



**Power Behind the Throne**  
**Published by Hogshead Publishing**  
**Reviewed by John Foody**

Hogshead's latest re-release is the much discussed and lauded *Power Behind the Throne*. However, this edition is not a straight reprint as it includes a new introductory scenario. Forming the third part of the *Enemy Within* campaign, *Power Behind the Throne* is seen by many as one of the best ever roleplaying scenarios. However, WFRP players often tend to rank it below *Shadows Over Bofenhagan* and *Death on the Reik*. In part this is because the scenario may be excellent in theory, but in practice can be difficult both to run and play. Indeed, even its greatest supporters agree that GMs need to be experienced before attempting to run it. The scenario, based in Middenheim, is a firmly city-based adventure, and the *Soucebook Middenheim: City of Chaos* grew from notes made by writer Carl Sargent during his development of *Power Behind the Throne*. The book, at 114 pages, is of Hogshead's usual high standard of production, although the front picture is somewhat misleading both about the nature of the scenario and, to some extent, WFRP. However, the original cover picture was not that good either and, as now, the internal art is variable.

*Power Behind the Throne* takes place some time after *Death on the Reik*. Indeed a much raised criticism is that there was little to connect the two scenarios. However, in this revised edition Hogshead have tried to address the issue by including the new fourteen page scenario, *Carrion up the Reik*. This has been written by James Wallis and illustrated by Russ Nicholson, who was responsible for the best of the art in the original release. Apart from the superb title, Hogshead promised that *Carrion up the Reik* would provide the "missing link" while keeping the essence of *The Enemy Within* campaign. It succeeds in this, particularly with regard to setting up plots for the promised re-write of *Empire in Flames*, while linking to earlier scenarios. Although little more than a small series of encounters, the roleplaying aspects of the scenario are strong, as is the atmosphere. Certainly *Carrion up the Reik* is firmly within the spirit of the *Enemy Within* and, indeed, makes no sense outside the campaign.

Don't forget to look out for the NPC Ruari Roddy, who is appearing as himself. At a previous Gaelcon Ruari placed the highest bid for a Hogshead donated prize: the chance to appear as yourself in a Warhammer scenario.

*Carrion up the Reik* brings the PCs to Middenheim and runs smoothly into *Power Behind the Throne*. They arrive in the city at the onset of carnival week, a week-long celebration famous across the Empire. However, all is not well: new taxes are alienating whole (and influential) sections of the population, placing the city itself in grave danger. A plot is slowly revealed to the characters, mostly through their own actions. The PCs are required to interact with everyone, from the city's great-and-good to the criminal scum. Events unfold with ever-increasing speed and, should they delay, the plot continues without them. All these plots lead back to an old enemy and an interesting and powerful villain. The climax to the adventure is dramatic indeed, although it may be overly structured for some tastes. However, most players are unlikely to notice this in the excitement.

It is in the treatment of NPCs where it comes into its own. These are essential to the whole

scenario and a lot of space is given to their development. This is done well and they, with the exception of one or two, are interesting and colourful. One in particular may be seen as a little too obvious and over the top but I'm sure many GMs will play him with gusto. As with all the previous *Enemy Within* books, there is a good deal of guidance and advice for GMs. However, there could be more, especially in advice on likely player actions. Inexperienced GMs, or those who have players who are not used to taking the initiative, may well struggle. There are few trigger events to push the PCs or the plot along. The GM is required to be fully confident with the adventure, especially the motivations and goals of the numerous NPCs, juggling them all as PCs criss-cross the city from one meeting to another. There is a danger that those who are ill-prepared may end up umming and ahing far too much for comfort. The biggest problem with the adventure is that there is no obvious entry point, especially if players are particularly mercenary in their outlook. GMs would be advised to have a firm idea of how to guide the PCs towards the action should they be lacking ideas.

At the rear of the book there is a selection of cut-out character cards which detail what the important NPCs are doing at set times during the scenario's timeline. Personally this seems a little pointless, and the amount of pages used on this is a little wasteful. Such information could have been summarised far more usefully and efficiently elsewhere.

Another summary chart, The Master Attractions Table, manages this very well. The few player handouts serve their purpose without any thrills.

There is absolutely no description of the consequences if the PCs should fail in their quest. This is an important omission. The price of failure should always be detailed as its possibility looms. This is a common problem running throughout the entire *Enemy Within* campaign: it is assumed that everything will work out OK. However, this is the grim world WFRP, and things forever go wrong. When they do, failure has a price and one that should dramatically effect the future parts of the *Enemy Within* campaign and the Empire.

Overall, *Power Behind the Throne* is an excellent adventure, but is not the best scenario that the *Enemy Within* has to offer. However, I endorse much of what has been said by others before: only experienced players and GMs are going to get to get through without too much difficulty. If the scenario is to be run as it stands, I would recommend tackling it in one long session in order to keep the momentum. It is atmospheric, and I would say the best example I have seen of what a city based scenario should be. It makes a worthy addition to the *Enemy Within* Campaign, especially with the inclusion of the *Carrion up the Reik* scenario. However, if you already own *Power Behind the Throne* this isn't enough to justify purchasing this expanded edition. Also, if you intend to play the whole *Enemy Within* campaign in the future, I would recommend waiting for the re-release of the revised *Empire in Flames* (under the title *Empire in Chaos*) before launching into this section. From here on in, there's no turning back...