



## The Camelot Shadow

*Sean Gibson*

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"A chance to save her. Improbably, impossibly, inconceivably."

Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam spends each day in much the same way: caring for his terminally ill wife and trying to lose himself in the dusty tomes that fill his library. Everything changes when he receives a visit from a man representing a clandestine organization operating with the backing of Queen Victoria herself. The group seeks his aid in finding an Arthurian artifact that, legend holds, can cure its bearer of any wound or disease.

Skeptical but desperate to help his wife, Alfred is convinced that the fabled item might actually exist after witnessing a seemingly impossible display of power by the organization's leader, James Nigel. He decides to pursue the treasure, accompanied by an eccentric scholar, a deadly druid, and his best friend, a sardonic bookseller who is far more than he seems. As he follows an arcane trail of clues from the gas-lit streets of London to the wilds of Scotland and deep into ancient catacombs in Italy, Alfred becomes enmeshed in a web of hidden agendas, secret societies, and ancient enchantments. Along the way, he learns a dark secret about Nigel's past--and the true power of the artifact he seeks.

Steeped in a compelling mythology and filled with unexpected twists, *The Camelot Shadow* will leave readers stunned, breathless, and wrestling with an impossible question: what do you do with an object that has the power to both save the world and destroy it?

(Don't miss *The Strange Task Before Me* for further adventures in the Camelot Shadow world.)

## The Camelot Shadow Details

Date : Published November 4th 2014 by BookBaby (first published October 31st 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Sean Gibson

Format : Kindle Edition 298 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Mythology, Arthurian, Fiction

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## From Reader Review The Camelot Shadow for online ebook

### Hannah Greendale says

Click here to watch a video review of this book on my channel, *From Beginning to Bookend*.

It is the time of Queen Victoria's reign over England, and Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam is a reputable scholar who specializes in Roman and Anglo-Saxon history, with special attention paid to the dark ages and Arthurian lore. When he is commissioned by a secret organization to recover a long-lost artifact, he learns that his knowledge of King Arthur might lead him to a relic that could change the course of history and save his dying wife.

Alfred Fitzwilliam is an endearing protagonist for his many favorable traits. He is charming, perceptive, empathetic and friendly to all, including subordinates. He has excellent taste in spirits and an enviable library; in fact, his reverence for his library - a collection that includes tomes that are centuries old - will resonate with all bibliophiles.

*The Camelot Shadow* has a wide range of supporting characters, each memorable for their notable differences in personality. A particular favorite is Henry Milner, a man with grapheme-color synesthesia, a neurological phenomenon that allows people to perceive colors when looking at words or numbers. He also has a general synesthesia that grants him the ability to associate unique meaning for individual words, so his declarations are often amusing.

The dialogue is superlative throughout, hearkening to the Victorian era in ways both eloquent and cunning.

*"I must say, it's such a delight to dance with a true artiste, one who hasn't traded in his beautiful blade for the amateur stench of gunpowder." He shook his head mournfully. "Such a shame - we practice a lost art, my friend."*

Lyrical passages are evenly distributed and play with one's senses in delightful ways:

*The ancient tome that currently rested in his lap was among the most prized in his vast collection, and as he carefully turned a vellum page, he marveled once again at its smooth feel, like the leaf of an orchid, and at the elegant script that covered its surface.*

*Even with his senses enmeshed in the present - the chill from the door, the hot ceramic mug, the quiet hum of conversation, the rich, acrid smell of burnt coffee, the pleasantly bitter taste - he found his mind slipping away to the past.*

While there's no shortage of sword fighting, talk of sexual exploits, or drinking of scotch, *The Camelot Shadow* is threaded with questions of a more serious nature concerning the moral implications of various acts or deeds that are not listed in this review for fear of spoiling the plot.

*With supreme effort, he managed to block out the distracting sounds and imagine the verdant rings of trees that must once have stood here, the gurgling trickle of a rain-swollen stream, perhaps even a mist-covered rainbow arcing between the rounded hills that crested over the horizon. Before long, however, his tranquil flight of fancy was interrupted by the imagined clash of steel and the screams of dying men, doomed to spend the final moments of their too brief lives wondering why they threw their lives away for a cause not worth*

*dying for.*

Lives are at stake and no one can be trusted in this rousing adventure based on Arthurian lore.

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## **Paul E. Morph says**

Straddling the already blurred line between historical fiction and fantasy, *The Camelot Shadow* is set in Victorian Britain (apart from the bit that's set in Italy) and the author makes the setting come alive. You can smell the shit in the gutters and hear the cries of the street hawkers. For an American author, Sean Gibson really gets the feel right for the Britain of this period.

I mean, I'm a complete arse, so I was obviously *trying* to catch this guy out! There were a number of things in the book that initially struck me as anachronisms (*A curry house in Victorian London? I thought. That can't be right!*) but when I researched them myself I was proven wrong every single time!\* (*There really were curry houses in Victorian London! Who knew?*) Every time I researched one of these non-anachronisms, I grew more and more impressed by Gibson's research (assuming he actually did any and didn't just get lucky lots of times).

