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JENNIFER GOVERNMENT

"Brilliant and hilarious"
Naomi Klein, author of *NO LOGO*

A NOVEL BY
MAX BARRY
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Jennifer Government

Max Barry

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Max Barry

Jennifer Government Max Barry

In Max Barry's twisted, hilarious and terrifying vision of the near future, the world is run by giant corporations and employees take the last names of the companies they work for. It's a globalised, ultra-capitalist free market paradise! Hack Nike is a lowly merchandising officer who's not very good at negotiating his salary. So when John Nike and John Nike, executives from the promised land of Marketing, offer him a contract, he signs without reading it. Unfortunately, Hack's new contract involves shooting teenagers to build up street cred for Nike's new line of \$2,500 trainers. Hack goes to the police - but they assume that he's asking for a subcontracting deal and lease the assassination to the more experienced NRA. Enter Jennifer Government, a tough-talking agent with a barcode tattoo under her eye and a personal problem with John Nike (the boss of the other John Nike). And a gun. Hack is about to find out what it really means to mess with market forces.

Jennifer Government Details

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Author : Max Barry

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From Reader Review Jennifer Government for online ebook

Oriana says

Aw, this was kind of disappointing on the second read. I remembered it being really clever and fast-paced and fun, and it *was* fast-paced and a little bit clever, but also much cornier and flatter than I remembered. The characters were very one-dimensional, and the plot was fairly original but totally predictable. Honestly (and I feel like this is a terribly back-handed compliment), I think this would be a great action movie.

Siobhan Bejr says

I found this book to be quite a good, cruisy read that was perfect for an easy afternoon. I didn't find it to be particularly in depth in many areas such as character building, plot etc but it was still quite enjoyable. I like how the characters were introduced individually and had their stories told and past constructed and then have them all intertwined as the book went on. Barry did a very good job on that part and made it highly enjoyable. Overall I found 'Jennifer Government' to be definitely a light, enjoyable read and would recommend it to anyone looking for a book that will give them a bit of a "break" from the in-depth ones.

Mike says

There is so much I want to say about this book. It is so jammed packed with interesting ideas and characters that there are a million places to start. Perhaps I'll just get the crude and vulgar out of the way first.

The world of Jennifer Government reads like an Ayn Rand wet dream. Corporations have free reign in what is called the United States of America but actually comprises North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and the British isles (or, for you George Orwell fans out there, Oceania). The government makes Nozick's Night-watchman state look like Soviet Russia and even most basic services are provided by companies.

The teacher jotted something in his folder. McDonald's sponsored schools were cheap like that: at Pepsi schools, everyone had notebook computers. Also their uniforms were much better.

But all is not happy go lucky in this Capitalist Paradise. Where the government does not have a monopoly on violence, those that deal in violence are attracted to the highest bidder. A corporate Cold War is on the verge of heating up, and in this case the customer isn't always right.

The battle lines have been drawn. Every Team Alliance company is in competition with every Team Advantage company. Every customer who flies T.A. airline will buy a computer from Compaq instead of IBM. Boeing is with us because otherwise United Airlines won't buy from it.

With this as the backdrop we are introduce to a wide cast of characters whose threads eventually get entangled with each other and much bigger events.

John Nike (because in this world you are your job, or at least your last name is your company) is what John Galt would be if Ayn Rand had a halfway decent editor. He condenses Jon Galt's (in)famous ninety page radio speech into two paragraphs that absolutely represent the spirit of the age:

Look, I am not designing next year's ad campaign here. I'm getting rid of the Government, the greatest impediment to business in history. You don't do that without a downside. Yes, some people will die. But look at the gain! Run a cost-benefit analysis! Maybe some of you have forgotten what companies really do. So let me remind you: they make as much money as possible. If they don't investors go elsewhere. It's that simple. We're all cogs in wealth-creation machines. that's all.

