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INTRODUCTION

Ashes of Middenheim is the first part of *Paths of the Damned*, an epic campaign series for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*. It follows on from *Through the Drakwald*, the introductory adventure in the second edition *WFRP* rulebook, and is intended for characters in their first or second careers.

In this adventure, the adventurers have arrived in Middenheim shortly after it survived a long and bloody siege by the forces of Chaos (see **The Storm of Chaos** on p. 6). The City of the White Wolf still bears the scars of that conflict, and many of its buildings and districts are damaged.

Arriving at Middenheim, the adventurers stumble upon a deadly plot intended to bring down the city from within and plunge the Empire into civil war. Unless they can uncover the conspirators and stop their deadly plan, the Empire will be torn apart, and left unable to resist fresh assaults by the forces of Chaos.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Paths of the Damned: Ashes of Middenheim consists of the following sections:

After the Storm describes the condition of Middenheim after the forces of Chaos are forced back from its walls. Although they lost the siege, the hordes of Chaos still infest the forests and mountains of Middenland. Imperial forces are hunting them down, led by Graf Boris Todbringer and the high priest Ar-Ulric. With them have gone the bulk of the city's fighting strength, including the Knights Panther and the Knights of the White Wolf. In their absence the scarred city is defended by the watch, as supplemented by an assortment of district militias, and an ad-hoc committee appointed by the Graf rules it. Inside the city entire districts have been damaged by attacks from above or Chaos cultists from within; repairs are underway, but even now no-one is sure that the tunnels and caverns that lie beneath the city have been cleared of enemies.

Chapter 1: Rats in the Walls opens the adventure with the PCs being implicated in a murder. To make matters worse, a holy relic they brought to the city for safekeeping has mysteriously disappeared. The adventurers must fight to clear their names, and stop a dire threat to the city's security.

Chapter 2: The Shrine in the Forest sees the adventurers rewarded for their efforts with a secret mission: to find and explore the long-lost tomb of a great Champion of Chaos from the days of Magnus the Pious. A powerful Chaos artefact buried with him must be brought back to Middenheim to keep it out of the hands of the Beastmen and worse creatures that roam the dark and dangerous inner groves of the Drakwald forest.

Chapter 3: Deadly Cargo faces the adventurers with a problem. Having recovered the artefact, they have to get it safely back to Middenheim. This is no easy task when every follower of Chaos for dozens of miles around is answering the psychic call of this powerful relic. Perhaps worse, the adventurers must wrestle with their own baser natures as the relic tempts them with promises of an easy road to power.

Chapter 4: The Unquiet Death sees another murder, but this time the adventurers are not suspected. However, they must find and stop a crazed Chaos-worshipper from poisoning the entire city. It becomes obvious that not all the Chaos cultists in Middenheim were discovered and executed by Imperial witch hunters during and after the siege; some evidence suggests that there are still followers of Chaos in high places in the City of the White Wolf.

Chapter 5: Panic in the Streets doesn't allow the adventurers any time to bask in their success, however. An acquaintance has been arrested and charged with witchcraft, and they must race against time to find crucial evidence before the trial.

Chapter 6: Trial of Fire opens with the witch-trial, but ends with a startling revelation that could lead to a devastating religious schism within the Empire—just at a time when it needs to maintain its unity in order to survive.

Chapter 7: Corruption's Journey leads the adventurers to the conclusion that the situation in Middenheim is more complex than it seems. The relic of Chaos that they brought to the city is not safe there, and a way must be found to destroy it. The answer may lie in the great library of Middenheim's famed Collegium Theologica—but first, they have to get there...