So, given that the setting is good, how was the actual story? Well, I bloody loved it! I'm a complete sucker for a quest (it's the gamer in me) so I love to feel like I'm setting out with a noble mission with the characters in a book, and I definitely got that feeling here. I also enjoy Arthurian myth and legend, which you get here in spades (although possibly not in the way you might originally think).

The characters themselves were all well-drawn (*the important ones anyway; there's a few Rosencrantzes and Guildensterns that we aren't given much information about, but I just pictured them as looking like characters from Blackadder and got on with it*) with distinct personalities and quirks. Some of the characters are wonderfully eccentric, in fact, and a joy to read about. Billy Connolly's even in it! (*All right, all right... it's not actually Billy Connolly, it's one of the characters he's played in movies... in MY head, though, it was him.*)

The plot has several twists and turns, a lot of which I didn't see coming. It also has a very varied tonal palette, which I like. There are moments of extreme sadness, sections that are very funny, passages that are very dark and sections that are very exciting and action-orientated. You get a lot of bang for your buck, basically!

Overall, I enjoyed the Hell out of this book and do not hesitate to recommend it to anybody who has a liking for anything listed above. I am most relieved to be able to say that this book does not suck!

*\*OK, I'll be completely honest: I caught him out once but only once on the anachronism front. One of the characters refers to acquaintances of his as being 'flakes' in the slang sense of the word. The word 'flake' didn't gain this connotation until the twentieth century. Sorry, Sean! (Please don't hurt me!)*

Full disclosure: The author provided me with a PDF copy of this book in exchange for an ~~insulting and~~ honest review. However, I liked the book so much that I bought a copy from Amazon. If that sounds stupid, please note that for every copy sold of *The Camelot Shadow*, \$1 will be donated to Surgicorps (<http://surgicorps.org/>). Here's why: [https://www.goodreads.com/author\\_blog...](https://www.goodreads.com/author_blog...))

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### Tabetha says

**Rating: 4 stars** *"Tears pricked the corner of Alfred's eyes as he leaned forward in his chair and grasped her hand tightly, squeezing it as hard as he could, as though, in so doing, he might drive the sickness from her.*

*"Alfred," she whispered, a ghostly rasp that he sensed more than heard.*

*"I am here." He squeezed her hand again, unsure whether she could feel the pressure. "I am always here."*

"The Camelot Shadow" contains many exciting elements throughout, including mystery, intrigue, search for treasure, secret organizations, fantasy, battles, evil villains, and more that I can not mention, as it would definitely spoil the story...but it is very exciting! It is a historical novel that takes place in Britain in the Victorian era. Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam is becoming desperate, as his wife is fast slipping away from him. When he is asked to assist in the search for a rare artifact, used by King Arthur in his last battle, Alfred realizes he has no choice. This may be the key to saving his beloved wife, and it may, in fact, be the key to saving the entire world!

The first thing that struck me is the beautiful writing, contrasted with the comic relief written into the scenes. The detailed descriptions were a bit long in the beginning, and I wanted to jump right into the action, but the tone changed quickly and kept my attention. I cared about the fate of the characters early on, and was not just a casual observer, but a part of the story. The quest to find the sacred artifact is exciting, as I was able to travel to London, Scotland, and Lucca, Italy.

A standout character is "Viviane Lytelle" because her charisma jumps off the page. Will Upton, Alfred's dear friend and rare bookseller describes his fascination with her: *"The heady mixture of strong emotion, too much brandy, too little food, and the tantalizingly close scent of Viviane made his head swim, and he found himself grasping the arms of the chair tightly, fingers digging into the leather, as he fought to keep from fainting."*

"The Camelot Shadow" continues to build, and I found myself looking forward to the evenings when I could read more. I am hoping for a sequel because I did become very involved with the characters. But if there is no sequel in store for the future, I am still hoping for another unique story by Sean Gibson!

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### Vanessa J. says

Alfred is in sorrow because his wife is sick and only a miracle can save her. This miracle comes in a much unexpected way - he is offered to seek the scabbard, a legendary sword that's supposed to cure diseases and whatnot, kind of like the famous philosopher's stone of the alchemists. He's not very convinced of the existence of this object, but what alternative does he have? His wife can't wait and this seems to be his only

hope of saving her, thus he accepts the quest.

I had zero expectations before starting this book. Stories about quests, traveling and searches of precious objects are stories that can bore me easily if they're not done correct. However, they can be epic as well, so it's a double-edged blade, isn't it?. This book was more between both of those extremes, delving a little in the tedious side, sadly.

You see, when I'm almost on finals week I can only read fast-paced or lighter (not fluffy because I hate fluff) books. If I try to read books with a pace slower than a sloth I lose attention very easily, and what with my fantastic trait of being easily annoyed and bored. This book is one of the latter. The pace... it was just soooo goddamn slow. It was slower than I could handle. Nothing seemed to happen for the first 50% of it, and I wanted to abandon it.