I've given you a world without Government interference. There is now no advertising campaign, no intercompany deal, no promotion, no action you can't take. You want to pay kids to get the swoosh tattooed on their foreheads? Who's going to stop you? You want to make computers that need repair after three months? Who's going to stop you? You want to reward consumers who complain about your competitors in the media? You want to pay them for recruiting their little brothers and sisters to your brand of cigarettes? You want the NRA to help you eliminate your competition? Then do it. Just do it.

He is a ruthless, amoral, sanctimonious, asshole and thrives in the world corporations have constructed.

It's my job to increase sales. Is it my fault that [killing kids to create buzz] was the best way to do it? If Government had the muscle to enforce the law, it wouldn't have made economic sense, but they don't and it did. this is the world we live in. If you don't take advantage of the rules, you're a sucker.

If it doesn't have a dollar sign in front of it, isn't connected to a board of directors, or doesn't wear a short skirt, he isn't interested. He is pure id in the empire of id.

Jennifer Government, the book's namesake, is a bit rougher around the edges, hemmed in by Government limitations that prevent her from seeing justice done. In order to pursue a murder investigation she has to convince the victims' families to pony up money for a budget.

"The Government's budget only extends to preventing crime, not punishing it. For retributive investigation, we can only proceed if we can obtain funding."

She fit nicely into the loose cannon cop trope while still delivering both a softer side with her daughter, and a more interesting backstory than most who populate the trope.

In a way, Jennifer felt bad, busting into such a nice place in full riot gear and scaring the crap out of everybody. But in another, more accurate way, she enjoyed it a lot.

The world itself is quite dystopian. All the places in the USA are homogenized (be they LA, Australia, or England). The overwhelming cultural impulse is to do anything to get ahead, to get yours and to hell with other people. People have internalized this to the point where they commit immoral actions (child abduction, murder, assassinations, etc) or suffer psychological breakdowns when they finally burn out. It is a culture driven by consumerism and consumption at the cost of overseas workers, the environment, and our shared humanity.

Thankfully things like this:

The cheap roads were clogged, even at six-thirty, but he was only four blocks from a premium Bechtel freeway and that was eight lanes, two dollars a mile, and no speed limit.

Would never happen in America

Well, at least this would never happen:

Prison housing prices have really jumped lately. Some of these places, you do fifteen years' labor and come out owing them for food and board.

Not in the good ole US of A.

Well, at least emergency services will never devolve into this:

"Sir, I need to know if the victim is part of our register. If she's one of our clients, we'll be there within a few minutes. Otherwise I'm happy to recommend-"

"I need an ambulance. I'll pay for it, I don't care, just come!"

"Do you have a credit card, sir?"

"Yes! Send someone now!"

"As soon as I confirm your ability to pay, sir. This will only take a few seconds."

Yup, no way that happens here in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

(Goddamnit world, this book was not supposed to be a how to guide!)

Anyway, doomsday prophesying aside, this was a very fast read. Chapters were just a few pages long and the action jumps among a wide cast of characters. The writing is sharp (see below for some of my favorite quotes) and Barry does a great job bringing this Calitalizm nightmare to life. I did think the ending was a bit lacking, much like Lexicon, but I greatly enjoyed this book in spite of this. If you like economic dystopias or just think the setting sounds fun then by all means check this out.

Also, if you are feeling ambitious, start and run your own nation at Nationstates, a site affiliated with this book.

Now, without further ado, fun/horrifying quotes:

Companies were getting a lot tougher on labor contracts these days; Hack had heard stories. At Adidas, if you quit your job and your replacement wasn't as competent, they sued you for lost profits.

~~

"I want to commandeer your vehicle for Government business. We pay three hundred dollars per hour of use, plus any necessary repairs. Also, you have the satisfaction of knowing you've helped prevent crimes in your community."

"Three hundred up front?"

~~

Companies claimed to be highly responsive, but you only had to chase a screaming man through their offices to realize that wasn't true.

~~

There was no place for irony in marketing: it made people want to look for deeper meaning, there was no place in marketing for that, either.

There are lots of other brilliant and funny lines as well, you should read it and see them for yourself!

