

# Special Investigative Press™

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**DRUIDIC MONSTER  
BATTLES CAUSE  
MORAL STRIFE**

**Local News:  
GORTAK TERROR SOLVED:  
IT WAS MR. JENKINS ALL  
ALONG!**

**WINTER ENDS:  
LOCALIZED  
FLOODING ON THE  
RISE**



**Your Insight to  
the Freelands**

Special Investigative Press™ is a division of Steamy Ink Publishing®, proudly supported by the Journalist's Guild of Civen. Our mission is to deliver timely, accurate, and accessible information to the Freelands community, while remaining committed to spreading Civen values of knowledge and integrity.

Our unwavering commitment to journalistic integrity forms the bedrock of our work. We provide in-depth investigations into global events with potential local consequences, specifically designed to empower individuals with knowledge that truly impacts their lives and shapes informed decisions. Through robust community engagement, our aim is to foster a more informed, knowledgeable, and discerning citizenry across the Freelands.

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## Veilwalkers Breach Freelands Borders; Nations Respond

**NOVITAS-** Reports from our correspondents in multiple nations confirm an increase in Veilwalker sightings beyond the borders of the Freelands. While currently periodic and isolated, their sudden movement into other nations marks a notable change from two years of Freelands confinement. Each nation's government has begun advising their citizens how to proceed and planning their defense against the incoming threat.

an explosive charge in there?" and the very remarkable "What do you mean no liquids? I have a speech today and I'll be thirsty." Whether the



Civen has begun diagnosing and searching everyone entering the Senate building, resulting in lines that are longer than normal at the already bureaucratic checkpoint. Overheard remarks from frustrated senators include "My shoes? What, do you think I'm hiding

screening is effective remains to be seen, but its unpopularity is already quite clear.

Terra is considered among the best-positioned nations at the moment, given the limited ways for outsiders to enter. Screenings have

been implemented for all visitors, and Reaver patrols topside have increased significantly. Our Terran correspondent reported disagreements among the patrols on how the throne should act; some argue that the nation's best defense is to seal its borders, close the entrances underground, and wait out the threat. Others are less comfortable with that position. "Terra is well-defended," one Reaver told our correspondent. "It is our duty to fight this where it stands, not wait for it to knock on our gates."

The Great Forest faces a much more dire situation: because of the density of the terrain, Veilwalkers have more opportunity to move without detection.

## Grak Youth Camp Attacked; Snack Time Never Came

**Maplewood-** A winter camp organized by local clergy of Grak was disrupted last month when Lightsworn member Ahtem attacked the group mid-outing. This reporter witnessed the entire incident from a nearby vantage point, and has several thoughts on the matter.

The camp had been on a scenic walk prior to their scheduled snack time. The children had been learning a traditional song of Grak's faith, which this reporter transcribed personally and found quite memorable:

*"Father Grak had many sons, many sons had Father Grak. I am one of them, and so are you. So let's all praise the Three. Cut off their fingers and watch them scream. Father Grak had many sons."*

It is very catchy, though I predict anyone found singing it may be subject to scrutiny. Moving on.

The attack, which was very rude and entirely unprovoked as far as this reporter could observe, resulted in the death of at least one clergy member. Snack time did not occur and no final rest was administered, which this reporter found troubling. The children survived but have since converted to Darkness worship, which frankly is worse than if Ahtem had just let them have their snacks. The Grak congregation has struggled accordingly, which is unsurprising given the attack on their snack time.

A fellow youth pastor, reached for comment, stated that the experience strengthened their faith in Grak, as the song attracted additional opportunities to praise him through combat.

Ahtem has not commented at time of publication.

## Sawmill Operator Unmasked as Gortak Terrorizing Maplewood

**Maplewood-** Maplewood residents can rest easier this month following the resolution of what has been described as a weeks-long campaign of terror caused by a figure believed to be a Gortak. The creature, responsible for numerous incidents of terror reported throughout town, was brought down last month through the efforts of local investigators Raggy and his associate Rooby with the assistance of the Seekers.

Upon the Gortak's incapacitation, investigator Raggy removed the creature's face to reveal not a Gortak at all but Mr. Jenkins, operator of the local sawmill, who had apparently been using the guise to terrorize Maplewood residents for reasons that remain under investigation.

Mr. Jenkins, upon unmasking, was quoted as saying: "I would have gotten away with it too, if it wasn't for you meddling kids and your dumb werewolf."