Gratefully, though, it picked up.... *but* I cannot say it got much better.

The main problem this book had was not the pace - it was the characters. If I had loved them, I could have endured 1k pages of just interactions between characters and no plot development. I didn't like them all that much, though. It's not that they were stupid or rage-inducing. It was that they were too cliched and one-dimensional.

Alfred is the typical too-good-to-be-true hero. He has unquestionable loyalty towards his wife (not complaining about this), pure heart and never has malicious intentions. Please, that's just not realistic. Even the most angelic person has sinful thoughts at times, and you and I perfectly know there's no Jekyll without a Hyde.

The villain was not of my liking either. He was waaaaay too predictable and cliched for my taste. He's that kind of guy who wants to take over the world because he has nothing to do and tells his plans to absolutely everybody and then is wondering why they never turn out well. He might as well have looked like this:

The other characters could have been better if the interactions between them hadn't felt so unnatural, forced and robotic. They spoke way too formal for them to sound real. In Victorian novels you could find characters using slang of the time (sidenote: this book is set in the Victorian era, that's why I make the comparison). This fact caused them all to sound exactly the same at times. The only way you could differentiate was because of their personal traits.

The book was not terrible, though. I actually liked the writing. It was descriptive yet not too wordy or tedious. It was not hard for me to imagine everything. I only point out that sometimes there were overly long descriptions about unnecessary things (such as how Alfred woke up and did all his daily routine) or it could get more telling than showing (for example, we never really feel Alfred's sorrow for his wife because we're *told* she's ill, and we don't really have the "proof"), but I assure you it's good on the most part.

I have to praise too the research the author made. Here there are myths, legends and historical facts about Merlin, King Arthur, the sword and other things. I, for once, know nothing at all about this, so I can't confirm the accuracy, but if you asked me, it doesn't feel as if the author went to Wikipedia and copy-pasted the first thing he found. Also, writing historical fiction is a hard task, I understand, and I never found any awkward use of language, so this is a point in the book's favour.

The story got quite interesting by the end, especially because the author was not afraid of taking risky decisions that, had they not been made, the book would have been softened down a lot, and I ummm like my books not Disney-sweet.

In the end, I cannot say I loved this book, and despite that, it wasn't all that bad. Have patience with it if you want to give this a try. If you're fan of arthurian novels/myths/stories/ quests, I'd say give this a go. If you're not, as I am, then... do what you will. Patience is the only key.

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## **Sarah says**

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to author Sean Gibson.)

***“You cannot be in search of Excalibur...”***

***“Well, we are not pursuing that particular item for one very simple reason.”***

***“And why, pray tell, might that be?”***

***“Henry shrugged. “Because we’ve already found it.”***

This was a detailed story about a man searching for relics from the time of King Arthur, in order to save the life of his wife.

Alfred went to such lengths in this book to find the scabbard of Excalibur, as he believed that it held the key to curing his wife of the illness from which she suffered. Alfred seemed to be a fairly upstanding sort of man, who really loved to collect rare books.

***“Alfred had amassed an impressive collection of Arthurian lore in his library, including some exceedingly rare and coveted tomes.”***

The storyline in this delved into the history of Arthur and Excalibur, as well as having its own storyline concerning Alfred. I have to say that I did find the story quite complex at points, and I did have trouble following what was going on a bit, although I think this was more a problem with me than a problem with the book!

***“Please explain to me how a sword found in a stone comes to have a scabbard anyway... or do the tales omit that little detail.”***

That being said, the writing in this was really quite special, and this read like a classic rather than a modern novel.

***“when the sword hit the water, a boat emerged, crewed by a trio of faeries. They took Arthur to Avalon,***

***where he was to remain until he returned to save his people during their hour of greatest need.”***

The ending to this was hopeful, although it really was quite sad.

6 out of 10.

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### **Ivana - Diary of Difference says**

My review can also be found on: <https://diaryofdifference.com/2018/06...>

***“I can either tell you my tale, or I can respond to your feeble witticisms. I cannot, in my mildly inebriated state, do both.”***

This is not your usual story related to King Arthur, Merlin and Camelot. This will, in fact, be quite different story and not only unusual, but one of a kind.

We go back in time when Queen Victoria was ruling over England. In a time when the author really liked to point out the fact that the characters are using trains. It was pointed out so much, that I had to do a bit of research to see if trains existed in that time. They did – apparently England had the oldest rail transport in the world. And Queen Victoria was one of the first royals to use that form of transport too.

Now, I am not even sure why I kept going on about trains... Back to the story...

The Camelot Shadow covers the story of Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam, a man whose wife is ill from an incurable illness. When an opportunity arises, giving him the chance and hope that he might save the life of his lover, he goes on a mission to find an object from the time when King Arthur was the ruler of England, and Merlin was his companion.

With a help from a group of people, Alfred digs the history and the stories of the past, only to discover that not everything he believed in was true, and not everyone that he trusted is his ally.