Jamie says

In some ways, Max Barry's Jennifer Government is like the inverse of Orwell's 1984. It's set in the near future where things have gone loopy, but instead of an out of control, totalitarian government oppressing everyone, it's uncontrollable megacorporations and hypercapitalism (or, one could argue, hyperlibertarianism) that's ruining everyone's day. Unfortunately, Jennifer Government is unlike 1984 in that it's not particularly well written.

The hook, like I said, is that Barry has created a near-future world where capitalism and its slothful cousin consumerism are the defining forces in the free world, to the point where the USA has taken over most of the planet, abolished taxes, moved nearly all traditionally governmental functions like education to the private sector, and yelled "Okay, let 'er rip!" It's the kind of place where McDonald's and Mattell run the grade schools, the police are mercenaries who dispense justice only after your credit card clears, and most of the world's ginormous corporations are banding together into ruthless syndicates centered around competing frequent buyer clubs. The consumer culture is so extreme that one's job is the most important thing in life, so that people do the very improbable thing of taking on their employer's name. So you got among the cast of characters John Nike (two of 'em, in fact), Billy NRA (uh, two of those, also), and one would assume Alice Freeonlinecreditreports.com (but just one of them).

By this you may surmise that the titular character, Jennifer Government, is one of the few people left in the employ of the dwindling public sector. She is, in fact, a law enforcement officer, and one of the last laws that remain in her world is a proscription against murder. So Jennifer gets involved when John Nike and his colleague the other John Nike launch a marketing campaign that involves assassinating 12 of the first youngsters to buy their new sneakers. You know, for the free hype and street cred.

The book jumps around between the points of view of several characters, including Jennifer Government, a suicidal stock broker, an anti-consumerism saboteur, a computer hacker with a screw loose, and the megalomaniacal marketing executive John Nike. But in general it's a tale of revenge and thrills. In fact, Jennifer Government is so obviously cast in the same mold as every rogue cop in every formulistic cop movie you've ever seen that I kept expecting her to fall to her knees, throw her head back, and howl "MEEENNNNDOOOZZAAAAA!" And then she practically did just that.

The other main problem I had with this book was that the author's hand was WAY too visible in the plot, shoving things this way and that so that they went the way he wanted. There are a lot of threads and characters introduced, which in a way is great because it gives us more points of view into this potentially very interesting world that Barry has created. But what really kind of broke the magic for me was that unlikely coincidences started piling up and the characters started to do very improbable things so that those threads could be twisted together. There are cases of mistaken identity thanks to so many people having the same name but apparently no other way of establishing identity, chance meetings on airplanes and street corners, spontaneous and completely unexplainable romances, and overly convenient job assignments that

bring characters together. It feels a lot less like the author is weaving various threads together and a lot more like he's yanking us around by the nose. In other words, it's not that the plot is so contrived, it's that the reader is so aware of it.

This is too bad, because the situation and world that Barry has created has a lot of potential. I wish he had expanded on the book a bit more and had the guts to slow things down a bit so that we got more vignettes and viewpoints about what it's like to live in a world where corporate executives can literally have you killed and get away with it, buying things is a way of life tantamount to religion, and class structures are defined less by race and wealth and more by which frequent buyer's club card you have in your wallet. The role of the media (tv, print, web) in this kind of world was also completely unexplored in the book. The author had some neat ideas going on here, but he seemed less intent on exploring them and more intent on railroading us through a predictable yet ham-fisted crime thriller. Still, it is fun and interesting enough in places that I can mildly recommend it as a kind of quick, entertaining read. It's kind of like a summer blockbuster action movie in book form.

Ilona Andrews says

Interesting book. A blistering satire on corporate culture, the book is written with a sparse, sharp style. It flies by. I read it while on the plane - I don't enjoy flying - and it took me right out of the shuddering cabin and into the world of corporations, advertisement, and violence.

