

WARHAMMER
FANTASY
ROLE-PLAY

The Making of The Horned Rat
— By Graeme Davis



DEVELOPER
DIARY

THE MAKING OF THE HORNED RAT

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'Rats! Nonsense! Only the feeble minded, or the insane would believe the tales of ratmen living under the city. A throne you, say, what folly. Whoever heard of a regal rat.'

If it's complex investigations, assassinations, assignments, double-crossing, and double-dealing you're after then look no further. **The Horned Rat** is an adventure like no other. It's true what they say, 'you are never 6 feet away from a rat', but in Altdorf and Middenheim, the rats are closer... much closer. Not only will they get under your feet, they'll shadow your every move. So lock up your cat, grab your coat and get moving. Let Morrnsleib's light guide you on your adventure.

Warning: Adventurers with musophobia need not apply! Steel wool, peppermint oil, and a feral cat will not save you from the encounters with ratmen, or free the place of vermin. Turn back.

The Horned Rat has been a long time coming. It was originally conceived by Phil Gallagher as the next **Enemy Within** adventure after **Power Behind the Throne**. When work on **The Enemy Within** began in mid-1986, the Skaven had just been added to the *Warhammer* canon. The *Third Citadel Journal* included a detailed article on the ratmen, a Skaven painting guide by none other than John Blanche, and a tie-in scenario to the *Terror of the Lichemaster* boxed campaign for *Warhammer* 2nd edition by Rick Priestley, which pitted a Skaven force against the Lichemaster and other foes. The ratmen were a fascinating new faction, and it made sense to use them in **WFRP** as well.

Some time in between writing the original *Enemy Within* sourcebook and adventure (now part of **Enemy in Shadows**) and planning **Death on the Reik**, Jim and Phil put together a multi-page proposal for the campaign, listing the planned instalments and summarising the contents of each. The last two titles were **The Horned Rat** and **Empire in Flames**. When we came to develop **Warhammer City** alongside the first edition of **Power Behind the Throne**, someone (probably Jim or Phil) reinforced the proposed titles by writing an adventure hook in which a prophecy name-checks them all:

'I see darkness gathering around a walled town — Shadows Over Bögenhafen! I see the Lord of Death astride a great river — Death, on the Reik! I see a hooded evil behind the seat of a once mighty lord — a Power Behind the Throne!

I see The Empire in Flames! The Horned Rat doth sit on the Imperial throne! It is all written in the Book of Changes. Yea, Chaos' most determined enemies shall prove its greatest servants. The Enemy is Within!

- *Warhammer City*, page 83

This six-part campaign proved overly ambitious for the time, however. **WFRP** was new and had yet to gather the popularity it would come to enjoy. Rather than pursue this initial seed of an idea for the campaign, the renowned American RPG writer Ken Rolston was commissioned to create the next part of **The Enemy Within**. His adventure **Something Rotten in Kislev** took the next **WFRP** slot in the schedule, edging out **The Horned Rat**.

Reluctant to let go of a good title, a *Realm of Chaos* supplement for **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay** was proposed. There had long been talk of a **WFRP** adventure to support the two *Realm of Chaos* volumes, in which the Players would control a band of Chaos Warriors. The Skaven made a natural foe for them, and **The Horned Rat** was the perfect title. Sadly, this never came to fruition.

Fast forward to October 2014. I was invited to an classic Warhammer event in Maryland. I was living just a couple of hours' drive away at the time, and decided to go. Phil was also there, having moved to Maryland with Games Workshop years before. It was the first time we'd met in 24 years! Naturally our talk turned to memories of Games Workshop and **The Enemy Within**. A few months later, Phil agreed to be interviewed for my blog, and we compared what we remembered of **The Horned Rat**.

There were Skaven, obviously. And Morrslieb featured prominently. In part, this was because the Skaven are obsessed with Warpstone (Jes Goodwin invented it while creating them), and Morrslieb is a colossal chunk of the stuff. There we inevitable jokes about rats and jovial comparisons between warpstone and green cheese, and the hope of somehow pulling them off in print. The Skaven were either going to Morrslieb to mine it for Warpstone, or they were planning to pull it down on top of the Old World. And that was about as far as anyone had got.

A couple more years passed, in the middle of 2017 I heard that Cubicle 7 was planning a fourth edition of **WFRP**. When Dom McDowall proposed that I put together a Director's Cut of the **Enemy Within** campaign I knew that **The Horned Rat** had to be a part of it. There was just one small problem: it didn't exist.

I quickly gathered everything I could about the Skaven, whose lore has expanded considerably since 1988. There have been *Warhammer* army books, campaigns, novels, assorted video games, the deliciously atmospheric *The Loathsome Ratmen and All Their Vile Kin*, the **WFRP** 2nd edition supplement *Children of the Horned Rat*. . . And miniatures — so many miniatures. Looking through all that information with Phil's original idea in mind, a plan quickly came together. It had been more than a decade since I last created something for **WFRP** from scratch, but it worked. It had it all: action, adventure, intrigue, bad jokes, many references to the established Skaven lore and history, and, of course, the potential for painful and embarrassing death. I'll say no more than that for fear of spoilers.

