



# The Veiled Web

*Catherine Asaro*

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## **The Veiled Web** Catherine Asaro

Ballerina Lucia del Mar has two great passions: dance, which consumes most of her waking hours, and the World Wide Web, which brings the outside world into her tightly regimented life. Lucia's two passions collide when a White House performance and reception leads to an encounter with handsome Moroccan businessman Rashid al-Jazari, creator of a brilliant technology that has set the Internet rumor mill afire.

A second, seemingly chance meeting with Rashid will plunge Lucia into a deadly world of desire and intrigue. For although his work has implications she cannot foresee, there are those who do understand and would turn its great power to their own destructive purposes. As she is drawn deeper and deeper into Rashid's life and work, cut off from the outside world, she finds herself becoming more attracted to him. But is her seclusion within Rashid's well-guarded Moroccan home intended to ensure her safety...or her silence? And is it already too late to stop the terrible consequences his new technology could unleash?

*From the Paperback edition.*

## **The Veiled Web Details**

Date : Published December 1st 1999 by Bantam (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9780553762709

Author : Catherine Asaro

Format : Paperback 368 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Romance, Fiction, Unfinished, Science Fiction Fantasy, Near Future, Artificial Intelligence

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# From Reader Review The Veiled Web for online ebook

## Mei-Lu says

The cover of the book really tells you what to expect - a romantic suspense novel with a tech/sci fi flavor. It reminds me of nothing so much as Daphne du Maurier's novel Rebecca - innocent, naive young girl gets swept up in a web (ha ha) of intrigue after meeting a dark, handsome, mysterious man. It's a fun, easy read - good enough that I'm reading a second Catherine Asaro novel. The most interesting aspect of the book is that it's written in the '90s but set in 2010 so basically the book is the author's vision of where the world would be technologically about now-ish. Her ideas are interesting (and in some cases kind of quaint) but she will not blow you away in a William Gibson kind of way. The perfect vacation or airplane read.

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## Ron says

Nancy 3 stars; Ron 3 stars

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## Anne says

I gave up midway through chapter 2.

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## Scott Holstad says

I've read other Catherine Asaro books and have enjoyed them. In fact, she autographed one for me many years ago and I follow her on Twitter. So I was intrigued when I read the description of this book. However, it was pretty dull and I gave up after getting a quarter of the way through. Lucia, the female protagonist, is a pretty pathetic excuse for a contemporary woman, in my opinion. She falls for a Moroccan stranger who is good looking and into software. She's into the World Wide Web. While this was set in 2010, the book was published in 1999 and feels dated. Lucia's into the old online services like AOL, Prodigy (did that even still exist in 1999?), Compuserve and even the old Genie. Ancient. Netscape is a browser that's still in use. There's AI in web browsing in the book, but that's about as "sci fi" as the book gets. It's more of a romantic "thriller," without many thrills.

Back to Lucia. She's a high school drop out who's a top ballerina. She goes to Italy with her dance company, runs into the Moroccan, takes a drive with him and is kidnapped along with her companion by the driver and several others. They are drugged. And this is where the plot started to bug me. Lucia sleeps. A lot. And is dazed while awake at other times. She leans on her soon-to-be husband, Rashid, (surprise!) for support and he has to carry her around. While he's up and going from his drug induced haze, she sleeps for days. And even after she's up, she can't eat because her dainty self is too queasy. She stumbles across his computer room, but gets weak and has to go back to sleep. Snore. Boring. Weak female in need of strong male presence. Pathetic female weakling. And this from a female author! Where's the strong female character? Is this meant to represent women in general? This bugged the hell out of me, to the point where it was distracting and thus caused me to stop reading. And I'm disappointed because I expected so much more from

this author, who has a PhD and is a genius. I guess that doesn't always translate to good writing. If Asaro had been more adventurous in her predictions of computer and Internet usage in the near future, I would have appreciated it. If she had written one of her normal sci fi novels, I would have appreciated that too. This was just a poor excuse to write a weak romance with some religion thrown in. Not a good book and not recommended.

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### **Debby says**

In July 2010, web-surfing prima ballerina Lucia del Mar briefly meets Rashid al-Jazari, the Moroccan inventor of a cutting-edge artificial intelligence system. In August, they meet again in Italy and are kidnapped by international terrorists who covet Rashid's invention. They escape but a hasty marriage is arranged to protect them. Islamic Rashid and Catholic Lucia are an unlikely pair, but when the terrorists strike again, the marriage survives with hopes for a more tolerant future.

Although full of the technical aspects of AI (which you can pretty much skip over), the book's strengths are the sensuous and respectful evocation of Islamic culture and how Lucia adapts, and the creation of Zaki, the AI - the most quirky and moving character! Mostly clean and quite interesting for a sci fi.

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### **Chiara says**

This book was written too long ago for the part regarding the internet and AI to be intriguing. Moreover, I thought I had understood the mystery underneath by page 90, but I was wrong. Because there was no mystery at all. Disappointing.