In the future, corporations rule the world, at least in USA and Commonwealth. Last names are abandoned in favor of employer names: John Nike, Lisa Disney, Michelle McDonalds and so on. Jobs are everything. Hack Nike works in marketing and he hates his. Then, on a chance trip to a different floor, he is approached by an executive who offers him a new position with a contract in a small print. Hack signs the contract without reading and the executive explains his new position to him. Nike is about to unveil their new line of shoes and to generate some street cred, Hack has to go to a local mall and shoot twelve teenagers for their shoes. Hack realizes he's screwed, and the book hits the ground running.

As I said, I've inhaled the book. At the core it's not about Hack but is about Jennifer Government and John Nike, the man she deeply hates. Now that several days have passed, I can point out a few problems with the narrative: Jennifer is a bit of cliche, there are perhaps too many viewpoints, and the action seems a bit confused, but while I read it, none of that mattered. Check it out if you get a chance.

Rob says

If asked to write the foreword to some 20th anniversary commemorative edition, I would say that Max Barry's *Jennifer Government* is like a bottle of Diet Neal Stephenson served with a twist of Christopher Moore (or perhaps a dash of Tom Robbins?) There is something uncannily similar between *Snow Crash* and *Jennifer Government*: in the comic book pacing; in the hyperbolic and impossible but chillingly familiar geo-political climate that he illustrates; in the characters that reek of auto-erotic caricature and yet are so

well-drawn, so believable and sympathetic and damn plausible. You can see Y.T. dropping out of school because of girls like Haley McDonald's. You can see NRA franchises competing against La Cosa Nostra in the burbclaves. You can imagine Hiro Protagonist sub-contracted by Jennifer Government to fend off Violet ExxonMobil. You wonder how the milieus of these novels *aren't* linked.

But even if you haven't read *Snow Crash*, even if you aren't making those comparisons, you will find this one wholly enjoyable. It has an immediate start, thrusts you headlong into the story-already-in-progress but makes sure to catch you up just as quickly. And it never loses this momentum. The chapters coming at you fast (each about 3-5 pages) and are fairly dialogue-driven. Before you know it, you'll find you've burned through 100 pages. THIS IS NOT A BAD THING. The narrative draws you in, the prose gets out of the way, and the characters encourage you to get invested.

Borderline 5 star review. There is a whimsy to this tale that draws on a lot of familiar dystopian capitalist tropes (e.g., the libertarian anarchy of free market capitalism run amok); it borders on cliche but doesn't quite cross the frontier into hackneyed territory. That it gets that close, that the prose taps its toes on cliche's fences is where we lose the fifth star in the rating. But that the narrative goes there so unabashedly, in all of its over-the-top banality -- *that* is a beautiful thing.

XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

Jennifer Government is one of the books I was lucky enough to come across by pure chance through BookCrossing. I first read the book in 2006, absolutely loved it and it quickly became one of my favourite reads ever. In subsequent years I read Max Barry's other books but Jennifer Government is still my favourite of his to this day.

I decided to read the book again this summer and was taken aback at first because I wasn't enjoying it as much as I did the first time. I think this was mainly because I had forgotten about the structure of the story which doesn't seem to make much sense in the beginning but comes together gradually, and how! It turns out the book proved as fantastic the second time around as it did the first. It is packed with brilliant, creative and very scary ideas about consumerism and government. A very smart satire and a thoroughly enjoyable read. Still one of my favourite books ever! :)

Karin says

There is a lot I liked about Jennifer Government. Thematically a few things hit really close to home right now. The merging of private industry with government functions, the availability of lifesaving services (such as EMS and police) to only the wealthy, and schools being for-profit run by corporations all come to mind. It was an easy read, a bit too popcorn for my tastes (or my tastes at this moment). I would probably read more Max Barry.

Erin says

Jennifer Government poses the most humorous "future gone wrong" I've encountered in the many of the other books of its kind that I've read. I've kind of been on a dystopian kick lately, and Barry's world of

tomorrow isn't quite as grim as some other authors have dreamed up, but there've been some big changes.

