



Tinker

Wen Spencer

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Inventor, girl genius Tinker lives in a near-future Pittsburgh which now exists mostly in the land of the elves. She runs her salvage business, pays her taxes, and tries to keep the local ambient level of magic down with gadgets of her own design. When a pack of wargs chase an Elven noble into her scrap yard, life as she knows it takes a serious detour. Tinker finds herself taking on the Elven court, the NSA, the Elven Interdimensional Agency, technology smugglers and a college-minded Xenobiologist as she tries to stay focused on what's really important — her first date. Armed with an intelligence the size of a planet, steel-toed boots, and a junkyard dog attitude, Tinker is ready to kick butt to get her first kiss.

Tinker Details

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Author : Wen Spencer

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From Reader Review Tinker for online ebook

Dee says

Still 5 stars more than a decade later!

I remember when I first saw this book on the "New Release" shelves in Forbidden Planet. It was clearly a Baen hardback - look at the cover art! A bit of an odd title but I already knew Baen were **GOD** so of course I read the blurb....and bought the incredibly expensive US import! (*Back then the hardback imports were generally about £4-£6 more than homegrown editions*).

So freaking worth it! Of course the fact that I then proceeded to wait...and wait....and wait....for a sequel was less awesome!

Uh-hum. So, as you can tell, this is a reread. A worthy reread. Wen Spencer has an excellent writing style; at times we follow Tinkers' stream of conscious, typical young adult thoughts about sex blending seamlessly with quantum physic ponderings. At other times we take a step back to listen to the intriguing background of exactly *how* Pittsburgh translocated to an alternate dimension. The mythology is distinctly oriental as opposed to the more common use of Celtic and European folklore - it suits the elves, though maybe that's the skill of a good writer showing. There's fast paced action and mystery. Dinosaurs and dog-things. Humans and elves. Magic and science. It's just an utterly marvellous blend of SF and fantasy - it's like an angel snatched my unvoiced genre dreams and mashed them together, swallowed them and then spat them out!

READ IT

Dan says

I loved this book, and the whole series (so far, looking forward to more). Wen seems to come up with very unique story lines. I love all of her books. 7/1/16 Re-read: So enjoyable, every time I re-read it.

KatieV says

I made it to almost the halfway point and still didn't like the heroine at all. She didn't seem to have any deep emotions and was kind of flippant with others emotions. I got so tired of being hit over the head with how she doesn't know she's the hottest chick ever born. Maybe it's a first book thing, but I just couldn't get into it. To be fair, I highly associate elves with baking cookies in hollow trees and have a hard time seeing them as sexy.

Janice (Janicu) says

Great combination of sci-fi and fantasy. Wen (short for Wendy) Spencer explains elves and other mythical creatures in a very original manner: they are from a different dimension. In "Tinker", an interdimensional

gate transports the whole city of Pittsburg to Earth once a month for supplies (a day called Shutdown), while the rest of the time it is in Elfland. Unfortunately the designer of this gate is long dead and no one else really understands how it works. Tinker is a girl genius raised in Pittsburg under this unusual situation. She owns a salvage business and one night, hours before Shutdown, an elf runs into her yard chased by monsters. Tinker steps in to help and this act changes her life forever as the elf is Windwolf, viceroy of the elves. A very interesting read: I fell in love with the worlds and loved some of the ideas used to explain elves and Japanese folklore like oni and tengu. I did notice some Mary-Sue aspects to Tinker (smart, so many men are in love with her, she doesn't realize her own beauty .. blah). Some flaws did help her from becoming a complete Mary-Sue: she is only 18 and completely clueless about relationships with men and her own hormones, and she is capable of acting before thinking despite her genius apparently. This is the first of a series (yay!) and I plan on continuing it as there are several things left open that I would like to know about and I think Tinker's past will prove to be interesting as well as elf society and politics as a whole.

So, I Read This Book Today says

I have to say, when I saw this book listed, I forgot where, I thought it might not be all that much, but it was at hand, so I picked it up. Oh. My. God. I could not have been more wrong, or more happy to be so.

