



April 1602

Steamy Ink Press ^{5c}

Lifestyle news to share over tea

We don't need a union, we have a lawyer.

54% of Maplewood Citizens are in One Large Polycule

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A Lifestyle Paper for the Townsfolk of Maplewood

Steamy Ink Press is a division of Steamy Ink Publishing (copyright pending). Our mission is to provide in-depth news to the people of Maplewood about the most entertaining topic- the People of Interest that flit through town. What are they doing? Why are they here? Are they single? We aim to answer these questions for you!

It is our goal to provide you a perfect conversation piece to share that pairs well with tea and great friends!

Please submit all articles, tips, short stories, and comments via courier to:
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Freelands



Pheasant Plucker Proprietor Pulverized

Local Merchant Finds Exploding Corpse; Pulling Out Found Ineffective

As further questions creep up regarding the cohesion of the Chainbreakers, Sigos was found a few short weeks ago on yet another questionable solo adventure.

According to an eye witness, the merchant took several explosions to the face after pulling a dagger out of the body of a local chicken farmer Roland. Roland was known for providing the best free-range chicken meat in town, and was well-loved and appreciated for his efforts to double production after the Helix fell to keep people fed. Sigos' trap and restoration masters were not present at the time of the incident.

"I loved eating Roland's chicken- best chicken in town. Shame to hear what happened to him," Local inn keep Lance said, staring sadly into the distance. "We're making chicken soup this afternoon."

Attached to Roland's body was a tattered letter, upon which was written

"Repayment for your services." It appears that Sigos may have accidentally crossed the wrong people during some of his business dealings, bringing his ability to lead the bazaar regrowth in question.



He was tight-lipped about the incident.

"We lost a valued member of the Maplewood community, and that is occupying more space in my mind than the fact I was attacked. Roland will be greatly missed by all his friends, fellow farmers,

and merchants."

Upon inquiring with Chainbreaker leader Makhno Brownfox about how he planned to limit further collateral damage to innocent townsfolk, he responded irately "This is between us and Sigos, go write about <name redacted>'s new gambeson or something."

The bazaar has recently come back to life after several merchants never returned following the orc invasion, and residents have expressed worry that they may see business start to take a nosedive again.

"With them there attacks on the bazaar, it's gettin' to be like a person can't go out anymore," Maplewood celebrity Thaddeus Roth said. Thaddeus is known for his many impressions, never actually stating his name, and occasionally will do stand-up comedy in the bazaar for spare coin. "I'm hopin' that Sigos takes care of whoever is threatening our livelihoods soon."

Ads Abound Raising Questions about the Maplewood Gazette's Financial Stability

After the lack of news in the last Gazette, local townsfolk have been mentioning how much the paper appears to be relying on ad revenue to keep itself afloat. Notably, there was only one news article in the March issue.

"This entire back page is ads! What about the fact that Farmer Josie killed my brother ten years back and now she's almost blown through his entire pension? They could have written about that!" Josie's sister-in-law Julie exclaimed in the inn as the latest issue was delivered.

"Some adventurer's tart gets uppity with some clowns and is rewarded with a half-page portrait in the paper?," Local Historical Society member Kingston

shook his head while looking down at the paper. "Going downhill since that gossip rag started coming out..."

We reached out to Steamy Ink Publishing CFO Lorelei Levanestra for comment on how they manage to publish more content with fewer ads.

"SIP has become significantly more popular for its in-depth reporting of facts. We have investors who are willing to help us expand and-" Lorelei paused at this time as Lynn leaned down and whispered into her ear. "Any further questions regarding our financial status should be directed to our legal department."

"Of course, like most papers, we do rely on advertising income," she added. "We have reasonable rates, anyone with questions can inquire in person to me or via courier. Please do not send inquiries to Poppy, she's very busy doing editorial things."

Issac Braun just gave a smile when we asked regarding how he decides how much ad space to allocate. "I just take each news issue as is. Sometimes there are more ads than stories in one month. The next it's vice versa. Just need to take life one step at a time at my age."

It seems that the way news is spread in Maplewood and to a wider extent, the Freelands, is evolving. Only time will tell which media outlets will adapt to these changing times, and which ones will disappear into history.



*Baked Goods
by Kyth
Offered in the Bazaar*



*Get a Tasty Treat to
go With Your
Morning Brew!*

Of the many dangers lurking about in the Freelands, werewolves are one of the more common and deadly. Even if the initial attack is unsuccessful in killing its victim, it leaves one open to a horrific change that is irreversible if not taken care of in time. The change of Lycanthropy is not something to be taken lightly and it can be contracted from the slightest scratch. A good rule of thumb is to always have a vial of Wolfsbane available at all times and to take it even if you think you weren't bitten. This advice comes down from one of the most adept fighters in the area, Pretty Boy, the renowned Arms Master of the Sable Company.



