

## **Zavant**

**Written by Gordon Rennie**

**Published by the Black Library**

**£5.99**

Fantasy readers who are searching for a book that captures the grim spirit and deadly intrigue of the Warhammer world can find what they want and more here.

Set in the capital city of the Empire, Altdorf, Zavant Lonniger and his Halfling manservant Vido set out to solve some of the most heinous crimes committed. Zavant is a mystic student of life and the arts whose subjects of interest vary from the nature of chaos to the understanding of affairs in the underworld of Altdorf. Tall and grim with piercing eyes, the sage uses his powers of deductive reasoning and ancient lore to defeat some of the most powerful foes of the Empire.

Much of his actions and methods used can be transposed on an earlier fictional character, Sherlock Holmes. Some people might find this irritating and unoriginal, but I love it and it fits true to the Warhammer world and the theme of sinister cults undermining civilization. I have not read any of Sherlock Holmes tales and cannot confirm anything to a degree but some of the other sources I have read confirm it does bear a striking resemblance.

The book consists of four short stories detailing Zavant's adventures in the Empire. It is hinted that he has traveled and worked on several cases in far off lands including Araby and Norsca, but no further information is supplied. The tales will be set forth here and I will give quick summaries of each and some commentary after each one for use in WFRP.

### **Part One: The Affair of the Araby Exhibit**

A break-in takes place at the Church of Sigmar Archives in the Araby Collection. An Emissary from the Grand Theogonist summons Zavant from his humble abode to investigate the theft. Later in the mystery Zavant and Vido discover a secret cult who are about to unleash a terrible evil upon the lands.

Many ideas reside here in this one story concerning Araby. One could build off several campaign ideas and lead a foolish party to the depths of Ancient Araby and Khermi. I think this is the most hastily written section of the book and could use some beefing up.

### **Part Two: The Case of the Morrsliebnacht Murders**

An ancient evil stalks the streets of Altdorf killing anyone or anything that gets in its path. Zavant and his trusty sidekick meet up with an Imperial Witch Hunter named Marius van Sandt and the Emperor's Assassin and personal bodyguard Vaul Steiner. Under direction from the 'Iron Graf' Otto von Bitternach, Lord Chamberlain spymaster and diplomat of the Emperor they set out to find the killer who is more than hair, muscle and fangs.

Some nice detail is included on the nature of the Empire and its political dealings and history. Also some good information lies within on the nature of Lycanthropy in the Warhammer World. This tale is better than the first one and has a fine twist at the end.

### **Part Three: The Case of the Tilean Widow**

Tracked by a Kislevite Witch Hunter, a Vampire and his servants make their way into the sewers of Altdorf to destroy the criminal empire in place. After a brief series of skirmishes with the Thieves Guild of Altdorf, the leader, Vesper Klasst turns to the

mystic sage Zavant to find and root out the new evil. But the plot gets complicated for the heroes when another servant of the dark comes upon the scene.

In this section one can find some background on the nature of types of vampires and witch hunter practices in Kislev. Also some insights into the criminal underground of Altdorf and Vido's past can be found within. I think that some WFRP players might find some of the events too much, but I like the way things developed and it has a good ending.

#### Part Four: The Case of the Twisted Man

A murder takes place deep within the heart of the church of Sigmar. In the scriptorium dormitory, the Chief Lector-Priest Comnenus find one of his flagellant brothers dead in a most horrible manner. Zavant is once again summoned to the Church's service. Clues and events lead the detective and his manservant to an old monastery set deep in the Drakwald forest named Alt Krantzstein. A chaos warband and a unit of Sigmar Templars named the Order of the Red Griffon become involved in a black plot of chaotic proportions whose outcome can only be determined by the actions of the sage and his servant.

Many ideas exist here for the Church of Sigmar and The foul pestilence god Nurgle. There are some ideas also on the flagellants who worship Sigmar and their saints. This is the best tale of the book. It is excellently written and has a nicely developed plot. I think the detailing is good and much can be said about the word flow and style. I look forward to reading more from this author.

I think this book deserves to be read and a lot of thought can be seen in the construction of this book. Many ideas and lots of character development showing that Zavant is more than a mediaeval Sherlock Holmes pastiche. I recommend this book highly as it stands out as a good example of what adventure is like in the "Grim World of Perilous Adventure". For a Black library book of pulp fiction there is a lot of promise. Seven out of Eight Arrow Rating

Richard Leon

[www.creative-fantasy-edge.com](http://www.creative-fantasy-edge.com)