A story that reminded me of Dan Brown's work. Quite similar in the sense of clues, history, what is a myth and what is a fact, though also quite distinctive, as it covers people's characters so well, describing their personalities in a powerful way.

***“Wealth. Status. Happiness. A perfect life. All built on an ephemeral foundation, an impossibility masking a lie that, if exposed, if openly acknowledged, would bring it all crashing down around our heads.”***

When a great disappointment comes around, and all hope is gone, people change, and people feel things. A person starts to wonder what they did wrong, what could they have done differently, what if... Alfred is one of the people where we will see his change over the chapters. For better or for worse, I'll let you decide.

***“It was Guinevere's infidelity that brought down Arthur's Camelot” – he said, wiping a trickle of Scotch***

*from his chin with the back of his sleeve. ‘It was God’s cruelty that brought down mine.’*

A book that explains good and evil in the unusual way. I thought I could explain good and evil, but sometimes my evil can do you good, and your good can do harm to everyone. And power... oh what people are capable of doing for power...

*‘Power, Arthur had taught him, was not something to covet, but rather something to treat in the same manner one might handle a wild mastiff – with considerable respect, constant vigilance, and a trace of fear. ’*

If you are a fan of history fiction, and stories about Arthur and Merlin, you would definitely want to dive in into this book and get lost into the world. And that is not the only thing that this book covers... It covers hope, faith, loss, love, good, evil, power, guilt and everything in between. Get ready for an adventure. One full of bravery and magic. And maybe... maybe some hope.

A huge thank you to the author, Sean Gibson, who was kind enough to give me an e-copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Anne says**

#### **3.8/5 I FREAKING LOVE ARTHURIAN LEGEND STARS**

**First of all**, let me put it out there. **I have a do or die affair** with Arthurian tales and anything Arthurian related. It's so serious it's not even funny. **I'm crazy about stories surrounding that time**. Believe me. I have references, ask any of them

**If there's anyone** reading this who hates Arthurian history and tales of that time, **help yourself. Backtrack. Scroll by and away**. Turn your laptop off before I reach my hand through your screen and pull your heart out of your chest.

Just kidding. I don't mean it, I'm just a bit grouchy.

#### **THE STORE WAS OUT OF CHEESE BALLS AND I'M SO HUNGRY**

But let's get on with the review, shall we?

#### **STORY LINE**

There is power buried in the sands of time. Power that men cannot comprehend despite so-called scientific advances

**Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam** is a noble intellectual and bibliophile who is greatly acquainted with the subject of **Arthurian history and legend**. He is grief-stricken and saddened by the grave state of his wife, **Ellen**, not

just because she is sick with consumption but also because of the unfavorable prognosis of her disease. During a social function, Lord Alfred meets a man by the name of **Brendan Quinn**. Through Quinn he meets **Henry** and **Nigel** who enlist Alfred's help to find an artifact of Arthurian legend. One which may or may not be a fixture of wild stories and speculations. The said artifact is rumored to have great healing powers, and Alfred, skeptical as he is is enticed into helping them with their quest. They claim to be an organization that has pledged duty to the Queen and their country. The artifact they say, is for the general good. They feed him lines like this to convince him of the good of their quest.

***Death cannot be defeated, true, but it may be delayed—the “D” in “death” tells us that-***

All I could say at that point was: You have a very twisted way of thinking my friend. **Reeeeeally twisted.**

**But what to do?** It's the only hope for Ellen's recovery now. So Alfred gives in. They need his extensive knowledge and skill and he needs his wife back and healthy. There's nothing like symbiosis. Their quest leads them on journeys to different countries and cities, scouring through old and disintegrating journals with encrypted data which will lead them to the aforementioned artifact.

**The question is, can Alfred trust the good intentions of the lot?**

### **MY THOUGHTS**

Much from the story and scenes came off as twisted- or rather put, reinvented- as they deviated from my own growing *but still* mediocre knowledge of Arthurian history. They portrayed the character of Merlin as something **very** different from what I've always believed to be true. **And that's the point.** The plot twist wasn't a surprise, **it was an ambush.** When the curtains were drawn open, I just couldn't believe it. Enter my spit take.

I was beguiled by the turn of events. I loved it. What I know of what I know was just irrelevant in this story. I was really enthralled by the storyline shake up.

But at the same time I was also thinking

### **Do I want to talk about how amazing and poetic the writing is?**

I don't think I could say enough. It was just...plainly put-**beautiful.**

### **So Why did I give this 3.8 stars?**

I'll start off with the very first thing that I noticed.

? **The setting:** This book is of the historical fiction genre. So of course the location is set in past times. **But I couldn't really feel it.** I didn't get that vibe at all. I read mostly out of tune with the setting, almost ignorant of it because I stopped trying to connect at some point.

? **Characters :** The first character I had a problem with was Ellen, Alfred's wife. I felt no sympathy for her plight, nor did I feel any for Alfred. The story was well way underway before Ellen was ever introduced to us. I was a little bit displeased with this. I wanted to get a bit acquainted with her character, to fully understand Alfred's motive and drive. The scenes where she had presence and/or input were insignificant. I just mostly **accepted** the story I was given: Alfred loved his wife so much he was ready to believe in the power and existence of a mythical object to secure a longer life for her.

