



Steamy Ink Press™

Maplewood's Whispers, from Ear to Ink

April 1604

Cordon Kills an Entire Aesthetic

Town Leadership Meets, Declines to Elaborate

Emeric Has Proof This Time
(He Does Not)

A Spotlight for Maplewood's Most Talked-About Personalities

Steamy Ink Press™ is a division of Steamy Ink Publishing®. Now, with the proud sponsorship of the esteemed Breaking Bulletin Consortium, and in support of its vital work across the Freelands, our commitment to chronicling the captivating lives of the People of Interest who pass through our bustling town is stronger than ever as we enter our third year in publication.

We are dedicated to delivering unparalleled, in-depth revelations to the people of Maplewood about those people. What are their dealings? Their true motives? Their romantic entanglements? It remains our mission to provide the perfect conversation starter for lively conversation over tea with friends.

All submissions to:
P. Anne Marianus, CEO

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Cordon's Meat: Exposed!

This reporter has spent considerable time and resources on an exhaustive investigation that spanned multiple gatherings, one suspicious kitchen visit, and a source who shall remain anonymous lest people find out they are still, in fact, alive.

For years, residents have gathered around Cordon's pit beef with no knowledge of what they were consuming or how it came to be so devastatingly good. Many questions have been asked and no answers have been forthcoming—until now.

Through sources this reporter will not name, at personal risk this reporter's lawyer would decline to comment on, SIP has obtained the complete and verified recipe behind Cordon's legendary pit beef.

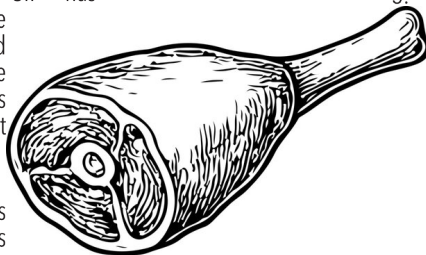
We are aware this information is sensitive. The

public demands to know, and this reporter is nothing if not dedicated to pursuing stories that others lack the courage to pursue. You're welcome, Maplewood.

CORDON'S LEGENDARY PIT BEEF Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 (3-pound) beef eye of round roast
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons seasoned salt
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 4 tablespoons prepared horseradish



1. Sprinkle the kosher salt all over the beef. Wrap and refrigerate in your ice box for 24 hours.
2. Remove and let stand at room temperature for 1 hour.
3. Preheat oven to 225°F. In a large skillet, heat the vegetable oil over medium-high heat until nearly smoking. Sear the roast until evenly browned, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet.
4. Combine the seasoned salt, pepper, and paprika. Sprinkle all over the roast.
5. Roast for 1 to 1½ hours until internal temperature reaches 120°F. Rest for 10 minutes.
6. Slice as thinly as possible. Serve warm with horseradish.

SIP accepts no responsibility for what you do with this information.

Town Leadership Met Last Month. That is All We Know.

The press was not invited: that is, perhaps, the most notable thing about the all-hands meeting held last month between Maplewood's Constables and Elders. It was not surprising that it happened, because meetings happen all the time, but it was surprising that no one is saying why it occurred and no public meeting notes have been released.

Every authority figure in town locked themselves in a room together, emerged with their mouths firmly shut, and returned to their regular duties as though nothing had happened. We would like to note, for the record, that this is exactly what someone would do if they were trying to pretend nothing had happened.

Sources confirm the meeting was called, attended, and concluded. As for the subject matter, residents have been treated to the rare gift of complete silence, which in a small town is a remarkably unique gift indeed.

Speculation among residents has been varied. Theories range from a review of Constabulary jurisdiction and enforcement powers, to discussions of how town authority functions now that Helix exile is no longer available. Others have suggested the meeting concerned Maplewood's preparedness against the Veilwalker threat specifically and what the town's own defenders plan to do should the situation escalate beyond the adventuring community. One source, speaking anonymously, suggested the Constables were primarily concerned with the Teran Thunder supply. This reporter cannot confirm or deny this theory, but we are investigating.

Anyone with information is encouraged to reach out directly to Poppy Marianus, Editor in Chief of this paper. Tips are accepted, and your anonymity will be guaranteed.

