

RBL-706

BETRAYAL'S STING



AN EARTHDAWN ADVENTURE BY
EIKE-CHRISTIAN BERTRAM

CONTENTS

Running the Adventure	2	Behind the Scenes	8
Adventure Background	3	The Enrager's Kiss	10
Plot Synopsis	3	Troubleshooting	11
This is Something That Might Interest You...		The Enrager's Legacy	11
Setting the Stage	3	Setting the Stage	11
Themes and Images	3	Themes and Images	11
Behind the Scenes	4	Behind the Scenes	12
Troubleshooting	4	Troubleshooting	13
Who Are You? What Do You Want?	4	Places of Interest	13
Setting the Stage	4	Setting the Stage	13
Themes and Images	4	Themes and Images	13
Behind the Scenes	4	Mehlan's Rest	14
Troubleshooting	5	The Town of Escandar	18
Madman's Diary	7	Aftermath	20
Setting the Stage	7	Awarding Legend Points	21
Themes and Images	7	Campaign Ideas	21
	7	Submission Guidelines	23

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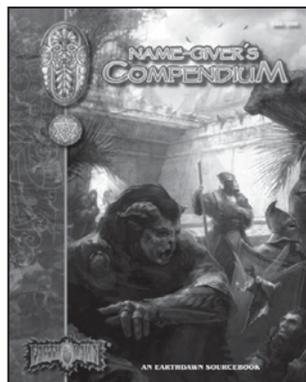
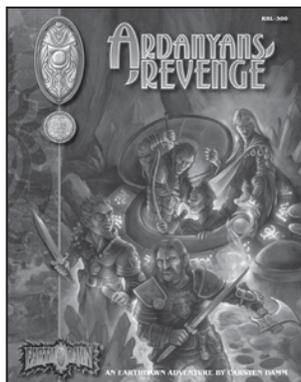
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BETRAYAL'S STING

The Horrors may have forced us to live in darkness.

The Horrors may have destroyed our world.

The Horrors may have taken our lives.

But the worst thing they have done?

They made us live in fear.

• **Carcinos the Younger, Theran Philosopher** •



Betrayal's Sting is an **Earthdawn** adventure for three to five Journeyman (Fifth to Eighth Circle) adepts of any Discipline. In **Betrayal's Sting**, the player characters meet a traveling merchant who suffers from a mind-affecting poison (injected by a Horror construct) and will have to deal with all the trouble it causes—to others or to themselves. They will get a good impression of how the vile work of the Horrors affects Barsaive's common man even today, a century after the kaers re-opened. In the end, they will realize that it is because of these common men that the adepts of legend set out to battle the Horrors in the first place, because others cannot help but fall victim to such monstrosity...

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

While **Betrayal's Sting** is a relatively straightforward adventure, each step depends on the prior actions of the group. Everything depends on the characters' choices, but chances are they will only slowly realize what this is all about. The gamemaster, on the other hand, needs to be prepared, and should be familiar with the entire adventure before the game starts. The first section in the plotline, **This is Something that Might Interest You**, p. 3, serves to get the characters on their way to the town of Escandar. But prior to arriving there, they will have an unusual encounter which unfolds a whole new mystery:

Who are You? What do You Want?, p. 4, details the characters' meeting with Vebraan, a merchant under the effects of a paranoia-inducing poison. Their interaction with him affects the remainder of the adventure.

Madman's Diary, p. 7, describes how the group can follow hints to discover the source of the poison that affects Vebraan: a Horror construct lurking near the road. It ends in a battle with the beast, with some characters possibly being poisoned themselves. From this point on, how the adventure develops is largely up to the player characters. Once all of them (and Vebraan, if he survived) are free from the poison, the adventure is nominally over. However, the events might well haunt them in the future.

The Enrager's Legacy, p. 11, is a general section needed throughout the adventure, detailing how the gamemaster can handle the group's attempts to work on the problems the poison poses.

Places of Interest, p. 13, details the town of Escandar and the hamlet of Mehlan's Rest, places that are dead-ends for the purpose of finding the cause of the paranoia, but which can become a focus of the characters' attention or used to expand the adventure.

Aftermath, p. 20, presents multiple options on how to modify or expand the adventure.

Because **Betrayal's Sting** is not absolutely predictable, many sections present the gamemaster with some options to adjust it on the fly.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Knowing a lot about traveling the wilderness, Vebraan, a former military scout for the Arm of Throal, put his abilities to use by starting a new life as a traveling merchant some ten years back. He is not the best merchant, but then again, he is not the worst, and villagers in the hinterlands are thankful for people like him. He also has a small family to take care of back in the dwarf kingdom, which is what keeps him going. He's not an unhappy dwarf, but struggles for economic survival with each new day.

That changed a couple of days prior to the beginning of **Betrayal's Sting**. A Horror construct, called an Enrager, crossed paths with Vebraan. It was forged by a Named Horror known as Fleshforger, a Horror that revels in destroying a bond between two or more Name-givers with its vile powers, feeding on the pain its victims cause each other.

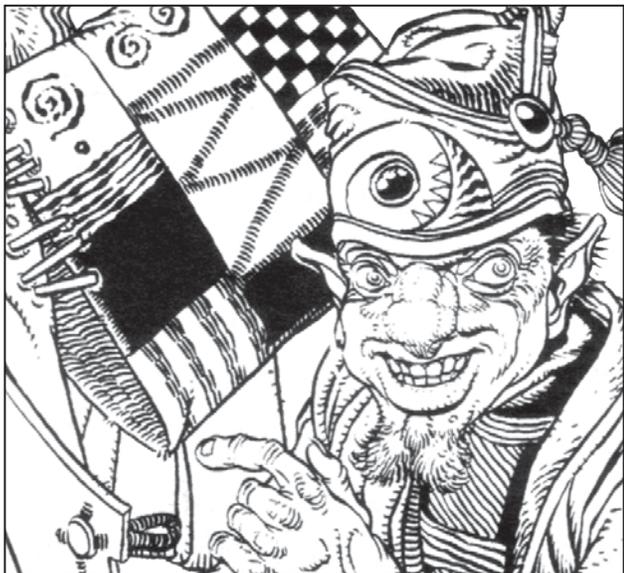
The Enrager injected the sleeping merchant with a poison which has made him paranoid. All of a sudden, the dwarf felt surrounded by a conspiracy dedicated to ruining him and endangering his family. He will react suspiciously and hostilely towards anyone he meets, assuming those he encounters were sent after him. He is not sure who exactly is involved in this conspiracy so far, but they are out there watching him—he knows it.

Enter the player characters...

PLOT SYNOPSIS

The player characters encounter a human who tells them of a relative of his from the town of Escandar, located north of the Thunder Mountains. The human's relative is in need of a group of adepts for some unknown task and willing to pay good silver, but has not disclosed any details. The characters will have to travel to Escandar to find out more.

The adventure proper begins with Vebraan meeting the characters on the road. Vebraan instantly assumes they are part of the conspiracy determined to ruin him and attacks them sooner or later, depending on the characters' behavior and their answers to his strange questions. If the characters do not kill him, they will likely have to deal with him



for the rest of the adventure, as he will not be cooperative if captured, and will continuously attempt to escape or kill the characters.

Vebraan carries a diary that includes some hints as to what has happened, and the group can ignore it, take it as a warning, or choose to act upon the information in it to find out the cause for the dwarf's strange behavior.

Sooner or later, the characters will meet the Enrager themselves, and every part of the mystery they unlock before the encounter can help them defeat the Horror construct and escape its terrible poison. Every action the characters take brings them closer to the truth, and there is a good chance one or more of the characters will meet Vebraan's fate, and become poisoned by the Enrager, possibly even turning on the rest of the group. Once the characters have eliminated this threat, they are ready to head out for new adventures, either having deepened their bond or distanced themselves carefully from each other.

THIS IS SOMETHING THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU...

The player characters will meet Graleg, a human merchant, who tells them of a job a relative of his has to offer. This encounter serves to simply get the characters on their way, to make them travel the trade route between Urupa and Travar. It is not required at all to run **Betrayal's Sting** if the characters are already traveling said route, if the gamemaster devises another way to get them there (for example by running **Betrayal's Sting** as an interlude in another adventure), or if the gamemaster places the events of **Betrayal's Sting** anywhere else in Barsaive (which requires minor modifications to the adventure). If the gamemaster replaces Escandar with a town already introduced into his game, this can intensify the experience of characters encountering old acquaintances under the poison's influence. On the other hand, it prevents him from adding a new location to his game, and the player characters might not make new friends or enemies there.

SETTING THE STAGE

The gamemaster can set the encounter with Graleg in any place he likes. However, it is advised that the encounter is a casual one; it should be clear that Graleg did not seek the player characters out. He just happens to meet them, probably at a tavern or his shop, and mentions something a relative wrote to him in a letter.

It might pay off to stage this encounter as close to Escandar as possible, perhaps in Travar or Urupa, because it is more likely the group will consider the journey to Escandar if they are already in one of these cities—travel time is only a few days from either of them to Escandar.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The encounter with Graleg should be similar to any trivial conversation, and Graleg telling them of the job offer

should not appear to be a meeting with an employer or part of some mysterious plot. The gamemaster should start the conversation with another topic, with Graleg only mentioning the job once the attention turns to the characters' status as a group of adventuring adepts.

BEHIND THE SCENES

There is nothing going on behind the scenes. For the course of this adventure, the encounter with Graleg loses any importance. It can, however, be employed at a later point to bring the characters back on track while in the town of Escandar.

I Got This Uncle...

The characters meet Graleg, a local human merchant, at a location of the gamemaster's choosing (see **Setting the Stage** above). Graleg has an uncle by the Name of Nosleth who makes a living as a fur trapper in the foothills of the Thunder Mountains, near the town of Escandar situated halfway between Travar and Urupa. Graleg was raised in the town of Escandar, but moved to become a merchant after his parents' death over fifteen years ago. Still, Nosleth and Graleg exchange letters on a regular basis, and in the last one, Nosleth mentioned he might have a need for some adepts for a task he could not handle alone. The gamemaster may read the following passage out aloud to the players or paraphrase:

"A group of adepts you say? Well, I should have guessed as much from the looks of it. That's perfectly matched. As it so happens, an uncle of mine from Escandar mentioned in his last letter that he had a need for some adepts. He makes a living hunting animals to take their meat and fur, selling it in town. He did not say why, but I guess he has found something of interest. He gets around the Thunder Mountains a lot, and the Passions know what he might have found there that he could not handle alone. An old kaer perhaps, or some dangerous but prized animal he cannot bring down himself. If you're interested, I can give you directions."

Graleg can point the characters towards Escandar and describe his uncle, but really does not know anything else about the matter. He can tell the characters more about the town and its surroundings (see **Places of Interest**, p. 13), but this might not help the characters much—they need to get there to learn more. Of course, Graleg will not leave after this, he is happy to spend more time with the adventurers and will gladly answer all of their questions; he did not come to deliver a message, but to spend some time at the place of the meeting (or to work there, if they visited his shop).

On the Road

Depending on where the characters met Graleg, the gamemaster will have to decide what happens on the road once the characters decide to seek out Nosleth. If the encounter with Graleg took place in Travar or Urupa, it is only a short trip to Escandar, and the bulk of the

adventure takes place before they even arrive there. In this case, simply move on to **Who are You? What do You Want?**, below.