This expert further advises of the difficulties in dealing with werewolves. Firstly they often travel in groups to utilize group tactics, much like a wolf pack would. The second, more insidious trouble with werewolves is that they can blend in with normal people, hiding their lycanthropy in the guise of normal traveling folk. Be wary of hunters and those who wish to separate you from other people. They can strike anywhere.

If one seeks to hunt werewolves the requirement is silver or elven steel blades or

WEREWOLVES:

HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE INEVITABLE

arrows to bring them down. If you know someone skilled enough in the magic arts to cast Silvershine on your bow or blade, this can suffice as well. Larger werewolves may require more powerful strikes to really make the difference, but they will drop to silver regardless.

Another local expert who has asked to remain anonymous has also requested that I mention that there is a difference between an individual who has been afflicted with lycanthropy and those who are born with it. Those who are born with it are considerably tougher and more cunning than their afflicted brethren. They are also the ones who often have better control of when they and how they change. They often lead these groups and can be an unpleasant surprise for those unprepared for their resilience.

- *Shelaz Snowpike*

Sources

- Pretty Boy, Arms Master of the Sable Company
- Anonymous

X'Nor:

Some
Truths and
Several
Lies

- Just a fun little guy
- Wears a cloak
- Solves crimes
- Woodworker
- Leather worker
- Doesn't kink shame
- Makes boxes
- Can be found stalking people in the woods
- Is not a bandit
- Wore a mask to avoid the mind shatter plague
- Is in a love triangle with Enzo and Lapis
- There is no confirmation if he actually exists or if he is just a figment of our imaginations



Half of Maplewood Residents Actually Part of a Town-wide Polycule

A recent study by Ruth Pinsky, a visiting scholar writing their dissertation on family dynamics in the Freelands, revealed that 54% of the adult citizens in Maplewood that self-identified as being in a relationship actually belong to one large polycule in the town.

It seems that due to a lack of active relationship counselors in town, most denizens just ask random adventurers for relationship advice. In matters relating to choosing between partners, adultery, or loved ones that were thought dead suddenly reappearing, most adventurers will suggest that the couple instead just becomes a throuple. Pinsky poses in their research that this could be due to adventurers progressive outlooks, the natural resistance of the adventuring lifestyle to putting down roots, or the high representation of wood elves among them.

Regardless, due to the small population of the town and the seemingly endless amount of interpersonal drama that happens, the result has been an intermingling chain of dozens of throuples and quadruples that Pinsky has stated "Made my head hurt from tracking". Anyone who wishes to volunteer and help chart this phenomenon is encouraged to reach out via courier.



Sable Company: The Premier Mercenary Company

As everyone took advantage of Founder's Feast to wind down, Sable Company was seen letting their hair down and mingling with the other adventurers. It was quite obvious to everyone in attendance that they shared a sense of family and belonging as a memorable game of Truth-for-Truth revealed their bonds. Dante was even heard stating he would marry every member of Sable Company, dashing the rumors that he may have a bias against those who identify as LGBTQIA+. When asked for further comment he confirmed that those rumors were false and he was quite upset that someone had started to spread such a malicious story. As the feast moved from a dinner focused affair, to one of more freedom and fun, Zenif was seen with Tiny temporarily joining the Sable polycule that had formed. It was truly wonderful to see such a display of affection amongst the normally serious group.

When asked later for comment on their camaraderie, Commander Tiny

had this long-winded statement: "Sable Company, a leading provider of innovative solutions in the mercenary industry, has built a reputation for being a close-knit family of professional soldiers who genuinely care for each other and for the Contract. From the moment one partakes within our Oath, you are greeted with a sense of belonging that is hard to find in today's dread-filled world. This commitment to each other and its ideals extends beyond just words. Sable Company has a track record of delivering on its Contracts and going above and beyond for its clients. With a team of dedicated and skilled professionals, we consistently provide top-notch solutions that often exceed expectations. Brothers and Sisters are encouraged to collaborate, share ideas, and lean on each other for support when needed."

Dearest Reader,

A new faekin arrived in town recently, bringing the color palette of Maplewood up to a total of 6! T only speaks elvish, but is very soft spoken so it is recommended that you stand close to them while they talk. If a yellow and orange faekin soon follow, we will be able to make a rainbow of them in the town square! T is also on a search for their mom; if anyone has any information, they should approach them with it (and a translator if needed).