Goth is Dead. Long Live... Whatever This Is

I will not pretend to have been a fan of the aesthetic that swept through Maplewood these past few months- the darkness, the brooding, the pretend apathy. But I will give credit where it is due: the Goth Baddies were committed. There were rules, and the color palette was limited but at least intentional. The commitment to the Necromancy school was consistent.

And then Cordon happened.

For those who were not present for the undead assault on Maplewood last month, allow me to summarize: a coordinated force of skeletons and wraiths descended on the town, were promptly dominated by our more prepared adventurers, and control was then handed entirely to Cordon who, at the spry age of two hundred and eighteen, made them do a dance termed "The Cha Cha Slide" before they were promptly disposed of.

The Goth Baddies were, unfortunately, present for this. I almost wish they had not been. Instead, they now must continue existing in a world where their entire aesthetic has been forever associated with a line dance led by a man who was alive before three quarters of Maplewood's current residents' grandparents were born.

The Goth Baddies cannot come back from that, I am sorry. They simply cannot.

The vacuum they have left in Maplewood is being taken over by something, dare I say, worse. What has moved in to fill it can only be described as chaotic whimsy. Manic. Fae-like. Frantic. Relentless. The mix of chaos and lack of care gives me a migraine.

At least the Goth Baddies were trying. I don't even know what to make of the newest trend in Maplewood, as it appears to be a cross between "wore what I found on the floor when I woke up" and "raided my grandmother's attic with no oversight whatsoever".

I do not blame Cordon. He is a blacksmith and an adventurer and he did what adventurers do, which is solve problems in ways that make the rest of us question our life choices. I blame the Goth Baddie ego for being fragile enough that one elderly man with a captive audience that wasn't even alive could ruin it entirely by accident.

If you are a Goth Baddie currently reconsidering your wardrobe in light of recent events, my door is open. There are other options. Several of them involve accessories that don't require a three paragraph tragic backstory.

Maplewood deserves better. It always has.

-Garnet Glower, Fashion Correspondent

I have PROOF. After years of saying something is going on with the adventurers in this town, I finally have PROOF.

Battle Tidings with Emeric Barnes

but forgot that Michael NEVER WEARS ARMOR and Liska wears her hair IN A BRAID NOT AN UPDO.

My source? Morton. The Salt Maker over in Maplewood Proper. You know Morton. Everyone knows Morton. Salt doesn't lie, and neither does Morton.

Morton was in attendance at the Druid's Grove last month, where Maplewood's very own Head of Tourism Michael and Curator of Artifacts Liska were married. Beautiful ceremony, lovely dress, very nice, not the point.

The point is that the bride looked EXACTLY like Evilynn. The groom looked EXACTLY like Evilynn's husband. And the officiant? Looked EXACTLY like a man who is currently STUCK IN THE LEYLINES and could not have been there. Morton saw it with their own eyes. Morton's eyes are very reliable. They spot impurities in salt that no one else can see.

No faekin. Not a single one. Lots of colored hair, but no matching eyes. You want me to believe that a Maplewood gathering had ZERO faekin in attendance? We have at least a DOZEN faekin adventurers in this town. Not to mention the lack of elves. Not a single pointy ear in the crowd. No war paint. No magic swords. These people looked right but the DETAILS were wrong and Morton, who has never once been wrong about salt, noticed. They noticed that with the adventurers gone, the townsfolk can FINALLY BE SEEN.

So what does this mean? It means the adventurers are DOPPELGANGERS of our townsfolk. Something comes to this town, studies our people, and then produces CHEAP KNOCK-OFFS of hard-working individuals! Off-brand versions! Counterfeits! Evilynn and her husband got Michael and Liska ALMOST right

What else are the doppels getting wrong? I've been asking around. Doing my own investigation, unlike SOME journalists in this town. I won't name names. Here is what I have found:

I have never once seen an adventurer stub their toe. Not once, in years of observation, has one ever done it. Normal people stub their toes ALL THE TIME. I stubbed mine this morning. It hurt a lot. I had to apply Barnes Apothecary All-Natural Foot & Suffering Salve to relieve the pain. These so-called adventurers are walking around in the dark, in dungeons, in FORESTS, and not one of them has ever hopped around holding their foot or bought a tube of the salve.