If the characters are farther away, they will likely have to travel via either Travar or Urupa and take the trade route between these cities from there. Travar and Urupa are also easily reached by riverboat or airship if the characters can afford this mode of transportation.

If the characters decide to travel to Escandar directly from the north, for example from Lake Ban, the gamemaster has to devise a way to get them onto the trade route and meet Vebraan before reaching the town. But as Escandar's location can be varied for a couple of days' worth walking in any direction, this should not pose any problems.

It is important to note that the encounter with Vebraan, the event which sets everything in motion, happens on the trade route between Travar and Urupa, but it is intentionally left open in what direction Vebraan travels. This allows the gamemaster and the player characters to start the adventure without too many complications.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The only thing that can go wrong here is if the characters do not take the bait. However, **Betrayal's Sting** can be re-introduced at any later point in the game. Graleg should not encourage the characters too much, as he really does not have anything to do with what comes afterwards. He will not offer money. He can offer them a small discount on a travel-related item or two at his shop if they sincerely promise to help his uncle, but will do so only if they were friendly before.

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

This encounter is staged on the road between Urupa and Travar, close to the town of Escandar, and signals the start of the plot. The characters meet Vebraan, who attacks them after a brief chat, setting things in motion.

SETTING THE STAGE

The characters are on their way to Escandar after their meeting with Graleg. This encounter occurs on the road, and the important thing is that it does not take place too close to Escandar so there is enough room to place the hamlet of Mehlan's Rest, Vebraan's campsite, and the lair of the Enrager on the characters' way to the town.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Meeting a traveling merchant on the road is a common event for adventurers, even in Barsaive's hinterlands. These merchants supply small towns and villages with many things of need, and often are a good source of information and equipment for travelers. However, the characters' conversation with Vebraan will be brief, and with every second

he will grow more uneasy and suspicious. The characters should find his reaction curious, or perhaps even unsettling. The gamemaster should familiarize himself with the effects of the poison prior to this encounter (see the **Enrager's Kiss** sidebar on p. 10).

BEHIND THE SCENES

Vebraan was injected with the construct's poison two days ago and has not slept much since, which adds to his poor state. While the poison enhances his physical state, it also reduces his judgment and ability to reason. He will talk to the characters to see if they are just travelers on the road or if they are part of the conspiracy dedicated to ruining him and his family by stealing his goods—his personal version of the paranoia caused by the construct's poison.

An Attack with Little Warning

The characters spot the merchant and his wagon approaching from far away and traveling in the opposite direction. Coming closer, they can see he is one of the many merchants traveling Barsaive, selling goods to villagers or trading them in for foodstuffs. A donkey pulls his small cart, and he seems to trade in household and crafting wares like pans, pots, and tools, as well as food. The merchant looks to be a dwarf in his late fifties or early sixties, wearing plain clothes.

As the characters come within a few yards of Vebraan, he greets them formally, speaking in the Throalic dialect. He takes the initiative in the conversation, asking the characters who they are, where they come from, and what they are doing here. He reveals information about himself only if asked directly, although such questions strengthen his mistrust (especially if the characters do not give any information about themselves in return). Of course, everything the characters say makes them suspicious in Vebraan's eyes; it is just a question of when he will act on this suspicion.

During the conversation, the characters can make a Perception (6) Test, requiring an Extraordinary result, to realize something is wrong with Vebraan. If successful, they notice that he is quite pale and his hands are shaking, and



that his behavior grows progressively stranger. In addition, Vebraan carries various weapons on his body, concealed half-heartedly. Reduce the result level needed to succeed on the Perception Test by one for every minute the characters can keep the conversation up.

As soon as the gamemaster deems appropriate, Vebraan attacks, leaving all characters who did not succeed in the Perception Test surprised (see **Surprised in the Player's Compendium**, p. 409). Vebraan is no match for the characters, even with the benefits the poison grants him. Nevertheless, he does not surrender, and is not susceptible to any attempt made to manipulate him (also a result of the poison's effects). Vebraan shouts at the characters when initiating combat and also while fighting; "You'll not ruin me, foul folk!" or "I've seen through your lies!" for example. This can give the characters some initial hints that Vebraan suffers from delusions. When the fight is over, proceed to **When the Smoke Clears**, p. 6.

Keeping Vebraan alive for the rest of the adventure is a good idea if the gamemaster is comfortable acting out Vebraan's poison-induced insanity and paranoia, and wants to continue to keep track of him. Whether Vebraan lives or dies during this encounter may affect the remainder of the adventure, as the characters having to take care of him can become central to the plot. Of course, this would be ideally suited for characters who have had little or no contact with the Horrors' taint, letting them experience how it can affect a Name-giver and without actually encountering a Horror.

VEBRAAN

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8*

Toughness (13): 6/D10

Willpower (10): 5/D8**

Strength (13): 6/D10*

Perception (12): 5/D8

Charisma (9): 4/D6

* Add +3 steps when Vebraan is under the effect of the Enrager's Kiss poison.

** Add +6 steps when Vebraan is under the effect of the Enrager's Kiss poison.

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 6**

Initiative: 5/D8*

Physical Armor: 4

Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 35

Wound Threshold: 9

Unconsciousness Rating: 27

Recovery Tests: 2

Knockdown: 6/D10*

Combat Movement: 16

Full Movement: 32

* Add +3 steps when Vebraan is under the effect of the Enrager's Kiss poison.

** Immune when Vebraan is under the effect of the Enrager's Kiss poison.

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman; Mason (2): 7/D12 [(2): 10/D10+D6]*

Painting (3): 7/D12

Knowledge:

Arm of Throal Lore (1): 6/D10

Dwarf Trade Routes (3): 8/2D6

Negotiation (3): 8/2D6

Military History (1): 6/D10

Throal Military Organization (1): 6/D10

General:

- Avoid Blow (2): 7/D12 [(2): 10/D10+D6]*
- Climbing (2): 7/D12 [(2): 10/D10+D6]*
- Conversation (2): 6/D10
- Evaluate (3): 8/2D6
- Great Leap (2): 7/D12 [(2): 10/D10+D6]*
- Haggle (3): 7/D12
- Melee Weapons (3): 8/2D6 [(3): 11/D10+D8]*
- Navigation (2): 7/D12
- Physician (2): 7/D12
- Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
 - Dwarf (Throalic)
- Speak Language (5): 10/D10+D6
 - Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, T'skrang
- Streetwise (1): 6/D10
- Tracking (3): 8/2D6
- Trading (4): 8/2D6
- Unarmed Combat (1): 6/D10 [(1): 9/D8+D6]*
- Wilderness Survival (2): 7/D12

Steps in brackets are used when Vebraan is under the effect of the Enrager's Kiss poison.

Equipment

- Padded Leather (Phys 4)
- 3 × Daggers (Damage 8/2D6 [11/D10+D8]*; Range 9–15–18)
- 4 × Knives (Damage 7/D12 [10/D10+D6]*; Range 6–10–12)
- Dwarf Sword (Damage 9/D8+D6 [12/2D10]*)
- Short Sword (Damage 10/D10+D6 [13/D12+D10]*)
- Belt Pouch
- Climbing Kit
- Masonry Tools
- Navigation Charts (in Map/Scroll Case)
- Painting Tool
- Wealthy Traveler's Garb
- Writing Kit
- Donkey (use Pack Mule statistics from the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 328)
- Small Cart (filled with trade goods, see below)

Steps in brackets are used when Vebraan is under the effect of the Enrager's Kiss poison.

Loot

53 silver pieces, 76 copper pieces in belt pouch

Legend Award

150 Legend Points

Notes

Vebraan possesses the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

Commentary

Vebraan is prepared for a fight. He is expecting the imaginary conspiracy to move against him, and is armed with items usable as weapons from his cart, concealed in various places on his person.

In addition to the loot found on his body, the cart contains simple items and foodstuffs worth 1,000 silver pieces (cart and donkey included). Refer to the **Vebraan's Cart** sidebar for more information on the goods Vebraan takes along with him.

VEBRAAN'S CART

Vebraan's cart contains a wide array of goods he sells to and buys from the different communities he visits. The list below is presented to allow the gamemaster to have a reference at hand without the need for too much preparation.

Item	Quantity
Animal hides	7
Backpack	2
Bedroll	3
Beer, simple	1.5 barrels
Blanket	5
Boots, mountain	1 pair
Boots, soft	3 pairs
Candles	20
Chicken, live	4
Childrens' toys	5
Cloak, woolen	2
Dress, plain	6
Dried meat	20 pounds
Hat, woolen	4
Iron pot	1
Kelix's Poultice	1
Lantern, hooded	3
Oil	11 flasks
Parchment	13 sheets
Rope	15 yards
Sack, small	3
Shirt, patterned	3
Torch	4
Trail rations	7 weeks' worth
T'skrang fish, grade B	.25 duari
Waterskin	7
Wheat	150 pounds
Whetstone	3
Wine, average	12 bottles
Wine, fine	2 bottles
Writing ink	3 vials

When the Smoke Clears

The easiest solution for the characters is killing Vebraan, although this is not necessarily in their, or the gamemaster's, best interest. The characters can, by accident or intent, subdue the dwarf, but this does not calm him down. On the contrary: whenever possible, he tries to free himself. If successful, he either attacks the characters or flees. Vebraan makes it as difficult as possible for the characters to hold him captive or interrogate him. Gamemasters should keep in mind that he might still have some weapons concealed, perhaps in a boot or some other place the characters didn't check—just to pull one of them out unexpectedly.

If one of the characters can use an appropriate talent, skill, or spell to determine his condition, he can discover that Vebraan is insane and has not slept in a while. Any character investigating Vebraan up close may make a Perception (12) Test to spot a tiny, swollen, entry wound, similar to a bee sting, on his neck. This is where the construct stung Vebraan while he was asleep. This wound vanishes completely within another day. A character with the Physician skill can diagnose the poisoning as per standard rules (**Player's Compendium**, p. 244). Treat the poison as a strong poison, with a Difficulty Number of 11 to diagnose it as such. As the Physician skill mainly concerns the body, an Average result only diagnoses Vebraan's seemingly high physical strength paired with exhaustion. At the gamemaster's discretion, a better result level might lead to knowledge of the psychological effects of the poison. No matter what they do, the characters do not get any useful information about what happened to him, except for the facts mentioned above.

Thus, if Vebraan lives, the characters are kept busy keeping him under control; they may want to discuss what to do with him if his condition does not improve. If they cannot solve this puzzle while on the road, they could leave him in the care of a temple or questor of Garlen, for example in the nearby town of Escandar. Regardless, the group should reach Vebraan's campsite, the place where the Enrager attacked, before they reach someone else who can help with him. At any point the characters may realize that Vebraan was poisoned, even without using any skill confirming it. Consult **The Enrager's Legacy**, p. 11, to handle upcoming questions and possibilities about diagnosing and treating the poisoning.

What's All This About?

The best source of information for the characters is Vebraan's journal, which he keeps in a small chest on his cart along with the rest of his personal effects. An excerpt from the journal is available as a handout (see p. 24). Give it to the players, read it aloud, or paraphrase; but make sure the characters are able to get the important facts: that Vebraan's behavior and state of mind changed abruptly, and that he has been at a certain campsite during this transition. Move on to **Madman's Diary**, below.

