

Special Investigative Press™

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Specialized Orcs: How to Assess the Situation

AD:
SIP is looking for Focusing Crystals to ask the Stranger what her deal is. If you have one, please contact P. Anne Katullin, CEO of Steamy Ink Publishing.

LOCAL
**Maplewood Lake
Poisoning:**
Lucky Speaks Out

The Freelands News You Care About

Special Investigative Press™ is a division of Steamy Ink Publishing® dedicated to delivering timely, accurate, and accessible information to the Freelands community. We strive to empower individuals with knowledge that can impact their lives, by providing in-depth investigations into global events with potential local consequences. Through our commitment to journalistic integrity and community engagement, we aim to foster a more informed and knowledgeable citizenry in the Freelands.

Please submit all articles, tips, short stories, and comments via courier to:

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SKY BEASTS SPOTTED IN SOUTH

Causation Rumored to be a "Bored Adventurer"

From the southern region- It's rumored that a very unusual occurrence was witnessed involving a well-known Chosen of the Knight and some Skybeasts. These celestial beings, usually thought of as forerunners to the Dark Three, have been the cause of much chatter and fear over the past few weeks.

The exact circumstances of the resulting battle remain vague, but eyewitness accounts indicate it was an apocalyptic event occurring somewhere between Maplewood and the Civen border. From the few accounts received, a blinding flash was followed by a deafening crash at about 11 PM on November 1st.

Reporters claim that Arcturus, ever the reckless charismatic adventurer, summoned or otherwise brought about these powerful entities. The

motive behind such an action remains shrouded in mystery, with some theorizing he may have been seeking a way to



harness their immense power in combat against the growing threat of the Veilwalkers.

While this incident has driven panic and raised concern in the Freelands for their southern neighbors, the general opinion in the area is rather cynical. Local celebrity Thaddeus Roth stated,

"Arcturus is well-known as a hellion. This is really just another ill-conceived escapade to have some respite from his temple. Have you talked to people lately? They are all scared... he's probably offering so much therapy he just needed to unwind."

Fortunately, no sightings of Skybeasts have been confirmed in the wide adjacent regions, which means the immediate threat can be considered neutralized. Yet, all this does is raise more pressing questions: if a bored Chosen of the Knight can just summon them at will, how many others have been brought to this plane? As more evidence underpinning the facts slowly surfaces, it is expected that a clearer picture of what really happened in each case will come to view, and SIP will be there to report on all of it.

Dear Readers,

I am writing to provide you with up-to-date information regarding the veilwalker infection. As many of you may know, I performed a large ritual on the lake, polluting it. This was intended to accomplish two things:

First, to slow down the veilwalker infection. Both the speed at which it moves, and the rate of infection itself.

Second, to force the veilwalker ichor to (slowly) come out of the lake and onto the shore where we can attempt to get rid of it using rituals and blightfyre.

The former seems to have been accomplished. No veilwalkers have attacked since the pollution occurred. The latter remains to be seen.

Before I took action, I met with the Constables, the Maplewood Militia, Vargainen contacts, and several adventuring parties to discuss my plan. All provided me with the utmost support, and it was only with their support that I made this choice.

I know many of you may not agree with what I've done. I get it. The lake is the heart of our home. This is why I had to do what was done. This was a hard choice to make, and I did not take it lightly. Ultimately, this seemed like it was our only shot at taking back our lake from the veilwalker infection. Polluting the lake may have been the thing that saved it, and I know that together we can begin to restore the lake to its former glory.

Supportive Listening

Provided by
Shandeem Maris,
Chosen of the
Stranger

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To make things explicitly clear:

DO NOT DRINK THE LAKE WATER!!!

Please use independent wells and water sources! The lake will POISON you and there is still a risk of infection from veilwalker ichor.

