



March 1603

Steamy Ink Press^{5c}[®]

Lifestyle news to share over tea
Our New Year's Resolution: Serve better tea than ever.

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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

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You Let This Happen:

How the Faithful of the Sept Betray Their Own Gods

Maplewood was once a place full of those who prided themselves on the defense of what is good and right - now look at you. Our town has found itself deep in an appalling pit of spineless complacency. It is no secret to anyone at this point that Pitohui, known worshiper of the Three, walks freely and openly within our town. What does come as a shock, however, is that the many of those who follow the Sept - or even those who just proclaim to oppose the Three - have done absolutely nothing to stop him or those like him who have grown bolder in recent months. Bold enough to advertise sermons and services in reverence to the Dark Three where all can see.

Pitohui is not simply a hooded figure whispering heresies in dark corners. The blatant murder of a Septly Chosen of the Stranger of the Prismatic Order, and further spitting on the work of this Order by freeing a Wraith Lord they had kept shackled for the good of Novitas should have sent the town into an uproar. Yet rather than facing any sort of retribution for his actions he continues to walk throughout our town, likely continuing to work with said Wraith Lord who has sworn to return to burn our homes and take our people as members of his

undead army. And what was done, ultimately? Nothing.

No, even less than nothing. Some of those in our town who would call themselves our defenders declared a truce with this man. Yes, a truce. With a worshiper of the god of corruption and deceit. Tell me Consul Titus, and you as well, Arcturus, Father of the Temple, what possible justification do you have for shaking hands with such an individual? Despite the Sept's temporary allowance for collaboration, what reason could you possibly have for tolerating the existence of one who stands against everything you swear to uphold?

However, it is not only these two at fault. If they were, perhaps I could dismiss these two as mere fools. But the entire town has stood by, spectating as evil takes root. Rumors swirl that Pitohui has found those sympathetic to his "plight" and "persecution." Let me be very clear when I say - anyone defending or harboring this man is as complicit in his actions as he is. The town should not turn a blind eye to them either.

Some have made the argument that we must collaborate to survive the current crisis with the Veilwalkers.
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Even the gods themselves have urged cooperation. But I must ask, what comes next? Should we survive the crisis, what kind of world do we find ourselves in? Corruption has taken root, and we idly watch as it grows in our society. Worse, we risk this corruption on baseless grounds. There is no evidence that Van'Ironsbane, let alone Pitohui, have taken any action to combat the Veilwalker threat up to this point and any action taken henceforth is simply an attempt to sway the populace.

So I ask you - when did we all become so spineless? When did we decide that doing good was optional? How long before another victim lies in the dirt at the hands of Pitohui while we all pretend it's "for the greater good?" Will the merciful Opal be the next to fall to his twisted murders of Chosen, exploited for his own devices? Will Champion of Maplewood Moira need to face him alone, bereft of the town's support once more? Or will we stand by so long that they've even struck down the aging Cordon, local craftsman, with none left to defend our elders?

The Sept may be showing patience, but not once did they instruct us to be complacent. If this corruption is allowed to continue to fester, we are not defenders of what is right, we are accomplices to our own destruction. The Dark Three are not winning because they are stronger - they are winning because we are letting them. So rise and do something or stop pretending like you were ever faithful to begin with.

-The Heretic Herald

Residents of Pinedale Lake Caught Between a Rock and a Dragon; Civil War Intensifies

The shores of Lake Pinedale are now a scene of escalating conflict as Draconus' forces have tightened their grip, laying a siege that effectively chains the remaining Pisces supporters to the area. This swift maneuver, which has left residents trapped and fearing for their lives, is not a mere coincidence. Sources within the region have exposed the financial backbone of this operation: local weaponsmith Cordon Sharptongue.

The sudden and overwhelming influx of weaponry being delivered to the Draconic front line, traced back to our very own Maplewood, has enabled Draconus' forces to establish their blockade over the course of the last two months. Cordon has singlehandedly transformed the Civil War into a full-blown crisis.

