

SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE *A Shadow In Summer*
AUTHOR Daniel Abraham
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COVER ART Stephane Martiniere

This novel is the first in **The Long Price Quartet** series of which three are published the fourth to come out in 2009. It is a fantasy novel although the only fantasy element is that of the andat who is a non-human construct that affects the world around them such as helping crops grow and such. I hesitate to call the andat a god because it does not appear to be omnipotent.

The story is about Otah, a young man from a influential family who is expected to become a poet. Poets are one of the highest callings and the highest-level poets control the andats. Otah chooses to drop out and go to the big city to become a laborer under an assumed name. He meets a girl, falls in love, and they both become involved in an intricate plot to discredit the leaders of the city and bring the Empire down on it. The plotters intend to monetarily gain from this. The plot is subverted by Amat, a strong woman who is the chief overseer for a trading house, the same house who ends up as a main conspirator. Amat is left out of the conspiracy but manages to find out and with much pain and help from Otah and others, saves the day. Amat turns out to be the most interesting character in the book.

I have a hard time assigning this story to an genre. As I mentioned it is barely fantasy, it isn't action-adventure; it's not even an alternate history - although it is obviously based on Asian culture. A romance is probably as good as anything, though the romance is not very intense. Overall, the story is just so-so, spending too much time on the gestures and scene painting and not enough on action. Abraham writes decent prose but the story never hooked me. I almost put it down after the first few chapters but I had expectations that were never met.

Considering the blandness of this novel, I am somewhat surprised the next two books in the series were published. I hope that they are better but I will not know because they are not on my list. Looking at Abraham's credentials on the web, he obviously writes well as he has many books and short stories published. Maybe this is just an aberration.

Rating 