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Steamy Ink Press^{5c}[©]

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A Lifestyle Paper for the Townsfolk of Maplewood

Steamy Ink Press™ is a division of Steamy Ink Publishing©. 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: Poppy Katullin, CEO

Advertising Inquiries: Lorelei Levanestra, CFO/Glitter Extraordinaire

Legal Inquiries to: J. Titus Marianus, Consul to the Freelands



Freelands Journalism In Peril:

An Investigation into the Special Investigative Press

The Breaking Bulletin Consortium, a pillar of journalistic integrity in Civen, has been shaken in a recent panic over some shocking news. Their investigative reporter, Adam, has vanished under mysterious circumstances and all fingers point to a disgruntled former grant recipient, Servius Katullin, owner of the now discredited Special Investigative Press (not to be confused with Steamy Ink Press, the paper you are currently reading).

Once a respected institution, the Special Investigative Press had been awarded a substantial grant from the BBC to promote Civen culture in the Freelands. However, behind the facade of scholarly research, Servius used the funds to bankroll sensationalized articles and personal enrichment. Several of her "researchers" turned out to be adrenaline junkies and drug addicts, who she was paying to write anything they could in exchange for

their vice of choice. Some of them were in town a couple months ago, claiming to be going on the "Sacred Tabernacle Challenge"; we still haven't quite figured out what that was supposed to be.



According to multiple sources, Adam had been investigating the Special Investigative Press' fraudulent activities when he disappeared. Witnesses claim to have seen him being dragged off onto a cart looking severely wounded by individuals associated with Servius. The disappearance coincides with the sudden closure of the Special Investigative Press' main

office in Ember, leaving several locals unemployed.

Steamy Ink Press intends to find the answer to this mystery; Servius was seen in town several months ago talking with her cousin Anne discussing journalism in the Freelands. Witnesses claim that she was screaming "I'll get her for this" and "She's ruining it all"! Perhaps she would like to return to Maplewood and discuss further the implications of saying that the family has a favorite, and clear her name of these allegations?

As the BBC grapples with Adam's disappearance and the Steamy Ink Press continues to investigate, the incident raises serious concerns about the integrity of the grant system and the potential for corruption within Civen's journalistic landscape. The big question, however, still remains: will justice be served, or will the truth about Adam's fate be forever lost in the shadows?

♆ Pisces vs. Draconus:

High Priestess Joy Weighs in on the Piscene Civil War

There is currently a civil war taking place in our local lake, between two different groups of Piscenes. One group follows the will of Pisces and the other group follows the will of Draconus.

Those that follow Pisces must be eradicated.

I do not say this lightly. If you know me you understand that bloodshed is by far my last option. However, Pisces-aligned individuals are not only purposely spreading the Veilwalker ooze... they're farming it. They are actively feeding the ooze to produce more of it to bring on shore. Pisces herself has ordered this.

We are not without allies though. The group that follows Draconus in the lake are slaying their once-kin for the good of all. We must aid them in this struggle however possible. There is still hope for the lake and their

civilization.

Do not take this as a call for the death of all Piscenes. The sins of one group do not condemn an entire race. If this was true, all races would have been put to death. Instead, if you find a Piscene who follows Pisces (and they will let you know due to their religious madness)... Submit them to final rest or at least make it so their body cannot be used to feed the ooze.

Do not attempt to convert those siding with Pisces. They are lost in the fervor of serving their 'creator' and will not be swayed.

Draconus is on our side. May we all work together to fight the Entity and the Veilwalkers regardless of our alliances and religions.

-High Priestess Joy of the Cult of the Divine Dragon

Disappearing Paper Available

Have you ever wanted to send a **secret message that disappears** when someone reads it?

Is it 1am and you have the brilliant idea of **sending your ex a letter telling them exactly what you think of them**, but don't want any evidence of it afterwards?

We can do that! Come to the SIP Storefront for more Information.

Winners of the Court of Lambs Contest

Catori
Audra
Micah

Not Poppy????

Prizes for this obviously rigged ballot-box stuffing contest will arrive soon*.

*Soon will happen when it happens

Forsaken Forgiveness?

A standoff between a group of Forsaken cultists and members of Sable Company and the Chainbreakers was resolved peacefully after the Forsaken threw down their weapons and agreed to assist in fighting the Veilwalkers in return for amnesty for their attacks last year, in a move that seemed to stun even the ones making it. Pretty Boy of Sable Company and Makhno Brownfox of Chainbreakers are the ones who offered the truce to members of the cult of the Forsaken.