The characters I strongly connected with were Alfred's best friend and successful bookseller, **Will Upton**

and **Henry Milner**. I fell in love with Henry in a heartbeat. He was such a peculiar and lovely soul. Regardless of his age,(he's in his 50's) I just loved his character so much. He was the most gentle and carefree character in this book to me. And what about Will?

Well, Will brought the comic to the story. And you know I love anything that makes me laugh. Him and Alfred have one of the most adhering bonds I've seen in any friendship between characters I've read about. Gosh it was so inspiring. The great lengths they would go for each other, the brotherly love was just amazing. They were forever looking out for each other.

? **The slow pacing:** This one really didn't bug me much, if I'm to be honest. I was so lost in the story and the adventurousness of the quest that I hardly felt troubled by the slowness of pace. I was so eager to know where the journey was leading our characters. And I just loved the unraveling! I could hardly wait to get to the end and see what end our villain met, and how he met it. I LOVED THE ENDING. **It didn't fail to deliver in action and blood-shed at all.** What? I love a bloody fight. It's the most thrilling thing to read about, I'll say.

In summary, I loved the second half of the book a lot more than the first half.

This book would be amazing on screen assuming inauspicious details and twisted scenes aren't added in the mix. There were some parts I just would die to see actualized on screen.

**And lastly**, after reading *Tuck Everlasting*, I took up a fresh perspective on the concept of immortality and life everlasting. I love how this story presented the topic again to me. The moral questions associated with the subject still presented themselves in a just as imparting fashion.

**That's one thing I really loved about this book.** Overall this book was a good read and I **thoroughly** enjoyed it.

#### **NOW I LEAVE YOU WITH A LOVELY QUOTE FROM HENRY TO ATTEST HIS ENDEARING CHARACTER:**

I have always viewed the world...differently. I am in full possession of my faculties, but where others see the lines and shapes that form letters and numbers, I see colors, patterns, personalities. I can infer from its rounded loop that the letter "p" is a pushover, and I can ascertain from the structure of the word "June" that it is both yellow and serene.

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#### **Erin \*Proud Book Hoarder\* says**

There's always an automatic, free-pass-given brownie point bonus when the protagonist is a book lover, because – seriously - as a reader, reading stories about characters who obsess with books makes sense – especially when they have to use books in the adventure at hand.

The Camelot Shadow focuses on Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam, a man who not only loves reading, but who loves collecting valuable tomes (he blows me out of the running with that since I only indulge in cheap books.) The story is a historical Arthurian fantasy adventure type, something I have little experience with. It seems everyone in the world but me knows about King Arthur and tales surrounding, to the point where there is even a fantasy sub-division named about him.

Even though I know little about it, I found the subject interesting as it unraveled; it wasn't too out there for me to grasp. There are a few hints and jabs in the wrong directions to leave the reader a few surprises, and the historical feel is one that slowly twists and reveals as you go through the motions with the main character. It's multiple POV, yet thankfully the shift changes only when needed, staying mainly in Lord Alfred's head.

Alfred was likeable – he was older, enjoyed keeping to himself, a sympathetic friend, intellectual type who remained humble. His best friend was a favorite of mine, the bookseller who had more up his sleeve than he was showing. The villain was creepy, unusual, and made even more interesting because of the other semi-villains he surrounded himself with. And Trusty John was just awesome, really, that's all there is to say about him.

What made the book so enjoyable wasn't so much the day old power-struggle of good and evil, but the political machinations that kept popping up in both the good and bad circles. Some people change face later, some hesitate, some follow because they're misled, and others stay so loyal throughout that they fit the definition of fanaticism.

It's a slower novel, which works since the plot is directed by scholarly types. Instead of getting an excitable, energetic adventurer, we get a man who can't resist the lure of this mystery and the potential hope it holds for his wife. I loved Sean Gibson's writing style - I think it fit the historical time period and this sort of adventure ideally.

The Camelot Shadow has layers of intrigue, some epic battles, intelligent twists, and characters who stand out and stand up. Recommended.

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### **Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

[www.melissa413readsalot.blogspot.com](http://www.melissa413readsalot.blogspot.com)

I was given a copy of this book by the author for an honest review.

OMG! This book was so sad. Hmm, maybe I shouldn't have started off with that :) The sad things are the people that die and the fact that Alfred is looking to cure his wife Ellen. Poor man almost drinks himself to death.

An evil man named Nigel and somewhat normal people come to Alfred saying his wife can be cured if he helps them find Excalibur. Yep, that's what I said. They say it has the healing abilities to cure his wife, so even though Alfred is skeptical, he is on this crusade like a dog with a bone!

Some of my favorite characters were Trusty John, Will and Stephen.

I loved the atmosphere of the book, all of the background the author put into the book. I felt like I was in Alfred's library at times or outside looking in from the beautiful grounds that I imagined.