"Tinker", and the follow-up, "Wolf Who Rules" are extraordinary. The concept of science as the foundation of magic is one I have always wished someone would write about - and Spencer does it in a believable, extremely well developed, and well written manner. I picked up the book for an 'easy' read, and within a few pages was totally hooked.

Admittedly, I am a sucker for BOTH fantasy and science books. The "multiverse" and "bubble universe" studies, as well as the whole concept of quantum physics, fascinates me. No, I am not a scientist, never got to learn, but I can still read about it, right? Many authors use alternate universes to base their stories. Spencer takes it further, placing her stories in a possible future, where layers of universes flow-through to a possible future Earth we all recognize. And set in Pittsburgh, no less? Ok, you write about the city you know, and even though I laughed when I read where it was set (who would think Pittsburgh for a land of fairies?) Spencer really makes you feel like you are there, walking the streets of Pittsburgh, that you know the people she writes about. And she makes you really care about them.

Tinker is fascinating. In a way genetically engineered to become the creature of her grandfather's dreams, she is a genius at mathematics and mechanics in a Pittsburgh moved to a land of magic. Good hearted, down-to-earth, intelligent, and smart as a whip, she is a perfectly realized character, with enough confidence in herself to be strong, and yet not a total screaming bitch as some authors like their heroines to be. She knows that she is not always right, is often unsure of herself, but still takes care of business, taking care of the people who depend on her for their safety and their own. She takes physical change, pain, and uncertainty and becomes the stronger for it. She never gives up who she is - amazing given the situations she finds herself thrown into with no preparation, no training, and socialization to the laws and goals of the group she suddenly finds herself a part of. Kudos, Ms. Spencer, for a beautifully developed group of characters, firmly based in both fantasy, and reality!

Tinker's grasp of technology, as well as her grasp of magic theory and the integration between the two makes this a fascinating new meld of my two favorite fields. I can hardly wait for "Elfhome" due out in July! I picked these up at the library, but am purchasing both of these books for my library to pull out again and again - and have already pre-ordered "Elfhome". Thank you, Ms. Spencer, for writing wonderful

characters!!!!

Genevieve Pearson says

I'm of two minds about Tinker. On the one hand, the concept and story are so unique, and fun, it made this book a page-turner. It's well thought out, and the world-building is amazing. As a result, I find myself picking this book up again and again. Tinker as a heroine is also a great character--unique both in personality and physical attributes, a brainy but petite offspring of a brilliant scientist who chooses to work in a junk yard with her brother.

There are two reasons I deducted a star (so you can consider them each half-star deductions).

First, while I love the idea of throwing the audience into the story head-first, there is so much world and so many unique things going on that the opening is confusing. The writing is a bit dense and there is a lot of invented terminology and terminology being used in unique ways. While we all hate exposition, I think a little more context allowing the audience to understand what things were would have helped, or even just drawing out the scene a bit longer to allow for better descriptions (with, yes, exposition added).

Secondly, I love the character of Tinker overall but by the end of the book I felt not all of the characters had grown/changed in realistic ways. One or two characters have changes to their personalities that don't make sense given what the author already established.

Overall, however, I definitely recommend the book for anyone who likes fantasy and fun reads, it's worth buying and having on your shelf.

Andrea says

This book had a lot that I liked a great deal, but more that didn't work for me, and some stuff that made me outright uncomfortable.

The basic set up is that the various mythologies of earth are a reflection of alternate universes. So elves are the inhabitants of one alternate universe, and other alternate universes contain creatures that also form the basis of other stories of earth. Earth found out about this by building a dimensional gate that as a side-effect takes part of a city into the alternate world of the elves for month-long visits, then returning for a single day. Tinker, the protagonist, has lived her whole life in the part of the city that gets transposed, and though she's travelled the bare fringes of the elven world, she's never gone out into the human world.

Both the setup and the heroine were very interesting to me. Magic is a science in this set-up and Tinker is a genius who likes to invent things, and is very interested in the science of magic. She also owns a junk yard, has just recently turned eighteen, and is a bit distrustful of the government (because of a patch of being young without a legal guardian). Tinker I enjoyed, and I liked her science smarts and her bravery in the face of danger and practical response to emergencies.

