

Always Greener

J.R.H. Lawless

Uproar Books (Feb 18, 2020)

Softcover \$16.95 (292pp)

978-1-949671-04-9

Eight ordinary people compete to see who has the worst life in J.R.H. Lawless's piercing science fiction comedy, *Always Greener*.

The Grass is Greener is poised to become the world's hottest new reality show, and Liam Argyle, a down-on-his-luck weatherman, jumps at the chance to host it. But Liam's dreams of using the show to help others are short-lived. Overwhelmed by mounting responsibilities and jaded by the harsh realities behind reality entertainment, Liam finds himself clinging to his optimism—and his humanity—by the fingernails.

The first of a series, *Always Greener* paints a bleak picture of a near future wherein personality prevails over logic and decency. In it, every country is controlled by the Corporations, augmented reality lenses that can filter out unpleasant realities in an instant, and everyone has convinced themselves that this is normal.

The contestants on *The Grass is Greener* range from egotists who relish their fifteen seconds of fame to sympathetic figures who put genuine faith in the system and don't deal well with their rude awakening. Liam, a struggling alcoholic and cosmic punching bag, has morals but no strength to stand up to the corporate forces that control every aspect of his life. His inner conflict becomes ever more painful as he slides deeper into the amoral muck of show business.

The story's absurdity and darkness increase in tandem. Unflinching barbs and preposterous situations build and etymological footnotes offer snarky commentary on the proceedings. By *The Grass is Greener's* finale, the atmosphere has become so intoxicating that Liam—and everyone else—is swept away in the dystopian tide, whether they want to be or not.

Both a sharp rebuke of where humanity is and a dire warning about where we may be headed, *Always Greener* is a stinging science fiction satire that takes the downsides of modern living to their hilarious and horrifying conclusion.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (January / February 2020)

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