There were even some undead in the book :) I thought that was a really good edition to the story. Ok, I have to add a \*\*SPOILER\*\* Especially when Trusty John kills one of the bad guys and remarks he guesses he

will have to kill him again when he gets brought back as a zombie and has to fight him all over again. :)

The Epilogue is both comical and sad at the same time. I hope Alfred gets better.

The story is very rich in history of Camelot or more so Arthur, Merlin and the gang. I enjoyed it and I look forward to any more books from this author!

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### **Anne says**

Is there anyone who doesn't secretly love stories about King Arthur and Camelot?

So I've been curious about this story for a while, but I avoided it because Sean is a good friend.

**I mean, he named his daughter after me, that's how close we are!**

*Not really. Total coincidence. Roll with it, though, because I like to feel special.*

Anyway, when it popped up in my feed again the other day, I caved in and added it. So, of course, Sean (because he knows how cheap I am) offered to gift it to me. His only stipulation was that if I trashed his book, I had to make the review funny.

About 4% into the book, I was trying to come up with Knock-Knock jokes.

*Knock-knock.*

*Who's there?*

*Imma.*

*Imma who?*

*Imma pretty sure Sean's gonna de-friend me after this review.*

**\*rim shot\***

Here's the thing, I don't like books that are full of unnecessary description. And as the main character was being introduced, I started getting bogged down by descriptive prose.

*The blowing wind made him grateful for the warm glow that emanated from the library's fireplace, an antique structure surrounded by a bronze relief that depicted a parade of ancient gods. In the evening, the fire would cast shadows across the wall, presenting a fierce struggle worthy of those same gods, one that raged until the blaze had burned itself out.*

Ok, after reading that, some of you are looking at me like, **What's wrong with you?! That's beautiful writing!**

But then some of you, my brothers and sisters in the **Move-It-The-Hell-Along** sect, are nodding your heads and grimacing.

My version of those same sentences?

*Brrr. It's cold. Thank fuck I lit a fire.*

**Boom!** Done.

For those of you who are like me, I want to point out that this is only an issue in the first chapter. After that, shit starts happening.

*I have a sneaking feeling that Sean's son stole his purple crayon back, and probably drew something Refrigerator-worthy with it. Thank you, Henry!*

Ok. The second problem I had when I started didn't have anything to do with the writing *or* story. I was actually just having a hard time taking *anything* Sean wrote seriously. See, he & I both belong to the same comic book club. Now, the other members & I like to think we're getting together to chat about *graphic novels*, but the reality is that most of what we talk about is simply depraved nonsense.

*Would you like an extra pat of butter on that blue waffle?*

And Sean is just as twisted as the rest of us, which makes him about as mature as a queef joke. **How do you read a book written by a walking queef!?**

One of the characters would start to say something important, and my mind would send me off-path.

Suddenly, I'm thinking about something ridiculous that Sean had said about creme filled donuts.

*Heh. Lady creme...*

Anyway. At first, it was hard to stay on track.

But then something weird happened about 9% of the way into this sucker.

**I fucking forgot about Sean!**

He just sort of disappeared from my mind, and I totally got into the story.

I should mention that this is set in the...

Um? Well, whenever Victoria was queen of England.

\*cough\*

**Whatever!** It'll come to me, *eventually*.

Alfred and Will are two middle-aged friends who've known each other for most of their lives. Alfred is a happily married noble, kind of an introvert, and (most importantly) he's one of the premier experts on the Arthurian legend. Will is a respected bookseller, confirmed bachelor, and all-around fun guy.

Despite their differences, they're pretty much BFF's.

Ok, Alfred's wife is dying, and he's heartbroken that he can't save her. So, when a shady dude claiming he's from a secret agency within the British government corners him at a party and tells him that they need his help to locate King Arthur's scabbard (which is reported to have healing properties), Al can't help but jump on board.

Alfred confides his plans in Will and takes off to meet a mysterious figure named Nigel.

**Right off the bat, you know Nigel is *not* what he seems...**

In my head, I'm screaming for Alfred to get the hell away from this guy.

*He's nefarious! Noooo! Don't get bedazzled by his powers!*

**Run, man! RUN!**

But, it turns out, *Will* is not entirely what he seems, either. I don't want to spoil anything, but he knows more than he lets on about *stuff*, and he begins working desperately behind the scenes to protect his friend.

Now, I'm not an expert on Camelot, so I have no idea about whether the legends used were accurate, or whether Sean just made all that shit up, but it sounded legit when I was reading it. I gobbled it up, and that's all that really mattered.

This was a surprisingly *good* story! I mean, just the fact that the main characters were ~~old guys~~ mature men and not 20somethings was a total bonus for me. I'm so sick and tired of everything revolving around youth like somehow you never do anything fun or adventurous after you turn 35.

**Horseshit! It rocks to get older!**

Alright. **That ending.** What. The. Fuck.

Seriously, Sean? *Seriously?* That shit is not going to fly, pal. I mean, I *get it*. It was a total **dude-ending**.