TROUBLESHOOTING

As it is unlikely that Vebraan will defeat the characters, the one problem that could come up is that the characters just travel on, without showing any interest in the situation (for example to reach Nosleth to learn more about the job offer). To get their attention, the gamemaster can stage a second encounter with another traveler the next day. If the characters did not find Vebraan's diary, they could find another one in this encounter. If the gamemaster anticipates such a problem, he can also prepare an encounter with another traveler before Vebraan, perhaps the one hinted to in the diary who left some wood back at the campsite. This also opens other possibilities that can be used as variations of the adventure. Another traveler that was behind the adventurers could make up the time and reach them

in the next town. This traveler sleeps at the same campsite, becomes a victim of the construct's sting, and causes some problems at the town's market or inn.

A convenient way to accomplish this presents itself in Nosleth, the person they are supposed to meet in Escandar. Refer to **This is Something That Might Interest You...** on p. 3.

Alternatively, if the gamemaster wants to stick to the frame of this adventure, but the characters do not find the diary and Vebraan does not survive, he can simply arrange for the characters to use Vebraan's old campsite and fall prey to the construct.

If none of the more subtle ways work, or if the gamemaster prefers having the characters hired, he should keep them busy in town a couple of days and have an important citizen approach them to investigate a massacre at a nearby hamlet (the hamlet is mentioned in Vebraan's journal). In this case, while out hunting one of the farmers set camp near the construct's lair. After being stung, he returned and massacred his family. This might show the characters what can come from ignoring such obvious warning signs.

It might seem important to keep Vebraan alive, but it is not essential to the plot. Vebraan serves as an early warning to give the group a hint about the Enrager, a distraction to keep the characters busy, and possibly a moral dilemma when deciding what to do about him. The primary goal is to get one or more of the characters poisoned and let the rest of the group deal with him based on their knowledge that the strange behavior is not his, or their, fault.

MADMAN'S DIARY

This section details how the characters can use the diary to trace Vebraan's steps back to the campsite where he fell prey to the construct. They can set up a trap for the construct here or follow it back to its lair.

SETTING THE STAGE

Ideally, this section starts right after the fight with Vebraan and the discovery of his journal. If the gamemaster chooses another way to play the adventure or had to resort to one of the solutions in the **Troubleshooting** section above, he will probably have to modify it. If the characters lose track or get lost at any point, they can always come back on track by reconstructing Vebraan's actions from the place where they met him on the road.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Up to the final encounter, the characters should feel uncertain about their actions. They only have sketchy information at best, and do not know what they are up against. Is it the magic of the place, a Horror, or perhaps even a conspiracy of some kind? The gamemaster should try planting speculation amongst the players, but without giving too much information away. This is a riddle to solve, after all.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Enrager has a lair near the site where Vebraan set up camp two days ago. It stays there during the day, coming out at night to search for new victims. How large its hunting grounds are and how long this has been going on are left to the gamemaster's discretion. All that is required is that the Enrager has access to the campsite near its lair.

Investigating the Evidence

The first step for the players is to put all the pieces together: the journal, the marks on Vebraan's body, and his entire behavior during the encounter. The journal is the best source of clues, and the only one that is needed, although anything reaffirming what is written in it will help the players. Note that the entries for some days feature two paragraphs: the first one was written in the morning and the second one in the evening. However, there is no indication during which time of day any entry was written—this is left to the players to figure out.

It should be fairly obvious to the player characters that his entries from three days ago and from two days ago are quite different, and that this development continues on the following days. Somehow, Vebraan started fearing that someone was out to get him (the same fear he expresses in his encounter with the characters). If Vebraan is still alive, he will not comment on the journal, except perhaps with a phrase like "There's nothing in there you conspirators don't already know!" If the players ask him about the campsite specifically, Vebraan might tell them that is when he first discovered that the characters were after him because they left "evidence" behind. If the gamemaster wants to add to their uncertainty, Vebraan's imagination could well have come up with even more "evidence" he observed back at the campsite. Nothing is too absurd for Vebraan's theories. For example, he might state that "the fact that the fire was out in the morning clearly shows that you wanted to freeze me to death." If there is a troll in the group, he might bring up that he thought one of his food containers was opened—because he thinks trolls constantly eat large amounts of dried meat. Likewise, if there's a windling in the group, Vebraan suspects that a barrel of wheat was opened because "flying creatures eat such things."

The Journey of the Mad Merchant

The location of the specific campsite Vebraan used three days before is not that hard to find. It is along the road, although approximately 50 yards away from it. According to the journal, Vebraan left it in the morning two days ago, and it is described as being between a handful of trees and a hill. How far away from the characters' position it exactly is depends on the time the gamemaster staged the encounter at. If the gamemaster staged it early in the morning, the time required to travel back to it will hardly change. If the gamemaster staged the encounter with Vebraan in the evening, perhaps at the characters' campsite, there lies another day of walking in between the locations.

There are hints in the journal for when the characters have gone too far. Two and a half days before being poisoned, Vebraan visited a farming community not far from the main road to conduct business. Needless to say at this

OH NO, IT MOVES!

The gamemaster can complicate the adventure by having the Enrager move. If the players realize what's going on too fast, and identify the possibility of a poison or Horror involvement and the campsite as the place where this happened, the gamemaster may just let the Horror construct move on from there. It may, for example, travel on to the hamlet of Mehlan's Rest (see **Places of Interest** on p. 13), poisoning several of the farmers. The player characters may find the farmers having slain each other out of mistrust, or might stumble right into the fight (either one with words or one with swords). As part of an investigation by the inhabitants of the nearby town, the characters might even be the prime suspects in such a bloodbath. Of course, the Enrager could also travel even further to wreak havoc on the town itself...

point, the hamlet is a dead-end, but it is possible the group connects the change in Vebraan's behavior to his visit there. Who knows, perhaps the farmers were the ones who messed with him?

Before he visited the hamlet of Mehlan's Rest, Vebraan stayed at the nearby town of Escandar, which likewise is a dead-end except as a place to find medical aid for Vebraan or the characters themselves (refer to **Places of Interest**, p. 13, for more information on the hamlet and town). Vebraan's journal entries do not hint towards any sign of his madness for his time at the town, and should the group travel there, they will find that no one observed any unusual behavior in the dwarf merchant. From their current location, they can probably reach the town in two days by horse, so reaching it by strictly following the hint of traveling two days is a possibility. Needless to say, it is generally a bad idea for the group to base their own time of travel on Vebraan's diary. Not only did he move at slow and irregular speeds, but they also have no way of knowing what else he did on the way, if he stopped for several hours to check behind bushes 'for conspirators' or to smear his face with mud 'so conspirators do not see him at night.' When they travel near the campsite, the gamemaster should allow any character who read the diary a Perception (7) Test to spot it.

The characters can also employ the Tracking talent or skill to follow Vebraan's tracks back. Vebraan has used the knowledge from his time as a military scout to obscure his tracks, however. His cart traveled quite slow, giving him enough time to obscure the tracks at least half of the way. Taking into account Vebraan's skill and the age of the tracks, the character must succeed on a Tracking (10) Test (**Play-**

er's Compendium, p. 208). The tracking character must make a new test every time the track he is currently following changes, for example when a part of tracks suffered from weather or once the tracks become older than a day. The Difficulty Number for the Tracking Test may change due to these conditions.

Trees by a Hillside

There is a range of hills rising some 50 yards away from the road, continuing for several miles, to eventually become the foothills of the Thunder Mountains in the far, far distance. To some extent, the road seems to be built around these hills to ease travel. Where the hills are nearest to the road, five trees form a rough half-circle. Between hills and trees, Vebraan's old campsite can be found, the one where he was poisoned.

An old fire pit and the deep tracks where the cart stood are visible once the characters reach the campsite. There are a great number of footprints, most notably Vebraan's, all over the place—more than there normally should be at a campsite used by one Name-giver for just one night. Vebraan most likely ran around a lot during his stay, searching for hidden conspirators. But there are also other footprints, footprints that do not resemble those of a Name-giver. If any character searches for unusual footprints, these can be found with a successful Perception (8) Test. They are perfectly round, 4 inches in diameter, and deeper on one side. The only thing that

identifies them as footprints is that they are in the pattern of a walking, four-legged creature. Characters not searching for them might spot them by chance with a Good result on the Perception Test. The footprints cannot be identified as belonging to a specific animal; they simply are unknown to any of the characters.

If the characters find the construct's tracks and assess the situation, they can either follow it to wherever it went after attacking Vebraan at the campsite or they can wait, hoping for it to return. The construct lairs just a half mile into the hills, and regularly wanders the area at night in search of new victims, visiting the campsite almost every night.

Calming the Enrager

If the characters follow the construct's tracks, they can find it hiding amongst a field of bushes in a small valley half a mile from the campsite. If the characters follow the Enrager's tracks here or stumble upon it by accident, the Horror construct has the advantage of Full cover (**Player's Compendium**, p. 407) and is hard to see between the bushes (refer to **Perception Tests in the Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 91). When it is hiding in the bushes, the base Difficulty Number to spot the Enrager is its Dexterity step of 12, with a +4 bonus from being in Full cover. This Difficulty Number is lowered by -2 because the Enrager is uniquely shaped compared to its surroundings, and by another -3 because it contrasts with the bushes in color, for a final Detection Difficulty of 11.

The better an idea the characters have of what to look for, however, the easier detecting the Enrager should be. The gamemaster is free to lower the Detection Difficulty as he sees fit for every effort the characters take and every bit of knowledge they gathered. Appropriate modifiers may include the "viewer knows what to look for" entry on the Perception Modifiers Table, as well as modifiers from categories other than Sight if the characters venture close to the patch of bushes. Flying characters may also spot it easier because they can see between the bushes from above.

If the player characters are at the edge of the bushes, the Enrager attacks them from its cover, but it will only profit from Partial cover at the edge of the field of bushes.

If they wait for the Enrager at the campsite, it will show up an hour after midnight. Sneaking up on them, it attacks any sleeping character first with a single attack from its stinger once it sees a chance to do so unobserved. This attack does not wake the character. If the Enrager does not see any chance to inject some of the poison unobserved, it sneaks up on any watch the characters have placed and tries to



eliminate it quickly, although this will be hard to pull off with adepts. Of course, the construct is not that clever; it acts like a predatory hunter, but lacks instincts of self-preservation. It is driven by the desire to poison as many living beings as possible, as fast as possible (a directive implanted by its Horror creator).

Once the Enrager goes down, refer to the next section to see what could happen to the characters after the fight. In any case, the gamemaster should not reveal the Difficulty Number for the Poison Resistance Test (**Game-master's Compendium**, p. 122). If the players do not yet know about the poison and all their characters have to resist against it is their Toughness (if they do not have abilities such as the Poison Resistance talent, for instance), the gamemaster should not even call for a Poison Resistance Test, but a Toughness Test—in order not to ruin the 'surprise' later on. The gamemaster may even consider making these tests in secret.

THE ENRAGER

DEX: 12	STR: 9	TOU: 12
PER: 10	WIL: 9	CHA: 10
Initiative: 11 (16)		
Number of Actions: 2		
Attack (5): 17		
Damage:		
Tail Club (4): 13		
Tail Sting (2): 11		
Death Rating: 60 (90)		
Wound Threshold: 17		
Unconsciousness Rating: 53 (78)		
Combat Movement: 58		
Full Movement: 116		
Powers: Durability (6/5) (5): 5, Heat Sight, Poison (Enrager's Kiss, Debilitation; SD 7; Effect step 9; see sidebar), Silent Walk ^T (5): 17/D20+D10, Surprise Attack (5): 5		
Legend Points (2): 1,550		
Equipment: None		

Loot: Poison glands containing 2D6 doses of Enrager's Kiss (see sidebar), worth 100 silver pieces per dose.

