

***Book Review: Sherlock Holmes and
the Case of the Bulgarian Codex***
By Tim Symonds

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A new 'Sherlock Holmes' novel has a lot to live up to. And frankly, I was not hopeful for this offering. As an avid Arthur Conan Doyle – and Holmes – fan, I was sceptical that anyone could match Conan Doyle's intellect whilst matching his fast-paced and gripping style. I was wrong. Symonds story could be described as a gripping yarn, which captured the essence of both Holmes and Watson very well.

The story in short; Holmes and his faithful sidekick were contacted by the mysterious and duplicitous Prince Regnant of Bulgaria, following the theft of an ancient and sacred manuscript. Holmes is tasked with finding the manuscript, and by extension preventing war. The lives of millions are in his hands.

So, plot set, the trusty duo set off for Bulgaria, travelling through beautifully described landscapes. As one would expect, the story is not as simple as it at first appears, and what follows is a tale of murder, greed, and vampires. There are the requisite unexpected twists and turns: A tale worthy of Holmes any day.

So, although I expected to be disappointed, I was not. The language Symonds employs is reminiscent of Conan Doyle, and really transports the reader on the journey. If I were to offer some small criticism, it would be that it feels as if the author is trying too hard to link the story to the earlier texts. But that would be all. And by halfway through this feeling is forgotten, as is the fact that this is not one of Conan Doyle's original offerings – so good is the dialogue and story telling.

A good test for me is, when you turn the last page, how do you feel? Glad or disappointed. I was definitely disappointed, as I was enjoying it so much I didn't want it to end.

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I haven't read Symonds first novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Dead Boer at Scotney Castle*. I will now, and very much hope Symonds keeps writing in this tradition, as this book is a worthy addition to the Holmes repertoire of tales.

I recommend it whole-heartedly to any Holmes fans.