Bro-hug, keep a stiff upper lip, take a drink, and squint your eyes to find the tiny sliver of light at the end of the tunnel.

No! No way. I want a sequel! I *need* these two to go on a few more adventures before they hang it up.

**Get on it!**

Anyway, this was just a great buddy-adventure with a pinch of magic thrown in for good measure. It had pretty much everything I look for in a book. I still can't believe it didn't suck. I mean, it's *not* some crappy indie turd that my friend banged out on his tablet! Color me shocked.

Now, come here and pull my finger, Sean...

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**Sean Gibson says**

(Updating to add a second third-party review...it's not just me who thinks this is the cat's pajamas, people!

Though, honestly, it seems like a digital pseudo-historical fantasy/mystery would probably make for pretty poor cat pajamas, and, frankly, in my experience, cats aren't huge fans of wearing pajamas, so let's just treat "cat's pajamas" as a figure of speech rather than as a literal concept, shall we?)

Reviewed by Katelyn Hensel for Readers' Favorite

In *The Camelot Shadow*: A Novel by Sean Gibson, you'll embark on an epic quest with Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam. Much of his time has been spent in reclusive activities such as caring for his bedridden wife and reading. His world is torn asunder with the mysterious visit from a secret society member, seeking his help to find a lost Arthurian artifact. Much like the proverbial Holy Grail, this artifact is said to grant healing powers, powers that could save his dying lady and allow them precious time together.

This is the kind of historical fiction that gives the genre a good name! It's not just a sensible maid being seduced by a dastardly devil of a lord. No, there is much more to *The Camelot Shadow* than meets the eye and I believe that it's the sort of fiction that makes you remember it long after you're finished. The characters were great together, whether nefarious or not, and they all had great banter/dialogue and chemistry with one another.

I'm going to be bluntly honest. I LOVED this book. Sean Gibson is a master crafter of plot twists, secrets and mystery. Paired with the austere and iconic imagery of Victorian London, this book thrills from page one to the final close of the cover. I enjoyed the reading experience so much that I immediately went to Goodreads to find out if Sean had any other books, and to my dismay he did not. My final comment is to Sean: Get writing so that I can continue reading your books! *The Camelot Shadow* is a great read, full of thrills and gritty characters that remind you of folks you know.

Reviews by Michelle Stanley for Readers' Favorite

*The Camelot Shadow* is a historical novel by Sean Gibson. Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam, an authority on Anglo-Saxon history, receives an unusual request to assist James Nigel in searching for King Arthur's scabbard that held his sword, Excalibur. He doubts that Camelot really existed, but agrees to help after learning of the scabbard's healing powers that could save his dying wife. Although the mission is top secret, Lord Alfred confides in his best friend, Will Upton, a rare book dealer who decides to accompany him on the mission. Will has his own hidden motives for joining the search team, but so does the detached Brendan Quinn, who works for James Nigel. His job is to watch and report the activities of the team, and eventually eliminate all witnesses who learn of the scabbard's existence.

*The Camelot Shadow* by Sean Gibson is an intriguing historical novel that absorbed my attention. It is well-written, and the author's spin on the legend of King Arthur is terrific. This is a story with great visuals, enabling readers to see and feel every bit of the action and emotions of these interesting "love me or hate me" characters. I like Lord Alfred, a strong, fair-minded man who has difficult decisions to make regarding the scabbard and his wife. The dialogue is sharp and expressive, with sufficient mirth from some characters. I think the twists are very good, and I gained knowledge of druids and their practices as Sean Gibson elaborated on this through his writing.

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### Miriam says

First, the requisite disclaimer: I am a friend of the author. It is a friendship born of goodreads. I do not have

to worry that he will disinvite me from his next orgy or throw a Molotov cocktail through my window if I say something mean about his book (which I won't).

I enjoyed this story. Don't be misled by the number of months it took me to complete this. If it had been in print format I would have finished it in a day or two. However, I look at text on the computer all day for a living and don't really feel like reading more on the screen in my free time. Also, reading on the screen tends to switch my brain into edit mode, which makes material less enjoyable. Related, I'll mention as an aside that I found only two typos, both extremely minor, which is better than many professionally published works manage.

In terms of language, I would put this somewhere near the middle of the historical fiction spectrum, with one end being authors who attempt (more often than not unsuccessfully) to replicate the formality of historical prose and the other by those who are writing what is essentially a contemporary story and characters in costumes. Gibson avoids anachronistic language but doesn't try to imitate the linguistic formality or convoluted sentences of, say, Dickens or, God forbid, Henry James. I'd compare the prose most closely to that of informal letters exchanged between Victorian friends, if you've ever read any of those. In fact, it reminded me a bit of painter Burne Jones's bantering conversations with his friends, as recorded by his assistant Rooke. Just needs some caricatures in the margins.