Commentary

The Enrager is a Horror construct forged by the Named Horror known as Fleshforger (see **Campaign Ideas**, p. 21). It has a yellow flat body only some eight inches thick, but nearly two feet wide and three feet long. It is supported by four short legs less than two feet in length. Its small head resides directly on the body, without any neck worth mentioning. All in all, it's probably best described as a pebble on legs. Its most prominent feature, however, is a nine-foot-long tail that arches over its head to attack opponents in front of it. The end of its tail houses poison glands and a retractable stinger, three inches long. These are surrounded by a thick, protective layer of bone, making the end of its tail nearly as big as a troll's fist, able to deliver powerful, mace-like blows.

THE ENRAGER'S KISS

Type: Special (see text) **Spell Defense:** 7
Onset Time: 3 hours **Step Number:** 9
Duration: Effect Test days

The Enrager's Kiss is a treacherous substance, physically beneficial but wreaking havoc on the mind. It is created by glands in the tail of the Enrager Horror construct, a hideous creature created just for the purpose of producing and injecting the poison. An affected individual will feel the first effects of the poison after a few hours. He will become suspicious of his surroundings, of people currently present, or of people not present if he is alone. The victim will feel as if he is watched, followed, and likely to be ambushed. The victim makes up his own story to explain why these people want to do so—a story most fitting to his personal situation and his deepest fears. At the same time, his Dexterity and Strength Attributes gain a bonus of +3 steps, his Willpower Attribute gains a bonus of +6 steps, he becomes immune to all abilities used against his Social Defense, and is unaffected by the rules for Fatigue (**Game-master's Compendium**, p. 120). With his paranoia growing, the victim will try to find a solution to his problem, but as he trusts no one, the solution will be one that can be carried out alone. This may be running away, but as the victim feels he is powerful enough to take on almost anything directly, the solution will likely result in violence.

The Enrager's Kiss is a debilitating poison, and as such can be resisted once per day, after 24 hours have passed from the previous attempt.

Rules

In a fight, the Enrager prefers to use its tail as a clubbing weapon, especially if it has already injected its poison, as the stinger is quite fragile.

Stinging Attack: On a Tail Sting attack only, the Enrager can poison its opponent if it inflicts damage. The stinger itself is very thin, bypassing armor on a result one level lower than normally required (usually on a Good result). However, the stinger is so fragile that it breaks off on a Pathetic result with this attack, growing back as soon as the Enrager regains its Recovery Tests. If a Stinging Attack causes any damage, the target is subject to the Enrager's Kiss poison.

Poison: The Enrager's poison can be extracted from the creature and used for other purposes. See **The Enrager's Legacy**, below, for information about extracting the poison. Both inside and outside of the creature's poison glands, it uses the same mechanics. Refer to **The Enrager's Kiss** sidebar, p. 10, for the effects of the poison, and to the **Poison** section of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 121, for information on how to resolve it.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Although the Enrager should not be too difficult for even a group of Initiate adepts to fight, the characters could have some problems with it. This largely depends on the circumstances of the fight. If the Enrager catches them unprepared, with perhaps a lone guard during the night, or if the group has no members of combat-oriented disciplines in it, the Enrager could pose a greater threat. If the gamemaster fears the construct is too powerful under certain circumstances, he may remind the players to be prepared for specific situations, as they do not know what they are up against. The characters know their own world better than their players, after all.

SCALING THE RAGE

The Enrager is not designed to be the ultimate challenge for the player characters. It is an encounter to advance the plot by allowing the characters to determine the cause of Vebraan's madness, to give them the opportunity of finding a cure, and to possibly get them affected by the poison. If the group of player characters is very strong in combat, is of a higher Circle or more in number than intended for this adventure, or the gamemaster wants to make the fight with the Horror construct harder for the characters (at the same time making it more likely for them to become poisoned), the following guidelines should be considered.

There might simply be two or even three Enragers. The Horror that created the Enrager saw the opportunity presented by so many merchant caravans passing through the area, and left several constructs behind to poison whole groups of travelers. The Horror knew that a large group of poisoned Name-givers would scatter in all directions, suspicious of each other, and cause suffering throughout a larger area. On average, use one Enrager at Fifth or Sixth Circle, and use two at Seventh or Eighth Circle.

It is possible the group does not find the Enrager, either by traveling too far, by not taking enough interest, or for any other reason. In this case, they might be brought back on track by having someone ask them to investigate another situation where the Enrager played a role, possibly including a number of additional victims, thereby making it clear this was no lone incident. Refer to the previous **Troubleshooting** section, p. 7.

THE ENRAGER'S LEGACY

This section is only required in full if Vebraan survived or if one of the player characters was poisoned by the Enrager. It is not an event or encounter chronologically following the fight with Vebraan or the Enrager, but rather a guideline to deal with the effects of the Enrager's poison. It may be needed at any point during the adventure.

If the gamemaster enjoys the role-playing possibilities offered here, he might want to arrange for one or more of the characters to be poisoned during their encounter with the Enrager. As the events and problems detailed here depend on what the characters did before and affect what they can do after the encounters with Vebraan or the Enrager, the gamemaster may have to utilize and combine the following bits and pieces in any given situation.

Note that some of the information found here may even be required *before* the characters fight the Enrager, such as discovering that Vebraan was poisoned or treating the poison.

SETTING THE STAGE

The events and problems detailed in this section most likely arise on two occasions: when deciding what to do with Vebraan after he has been defeated, and after the fight with the Enrager; the characters will not get to rest, even after all this. Vebraan is still affected by the poison and might pose a problem (especially when the characters need rest after a fight). If the characters find a solution to deal with Vebraan, he might not be that much of an issue. Likewise, the same is true for poisoned player characters after the fight with the Horror construct. By meeting Vebraan, the characters have experienced what is waiting for them, so they can act accordingly, if they see it coming.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Themes and images depend very much on the characters' reaction to a member of the group being poisoned or their examination of Vebraan's symptoms. Although the poison will wear off in a matter of days, the characters will not necessarily know that. If the group does not feature a character with at least tangential knowledge of the Name-giver's physiology, they might even assume the poison is fatal, since Vebraan looked worse with each day (a result of his sleeplessness and all the bad things that might have happened to him).

BEHIND THE SCENES

This section describes ways to deal with the poison's effects on Vebraan and the characters, and might be required at any point during the adventure. However, the gamemaster may want to utilize options to expand **Betrayal's Sting** at this point (see **Aftermath**, p. 20), and has to decide at what point to introduce them.

Working the Loot

It is a good idea to use the Alchemy skill to analyze the Enrager's Kiss. Even using it to produce a treatment is possible. Doing so is not required to solve the adventure, but it can underline the usefulness of certain abilities that are not very often the center of attention when the situation could be called dangerous. When describing the Enrager as it fights with the adventurers, the gamemaster should draw the players' attention on its tail and stinger to hint at it as something noteworthy.

If they examine the Enrager after the fight, he should do the same (it is a pretty prominent feature of the beast, after all). The gamemaster needs to decide how easy learning about the poison glands should be for the characters. A Skill Test against Difficulty Numbers ranging from 5 to 7 is good enough to instantly get an idea that there is something to be found on the corpse. The Difficulty Number should depend on how much the skill is related to the task, and applicable skills can include Alchemy, Hunting, Knowledge (Animal Lore, Horror Lore, Nature Lore, Poison Lore), or Wilderness Survival (although this list is nowhere near complete). Also note that some of these skills can be defaulted to or are covered by the Half-Magic abilities of certain Disciplines. If the characters examine the construct's corpse or the poison using a suitable skill, refer to the general guidelines for Knowledge skills (**Player's Compendium**, p. 231) to determine what they can learn. For experienced adventurers, the gamemaster may also decide that some of this is part of their common knowledge already.

To use the poison for any purpose, it has to be extracted first. This requires the poison glands to be removed from the construct's corpse without damaging them—not an easy procedure given the construction of the Enrager's tail (see **The Enrager**, p. 10). Removing the glands requires about 10 minutes of time and a successful Alchemy, Hunting, or Wilderness Survival (7) Test—although skills allowing similar procedures (experience as a cook or butcher, for example) may be applicable, requiring a Good result at the gamemaster's discretion.

Once extracted, the poison can be analyzed according to the standard rules for the Alchemy skill (**Player's Compendium**, p. 235). It can be used to produce new or modify existing antidotes in only 1 hour, requiring an Alchemy (12) Test. A new antidote conveys a +3 bonus to Poison Resistance Tests made, while modifying an existing antidote raises its Effect step by +3. For every dose of the poison, one antidote can be produced or modified. At the gamemaster's discretion, an Excellent result on the Alchemy Test produces a cure: an antidote immediately neutralizing the poison. In any case, the poison will only take effect for a few days and wear off after that.

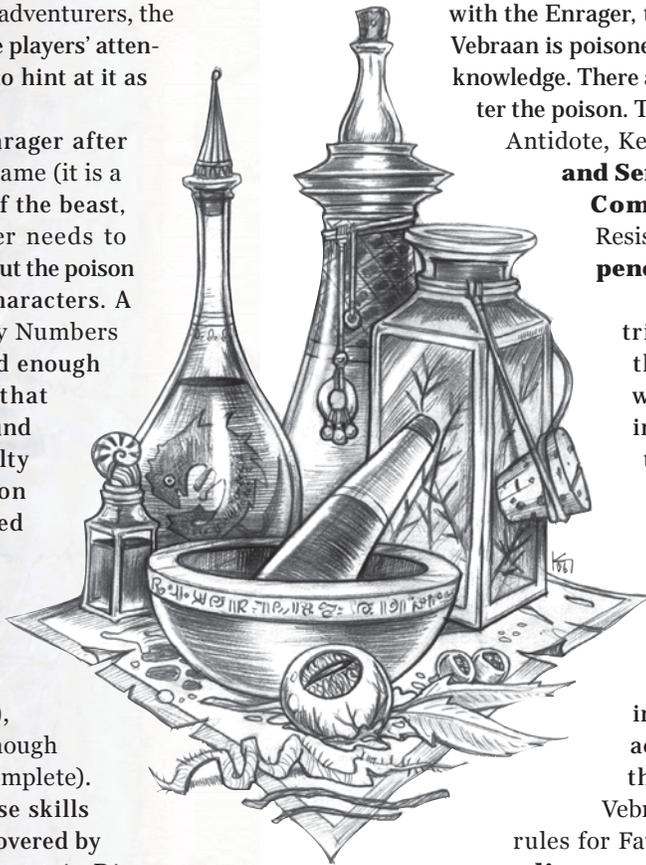
Dealing With Vebraan

At any given time, before or after the fight with the Enrager, the characters may realize that Vebraan is poisoned, and may want to act on that knowledge. There are several possibilities to counter the poison. The most noteworthy are Kelia's Antidote, Kelix's Poultice (see the **Goods and Services** chapter of the **Player's Compendium**, p. 451), and the Resist Poison spell (**Player's Compendium**, p. 309).