When asked for comment, Pretty Boy stated "Sable will offer the full protection of the refugee camp in Gardner's Grove for those who accept our amnesty. No one will harm them on the order of the Captain, Commander, and Armsmaster."

Makhno had this to say: "The Veilwalkers forced the Vargainens to put aside their differences and use every weapon at their disposal. That is what must be done here, now."

-E. Barnes

Recently a group of the missing (AWOL?) Civen Legionnaires came through Maplewood, demanding to inspect all magic items. Apparently they are under orders from General Crassus to find a magical item of some importance, said to "glow ten times brighter than other magical items". Attempts by several adventurers to obtain more information were unsuccessful.

Civinites familiar with the military state that Crassus must be under some sort of Compulsion magic, and that no Civen General would ever do something like this. Most people in town aren't so sure.

"I mean, they just come banging around on our doors, saying that they are going to take my home to quarter troops. Who does that?" Lucy, who owns

*Baked Goods
by Kyth
Offered in the Bazaar*



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

Looking to Study Veilwalker Habits

- What do they do when not hunting?
- Do they have logical reasoning?
- Are they lactose intolerant?

Send a courier to SiP to discuss further.

a house in Old Maplewood, was slightly distraught. "I don't have any magic items in my house, I can barely afford a sack of potatoes! If I had any magic doohicky I would have sold it by now".

Civen's Military Mutiny: A Threat to the Treaty of Pinedale

Crassus' troops seem to be very devoted, not questioning any of his orders despite them being in direct violation of the Treaty of Pinedale. They aren't able to be reasoned with in any capacity. If you come into contact with anyone, it is recommended that you find Titus to handle the situation.

Seeking Stolen Runesnails

After a recent attack, probably a rival scholar or rabid fan, my stock of runesnail specimens have been stolen. I am offering a high reward for any runesnails found and delivered to me. Preferably alive. I can be reached by Crimson Courier. You know, like most people. They can be the ones stolen from me or new specimens.

As runesnails are very rare, I will share with you some information from my latest and brilliant study publication.

Runesnails vary in size from roughly half to a whole human male's hand. I'd write exact measurements but I doubt you carry such equipment with you, dear reader. Needless to say they are far larger than typical snails.

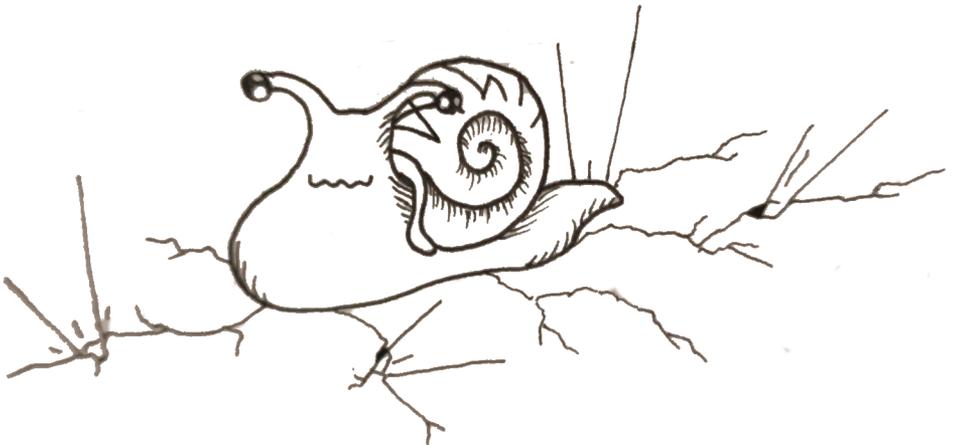
They are blue and may appear to be glowing if they have just fed. As their name may suggest, they have rune-like

markings along their shells. The clearer the runes, the healthier the specimen.

Runesnails feed exclusively on magical residue. They are drawn to areas where magic is cast often or has otherwise permeated from ritual or curse or whatever else nonsense adventurers do that breaks the magical flow.

Their unique eating habits are what make them so spectacular. Any magic they consume is purified by their bodies and released as a magical trail that others of their kind follow. It is difficult to see by our eyes, but radiant to their own. Yes, I verified this. No, you may not call me the snail whisperer. I believe runesnails can purify areas long thought lost due to magical corruption. But unfortunately I cannot study this further without more specimens. Find them for me and be rewarded well!