Chapter 8: The Truth Will Out brings the adventurers to the heart of the conspiracy. They must defeat powerful cultists and a mighty Daemon to destroy the relic and save the city. Even as they do so, they find that they have barely scratched the surface of an Empire-wide plot to foment civil war and turn the scattered forces of Chaos from the hunted to the hunters. The campaign continues in *Paths of the Damned: Spires of Altdorf*.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

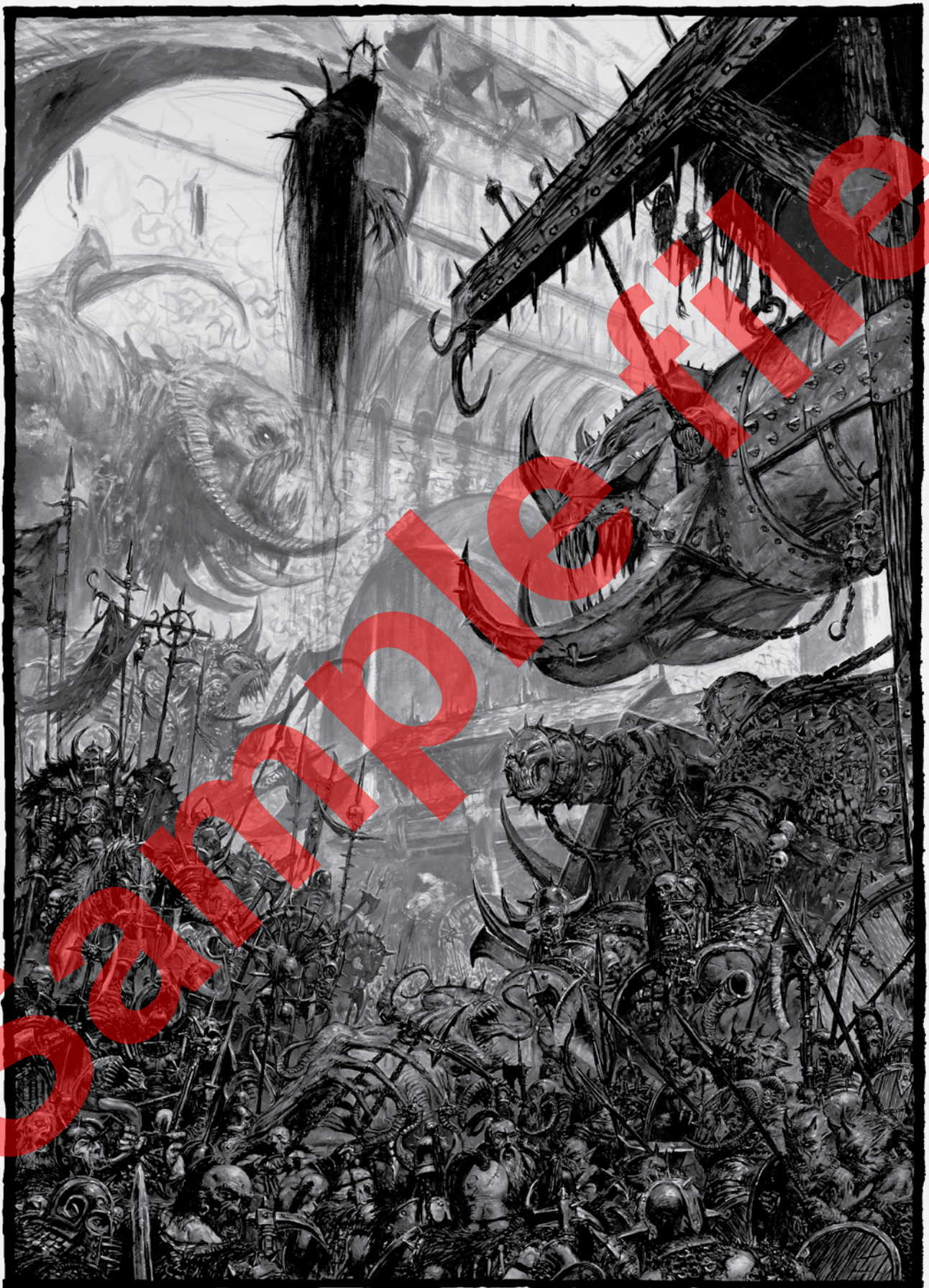
In order to use *Ashes of Middenheim*, you will need the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* rulebook, plus paper, pencils, and dice. *Ashes of Middenheim* is for characters in their first or second careers.

