

Special Investigative Press™

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**Wanted Arms
Dealer Spotted in
Maplewood**

**Local News:
Tournament Champion
Unidentified;
Victory Undisputed**

**Reward Offered for
Apprehension of
Mustard Thief**



**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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Rabies: It's Not Lycanthropy A Guide for the Informed Citizen

My Friends in Maplewood, It has come to my attention that there has been significant discussion of a certain incident involving a kazvak at the crossroads just north of the town. Having both personal involvement in the incident, and academic knowledge of the affliction the poor creature was suffering from, I would like to take this opportunity to dispel some rumors I have heard passing through the Spinning Jenny, and inform the public at-large of what they should be looking for, and how to treat it.



To begin with, a recounting of the event in question: A man approached me asking for help with his pet kazvak, whom he affectionately named "Pup". The kazvak itself seemed to have a different idea of what its name was, but this medium is not fit to communicate

what it told me in its native canine tongue. The kazvak had been cared for by the man for 8 years and had, by report of the owner, never been fed sparks, and was normally of a gentle, cheerful disposition. Now, however, it was behaving much more erratically, with a strange substance coming from its mouth, an unusually ill temper, and seemingly random jerking and twitching.

When questioning the kazvak itself, it expressed extreme hunger, and vague desires of violence. Due to circumstances that I won't discuss here, I had a deer heart on me that contained a glimmer (read: not a full spark). In an attempt to temporarily calm Pup so we could approach, I offered this to him, and it did seem to work, albeit to a small degree, but enough so that another adventurer more skilled in restoration magic than I, Lynn, could properly diagnose the creature.

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Stranger Wins Harvest Fest Championship

Janos, Valdunar, and Ferdias Fall to a Combatant Nobody Can Place

MAPLEWOOD – The 1604 Championship of Maplewood was decided this past Harvest Fest by a combatant whose name this press has been unable to confirm.



The tournament ran twelve entrants through three elimination rounds and a championship bout. The mystery combatant opened by defeating Ferdias, a fighter well known to readers of this paper and its sister publication, then met Valdunar in the semi-final. Valdunar had by then defeated X'Nor, Ferdias in a substitution rematch, and Adroy in succession, and was widely expected to advance. Though Valdunar fought valiantly, he did not reach the final round.

The championship bout paired the newcomer against Janos, who had defeated Albite,

Cordon, and Stan on the way to the final. Janos did not prevail. One resident, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the champion as having "a spunk I haven't seen in Maplewood in a long time."

Though the newcomer is listed as "Torbik" in the bracket, Special Investigative Press investigators have found no record of a Torbik in the rolls of any Freelands town, guild, or adventuring party.

The champion wore a hat throughout his stay, which several spectators mentioned unprompted and variously called "fabulous" and "ostentatious."

Special Investigative will continue to report as information becomes available. Anyone with knowledge of the champion's identity or origin may contact the paper directly.

The full bracket appears in the sidebar to the right. This press notes that Adroy does not appear in the opening round and that Valdunar fought twice in the quarter-final. The tournament marshal, also Adroy, was not available to explain the bracket's construction at the time of writing.

Opening

Makhno v. **Cordon**

Janos v. Albite

Carrick v. **Stan**

Lionel v. Sigos

Ferdias v. **Torbik**

X'Nor v. **Valdunar**

Quarter-final

Cordon v. **Janos**

Stan v. Lionel

Ferdias v. **Valdunar**

Adroy v. **Valdunar**

Semi-final

Valdunar v. **Torbik**

Janos v. Stan



Championship

Torbik v. Janos

Many in town have proposed that this poor creature was infected with lycanthropy. While I have encountered kazvaks with this horrible condition before, I can confirm that this was not the case here. Lynn's diagnosis was that the creature actually had rabies, an equally disturbing disease of a different sort.

