would.

Eugie Foster - *Beneath the Silent Bell, The Autumn Sky Turns to Spring* - A good story, the kind that seemed like it could earn awards. Not that it was perfect, just that it was the kind that judges seem to like, from what I can see from the award nominated stories that I've been reading. But I can't really figure out what they like.

Jody Lynn Nye - *The Very Next Day* - A cute Santa story. Bittersweet, but it didn't make me annoyed. The theme is human for a day, I can't get mad at all of the authors who take the description literally.

Kristine Kathryn Rusch - *The Destroyer* - I liked this story from a feral cat's perspective.

David D. Levine - *Into the Nth Dimension* - It wasn't perfect, but I liked the idea of the comic book world layered underneath ours with flatter colors, and how disorienting it would be to land in our with all of the extra vibrancy. The way the author described the change was great, very visual and easy to picture. The

conflict between the characters was a bit predictable, duty versus freedom, responsibility versus love. It felt a lot like not so well disguised fanfic of the dynamic duo. But the concept was very cool.

Jim C. Hines - Epilogue - Very touching, a great way to end the book, though not a chipper one. But the story had its light moments too, and definitely its sweet ones. Good writing. And good editing to wrap things up.

Angelica says

The Mainspring of His Heart, The Shackles of His Soul' I would give 3 stars. I enjoyed reading about Jax and his bittersweet ending. I just wish there was more, I would love you read other stories about this world that Ian Tregillis created for this short story.

The Blade of His Plow- 2 stars. I didn't really get this story, maybe it's because I war stories have never held my attention.

Cinderella City- I'll also have to give this one 2 stars. I think if I had read Seanan McGuire's books, this story would have been enjoyable. I spent the whole time trying to fill in the gaps. This story is about the city of San Francisco and she wakes up as a human I still don't get why or how.

Tumulus- 3 stars. this story is about Jeanine and Joseph, Jeanine raised the dead to ask for help with conceiving a baby.

Paul Bonamy says

What would it mean to be human (or even to exist) for exactly one day? To live among us, not as an outsider looking in, but as one of us in truth? What would it mean to go back, having lived as one of us? This excellent collection explores these questions from a variety of angles, and the answers aren't always what one would expect.

For some of the characters herein, becoming human is a gift deeply desired, for others a curse. To some, humanity is a curse to be remedied as quickly as possible, an apparently weakness that becomes a strength, or a tool to be used. All of the stories here are different, unique gems whose shortness still allows great depth.

On the whole, this is an excellent collection, and well worth reading.

Jailyn says

There were only a few stories that were worthwhile in this collection, but I would definitely recommend:

The Mainspring of His Heart, The Shackles of His Soul - Ian Tregillis

Cinderella City - Seanan McGuire
The Dog-Catcher's Song - Tanith Lee
The Destroyer - Kristine Kathryn Rusch

I suppose looking back through the stories there were more I enjoyed than didn't, but I found some stories like The Blade of His Plow and The Very Next Day that I found cliched and trite. And then there were some in between that were good, but not as memorable like Zombie Interrupted and Into the Nth Dimension.

Hilary says

A varied mix of short stories (and these are short, despite the tendency of some anthologies to include mini-novellas) from authors such as Tanith Lee, Jody Lynn Nye, Jay Lake. Each story portrays one being who gets the chance to be human for a short time, whether by choice or misadventure. Some revel in it, enjoying every second, while some are horrified and can't wait to get back. There was only one I didn't read, and one I didn't like - pretty good for this sort of anthology - and a few authors I need to check out.

Heather says

Human for a Day is an anthology edited by Martin H. Greenberg and Jennifer Brozek. Each story tackles a different aspect of the question: what if something could become human for just one day? How would that affect them and those around them? What would happen? Each author has a very different tale to tell, and the range is quite interesting. I'll delve into a few of the individual tales, although I'll do my best to avoid spoilers.

The Blade of His Plow by Jay Lake: Longinus is a deathless soldier, doomed to fight again and again in other men's wars until a day when he might be released from his condition. Watching him live and fight through century after century of evolving warfare is both fascinating and sad. The topic of the anthology makes it inevitable that he will find his freedom, and seeing what he does with it is equally fascinating.

