



Maplewood's Whispers, from Ear to Ink

September 1604

Questions about  
Cult Labor  
Practices

Imbri's Hot Sauce:  
Homewrecker In A Bottle?

Maplewood Mercs  
Now offering  
Marriage Counseling

A Spotlight for  
Maplewood's  
Most Talked-  
About  
Personalities

## House Yago's Curtain Call?

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

Advertising and financial  
inquiries to:  
Enzo Belli, CFO

Legal inquiries to:  
J. Titus Marianus, Consul to  
the Freelands

Those who follow the northern stage will know that the Gershan theater houses of Preya and Yago have spent generations trading barbs, patrons, and the occasional playwright, and that House Yago has held the upper hand for as long as its star Himeko has held its lead.

That appears to be changing.

The lady whose name once sold out a season in advance has been giving performances that the more diplomatic critics call "restrained" and the less diplomatic call "adequate," which on any stage from Civenopolis to Evendandra is a word that ends careers. Add several cancellations with no explanations offered in the mix and naturally everyone is coming to their own conclusions.

This paper has been offered every theory that a well-traveled circle can produce: a quarrel with the director, an actress past her prime, and even nerves. One theater fan claiming to know Himeko well mentioned, after their second glass of Gershan red, that the star may be expecting some-



thing other than applause. Meanwhile, two of Yago's longest-standing patrons were seen at Preya's autumn opening, and it

did not appear that they were there out of curiosity.

Himeko herself has said nothing, which is her right. However, this paper has covered enough houses in enough cities to know that silence has never boded well for a rumor.

House Preya, meanwhile, opens on schedule.





# *House Preya presents:* **The Autumn Theater Season**

Featuring more performances, more excitement, more bloodshed, and more of our star than the competition can offer!

## *Intermission menu includes:*

Crystallized Lotus, Candied Ginger, and the best Gershan red in Novitas.

Our players remember every face in the audience; returning patrons are always treated as family!

## **Third Hand Recruiting for Four Open Positions**

**S**teamy Ink Press is seeking information on recruitment practices within the organization known as the Third Hand, after correspondence obtained by the desk suggests that new members are being sent into fatal assignments with no training.

The letter, written by a supervisor identifying himself as Mirok, refers to the organization's newest members as "neophytes" and "expendable," and confirms that four were sent to carry out an assassination attempt two months ago.

The Maplewood resident named in the letter notes this is the second time the Third Hand has made an attempt on their life. They informed us that "Their ability to source people has declined over time. It started with someone who could actually do damage. Now it's people whose bite is less than a fly's."

Questions we are pursuing:

- What benefits does the Third Hand offer at the point of recruitment, and do those benefits include life insurance
- Whether new recruits are informed that assignments can be assassination attempts on a tar-

get the organization has already failed to kill

- What kinds of weapons and alchemicals are provided to recruits, and if they are rationed at all
- Whether families of the deceased are notified when they are killed in the line of duty
- Where the First and Second hands are

The letter also states that Mirok will now "happily" take the assignment himself. There is no indication why he didn't do it happily the first time, but as they say, Third time is the charm.

Former members willing to speak may contact the editor. Anonymity is guaranteed, and we will use whatever name suits you.

Steamy Ink Press is publishing this notice as a public service. Any person approached by an organization whose name is any combination of a body part and a number is encouraged to inquire about payment benefits, survival rates of members, and if you will be treated like a person with a name and a life.

*Dearest Reader,*

Harvestfest has come and gone and this author has recovered enough to hold a pen, which is more than can be said for half the town. While this author was several tankards in, she witnessed Týn singing a song at the talent show about how Harvestfest is the one thing that never changes and this author, who has watched this town do many things, was moved by the truth of the piece. What follows is the proof.

Let us begin where the festival did, with Liotru's procession. What set out as a stately parade arrived at the bonfire as a pub crawl, having walked in what several witnesses describe as "circles". I am told that the delay was intentional and the bonfire was not ready; this author is also told that Otto was seen sprinting through the woods ahead of the procession throwing firewood off the path, and would like to commend him for doing so. Liotru: the speech afterward was lovely, darling. The route was a crime against drinking.

Liotru also spent a portion of the festival at war with Pythagoras over the nature of shapes while folding lanterns. This writer has been told the shape was a kite. She has also been told it was a wedge, a pie slice, a three-cornered shape, and possibly a personal attack. The dispute grew heated enough that another resident was overheard advising him not to get his titties in a twist. The shape, a triangle, remains very normal, and Liotru "remains very normal about it".