Investigator Raggy responded "Hey, man, I'm 35." Rooby, when reached for comment, stated that he is currently receiving significantly more Rooby snacks as a result of the investigation and described his quality of life as, quote, "great."

Mr. Jenkins was promptly handed over to the Constables.

Special Investigative would like to commend Raggy and Rooby for their service to Maplewood. We would also like to note that the Constables were not present for the unmasking, but we are sure they were very busy with other things.

**Veilwalkers, con't** Wildrunner patrols have significantly increased their activity in response, but with most members inexperienced in fighting the new threat, it remains unclear how they will fare. Wildrunner Matriarch Thaerion, speaking to our correspondent, is confident in Lodge Silverbranch's abilities: "This is not the first time The People have fought a new foe. We prevailed when Nalbendel fell. We persevered when we entered our home in Fionn A'ilean. The unmatched skills, instincts, and sense of community of not only Wildrunners, but elves in general, is what will allow us to continue to exist with these new horrors in our realms."

No responses from other nations have been formally announced at the time of publication. Right now the attacks do not appear coordinated, but as the incursions increase, the window for a unified response grows narrower. Special Investigative will continue to report as information becomes available.

- Marcus Throne, Seige Analyst

## Local Flooding Results in New Lake

**MAPLEWOOD-** Continuous rainfall and rapid snowmelt have resulted in significant flooding across several areas of Maplewood. The field adjacent to the Jenny has flooded, the southern road toward Civen is difficult to pass, and water levels at the lake continue to rise. Residents are advised to plan travel accordingly.

Of note: the puddle which formed in the field adjacent to the Jenny was formally named "Lucky Don't Poison This Lake Lake". The puddle, which formed during the snowmelt and was named by community vote before anyone fully understood what the weather had planned, has since grown to a size sufficient for several residents to attempt fishing in it. Whether anything was caught is unclear. Lucky has confirmed she is not responsible for current water levels.

The Maplewood Constables were unavailable for comment regarding infrastructure response.

## Constables and Elders Convene in Closed Session

**MAPLEWOOD-** Last month, the senior authority figures of Maplewood, located in the Southern Freelands, attended an all-hands meeting behind closed doors. No public statement has been issued, no meeting notes have been released, and officials reached for comment have declined to provide one.

The meeting occurred during the same period in which SIP's correspondents confirmed increased Veilwalker activity across multiple nations, and world governments have begun organizing their responses. Whether Maplewood's leadership convened to address this threat, or for unrelated reasons, has not been established.

What can be established is that a decision was made to hold this meeting, and a separate decision was made to not to inform the public of its contents, by the same people.

Special Investigative Press will continue to pursue this story, and will release a statement as soon as it is made.

# Insect Battles: The Freeland's Newest Spectator Sport

**FREELANDS-** A new form of entertainment has emerged in the Freelands: organized monster battles, conducted by members of the druidic community using dominate to pit creatures against one another in a fighting ring. Audience members take bets on which monster will come out on top, with earnings of up to 30 coin being spoken of. No ordinance currently prohibits the practice in any area that we have found.

Participants include druid Fiddy Coin, who has dedicated considerable effort to breeding a competitive line of Yeb His entry: a Varganien regional variant distinguished by a dramatic natural mane that reminded several attendees of Illifrith's hair. A Bloomgrub of unknown origin has also been observed in the ring.

Not everyone is comfortable with the arrangement. Monster scholar Imbiri, the only one so far to formally object, was very vocal: "If a creature is attacking the townsfolk then I have no problem with putting it down, but pitting them against each other by subjugation to fight to the death for nothing more than the amusement of a crowd is sick, and this whole town [ed: *Maplewood*] is sick for supporting it."

Bloomgrubs, by documented behavior, are not naturally aggressive toward

other creatures except in competition for food. Their primary drive is locating and consuming rare alchemical plants. Forcing one into organized combat via dominate does not simply redirect existing aggression; it imposes an entirely foreign experience on a creature with no natural framework for it.

When presented with the argument that a controlled environment might offer valuable observational data, Imbiri was unconvinced. "I want to observe them in a natural environment, and there was nothing natural about that. Why would a bloomgrub even fight in that kind of setting anyway, I've studied them before and this was all wrong."

The practice is not without precedent in other cultures. Gladiatorial matches have long been a fixture of Civenite entertainment, in which combatants (historically both willing participants and those with less choice in the matter) fight for the amusement of crowds and the profit of organizers. The ethical questions raised by Maplewood's monster battles are not new ones; they have simply found a new arena.

The Constables of Maplewood were unavailable for comment.