Mortal Mix-Up by Laura Resnick: A vampire and a high school student trade bodies, leaving the stunned vampire to try to fake her way through a teenage girl's morning. While the concept is interesting, the vampire feels awfully stereotypical, and the altered state she finds herself in didn't feel like it went much of anywhere. It felt like it could have been an interesting start to something that got cut prematurely short.

Zombie Interrupted by Tim Waggoner: This tale clearly takes place in a pre-existing world from the author's novels. It's impressive how well Waggoner manages to get the feel of the unique setting across to the reader without info-dumping, failing to do justice to the actual plot, or leaving the reader stranded and confused. The plot itself is interesting (but would probably be more so with the book background); the nifty part is the setting and the zombie's unique place within it. I found myself caught up in caring about what happened to him.

Six out of sixteen is a high percentage of 'okay' stories, particularly combined with two that really didn't do anything for me, which is why Human for a Day didn't manage a 4 out of 5. The stories that I did enjoy were quite good, however. It's a nice book to spend an afternoon with, and you might find a new author or three to follow.

NOTE: review book provided by publisher.

For a longer review including attention to more of the individual stories, you can visit my site:

<http://www.errantdreams.com/2014/05/r...>

CatBookMom says

I didn't find most of these stories really enjoyable. They're well-written; good authors, some new to me. Maybe I just wasn't in a positive mood while reading this.

Timothy Tobolski says

This one promises to be good: an anthology of beings attempting to transition from their original forms to that of being human. I picked this one up primarily for the promise of a short story with Tim Waggoner's 'Matt Richter', but the more I perused the stories collected, the more I became intrigued; Steampunk robot, vampire, angel, even a statue, all wishing to become human for at least a little while. And might not want to switch back. These are going to be more than just simple Pinocchio Syndrome stories. And besides Tim Waggoner's piece, there's also Jean Rabe, Laura Resnick, Jody Lynne Nye, and Jim C Hines contributing.

Alisa Hedden says

This collection examines what it means to be human, with all the hope and heartbreak this entails. From robot slavery (complete with an underground railroad) to how do you spend your final hours when trapped and you know you will die?

Like any really good story, these take the basic premise and expand upon the theme.

This volume is filled with tales that manage to take the step further.

Martin H. Greenburg will be sorely missed, this anthology adds to an impressive legacy.

© Night Owl Reviews

Colleen says

Human for a Day is a theme anthology that covers various beings becoming human, corporeal, incarnate, animate, or mortal for a limited period of time. The topics range from statues made animate to vampires swapping bodies with teenagers to steampunk machines gaining free will. There are also two stories about pets becoming humans, in case you wanted to revisit the old saw.

The stories are almost universally good, with a nice editing job, excellent length, and reasonable accessibility (though the story about the warrior through time and the story about the Mad Hatter running around with Shakespeare both take some work).

Perhaps because of the season, "The Very Next Day," when Jody Lynn Nye's incarnation of Santa Claus visits New York City in September, sticks in my head as one of the more pleasant and re-visitible stories.

Seanan McGuire's "Cinderella City" was cute and fun in a rum-soaked San Francisco sort of way, though her obsession with the various Summer King/Winter Queen family spats is a tad head-tilting. "The Dog-Catcher's Song" was so straight up (and sad) that I had to go back and check that it really was Tanith Lee. I am aware that Jim Hines is working on a book where objects can be pulled from the story and made real, so "Epilogue" felt very homey and sad, rather than immediately casting me into despair. It's only as I work on my reflections about the book that the stunning horror of the last story is setting in.

I don't know what it is with authors trying to end anthologies on such a downward beat, but like the book *Running with the Pack*, I'm sorry to say that some of the gruesome aspects in books stick harder when one of the stories sets up a death that I can empathetically feel and cannot disbelieve. The book is somehow diminished in my mind, because the shadows loom larger than the characters. And so it is with specific regret that this book - as well crafted as it is - is being tossed immediately into my giveaway pile.

Mrs Giggles says

What happens when a creature, or a thing, or even an abstract concept, takes on human form for a day? That's the question that the contributors to the anthology *Human For A Day* attempt to answer. The results are quite predictable - humans can love, hurt, hate, and more - but, at the same time, spectacular.