Thank you,

Lucky of the Harbingers



If you fight orcs enough, eventually you will find that there is nothing uniform about the groups that they band together with. Normal orcs will come in mass, but there will always be some strange outliers that bear mention. There are two main types that you will witness traveling with the tribe and that common people should be wary of. Aside from any drummer with orcs, these two varieties present both a unique danger and a valuable target.

A Primer on Specialized Orcs

The first of these is the shaman. Usually easy to pick out in the crowd due to their dirty white/gray hair, these shriveled examples of orc are often a little bit more clever and sometimes lead the tribe. If you can take them down, even if you don't manage to kill every member of the tribe often they will break up into smaller groups due to infighting. The main danger with shamans is that they can and often do cast battle magic. The traveler who relies on magic to keep them safe from mundane steel should also be wary of groups with a shaman because some of them are also skilled in enchantment and will at times randomly enhance another orc's weapons to hit with something more devious. Killing the shaman is a very good job for a hidden archer, as the shaman will happily stand behind other orcs blasting combatants as its own tribe dies.

The second variety is the far more dangerous of the two. In fact, it might be the most dangerous variety of orc of all. If there is no shaman in the tribe, invariably these orcs lead the war band. These leaders are noted by the masks they wear to cover their faces and their very extremely hard to kill nature. While all orcs will let out their bloodthirsty battle cry to announce battle, once these leaders unleash theirs they will stop at nothing until either they are dead or everything in front of them is. The best way to deal with these leaders is to use a decent length weapon to keep them at bay, and if you are not a skilled fighter you should just get away from them.

-Shelaz Snowpike



Path Walkers: at your service.

A new local organization, called The Path Walkers, have begun making a name for themselves! When asked what they stand for, one replied:

"We are here to help guide and counsel those of good intent on their paths in life, be they physical or metaphorical, until they discover their natural place in life and, or after, death."

Recently this has included counseling ghosts, helping people with relationship matters, and helping lost travelers find their way through the local woods.

"Depending on which Path Walker you talk to, you will find different levels of help that can be provided. More experienced Path Walkers might be able to assist with the most aid, while a newer Path Walker might seek help, or handle less-complicated matters."

Don't expect them to fight for you though- their goals lie in shedding the least amount of blood possible.

If you are in need of counsel, aid, or guidance, seek them out! You'll know them by the spiral they wear and their introduction to you.

Two years have flown by and with each passing day, Steamy Ink Publishing continues to chronicle the goings-on in the Freelands. We've shared tales of adventure, intrigue, and the everyday struggles of our neighbors. From the heroic deeds of local adventurers to the heartwarming stories of the people who call this place home, we have always aimed to keep our readers informed and entertained.

This year has been challenging on that front. The Veilwalker threat looms larger every day. Despite the best efforts of our heroes they persist, leaving us to wonder if there is any hope for the future. With their ability to infect and corrupt, they forced us to confront the darker side of existence. It says everything is hard- give into the void and be happy. Become one with them and find peace. Make all of your anxiety and worries disappear.

As the editor-in-chief, I find myself grappling with these thoughts daily. I sit at my desk, surrounded by the creeping tendrils of the Entity's influence, and I wonder: What will become of me? Will I succumb to the void and free myself of my burdens, or will I find a way to overcome this? How can I keep my readers informed if I myself cannot piece together what is happening to my own mind?

Despite the growing darkness, we remain committed to our mission here at SIP. We will continue to document the events unfolding around us and share stories of hope and resilience. Somewhere, a Septa has found an unlikely friendship. Somewhere, an investigative journalist is wandering the woods looking for answers that will bring a glimmer of light in the dark. Somewhere, a Chosen of the Knight is calling down beings of incredible power at risk to their own life just to see if they can find a way to help.

Somewhere, someone is reading this message safe and surrounded by their loved ones, their peace a testament to the sacrifices of others.

As the future unfolds, we can only pray that good will triumph over evil and that our community will emerge stronger than ever.

Because that's what mortals do. We persevere.

Best Wishes,

Poppy Katullin

CEO and Editor-in-Chief, Steamy Ink Publishing