"Because Pisces has become a threat to all life, is that good enough for the paper?" Cordon stated when asked why he chose a side to fund when his very own god is the pinnacle of community and working together to resolve conflict. When

asked how exactly Pisces is a threat to all life, Cordon declined to comment.

"I didn't know Cordon worshiped Draconus, he's always working on his anvil, I figured he was a Craftsman type." Yvette, the local woman who insists that horses still exist and we just haven't looked hard enough, commented. "It's interesting to see him throwing his support behind the Godbeast."

"I'd do it again too." Cordon was quoted as saying when asked how he felt about shackling the besieged to a cause they may or may not support.

-Submitted by Yvette, Local Horse Enthusiast



Dearest Reader,

The season of winter has descended upon us where one finds themselves nestled quite comfortably in their house, warm and cozy and attended to by our wonderful housekeepers.

Alas, the seasonal depression soon follows, bringing with it a lack of interesting events and drama. A slight whisper of the ley lines or laughter of children may lure one outside, only to be met by a frigid gust that causes one to question their life choices.

An unfortunate side effect of the winter blues is everyone's sleep schedules scrambling. For example take Evilynn, a woman of considerable charm and wit and one of my favorite people to enjoy a cup of tea with. Evilynn and I were once nightly companions, sharing tales of the adventurers' latest idiocy and gossiping well into the night. But alas, Evilynn has transformed into a creature of the dawn- a "morning person," if you will- while I have grown to prefer the more civilized hours of the afternoon and evening. A most inconvenient development, and one could almost say it is the most distressing consequence of this dreary winter.

But you're not here to read about my woes, you would like to know about a true scandal unfurling! Abacus, a name whispered with respect and trepidation, has been seen with new compatriots. While officially enlisted with Sable Company per their rosters, rumors abound of associations with... well, let's be honest, Micah and Audra are acceptable given their trade and investment similarities. But Pitohui? Pitohui? His reputation is like an unlucky coin. To see one of my favorites with him is nauseating. Without Sable Company's protection, one must wonder: Is her bank, or even her very safety, in danger? Will Pitohui relieve her of the funds she was entrusted with and leave her dead in the woods? I hope such a fate does not befall a friend.

While we are discussing Pitohui, let's remind everyone that he has sticky fingers and has been known to paw through personal belongings left unattended- this time, it was a shopping bag of mine left unattended at the inn during a mind eater attack. How do I know that it was him? One cannot give away all of their secrets. We can safely assume from this act that Pitohui's disregard for the town's safety extends to its defenses, as he could not be bothered to come assist with the ambush. Luckily, this author keeps things she actually cares about on her person and away from prying eyes.

Let us also speak of Anlyth's curious departure. Fleeing Maplewood with the first snowfall one might think they were a mortal of some common sense, as who would want to stay here in these frigid temperatures? All correspondence sent in pursuit was returned unopened and just as concern for their life settled in, Anlyth reappeared. Seemingly they are unharmed, but are shrouded in a most unbecoming gloom with their friendship stick looking considerably less friendly. One cannot help but wonder what happened during their absence. Why the sudden isolation? Why not simply address the issue directly with the source? The mysteries of this friend are as deep as the snowdrifts.

Our charmingly dimwitted Pretty Boy, purveyor of conspiracies, was overheard rather loudly plotting this author's demise in the middle of the inn. One would think such a delicate matter would be whispered and not shouted for the world to hear, but apparently theorycraft trumps discretion. A loyal ear brought this to my attention immediately, and to be frank I found it more comical than concerning. However the true entertainment of the situation arrived courtesy of Wolfbane who, with all sincerity, inquired "What is a consort?" upon someone mentioning that mine would be unhappy if something

unsavory were to happen to me. Imagine the delightful, and likely awkward, explanations that ensued trying to explain my relationship with Titus- I only wish I had been there to hear it myself.

One of this author's cherished few, Joy, has spent the winter – and the better part of the year – in Vargainen. Finding a distinct lack of Chosen of Draconus to provide ordeals for those afflicted with the Veilwalker curse, she, along with her entourage, embarked upon a mission to bestow ordeals upon the afflicted. It seems her efforts were met with some success, particularly in Munta'Saf, where I hear they were positively delighted to receive Dragon Daddy's gift and be rid of their impending deaths. One can only imagine the festivities that followed such a mission.