Ian Tregillis's *The Mainspring Of His Heart, The Shackles Of His Soul* is set in a steampunk version of 19th century Canada, at a time when the Netherlands is the center of power. Our hero is a clockwork servant (or "Clakker"), an android of sorts created to perform menial labor. He is doing his thing on a ship to Quebec, and his superiors have no idea that he is plotting to escape when they land, so that he can find this alchemist that is said to be able to help Clackers become humans. He has the help of Willem, the lieutenant of the ship, whom Jax is in love with.

And just when things seem to be going great, the author throws a sucker punch that has me biting my lower lip in dismay. Okay, those are not tears welling in my eyes, oh no. I hate it when that happens, but good for the author for pulling this on me in the first story of anthology. Still, the bittersweet ache this story arouses in my heart is a good feeling to experience, and I wouldn't change any word in this story if I were given the power to do so.

Jay Lake's *The Blade Of His Prow* is about a very ancient immortal who had been a soldier all his undying existence. After so many killing and transient relationships, life seems empty, until, at least, he is given a reprieve. This one presents a pretty good look into the shattered psyche of someone who has lived too long.

Seanan McGuire's *Cinderella City* is set in the same setting as her short story *The Alchemy Of Alcohol*. It can somewhat stand alone, but the villains are the same goons from that last story. This time around, bartender and alchemist guru Mina has an even more unusual visitor to her bar. The city of San Francisco - apparently cities become sentient after reaching a certain population density, becoming something like a guardian spirit - has been made into human. This is not a happy outing, however, as killing her in her mortal form would destroy the entire city and everyone in it (duh, like nobody could see that coming). Can Mina help the city stop whoever it is that is trying to pull the big plug on the city?

This one is fun, but it is spoiled by the ending where the good guys refuse to get rid of the bad guys permanently because the bad guys are "family". Yeah, we see how well that worked out for He-Man and the Masters of the Universe, right? 130 episodes of the original cartoon series in the 1980s, oh my god. "He's

getting away!" "Shut up, it's time to pose for the rolling credits!"

Anton Strout's *Tumulus* is about a desperate couple who, wanting a child really badly, make sure that they are there to plead their case on that one night every 100 years, when the dreaded banshee creature Mongfhionn comes back to life as a human. That is a punishment for Mongfhionn's many sins during her lifetime, and she's not exactly a benevolent fairy godmother. What happens next? This one doesn't really fit with the rest of the stories in this anthology, and it's a fairly forgettable story ruined by a somewhat hopeful ending that doesn't fit the story as well as I'd have liked.

The Sentry by Fiona Patton makes me cry. The cynical part of me insists on thinking of this story, of a long-dead soldier somehow coming back to life after they finally found his body, as an overly sentimental type of pap that should be left to Nicholas Sparks and his ilk. But what the heck, it's always nice to read a story that turns me into an emotional mess, so I'm going to give this one my two thumbs up. Those last few pages...

Erik Scott de Bie's *Ten Thousand Cold Nights* is about samurai swords that take human form to take it out on one another. This one has a great concept, but it just goes on and on that my enthusiasm for the story is completely dissipated by the time it limps to the denouement. I guessed correctly what would happen early on, which is probably why this short story feels much more interminably long than it actually is.

Dylan Birtolo's *Mortality* has an angel, Deniel, sent down to Earth as a human being for a day, to help those he comes across find or regain their faith. If you are thinking that this probably won't end well, you're right. Like the previous story, I correctly guessed what would come just after a few pages, so this one is far too predictable for my liking.

What happens when a dog turns into a human and his favorite owner falls for him? I believe I have read or watched that story before, even before Tanith Lee serves up *The Dog-Catcher's Song*. Still, this one still manages to deliver some hard knocks to my cynical heart, and the bittersweet ending hurts so good. I actually went and hugged my dogs after reading this story. No, don't tell anyone!

