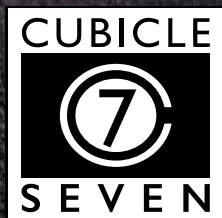


WARHAMMER
FANTASY
ROLE-PLAY

The Making of Power Behind the Throne
—By Graeme Davis



DEVELOPER
DIARY

THE MAKING OF POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

by Graeme Davis

Power Behind the Throne — **The Enemy Within Director's Cut, Volume 3** PDF is currently in development. While we continue to commission artwork and playtest the adventures, we wanted to share Graeme Davis's insights on creating the Director's Cut.

With such an evocative title it's hard not to be curious about what secrets dwell within **Power Behind the Throne!** Following on from the trials, hazards, and frustrated heroism of **Death on the Reik**, **Power Behind the Throne** delves deeper into the political machinations of The Empire which will feature much more heavily as **The Enemy Within** campaign progresses. Brimming with subterfuge, political manoeuvres and betrayal, the Characters are left wondering — just who is the true power behind the throne of Middenheim? Despite the city streets being draped in carnival colours, Middenheim is brimming with resentment and barely restrained outrage. Political machinations have brought old grudges to the fore. Whether Sigmarite or Ulrican, Dwarf or Human, Wizard or decent citizen, everyone has an axe to grind, and there is only so much that cheap ale and spectacle can paper over. The Characters must tread carefully through these tensions, with ever a careful eye cast over their shoulder, if they are to survive the events of **Power Behind the Throne!**

We asked Graeme Davis — the power behind the campaign — to reflect back to share the story behind the embryonic stages of the impressive campaign.

There is some disagreement about the origins of **Power Behind the Throne**, but the consensus is that it was not originally written for **WFRP**.



ART BY SAM MAULEY

In the mid-1980s, Carl Sargent was a researcher in psychology and parapsychology at Cambridge University. I teasingly called him the Peter Venkman of gaming, after Bill Murray's character in the movie *Ghostbusters*. By chance, Cambridge was where the publisher of **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** decided to establish its short-lived UK subsidiary, and Carl began gaming.

This is the point where memories become unreliable. I remember being told that Carl's gaming group included several people who later came to Games Workshop, including **Enemy Within** co-author Phil Gallagher and *White Dwarf* editor Paul Cockburn. Carl ran an adventure full of political intrigue titled something like 'Intrigue in Elyrria'. The adventure was successful and it was suggested that he rewrite it for **WFRP**, and the new **Enemy Within** campaign.

When I began working on the Director's Cut of **Power Behind the Throne**, I tried to confirm my memories with others who were there, hoping to get more details. But no one else remembered the story as I do. Sadly, Carl died in 2018, so there is no way to confirm the facts with him.

But really, all that matters is that Carl created an adventure that is packed with intrigue, and challenging for both GM and players. **Power Behind the Throne** is still revered, and I had a lot of fun developing it for the Director's Cut. Carl went on to write much more for **WFRP** – even taking over the running of Flame Publications after Mike Brunton and I left and for many other games from other publishers.

We wanted to make sure that **Power Behind the Throne** could be played separately with just the **WFRP** rulebook, but there was so much more to explore, and build, and expand on in Middenheim – so we did. The result was **Warhammer City**, a separate and much more extensive sourcebook on Middenheim that included contributions from almost everyone on Games Workshop's writing team. More on that later.

To the best of my knowledge, no one had ever attempted to publish an adventure like **Power Behind the Throne** before. The plot was so dense, with so many moving parts, and we knew that the GM was going to need some serious help. Developer Derrick Norton devised an excellent array of GM aids to solve the problem. There was a chart to keep track of the major events of Middenheim's famous Carnival, showing at a glance when and where each event took place and which of the major NPCs was in attendance. Each major NPC also had a schedule card of their own, so the GM could see where they would be at any given time — with space for the GM to write in any changes or additions to an NPC's schedule that might arise during the course of play. Given the importance of building up influence at the court of Graf Boris Todbringer, there was also a summary card giving basic details of all the major figures at court, including the amount of influence each could bring to bear on the party's behalf. Derrick gives his own account of developing **Power Behind the Throne** as one of the guest commentators in the **Power Behind the Throne Companion**.

Even with these, many of the GMs who had run **Power Behind the Throne** in the years since its first publication reported that it was hard work for the GM, so when I started to plan the Director's Cut, I aimed to make it easier without losing any of the depth and complexity that were so important to the original.

As with **Death on the Reik**, I found opportunities to re-order information so that it was easier to find in the heat of a gaming session, as well as making it easier to navigate your way around the book. I divided the adventure into accessible steps, and made sure that the timing and progression of events were as clear as possible.