Kelia's Antidote is the most tricky to use, as it neutralizes the poison for 4 hours, but it will not help Vebraan in resisting the poison. After ingesting the antidote, Vebraan will become more bearable and even be able to tell them what went wrong. However, he will soon fall asleep, exhausted from several days of being awake. He can be woken up, but will be in no condition to help the characters much. During any time the poison's effects are halted, Vebraan will also be subject to the

rules for Fatigue (**Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 120), and the penalties he has accumulated are likely to be steep. This situation will also feed Vebraan's paranoia once the antidote's effects wear off: he will only remember that the characters fed him something—something that made him sleep or to trust them, which clearly must be a magical trick! However, if the characters have several antidotes with them, they might renew the effect long enough for Vebraan to sleep several hours and wake clear and free of the poison. Once they run out of antidotes, however, Vebraan will fall back into his paranoid routine again, believing they tricked him with magic.

Kelix's Poultice and the **Resist Poison** spell can actually help Vebraan shake off the effects of the poison, as they grant bonuses to Resistance Tests, albeit for a limited time only. As a debilitating poison, the Enrager's Kiss can be resisted in intervals of 24 hours after injection. The timeframe for the poultice to work is very small, so



it rarely will be able to help significantly; although the gamemaster may want to consider extending this period if the characters went to great lengths to produce a specific antidote (see the previous section). The spell, however, can be continuously cast upon Vebraan, with its high bonus making it likely he will succeed on a Resistance Test. Vebraan makes his Resistance Tests an hour after midnight (the time he was poisoned), so the spell or poultice will have to be active at that time. Characters who have succeeded in a Physician Test (or a suitable Knowledge Skill Test) will likely know that Resistance Tests can be made once a day, although the characters themselves obviously will not know the game mechanics. They can determine the right time for help by monitoring Vebraan and seeing these “critical moments” in his condition. Alternatively, the gamemaster may grant each character a Perception (8) Test to realize that Vebraan is shivering extensively because his body is fighting the poison at that very moment.

Additionally, the characters can also find help for Vebraan in the nearby town of Escandar (see p. 18).

If the Characters Are Affected

During the fight with the Enrager, one or more of the characters could be poisoned. For diagnosing, treating, and handling the effects of the poison, use the same guidelines given for Vebraan (see above). The poison has an Onset Time of 3 hours, after which an Effect Test determines the number of days the character will be poisoned. If the poison’s effects do not come as a surprise to the characters, they have a good chance to prevent a lot of trouble. For example, an affected character may ask his companions to restrain him to prevent an attack against the party. If the characters did not realize one or more of them might have been poisoned, then their companions will surely open their eyes when the Enrager’s Kiss takes effect. In any case, use the following guidelines:

After being poisoned, a character will not feel any different. In fact, even if the poison takes effect and maddles with his wits, he will still feel completely normal, perceiving every one of his imaginations as true. If the gamemaster wants to take the players by surprise, he should not announce that the player is feeling different. Rather, he should explain the situation to the player alone or hand him a note on what has happened or what he is expected to do. If the players are totally unsuspecting, the gamemaster can even call for Perception Tests to create the illusion that the note is not connected to the poisoning. He may even want to hand out notes to all of the players: for the ones poisoned, describing the above; for the rest, writing down unrelated information; or for characters who previously succeeded in appropriate skill tests, earlier information about a shift in behavior on part of the poisoned characters.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The worst thing that can happen is if the group starts some real trouble in the town or hamlet (see below) or any other community they visit as a result of being poi-

soned or by drawing the wrong conclusions, possibly ending in violence. That, however, is part of the adventure. Each character is free to decide how to deal with the residents of these communities, and having these people react appropriately is important to show that any prior mistakes can influence the remainder of an entire adventure. The gamemaster should not hold back to protect the characters.

Another possibility is that of the group splitting up because of whatever happens while a member is poisoned. The gamemaster should judge if there are latent conflicts present anyway and employ the poisoning attacks of the Enrager accordingly (the beast might perceive such things with a weird sense for relationships between Name-givers—bringing them apart is its main function, after all). Such a situation can also be employed to find out how thick the group’s bonds truly are—maybe they are ready to form a group True pattern after this experience?

PLACES OF INTEREST

This section details the town of Escandar and the outlying farming community of Mehlan’s Rest a couple of days from it. The town of Escandar is the next big settlement on the road the characters are traveling, while visiting the hamlet means taking a small detour. Neither will necessarily have to be visited by the characters to conclude **Betrayal’s Sting**, and at what point of their journey they might come here is uncertain. The gamemaster can also replace Escandar and the farming community with locations of his own choosing or relocate them within Barsaive (see **This is Something that Might Interest You...**, p. 3, for guidelines).

SETTING THE STAGE

The town of Escandar is introduced to the player characters as their primary destination in **This is Something that Might Interest You...**, p. 3, while they can learn about the hamlet of Mehlan’s Rest from Vebraan’s journal or by discovering the small path branching off of the main road. The group can visit either community at any point after encountering Vebraan, if they do so at all.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Themes and images for each of the two places can be found in their descriptions below. The following applies to both of them, however: the people of Escandar and Mehlan’s Rest live peaceful lives far away from any of the major trouble that plagues Barsaive. There has not been hostility in this area for decades, and the wildlife is not too dangerous. They approach outsiders in a friendly manner, but might seem naïve to not expect anything bad to happen to them.

Compared to what the player characters might have seen in their travels, the people of Escandar and Mehlan’s Rest (with the exception of Mehlan himself) give the impression of innocent children. They are not ignorant

to the possibility of violence, however, but this does not necessarily help the characters either: the farmers and townsfolk might simply seek the most obvious solution, which presents the characters in a bad light. If they drag Vebraan along and cannot explain this properly, it will be believed that the characters are the culprits...

MEHLAN'S REST

Mehlan's Rest is a small community at the end of a path branching out from the road to Escandar. Travel from the road takes about two hours on foot, and it is a day's walk from the crossroads to Escandar.

The community is home to a handful of extended families of humans, about sixty people including the very young and the very old, living in a dozen medium-sized houses surrounded by a five foot palisade to keep animals out. The farmers are not that bad off; they are the only ones for quite a ways and had a prime pick when claiming the land. As far as farmers in the hinterlands are concerned, they are pretty wealthy.

The head of this community is Mehlan, a retired adventurer and Swordmaster. When he was weary of adventure and injured in the First Theran War, he and his (now deceased) wife retreated to this remote piece of land to found the agricultural community which would grow into the hamlet bearing Mehlan's Name. The land is fertile, irrigation draws water from several nearby creeks, and having the town of Escandar with its market nearby has bought the residents a few possessions many farmers can only dream of, like enough draft animals to plough the fields and oil-fueled lamps to illuminate the houses at night—to read books or write letters!

While Mehlan made this community prosperous, he long ago left the day-to-day business to his son Joerm, whom he sent to Throal for some business experience and dwarf education. As a result, Joerm is well-versed in trading and other forms of diplomacy. He was trained to wield a weapon by his father, but does not share the magic of the Swordmaster Discipline.

The other inhabitants of the hamlet are simple farmers, but they have also been trained at arms. They are better educated than most Barsaivian farmers, and several of them have spent a year or two in one of Barsaive's larger cities. They will leave dealing with the characters to Mehlan and Joerm, but will be quick to support their headmen if there is any sign of trouble.

Should the characters arrive during the daytime, Mehlan is the only adult present, teaching a group of eight children. Joerm and the rest of the farmers come home from the fields in the late afternoon.

MEHLAN, NINTH CIRCLE HUMAN SWORDMASTER

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8 **Strength** (15): 6/D10
Toughness (11): 5/D8 **Perception** (16): 7/D12
Willpower (14): 6/D10 **Charisma** (18): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative:** 5/D8^{*}
Spell Defense: 10 **Physical Armor:** 0 [10]^A
Social Defense: 11 **Mystic Armor:** 2 [4]^A
Death Rating: 30 (100)** **Recovery Tests:** 2
Wound Threshold: 8 **Knockdown:** 6/D10***
Unconsciousness Rating: 22 (82)*

^{*} Mehlan knows the Tiger Spring talent.
^{**} These values have been modified for blood magic.
^{***} Mehlan knows the Wound Balance talent.
^A Statistics in brackets are used when Mehlan dons his chain mail.

Combat Movement: 24 **Full Movement:** 48
Karma Points: 40 **Karma Step:** 5/D8

Talents (Knacks)

Air Sailing (8): 14/D20+D6^V
 Anticipate Blow (9): 16/D20+D8
 Avoid Blow^D (9): 14/D20+D4
 Cobra Strike (9): 14/D20+D4
 Disarm^D (9): 14/D20+D4
 Durability (7/6) (10): 10
 Engaging Banter (9): 16/D20+D8
 First Impression (9): 16/D20+D8
 Graceful Exit (9): 16/D20+D8
Heartening Laugh (9): 16/D20+D8
Item History (8): 15/D20+D6^V
 Karma Ritual (9): 9
Leadership (8): 15/D20+D6
Lizard Leap (5): 11/D10+D8^V
 Maneuver^D (9): 14/D20+D4
 Melee Weapons^D (11): 16/D20+D8 (Armor Beater, Deflect Blow)
 Pin^D (9): 14/D20+D4
 Resist Taunt^D (9): 15/D20+D6
 Riposte^D (11): 16/D20+D8 (Arrow Cutting, Claw Riposte)
Second Attack^D (9): 14/D20+D4
 Speak Language (4): 11/D10+D8
 —*Sperethiel*, Theran, Troll, T'skrang
 Taunt (10): 17/D20+D10
 Thread Weaving (Weapon Weaving)^D (8): 15/D20+D6
 Throwing Weapons (8): 13/D12+D10
 Tiger Spring (5): 5^V
 Versatility (5): 5
 Windcatcher (5): 11/D10+D8^V
 Winning Smile (6): 13/D12+D10
 Wound Balance (9): 15/D20+D6

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.
^V Indicates a talent learned through Versatility.

