

The Spell of Rosette by Kim Falconer

Contributed by Satima Flavell
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This is Kim Falconer's first published work, and, as is typical of Harper Voyager's output, it's the first book of a trilogy. The series is entitled Quantum Enchantment, and the name cleverly suggests the dichotomy inherent in the story .

While it's apparent from the cover art that this is a fantasy novel, the casual reader could be forgiven for thinking, having browsed the prologue, that it's hard SF. The author is a woman of many parts – fascinated by science as well as myth; computing as well as astrology, Kim Falconer is the new Renaissance woman. It's only to be expected, therefore, that she would have written a book of two worlds: one, Gaela, is an Earth-like colony many centuries in the future and the other a post-apocalyptic Earth. The bridge between them is JARROD, a sentient computer that takes on fleshly form. A few beings can move among the many-worlds, and the control of the portals that link these worlds is coveted by some of them.

Yet these matters remain in the background most of the time. Only towards the end do we realise that some of the characters have been coming and going all the time, assuming different personas on Earth and Gaela. Most of the time, the book reads like a typical alternative medieval world with all the stock characters: wise old mentors, heroic young men and, of course, a magically-gifted, feisty young woman. Falconer handles the delicate balance nicely: too much of the Earthside setting would risk alienating her fantasy readers, yet there's enough of it to fascinate those who also read science fiction – or at least, science fantasy. Rosette is as likeable a heroine as you'll find, and many readers will love her all the more for her familiar, a giant, telepathic cat.

Like many first books, The Spell of Rosette does slow somewhat in the middle, but the pace picks up again towards the end and there are plenty of surprises in store. Readers interested in astrology will like the way Falconer has woven its tenets into the magical thread of the story, although it does seem odd that Gaela has a zodiac and planets almost identical to those of Earth. Perhaps we shall learn why in a later book.

Speaking of which, Arrows of Time, book two of the Quantum Enchantment trilogy will be out in August and book three, Strange Attractors, will follow it next February. Meantime, you can keep track of Kim Falconer's work at <http://www.kimfalconer.com>.