After all that gloom and doom, it's a nice change of pace to read Laura Resnick's *Mortal Mix-up*. A vampire diva ends up switching bodies with a vampire wannabe girl due to a spell, and the poor thing goes all Victoria Beckham over the horrible incident. This one is frothy, light, and forgettable, but hey, it's an opportunity for me to regain my equilibrium after all those sad stories about falling in love and having other emotions being such burdens on the soul.

Jean Rabe's *Band Of Bronze* is, surprisingly, the most violent story of the bunch. One night every year, the Mad Hatter statue in a park comes to life and he can animate a few other statues to tag along with him... as he goes on a bloody rampage to clean up the criminals and other low-lives stinking up "his" park. The cheerful contrast between the nature of some of the statues and the brutality they commit makes this one a most cheerfully demented tale to savor. But ouch, how can anyone do that to the poor duck!

Tim Waggoner's *Zombie Interrupted* is a story set in the same world as his novels that feature the zombie PI Matthew Richter. In this one, Matthew turns human for a day, which is a great opportunity for him to finally get busy with his girlfriend and make a baby. Alas, he gets sidetracked by a very important mission as the clock ticks away... This one isn't bad at all, and I find that it's an intriguing introduction to the author's novels featuring that zombie guy. Still, the plot is lightweight and the story doesn't really grab me, at least, not enough to make me want to look up those other books.

Eugie Foster wins the most bombastic title for a short story with her contribution *Beneath The Silent Bell*,

The Autumn Sky Turns To Spring. This tale of reincarnated lovers, angry psychotic lovers... or something... is written in such a deliberately opaque "I want to be an Asian literary goddess!" manner that my eyes just glaze over. I find myself actually craving for Amy Tan's usually dull and plodding narrative.

Jody Lynn Nye's The Very Next Day is the most embarrassing story that I'd ever admit to liking, as it is a gentle yet moving story about Santa Claus coming to be as a human being and helping a cynical newspaper writer believe in Christmas again. Seriously, admitting to liking this story is like showing off one's collection of beanie babies to one's friends at a goth convention. So just pretend that you didn't read this, okay?

Kristine Kathryn Rusch demonstrates why you really should treat cats nicely in The Destroyer: they may get to become human for a while and really bring the whoop-ass down on you. This one is interesting, and even disturbing in a nice way, thanks to the author's steady narrative even as the protagonist - a cat who becomes increasingly disillusioned and even bitter about how people treat his kind - becomes more violent.

David D Levine's Into The Nth Dimension is about two comic book superheroes who find themselves cast into the real world. Is this the right time for them to finally give in to their mutual lusts or would they go back to being superheroes? I have fun first imagining Batman and Robin in the lead roles, and later, the Tick and Arthur. Actually, Tick and Arthur fit the profile more perfectly, but somehow I find myself cringing when I think of them getting down even for a second. I know, I'm so shallow.

Jim C Hines closes the anthology with Epilogue. I am not giving a synopsis of this one because this one is too easily spoiled. I'll just say this: this is the bleakest and most heartbreaking story of them all. I close this anthology conflicted as to whether I want to scream at the author and the editors for the very sadistic act of slotting this story last, or to thank them because, the sadist that I am, I love having my emotions whipped up into a lather when I am reading.

There are some weak links in this anthology, but at the end of the day, Human For A Day connects with me, makes me feel, and works up my feeling. If you don't mind me saying this, it actually makes me feel human while I am reading it. It is impossible for me not to give this one a well-deserved keeper status.

Cathy Green says

Human For A Day, a recent anthology of 16 original short stories from DAW Books, explores what it means to be human through the lens of various nonhuman entities such as dogs, swords, comic book characters, robots, and even an entire city that find themselves incarnated as fully human beings for a day. Greenberg and Brozek have chosen an interesting group of up-and-coming and well known authors including Tanith Lee, Eugie Foster, Ian Tregellis, Jay Lake, Seanan McGuire, Fiona Patton, Anton Strout, Jim C. Hines, Dylan Birtolo, Laura Resnick, Erik Scott DeBie, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Jean Rabe, Tim Waggoner, David D. Levine, and Jody Lynn Nye.