That is not human behavior. I don't know what kind of behavior it is, but I intend to find out.

But whatever YOU do, do NOT give the adventurers Barnes Apothecary Organic Pink See Salt. It is sourced ethically, ground fine, all natural, no impurities. Sprinkle a little into your eyes and you will SEE THROUGH THE DOPPEL DISGUISES. But if you give it to them, they will BEGIN STUBBING THEIR TOES and then we'll lose our only way of telling them apart.

Morton checked it for impurities and said there was none. Morton doesn't lie, and neither does salt.

Congratulations to Michael and Liska, whoever they actually are.

[Editor's Note: Do not put salt in your eyes. We are not liable for any eye related incidents resulting from Battle Tidings product recommendations. This has been added to our subscription terms. -P. Marianus]

Collector's Potion Bounty

It has come to my attention that a series of collector's potions have been circulating Maplewood. They do nothing. This has been verified. This reporter has collected all of them anyway. Gotta have them all.

Should any additional potions surface, please bring them directly to me, Penelope Marianus of Steamy Ink Publishing. Do not drink them. Do not sell them. Do not give them to Emeric Barnes. Bring them immediately to me.

Compensation will be provided in whatever amount of coin I am willing to part with at the time.



Dearest Reader, As the last stubborn patches of snow melt from Maplewood's streets this author returned refreshed, rested, and absolutely ravenous for news. You have not disappointed.

Marcella has been gracing our town with her presence again while traveling with her new apprentice, who is reportedly in the midst of their practical education. All professions require training, and nobody is born knowing their craft. That said, this author has observed the apprentice's technique and has seen more promising social instincts from a feral cat. Marcella and her apprentice departed Maplewood in the company of Lapis, who agreed to escort them to his clan for a specialized portion of the curriculum; one must admire Marcella's dedication to her apprentice's education.

Word has reached me that our beloved Xerxes has taken up residency in Sol Centura, where he has apparently become something of a sensation. It appears that in his rise to stardom, he has forgotten his Maplewood roots entirely. It is truly a shame as we knew him when, and we will remember that he knew us too, whether he chooses to or not.

Old Man Morris, Maplewood's most reliable economic indicator, has weighed in on the current state of affairs from his customary position beneath the table at the Jenny. For those unfamiliar with his methodology: Morris reads the economy through the state of the town's boots. This month's assessment was, by his account, concerning. This author cannot confirm the specifics of his analysis but can confirm that his boot-based forecasting has historically been fairly accurate, and suggests you check the state of your own boots before dismissing his findings.

On a more mysterious note: Lucky is missing a sock. One sock, specifically. Rumors circulating town suggest this is no ordinary laundry accident and that someone has relieved her of said sock in order to determine her toe ring size ahead of a proposal. This author cannot confirm this theory, nor why Lucky would want a toe ring. This author also cannot stop thinking about it. We will be watching Lucky's feet very closely in the coming months.

Maplewood Marv, the sandslug traditionally consulted on how long it will be until spring, predicted six more weeks of winter before attempting to eat several adventurers. He has since passed on to whatever afterlife awaits sandslugs. His forecast remains accurate, but his methods will not be missed.

This author would also like to welcome Anari to Maplewood, who arrived at Founder's Feast and sat in Shelaz's old seat with the audacity of someone who had always been there. The resemblance to her predecessor is uncanny—both dark haired, dark eyed, and perfectly unremarkable in their coloring in a way that this author, whose hair has never once been described as unremarkable, finds deeply unfair. If you are going to have a token faekin, at least commit to one who doesn't have natural hair color privilege. The Chainbreakers apparently have a type.

Finally, the Lightsworn rescued a cat from a tree last month. The cat was unharmed, the tree is unharmed, and the Lightsworn are heroes- well, almost all of them. Eldin, I have heard from a very reliable source, is currently studying abroad in Evenandra at etiquette school. What makes this so interesting is that this was a voluntary sabbatical so that he could, and I quote, "Improve his prospects with the ladies".

We wish him the very best. Evenandra is very far away.

Yours truly,
Madam Mapleleaf