



Steamy Ink Press™

Maplewood's Whispers, from Ear to Ink

March 1604

1604 Goals:
More Chaos Energy

Wolves, Exes, and One
Very Confident Finn

1604 Goals:
Improved Decorum

A Spotlight for
Maplewood's
Most Talked-
About
Personalities

Ashes to Ashes, Crust to Crust Wraith Lord's Legacy Becomes Toast at Local Bakery

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 Katullin, CEO

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J. Titus Marianus, Consul to
the Freelands



This press can confirm that the crown of Wraith Lord Umbrex, contender in the undead power vacuum, is no longer in circulation. It was burned in a bakery oven last month by a local medium—we will get to that later on.

The circumstances surrounding the crown's arrival in Maplewood are as follows:

In the weeks prior to Pandora's assault on the Freelands, her representatives were present in town conducting "diplomatic negotiations". The town was asked, plainly, to declare a side: Pandora or Umbrex. The mediums in the town chose neither. Pandora attacked the town and

proceeded to absolutely KICK OUR SHIT IN. By some stroke of luck, we were able to repel her forces. She sent a representative to conduct more negotiations. The mediums, and by mediums we mean

cost her an army and her phylactery, took the time to send a trophy. She is alive, she is apparently organized enough to arrange courier service, and she wants us to know that Umbrex is dead.



Lynn, told her "Respectfully, no".

Pandora's response was to send Umbrex's crown in a box in the middle of the Jenny's dinner rush.

This was not a gift or a peace offering. Pandora, fresh off an assault that

This reporter would like to draw the readership's attention to something that I find deeply interesting and not at all coincidental: Special Investigative Press reported just last month that Umbrex was conspicuously absent during Pandora's assault on Maplewood.

Conspicuously. Absent.

A Wraith Lord with an active alliance offer on the table, and he was nowhere to be found.

Wraith Lord, con't

and he was nowhere to be found. Was he absent because Pandora had already dealt with him? Or was he absent because he was waiting to see who won? And if Pandora killed him, when? Before the assault? During?

I have questions. I have many questions. I have a bunch of papers hung up on the walls of my office linked together with red yarn.

What I also have, regrettably, is a sister.

In the interest of full disclosure, the medium who received Pandora's delivery is Lynn, who

is my sister, who I love very much, and who opened the box, looked at the crown of a godsdamned Wraith Lord, closed the box, and returned to advising a local chef on mushroom preparation. I said something to the effect of pointing out that she had just received a priceless undead artifact as a political statement from a surviving Lich and how could she talk about mushrooms at a time like this. Lynn told me to get off of her dick.

Which, for the record, she does not have. I know. We took baths together as children.

The crown was subsequently burned in a bakery oven by my sister. I was not present nor

consulted. The most significant political artifact of 1603 met its end between loaves of bread, and I was unable to see it happen. There were no known negative effects to the bakery oven as a result of this shortsighted destruction attempt.

Back to the point: Pandora is alive. Umbrex is dead. And the town of Maplewood, when presented with evidence of a major shift in the undead power structure, made toast.

We will keep you informed as the situation develops. In the meantime, if anyone needs me, I will be in my office with my yarn.
-Poppy Katullin, Editor-in-Chief

This press has been informed that the

territorial dispute between a local werewolf pack and the Bloodmuzzle pack came to a head last month, when their respective leaders met in what was described by witnesses as "tense negotiations." We are told the conflict concerned borders and matters of great significance to the lycanthropic community.

What this reporter observed was two people with a great deal of unresolved sexual tension conducting what can only be described as the world's most aggressive post-breakup reunion. The details of the territorial dispute escape me, largely because the territorial dispute was not the point. This author has attended enough post-breakup confrontations to recognize one on sight and of the many grievances

Fangs Fur the Memories



aired between these two pack leaders, "borders" was not among them.

Adding a scandalous wrinkle to the proceedings was the involvement of Finn, who—through circumstances I am still piecing together—was apparently tasked with ensuring one of the parties did not survive to attend the meeting. He failed; whether by interference, miscalculation, or sheer chaos, both pack leaders arrived very much alive and Finn found himself standing in the middle of a relationship spat without a single qualified marriage counselor in sight. We are choosing, charitably, to give him

partial credit for how it ended: his first words once the dust settled were "Since I've helped you, can I ask for a favor?"

We have to respect the confidence, Finn, but we do recommend not asking for favors from someone capable of having your intestines for a candlelit dinner.

The evening ultimately concluded with the Bloodmuzzle pack leader dead at the hands of an attending adventurer, and the local pack leader departing after swearing on Titus' sword that her pack does not hunt humans. Whether this constitutes a resolution is, I suppose, a matter of perspective. One imagines the surviving leader had feelings about this that had nothing to do with territorial independence.

Dearest Reader,

It has been quite a year for our beloved Editor-in-Chief. Regular readers will recall last issue's somber update on the state of the Tippy situation which was Poppy, alone with her cat, having spent the better part of 1603 on woodland excursions with a druid, not doing druid things like she insisted, and instead was talking to a millennia old cosmic horror.

I did not expect her to sign a marriage contract to spite me.