There was also some work to do in providing a smoother transition from **Death on the Reik**, both within the narrative and in terms of power. The original campaign had jumped straight from escaping Castle Wittgenstein to approaching Middenheim, glossing over the fact that the party would be travelling half-way across the Empire. Luckily, I had a couple of existing resources to turn to.

The first was 'Carriage on the Reik,' which James Wallis had written for the Hogshead reprinting of the original **Power Behind the Throne**, was famous — or rather, notorious — for the brutal way in which the Characters lost their barge and were forced away from the river. James tells the full story in the guest commentary he provided for the **Death on the Reik Companion**. I used parts of that, and added a few gentler ways to lure the party into the overland journey to Middenheim.

There was also 'The Grapes of Wrath,' which Carl had written in answer to the same problem. It was first published in *White Dwarf* 98 (February 1988), shortly before **Power Behind the Throne** was released, and was reprinted in a compilation for **WFRP** 1st edition called *The Restless Dead*. Set just off the Altdorf to Middenheim road, this adventure gave the Characters a chance at some more experience but had little to do with the campaign's main plot.

I kept most of 'The Grapes of Wrath' back for the **Power Behind the Throne** Companion. By pure chance, it dovetailed nicely with the parts of 'Carrion up the Reik' that I had adapted into an optional B-plot for the **Death on the Reik Companion**, and allowed me to advance that storyline in a most satisfactory manner. Before Carl had settled on the title 'The Grapes of Wrath,' the adventure was known around the GW Design Studio as 'Flying Death Skulls' after its signature encounter. I went with that title, since I had made so many changes that the adventure was no longer just an update of 'The Grapes of Wrath.'

I found a lot more interesting material for the **Power Behind the Throne Companion**, too. A few sections were excerpted from the original, or from **Warhammer City**, taking care not to interfere with Cubicle 7's Middenheim sourcebook (PDF due for release 2020). There are some encounters and incidents set in the city, an interesting NPC who could replace a fallen Character, and an expanded look at the Graf's Garden Party, the social event of the Carnival. The Slaaneshi Cult of the Jade Sceptre receives the same treatment that the two previous Companions gave to the Purple Hand and the Red Crown, and the cult of Ulric is examined in detail. There is some information on Middenlander Characters, and how they differ from the Reikland Humans described in the **WFRP** rulebook. And there are a few other exciting elements that I won't divulge here. You'll just have to wait until the book comes out. Like its predecessors, the **Power Behind the Throne Companion** also has two guest commentaries. Derrick Norton's contribution has already been mentioned, and the second slot is a tribute to Carl Sargent by his long-time collaborator, Marc Gascoigne. Some of you may know that Carl dropped out of gaming in the mid-1990s and seemed to disappear, sparking a great deal of rumour and conjecture. Marc finally fills in the blanks.

To return to **Power Behind the Throne**, I also needed to do some work on the ending. It was rather abrupt in the original, not giving the Characters a clear path forward into the rest of the campaign. At the time, there was a very good reason for this: the rest of the campaign was in flux. When **Power Behind the Throne** was released, **The Horned Rat** — which was to have been next, according to the original plan — had been dropped in favour of Ken Rolston's *Something Rotten in Kislev*. That was still being written, and not enough was known about it to build substantial links into **Power Behind the Throne**.

This time, knowing that **The Horned Rat** would be next in the Director's Cut and having already prepared a detailed plan for Games Workshop's approval, the path was clearer and the ending could be made much more satisfactory. In fact, it is scarcely an ending at all, moving seamlessly into the start of **The Horned Rat** as... well, you'll have to wait and see!



ART BY SAM MOLEY

A LITTLE EXTRA BIT: DIETER HELSNICHT, THE DOOM LORD OF MIDDENHEIM

Dieter Helsnicht first appeared in *Warhammer* lore in 1994, in the *Undead* army book for the 4th edition of the *Warhammer* battle game. While this master necromancer did not achieve the notoriety of the Lichemaster Heinrich Kemmler, his legend lives on in Middenheim and its surroundings.

Characters who study the history of Middenheim, or listen to old stories, may learn Helsnicht's name and some parts of his story. Despite persistent rumours of his survival, he has not been seen since the Battle of Beeckerhoven some 13 centuries ago. Most believe Helsnicht is nothing more than an ancient legend. Though there may be a secretive group of necromancers who see him as their patron — and whose leader may claim to have studied under him — more on that later.

