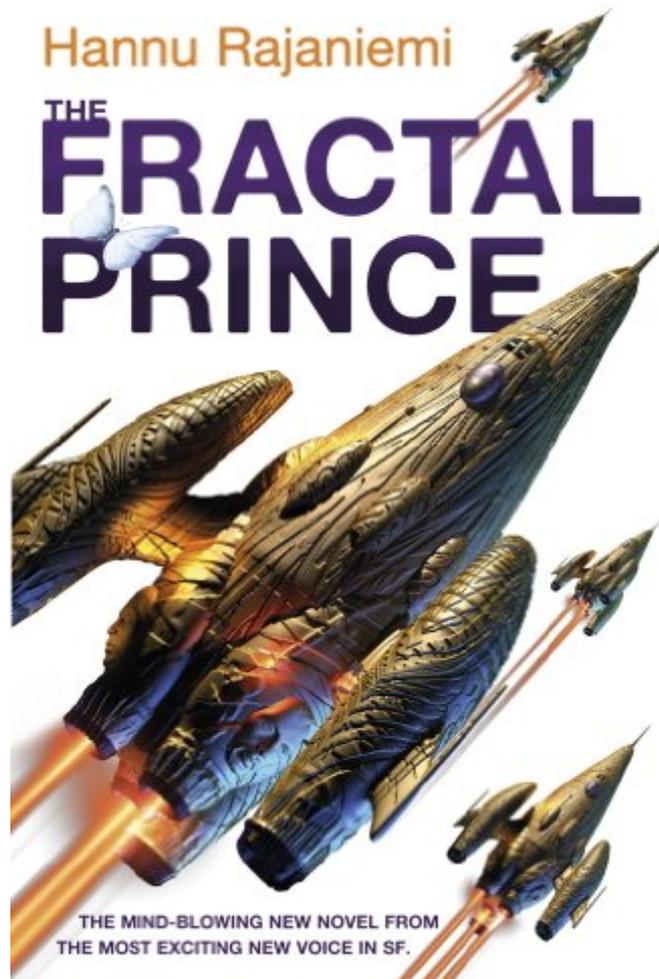


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The Fractal Prince (Jean Le Flambeur)



Synopsis

Jean le Flambeur is out of prison, but still not free. To pay his debts he has to break into the mind of a living god. But when the stakes are revealed, Jean has to decide how far he is willing to go to get the job done. The sequel to Hannu Rajaniemi's extraordinary debut novel is set to build on the extravagant promise of one of the most exciting new voices to come out of the genre this century.

Book Information

File Size: 1259 KB

Print Length: 311 pages

Publisher: Gollancz; Trade Paperback edition (September 27, 2012)

Publication Date: September 27, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B007ZXK0G4

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #438,144 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #67

in Books > Science & Math > Mathematics > Pure Mathematics > Fractals #16864 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction #29255 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction

Customer Reviews

It with some trepidation I downloaded my copy of the Fractal Prince. The world of the Quantum Thief was brilliantly executed, and so slyly construed as to make a Lupin-style fable possible even in a post-human world that I wondered if Hannu could keep the magic going for another book. Not only is the Fractal Prince a worthy sequel, I think it might actually top the Quantum Thief -- certainly, the implications of its world have continued to haunt my thoughts (or perhaps I should say, its memes live a life of their own in my mind) daily. The set piece for this second book is a (dying) Earth, peopled with a post-crisis culture which is consciously evocative of the fables of the Arabian Nights. In his portrayal of a society which is, if not post-literate, at least post-fiction on the edge of a tech-as-magic desert, Hannu pays homage to Wolfe (and in turn Vance), Simmons, in an

odd-but-effective dual evocation of mythology from our distant and near pasts. Hannu's style is consistently minimalist. This has been criticized by those not familiar with some of the tropes of modern science fiction or modern physics, but I think there's enough here for the clever and Googling reader to answer any questions. And besides, the minimalist approach appears to be the right one for a world so far advanced that it is on the edge of comprehensibility. Bare description leads to fertile imagining -- read this book, and you may come to dream of ruined cities ruled by merchant-slavers astride a desert haunted with spirits and memes, or have a nightmare of a pharaonic dynasty with its Founder's boots on the face of (virtual) humanity.. forever. Read it, and see if "Here be Dragons" isn't just a bit more terrifying by the time you're done.

THE FRACTAL PRINCE is the follow-up to Hannu Rajaniemi's THE QUANTUM THIEF, and, like its predecessor, is a complex, fast-paced tale of gentleman thief Jean le Flambeur battling gods in a post-singularity world that only a mathematician or physicist will feel completely comfortable. But this time, Rajaniemi adds a layer of Arabian Nights and the power of stories to this hard-SF tale. As you can probably guess from that first paragraph, THE FRACTAL PRINCE is not the easiest read. There is a reason all discussions of a post-singularity Earth tend to peter out into statements along the line of "It will be so unlike our current world," or "We cannot imagine that future world."

Rajaniemi does an admirable job of trying to avoid such statements and describe a world of humanity with AI-enhanced brains, omnipresent nano-materials, and uploadable consciousnesses. It's a difficult read, and I found myself at times confused and having to go back and re-read portions of the book. But despite these difficulties, at its heart, Rajaniemi has written a beautiful story about the power of stories and the extremes to which people will go for love, honor, and family. So THE FRACTAL PRINCE isn't so foreign after all. It's just not easy on the readers. That being said, it is also wonderfully written. It's downright poetic at times-a rare thing among hard-SF novels. In this book, the second of a proposed trilogy (and do not pick up this book without having read THE QUANTUM THIEF), le Flambeur returns to a damaged Earth on assignment from a goddess. With him again is Mieli and her living ship Perhonen. His job? To break into the mind of a living god to steal codes that would allow him to manipulate reality on the quantum level. If he succeeds, he might earn his freedom.

First up, it burns me that the Kindle version of this novel cost MORE than the hardcover version! Crazy stuff...Equally crazy - but in a good way - is Rajaniemi's follow up to his outstanding "The Quantum Thief". Now I won't pretend that I understood everything that was going on, or was able to

visualise everything from Rajaniemi's fecund imagination, but this is a top notch 'wheels within wheels' sci-fi thriller that combines cutting edge technology concepts with the ages old Persian legend of Hezar-afsana, or the "Thousand Myths". It is a sequel to "The Quantum Thief" and while some aspects are retold (fortunately, Rajaniemi has the story teller gift and manages to indirectly infuse critical elements without you feeling that you are rehashing a previous novel) you should read "The Quantum Thief" before you launch into "The Fractal Prince". And if you have already read "The Quantum Thief" then you know what to expect - warring metaminds running on q dot substrates the size of planets; uploaded humans who jealously guard their immortality; made to order military spec bodies with reflexes to shame a clowder of cats; and the thread that holds it all together, a very canny thief who is the very embodiment of the ghost in the machine. If you haven't read "The Quantum Thief" and all this sounds like good stuff, rest assured that it is. So I'm waxing lyrical, but still, there were some niggling aspects to "The Fractal Prince". I personally don't like novels that bounce between first person and third person perspective.

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