

Special Investigative Press™

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**The Olmez Question:
Sparks, Sigils, and
No Answers**

**Local News:
Elders and Constables
Depart Maplewood
Permanently**

**Blightfyre Abuse
Sharply Increasing as
Number of Infected
Persons Triples**



**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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Veilwalker Invasion Worsening; Nations Respond Alone

NOVITAS – In Civen, the entry screening that drew complaints from senators this spring has expanded inward. Legionnaires now move through the nation's streets, checking residents and pursuing Veilwalkers directly. One official, speaking on

Publicly, the absences are attributed to Veilwalker attacks; our Gersh contacts note that the Veilwalkers appear to find government critics particularly vulnerable.

Those two countries are currently facing the

screen all travelers at the gates, with patrols active topside. Burrowing Veilwalkers have been reported but remain infrequent; one Reaver told our correspondent that digging into Terra was "a great deal of work when there are much easier



condition of anonymity, described the searches as "necessary, thorough, and deeply resented."

In Gersh a number of public figures have gone missing since the incursions began, several of whom have a history of speaking out against those in power.

brunt of the Veilwalker attacks taking place across Novitas. What was previously infrequent and isolated has become more common, and citizens in all countries are starting to become more alarmed.

Terra continues to

targets aboveground."

The Great Forest has turned inward, combining self-isolation with sustained Veilwalker hunting. Wildrunner patrols, whose tactics typically involve hit-and-run and wars of attrition, are finding that that isn't

working against an enemy that doesn't need supplies and multiplies faster than it can be put down. Evenandra, meanwhile, is "watching its border closely" and has announced no further measures at time of publication.

Vlean has placed responsibility on a "heretical sect" referred to as the "Decade Cult" and those who worship Draconus. What is most notable about the theocracy's statement is that they are

Veilwalker Invasion, con't

very specific about who is responsible, but they are not stating how either of these groups are causing the Veilwalkers to spread.

It has become clear over the past months that the nations of Novitas are not fighting one war together but instead many separate battles, and in more than one case against targets of their own choosing. Special Investigative will continue to report as information becomes available.

Who Is Olmez?

MAPLEWOOD—Bodacks, wraiths, and corvari have been observed working together, a behavioral anomaly worth reporting on its own. What makes it more remarkable is that each has been seen bearing the same sigil, which witnesses are consistently identifying as belonging to a figure referred to as Olmez.

This correspondent received word that shortly after cursed necklaces began circulating as early as April, Maplewood's adventuring community identified a variant of the Final Rest ritual that could be used to release the curse. This ritual, instead of releasing a spark to the well, instead dedicated the spark to Olmez.

Adventurers have since confirmed the sparks are indeed prevented from going to the well, though by what means the confirmation was obtained this paper was unable to establish. Whether someone is directing this deliberately, or whether Olmez has the kind of pull that makes it happen

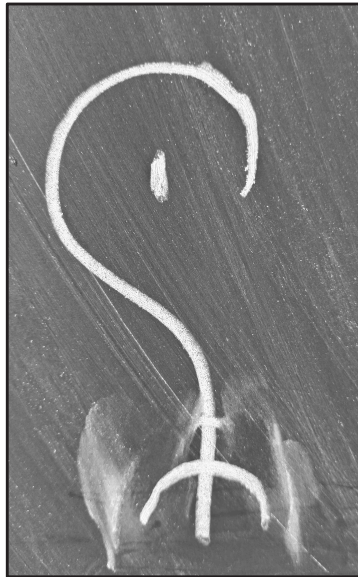
regardless of intention, has also not been confirmed.

Residents reported that Olmez's ritual started showing up around the same time the Elders decided to shut down the Helix.

Upon further investigation, this reporter was able to confirm that the Maplewood Elders did not "shut down" the Helix but instead shunned themselves from it for safety. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that Olmez's activity is conveniently linked to a decrease in leadership in Maplewood.

Who or what Olmez is remains unknown. The adventurers who are awake after the nightly

eight o'clock hour have taken a particular interest in the matter; anyone with information is encouraged to contact this paper directly and we will be happy to pass it to the proper parties. Tips are accepted and your anonymity will be guaranteed.



The Shunning: Constables and Elders Depart Maplewood

MAPLEWOOD – The Constables and Elders of Maplewood have shunned themselves from the town, following the closed-door meeting that was reported in April.