The search for his hidden fortress would make a deadly adventure on a par with venturing into the terrifying Castle Drachenfels. It is outside the scope of the **Enemy Within** campaign, though, but one to consider in the future. Even so, Helsnicht will be aware of the troubles afflicting the Empire, and he will doubtless be planning to take advantage of them. If your players are having too easy a time of it (they really shouldn't, but you never know) you might have him fly in on his Manticore to exact revenge on the city that expelled him. Or, you could have him add to the complications of **Empire in Ruins** when that is published, bursting out of the Forest of Shadows at the head of an Undead horde to attack all living forces within reach.



DIETER HELSNICHT

DIETER HELSNICHT

M	WS	BS	S	T	I	Agi	Dex	Int	WP	Fel	W
4	67	64	52	44	56	43	52	65	75	43	20

DIETER HELSNICHT'S STORY

A powerful Middenheimer wizard during the Age of Three Emperors, Helsnicht read the legends of Nagash and made the unholy pilgrimage to Nagashizzar. He returned to Middenheim a changed man, and it was only a matter of time before grim rumours led the authorities to his door.

Helsnicht escaped on the back of a Manticore, and it was widely thought that he established a hidden fortress deep in the Forest of Shadows, where he conducted his foul research and trained junior necromancers as apprentices. He returned a few years later at the head of an Undead army, ravaging the north and striking terror into the populace until he was stopped at the Battle of Beeckerhoven in 1244 IC. His Manticore fled the battlefield carrying his wounded body, which was never recovered.

Helsnicht survived his wound, and would threaten Middenheim and the north many more times from his secret fortress deep in the Forest of Shadows, mounted on his Manticore and carrying a Chaos Runesword. He became one of the world's most dreaded necromancers, and many deluded souls sought his tutelage.

Traits: Combat Aware 5 (as Talent), Commanding Presence (as Talent), Dark Vision, Fear 1, Leader (included in profile), Prejudice (the living), Spellcaster (Death, Necromancy), Weapon +9

Trappings: Manticore mount, Chaos Runesword, Staff of Flaming Death

Chaos Runesword: Dieter's cursed blade bears runes that add +10 to his WS and Strength when he attacks with it. It also gives him one additional attack per Round.

Staff of Flaming Death: This skull-topped staff can cast a *Screaming Skull* spell once per Round. It requires no casting roll necessary and there is no chance of a miscast or any other mishap.

Spells: Helsnicht knows any spell from the Lores of Necromancy or Death which seems convenient. He is particularly fond of rituals to raise new servants, often spending longer than is wise in preparation of such undead thralls. In battle, he is ferocious and unyielding, and will seek to slay his most powerful foes outright with a *Screaming Skull* spell or, failing that, the razor edge of his Chaos Runesword.

If you thought the sewers of Bogenhafen had a rancid stench — wait until your Characters have plumbed the fetid depths of Middenheim's ruling class! There are a lot of opportunities for your Characters to have more grim and perilous adventures in the favoured City of the White Wolf, including attending a lively carnival filled with fascinating characters. Watch out for exciting events, *fascinating* operas, and rare opportunities to ascend the Empire's intractable social structure. But most of all, watch your back.



DEATH ON THE REIK COMPANION UPDATE

Along with Graeme's excellent retrospective on the creation of **Power Behind the Throne**, we are also including some art for the upcoming **Death on the Reik Companion**. Along with a plethora of NPCs, encounters and optional rules, the **Companion** includes a River Bestiary of unique threats present on the Reik and other rivers of The Empire.

NAIADS

The near mythical Naiad are said to haunt certain stretches of the Reik. While otherwise educated scholars scoff at the idea of watery, almost ethereal spirits granting their favour and curses on a capricious whim. Poets have written volumes about the ever-changing beauty of the creatures, while more wary folk speak of the terrible aspects they adopt when angered. Indeed, it was once the fashion among certain romantic souls to search for a Naiad spouse in lonely stretches of the Reik. While most returned unfulfilled, a few are never seen again — whether this is due to their achieving marital bliss, or something more sinister, remains an open question.

AMOEBAE

Scholars at The Imperial Zoo are unclear if the large, ravenous Amoebae that stalk calmer sections of the Reik are examples of smaller creatures that have grown large due to their diet, environment, or the influence of Chaos, or if they are a distinct species that solely preys on larger creatures. Regardless, Amoebae are a known hazard deftly avoided by skilled Riverfolk, and a deathly hazard to unwary travellers. A few wreckers are rumoured to keep a handful of these creatures in a covered pit, throwing hapless victims to a terrible demise. The Amoebae dutifully excrete metal weapons, coin, teeth fillings and other valuables, which are collected by the wreckers at the end of each month.



Art by SIM MARLEY