Skills

Artisan:

Mapmaking (4): 11/D10+D8
 Singing (5): 12/2D10
 Storytelling (6): 13/D12+D10

Knowledge:

Airships (5): 12/2D10
 Barsaive Geography (2): 9/D8+D6
 Barsaive History (2): 9/D8+D6
 Barsaive Politics (2): 9/D8+D6
 Botany (5): 12/2D10



Creature Lore (5): 12/2D10
 Escandar Lore (3): 10/D10+D6
 Farming (5): 12/2D10
 Guerilla Tactics (6): 13/D12+D10
 Horror Lore (5): 12/2D10
 Human Racial Lore (3): 10/D10+D6
 Mehlan's Rest Lore (3): 10/D10+D6
 Spear Lore (5): 12/2D10
 Theran Military Organization (2): 9/D8+D6
 Throal Military Organization (5): 12/2D10
 Thunder Mountain Trollmoots (4): 11/D10+D8

General:

Animal Handling (3): 9/D8+D6
 Climbing (5): 10/D10+D6
 Conversation (6): 13/D12+D10
 Etiquette (5): 12/2D10
 Haggle (4): 11/D10+D8
 Navigation (3): 10/D10+D6
 Read and Write Language (4): 11/D10+D8
 —Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Troll, T'skrang
 Research (7): 14/D20+D4
 Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), Human
 Surprise Strike (3): 9/D8+D6
 Swimming (3): 9/D8+D6
 Tactics (6): 13/D12+D10
 Trick Riding (3): 8/2D6
 Wilderness Survival (5): 12/2D10

Equipment

Thread Chainmail (Rank 4; Phys 10; Myst 2)
 Thread Crystal Spear (Rank 8; Damage 12/2D10; Range 24–40–48; 1 Strain Point: the wielder's Physical and Spell Defense are increased by +2 for 8 rounds or until an attack is made with the spear; 2 Strain Points: the next Damage Test with the spear gains a +2 bonus; 3 Strain Points: the next Damage Test with the spear causes an additional Wound as long as at least 1 Damage Point is inflicted; 5 Strain Points: +1 bonus to Initiative, Attack Tests, and the Defense ratings of all the wielder's allies within 100 yards and increase the result level to hit the wielder by one level for 8 rounds or until an attack is made with the spear; 2 permanent Damage Points have been taken from a blood oath with a Thunder Mountain trollmoot's leader)
 Quarterstaff (Damage 8/2D6)
 Adventurer's Kit
 Belt Pouch
 Climbing Kit
 Farming Tools
 Forge Tools
 Last Chance Salve
 Mapmaking Tools
 Navigation Charts (in Map/Scroll Case)
 Traveler's Garb

Loot

250 silver pieces in belt pouch

Legend Award

4,875 Legend Points

Notes

Mehlan possesses the human Versatility racial ability.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

Fifth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

Sixth Circle: +1 Social Defense

Seventh Circle: Karma on melee weapons Damage Tests

Eighth Circle: +1 Spell Defense

Ninth Circle: Karma on Recovery Tests

Commentary

As the founder of Mehlan's Rest, the old Swordmaster of some seventy years is quite protective of the hamlet and its people. However, he is also down to earth and easy going. Probably all-too ordinary problems do not matter that much any more once one has reached a certain age. Most things can be fixed. Then again, there is a certain way things are done. From simple greetings to challenges of battles to the death—all these things should follow a code. It is a matter of mutual respect. If you cannot behave yourself, cannot carry yourself with the dignity of a Name-giver, you are not worthy of a Name-giver's attention.

Mehlan had hoped that a good education would teach this to his son Joerm, but it seems that it only made him feel superior. Sometimes, Mehlan feels closer to the other farmers of the hamlet than to his own son. They are less educated, but so much wiser in his opinion.

Should a situation arise in which Mehlan can foresee trouble and has time to prepare, he might arm himself with his old spear and probably also don his armor. If he does, the rest of the farmers will likely do the same. Mehlan considers himself a Spearmaster specialist.

JOERM

Attributes

Dexterity (9): 4/D6
Toughness (8): 4/D6
Willpower (12): 5/D8

Strength (13): 6/D10
Perception (15): 6/D10
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 6

Initiative: 4/D6
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 28
Wound Threshold: 7
Unconsciousness Rating: 19

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 5/D8

Combat Movement: 18

Full Movement: 36

Skills

Artisan:

Poetry (4): 8/2D6
 Singing (3): 7/D12

Knowledge:

Barsaive History (3): 9/D8+D6
 Botany (3): 9/D8+D6
 Creature Lore (3): 9/D8+D6
 Dwarf Racial Lore (2): 8/2D6
 Dwarf Trade Routes (2): 8/2D6
 Escandar Lore (3): 9/D8+D6
 Farming (3): 9/D8+D6
 Finance (5): 11/D10+D8
 Human Racial Lore (3): 9/D8+D6
 Legends and Heroes (3): 9/D8+D6
 Math (5): 11/D10+D8
 Mehlan's Rest Lore (2): 8/2D6
 Negotiation (5): 11/D10+D8
 Throal Economics (5): 11/D10+D8
 Throal Law (3): 9/D8+D6
 Throal Lore (2): 8/2D6
 Throal Merchant Houses (3): 9/D8+D6
 Throal Politics (2): 8/2D6
 Weather Lore (3): 9/D8+D6

General:

Animal Handling (3): 8/2D6
 Anticipate Blow (5): 11/D10+D8
 Avoid Blow (5): 9/D8+D6
 Conversation (6): 10/D10+D6
 Etiquette (6): 10/D10+D6
 Evaluate (5): 11/D10+D8
 Haggle (5): 9/D8+D6
 Maneuver (5): 9/D8+D6
 Melee Weapons (6): 10/D10+D6
 Quickblade (4): 8/2D6
 Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), Human



Rhetoric (6): 12/2D10
 Riposte (6): 10/D10+D6
 Speak Language (4): 10/D10+D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Sperethiel*, T'skrang
 Taunt (5): 9/D8+D6
 Throwing Weapons (3): 7/D12
 Trading (5): 9/D8+D6
 Wilderness Survival (3): 9/D8+D6
 Wound Balance (5): 11/D10+D8

Equipment

Long-Spear (Forged +5; Damage 16/D20+D8)
 2 × Spears (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 18–30–36)
 Adventurer's Kit
 Belt Pouch
 Farming Tools
 Traveler's Garb
 Writing Kit

Loot

25 silver pieces, 35 copper pieces in belt pouch

Legend Award

150 Legend Points

Commentary

Already in his mid forties, Joerm is the day-to-day leader of Mehlan's Rest, while his father is the wise old man everybody goes to for personal advice. Joerm is well educated and well spoken, and while those who surround him are not typical farmers or people from some backwater village, he stands out even from them. For the most part, this is an active effort of his. If he meets someone equally interested in elevated conversation, he will seize the opportunity to converse on a high level, but will likely seem arrogant or condescending in doing so.

While Joerm thinks he is on par with his father and has the same background, he has not been to war with the Therans, has not fought Horrors, and has neither suffered nor triumphed significantly. In the end, he will seem unremarkable to most adepts, contrary to the way he carries himself. Should Joerm take part in any conversation with the characters and his father, he will try to take the lead in it (eager to prove himself), and speak out of turn even if ignored.

HUMAN FARMER

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8

Toughness (11): 5/D8

Willpower (12): 5/D8

Strength (11): 5/D8

Perception (13): 6/D10

Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 6

Initiative: 5/D8

Physical Armor: 0

Mystic Armor: 1

ADVENTURE HOOK

The rumor of Therans active in the area is true, although they do not have anything to do with Vebraan's madness. While in Escandar (probably after **Betrayal's Sting** is completed), the characters are approached by a Throalic merchant coming through. The merchant is in fact an operative of the Eye of Throal (see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 92), sent out to investigate rumors of Theran activity in this area. He sees the player characters as an opportunity to gather information without blowing his cover, and will reward them handsomely for venturing into the foothills of the Thunder Mountains to find out what the Therans are up to.

If the characters take up the offer, they can ask the hunters active in this area about Theran activity, and several reports of Theran airship activity can be used to calculate a destination for the airships from their respective courses. It still is a large area to search, but eventually the group can find a small Theran camp used as a base of operations for expeditions into the mountains. Either by interrogating a captured Theran Elementalist from the camp or stealing the Therans' documents, the characters find out that the expedition was sent to determine if the rare phenomenon of the thunder in the Thunder Mountains can be used as a weapon: the thunder sometimes deafens everybody in a large area for a couple of days, and creating this effect by any other means would be a great asset in mass engagements—an entire army deafened would be much more easily defeated.

Death Rating: 32

Wound Threshold: 8

Unconsciousness Rating: 24

Recovery Tests: 2

Knockdown: 5/D8

Combat Movement: 20

Full Movement: 40

Skills

Artisan:

Wood Carving (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:

Barsaive History (1): 7/D12

Botany (3): 9/D8+D6

Creature Lore (1): 7/D12

Farming (3): 9/D8+D6

Human Racial Lore (2): 8/2D6

Legends and Heroes (1): 7/D12

Mehlan's Rest Lore (2): 8/2D6

General:

Animal Handling (3): 8/2D6

Avoid Blow (2): 7/D12

Fishing (1): 7/D12

Hunting (3): 8/2D6

Melee Weapons (4): 9/D8+D6

Missile Weapons (3): 8/2D6

Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), Human

Speak Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), Human

Swimming (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)

Hoe (Damage 9/D8+D6; Improvised Weapon)

Long-Spear (Damage 11/D10+D8)

Shortbow (Damage 8/2D6; Range 30–60–120)

Quiver (with 20 shortbow arrows)

Belt Pouch

Carving Tools

Farming Tools

Fishing Kit

Peasant's Garb

Loot

8 copper pieces (in Belt Pouch)

Legend Award

60 Legend Points

Commentary

The typical farmer from Mehlan's Rest is proud of his community and reassured of his peers' abilities and willingness to stand for him. Mehlan has inspired the community to form a deep bond, and while he holds no particular position, the farmers see him as the wise elder that deserves to lead them for all he has done for them.

Paranoid at the Hamlet

The hamlet is not the place to solve the mystery of the Enrager. It is a place where the characters can find confirmation that whatever happened to Vebraan happened after

he was there—as well as a place where they can get into trouble by accusing the wrong people.

If the characters make the impression that they suspect the farmers of having poisoned Vebraan, Mehlan will not take any accusation lightly—the characters pose a challenge to him, and it has been many years since he had anyone disturb his peace. Although he cannot even walk straight any more, he carries a quarterstaff to support himself that he can bring to bear to teach any offending characters a lesson. Unfriendliness or lack of manners might warrant the same response from him (no outright attack, just a ‘friendly call to etiquette’ with the end of his staff) after a subtle warning.

It is also possible the characters visit Mehlan's Rest while under the effects of the Enrager's poison, or bring the paranoid Vebraan with them. This could develop into a nasty situation very quickly. Should the group arrive with one or more restrained individuals, they better have a good explanation, especially if one of the restrained Name-givers is Vebraan—the kind merchant who was there not a week ago. The farmers are willing to care for the poisoned Vebraan if they believe the characters have a sufficient reason to not take the dwarf along, but make it clear they have no way of treating him. They may also refer the group to the temple in the town of Escandar, below. They will not do the same for a poisoned player character, having no way to restrain an adept. If the gamemaster wants to expand the adventure (see the **Oh No, it Moves!** sidebar, p. 8), Mehlan's Rest can be a place to work with.

THE TOWN OF ESCANDAR

Escandar is a small town situated approximately halfway on the trade route between Travar and Urupa. While in past years that trade route was of little importance (with merchants favoring the river to transport goods between Travar and Urupa), the Therans' return and subsequent introduction of new tolls on the Serpent River's south reach by their K'tenshin allies has revived the land route to a certain extent. It is still primarily used for trade going into and out of the region, but sees more merchants and caravans coming through with every month. The town of Escandar draws its economic power from its position along the road, where it serves as a welcome rest to travelers, lone traders, and caravans. A small trading company buys raw materials and natural products from producers in the surrounding area and re-sells them to the caravans of bigger companies that come through with increased frequency.

The town existed before the Scourge and was re-settled when the inhabitants' ancestors left their kaer in 1432 TH. The opening of the kaer saw an exodus of its residents to the city of Travar and later the emerging Urupa, but a good deal of daring kaer-dwellers stayed behind in this remote place to become the foundation of this town that numbers 600 today, with more exploring and taking residence in the surrounding area. For these reasons, many Escandarians have family ties in Travar, Urupa, and among the many Name-givers who live in the larger area as farmers, hunters, or gatherers (or a mix of these occupations).