(view spoiler)

Anyway – I started out really liking this story, but it ended up as a not for me. Too much of the aggressive/domineering male factor, too many actions of the main character that bugged me, and a romance that had serious consent issues.

MB (What she read) says

Interesting in spite of the main character being a Mary Sue and her love interest being what some would consider 'every woman's elf fantasy'. (Not mine, btw.) This novel would have benefitted from better world-building and setting the scene in the first several chapters as I was still confused by the middle of the book.

The villain was too evil for words, there is some pretty obvious racism in the 'evil' characters, and several parts were just too disturbingly weird for me. This book kept my attention but annoyed me. I'm not sure if I'll read the sequel or not.

Lightreads says

Sci-Fi/fantasy. Due to unexpected consequences of building a transdimensional gate in orbit over Earth, our Pittsburgh spends all but one day of each month on Elfhome. Our intrepid heroin runs a junkyard, builds things, and tangles with elves and other interdimensional troubles. Good God, this is vile. The pseudoscientific set-up is actually sort of interesting, and there was potential in the interdimensional relations aspects of having a piece of the United States on foreign soil, but these things are ignored in favor of transformative!sex!magic, gratuitous romantic entanglements for Mary-Sue Tinker, and truly disgusting racial politics. I kept reading due to a rubbernecking impulse, and indeed it really is terrible to the predictable, patronizing end. After spending the whole book angsting about going to Earth for college because she just cannot choose, Tinker highs off and makes that choice for the entire city after she's turned into an elf by the power of magic!elf!sex (oops, did I ruin that for you?).

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

This was a relatively quick read for a non-romance (since they are my favorite I usually zip through them). I guess I finished it in about 10 days but I also read a few books at the same time. I guess romantic books get read quicker because of the pull of the romantic relationship. Having said that, maybe that is why I finished this quickly. Tinker is a great heroine, smart, likeable, human, and interesting. The world is an interesting one: Pittsburgh with a twist. In this book, Pittsburgh goes from Earth to Elfhome every 28 days because of a gate between the worlds. Hence, it's not quite considered Earth.

This book is immersed in a world of magic meets science. The elves live in a world of magic, but on Earth magic is linked to and explained by science. Tinker, a mechanical genius, is able to exploit the link between magic and science.

The book opens with a bang: Tinker saves a beautiful, aristocratic elf from large, carnivorous creatures trying to kill him when they barge into her salvage yard. It turns out they have a link because the elf Windwolf saved her life as an eight year old, and cast a spell that linked his lifeforce to hers. He is badly injured and needs her mechanical/magical expertise to keep him alive until they can get him back to Elfhome. He is very impressed with her and falls for her as a result. Tinker spends some time wondering how

an elf like Windwolf, rich, high-born, and perfect to her, could be interested in her. It turns out that she has been crushing on him since she was eight years old.

I won't spoil you, but let us say that Windwolf is not about to let Tinker walk out of his life. Their romance unfolds in a very fascinating, enjoyable manner, with some good action and magic as well. There is also another potential love interest that I spend a few moments wondering if Tinker wasn't more likely to end up with him.

If you like magic and elves, but also credible science with fiction thrown in, this book will do it for you. I must admit some of the quantum physics went over my head, because I'm more of a biological scientist. But I don't consider that an impediment to enjoying the book.

Also if you like kickbutt heroines, you will also love this book. As a matter of fact, I am adding Tinker to my list of favorite, unusual, and in her own way, kickbutt heroines. She definitely earned it as, she saves the day more than a few times. Few heroines make this list, so this is quite a compliment.

Some may find Tinker's internal back and forth about her relationship with Windwolf annoying, but since she is an 18 year old with no romantic experience, I found it realistic. I know I certainly wouldn't have recognized my true love at 18 years of age.

Windwolf is dreamy and intriguing, and although he is not in the book as much as I would like, you know that he's waiting in the background and is a significant part of the storyline, and that definitely is satisfying. I like the premise of the book and the memorable characters, although some seem to drop off the page. I wonder if they reemerge in the sequel. One thing for sure, I am rooting for Tinker and Windwolf to have a long, loving life together.

