



The Last Free Man: A Novel

Zubin J. Shroff

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His name is Gregory Hidalgo Merchant, and he runs a call center in New Jersey, but when he unwittingly becomes the last man in America without an account on the dominant social network, the people start to call him Hidalgo: The One Who Walks Alone.

And so Gregory becomes Hidalgo. He becomes the symbol of rebellion and freedom and independence that his fans think he is and the media makes him out to be. But freedom and fame and fortune come with a price, and for The One Who Walks Alone, that price is simply to be alone.

A lighthearted, whimsical satire, The Last Free Man is the story of one man's ridiculous rise to fame and his even more ridiculous attempts to become un-famous again.

The Last Free Man: A Novel Details

Date : Published 2011 by Four Circle Press

ISBN :

Author : Zubin J. Shroff

Format : Paperback 230 pages

Genre : Fiction



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Rebecca McNutt says

The future is now; we live in a time period where we are more socially connected than ever, when nobodies can become famous to a group of followers and where self-absorbed teens can post up photo after photo of themselves every second if they wish (coughnarcissismcough). It's actually rather depressing if you ask me. Not so much the social media, but the way that we live in a century of vanity. Don't get me wrong, I'm no angel when it comes to social media. Here I am on my Windows 7 Asus laptop, on GoodReads, where every day I promote and give away copies of my novels to reviewers. But I can't stand today's society of people.

Here's a typical description of what you need to look and act like in order to fit into this century:

Fall into every fad and trend, especially the hypocrisy of them. Environmentalism, yoga, gluten-free food, follow these fads like a sheep in a crowded pen. You need to dress as lazy and trailer-trashy as possible; yoga pants and oversized sweatshirts are a must-have. Infinity scarves, Starbucks gripped in one hand and a cellular phone in the other, so that you can take a selfie and smile for the inferior-to-celluloid digital camera. Meanwhile your children are neglected while you act like an immature child yourself, and, feeling alone in this connected century, these children are just accessories to their trendy sheeple mums and dads. They'll grow up as the subject of every online photo on their parents' accounts, at birthdays, Christmases, beaches, camping trips... but as time goes on, their innocent eyes and wide smiles will change to vacant frowns and soulless, depressed glares. Their parents are socially connected, but the children won't be, they'll just be buried under apathy and pre-prescribed nonsense... they'll drift away in the connected world that their parents designed.

...So, where does somebody fit in who'd rather rent a VHS tape than watch Netflix? Who'd rather make a super 8 home movie of their friends and family than snap a continual chain of selfie photos? Who'd rather wear Seventies dresses than see-through yoga pants? Who'd like to just be themselves and not fall into the stupidity trap? You know who you are, intelligent people out there. Stay intelligent, keep being yourselves.

...Alright, that ranting was rather long. So, what does it all have to do with this book?

Well, *The Last Free Man* is a story of one guy who'd just like to be himself, to be left alone at his call-center career. Unfortunately, he happens to not be addicted to the drug known as social media. Because of this, he earns the unwanted title "Hidalgo", the last free man. In a rather humorous series of attempts to rid himself of his newfound fame, Gregory's story is a satire filled with bleak comedy and powerful messages of the world we live in, especially in this day and age. Well-written and creative, this is a brilliant book and I highly recommend it.

Jason says

An interesting book, depending on your sense of humor, you may like it, or you may not. Personally, I enjoyed it and found it a good read.

Marcia says

I received this as a free first read from goodreads.com. Very rarely do I quit on a book, but this was one of those exceptions. I thought it was silly and then the further I got into it, it just became tedious. I thought, perhaps this is not a book for a 58 year old woman so when my 21 year old son asked me for something to read while it was slow at work, I handed it to him. At first he thought it was funny, but he quit on it before he even got as far as I had, saying it was repetitious and wasn't going anywhere.

Erin says

This book didn't have an insipid moment in it. I'm so glad I won it, because it isn't a normal book I would read. It was written differently, almost like a diary, and was full of puns.

Heather says

I will be getting a copy of this book via the goodreads first read giveaways! :) I am very excited to read this book as the premise of the book is interesting. In a world full of social networks, how can you not be involved! I will update this when I finish reading the book. :) I look forward to it!