More details of the Chaos Incursion and its leader, Archaon the Lord of the End Times, can be found in the section headed **The Storm of Chaos** (see p. 6).

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Ideally, the adventurers should have completed *Through the Drakwald* in the *WFRP* rulebook as a prelude to this adventure. It is possible to play *Ashes of Middenheim* on its own, of course, provided that you are prepared to do a little work in setting up the adventure.

At the start of *Ashes of Middenheim*, the adventurers have come to the City of the White Wolf from an outlying settlement that was destroyed by a large force of Chaos Beastmen—one of many remnants of Archaon's horde now wandering the forests and mountains of the northern Empire. En route a dying priest entrusted them with a holy relic of Sigmar—an ancient icon in a gold frame—and asked the PCs to hand it over to the Temple of Sigmar in Middenheim. *Ashes of Middenheim* begins when the PCs give the icon to Father Morten at the temple.



AFTER THE STORM

This section of *Paths of the Damned: Ashes of Middenheim* describes the city of Middenheim, where much of this adventure takes place. Middenheim is one of the greatest cities of the Empire, but was severely damaged during a recent siege by the forces of Chaos.

— A BRIEF HISTORY OF MIDDENHEIM —

According to legend, Middenheim was founded by the god Ulric himself, to be the centre of his religion in the Old World. Originally, the towering, flat-topped rock upon which the city stands was the base of a high mountain sacred to Ulric's brother Taal, the God of Wild Places. Taal gave the mountain to Ulric, and he struck the top of it with his fist, shattering the top of the mountain and leaving a flat stump where the city was to be. For this reason, the rock is sometimes called the Fauschlag, from an ancient word meaning "fist-strike." It is also known as the Ulricsberg.

The first Humans to settle on the Fauschlag were Teutogen tribesmen, more than 2,500 years ago. With the help of a neighbouring Dwarf clan, the Teutogens tunnelled up through the rock and established a settlement on the top.

THE COMING OF SIGMAR

Some fifty years later, a young chief of the neighbouring Unberogen tribe united the Human tribes and laid the foundation for the nation that would become the Empire. His name was Sigmar Heldenhammer. He was crowned Emperor by the high priest of Ulric, one of the most prominent deities of these warlike tribes. The modern Imperial Calendar (IC) starts with Sigmar's coronation.

Sigmar ruled for fifty years, before abdicating and leaving the Empire that he had founded. He headed east towards the World's Edge Mountains; at Black Fire Pass he dismissed the last of his bodyguard, and travelled on alone. From then, he is lost to history. In the year 63 IC, Wulcan, the High Priest of Ulric, received a vision from his God instructing him to build a great temple at Middenheim; it was completed in 113 IC, and has been the centre of the cult of Ulric ever since.

As the years passed, Sigmar came to be revered as a God in his own right, and became the patron deity of the Empire. Ulric remained a popular deity, especially in the northern provinces, but the growing veneration of Sigmar threatened to eclipse his glory. Building tension between the cult of Ulric in Middenheim and the cult of Sigmar, based in the Imperial capital of Altdorf, broke out into open hostilities more than once.

The Graf of Middenheim became powerful nobles, and when the electoral system was established for choosing Emperors, they could not be ignored. At one time, the Graf of Middenheim held two electoral votes: one as the head of the city-state itself, and one as the overlord of Middenland, the province in which the city is situated. Over centuries of political wrangling—and more than one civil war—the rulership of Middenland passed in and out of the hands of the Graf of Middenheim.

In 1547 IC, Graf Heinrich of Middenheim (who was also Grand Duke of Middenland at the time) made a bid for the Imperial throne himself, but was narrowly defeated. Declaring the election a sham, he claimed to be the rightful Emperor, and the Empire was torn by rival claimants to the Imperial throne. So began the long civil war known to Imperial historians as the Age of Three Emperors—although the number of "Emperors" varied over time.