The decision followed the infection of a Constable with the veilwalker curse, raising concern among Maplewood leadership that continued proximity to the Helix could compromise it. Rather than risk the town's remaining protections, the Constables and Elders chose to sever their own connection to Maplewood through a ritual they referred to as "The Shunning".

As of the end of May, all Elders and Constables have departed Maplewood. When asked if they have any intention to return if the Veilwalker curse were resolved, the answer was a resounding 'No'.

The Elders have spoken for the Helix since Maplewood's founding more than four centuries ago. They served as the final authority on questions of citizenship and conduct, and their successors were said to be chosen by the Helix itself. The Constables kept the peace and acted on the Helix's behalf. For all of Maplewood's history this arrangement has just been how things were; the loss of

that structure has caused what can only be described charitably as varied reactions.

"Who do I talk to if something happens?" asked one resident, eating a large bowl of mac and cheese at the Jenny. "Before I knew who to go to if some random adventurer got uppity with me; now I feel like I'm on my own."

Others have taken a differing viewpoint. "The adventurers were handling things anyway," one merchant told this reporter, straightening goods on his table. "When was the last time a Constable actually dealt with someone running into the Bazaar because bandits broke into their house?"

Several residents expressed uncertainty about something more fundamental than enforcement, such as who speaks for the Helix now and how those with ill intent can be dealt with. The Elders did not leave a plan, and no one has yet stepped forward with a proposal.

What order exists in Maplewood will be whatever its residents and adventuring community choose to maintain. Special Investigative will continue to report as information becomes available.

Are You Hallucinating Right Now?

Do you know if you are hallucinating right at this moment?

Twenty five percent of people who were hallucinating when asked if they were hallucinating said that they were not. Are you one of that twenty five percent? How do you know? You could be hallucinating right now imagining this entire article. Why would the editor-in-chief of SIP let this get published? They wouldn't. Further evidence that you are hallucinating right now.

We're very disappointed/ excited for you, we're not your parents its not our place to judge you. But, you really should look into these hallucinations. If they happen too frequently that's a really bad sign.

- Enzo. Probably.

Blightfyre Works; It Also Has a Price

As the Veilwalkers continue to invade Novitas, the number of those infected with the Veilwalker curse continues to climb. What was just a year ago a "Freelands Problem" has crossed borders, increasing the number of people affected by this curse and in turn, the amount of people who need the scarce resource of Blightfyre Tonic. Currently, this tonic is the only known way to stave off the infection and prevent turning into a Veilwalker, but it comes with some significant drawbacks.

Blightfyre Tonic is currently available for those who need it from the Varganien Commissary for 2 credits. You will need to take this Tonic once a month to correctly dose against the infection.

The tonic works by stripping the body of all physical resilience at once. This purge is how the infection is fought. It is also, by every account from those dosing, agonizing. Anyone who has told you otherwise has not taken it, or they are not being honest with you. Do not take Blightfyre Tonic alone. In the moments following consumption you will be physically vulnerable, and you should have someone beside you who can heal you afterwards.

Blightfyre Tonic has been shown to be addictive with repeated use. The behavioral changes that accompany dependency arrive gradually: shortened temper, small lies about

how much has been taken, deflection when asked directly, an obsession with getting to the next dose. From the inside, none of this feels like change. It is just the person's way of coping with what can be a terminal illness.

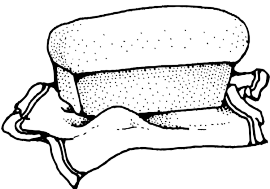
If someone you care about has been taking Blightfyre regularly, watch for increased irritability in situations that would not normally cause stress, withdrawal from people and activities they enjoy, urgency around obtaining and dosing times with the tonic, and other unexplained changes in behavior.

If you recognize these signs in yourself: you are not broken. You took a tonic to survive a genuine threat, and it worked, and now you are dealing with the cost of surviving. Find a healer. Tell them the truth about how much you have been taking and for how long. Tell your friends and your support system. Recovery is not easy, but is possible.

If you recognize these signs in someone you love, do not shame them. Do not remove the tonic without support in place. Stay with them if they will let you, and contact a healer for advice on how to approach them.

Blightfyre Tonic is a legitimate response to a real threat, and should absolutely be taken if you need it. Just take it with someone beside you, and if the cost starts to show, ask for help.

– *Caerith Lorraine, Temperance League Health Correspondent*



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