I heartily recommend this book to urban fantasy, romance, and magical book fans, with a good bit of science thrown in.

Lisa Emme says

Just did a re-read on this after reading Wood Sprites. It continues to be one of my favourite books.

Jess says

Tinker was an absolute delightful melding of science fiction and fantasy. Within the first few pages I found myself immediately drawn into the world, and loving every second of it.

A quarter way through the book I realized what was so entrancing about the story, it seriously reminded me of reading a manga (Japanese style comic). There is a type of genre of manga that melds high fantasy with sci-fi which I have never before seen actually expressed in just writing, and I must say I was damn well impressed. There are several scenes in the books I could imagine easily as a comic page, and in fact inspired me to draw myself! Curious, I looked online and found with no surprise that the author is indeed a fan of anime and manga, and that influence has blossomed into a wonderful tale that will have you clutching the book every inch of the way, putting off sleep for just "one more chapter".

Alex says

I forced myself through this book because a friend's mom was kind enough to get me the series, but boy howdy, I did not enjoy it. The race and gender politics are beyond problematic, and there's a bucketful of

consent issues made worse by the fact that Tinker responds to them all with vague anger/confusion followed by a noncommittal shrug. There's a lot of rape-y bodice ripping topped off by an actual public rape. Incredibly high squick factor with virtually no commentary.

All of that would be enough to turn me away from the book, but if that's not enough for you, the characters and plot were lackluster too. Her love interest might as well only be mentioned occasionally by name for all the feel we get for his character. I spent most of the book rooting for her and Pony instead. The concept of the gate was dropped in bits and pieces in a way that I found confusing and unsatisfying rather than mysterious. Tinker herself feels like she was written by a 16 year old fanfic author. She doesn't seem like a single cohesive character, but rather a lot of skills and positive traits of other heroes cobbled together with no glue.

As a side note, for the love of god, what is so attractive about an ancient mystery man falling rapturously in love with a girl just out of puberty? That sounds like a horror novel, not a romance.

In conclusion, I do not recommend this book because it made me feel like I needed to marathon Buffy as a palate cleanser, after which I remembered how much older Angel is than Buffy, which lead to a small existential crisis and a large bill at Cherry on Top.

Barbara Gordon says

Notes on the first half:

I'm having problems with this, mostly related to my reading as a writer. I like the character Tinker okay, but she is one heck of a Mary Sue. She's a genius, she's cute, everyone loves her except the elf-woman who's jealous, she wins fights despite (as we are frequently told) she's just a little thing, she's related to the most important people you can think of in that world, and I'm getting the strong feeling she has a Destiny. The narrative is thick with info-dumps, just sitting there like lumps in mashed potatoes. So those aspects are slowing me down. What may cause me to stop is not related to the writing at all. It's my personal squick.

SPOILER!!

Tinker is non-consensually turned into an elf.

I've only attempted to read Jack Chalker once, and it was exactly this that put me off. An interesting, imperfect, realistic character changes into a supernatural being. Just because, as far as I could tell.

There's an Andre Norton I didn't enjoy because the character ends up transferred mentally first into a wolf, then into an alien body, because his own body is murdered in the course of torture. I did read that one all the way through, because there was a valid reason for him to be changed, and because the way the story dealt with someone losing his physical self and losing that continuity worked for me. But it still made me profoundly uncomfortable.

Sometime I should examine in more detail why this is a disturbing idea to me.

Notes on the second half:

I skimmed through the last part with a growing unease. Here's my issue. You've got the impossibly gorgeous long-haired Nordic-type elves, who have kind of a crap political system (I give Spencer credit, the elf social system gets some criticism), with whom our heroine allies herself, not entirely by choice (again, good for Spencer, I like uncertain and equivocal alliances).

The baddies, and are they ever bad, are another supernatural/alien race, the oni. And their slave-races, the

kitsune and tengu. Spencer is obviously an anime/manga fan and that's cool too. However. One of the sympathetic elf characters says twice that the oni and associates "breed like mice". Anybody else catching ugly echoes here? Because I am.