Lucky, the druid who thwarted the veilwalker invasion last winter, has been observed displaying peculiar behavior. Instead of communing with trees and earth as is customary for druids, she has taken a keen interest in water. She has been spotted gazing intently at puddles, traveling to other lakes in the Freelands, and even studying the melting snow. One might think that Lucky has decided to deviate from tradition and explore the fluidity of water in her druidic practice. Hopefully she discovers how to turn water into wine before long, as the severe lack of it the last two weeks due to the several feet of snow has begun to wear on the last nerve of many townfolk.

I would be remiss if I did not mention a newcomer to town, Silor. This lovely individual has arrived to assist with the frequent problem of dead bodies all over town, offering to clean them up for free! For a nominal fee, they will also preform funeral services for them to assist any wayward sparks to the well. Personally, I think they also have a future in hustling the local gambling crowd; watching Titus get cleaned out by them during a round of bet the pot is one of my new favorite ways to pass the time.

Enzo, the town gossip, has hinted that this writer and a certain drake - Lapis, to be precise - have been taking long, mysterious walks in the woods. Let's make things very clear just for you, dearest readers- who knows what Lapis and I are doing out there. Discussing politics? Druidic rituals? Curses hurled at the heavens for the relentless snow? Or perhaps something more sinister, like a cull of the local squirrel population? Only two souls hold the truth, unless, of course, Enzo lurks nearby, hungry for gossip to fill these pages.

Sable Company's reputation has taken a rather frosty tumble this winter! Coinpurse's kidnapping laid bare the company's inability, or perhaps unwillingness, to rescue their own. Eventually Pretty Boy made a valiant attempt that only landed him in the same predicament, proving that good intentions and competence are not always the best bedfellows. Thankfully, the timely arrival of the Chainbreakers spared them all a most unpleasant fate. One is left to wonder, however, if Sable Company is more adept at posing than protecting.

This writer, rather than partake in all the interesting activities happening in town, took time to enjoy the silence of the winter and remained inside, curled up in front of the fire with a blanket and some light reading. I am positively delighted at the upcoming novel "Snake in the Dark", starring the likenesses of Arcturus and Pitohui, and cannot wait for the media ban on it to be lifted so that I can gush about it with the rest of you.

Yours truly,

Madam Mapleleaf

The colder than normal temperatures led many people to cuddle up to their beaus for warmth. However Maplewood's most beloved couple, Arcturus and Pitohui, were not seen snuggling together, leading many to believe they may be in a lover's quarrel.

Pitohui's Dangerous Game: Playing Fetch with Arcturus' Heart (and Scary Dog Privilege)

think that Arcturus is actually the scary dog. Pitohui is your standard Tall, Dark, and Mysterious, will probably knife you if given the chance, but Arcturus is the one who will fuck you up and not change his mind. The only one he's changed his mind for is Pitohui, it's soooo cute! So Arturus is the scary dog!"

A Jenny patron, sipping hot cider and writing "Arcturus and Pitohui forever" surrounded by hearts, argued that he doesn't need to snuggle to stay warm. "He wears so much armor, he stays warm. It's wrong to shame him for not being a fan of constant physical affection."

"Their Kazvak and Tamer energy give me life!" another fan squealed after hearing this, clutching a copy of Snake in the Dark in their hands. "I can't wait to see what happens when they are back together after the long winter!"

Some believe that the disagreement stemmed from a supposed deal presented to Pitohui at the Sacred Tabernacle. This rumor suggests that the Dark Three would provide access to blight in exchange for something from the Sept. The specifics of this exchange remain unclear, but some speculate that Pitohui is attempting to get the Knight to give Arcturus up to Darkness so that they can run away together. While this theory lacks widespread support, it has sparked fan discussions about the dynamics of Pitohui and Arcturus' relationship.