-Scholar Chelby Wright



Pictured above is an artist's rendition of a runesnail. The artist clearly took liberties as snails are not ordinarily this cute looking; please be on the lookout for a less adorable version of these snails being traded or otherwise not in the possession of Chelby.

Dearest Reader,

Please excuse last month's outburst. P has indeed been spotted around town, not missing, with L yelling at her. Apparently L believed P had run away, and had a lot to say

about it when she turned back up after going home for a month. Communicate with your friends, especially in these trying times, or you may cause them undue distress for no reason.

M and C have been spotted a few times over the last month playing cards together in the inn, getting close, fingers brushing against each others. . . a Chosen of the Soldier and one who worships Grak interacting is certainly an interesting thing to witness. In fact, M was seen ignoring some very blatant mistakes made by C during their game. Are they a match made for each other, or are they doomed to destruction?

There were a bunch of dark-robed strangers spotted on their way up to what seemed like Maplewood Proper under the cover of darkness. This is normally just a standard Tuesday in Maplewood, but this particular instance took place on a Saturday. Everyone knows that bad stuff happens on Saturdays.

It is rumored that J and A started a "sermon-off", and others apparently joined in! If you know anything about this, or who won, please inform us. Inquiring minds wish to know! The editor has placed a bet on A winning and would like to collect.

As more people begin researching the Veilwalkers, we have had some townsfolk attempting to search them out to see what they are themselves. This recently caused an explosive fight between L and E, as one particularly enthusiastic townsfolk found himself one as a result of C helping him seek one out and became infected. SiP does NOT endorse hunting down these foul beasts yourself, even if you are well trained. Please leave this to the professionals. Are there even professionals for this?

Having been flying under the radar since arriving, L and S of the Moonlight Sentinels were seen walking about with lizardfolk. Lizardfolk are, of course, not inherently bad, but this writer wonders what L and S may be up to. Are they solving problems, or are they just going to end up causing more?

Sable Company has recently acquired themselves a doppelganger, after P was seen knocking them out. Please be on the lookout and make sure that the person you are dealing with is actually who they claim they are. If you are unsure if it is a doppelganger, their saliva heals wounds. Have them lick a cut to see if it gets better. If it does, it's not really who it looks like. (You can also stab them and see if they bleed green- Editor)

L was recently seen after her "first hunt" carrying an ogre head through the inn and to the bazaar, dripping blood everywhere she went. She was spotted later that day with warpaint, which does not contrast well with her current outfit. Perhaps she could take some fashion tips from C.

W was seen in the bazaar attempting to buy a mirror, but lacked the skills needed to successfully haggle it down to an affordable price. I'm sure he would accept donations to buy this mirror, or tips on haggling if anyone has anything to offer.

E was recently spotted around town with her betrothed, who, by the way, her friends very much don't like. We here at SiP wish them a happy and joyous future.

Yours truly,

Madam Mapleleaf

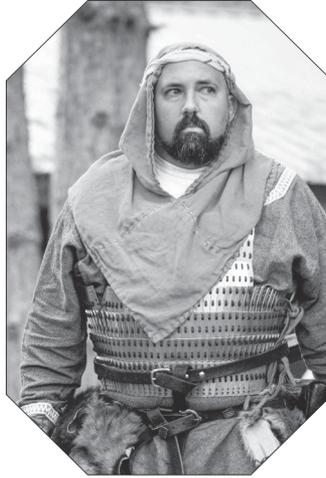
Man Punches Avatar; Avatar Punches Back

Özur Accuses
Avatar of
Cheating by...
Being an
Avatar

An unmovable object met a stoppable force a few short weeks ago when Özur issued a challenge to Justine, the Avatar of the Knight who has been frequenting Maplewood.

The town square was filled with anticipation as the sun began its descent that night. Özur stood at one end of the field, his determined aura exciting the crowd further. Across from him, Justine exuded a calm energy that hid the immense power to come.

The sound of steel on steel could be heard inside the Spinning Jenny as the two clashed. The fight went on for several minutes, Justine parrying Özur's blows with grace as he charged at her. Finally, as it seemed his victory was at hand, Justine suddenly took her true form as the Avatar of the Knight. Clad entirely in armor that rivaled Arcturus' and expertly wielding a sword and shield, there was no question who would win at this point.



Özur continued the fight valiantly but was quickly brought to his knees. He shouted out in anger, demanding a rematch. Justine declined this, stating that she had fought the duel fairly as Özur had wanted. He later could be heard in the inn stating how he didn't know Avatars could take other forms, and that the fight wasn't fair since he didn't know the extent of Justine's powers.

