

A Perfect Life

Joel Spring

Phoenix Books (Aug 15, 2015)

Softcover \$9.95 (220pp)

978-0-692-48578-1

For fans of 1984 comes a comedic new dystopian sci-fi story that makes Big Brother look benign.

For the next generation of Orwellians, Joel Spring's *A Perfect Life* offers a bold mix of political commentary, satire, and cloak-and-dagger dystopian science fiction, chronicling the highly anticipated and ruthlessly monitored life of one young man, and making Big Brother seem benign in the process.

Jimmy Clark has never had a moment of privacy in his entire life. Selected in utero to participate in World Government's experimental cultivation of a "perfect life" for its citizens, Jimmy's every voice inflection, gesture, action, and reaction is scrutinized for maximum "happiness." Generally content with his lot and willing to be guided by his team of doctors, scientists, and corporate leaders, Jimmy doesn't question World Government's policies and consumerist agenda too closely until data indicates that he should marry his childhood classmate Chelsea, a passionate activist with revolution on her mind.

Although there are many surface similarities between *A Perfect Life* and *1984*, die-hard fans of George Orwell's classic will appreciate the original details and decidedly different direction and overall tone that characterizes *A Perfect Life* and sets it apart. From shooter-game capitalism to the Internet of Things Web and the absurdity of futuristic eating trends, Jimmy's world is a colorful riot of sensory experiences, and World Government's yes-men (and yes-women) reach a new level of intrusiveness through constant video and microchip monitoring, offering comic relief even in the throes of total government control.

A Perfect Life manages to touch on a wide variety of very real social, political, and environmental issues relevant to this and future generations, including, but not limited to, pollution and global warming, nutrition and genetically modified foods, pharmaceuticals and plastic surgery, religion and philosophy, and consumerism and economic disparity. Basically, if there is a hot topic out there, World Government or Jimmy Clark has either considered it or has been exposed to it. At the root, though, the question of success versus happiness and the definitions of both are the leading debates, causing Jimmy to remark, "Enough with success. I may try happiness without a pill."

Told through a series of video clip flashbacks recorded and projected on demand by Jimmy's lifelong robotic companion/caretaker, Sally, characters are revealed through their interactions with Jimmy over the course of his twenty-year-old life. While the topics are diverse and interesting, the political agenda moves the plot more so than anything else, and aside from Sally's evolving artificially intelligent personality, the zealots remain zealous, the blind remain blind, and Jimmy's passive-aggressive tendencies carry him through to the end.

A Perfect Life provides timely entertainment and thought-provoking narration for fans of science fiction looking for a story line with substance.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (September 26, 2015)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a

positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.