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In commemoration of this issue's focus on Albion we will be looking at one of the more obscure, little known, and in my opinion, useless of WFB products. It should be noted that I will not be looking at this as a resource for players of Warhammer Fantasy Battle, but as a source of information for background on the Warhammer World.

What You Get

As stated above, this is a boxed warhammer supplement. Inside the box are a number of color cardboard buildings, color cardboard characters (lacking stands), a color map of the McDeath Kingdom, red and blue command sheets, the Gamesmaster's Guide with a color cover and black and white interior, color cardboard building floorplans, and a FREE FULL-COLOUR BADGE!

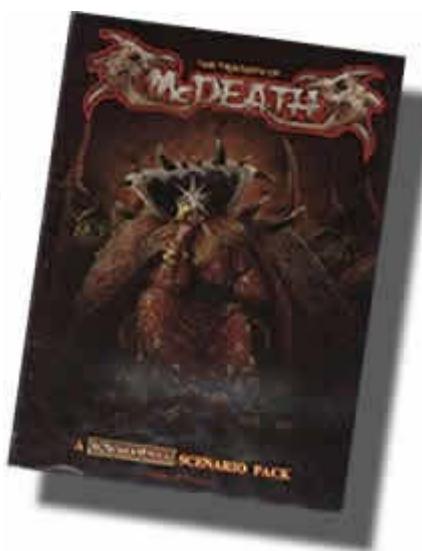
The Cover

For something in the mid-80's the cover does a good job of conveying the feel of the game, a rather moody looking McDeath wearing his crown upon a troubled brow. The inspiration for this John Blanche cover, I assume, would be the ending scene of Conan the Barbarian, where a rather moody looking Arnold Schwarzeneggar wears his crown upon a troubled brow. But that's is a story for another time...

The back of the box has a picture of the contents.

The Tragedy of McDeath Gamesmaster's Guide

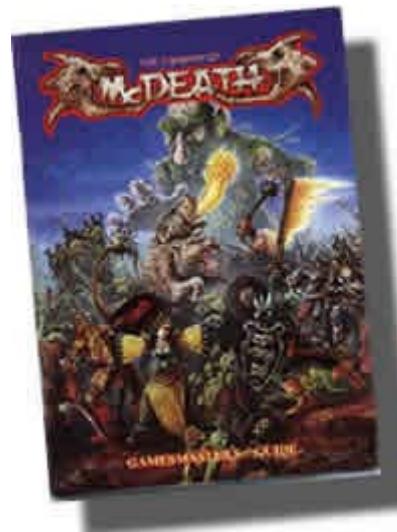
This book is a 24 page book, Blanche full color cover and black and white illustrations by the WFRP rulebook illustrator Tony Ackland. The actual content of this will be covered below, but the inside back cover has all the drawings of the counters inside labeled so that you know who is who.



Command Sheets

These command sheets, Red for the McDeath player and blue for his opponents number eight, are illustrated, including some rather humorous banners. The rest of the illustrations are uninspired, and mostly details of other pictures published in this adventure or in others.

"The Kingdome of McDeath Map"



This map was one of the two reasons why I bought this scenario box, since I thought it would be great to have one of the maps of Albion that GW produced. I was disappointed however to discover that the map is only a map of McDeath's Kingdom, showing nothing else of Albion and only being labeled with locations from the McDeath campaign. No initiative is taken to detail any other locales. the drawing is also inset with drawings of some of the antagonists. This map is of little use to those seeking a map of Albion.

Castle Maps

There are four folding maps with the layouts of McDeath's castle, the locale of the final battle in the game. These maps could conceivably be used in WFRP, WFB, and Mordheim games with little effort I would imagine, although the scale might be a bit off.

Cardstock Colour Buildings

The instructions for constructing these buildings are in the back of the

Gamemaster's Guide. I can't tell you how many there are because I bought it used, and as always, half the buildings are cut up and left unassembled. This scenery of buildings would be useful for games like Mordheim and WFB and for those who use minis in WFRP. Once again, the scale might be off between the buildings and the figures, but it would do the job.

Heaps of Cardboard Character Counters

As to be expected, the previous owner had also meticulously cut out all the counters so I have no idea how many sheets there were, but there are a lot of one sided color counters. These counters are base counters, rather than standing counters and are the size of the base appropriate to the character. This scenario pack disappointed me in many ways, but the counters were a pleasant surprise and conveyed a feel for the personalities of the figures. The images provided are of the Lord McBeth and his missus.



The Pin

Sorry, I can't tell you much about the pin - since it was missing from the boxed set - yet another reminder of the dangers of buying over the internet! But there is a picture on the back, a pink button with a green orc head that reads: "OUT OUT DAMN SPOT" ("Spot" being McDeath's chaos hound pet).

What it is

Essentially this is a parody of the much beloved and maligned Shakespeare play "Macbeth", set up as a 2nd edition Warhammer Fantasy Battle Scenario. Better, it is an example of how not to write a scenario pack. The scenario is confusing - the Gamesmaster Pack has some befuddled overviews and summaries of what is going on, but they require constant reference to the Command Sheets that the players have. In order for the GM to have some idea of what is going on, he has to refer to all three. Worse is the fact that much of the background is written in verse just like Macbeth. And although it is a parody, it is a tedious one at that.

The rationale for the battles is fairly weak. The gist is that McDeath killed the rightful king and under his oppressive reign discontent has grown and he is now attacked by a force allied against him. The first scenario, Winwood Harbor involves the invasion by Julia McEwman and her clan against another clan while marching upon McDeath. The pretext is weak, but I suppose it provides a battle involving caber throwing, broken bottles, shot puts, and jokes about kilts. The second scenario Loch Lorm entails the raid by Donalbane, surviving son of the murdered king with his allies attacking the critical objective of a distillery, a distillery built next to a river in which a loch monster lives. Hilarity ensues. The third objective details the advance of Donalbane's troops towards McDeath's castle and a battle at Dungal Hill where a group of dwarfs have been resisting McDeath's orc forces. Both the McEwman clan and Donalbane's force meet and are joined by Treemen and assault McDeath's castle. Of course there's some gobbledegook about witches' prophesies and the like and the means by which McDeath will meet his end.



The whole thing is rather incoherent, rules are scattered about, character motivations are not clear, and the whole thing seems thrown together with little regard for clarity. Worse, is the parodic verse through the whole thing which makes reading it tedious.

However, this could all be overlooked if it added to our understanding of Albion and/or the Old World, but this scenario pack fails to do that - it simply provides a badly written context to fight four battles strung together with unusual rules for fighting with bottles or rolling ales of malt liquor down hills. Although there are some interesting divisions among the Alliance of the Just, it simply isn't enough to redeem the game.

What we learn is that there is some sort of feudal monarchy in parts of Albion ruling over a bunch of drunken clansmen. Orcs and Ogres live on Albion, and monsters seem to live in rather thin and shallow rivers. I suppose there are a number of other stereotypes as well still not extrapolated regarding kilts and caber tossing...

All in all, this scenario pack provides little or no information regarding the world of WFRP - it is more of a WFB meets Shakespeare rather than an adaptation to the WFRP world. For the WFB player, the rules are old and no longer in use - although the buildings might be of some help. For the rest of us, this rare item is of interest to only the serious collector, the rest will find McDeath lacking in detail or significance. If you do buy it, it's one of those things that sits on shelves or in boxes and gets little use.

reviewed by Rev. Lepper