




## Speculative Fiction Book Review

Book Title	<b>Shadow of a Dead God</b>
Author	<b>Patrick Samphire</b>
Date	<b>June 2020</b>
Stars	

Patrick hooked me into his novel with the tagline, 'Ben Aaronovitch's Rivers of London series transplanted to an epic fantasy world.' I'm a huge fan of the police procedural stories of magic in London's Metropolitan police so it made me curious how that would work in epic fantasy.

The answer is; it works very well. Very well indeed.

Nik Thorn is a worthy co-worker of Aaronovitch's Peter Grant. They'd probably get on well together. Neither possess powerful magic but confront enemies who do. They make enemies by doing the wrong things for the right reasons. Both have a wonderfully wry sense of humour that keeps you grinning throughout the story. The comparison is apt.

But *Shadow of a Dead God* moves beyond the urban sprawl of London into a world with great depth of detail which creates a vivid backdrop for a story about the misuse of power. I describe it as a backdrop deliberately because the world never gets in the way of either the action or the writing. It defines it, it precipitates it too. But the city is just that, a place where politics, trade, crime is linked together with magic. It's a heady brew.

Nik Thorn is a character you can't help but like, he's engaging because he's harmless, a genuinely nice guy who is perpetually unfortunate. At one point he's told that his mediocre magical talents could get him a better lifestyle so Life wouldn't involve dodging his debts and trying to find food. Yet he refuses that lifestyle in order to help others, to fulfil obligations to friends – even when they lead him into trouble. Nik Thorn is a good guy.

This is a procedural story in the sense that Nick and his friend Benny need to find a murderer because they become the fall-guys for the crime. Events pile up against them with increasing speed and misfortune so there is never a lull in the action. It is relentless. Fast-paced, exciting and wonderfully inventive.

The writing style is simple, uncomplicated and easy to move through. That wry humour I mentioned earlier permeates every sentence to give the writing a lovely light quality that makes it easy to read and enjoy. I read it in just 4 days! But I emphasize, I didn't want to put the book down. It's fun to read. A real joy.

Patrick Samphire has primarily written middle grade adventure stories, this is his first foray into adult fantasy fiction. *Shadow of a Dead God* is also in SPFO6. It deserves to do very well because its uncomplicated narrative, its engaging characters and original use of magic makes it a winner as far as I'm concerned. I highly recommend it.