

# Maelstrom

## Onontakhan Herb Lore

Every onontakhan knows how to make the most of the plants that grow across their lands. There are some – often tribal shamans – who study the intricacies of the herbs to a greater degree, and even before the appearance of magic they could create mysterious effects with their clever herbalism. But these preparations are those that all onontakha have the knowledge to create, if not the wisdom to use effectively.

### **Babbleweed**

Growing on dry plains, this dark grass is ground into a powder and used as a component of a coarse green incense. It can be mixed with dried tobacco, or the bitter smoke inhaled directly. It fills the user with euphoria, and energetic enthusiasm, but has the drawback of interfering with the gift of language, filling the user with an intense desire to talk but removing the ability to do so coherently. As a euphoric, it can be somewhat addictive, causing those who over-use it to become withdrawn and uncommunicative.

### **Black Moss Paste**

This strong narcotic is a dark brown cream made from a certain moss that grows on the underside of dead trees, mixed with the fluids of crushed beetles. When rubbed into the gums or drunk it causes strong hallucinations that create feelings of terror, paranoia and dread. Some take it for recreational effect, but it has long seen use in rituals and ceremonies before battles as it is believed to grant mastery over the emotion of fear. Once the effects of the narcotic wear off, the user is left calm and detached for a period of time. Used sparingly under ritual conditions, Black Moss paste is not addictive.

### **Dreamroot**

A narcotic substance that causes a deep sleep full of strange dreams. Created mainly from a purple root vegetable, the smoke from the coarse purple powder causes one who inhales it to fall into a comatose sleep. This is apparently very restful, but causes some to experience exceptionally vivid dreams or visions. In addition to its use for ritual purposes, it is also used as a treatment for those recovering from serious wounds. If over-used it is dangerously addictive.

### **Flaxvine**

Flaxvine is reasonably common in warm forested areas, recognisable as a fine fibrous vine covered in tiny hairs, that produces a viscous green sap when cut or bruised. When mixed with other substances, including the secretions of a certain frog, this sap becomes a valuable medicinal compound. The resulting dark green liquid is used for treating wounds and promotes thickening of the blood – potentially dangerously if over used.

### **Howling Coyote**

The fruit of the rare coyote tree can be dried and ground to produce a dark brown powder. It is nearly tasteless, and even a pinch can be quite deadly – to ophidians at least. Like the Coyote itself, however, this powder is capricious and sometimes has no effect whatsoever on the one poisoned with it. Otherwise, it is almost certain death for the ophidian who consumes it. Once the powder has been mixed with another substance it loses its potency within ten minutes.

### **Jaguar Sweat**

This sticky golden syrup is made from the fine crystalline blooms of the flowering muskvine, so named for its strong, musky-smelling flowers. It has an extremely sugary taste, and is sometimes used as a flavouring. The syrup increases sensation, and serves to make every experience seem fresh and exciting. If it is consumed at the same time as another recreational substance, it enhances the effects of the narcotic on the imbiber. Unfortunately, Jaguar Sweat loses its potency almost immediately if mixed with another substance, making it ineffective as a poison. Jaguar Sweat is very addictive if swallowed neat, causing depression and rheumatism, and thinning the blood. It is not addictive when mixed with other substances.

### **Peaceberry**

A dark red berry that grows on certain bushes in damp environments - swamps and marshes especially. Properly prepared, it produces a sour red liquid that relaxes the drinker and improves both sexual stamina and fertility. It is sometimes used by representatives of rival tribes who wish to meet for peace talks, or to calm the nerves of the angry or emotionally distraught. It can be addictive if used too often, with symptoms including impotency and poor temper. Peaceberry is often prescribed by tribal shamans for quarrelling couples.

### **Scalesalve**

The crushed leaves and thick sap of the bitterscale tree can be used to produce a coarse blue cream that makes ophidian scales particularly lustrous, and adds a polished shine to myrmidon chitin. It is popular as a cosmetic product among the onontakha, and occasionally traded to some azarch. Recent developments have created a much more potent version of this paste that toughens the scales of an ophidian to the degree that they can function as temporary natural armour, although what side effects this new preparation may have are not fully explored.

### **Serpentbloom**

The Serpentbloom is a flowering yellow orchid with thick, fleshy leaves. The bloom looks a little like a snake poised to strike, which gives it its name. The flower is harmless, although its strong scent is popular with ophidians, but the leaves are extremely chewy and succulent with a pleasant taste. Properly prepared, they produce a chewy green gum that promotes venom production in ophidians who have exhausted their venom sacs. Some myrmidons also chew the leaves of this plant although what advantage this might give is uncertain. Carefully used, this substance is not addictive.

### **Vileberry**

If the virulent orange of the berries of this mountain-growing bush are not sufficient warning, the juice they produce is considered to be one of the most unpleasant tasting substances known to the onontakha. This is perhaps just as well; when consumed, the extremely sour orange juice from the berries numbs awareness of physical pain but causes psychotic hallucinations that are known to send animals who eat them on sprees of insane, uncontrolled violence. When carefully prepared, other ophidians are not elected as targets of the insane killing spree. It is not believed to be addictive, but the warriors that use it rarely survive long enough to take enough doses for anyone to be sure.