For those keeping score at home: Penelope Anne Katullin, a woman who has survived the Veilwalker curse, expanded a publishing empire across the entire Freelands, and once convinced this correspondent to do her accounting at two in the morning, has spent years being completely oblivious about how much she liked a man while somehow thinking nobody noticed.

I noticed, Poppy. I noticed when you stopped being condescending to him. I noticed when you actually sat back down at the Jenny and listened, with your eyes and everything, while he was talking. I noticed when you handled that Civen Legion issue in his absence because you knew how and you didn't want it to fall through the cracks.

You did not mention that last one to anyone. It's okay. I saw it.

What I cannot explain is what on Illumina Titus sees in her.

This is a woman with no self preservation instincts who has walked out of the Jenny and into active danger without her weapons on more than one occasion. Not misplaced them, not forgotten them at home, *left them at the table* while going outside like kazvaks are a thing that doesn't exist. She forgets her magical protections with such regularity that a betting pool on if she has Second Breath up or not has the potential to turn a profit. She talks to suspicious-looking strangers with the confidence of someone who has never been stabbed by surprise.

This is also a woman who, when asked directly in Truth or Truth whether she loved the man she is about to become legally entangled with, picked up her cup and drank. Titus stated, with his hand on the sword, in front of witnesses, that he loved her; Poppy instead made eye contact with the bottom of her mug.

Titus, for his part, has our deepest sympathies and admiration. He has accepted being the last to know anything, being dragged into situations he did not agree to, listening to Entity research theories at hours no reasonable person should be awake, and quietly ordering extra food for someone who said she wasn't hungry.

He does not complain about any of it. He just looks around sometimes with an expression that says "this is my life now" and leaves the plate somewhere she can easily reach.

I have been watching this for two years. I knew it was serious approximately six to eight months before Poppy admitted it out loud. We think Titus understands this and that is probably why he smiles and says "no comment" when someone asks him a question about her.

Congratulations, Poppy. You are not as subtle as you think you are, you never eat enough, and you are genuinely terrible at talking about your feelings.

I am so happy you weren't stabbed by a wedding planner. It is deeply unfair that you didn't actually plan a wedding but I am happy for you anyway, in spite of everything, which is the most honest thing I have ever written in this column.

Yours truly,

Madam Mapleleaf

I Should Not Have To Say This, and Yet...

The snow has finally started to melt (thank you, Abacus), but the poor behavior remains. As we close the book on 1603, I find myself compelled to issue a few corrections.

You are adventurers, not barn animals. Please try to act like it.

I was privy to see some wonderful snow sculpting festivities happening in town! The many snow creatures were festive, charming, and a delight to behold. You would think I would have nothing negative to say about it! However, to the individual (rumored to be Haelga) who decided to use a corpse to sculpt a "lifelike" snowman: please do better. We have enough dead bodies in the Freelands; we do not need you to pollute a crime scene on the lawn using packed ice. It is tacky, it is morbid, and it ruined my hot cocoa.

On that note: the dead belong decomposed or burned. Not the lake, not the inn, and not the middle of the road where I am trying to walk in nice boots. If you killed it, move and compost moss it; this is not a difficult concept!

To Lynn (and everyone else copying her): we understand you have slain your foe. We can see it. They are dead. Screaming "FATALITY" like my grandmother after that time I accidentally

broke her favorite vase is completely unnecessary. It lacks subtlety or grace. Simply wipe your blade on their tunic and move on. You are an adventurer, not a fisherman selling cod at the bazaar.

Speaking of food, let's talk about the innkeepers- I saw their tip box looking a little light recently. For shame! They feed you, they house you, they mop up after whatever you have tracked in from the woods. Leave them a coin when they bring you your food. I do not care how tight your purse is after the card game. Leave. Them. A. Coin.

And finally, the clowns and their ratfolk cousins. I should not have to say this, but please take notes: when you laugh, when you talk to them, when you toss them so much as a copper or a cube of cheese, they do not leave. They multiply.

You are not being kind, you are being naive. A ratfolk who has found a source of free food has found a mark, and they will tell every associate they have; the clowns will tell no one, because clowns do not communicate, they simply duplicate. The end result is the same: you have made yourself a problem that the rest of us now have to solve.

1604 is a fresh year. Let us try to behave like it.

- Garnet Glower, Fashion Correspondent

We Are Wasting Our Potential, Maplewood

As we enter a new year, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the state of Maplewood's gossip ecosystem. Pitorous, Janos running off on sabbatical, the wraith lord crown arriving in a box during dinner service-1603 was an exceptional year and I am personally grateful for every bit of entertainment.

But I have sat through too many quiet breakfasts this winter. The snow has kept people indoors and the rumors have slowed to a trickle, and I am not willing to accept that as the natural state of our town.

Maplewood is full of interesting people doing interesting things. Why am I constantly hearing about them secondhand from the Steamy Ink Press instead of over tea like a normal person?

If you are involved in something scandalous, tell someone. If you witnessed something scandalous, tell two someones. If you know someone who is involved in something scandalous and feel they deserve to be held publicly accountable, then tell Poppy.

More drama. More chaos. More screaming "FATALITY!" in the town square when you stab a skeleton. 1604 is a new year with fresh opportunities to make terrible decisions.

I look forward to hearing about all of them.

- A Concerned and Entirely Uninvolved Citizen