First, 75% of the planet is now part of the United States, with only pockets of foreign countries still rooted in democracy and free market. The parts of the world governed by the US are under control of the corporations. In this future, people take on the last name of the company they work for -- for example, John Nike or Violet ExxonMobile. The Government now seeks to solve crimes but doesn't impart justice -- it's too expensive. The Police are third-party hit men for the corporations and private citizens, the NRA mercenaries for hire. It's crazy stuff.

The character development in Jennifer Government isn't great -- I didn't find myself caring about or relating to the central characters. The book's namesake, Jennifer Government, is a single mother with a secret, a former advertising wunderkid who now has cast off corporate life to work for the Government. Why is part of the central storyline. Another part of the problem is the sheer number of characters Barry throws at the readers. It's especially confusing when characters change jobs or employers, thus getting a new last name. Luckily, the story is fun enough to get past these problems. It's not going to earn a place among my favorite books, but I did enjoy Barry's satirical and cautionary tale of tomorrow, where consumerism has taken over and brand power is worth killing for.

G33z3r says

Sharp, wickedly funny dark comedy/action satire in a future in which much of the world is a total laissez-faire corporatocracy, in which a few deaths in the pursuit of profits is just fine. The title character is a Government criminal investigator (people take their last names from their employers; thus John Nike, Theo Pepsi, Billy NRA and Jennifer Government) trying to pin a murder on an especially odious corporate executive who makes Martin Shkreli seem like Mother Teressa. In a way it's too bad the story focuses so much on a single uber-sociopath, as if stopping him would be a solution to... what?

How Barry uses real company names so disparagingly without getting sued is a mystery.

Amy says

I was currently reading another book, but stupidly left the iy in the car. It was rainy out, and I was in my jammies. Having no desire to get wet, I pulled Jennifer Government, by Max Barry, off the shelf.

I started reading.

About the author...interesting. Dedication- ok. Two quotes by Thomas Jefferson- nice touch. Then an author's note:

"There are a lot of real company names and trademarks in this book, most in situations you are unlikely to see on the covers of any annual reports. That's because this is a novel, and the things that happen in it aren't true. This may seem obvious enough to you, but some people (whom we shall call "lawyers") get very uptight when you describe large corporations masterminding murders. So let's be clear: this is a work of fiction. The actions depicted are not real nor based on real events. Any resemblance to actual people is coincidental. And the use of real company and product names is for literary effect only and definitely

without permission."

So tell me...why did I suddenly think of chit-chat?

Anyhow, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Reminded me of Douglas Adams, in some ways, and Adams remains one of my favorite authors, so that's a good thing.

Clever, scary in that it actually isn't all that implausible, funny....one thing is for certain. I shall never look at corporate loyalty programs the same, ever again.

Eh?Eh! says

entertaining. female heroine who kicks a**. frightening future possiblity. your last name is determined by your corporate affiliation. everything is commercialized, even emergency services. if you can't pay you won't be aided...health 'care' is already there in America.

amoral corporate marketing executives concoct a new advertising campaign - create hype by murdering the initial buyers of their new shoe line. other executives, disconnected from real appreciation for human life, see it as "proactive" and tap them to head the takeover of a commerical adversary which turns into war. underfunded government agents work until their funding runs out except Jennifer who has a personal interest in defeating one particular marketing executive. the NRA, buyer incentive programs, entrepreneurship - it's all pretty scary.

call me socialist...but some things shouldn't be privatized. 'spreading of the wealth' is great if only it was used to ensure equal access to health&justice, not abused like the current system does now.

The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?Misericordia? ?????? ✨*♥? says

A marketopia populated by the rabid people, surnamed after the companies they work for. An inane world-for-profit. Tongue-in-the-cheek market worshipping leading to perception of capital and enterprise as the pinnacle of human achievement. And don't forget your constitutional rights, fraud included.

Add to that all the nice touches. The gun of sentimental value. The Nike hype. The John guy assaulting a gal and all the way threatening to sue her for damages! Wow! Consider me a Max Barry convert!