The opening story, "The Mainspring of His Heart, The Shackles of His Soul", by Ian Tregellis, is a retelling of Pinocchio in which Jax, a robot A.I. Coal stoker on a Dutch ship, makes plan to escape via the underground railroad in Quebec so that he can be made human and live out his life with the man he loves, a fellow sailor named Willem. As is often the case with fairy tales, Jax gets his wish after a fashion, but at a very steep price.

The most unusual incarnation comes in Seanan McGuire's delightful "Cinderella City", in which the City of

San Francisco is turned into a woman by the brother-in-law of the Summer King as part of a plot to take over summer. Part of the fun with the story is that while human, San Francisco retains certain abilities, such as being able to sense what is happening anywhere in San Francisco (since she is the city after all), and pigeons and stray cats and dogs recognize her for what she is and begin following her everywhere

In Laura Resnick's amusing "Mortal Mix-Up", a vampire finds herself switched to the body of a schoolgirl who was playing with black magic. Neither of them is happy with the results.

Jody Lynn Nye's story, "The Very Next Day", is a very sweet story about Frank Church's famous "Yes, Virginia" editorial resulting in Santa Claus being incarnated for a day in New York City. The story is also an interesting meditation on the difference between childhood and adult beliefs as the quality of the recognition Santa receives differs depending on the age of those he encounters.

Not all the stories are happy or have happy endings. In Tanith Lee's bittersweet "The Dog-Catcher's Song", the relationship of a beloved family pet with his family is irrevocably altered, and not for the better.

Greenberg and Brozek have put together a nice balanced mix of happy, sad, funny, and bittersweet stories. Also, unlike many themed anthologies, in Human For A Day the theme of the title is consistently carried out in all sixteen stories. For readers who enjoyed the stories and want to read more by authors with whom they may previously have been unfamiliar, the anthology helpfully includes contributor bios that reference websites and other stories and books by the authors. Human For A Day is definitely worth reading. Highly recommended.

Anna says

The entire premise of the anthology is to explore what it means to be human by allowing a variety of... uh, non-humans and entities to be human for one day. How does being human differ from being anything else? What sets us apart, and is that a good thing or a bad thing? This is the sort of premise that draws me in like whoa, and it doesn't hurt that a few authors I love have contributed to the anthology, as well as a couple that I've been meaning to try out.

So having taken a look at each of the stories individually, how does this hold together as an anthology? Pretty well, actually. Some are stronger than others, but on the whole, there's a lot of fodder for thought and some fun to be had, and while unrelated, a lot of the stories expand on ideas that were just touched on somewhere else. Anthologies are usually a mixed bag, but this one is better than most.

Joshua Palmatier says

Human for a Day

Edited by Martin H. Greenberg & Jennifer Brozek

The title of this anthology pretty much says it all: the stories all surround what might or could happen if something non-human had the chance, or was given the curse, of being human for a day. It's a great idea for

an anthology theme (wish I'd thought of it), and those included here used that theme to its greatest extent. There's a wide variety of interpretations on the theme, as well as a wide variety of tones for the stories. Some are humorous, others are sad, and still others have a mixture of both. My favorite "serious" stories were from Ian Tregillis and Jim C. Hines, while David D. Levine used the theme in the most surprising way. I had a blast with Laura Resnick's humorous story--she captured the POV of her main character perfectly, I thought--while Jean Rabe's was also a riot. The rest of the stories were good as well. Overall, a well-balanced anthology with enough variety that everyone should find at least a few stories to love.

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The Mainspring of His Heart, the Shackles of His Soul by Ian Tregillis: The anthology starts off with a steampunk story and tick tock automaton who, in cohorts with his human best friend, hopes to find the key that would free him from servitude and give him a soul. All he has to do is escape the ship he works on while in New Amsterdam and find the Underground Railroad. A cool, touching story to start of the anthology.

The Blade of His Plow by Jay Lake: In this story, we get to see Longinus, cursed to live forever as punishment for his role in what happened that "one hot morning in Judaea." He's drawn to battle and sees many horrific sights as penance before someone arrives and makes him mortal for a day, his punishment over. An interesting take on Longinus and the many stories surrounding his name.

Cinderella City by Seanan McGuire: We return to San Francisco in 1901 and the character Mina, an alchemist and bartender first introduced in a story in the anthology **After Hours: Tales from the Ur-bar** for this story. Here, the city of San Francisco itself is given human form as the Summer King continues his battle to keep his position. Lighter fare than the first two stories, but fun. Just remember not to piss off your own city, just in case.