ADVENTURE HOOK

With more and more trade coming through Escandar, the town's citizens Skeljar, Linsiel, and Haars have formed a trade council in the hopes of promoting their town as a way station for larger caravans. Every one of them has something to gain in respect of local trade, but they will need a partner on the outside who can bring caravans through on a regular basis, because their businesses do not allow them to be active outside of Escandar at the moment (they would have to invest heavily in their current operations for their plan to work already, expanding their facilities and stocks).

They ask the player characters to travel to Travar and/or Urupa as their representatives, advertising Escandar to trade companies running caravans. They can probably even convince one or two to favor the caravan route between Travar and urupa over the Serpent River route because of the recent trouble with the Theran behemoth.

The characters will have to look for likely prospects and do their best to advertise the services of Escandar's trade council to be successful on this mission.

With only about 600 mostly human residents, Escandar does not maintain a watch or professional administration, but the people here watch out for each other, and the three inns are always filled with some wilderness-hardened individuals who are in town for a day or two. Most are friends or distant family with the townsfolk and are willing to come to their aid. With more and more trade coming through town, there has been debate whether or not the community should elect or commission someone to deal with outsiders in an official manner, but so far the innkeepers and merchants of Escandar have been proficient in explaining to visitors the way the town works, and the townsfolk have trusted this arrangement to keep the peace. In case of conflict between inhabitants of the town, they often turn to the questors of the temple (see below), which is also a place the player characters can turn to for help.

Investigating Vebraan

To find out more about Vebraan's stay here, the player characters had best talk to the town's merchants and innkeepers.

Vebraan stayed at the Golden Stack for one night. It is run by an ork Named Haars, who remembers Vebraan as a quiet customer should the group ask, but he will want to know why they do so before he answers any questions. He will react positively if he learns what happened to the dwarf and that the group wants to help him, as will most

of the townsfolk. The Golden Stack is the only inn to have rooms for travelers and is mostly frequented by traveling merchants and Name-givers from the surrounding area who do not have any ties with the townsfolk. Those who have ties in town will frequent the other two inns and stay with friends or relatives for the night, but none of them will have met Vebraan. The other inns are the Red Hill kept by the human Lisslaa and the Soaring Dragon, Named for the alleged sighting of a dragon by its human proprietor Mankall. Vebraan has not been to either of these inns.

There is a human grocer by the Name of Skeljar, the human smith Hekrath, and the small trading company led by the elf Linsiel (who moved here from Urupa three decades ago). Vebraan has done business with all of them (refer to **Vebraan's Diary**, p. 24, for a few of these details), but none can give any hints as to what might have happened that made him go crazy. They will otherwise react as the innkeeper (see above), and can all refer the characters to the inn Vebraan stayed at for the night. Other inhabitants of the town might have seen Vebraan, but did not spend enough time talking to him to be of any help. They will refer the player characters to the merchants or Haars.

In the end, Escandar is as much a dead end as Mehlan's Rest (see above), a hint that whatever happened to him happened after he was here. The player characters can of course inquire as to current Horror activities in the area, and the hunters visiting Escandar seem a prime source of information for this (move on to **Horror Stories**, below). As with Mehlan's Rest, Escandar is also a place to get into trouble if the characters draw the wrong conclusions...

Paranoid in Escandar

Escandar is a much more open community than Mehlan's Rest, and it is likely the player characters expect a single individual to have made Vebraan become mad. However, there is simply no way they can find evidence proving this (as there is none), and if they accuse someone, the other townsfolk will hardly believe them. They will explain to the characters that a lot of things can happen in the wilderness, especially if you travel alone.

Again, there is the possibility of poisoned characters causing trouble. And while Escandar does not have high-Circle adepts like Mehlan to protect itself, there are a handful of less powerful adepts and trained fighters among the visiting hunters, and the townsfolk themselves have overwhelming numbers on their side. Should any trouble arise in Escandar, the gamemaster should tell a poisoned character that he is surrounded on all sides and harshly outnumbered, and that the best solution is to flee. This might not be true for all characters, however.

Horror Stories

If the player characters try to learn more about the activities of Horrors or plant and animal life in the area that might give a clue as to Vebraan's condition, they had best turn to one of the visiting hunters. None of them have ever heard of something like this, however, and none can give any confirmation of Horror activity. They are, however, eager to share a tale. The gamemaster may pick any number

of the tales and rumors listed below as red herrings or to make the encounters livelier.

"There is an unknown type of mountain lion living in the Thunder Mountains that is said to travel all the way to the trade route and attack travelers. Those who have seen it say it has greenish fur and eyes shining in an eerie blue."

"This area is the logical direction for the Therans to expand their hold on Barsaive. They send scouting parties into the Mountains, but it seems they do not dare to venture too far. Being evil people, they might have captured Vebraan and... changed him..."

"Old stories from before the Scourge tell of a Horror that harassed the builders of the old kaer. Every full moon, it would come out to take one of the workers, returning him changed, each in a very different way. A group of adepts managed to put an end to this, but it is rumored that they only drove the Horror off, and did not kill it."

"A similar story to that of Vebraan has been heard of from Urupa. There, a husband attacked his wife for no good reason, killing her. The husband has relatives in Escandar, maybe they know more..."

At the Temple

Escandar is home to a mixed temple of the Passions, where there are three questors present, living on the temple's premises. There are two young human questors of Astendar, Lelaan and Horoon, who seem to be a couple, but follow some other lines of business (if the gossip the characters can hear from out-of-town patrons at the local inns is true). Then there is Marka, an elderly dwarf who seems to be a stereotypical questor of Garlen. Her matronly nature reminds any dwarf character of his mother, and she seems to be able to handle any problem they have, including poison. Marka is well respected in Escandar, and should the group get into good standing with her, this will influence relations with any other inhabitant should the characters have worsened some attitudes. If the characters seek help from her, they will get it without any requirements (though donations are always welcome). Marka is skilled in alchemy and is a good physician, which enables her to diagnose Vebraan's or the characters' condition as a poisoning. She has all the necessary ingredients to devise a cure (see **The Enrager's Legacy**, p. 13), but it will help if the characters can provide the Enrager's poison itself or any knowledge of the construct. Marka can also sell the player characters healing aids.

MARKA, DWARF QUESTOR OF GARLEN

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8

Toughness (14): 6/D10

Willpower (14): 6/D10

Strength (13): 6/D10

Perception (15): 6/D10

Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative:** 5/D8
Spell Defense: 8 **Physical Armor:** 0
Social Defense: 7 **Mystic Armor:** 2

Death Rating: 36 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 10 **Knockdown:** 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 28

Combat Movement: 18 **Full Movement:** 36

Talents

Questor of Garlen (5): 5
 —Comfort (5): 11/D10+D8
 —Heal (5): 11/D10+D8
 —Seal Home (5): 11/D10+D8

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman; Woodworker (1): 6/D10
 Wood Carving (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:

Alchemy and Potions (4): 10/D10+D6
 Botany (4): 10/D10+D6
 Creature Lore (3): 9/D8+D6

General:

Alchemy (4): 10/D10+D6
 Animal Handling (3): 9/D8+D6
 Melee Weapons (2): 7/D12
 Physician (4): 10/D10+D6
 Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
 —Dwarf (Throalic)
 Speak Language (1): 7/D12
 —Dwarf (Throalic)

Equipment

Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
 Quarterstaff (Damage 7/D12)
 Belt Pouch
 3 × Booster Potions
 Carving Tools
 Healing Kit (3 uses)
 Peasant's Garb
 Physician Kit (3 uses)
 Alchemy Kit (at the temple)
 Small Sack (with Medicinal Herbs)
 Symbol to Garlen
 Woodworking Tools

Loot

50 silver pieces (in Belt Pouch)

Legend Award

175 Legend Points

Notes

Marka possess the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

What About the Job?

The initial need for adepts by the trapper Nosleth presented at the start of the adventure (refer to **This is Something that Might Interest You...**, p. 3) is left open for the gamemaster as a wildcard. The gamemaster can decide to make it anything he wants, but it can also serve his needs to bring the characters back on track.

If the characters rushed past the Enrager after their encounter with Vebraan, Nosleth can ask them to investigate some strange creature he has seen in the foothills near a popular campsite. It is the Enrager, but Nosleth has not told anyone, because he does not want to scare people.

If the characters have not been to Mehlan's Rest, and the gamemaster wants to explore the **Oh No, it Moves!** option, p. 8, Nosleth can send them to investigate the strange behavior of the farmers at the hamlet.

If the characters come to him after meeting the Enrager, after the initial adventure is concluded, it can turn out that this was what Nosleth originally had in mind, that the characters have already completed his task. Of course, he could also be the one who brings the Theran's machinations presented in the Adventure Hook on p. 17 to the characters' attention.

Another option to make the job offer come true is to utilize the **Mountain Rangers** campaign idea presented on p. 22 and have the player characters search the foothills of the Thunder Mountains for more Horror constructs.

Nosleth can be present in Escandar at the gamemaster's discretion. He owns a small cabin south of the city, but is out in the wild at any given time to check his snares and hunt. He visits Escandar regularly to trade fur and meat for other necessities of life, but does not have a timetable.

AFTERMATH

If run as presented here, **Betrayal's Sting** does not have any larger influence on Barsaive. If the Enrager gets away, it will wreak havoc on a number of poor Name-givers, but its doings will not differ from the machinations of other Horrors and constructs still roaming the province. It will be active in wild and remote areas and hope its victims will reach one of the bigger cities one day, but even if they do, it is unlikely to be of consequence in the greater scheme of events. What becomes of the player characters, however, is an entirely different story. **Betrayal's Sting** might see them end up as culprits in a case of murder, even a massacre, if they are poisoned. Although the poison will eventually wear off, they might suffer a bad reputation in southern Barsaive if poisoned characters cannot be held in check by their peers.

The adventure might even cause mistrust inside the group, depending on how well the characters can cope with what happened—if one character cannot see that another's actions were beyond that character's control, or if a poisoned character is not happy with the way he was treated. After all, the group is supposed to help each

other and be loyal, and if an unpoisoned character tried to save his own hide rather than stand with his poisoned pal, that unspoken contract was broken.

The gamemaster may decide to make use of one of the Campaign Ideas below or devise his own means to expand on **Betrayal's Sting**, which will keep the events as being seen from the characters' eyes—they are supposed to learn about themselves, after all.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 94, **Betrayal's Sting** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a Seventh Circle character receives from 1,650 to 4,900 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session.

In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal. The creatures presented in this adventure have listings for Legend Points. These are the points characters earn for defeating the creatures.

The adventure goal for **Betrayal's Sting** is to discover the Enrager's existence and prevent it from doing further harm. Harvesting the Enrager's poison is a suitable candidate for awarding Legend Points for finding treasure. Players whose characters' have been poisoned should receive an Award for roleplaying for their characters appropriate to their performance, but the gamemaster should not forget that the same is true for the unpoisoned characters' response. Characters who contributed significantly to finding a cure to the poison (see **Working the Loot**, p. 12) might receive Legend Points for individual deeds. An additional Legend Award should be granted if the group handled Vebraan in an exemplary manner, trying everything in their power to save him.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

This section offers some loose ends gamemasters may use to weave the adventure into their own campaign and/or to expand on the events presented in **Betrayal's Sting**.

The Grey Eminence

Horror constructs don't just fall from the sky; there has to be a Horror involved. For the events in **Betrayal's Sting** as presented, it is assumed that it has moved on—probably to plant another Enrager elsewhere. The group might realize this and try to find this Horror on its own. After all, the Enrager cannot have been here for very long: people would have noticed. As a result, the Horror cannot be far.