SHARDS OF EMPIRE

The Empire was fragmented for eight long centuries. Chaos cults proliferated unchecked, Goblins and worse creatures bred in the forests, and it seemed as though the days of glory were long in the past. To make matters worse, the year 2303 saw a vast and terrible horde of Chaos sweep across Kislev and threaten the lands of the Empire. It seemed that the Empire was doomed—and with it, possibly the whole of the Old World.

In Nuln, a young nobleman known as Magnus the Pious assembled an army to resist the forces of Chaos. On his shield he carried the sign of a twin-tailed comet—the same comet that had presaged the birth of Sigmar two millennia before, according to tradition—and in the name of the Empire's founder and patron deity, he called for unity in the face of this common enemy.

As a follower of Sigmar, Magnus was initially regarded with suspicion in Middenheim. The High Priest of Ulric denounced him as a fraud and a blasphemer; rumours were even spread that he was a servant of Chaos, bent on destroying the Empire from within.

Magnus entered Middenheim secretly, and confronted the High Priest in the Temple of Ulric itself. At the heart of the temple burned an everlasting flame, said to have been kindled from the sparks struck on the rock of the Fauschlag by Ulric's fist when he shattered the mountain. Many divine powers were attributed to this flame. It was said that so long as it burned, the City of the White Wolf enjoyed Ulric's protection, and could never fall. It was also widely believed that the flame could not burn anyone who was favoured by Ulric. To the dismay of the High Priest and his followers, Magnus took off his cloak and entered the flame, standing there completely untouched by the fire.

Word of the miracle spread like wildfire. People flocked to Magnus, and under his leadership the hordes of Chaos were driven back. He was crowned Emperor of a reunited Empire the following year.

NEW ABOMINATIONS

The *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* rulebook contains information on many of the creatures and followers of Chaos, but Archaon's forces included two horrors that had never been seen before: the mutated Flayerkin, and the terrible Hellcannon.

Flayerkin

Some Flayerkin arise through mutation, and others are created by barbaric surgery. These creatures are basically Human—or at least, humanoid—but their arms end in great blades and hooks rather than hands, and they trail heavy iron chains that are fused to their spines. During the siege, Archaon sent hordes of Flayerkin scaling the Ulricsberg, trailing chains behind them that their allies could climb. All were killed before they could reach the top of the rock, and dozens of the creatures still hang where they died.

Flayerkin have the same characteristics as Chaos Mutants (*WFRP*, p. 230), with the following exceptions:

- They cannot perform any complex manual tasks, since they lack hands. Any Agility checks for manual tasks suffer a -30% penalty.
- Their hooks or blades count as Hand Weapons.
- They have the skill Scale Sheer Surface +20%.
- If they are killed while climbing, they do not fall, but hang in place.

Hellcannon

The Hellcannons of Chaos are terrible weapons, part Daemon and part war machine. Created by Chaos Dwarfs, they are sentient weapons that are loaded with the bodies of the slain. Hellcannons strip away the souls of dead, firing them as missiles of pure Chaotic energy.

Archaon used a number of Hellcannon in the siege of Middenheim, but many were destroyed—either by the defenders or by their own Chaotic nature. Many broke their bonds and ran amok in the Chaos lines. It is not known whether any of these appalling weapons still exist.

No game statistics are given here for Hellcannon, since it is extremely unlikely that the PCs will ever encounter one (and even less likely they could survive the confrontation if they did). However, there are many survivors of the siege who have seen these abominations in action, and can attest to their destructive power. In at least one part of the city, a shot from a Hellcannon has had lasting effects (see p. 19).

For the last 200 years, the Empire has been united, and Middenheim has taken its place as one of the nation's greatest cities. For devout followers of Ulric, it is the holiest place in the world, and pilgrims flocked to the city, bringing great wealth to supplement Middenheim's income from trade. A few years ago, a plot against Graf Boris Todbringer was

thwarted, without most of the city's population knowing that anything was wrong. The only visible results were some damage to the south gate and the adjoining causeway—which was quickly repaired—and the sudden replacement of a few high-level officials.