Q:

"Hey, don't worry about it," Vice-President John said. "Career change can be very stressful. I read that somewhere."

(c)

Q:

Hack was a Merchandise Distribution Officer. This meant when Nike made up a bunch of posters, or caps, or beach towels, Hack had to send them to the right place. Also, if someone called up complaining about missing posters, or caps, or beach towels, Hack had to take the call. It wasn't as exciting as it used to be.

(c)

Q:

They were smiling at him as if he was an equal—but of course, Hack was on the wrong floor.

(c)

Q:

Then they stuck out their hands. “I’m John Nike, Guerrilla Marketing Operative, New Products.”

“And I’m John Nike, Guerrilla Marketing Vice-President, New Products,” the other suit said.

(c)

Q:

“Hack, we need someone who can make snap decisions. A fast mover.”

“Someone who can get things done. With a minimum of fucking around.”

“If that’s not your style, well... let’s forget we spoke. No harm done. You stick to Merchandising.” Vice-President John reached for the contract.

“I can sign it now,” Hack said, tightening his grip.

(c)

Q:

“Yeah.” Hack hoped he sounded confident. He didn’t really understand marketing.

(c)

Q:

“So you know what we’re going to do?”

He shook his head.

“We’re going to shoot them,” Vice-President John said. “We’re going to kill anyone who buys a pair.”

(c)

Q:

“I remember when you could always rely on those little street kids to pop a few people for the latest Nikes,” Vice-President John said. “Now people get mugged for Reeboks, for Adidas—for generics, for Christ’s sake.”

“The ghettos have no fashion sense anymore,” the other John said. “I swear, they’ll wear anything.”

(c)

Q:

“Um...” Hack said. He swallowed. “Isn’t this kind of...illegal?”

“He wants to know if it’s illegal,” the other John said, amused. “You’re a funny guy, Hack. Yes, it’s illegal, killing people without their consent, that’s very illegal.”

Vice-President John said, “But the question is: what does it cost? Even if we get found out, we burn a few million on legal fees, we get fined a few million more... bottom-line, we’re still way out in front.”

(c)

Q:

Hack sat in traffic, biting his nails. This had not been a good day. He was beginning to think that visiting the marketing floor for a cup of water was the worst mistake he’d ever made.

(c)

Q:

“Well, that’s cheaper. We can make sure we don’t take out anyone with means. For, you know, retribution. And you need ten capped, so there’s a bulk discount. We could do this for, say, one-fifty.”

(c)

Q:

Jeeps were one of the safest vehicles on the road, Buy had read; safe for people in the Jeep, anyway.

(c)

Q:

Until recently, Buy had thought that moving to a USA country was the best move he’d ever made, with the possible exception of changing his name from Jean-Paul.

(c)

Q:

“I know first aid.” Not many people did; there was too much risk of being sued.

(c)

Q:

“Nine-eleven Emergency, how can I help you?”

“I need an ambulance. Quickly, a girl has been shot at the Chadstone Wal-Mart mall.”

“Certainly, sir. Can you tell me the girl’s name?”

“Hayley. Hayley something. Please, come straight away.”

“Sir, I need to know if the victim is part of our register,” the operator said. “If she’s one of our clients, we’ll be there within a few minutes. Otherwise I’m happy to recommend—”

“I need an ambulance!” he shouted, and it was only when water splashed on his hand that he realized he had started to cry. “I’ll pay for it, I don’t care, just come!”

“Do you have a credit card, sir?” “Yes! Send someone now!”

“As soon as I confirm your ability to pay, sir. This will only take a few seconds.” He looked at the faces around him. “Someone help her. Help her!” The kid who had loaned Buy his cellular knelt down and held the jacket over the wound. A girl began stroking Hayley’s hair. Buy dragged his wallet out from his back pocket and retrieved his credit card. Hayley’s eyes were fixed on him. I promise, he told her. I promise. “I have American Express—”

“That’s fine, sir. Could you read your card number to me, please?”