The human baddies are the Chinese, who stole Tinker's dad's plans and killed him in the doing, and built the Gate that dumped Pittsburgh in Elfhome. There are supposedly Chinese immigrants in Pittsburgh, though I don't recall any Chinese characters actually appearing. It turns out

SPOILER ALERT

that the Chinese govt is actually being run by the oni, and all the Chinese immigrants in Pittsburgh are actually oni in disguise.

At which point, the WTF indicators lit up. Look, I'm just an old white broad who never got past second year in Asian languages, but even I know that oni are Japanese, as are kitsune and tengu. Where is Japan in all this? Why is China ruled by Japanese spirits, and why do they not have Chinese names if they've embedded themselves in Chinese culture as long as suggested? Are there no real Chinese or Japanese people? Are they all evil spirits that breed like mice?

I'm sure Spencer is a very nice person. And none of the Amazon reviews commented on any racist subtext. So maybe it's just me. But it made me uncomfortable, and I'm not inclined to read the next one.

Olga Godim says

I first read this book when it came out in 2003 and I loved it. Now, after I read the third book in the Tinker series – Elfhome – I decided to reread this one, the book that started Tinker's adventures. And I loved it again, much more than the book #3.

Tinker is a charming girl, unaware of her allure but full of spunk and wit. A genius in all things mechanical, she is first and foremost a compassionate human being, prone to helping everyone who comes into her sphere. When her lover, the glorious elf Windwolf, uses magic to transform her into an elf, because he can't think of her dying on him after a mere 70 or 80 years, he loves her too much for that, she remains a "human with fancy ears" by her own admission and acts like one.

Her every thought is triggered by humanity. No matter how sharp her ears have become, she never turns into a scheming, arrogant elven bitch, as so many elves in this tale seem to be. Is it their immortality that inspires their haughtiness and their snobbish disdain for humans, I wonder?

The interlacing of human technology and elven magic in the novel is ingenious, and Tinker's interactions with both humans and elves of her home city of Pittsburgh are simultaneously off-beat and funny, believable and incredible. Add to that the all-powerful EIA (Elven Interdimensional Agency), evil *Oni* lords, a hoverbike chase (yes, Tinker invented hoverbikes), a betrayal or two, a DNA adventure, several mythical creatures unexpectedly turned real, and Windwolf's rival for Tinker's affection, a human cop Nathan, and the resulting cat's cradle of contradictory desires and goals becomes a pretty good fantasy novel.

I'd even call it an undiscovered gem, although the ending is a bit unfinished in my opinion. I'd prefer another chapter to tie up the loose ends, but of course, it's the author's prerogative not to do so.

Overall, a delightfully original fantasy with a dollop of Sci-fi. Highly recommended.

Mara says

3 1/2

A strange experience. I had read other people's reviews, both negative and positive, before buying this novel. And while reading it, I kept nodding my assent with *all* of them. There's no doubt in my mind both side are right. Yes, this book is lily white, the heroine is a bit of a Mary Sue, etc. etc. But none of it was enough to mar the book for me. (The heroine's MarySueness didn't have that much impact, the enemy was based on Japanese's tradition, but I didn't feel it was based on race. But this are my perceptions.)

Laura had told me this book was YA (before YA become trendy), and I see why. I don't think it's the heroine age that makes this a young adult book (even if she is barely 18). It's the naïvité of the story. Yes, the story, not the heroine. Oh, the heroine is borderline (and quite often over line) stupid in her simplicity and naïvité, but it's the world and the story built around her that shows the target audience.

There's no grittiness, no gray to the plot. Betrayal hurts, but it's no one important, no one significant. The world is at risk, but never really. No one dies, no one is hurt among the "good" guys. This is a YA feel for me.

Let's be clear: I devoured this book, staying up all night until the end. I growled and threatened to bite my SO when he suggested it was time to go to bed. Still, I can't deny it's far from perfect.

Mostly, because too many characters were too shallow for my tastes. Nathan moved for big brother to stalkerish wannabe boyfriend and then disappeared. I understand this is a world on the Rim between two others, but there was no explanation to his sudden move toward a marriage bed. He was convenient as a comparison to the elf (who by the way isn't that more complex.)