There have been reports of the two sneaking off into the woods near Old Maplewood, going separately so as to not be seen walking together. Pitohui also occasionally sticks his head in the temple, apparently related to his rehabilitation, listening intently to Arc's sermons. Some say this is a sign that they are ready to take the next step in their relationship.

"I don't know if they are ready to take on the responsibility of parenthood together yet, but there's plenty of time." an elf named Sophie stated as they intensely read yet another fanfiction about the couple. "I believe in them, though. Their love is so deep that even if Pitohui summons Darkness to the mortal realms, I think Arcturus will still fight for him."

"There was some debate at the last fan reading about if Pitohui gives scary dog privileges, but I

Founder's Feast Menu

40 Clove Chicken
Mashed Potatoes
Eggplant Parmesan
Escarole w/ Cherry Peppers
Dressed Salad

Lake Water Determined to be Drinkable Beginning in May

The Maplewood Alchemist Guild (MAG) has been performing regular testing of Bull's Head Lake water following its intentional pollution last fall to drive out Veilwalkers. After extensive research and monitoring, it has been determined that the lake water will naturally return to being drinkable in May. The water has been diluted to the point that if a Cleansing ritual is performed, it can be drinkable at the beginning of April. However, no one is currently able to reach the lake to perform the ritual due to the extensive snowy season and unchecked water elementals, potentially resulting from the death of an Archon earlier last year.

Maplewood's Deep Freeze Blamed on Medium's Druid Fiancee

Maplewood was suddenly covered with three feet of snow shortly after the unexpected return of Diatoro's fiancée last November. The snow has continued all winter, leading many to believe that the prolonged winter is the result of yet another druid performing strange rituals that cause massive changes to the natural order of Maplewood.

"I mean, it seems pretty obvious," Michelle, the local hairdresser, chatted as she dyed Lorelei's hair. "Last year, we had barely any snow on the ground. Then suddenly Asha is back, and it hasn't stopped snowing since. If you ask me, she's performing constant hailstorm rituals to help him keep silent as he moves through the town. I tried to ask her about it when she was here getting her hair done the other day, but she just kept talking about dragons and Draconus."

Some people are even saying something more sinister is at play.

"The last time I saw her, she was blowing smoke out of her nose and chatting in Snow Goblin," the local dairy farmer whispered, looking around as if trying not to be seen. "I mean, only people who like snow speak in Snow Goblin, right?"

"This is just like when the Elemental trapped the Snow Goblins in Gersh," Yonx said over a cup of tea, as he tried for the third time to poison this writer, seemingly hoping I'd forgotten to cast Poison Immunity. "Not nearly as devastating, mind you. But isn't Diatoro heavily involved with the well? Perhaps she is trying to trap people in Maplewood so that they cannot follow him in whatever he is doing."

The writer's sister disagrees with all of the above.

"Poppy, is it really that slow of a news month?" Lynn, local news correspondent, sighed. "It's harder to sneak around in the winter because of all the footprints. And once the snow cleared, trade and travel were only a couple of days behind. There are a lot easier ways to trap people than a little snow."

Despite those very rational points, Asha has remained unavailable for comment. Until such time as she can deny the accusations, the blame for the long winter currently falls squarely on her shoulders- at least according to some conspiracy-loving townsfolk.

BINGO!

Have you ever thought "Wow, that wasn't on my Bingo Card this year"?

Well, now it might be! See Poppy at Founder's Feast to purchase the first Steamy Ink Publishing Bingo Board for 10 coin. Limit one per person.

The first participant to submit a fully completed game board to Steamy Ink Publishing will be awarded a prize of fifty (50) coins. All participants submitting fully completed game boards thereafter will receive a coupon redeemable for one (1) complimentary "fancy coffee" at The Pheasant Plucker.

A completed game board constitutes a "Bingo," which is defined as five (5) marked squares in a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal line. To complete a game board and achieve "Bingo," participants must mark the appropriate squares and, on the reverse side of the game board, legibly record the month in which each marked event occurred and a brief, descriptive sentence summarizing each marked event. Each square must be individually documented. Submissions that do not adhere to these completion requirements, including incomplete documentation of each marked square, will be deemed incomplete and will not be accepted.