“Nine seven one four, oh three—”

Two shots rang out from somewhere below them, close. The people around him shrieked and fled; only the kid stayed, crouching lower.

“—six six—”

People were screaming. Something hit the ground—or one of the Mercedes?—with a deafening boom.

“Sir? Are you there? I didn’t catch the number, sir.” “Nine seven—”

The kid put his hand over Buy’s. “Mister...I don’t think it matters.”

Hayley was no longer looking at him. Her eyes were turned upward, at the Nike Town sign, at the fluorescent lights. Her face was white.

“Oh, no,” Buy said. “No, please.”

“Sir?” the operator said. “Can you please repeat your credit card number for me, sir? Sir? Are you there? Sir? Sir?”

(c)

Q:

Hack, what you just saw was a press release. We have no intention of hunting down the people responsible, because the people responsible are us. All right?

(c)

Q:

“You want to know why Americans took over the world, Hack? Because they respect achievement. Before this was a USA country, our ideal was the working-class battler, for Christ’s sake. If Australians ruled the world, everyone would work one day a week and bitch about the pay.” He shook his head. “Then there’s the British, who thought there was something wrong with making money. No surprise they ended up kissing the colony’s ass. The Japanese, they think the pinnacle of achievement is a Government job. The Chinese are Communist, the Germans are Socialists, the Russians are broke...who does that leave?”

“Canada?”

“America,” John said. “The United fucking States of America, the country founded on free-market capitalizm. I tell you, those Founding Fathers knew their shit.”

(c)

Q:

“You mean the one time you did something nice for no reason, the person died?”

(c)

Q:

He reddened. "Well, we still need that information. It may not seem important to you, but this is a serious suit."

She couldn't help it: she looked at his suit.

(c)

Q:

In order to pursue the perpetrators, we need funding, yes. The Government's budget only extends to preventing crime, not punishing it. For a retributive investigation, we can only proceed if we can obtain funding.

(c)

Q:

Hack said. "See, there's this body in my kitchen—"

"You're meant to call first," the agent said. "To set up an appointment. We can't drop everything just because you walk in."

(c)

Q:

He smiled. Trespass was an assault against property and therefore a crime, but fraud was fine: fraud was practically a constitutional right, like free speech.

(c)

Q:

Jenny Maloneys says

If McDonalds ruled the world: it would look like this book.

Or, rather, if Nike owned the world.

The Low-Down Dirty:

Welcome to the not-so-far-away future, where everyone is identified by the company they work for. Hence, our trigger-man (in every sense of the word, sort of) is Hack Nike. Hack Nike works for John Nike and John Nike. ***No, that wasn't a typo. There are two John Nikes in this book. One is prettier than the other.*** John Nike has decided that the greatest marketing scheme of all time includes shooting ten teenagers to make the new shoe, the Nike Mercury, that much cooler and desireable. The Johns ask Hack to handle it.

But Hack's not very good at this and outsources to the Police, who in turn outsource to the NRA -- who kill fourteen teenagers instead.

Now Hack is being hunted by the Government: Jennifer Government.

How it Works:

Barry has pulled off a fast-moving, sometimes confusing feat of how-not-to-run-the-world. Considering the world-wide scope of this story, it's amazing the characters come together as well as they do.

You've got unemployed people (a.k.a. 'entrepreneurs') working on computer viruses to sell to the highest bidder. You've got a government that can't prosecute criminals unless the victims agree to pay for said prosecution. You've got ambitious corporate-ladder climbers that make the Enron assholes look like pansies.

It's an exciting set-up for things to go wrong.

The most interesting parts are the people who somehow grow a conscience out of this whole debacle, and there are a surprising amount of them, which bodes well for humanity. Just be prepared, as a reader to keep a mental list of the cast of characters because Barry doesn't slow down to let you catch up. If you lose a person, you're outta luck for a little while until you can get your bearings.

~Jenny
Place for the Stolen
Under Ground Writing Project

Brent says

An enjoyable satire on the concept of unfettered capitalism.