THE STORM OF CHAOS

In recent months, however, a deadly threat arose in the Chaos Wastes of the far north that was to imperil not only Middenheim, but also the Empire and the whole of the Old World. A great Champion of Chaos rose to prominence, by the name of Archaon, Lord of the End Times.

The nature of Chaos is such that only a very strong leader can bring sufficient unity to command a large force; Archaon was such a leader. Under the banner of Chaos Undivided, he assembled a vast horde of Chaos Warriors, Beastmen, Daemons and worse creatures, including contingents loyal to all four of the great Powers of Chaos: Khorne the Blood God, Slaanesh the Prince of Pleasure, Tzeentch the Changer of the Ways, and Nurgle the Plague God. This force—the most massive to come out of the Wastes in more than 200 years—quickly and ruthlessly overran the nation of Kislev and the northern parts of the Empire.

Archaon knew that he could not leave the fortress-city of Middenheim standing. He and his lieutenants converged on the city from the north, east, and west, devastating the countryside as they came and laying waste to towns and castles. The main body of the Imperial army, aided by Dwarfen and Elven allies, harried the forces of Chaos as they came. They were led by the Emperor himself along with the Grand Theogonist of the cult of Sigmar, and included a remarkable warrior named Valten, in whose form some said that Sigmar had returned to save his Empire. Despite furious fighting, they were unable to prevent Archaon's forces from linking up and surrounding the City of the White Wolf.

Beastmen—many the descendants of those who had accompanied the Chaos Incursion of two centuries ago—burst forth from their hiding places in the Drakwald and other desolate places, harassing Imperial forces and moving on Middenheim from the south. By means of some unholy bargain, Archaon had secured the allegiance of the Skaven Clan Eshin, and the Ratmen spread throughout the tunnels and caverns of the Undercity. Within the city itself, cults of Chaos worshippers came out of hiding to sabotage the defences and spread alarm among the inhabitants.

The siege of Middenheim lasted for fifteen days. Time and time again the forces of Chaos hurled themselves at the walls and gates of the city. Attackers and defenders died in their thousands. The Middenlanders were reinforced by many allies, including Elves, Dwarfs, refugee kossars from Kislev, and knights errant from neighbouring Bretonnia, and the city's natural defences served it well. For more than a week, neither side was able to gain a significant advantage. Fighting was concentrated on the four great causeways serving the city's gates, although there were some bitter struggles against Skaven infiltrators from below.



A great rockslide tore through the northern wall, but the breach was still protected by several hundred feet of sheer cliffs, and Archaon's forces were unable to capitalise on this opportunity. At last, with the news that Emperor Karl Franz and Valten, the Exalted of Sigmar, were approaching from the south and east, the attackers lifted the siege. Some moved southward into the Drakwald and east along the Talabheim road to face this new threat, while others retreated northward into the Middle Mountains.

AFTER THE SIEGE

As the attackers withdrew, the fighting forces of Middenheim pursued them. Graf Boris Todbringer led his Knights Panther from the city, along with High Priest Ar-Ulric, accompanied by the Knights of the White Wolf and the elite Teutogen Guard. Each left a deputy to rule in his place: Graf Boris gave military

command of the city to Watch Commander Ulrich Schutzmann, while Ar-Ulric appointed Deputy High Priest Claus Liebnitz to temporary control of the Temple and cult of Ulric.

The siege has left its mark on Middenheim, both inside and outside the walls. The four causeways still stand, but are pitted and cracked from the battle. The gates and walls show signs of the heavy fighting and powerful magics that accompanied the siege. Many of the city's towers are seriously damaged by attacks from Chaos Dragons and other airborne attackers. In the Undercity, many tunnels have collapsed—some caved in during the fighting, and the defenders destroyed others as a precaution against Skaven attacks. Hook-handed Flayerkin hang in their dozens from the walls and the cliffs beneath, fixed where they died from the defenders' fire. Repairs are under way, but it will be months—if not years—before Middenheim is restored to its former glory.

