

Narcissus Is Dreaming

Rose Mambert

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This quick, interesting sci-fi read takes us inside the emotions of a shape-shifter living among humans.

Imagine being able to change into any shape you choose. Rose Mambert has written an original story about a race of people who can do just that while still existing among humans. *Narcissus Is Dreaming* is a straightforward account of reality with a twist.

The book takes place in the future. Humans still exist as they do today, but a race of shape-shifting beings called “shapers” secretly lives on Earth, passing among humankind and maintaining normal jobs. They have no gender-specific pronouns, and are simply referred to as “it.” They do not have emotions—at least they are not supposed to. A shaper living as both a young woman named Dahlia and a man named Dragon Cello tries to get even with a former lover and is captured by the FBI in the process. The agency wants Dahlia/Dragon Cello to act as an assassin.

The cast of main characters is small, made smaller by the Dahlia/Dragon Cello dichotomy. The other main character is the shaper’s captor, an FBI agent named Rush with a strange connection to the shaper lifestyle. These two are the best developed of the characters. Through their interactions, we see that they are both trying to reconcile something within themselves; Dahlia/Dragon deals with the advent of having emotions, and Rush confronts his past. The supporting characters, on the other hand, are not very well developed. They come and go throughout the book and we are never really get to know them.

Narcissus Is Dreaming is successful in telling a new story that gets inside the main characters’ heads. It is easy to imagine trying to figure out emotions and to grapple with the past, as Dahlia/Dragon Cello and Rush do. The book is written in the present tense, which adds to the story’s immediacy, and, at 150 pages, *Narcissus* is a fast read. The cover art underscores the book’s focus on the dual-form shapers by featuring a profile that is half male and half female, depicted in pleasing pastels.

Mambert, who lives in Massachusetts “with her son, one small cat, and 200,000 honeybees,” has written one other book—a “rock and roll vampire novel” called **The Muses: The Blood Tour—** and is editor-in-chief of Pink Narcissus Press.

Narcissus Is Dreaming is great for folks looking to dip their feet into the science fiction genre or those just looking for a quick read. While simple, the story is interesting. Mambert certainly serves a solid book.

MARLEE LEEBRICK-STRYKER (June 9, 2014)

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