Now I knew that I had created a work of genius, it just remained to convince Cubicle 7 and Games Workshop — thankfully they agreed with my assessment. As I had done for the previous episodes in the Director's Cut, I planned a Companion full of extras old and new. There's updated and expanded information on the Skaven, of course, and a profile of the nihilistic, Skaven-worshipping Cult of the Yellow Fang. There's a guide to the Middle Mountains, where much of the action takes place, and a short bestiary of new monsters that can be encountered there. There is a re-tooled version of an encounter I wrote for *White Dwarf* back in 1991; relocated to the Middle Mountains from its original setting in the vaults. And, of course, I continued the B-plot adventure series that began in the **Death on the Reik Companion**. I chuckle as I imagine just how sick the Players will be of a particular NPC by now.

So, 34 years after it was first proposed, **The Horned Rat** is finally real. The team at Cubicle 7 has done their usual bang-up job of development and production, polishing my raw text and pairing it with jaw-droppingly beautiful art and clear, accessible layout to make yet another volume worthy of the name Director's Cut. If you're new to **WFRP** and **The Enemy Within**, I hope you'll enjoy it. If you're familiar with the original campaign, I hope you'll agree that **The Horned Rat** lives up to the standard of the rest. I know I enjoyed writing it.



Art by JC O'Donoghue



A FEW EXTRA BITS

The **Horned Rat** and the **Horned Rat Companion** include some Skaven spells and items. But as so many have been published over the years, in various sources, that I had to be rather selective. Here are a few that didn't make the cut. I hope you'll find them useful, or at least interesting.

SKAVEN MAGIC

Earth Crack

CN: 10

Range: Willpower Bonus Yards x 3

Target: Area of Effect (Special, see below)

Duration: Permanent

The caster stamps his pinkish foot, and the very ground splits asunder. A crack appears in the ground at the caster's feet and runs a straight line 2-yd wide in any direction the caster chooses. Any creatures in its path must make a **Challenging (+0) Dodge** Test to leap out of the way. Those who fail suffer a 5-yd fall and remain in the crack until they climb or are lifted out.

Buildings (or a single section for larger structures) collapse on a 1d10 roll of 9+, leaving difficult terrain behind (**Athletics** Test required to move faster than a walk). Any creatures inside a collapsing building must pass a **Dodge** Test or fall, gaining the *Prone* Condition, and suffering an additional 10-TB Wounds from falling rubble.

Lance of Pestilence

CN: 8

Range: Willpower Yards

Target: 1

Duration: Instant

The caster reads from the *Book of Woe*, directing a bilious emission of pestilence at the foe. This is a *magic missile* with a Damage of +6. In addition, targets struck by this attack must make a successful **Challenging (+0) Endurance** Test. If they succeed, there is no further effect. If they fail, consult the table below to determine the effect.

LANCE OF PESTILENCE

Negative SLs	Result
1	Attack is Infected (WFRP, page 340)
2-3	Attack is Diseased (Ratte Fever) (WFRP, page 187)
4+	Attack is Diseased (Black Plague) (WFRP, page 186)

If *Lance of Pestilence* reduces a target to 0 Wounds, it leaps to another target within the spell's initial range and within Willpower Bonus yards of the previous target — resolve these hits using the same roll made for the initial casting of the spell. It may leap a maximum number of times equal to your Willpower Bonus.



Aspect of the Horned Rat

CN: 6

Range: You

Target: You

Duration: Willpower Bonus Rounds

You seem to increase in stature, and your face twists into a vicious snarl as you take on the fearsome aspect of the Horned Rat himself. While the spell is active you gain the Traits *Belligerent*, *Fear 1*, and *Hatred* of all enemies. Add 1 level of *Fear* for every 2 SLs on the casting roll.

When the spell ends, make a successful **Challenging (+0) Endurance** Test or gain 1 *Fatigued* Condition.

Fight-Fight

CN: 6

Range: You

Target: Willpower Bonus Yards

Duration: Willpower Bonus Rounds

You gnash your teeth and shriek in Queekish, inspiring your Skaven allies with courage and ferocity, and strike fear into your enemies' hearts. For every SL on the casting roll, you may remove one *Broken* Condition from every Skaven ally within range. Also for every SL on the casting roll, you may give one *Broken* Condition to every enemy within range who fails a **Challenging (+0) Willpower** Test.

SKAVEN WEAPONS**Warpforged Blade**

Warpforged blades are infused with warpstone in the forging process. They can take many forms, including swords, daggers, and spears. They have the Qualities *Hack*, *Impact*, *Penetrating*, and *Unbreakable*, and their attacks count as Magical. However, every day spent carrying a Warpforged weapon counts as Minor exposure to Corruption for non-Skaven.

Blade of Nurglitch

Nurglitch I was the first of the Plague Lords of Clan Pestilens. He was responsible not only for their ascension as a clan and their seat on the Council of Thirteen, but also for the corruption that gnarls their bodies and marks their souls. Following his direction, the Plague Lords of Clan Pestilens enchant blades of this type, whose attacks bear the Infected trait (see *WFRP*, page 340).

Horned Rat Talisman

These tokens of devotion to the Horned Rat take many forms. They may be rat skulls, chunks of raw Warpstone, or any items bearing Skaven runes of power. The wearer gains Armour +1 on all hit locations, but non-Skaven suffer Minor exposure to Corruption for every day they wear the talisman. Yellow Fang cultists either welcome the Corruption, or do not care. Openly wearing a Horned Rat talisman will mark a Character as a Skaven cultist if the talisman is recognised.

For more info on the campaign, ignore the sound of chittering and scurry to our website while the moon is still high.