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### **Susan says**

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I enjoyed the thought of such AI and VR, as well as the fast plot. The whole compromise on religion is the real fantasy here. Both Catholicism and Islam claim to be God's true religion. Trying to compromise on that is like trying to compromise on the laws of physics. Some sexuality- touching above the waist but in context and not gratuitous. Some profanity, but limited.

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**Rena says**

I enjoyed this surprisingly more than I thought I would. I picked it up cheap from the discount library shelf. I didn't expect to be pulled into the dark intrigue of Web conspiracy and learning cultural respect. There are just layers I didn't expect that really make this book a well-deserved pat on the spine.

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**Fate's Lady says**

Maybe this book just wasn't for me, but I'm bored out of my mind. Both of the main characters make me vaguely uncomfortable, and I can't imagine appreciating a relationship developing between them. I'm giving it a dnf.

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**Joy says**

If an artificial intelligence can be reprogrammed to lose its conscience, is it really a sentient personality? This question means life and death to Lucia del Mar and Rashid al-Jazari, because a ruthless group is determined to capture their friend and computer program Zaki; they think it can help them take over the world.

In addition to the science fiction story of Zaki, Asaro gives intense consideration to the differences in religion and lifestyle between Islam and Catholicism. Rashid and Lucia's ideal is a meeting place where all religions can gather, but their reality looks too different.

I picked THE VEILED WEB up as a change from an arid history book, and was captured immediately by ballerina Lucia and computer genius Rashid. Their passionate creativity sweeps the reader away.

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**Candis says**

I was unimpressed with the author's writing style. Half way through I couldn't take another "his face gentled" and gave up on the book altogether.

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**Kyle says**

Interesting cultural questions.

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**Jane Stewart says**

Nicely thought provoking about religious differences, but I prefer more emotional entertainment.

#### Story brief:

This is a story about Rashid a wealthy Muslim man from Morocco who is a software genius. He created an artificial intelligence system named Zaki. He strictly follows all Muslim religious rules including praying five times a day, fasting during daylight hours during Ramadan, etc. Lucia is a high school dropout from New Mexico, who is one of the leading ballerinas in the world and devoutly Catholic. Rashid has admired Lucia for five years and traveled many times to see her perform. He sees her in a café in Sicily and offers her a ride which she accepts. The driver had drugged their beverages causing them to pass out. He is part of a kidnapping group. The kidnappers want Zaki and Rashid's services to modify it for their purposes. Rashid and Lucia are taken in a private plane to Algeria, where they are able to get free. A single woman can not travel with Rashid in that country, so they get married and then flee to his home in Marrakech, Morocco. She stays in his home with his extended family for a few weeks, experiencing life in the Muslim world.

#### Story Ideas:

This story is primarily an exploration of cultural and religious differences between Catholic Lucia and Muslim Rashid. There is a lot of discussion about how they cannot be together because of their differences. He would like her to live in seclusion in Marrakech away from the public and not to be seen dancing on stage in scanty clothing. Her life and identity is dancing. She could never be happy if she had to give it up. Additional discussion concerns Rashid's ideals of helping people come together from every religion to meet and accept each other in peace. The author provides some interesting ideas about what artificial intelligence might be like, with Lucia having conversations with Zaki (the AI software). Lucia and Zaki also go exploring web sites together.

#### Reviewer's Opinion:

The story would be interesting for readers wanting to think about these ideas. There are some thrills due to two kidnapping attempts with interesting escapes. There is a gentle romantic development as Lucia and Rashid fall in love with each other. My major problem is that I was not drawn in emotionally. I didn't feel for the characters. I don't know, but maybe part of the problem was a lack of vulnerability in the characters. I want to feel sympathy, humor, surprise or delight. I don't require all of those, but I'm trying to suggest something that might have made it better for me. I did not find this enjoyable entertainment. It was more of a thoughtful discussion.

Story length: 355 pages. Sexual language: none. Number of sex scenes: 2. Length of sex scenes: about 1 sentence each. These were told/referred to, not shown. Setting: current day U.S., Sicily, Algeria and Morocco. Copyright: 1999. Genre: contemporary romance.

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#### **Jeri says**

I love the way Asaro combines fascinating scientific speculation with characters who are so human and so real. I am intrigued and excited by the concept of a true artificial intelligence. Most science fiction fans are weaned on stories of thinking computers, and I enjoyed exploring questions such as "how do you define a soul?" or "can a machine have a conscience?" The AI in this novel is a memorable character in its own right, and an appealing one.

Even more, however, I enjoyed the developing relationship between Rashid and Lucia, and the look at a culture that is as foreign to me as it is to Lucia. The characters were very real to me, and I cared about what

happened to them. A romantic myself, I wanted things to work out for them, but at times the distance between them seemed impassable. The two main plot elements mesh perfectly; the story of two individuals attempting to find common ground in which they can be together, and the idea, the dream, of a new technology that can help all humanity find a common understanding.

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**Lynn Calvin says**

SF,Romance

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