— THE POWERS THAT BE —

Everyone knows that Graf Boris Todbringer rules Middenheim, but of course there are a great many other individuals without whom the city could not function. In the following pages, key figures in Middenheim's government and administration are described briefly. Although many of them are presently away with the Graf chasing down the retreating forces of Chaos, there will come a time (most people devoutly hope) when they will return to the city and life will take on some semblance of normality. If these individuals do not return, their offices will remain to be filled by suitable replacements.

THE TODBRINGER FAMILY

Unlike many nobles in the Old World, Graf Boris Todbringer has not surrounded himself with an extended family of aunts, uncles, cousins and the like. His wife is long dead, and his immediate family consists only of his daughter Katarina. He did have a son, Stefan, who was troubled by illness and died a few years ago—according to some, as a result of some plot by cultists.

His only other offspring is illegitimate, a son called Heinrich whom he has formally recognised as his own and permitted to

use the family name. However, Heinrich's birth prevents him from succeeding his father as an Imperial Elector and ruler of Middenheim. Because of this, a great deal of diplomatic activity is focussed on winning the hand of his daughter—called “the Princess” by Middenheimers, even though she is not officially permitted that title—on behalf of young nobles from across the Old World. So far, no suitors have been found suitable.

THE MIDDEN MARSHALS

As a powerful city-state, Middenheim maintains considerable military forces, and the bulk of these fall under the command of the three Midden Marshals.

The Midden Marshals are Maximilian von Genscher, Johann Schwermutt, and Ulrich Schutzmann. Von Genscher commands Middenheim's walls and gates, along with the city garrison (but not the Watch), fixed artillery pieces, the city militia, and all other defensive forces. Schwermutt commands the standing army of Middenheim, while Schutzmann commands the City Watch and is responsible for keeping the peace within the walls.

As the events of *Paths of the Damned: Ashes of Middenheim* unfold, only Schutzmann is in the city. Graf Boris has assembled a great force from the army, the militia, the knights, and several allied contingents that assisted in the defence of the city, and set out to chase down the forces of Chaos as they withdraw. Schutzmann has been granted full ducal power, making him the unquestioned ruler of Middenheim in the Graf's absence. Unfortunately, he only

has the City Watch at his disposal, along with a few artillery crews defending the walls and gates.

THE STANDING ARMY

The army of Middenheim is currently away from the city, hunting down the rag-tag remnants of Archagon's Chaos forces. Like all the armies of the Empire, it is a diverse and versatile force, with a wide range of infantry, cavalry, and artillery units at its disposal.

THE CITY GARRISON AND MILITIA

While the army's task is to take the field against Middenheim's enemies, the garrison is charged with the defence of the city itself. Like the army, it includes a wide range of troop types, with a heavier emphasis on artillery and missile-armed troops—crossbowmen, handgunners, and the like—to decimate attackers from behind the safety of the city walls.

The militia is a more *ad hoc* force, recruited from among Middenheim's citizens and serving only when needed. Many Middenheimers who have previous military experience join the militia, which is organised by city districts. Each militia troop is charged with the defence of its own home district, in the event that the city walls should be breached. In addition, the militia can be called upon to assist the City Watch in an emergency.

Although the garrison and militia do not normally leave the city, a large number of them are currently in the field with the army and the knights. Only the crews for the fixed artillery on the city walls have remained behind as Middenheim fields the largest possible force to secure the surrounding countryside—and to avenge those who fell in the city's defence.

THE CITY WATCH

The City Watch is the main armed force left in Middenheim at present. While the army is charged with fighting in the field and the garrison with defending the city (although for now most of the garrison is in the field alongside the army and the knights), the task of the City Watch is to maintain order and apprehend criminals. During the siege, however, the Watch fought alongside Middenheim's other armed forces, and did so with distinction.

THE KNIGHTLY ORDERS

Middenheim is home to two orders of knights, both of which operate independently of the Midden Marshals. Both orders are currently away with the Graf.

THE KNIGHTS PANTHER

The Knights Panther form the personal bodyguard of the Graf, and acknowledge him as their sole commander. In practice this causes few problems, since the Midden Marshals act on the Graf's commands as well, and he is a gifted military commander who is well able to co-ordinate his various forces to good effect.

