

ROCKET SCIENCE

by Jay Lake
(Auburn, Washington: Fairwood Press, 2005.).

As a first novel for Jay Lake, "Rocket Science" is amazing. Fairly short, a quick read, I could not put it down, nor wait to finish it. Keeps the pace to the very last page—didn't want it to end, actually. Lake's style is clean and flows at times like poetry, as in: "Floyd's Nazi bayonet instantly won the loyalty of every boy in town, while his casual good looks won the heart of every girl" (p. 11). Reminiscent of the pulp sci-fi of the 1940-50s, "Rocket Science," borders on the literary without the tedium.

The hero Vernon Dunham is a completely engaging young man, and his friend Floyd Bellamy is as inexplicable as he is sympathetic. While clearly a creation of the 21st century, there are certain values Lake is not afraid to allow his characters to voice, e.g., respect for one's parents, honoring one's father, even when he is an asshole.

"Rocket Science" does a delightful job of exploring that odd, sometimes haunting connection between historical fiction and science fiction (and not as in the specific subgenre of "alternative histories"). After all, is not science fiction historical fiction forward, and historical fiction, at least sometimes, science fiction back?

Lake has been writing short stories, reviews, and editing anthologies for a number of years, so his voice is well established and clear. After enjoying "Rocket Science," I will be looking forward to his next full-length novel.

Jay Lake's Website: <http://www.jlake.com/>

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