Gamemasters might want to introduce the Horror because the group simply is up to the task of defeating it. It might either lurk nearby, following the characters or other victims of the Enrager to feed on their troubles,

or the group might get its attention by defeating the construct. If they are not up to the task yet, they can continue to come across stronger and stronger constructs of Fleshforger until they grow to the point where they can face him directly.

FLESHFORGER

DEX: 14 **STR:** 17 **TOU:** 15
PER: 14 **WIL:** 21 **CHA:** 13

Initiative: 17 **Physical Defense:** 18

Number of Actions: 3 **Spell Defense:** 18

Attack (7): 21 **Social Defense:** 17

Damage: **Physical Armor:** 17

Claws (6): 23 **Mystic Armor:** 17

Death Rating: 78 (113) **Recovery Tests:** 8

Wound Threshold: 22 **Knockdown:** 17

Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 36 **Full Movement:** 72

Karma Points: 20 (30 max) **Karma Step:** 12

Powers: Astral Camouflage (3): 24, Astral Sight (3): 17, Corrupt Karma (2): 23, Durability (7/6) (5): 5, Forge Horror Construct (6): 20, Horror Mark (3): 17, Silent Walk^T (5): 19, Spellcasting (8): 22, Thread Weaving (Nethermancy)^T (8): 22, Thought Worm (3): 17

Spells: Nethermancy (Seventh Circle)

Legend Points (3): 26,100

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Fleshforger is a very powerful Bloatform, although it does not appear as bloated and repulsive as most of its peers. Rather, it looks like a Name-giver of human build, but the size of a troll and with yellow skin covered in blisters. Remarkable are its enormous hands, double the size of a troll's, and ending in vicious claws. It is these hands Fleshforger physically uses to create Horror constructs out of dead bodies, burying them deep in flesh, bone, and gut to shape its vile creations. They are infused with vile magic, and will deform flesh on direct contact rather than ripping it.

Fleshforger is fascinated by Name-givers' ability to create, to design, and to bring life into the world. It tries to mimic these abilities by designing new constructs, and in turn receives power from them. It considers itself to be an artist among the Horrors, striving for the perfect tool, not satisfied with the ever-the-same constructs known of the past and still forged by other Horrors.

Fleshforger will sometimes follow its new constructs to see them in action, to see what he can do better. It normally does not interfere in any fights its constructs fight, because this would not allow him to judge their effectiveness. Fleshforger is a subtle Horror, and can satisfy its need for causing pain by knowing its constructs are out

there; and occasionally witnessing the pain and destruction they cause.

Rules

Whenever a construct forged by Fleshforger causes someone to die, whether directly killing a Name-giver or bringing a Name-giver to kill another, Fleshforger instantly recovers one Karma Point, up to a maximum of 30. It also instantly learns the location of the corpse, and often travels there to use it to forge the next construct.

Fleshforger depends on its constructs to remain in the physical world. If it does not receive a Karma Point through the link with one of its constructs for a year and a day, Fleshforger will be cast back to its native netherworld.

Due to the same link, Fleshforger's constructs count as Major Pattern Items for the Horror. At the gamemaster's discretion, exceptionally long-lived constructs may count as Core Pattern Items for the Horror.

Benefactors

In the event Vebraan dies, he leaves behind a family in Throal: a wife and two kids, as mentioned in his diary (see p. 24). The group may decide to deliver the bad news of the dwarf's death, or they might worry that his family will feel animosity towards them because they have killed him.

The group might also help Vebraan's family financially, which could develop a relationship for the remainder of their careers. It is a responsibility, but can of course be interpreted as a heroic act and good roleplaying. This relationship can also be advantageous to the players in some occasions, for example if they need a place to hide in Throal. If contact with Vebraan's family becomes a regular occasion, the gamemaster can use it as a starting point for new adventures, bringing them into ordinary situations to see how they resolve them by an adept's means.

Scapegoats

Even if the group does not deliver the news of Vebraan's death, his family might still hear about it, eventually learning the characters' role in the events. Vebraan's wife, Fabra, might hold them responsible and somehow manage to gather the money or influence necessary to take revenge. The group may be faced with a hired assassin or another group of adepts pursuing the righteous path of bringing the "murderers" to justice, or she might just turn the group's stay in Throal into a nightmare. The characters can try to escape her wrath, or try to resolve the situation by some other means.

The same is true if the characters caused a death in any other community due to being poisoned themselves or acting the wrong way during their investigations. They might end up being wanted criminals, having to redeem themselves.

Mountain Rangers

The Horror responsible for placing the Enrager near Escandar might have left more than just the one beast behind. It might have used the mountains as a base of operations or a "construct laboratory" for some time, and the nearby foothills of the Thunder Mountains might be crawling with horror constructs of all types. If not eliminated, they might become a threat to the town, hamlet, and hunters in the wilderness soon.

The characters might suspect this themselves, or might be made aware of the possibility by the townsfolk or Noslath, the trapper who sent for adepts in the first place.

In this scenario, the gamemaster can lay a trace of Horror constructs through the mountains, and it is possible it eventually ends at the Horror's lair. As such, this option can be combined with the **The Grey Eminence** campaign idea (see p. 21). Especially a group with characters proficient in Tracking and Horror Lore might see this as a special challenge, and in these cases an emphasis should be placed on finding the constructs.

This scenario also poses a great opportunity to engage the characters in a series of smaller skirmishes, testing their endurance and ability to equip and prepare themselves for such a challenge. If they succeed, they are sure to receive the gratitude of the townsfolk and local hunters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

*The gamemaster can have Marka (see p. 20) send the player characters on a mission to collect a rare herb found only in the Thunder Mountains. The herb is needed for treating the Enrager's Kiss, and the characters will have to climb high into the mountains to collect it (possibly facing green-furred mountain lions, see **Horror Stories**, p. 19). This herb is also among the favorite foods of the vetta in these mountains, adding additional challenge to their mission.*

*This adventure hook will be best employed when no member of the group is poisoned so everybody has a chance to participate. Another option for a similar mission is if the characters are in Marka's debt after completing **Betrayal's Sting**. They can hardly turn her request for help down after she depleted her healing aids for them.*

EARTHDAWN SHARDS: SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The **Shards** series is a collection of adventures and encounters for the **Earthdawn** game. Intended as an inexpensive adventure resource for **Earthdawn** gamemasters, they are also a springboard for aspiring writers. The **Shards** series is published and available for purchase online from *OneBookShelf.com*—it is possible that a collection might see print at a later stage. Please read the following guidelines carefully before submitting your idea for a Shard. Submissions that do not conform to the guidelines may not be accepted.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

Short adventures and encounters (including appropriate setting descriptions) for **Earthdawn**, written to be used with the rules contained in the **Earthdawn Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**. A Shard can also contain new creatures and gamemaster characters. The tone and style of the text should fit the **Earthdawn** setting (refer to previously published adventures to get an idea of what we are talking about here).

As mentioned above, the **Shards** series also serves as a hunting ground to find potential new writers we can send outlines to and ask to participate in bigger projects, so succeeding here may result in future agreements.

WHAT YOU NEED TO SEND US

Your manuscript, formatted as outlined below, attached to an email sent to *submissions@earthdawn.com*. The email must contain a standard disclosure agreement (you can copy and paste the boxed text unaltered into the body of your email). Please note that these guidelines are subject to change, so check our web site at *www.earthdawn.com* for updates and an FAQ).

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We accept electronic submissions only. Each entry should come as a separate file (please use any of the following formats for your entries: DOC, RTF, TXT, or PDF). Your full name and email address should be provided clearly on the first page of the entry and/or in the header/footer. All pages should be plain white Letter- or A4-sized paper with one-inch margins all around, and set in a Times Roman type no smaller than 10 point). Using the default settings of your word processor is usually a good idea. Please pay close attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuation—use our **Submission Handbook** for **Earthdawn** as a guide.

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If your submission survives our evaluation process (as outlined in the **Revisions and Rejections** section on p. 6 of our **Submission Handbook** for **Earthdawn**), we will contact you and start working on getting the Shard ready for publication (this involves editing, artwork selection/creation, and layout by our staff).

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Additional Guidelines

Check our web site at *www.earthdawn.com* for more information and general advice on how to create a Shard!

Player Handout: Vebraan's Diary

6 Days Ago

My work in the town is done, it seems. It's before sunrise now, but I want to have as much time as possible today, in case I find some outlying farms where some trading can be done. I made some good deals yesterday, but the townsfolk have little coin. Traded some tools for grain with the local store and some pots for dried meat with the local company. The smith had a nice short sword. I haggled him down, as it seemed no one would buy it anyway. I am keeping it for myself; he only wanted a bottle of quality elven wine.

No farms there. The soil doesn't seem that good on this side of town. Anyway, I saw enough of them on the other side. Found an established campsite by the road, there was already some cut wood there from the last traveler. I'd cut some for the next, but my feet are aching. Didn't want to ride the cart, Sticky already has his problems with the grain.

5 Days Ago

I made a detour today to follow a small path, leading me to a farm at its end. Took me half the day to get there and back to the road, but it paid off. The farmers don't get into town often, and I traded some cloth in for preserved fruits. I need to remember this place, they're hard-working people who got their rightful share—they got some coin and are willing to spend it.

4 Days Ago

Not much to write. No people on the road, no people living besides it. I miss Fabra. I'll be home again in another month or two. Can't wait to give the kids the toys I got them. It's been three months now, hope they'll still recognize me. If times weren't so hard for us, I could be at home more. But things are as they are. Ah. Shouldn't spend so much time alone, all that thinking and rambling...

3 Days Ago

I found a lovely campsite some fifty yards away from the road. A handful of lonely trees by the road, with low branches. On the other side, a small hill rising. That will keep the wind away. It is quite beautiful, so I'll draw it to give to Fabra when I'm back.

2 Days Ago

The day seems beautiful, but I think it's treacherous. I just made the cart ready for today, and I think someone touched it while I was sleeping. I looked around, but could find no trace of an intruder. All is quiet, too quiet. Even the birds are silent. Something has happened. Someone was here.

I didn't see a trace of my stalkers during the day. I've set up camp, but will stay awake, feigning sleep. When they come out, I'll confront them. Will teach them a lesson! Wonder who's behind it.

1 Day Ago

Up all night, thinking. They didn't show up, but I think they were there. Heard something last night. Must be someone from home, or someone who travels this route regularly. Or bandits, trying to get at my goods. But more likely competitors. Bandits would've attacked me right away. Wonder what they want. Is it personal?

Perhaps they are Horror-tainted, or some weird cult. I walked as fast as possible. I think I'll return home right away, it is not safe anywhere else. They want to ruin me, I'm sure. They'll pose as bandits or scorchers or something else, but it's not that, it's not about that. This is pure evil. I can't rest long, have to escape them. But is home safe? There must be many of them, they probably lurk everywhere. I have to be careful.

Today

I'm sure they walked around the camp perhaps they are there even now outside of sight I have to be fast but ill likely have to fight them cause that's the only thing that stops them but I have not figured out why and so I don't know if I'm up to them or if I get to know why I hope Fabra and the kids are safe but perhaps they've already reached them I have to get back to see maybe the watch can help me but will they believe me. But... what if they are in on it too?

PARANOIA

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