Riki and Sparrow were so self-evident to be painful to read.

I loved Tinker and her brain, but her lack of reaction to the spell was really off-putting. He basically robbed you of a choice, in all facets of life, marriage, jobs, where to live, and how. Yes, she's young and maybe ineffective at expressing her feelings (but she had no problem with rage with the tengu), still.

And about feeling. I'm almost tempted to say that maybe the story would have been better off without the "romance". Because honestly I don't see how two people fall in love in a day. With all their previous background, there's really no sense as a reader that the love is real, but for the author's hand.

(My thoughts on Tinker are better expressed by Andrea Host: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show....> I don't necessarily agree with everything she says, but I do on this. See spoiler.)

A question to the other readers: am I particularly dumb (or tired) or the magic-science mumble-bumble was too difficult to follow?

Crystal Starr Light says

Bullet Review:

What a silly, ridonkulous book. There is just so much absurd and wrong - and yet it wasn't so terrible that I could rate it 1 star.

Full Review:

I suppose I should stop procrastinating and just try reviewing this crazy book a friend of mine recommended for Books and Soup Buddies (that's a thing, right? It is now!).

So Tinker is actually an 18-year old woman named Alexander Graham Bell. Both of her parents were dead long before she was born (still don't get that plot point) so she was raised in Pittsburg (which now floats between Earth and an alternate dimension called Elfhome, occupied, by, you guessed it, Elves) by her grandfather alongside her dear cousin "Oil Can". (Why do these characters have names like this? How much zaniness can be endured before the world implodes upon itself?!) She's a super brilliant genius virgin (but of course), who one day meets this elf, WindWolf, who is nearly killed. She has to keep the elf alive during "shutdown", the one day a month that Pittsburgh is back on Earth, away from Elfhome and magic and all those things that could keep Windwolf alive. So Oil Can and Tinker spend the first quarter or so of the book racing around to keep Windwolf alive.

And THEN the weird sh!t happened. Namely the magical!Elf!sex!transformation.

So. There is some good. I like that Tinker loves math and science. I also like how upbeat and positive she is. And she's pretty damned independent, not taking shit from d-bags (like the person Nate turns out to be - I suppose I should be "sorry" I spoiled it but given that Police Officer Nate who has known Tinker since she was a tween at one point attempts to rape Tinker and admits he's been lusting for her since she was like 12 - BIG FAT NOPE).

Oh and it's also interesting the concept of different worlds and gates leading to worlds. That was cool.

And...

And...

Geez, this was SUCH a disjointed read! At the end of the day, thinking back to what the beginning of THIS BOOK was, I'm like, "That was the same book?!" It feels like at least three distinct books thrown into one:

Book 1: Save Windwolf!

Book 2: Magic Elf Transformation Sex!

Book 3: Evil Asian Stereotypes!

Can anyone in this story bother to respect Tinker's autonomy? Lane pushes Tinker to go to college and - gasp - LEARN MOAR STUFFS. (It's always rather weird to read about these characters being like "I am super smart but I don't want to go to college because icky". Wouldn't you WANT the excuse to do NOTHING but learn all day??) Nate forces himself on her - literally! Windwolf isn't clear about his intent to turn her into an Elf and force her to be his wife when he has (admittedly consensual) sex with her. And then of course, bad guys being baddies leads us to an actual rape complete with forced pregnancy. YAY! Don't you just love this?!

And then Tinker herself has got to be one of the Mary Sueiest Mary Sues I've read. Petite, gorgeous without trying, a genius at the ripe old age of 18, sexing up the most eligible Elf around, attracting the attention of numerous potential lovers, and literally transforming into an Elf?!

Side note: why must we insist on using English names for other cultures? Doesn't anyone else find it a little

denigrating to call a full-grown Elf, trained in the arts or war and defense, "Pony"? Seriously?

At the first half of the book, I probably would have just laughed and rated 3- stars. It's cheestastic and silly, but harmless. But so much disregard of personal boundaries, lack of consent, deception, and just plain weird overload, 2- stars is a VERY generous rating from me. I will NOT be reading further in this strange series.

