

Sirgrus Blackmane Demihuman Gumshoe and The Dark-Elf

William Schlichter

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In William Schlichter's hilarious detective novel *Sirgrus Blackmane Demihuman Gumshoe and The Dark-Elf*, a dwarf solves a murder in a city that's rotting from within.

Prohibition has the city of Quarter firm in its grip. Rum flows in and bodies flow out, prompting private eye Sirgrus to the city's outskirts. There, he finds the body of his human partner, Mason, abandoned in the middle of a smuggling operation. Mason saved his life during the Great War, so Sirgrus vows to find the killer. Before long, he's swept up in a convoluted mess as the city's underworld fights to control the rum supply. Sirgrus finds more questions than answers as he faces his own painful demise.

The denizens of Quarter span the gamut of fantasy creatures. They include dwarves like Sirgrus and titanic rock monsters serving as mob goons. But magic is dying out, relegated to selective uses, as with mages employed by the government who wield arcane arts in the pursuit of justice. Veterans of the war suffer from horrific flashbacks, and modern life threatens to leave them behind. The world building is rich, letting unusual fantasy elements compete with realism, as with agents who use cars instead of dragons, and with revolvers that supplant wands.

Sirgrus's wittiness is in evidence while he's dodging bruising hits from massive trolls in his attempt to solve his friend's murder. His allies can't stand him, and his enemies can't wait for an opportunity to wipe him from the face of the earth. No one in the city is clean, and Sirgrus begins to suspect his partner hid more from him than he realized.

Sirgrus Blackmane Demihuman Gumshoe and The Dark-Elf is a unique blend of fantasy and noir that is, at turns, hilarious and painful.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May / June 2021)

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