This story delivers a lot of interesting ideas: America as a franchise, the NRA as a mercenary army, corporations ruling the world, government as a vestigial organ. Unfortunately, the reader tends to be so far ahead of the characters in understanding the mystery that it is hard to be patient with them and really empathize.

XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

???**Jennifer Government** maths:

?? This is one of my favourite books EVER and I don't give a damn if:

- ① Some people say it's **overhyped and overrated**.
- ② Some people say it's **predictable**.

③ Some people say it's **pure, badly written crap**.

④ Some people say all the characters in the story are **stupid, flat and unlikeable**.

?? **And I certainly don't give a damn about the book snobs** who compare this book to the supposed greatness of novels written by Huxley, Orwell, Stephenson and the like. The **reverse book snob** in me happens to think all these authors are greatly overrrrrrated. I'd rather reread The Duke and I than have to go through Snow Crash or Brave New World again. But hey, **I'm pathetic enough** to think Jennifer Government is one of the coolest books ever, so **who am I to judge?**

?? **And the moral of this story is:** love this book, hate this book, judge this book, I don't give a damn. It is and forever will be pure awesomeness to me. **Ha.**

? **Pre-review nonsense #2:**

? **Question:** Is this still one of the coolest books I've ever read?

? **Answer:**

?? **Crappy non-review to come.** In 2025. Or whenever I find the time to write it.

? **Pre-review nonsense #1:**

① **Because** this is one of my favourite books ever.

② **And because** reading it twice is not nearly enough.

? Review #2 (August 2013)

? Review #1 (January 2006)

Jensownzoo says

You know how it seems like certain American corporations have wormed their way into practically every market overseas (McDonalds, Pepsi, Coke, etc.)? This novel takes it to the extreme as it supposes what

would happen if corporations and capitalism took over the world and government was minimized into an underfunded major crime (e.g. murder) prevention body. There are no longer family surnames...you take the name of the company that you work for like Bob Nike or Cathy McDonalds. You have to give the hospital your credit card # before they will send an ambulance, so on and so forth. Okay, that's the slightly disturbing part (could it really happen? You betcha.). The actual *story* is not the least bit speculative but certainly was a good read because in this world, people behave like people...they're greedy and manipulative and bumbling idiots and maternal and caring and all the other things that people are known for being.

Stabitha says

In a word, Max Barry is overrated. He has no ear for dialogue and his characters are completely flat and forgettable. He has an annoying habit of making his female characters drop-dead gorgeous and going on at length about just how gorgeous they are. And exactly what they're wearing. That being said, he's got a good enough sense of pacing and enough satirical bite (though it never breaks the skin) to keep a person reading. I mean, there has to be some explanation for the fact that I read three of his books in two weeks. I find myself irritated with his mediocre writing and tired observations yet unable to put his books down until they're done. *Jennifer Government* is set in a dystopian future in which the individual is so irrelevant that they take on the name of whatever corporation they work for. There are some truly funny moments but the book just feels like unfulfilled potential. I would say he's like the JJ Abrams of books: you kinda like the ideas but the execution blows.

Eric says

I gave this book 2 stars, because I thought it was a good ride, but honestly it's only good at all if you can get past the fact that all of the characters are completely one-dimensional, poorly thought out, do things that are totally unrealistic, and have little to no motivation to do anything but do things that are completely bizarre. Seriously, Hack, the main character if there is one, is like Tess of the D'Urbervilles. He practically sleepwalks his way through the book and then when he grows a spine it's all pointless. The big secret of Jennifer Government's eye tattoo wasn't anything worthwhile either. There's so much pointlessness in this book, and so much out of the blue action that it makes you wonder how this book got any good reviews at all. If anyone in my book club actually reads this I'll be amazed, and I'd be totally up for discussing how bad it is with anyone who asks.

JAIME says

This was really fucking good. Not quite five star read, but I'm giving it 5 anyway. Because.

Review might come. If I ever do the other 5000 I've been promising.