Seth says

This one's fun. A nice take on the cross-world SF/Fantasy hybrid with good politicking on both sides of the divide and some fabulous surprises along the way.

In particular, I like the way the main character's specialness is worked into the plot without breaking suspension of disbelief and the way her flaws and youth are handled.

Basic setup: the Chinese government steals some not-quite-done research on making a star drive and builds it, not-quite-understanding how it works. The result is a probably working star gate (colony ships are reporting back, but it's a one-way trip so far, with no gate at the other end) but the side effect is a resonance point in ~~Philadelphia~~Pittsburgh that sends the whole city to Elfhome, another dimension with elves and monsters and magic.

As a compromise, the gate is shut down for one day a month, pulling ~~Philly~~Pittsy back and allowing trade and diplomatic relations between humans and elves.

Our protagonist, who goes by the cognomen Tinker, is a mechanical genius who runs a scrapyard in ~~Philadelphia~~Pittsburgh and tinkers with machines (like her line of souped-up racing hoverbikes) on the side. She becomes involved with the elves and spends the one-day shutdown protecting a near-dead elf prince from assassins and smugglers. As a result, she gets pulled into cross-world intrigue and develops a much closer relationship with the elves than almost any humans.

Fun stuff. High tech works, but no power is available on most of Elfhome. ~~Philadelphia~~Pittsburgh has power stations but humans don't have access to magic training. They can buy pre-printed spells, though, and make use of those alongside their machines. The elves are incorporating human design and technology into everything they can without the sometimes-unfortunate side effects of magical activity in a strong electromagnetic field. And Tinker starts to make sense of it all.

The author throws us some great surprises. Tinker's relationship with the elves winds up much closer--and more complicated--than expected. The history of elven interaction with Earth is far more complex than any human knew (and even the few elves and half-elves who have been trapped on earth in hiding for thousands of years don't know the whole story) and human western culture turns out not to have a monopoly on this fact-based cross-world mythology.

The relationship side of the story is pretty well handled, although you have to make allowances for Tinker's limited access to boys and limiting all-science training from her slightly nuts grandfather while growing up in an under-populated ~~Philadelphia~~Pittsburgh. Her strange upbringing (her grandfather used stored sperm from her 10-years-dead father to in vitro impregnate a surrogate with an egg from an already-dead woman and raised Tinker on science, math, and engineering) explains some of her odd and naive interactions with men she's attracted to or who are attracted to her.

The elf she rescued is an interesting character, if a little flat. He isn't quite the Charlaine Harris male (i.e., only there to make the lead female clearly desirable), but he can be close at times. He may come into his own in the sequel, which is named after him instead of her.

Read this one for the fun setting and the fun intrigue, but read it especially for two major plot turns: one about halfway through and involving Tinker making a poorly-informed, if not at all bad, decision and the other about 2/3 of the way through when the antagonists of the book reveal themselves to come from a mostly-unexpected direction.

The book also has four of five very nicely written action set pieces, including a very entertaining and readable hoverbike chase, a great assault by a powered-up magic user, several escapes from potentially devastating guards, and a fun sequence fighting back against a mind reader/illusion projector.

I haven't read the sequel *Wolf Who Rules*, but friends liked it, so I have hopes for it.

Shannon C. says

I just did a re-read of this series and I enjoyed it the second time around even better than the first. I think this would appeal to urban fantasy fans. It is set in an alternate Pittsburgh. The characters and world are well-crafted. I like the mix of adventure, action, mystery and romance. I particularly like that the lead gal Tinker is super smart, quirky, loyal and honorable. She is not your run-of-the-mill urban fantasy heroine. I also really like the supporting cast, like Oilcan, Pony and Windwolf.

Books 2 & 3 I rated even higher--a full 5 stars. I was happy to see that book 4 is scheduled to come out this year.

Chris says

Any book I read in a single sitting tends to get top marks from me. This book reminded me a lot of the *Bordertown* books, with a bit of quantum mechanics and scifi tossed in.