Tumulus by Anton Strout: Every hundred years, Monghionn, a banshee, rises from the dead for a day and the main character Jeanine is there to take advantage of it this time, with wards to protect herself. All she wants is a boon, but things don't go as she planned. Monghionn is suitably terrifying here. A good use of her legend as well.

The Sentry by Fiona Patton: In this case, a statue of a lost soldier comes to life for a day as his remains are finally found. He uses his time to help a few fellow soldiers find their way home . . . or find a new purpose in life. A touching story of war and youth and loyalty.

Ten Thousand Cold Nights by Erik Scott de Bie: This is the story of the rivalry between two swords, the Bloodsword and a Soulsword. The Bloodsword doesn't understand why the Soulsword continues to defeat him when he is stronger. He may find his answer on the day he learns to manifest himself in human form. This story read more like a legend and was perhaps a little rambling.

Mortality by Dylan Birtolo: Deniel is an angel and for one day he is given human form in order to test his faith. And the circumstances Denial runs into while in human form certainly challenge his beliefs.

The Dog-Catcher's Song by Tanith Lee: Here, the family dog, loved by all, is given human form and he uses it to its fullest advantage. But not everyone in the family is willing to accept magic in their lives, and this one day of freedom changes everything.

Mortal Mix-Up by Laura Resnick: A young teenager casts a spell in order to switch bodies with her "vampiric" best friend, so she can steal her life and boyfriend, but the spell goes horribly wrong when it

targets a real vampire in the vicinity. The story is from the vampire's perspective, waking in a human form, and the author uses this POV to hilarious effect. I enjoyed this story a lot. Perhaps the best in the anthology in terms of sheer fun.

Band of Bronze by Jean Rabe: Although this one comes in as a close second for fun. The statues of Central Park--including the Mad Hatter, William Shakespeare, a marine, and a duck--in order to defend their park from pickpockets, drug dealers, and gangs. A great take on the individual characters, with some decidedly touching moments as well.

Zombie Interrupted by Tim Waggoner: We return to P.I. Matthew Richter, currently a zombie, in the city of Nekropolis. In this case, he's after a wand that turns things into silver, but before he can get far in his search he's forced to use a coin to turn himself into a human. He's got one shot now to back home to his significant other for their only chance at having a kid . . . but of course all of Nekropolis is out to get him (or so it seems).

Beneath the Silent Bell, the Autumn Sky Turns to Spring by Eudie Foster: A story in a non-traditional setting here, about two lovers. One thought she was rejected and sought vengeance, but as the story unfolds--all surrounding a particular bell--the real story is unraveled. I liked the mysticism here, and the use of the "day as a human" theme, with a few twists.

The Very Next Day by Jody Lynn Nye: In this story, Santa gets a day of actual true life, a magic made possible by the intense belief in his existence that came the day after Virginia's letter was printed in the newspaper. Finding himself on the streets of New York City, Santa goes to see the man who wrote the editorial in answer to Virginia's letter. I liked the story quite a bit, but still felt that something MORE should have happened here. I'm not sure what myself, but still . . .

The Destroyer by Kristine Kathryn Rusch: The main character here is a wild male cat who simply wants to defend his territory. But when it's invaded by the Destroyer, he finds he must use the cats' pact with the faery to help him. Cat lovers will love this one, of course.

Into the Nth Dimension by David D. Levine: This was a totally unexpected take on the theme, fitting it perfectly, but not something I would have thought of myself. I find I don't want to ruin the reveal, so suffice it to say that the story was well-written, interesting, and even had a little social commentary woven into it as well. More serious than it would at first appear anyway. Perhaps my favorite in the anthology simply for the surprise of the idea.

Epilogue by Jim C. Hines: This is a darker story from Jim, which should no longer require comment since he's been doing it--and doing it well--for a while. Here, Clair is caught in a coal mine collapse and uses her cell phone and her father's old stories to connect with her dead father once again. A subtle use of the theme of the anthology and a somber end, but an excellent story as usual.