Rabies seems to be a neurological affliction in nature, primarily transferring between hosts by saliva. Perhaps this kazvak was involved in a fight with something in the wild that happened to come through its yard. The disease progressively degrades the victim's ability to control its movements, while at the same time causing great pain, which perhaps leads to the increased aggression that we see in later stages. As the affliction reaches its end stages, the poor creature knows nothing but pain and fear. It is unable to so much as contemplate a drink of water, yet will lash out at anyone or anything that approaches it, thus passing the plague on to its next victim before finally succumbing to its own suffering. I have read of cases in a large variety of creatures afflicted with this disease, including humans and elves—although, rather curiously, I have not heard of a single case in insectoid or reptilian species, suggesting something in their anatomy offers immunity to the condition. Based on my reading of prior research, I hypothesized that a remedy ritual could serve as a cure to the disease. Fortunately, I am an accomplished ritualist myself, and was able to prove my theory correct. By the time the candle flickered out, Pup was back to his usual

RABIES KEY FACTS

- Rabies can affect all manner of creatures, perhaps save insectoids, reptilians, and Pisceans. Look out for foamy saliva oozing from the mouth, random jerking and twitching, and increased aggression.
- Do not attempt to approach the creature unless you can protect yourself and perform a remedy ritual! Attempting to feed such a creature should only be attempted by experts such as myself. If you do not think that it is feasible to find a willing ritualist, then the creature should, unfortunately, be put down, for both the good of the town and the end of the creature's suffering.
- If you are bitten by something or someone that you suspect may have rabies, seek out a ritualist immediately for a remedy ritual!

jovial self, and properly reunited with his owner in sound mind and body. In spite of its pain and aggression brought on by the disease, Pup did not once hurt its owner, showing that kazvaks can, in fact, become loving and loyal pets, without the shamefully oppressive training called for in Gersh!

If you have seen a creature that you suspect may have had this affliction, I would love to hear about it! Please seek me out in Maplewood.

Yours,
Imbri Curiose
The Paragons (for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)

LOST CAT

Black and white, small, offended by your existence. Not technically lost but the editor would like the return of six hair ribbons, two combs, and one pearl hair pin. Last seen leaving the Steamy Ink offices with a seventh ribbon. Reward for the hair ribbons, no reward for the cat.



REWARD

One week ago, a thief broke into my place of dwelling and stole my prototype batch of my newest sauce, a fiery mustard fueled by a single extremely hot pepper I encountered in my travels. I am asking the people of Maplewood to help me in recovering my caustic condiment, and bring justice to the thief who took it.

IMBRI CUIROSE

The person who apprehends the thief will be rewarded with a bottle of the prototype when it is properly in production.

Callie's Bakery

Fresh bread every morning, rolls by the dozen, and sweet buns while they last.

Plain bread to help your mouth if you've been eating Imbri's Hot Sauce.

Open early, ask for Gerard.

We didn't take the mustard, but if it turns up we'll bake something to go with it.

"Baron Helmsworth" Identified as Wanted Arms Dealer

Bounties Posted by Civen, Vlean, and Terra; Ties to Former Cairnhold Rangers

MAPLEWOOD - The individual operating under the name "Baron Helmsworth" is actually Carlyle Helmsworth, an arms dealer wanted in at least three nations, Special Investigative Press has confirmed.

Helmsworth has active bounties posted by Civen, Vlean, and Terra for Kidnapping, Murder, Arms smuggling, and extortion of government officials.

The name surfaced in connection with a group of well-equipped bandits recently encountered near Maplewood. Public records under the name return almost nothing; the title of Baron does not appear in any peerage this press could locate. The picture changes on inquiry through less reputable channels, where Helmsworth is known as a supplier of weapons and, of greater concern, has contacts inside the old Cairnhold Rangers.

This press requested a profile from Civen authorities, and what was provided is thin. It does, however, establish one pattern across incidents: Helmsworth does not abandon a target once he has selected it.

Why Helmsworth would be operating near Maplewood is unknown; the most likely explanation is the town itself. Maplewood hosts an unusual concentration of adventurers carrying large quantities of quality equipment, which to a man in Helmsworth's trade that reads as inventory. The equipment recovered from the bandits, substantial as it was, is unlikely to represent more than a fraction of what he moves.

Residents should assume Helmsworth may still be active in the area on an intermittent basis. Anyone with information on his movements, associates, or the origin of the bandits' equipment may contact this press directly and we will forward the information through the proper channels.

Special Investigative Press will continue to report as information becomes available.