Quieter passages of bibliophile research, train travel, and historical conversation alternate with action: sneaking, stabbing, and skullduggery abound. Some of the murders and fights are pretty violent, although not to such an extent that I'd expect them to bother anyone who wasn't particularly squeamish about such things. I myself am not a fan of physical horror, and none of the violence disturbed me, although a couple of deaths did make me go, "ahhh, boo!"

I would say that this would make a fun movie, except they would make all the characters 30 years younger, hot, and kick-ass, and then it would be nothing like the original.

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**Karlyflower \*The Vampire Ninja, Luminescent Monster & Wendigo Nerd Goddess of Canada (according to The Hulk)\* says**

*Karly's Authors Who Rock Challenge*

Buddy-read with my girl, Jess, for sometime in August.

(Oh wait, he's already done that.... by choice.)

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**Dino-Jess ★ The Book Eating Dinosaur ★ says**

Dear Sean,

When I was growing up and my parents would make weird things for dinner (and by weird I mean stuff like red wine stew that my young taste buds could not yet appreciate) I came up with a politically correct way of saying I didn't like it, and that phrase was "*It's not my favorite.*" This, or simply drowning whatever was put in front of me with tomato sauce, was a sure fire way of telling my parents not to make that concoction again.

Since I do not want to douse my e-reader with tomato sauce, I'm going to have to say that much like red wine stew to 10 year old me, *this book was not my favorite.*

To be brutally honest, for the first 50% of this book, the only thing that kept me reading, was the promise of another Nicolas Cage worthy quote to put in my reading progress. There were so many characters, so many point of views, and yet nothing seemed to be happening. This was me for most of the first half of the book:

I had to set myself little goals to keep reading, and when I got to those goals, my reward was a Nicolas Cage picture. YAY.

At about page 200, things started to ramp up and I was excited to see what would happen. And bloody hell Sean, this is also about the time you turned into George R.R. Martin on us, is no character of yours safe?

While I understand now, that the first half of the book was setting up all the information and drama needed to unfold the epic finale, there were times when I nearly gave up reading, because I was worried that although all of this back story and set up was beautifully written, it wasn't ever going to end up getting us anywhere.

Truth be told, I wanted more Beaumont. I wanted more Trusty John. They were excellent in a creepy and psychopathic way. I loved Henry. What a character! I also enjoyed Alfred and Will's relationship, but Alfred's inability to ever press for answers became rather annoying, I am all for keeping up appearances, but his often *quixotic* nature was self detrimental most of the time.

This story had a little bit of everything in the end, it had adventure, it had intrigue, it had heartbreak and it really left me reeling at some points at the end there.

The best thing about this book is its writing. Sean, you really do have a way with words. Sure, you sometimes use too many, they are purple as fuck and I often had to google the meaning of some things, but overall this is a well written tale.

I feel like I gained brain cells with every paragraph I read of this, whereas I lost brain cells for every paragraph I read of this alien smut.

What this boils down to is that it's not you, Camelot Shadow, it's me. I like paranormal romance, creepy stalker books and alien smut. And while there are some supernatural elements at play here and the plot was driven by Alfred's desire to cure his ill wife, in the end, ***it's not my favorite***.

While this was not my cup of tea, I'm sure there are many out there who will enjoy this Sherlockian adventure tale with an Arthurian twist.

A lovely addition to my Indie August Challenge.

### **3 fridays-are-very-agreeable-days Stars**

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*I am friends with Sean here on Goodreads. This in no way affected the rating I have given.*

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### **Evgeny says**

Personally I think the legend of King Arthur and Camelot is beaten to the death and beyond. Everybody and their brother did a telling/retelling/re-imagining/reboot of it. Take an undisputed classic of US literature Mark Twain: he wrote A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. Disney created The Sword in the Stone. Feminist literature: Marion Zimmer Bradley's The Mists of Avalon. A video game Final Fantasy VII has a powerful summoning spell called Knights of the Round which makes a short work on the final boss. When I was looking for fantasy written in French one of the first suggestions was René Barjavel's L'Enchanteur. Honestly I became bored with the theme a long time ago.

Here came The Camelot Shadow. Fortunately the actual story of that time only took a couple of pages: prologue. Fast forward to Victorian Britain. Lord Alfred Fitzwilliam had a great library on the subject of King Arthur. He also had a terminally ill wife. One seemingly unremarkable day he received an offer to help find some of the Arthur's lost artifacts. This would obviously imply that the guy really existed. Not only that, one of the said artifacts allegedly had miraculous healing properties (it was NOT Excalibur, by the way).

Alfred was desperate enough to try anything to have a chance of saving his wife's life so he grabbed at that straw.

What followed was the thriller resembling works of Dan Brown with some supernatural elements set in Victorian times. While the plot moves at steady and somewhat slow pace there are quite a few action scenes to keep the boredom away. Some of the characters were great: Alfred for example; how can you not like a fellow reader?

Alfred's closest friend Will I was not too crazy about though: let me just say that with the friends like this Alfred surely did not need any enemies.

The final rating is 4 stars; no more, no less. This is exactly what you would expect from a historical thriller where a long-dead past came to haunt the decedents.

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