And while this author has Liotru's attention, a word about your outfit. Opal complimented it this weekend, and this author would like it on the record that Opal was completely right about your calves. Whatever tailor you have found for that ensemble has done the town a service and should be given a plaque. This author has covered festivals for four years and has never once devoted a paragraph to a man's lower leg, and is doing so now with a clear conscience. Liotru, please send the name of your tailor and your personal trainer along immediately.

Enzo cleared the field before the Flying competition began and, by every account, murdered Cormac in front of a live audience. This author is told the fatal line concerned his eye and a mirror and will not repeat it because Cormac has suffered enough, and also because he spent part of the weekend explaining to strangers that he follows squirrels through the woods to steal their acorns and this author does not think Enzo needs the help.

The fighters' tournament was, on paper, about honor. Commander Tiny took possession of a drumand by the semifinals he had turned the bracket into a matchmaking service with a red-flag screening process, at some point taking time to explain to the crowd the difference between honor and misogyny. This author was not present for the explanation and cannot confirm anyone learned anything, but her own position is that honor buys the drinks afterward.

Rytiss arrived at the festival with a new haircut, a new outfit, and no armor whatsoever, and was later caught doing a dance by the bonfire when he thought nobody was looking. Somebody is always looking, Rytiss, and in this case it was Liotru, who watched the entire dance from across the fire with an expression this author can only describe as "puppy dog enraptured". This author would also note, purely as an observation, that nobody has ever seen Rytiss and the sun in the same place, and a man who dances that well in the dark has explaining to do.

The Curators of the Curious have been acquiring curiosities at a pace this author finds alarming. Sílor received an original work from a famous artist, Nissriel received 100 coin, and Lottie has more feet than she knows what to do with. Vindicta, meanwhile, has a bag of teeth, which this author has decided not to think about any further.

And finally, our own editor-in-chief has returned to town and has been perfectly pleasant all weekend, which this author finds suspicious. Penelope Marianus does not apologize, does not print corrections, and does not backtrack; during Harvest Fest she was seen doing it in person, to faces, with feeling. At least one reader has asked whether she'd been replaced. While this author cannot confirm a doppelganger, she reminds readers that their saliva heals wounds and invites anyone with a paper cut to go to the Steamy Ink offices to test the theory.

Harvestfest never changes. I'm less sure about all of you.

*Yours truly,  
Madam Mapleleaf*

# Sauce Spicier Than I Am, Apparently

Submitted By: A Concerned Wife Who Wishes to Remain Anonymous

I have never tasted Imbri's Hot Sauce, I want that to be established up front. This is a review of *watching my husband* taste Imbri's Hot Sauce, which I have now done extensively, at every meal, against my will.

This condiment has replaced me as the most important thing in my kitchen, and my husband now puts it on everything. I made shrimp and rice last week, which I thought was fine. The meal was apparently not fine until the sauce was dumped on top of it, and he has *never* looked at me the way he looked at the plate in that moment.



## Product:

Imbri's Vial of Acid

## Price:

20 coin

## Rating:



There as well, sitting between the butter and the salt like it belonged, because apparently every kitchen in Maplewood has a bottle now. This sauce is following me, or (more likely) it is following him, but either way I am the third wheel in this relationship.

Everyone I hear mention it talks about it like a religious experience. I have held the bottle and read the label, which is the full extent of my relationship with this sauce and, increasingly, with my husband. Five stars, because I refuse to drag down the average out of spite and whatever this sauce has that I don't, it's clearly working.

# Jethreau Fixes Marriage; Merks Fix Husband

Submitted By: Stag Tanleather

Jethreau the Hero, the winner of June's "Ratchelorette" contest and captor of Raterella's heart, was seen walking hand-in-paw with her the night before Harvestfest. Witness accounts tell us they were confronted by none other than Raterella's husband! As a man of noble honor, Jethreau the Hero helped the two ratfolk work through their differences and restored their marriage.

But, a family who slays together stays together—as I'm sure ratfolk say—and the couple attacked the Hero, paw-in-paw, once his back was turned.

But, not to worry, as heroes always have friends! The Maplewood Merks and nearby adventurers rushed in to defend the heartbroken loverboy. His voice was heard rising above the chaos, demanding they spare Raterella's life.

Raterella's husband was left to suffer a violent death, cut down and sliced into pieces by the Merks, who were searching for so-called "Ratfolk bits" to sell for coin.

Jethreau did not make a statement, but first-hand accounts claim they saw a single tear roll down his face as they abandoned Raterella in the woods.