Local scholar J was found during the Founder's Feast with his head in a stew pot, exclaiming how much he enjoyed C's well-aged meat. It is good to know that even the most studious of scholars chosen can let loose and enjoy themselves.

Recently engaged to S, L said during a game of truth or truth that if she had to marry someone that wasn't S, she would probably marry R. As R admitted later in the game that he was interested in eating the Rock that ate his spark, L began to rethink her choices.

In the same game of truth or truth, E admitted her biggest regret was mastering restoration magic. It appears E learned a lesson the hard way- let everyone know that you're a resto master and all of a sudden you need to fix them all.

There has been a disturbing amount of propaganda recently from other news sources, stating that there are attacks instigated seemingly at random by faekin happening in the Freelands. It is not recommended that anyone entertain such rumors, and dismiss them as the fallacy that they are. Faekin are about as stable as anyone else who thinks it's a good idea to be an adventurer wandering about this place.

This writer had the joy of listening to P and T argue late into the night about how to properly format this very column. It appears local attorney T hates justification and thinks text should be left-aligned. This matches the Chainbreakers' take on how people should be- perhaps SIP is just a stepping stone for him to get with the group he truly belongs with?

S has been seen looking quite down since her return trip from Varganien, quite a feat considering her normal sad demeanor. Even the feast festivities could not cheer her up. The question everyone seems to want to know- who hurt her, and where are they so we can hurt them?

It seems as if L isn't the only one causing criminal mischief. Her wife, O, was recently seen wandering around with a parole officer and causing some giggles and whispers among the townsfolk. As a reminder to our readers, we do not kink shame and what O and her new partner role play is nobody's business but theirs- but we would love some details if you have them.

At a recent conference of Septons and people of influence, some stragglers to the event arrived to find everyone dead. The individual who called the conference, Cameron Septimus, escaped the room unscathed. Septimus had called the conference to discuss his findings on the Tabernacle; of course, we're all very curious what he could have found that so many people lost their sparks learning of it.

Finally, we would like to remind everyone that after a long and muddy winter it is important to recondition and clean your footwear. X'Nor of the Craftsman's Guild is offering reasonable rates to those who need to outsource this task.

Yours truly,

Madam Mapleleaf

Lucky and Gerard, Sitting in the Inn

After our listing of potential inn/ adventurer couples last issue, an anonymous letter was sent to the SIP offices:

"VERY disappointed to read about adventurer/innkeeper couples in this recent issue and see that Lucky and Gerard were not included... Very disrespectful to their beautiful budding romance."

It is not often that something such as this goes unnoticed by the newsroom, so we did some investigating of our own. We noted that for some reason, they have been wearing their feast dress (which leaves little to the imagination) every time he is working in the inn. During our research, we found:

- 2 Unreturned flirting looks from Lucky.
- 4 Polite "Thank you"s from Gerard as they tipped him more than most innkeepers make in a week.
- 3 dropped swords that Lucky needed to bend over in front of Gerard to retrieve. Gerard appeared uninterested in the exchange.
- 1 Spilled drink as Lucky waved frantically at Gerard to bring napkins to clean their bosom.
- Lucky complaining that they were feeling warm and wishing they could get out of their now sticky dress.
- Shortly after, complaining that they were cold and asking Gerard to warm them up. Gerard brought them a mug of hot chocolate.

We highly recommend observing this romantic comedy yourself, and anyone interested in starting a betting pool on when the wedding date will be should start doing so now.



This town needs to wake up and see who pulls the strings. It's not the Elders, oh no, the Elders are just puppets making you THINK they run the town, it goes far above them. It's the Shadow Council who really runs things. A secret cabal of people who make ALL the decisions in Maplewood. They meet in secret in the Druid's Grove every month and plot. Not just either. Oh no their reach is far beyond that. They control all of Novitas. They say which merchants come to town and what they sell. These plot masters plan when and where the cultist will meet! They orchestrate

monsters will attack the town! They can shape the past present and future. If they say something didn't happen, then it didn't. If they say something will happen then it most likely will! We can try to foil them by doing things they wouldn't expect but that just changes the short term plans. The signs are all there you just have to look for them! You need to be smart. You need to be vigilant! That's why I use Piscean oil supplements. All natural. Improves brain function. *SIP would again like to remind anyone submitting that ad space is paid for, and you cannot just sneak them into an article thinking that we will not notice them.*

Battle Tidings With Emeric Barnes

Sacred Tabernacle Appears at Mercy House in Maplewood, vanishes without Trace

In a mysterious turn of events, the revered Sacred Tabernacle made a surprising appearance near Mercy House on the outskirts of Maplewood last month. What initially seemed like an abandoned cabin turned out to be much more as people started realizing that the building was not ordinarily there. Several adventurers and citizens were seen entering the building throughout the day, although not all of them appeared to exit.

