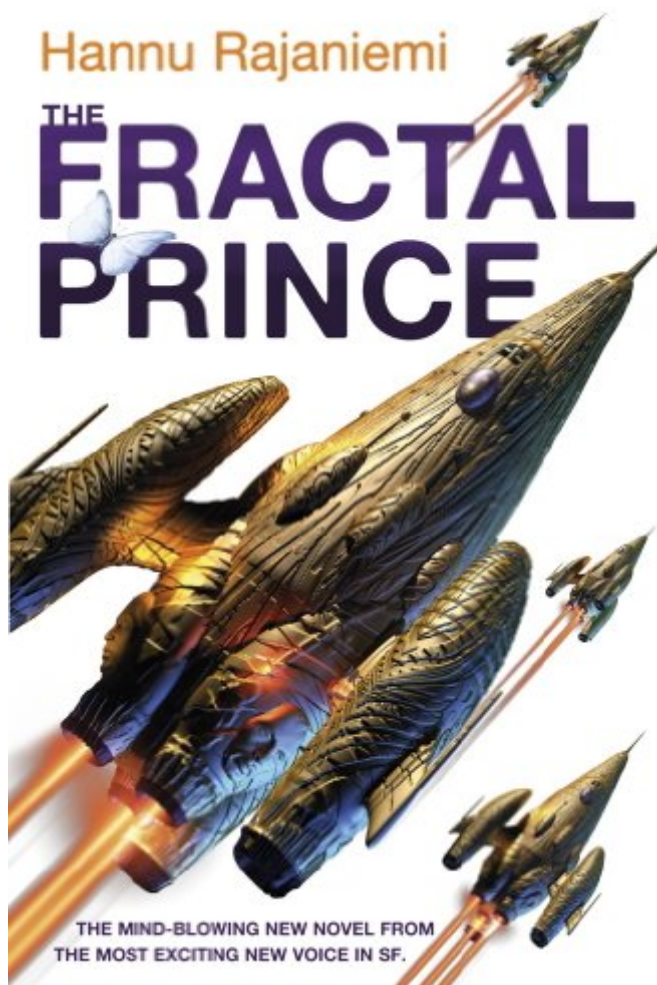


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The Fractal Prince (Jean Le Flambeur)



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

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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. Honestly, I can't get enough of this world and its characters, and have been busily recommending it to all my friends -- and I think that if you like science fiction in the best tradition of "If This Goes On" type stories, I think you'll love it.

I bought *The Fractal Prince*, a sequel to *The Quantum Thief*, because I had enjoyed immensely *The Quantum Thief*, a hugely entertaining, beautifully written and simply fun to read novel. The main defect in *The Quantum Thief* is that the author uses many invented words which make the novel more difficult to read than it should have been. The book should have come with a glossary, if Mr. Rajaniemi had a little more common sense and less hubris. But still, again, *The Quantum Thief* is a good novel, it has a recognizable mostly coherent plot and some very likable characters, starting with the hero of the book: Jean Le Flambeur, a very sophisticated thief. However in *The Fractal Prince*, Rajaniemi unfortunately seems to have completely lost control of himself with the sheer excess of neologisms (again, no glossary), and his editor does not seem to have been able to control him. The consequence is that far too many paragraphs in the book become unreadable and incomprehensible. Try this one, as just one random example among too many: "She interrogates the gogols in the ship's sensors array who spend their bodiless existence watching the ship's ghost imagers, neutrino imager, neutrino detectors and other sensors. They are on one of the lesser Highway branches, engineered by Sobornost to provide pathways for their thoughtwisp traffic. Apart from old scattered zoku routers... " It sounds beautiful as most of Rajaniemi writing, and also somewhat incomprehensible. The plot is considerably less interesting than in *The Quantum Thief*. Half of it is not about the thief but rather a more fantasy than science-fiction tale in a far future almost unrecognizable Earth, which seems to have been inspired by the *One Thousand and One Nights* oriental fairy tales. At the end of the day, in this type of science fiction novels, the science

and the technology are assumed to be so advanced and incomprehensible that everything is allowed without any need for rational justifications, the heroes (and the villains) become super powerful superheroes and the science fiction becomes almost pure fantasy, again as a fairy tale would be.

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