Rebecca Owen says

I had a really hard time with this book. I received it through a goodreads giveaway and was determined to get through it to give it a review. To start, though, I had a really hard time getting past the premise of being the only person not on, essentially, Facebook. Even based on census reports, there's always going to be some hold outs who for whatever reason have no interest in social media or can't afford the technology necessary. Getting past that, though, I then had trouble with the amount of celebrity he gained. I feel like such a situation would be a passing fad, not so much attracting screaming hordes living in the streets. And with his celebrity, "Hidalgo" got annoyingly conceited--the flags were strange. Overall it was also repetitive. The naming of things with "Hidalgo" (his Hidalgo-robe, Hidalgo-terrace, Hidalgo-hearing, etc.) while somewhat humorous at first, the fact that it continued almost to the end got old. I was also confused by the naming of things as "puns" so often, only a few of which were actually puns. And while I did chuckle a few times, I really just didn't find this humorous.

Andd Becker says

College students and graduate students will appreciate the protagonist's intellectualism. There are puns. There is satire expressed through word-combinations such as SpaceHook, Boston Globular, New York Mimes, and Muffington Host.

The only man in the nation who has no social network account is caught in circumstances not of his making. He subsequently plays a role, brands himself, and has adventures. Readers will be inspired to self-reflect about social media.

I received this book free through the goodreads FIRST READS program.

Joshua says

I would give this book about a 3. I won this off the Goodreads website. It was a decent read for what it was. A call center employee attempts to start an account on an enormously popular social network website (not unlike Facebook) after much hesitation. He is called by a woman saying he has been named the last person in America without an account. He soon gains much fame and fortune which of course, comes with many consequences. This was pretty much a fast read for me.

Brenna says

I thought that this book was an interesting look into the mind of a citizen who was just living life when suddenly he is thrown into the spotlight and becomes more than he actually ever was. This is a book that really makes you think.

Darlene says

The Last Free Man: A Novel by Zubin J. Shroff is about the only man in the world not on the social network, Spacehook. After a reporter brings this to the attention of the world, Hildalgo is seen as a rebel, acquires a following, becomes rich through interviews, and “walks alone.” What happens when he decides he doesn’t want to be a rebel or remain alone?

Lighthearted, quick read!

Mr. Shroff did an admirable job on this spoof on Facebook. While I do like satirical and farcical writing, at times, this was a little over the top for my preferences. However, I would recommend it to anyone liking this particular brand of humor. As I said, Zubin J. Shroff, did a great job on it.

I received a free copy from Zubin J. Shroff for which I thank him.

Saira says

I love books that raise more questions than they answer. The clever phrasing and fantastic dips and lifts the author uses are just perks.

Fox says

I won this book through the GoodReads first-reads program.

The Last Free Man is the story of the last person in America to sign up for the social networking website Space Hook. Being the only person not on Space Hook, he generates a lot of attention and becomes a noncommittal rebellious character who stirs the basic fabric of civilization. Somehow, he seems to believe he knows more about puns than most people.

This humorous foray is part social commentary, and part plain absurd. Unfortunately, the humor fell rather flat for me and I couldn't find myself getting into it. The puns grated on me, and the not-so-subtle commentary got me rolling my eyes. The repetition of "Hidalgo" made me cringe rather a lot, and all in all, I found it a bit of a chore to read. The book just came off as being too self-conscious for my taste.

Mallory says

This was a fun read that, at times, caused me to giggle right out loud, much to the concern of my fellow subway riders. It's clever, witty and filled with puns (while simultaneously making a heck of a lot of jokes about puns: people's inability to actually make and recognize puns, the affinity some groups of people have for puns, things that are "almost puns" but aren't really). For most of the time I spent reading, I was amused. While some sections dragged (despite the fact that it is a very short book) and the characters were fairly one dimensional, I feel like this is a solid social satire.

I feel overall like this book is the printed version of a good post-modern performance art piece. Strange, creative and with the ability to make you both laugh and think.

I received a promotional copy of this book through the GoodReads FirstReads program.

Deb Carroll says

I got this book from Goodreads a little bit ago. (Thank you very much)!

I was excited to read it because it was different and I liked the concept of there actually being someone who didn't belong to a popular social site like the rest of us. I was also in love with the mans name for some odd reason. I have to say I did enjoy the story. I love the way it was told but I felt a little lost at times and I had to go back and re-read things to catch back up. Even with that though, it is still a really good book and I have suggested it to many of my friends.

Robin says

I was so excited to read this book, I jumped right in. Before long I was pretty confused. It's a quick read, sometimes so quick you miss out on much of the story. The concept is awesome; a fresh take on a current phenomenon many of us have mixed feelings about. The changes that take place in the main character, particularly in the author's voice and perspective, really help tell the story. The plot however, was disjointed and sometimes difficult to follow, but in the end I was emotionally connected to the character and wished for a happy ending. This book is an interesting commentary on the culture of our technology-craving world and

how social networking shapes our modern life. I obtained this book free in a Goodreads drawing.