In the aftermath of the duel,

several questions arise. Why has Justine chosen to stay in Maplewood? Why did she accept the duel to start with? And where is Yonx, the current host to the shards of Darkness and the Scholar that she was searching for? We attempted to ask her ourselves, but she declined requests to interview.

Despite the unknowns, Özur provided a glimpse into the extent of powers that most will never see in their lifetime and put up a valiant fight while doing so. His skills are commendable and he shouldn't be looked at as someone who lost, but someone who put up the best fight possible against the odds.

Although, judging from his unsportsmanlike reaction to his defeat, the rivalry between him and Justine is far from over.



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You know Steamy Ink Publishing for the Steamy Ink Press, but did you know that we have much more available than just the news?

As a publishing house, we specialize in many different paper products. If you desire any scrolls, inks, paper, books, or paper-related ephemera stop by our stall in the bazaar for your needs!

Open during daytime hours. Other publishing and art services available upon request.

Eoin's Engagement: A Tale of Two Elves

(One More Annoying Than the Other)

Happy tidings can come even in some of the darkest of times, and our Dearest Eoin has now received such tidings. Late in the evening as they were speaking to a noble personage Amarhos Silnor of all things Dellan Marriage traditions, he suddenly began speaking of Eoin's greatest accomplishments and virtues, ending this magnanimous speech with what he calls her greatest accomplishment: becoming his bride.

Eoin is, of course, shocked by this sudden turn of events but is rather excited about the prospect of marriage. She is hoping that through correspondence and continued adventures that they may grow fond of each other and that "love will eventually bloom".

While she was aware that eventually there would be some sort of marriage arranged for her, this was not what she had expected. "I grew up knowing that my mother would pick someone for me" she elaborated while sipping a cup of tea. "I never really had a chance to develop romantic taste".

Eoin has said that she finds Amarhos passionate, confident and

that she likes that he has no issues speaking his mind. She also does find him attractive, but is more interested in what his mind holds than his body.

When reaching out to the rest of the Lightsworn for comments they did not have much to say on the gentleman in question. They care for their companion deeply and wish for her happiness always. This writer has heard them discussing their suspicions and dislike of the man when walking by the temple late at night, however.

When asked about why the rest of the Lightsworn might have had this kind of reaction Eoin responded with "I don't want to speak directly for them, but I would assume it has something to do with his rather, um, sassy remarks towards them". When pressed further on the matter, Eoin explained that "many people in Evenandra are still ignorant to the outside world and that manifests in some rather rude behavior".

Let us all keep a close eye on what is sure to be a blossoming relationship between this Amarhos Silnor and Eoin Rose Rourke.



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.

Who SHOULD Have Won the Court of Lambs Contest?

Poppy

50

Also Poppy

47

Look, I can rig a vote too!!

Letters to the Editor

Last month, many of us witnessed a local imbecile decide he wanted to see what a Veilwalker looked like up close. He had a sword, no blightfyre, and no clue as to the danger he was putting himself and everyone around him in. Speaking to adventurer after adventurer, they told him how stupid this plan was. No one could talk him out of it.

In the end he found his Veilwalker and he was infected in short order. Others put their own lives at risk and resources were spent that could have been used to save people from real danger, all because this one idiot went thrill seeking.

Hunting Veilwalkers to protect the community is noble. Protecting those at risk is noble. Even with vigilance, they are capable of a great deal of stealth at night and can surprise many people. All of these things are understandable dangers we all face trying to end this threat to our town, land, continent, even world.

Draconus has given all of Illumina a gift, a way to heal the infection that was not available previously. Some may reject that gift for their own reasons, and that is their choice to make. However, there is one thing I want to make abundantly clear. If you would carelessly allow yourself to get infected because of a desire to go sight-see or some other deliberate and knowingly reckless action I for one *will not* ask Draconus to waste his time curing you, and I encourage others in my position to do the same. Taking his gift for granted is disgusting.

The same goes for those who hoard the resources that the people of Vargainen have so kindly delivered to us through their commissary. We all need to work together to overcome this foe. Stockpiling, profiteering, or letting such resources go to waste is just as bad as letting others get infected. If you are not going to use what is being provided, give it to someone who will.

I hope even those who do not share my feelings regarding the Dragon understand the importance of working together in this matter, however the battle evolves.

-Enzo



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