The Tabernacle vanished from that location almost as soon as it appeared. Efforts to trace its whereabouts have been fruitless, with its current location unknown. There are speculations abound regarding its significance and the reasons behind its sudden appearance and disappearance. Why in Maplewood? How was it some people were able to enter and exit with no consequence and others have disappeared without a trace? Will it show up again? These questions leave many who hear about the situation intrigued and puzzled.

Any further research into the Tabernacle's counterpart, the Hallowed Chantry, remains unreleased.

-Submitted Anonymously



Path Walkers: at your service.

A new local organization, called The Path Walkers, have begun making a name for themselves! When asked what they stand for, one replied:

"We are here to help guide and counsel those of good intent on their paths in life, be they physical or metaphorical, until they discover their natural place in life and, or after, death."

Recently this has included counseling ghosts, helping people with relationship matters, and helping lost travelers find their way through the local woods.

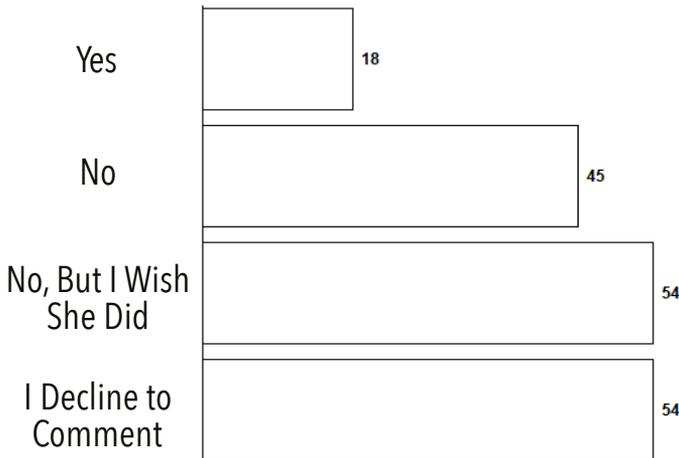
"Depending on which Path Walker you talk to, you will find different levels of help that can be provided. More experienced Path Walkers might be able to assist with the most aid, while a newer Path Walker might seek help, or handle less-complicated matters."

Don't expect them to fight for you though- their goals lie in shedding the least amount of blood possible.

If you are in need of counsel, aid, or guidance, seek them out! You'll know them by the spiral they wear and their introduction to you.

OPINION POLL:

Did Lilith ACTUALLY Do It?



Bandit Brothers Band Together: The Rise of the Maplewood Acquisition Specialists Union

A local group of bandits have recently formed the Maplewood Acquisition Specialists Union, coming together to petition for better benefits, hours, and pay. They have requested that we call them "Acquisition Specialists" instead of bandits due to the negative connotation that "bandit" implies.

"There's a lot of different kinds of bandits, we don't all just steal things," a specialist who wished to remain anonymous due to concerns for her safety said. "There was a group of us collecting tolls to work on the roads around Maplewood and adventurers murdered them, maybe this whole union thing would put an end to adventurers randomly killing concerned citizens."

"The ones up top can't get all the money. We're out here living on table scraps for the work we do." Ron, one of the founding members of the union, added. "I can't even feed my dog on the pittance I get, even if I put in ten hour days. My boss basically steals all the money and it's theft, plain and simple."

Being an Acquisition Specialist is a rough job with long hours and comes with a high risk of death, dismemberment, memory loss, and bad press. Even so, the job comes with the side benefits of adventure, fame, good loot, and a sense of community.

"My band- specialists don't need a union." Gruff, head of a group of bandits, said in an interview. "They can just come to me if they have any problems. We have an open-door policy here. I view us more of a family than coworkers; just last week I bought meat pies for all the boys."

Not all workers agree with him.

"My grandfather was in the Thieves Guild out of Civenopolis and he owned a house and raised 4 kids on just that one income. I'm out here working 40, sometimes 50 hours a week and can't even get a down-payment on an acre." Liam, a newer recruit to the acquisition scene said. "I just want to get my girl a nice ring the proper way and settle down and have a family."

Local craftsman Cordon Sharptounge had this to say about the new union: "Work is work and people should be paid a good and honest wage for it. Too long has management taken advantage of the good will of their workers. The power of collective bargaining is a great tool and should be utilized by all."

It remains to be seen how the new union will uphold. We will provide details of the bargaining contract as they become available.

NOTICE

It is prohibited to poison communal food and snack bowls owned by the Spinning Jenny.

We are not responsible for individual servings of food and drink left unattended.