



Maplewood's Whispers, from Ear to Ink

June 1603

**NEW: The Daily Drivel**

Janos Cancels  
Water

Deposits in Doubt?  
Choices in Friends Lead  
to Fiscal Concern

Catori Leaves Town  
Without Telling  
Makhno

A Spotlight for  
Maplewood's  
Most Talked-  
About  
Personalities

## Shrine Showdown: The Assault Commences

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

It's official: Veilwalker shrines have emerged around Maplewood, just as Maudry (bless her heart) said they would. Some of our local adventuring groups, led by figures such as Arcturus, Lapis, and Makhno, swiftly initiated action, confronting these threats directly. This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone because, really, who else was going to step up?

It seems like every adventurer with a sword or magic at their disposal was repeatedly surging towards the outskirts of town, determined to dismantle these shrines. Journalists from our sister paper Special Investigative Press were on the scene, and we can assure you these fights were not for the faint of heart. The Veilwalkers

fought back with formidable power, and our local heroes sustained multiple injuries in the intense, close-quarters combat. It certainly wasn't a leisurely stroll to hit a shrine with a baseball bat.

Reports confirm that the destruction of specific sigils last month prevented the Veilwalkers from casting low-level Compulsion spells (which humanoids were especially susceptible to), obtaining primal forms,

terrorizing victims, or dominating targets. However, not all sigils could be destroyed. In the future, Veilwalkers could gain the ability to control the undead or pin targets in place because, you know, they aren't already terrifying enough.



So, how did they manage it? The key was shattering the glowing sigils etched onto the shrines. Some of the most skilled ritualists, Jace and Lapis among them, were armed with a special ritual. Upon being performed, this ritual would shatter a sigil, rendering that portion of the shrine useless.

From what we observed, the Veilwalkers fiercely defended any approach to their shrines before their complete consecration, indicating they will fight to the death to prevent any interruption. It is stated that if the shrines were allowed to fully

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consecrate - say, if someone conveniently delayed a ritual performance in an attempt to shatter multiple sigils at once - the Veilwalkers would immediately gain the full power of one of the sigils on the shrine. The importance that this be done immediately was underscored by a particularly exhausted Draconus cultist, who, upon handing over a ritual, firmly stated, "Make sure that you have a competent person do this." (Because, honestly, some things just require a bit of common sense and experience, not just enthusiasm.) Those closest to shattered shrines recall feeling an immense magical surge that nearly caused unconsciousness upon its completion, a clear sign that this ritual is definitely not for those who just picked up their first spellbook yesterday.

Despite their successes, the adventurers did have some casualties. Many town favorites, such as Lotharwen and Lorelei, returned infected, and one can only wonder if others will soon decide

that staying home is the better part of valor in an attempt to avoid the same fate.

## Shrines, continued

Adding to the challenge, the decisions on which sigils to prioritize for destruction are already causing quite the argument among our adventurers who, true to form, seem to prefer a lively debate over a swift consensus. The Harbingers, of course, seem to think they know exactly which ones are most important, while the Paragons continue to charge headlong into battle with little regard for their comrades' positions, and Sable Company remains unable to maintain a shield wall. The fate of Novitas—and perhaps even all Illumina—now rests squarely on the shoulders of these very same heroes. We'll just have to wait and see if their 'heroics' are enough to save us all.

## We're Getting a Glow Up!

Since 1601, Steamy Ink Press has been your go-to for all the juicy happenings in and around Maplewood. We decided it's time for a new look!

You'll spot some exciting changes, starting with our very logo. As Maplewood is undeniably our home, we've made the lovely Maple Leaves a permanent presence on the front page. You'll also find our issues will be filled with more of the delightful, truly interesting tidbits you crave, without getting bogged down in the heavier news (you can find that stuff in Special Investigative Press, after all!).

We're so proud to officially stand alongside the Maplewood Gazette as a recognized paper of our beloved town. We truly couldn't do it without you, our fabulous readers. Thanks for keeping the presses rolling and the gossip flowing!

P.S. For those papers still struggling with spelling, it's "bazaar." Just a friendly tip from your favorite ink-stained journalists.

## Mayor Gharr's Re-Campaign Already Underway



Eyewitnesses report Daitoro and Rex were out aggressively soliciting 'donations' for Gharr's next campaign almost immediately after his win, raising questions about whether this was fundraising or a victory lap shakedown. As one local baker, who preferred to remain anonymous, grumbled, "They didn't even wait for the victory banners to dry before rattling the donation plate." It seems for Gharr's team, "public service" never stops, especially when there's coin to be collected.

It came to light recently that Janos is constantly dehydrated. Apparently water and ale aren't exciting enough- the current rumor is that he's holding out for a limited-edition 'Post-Apocalyptic Veilwalker Puddle' coffee flavor to show up at the Plucker. What are your thoughts on this?

Janos  
Committed to  
Living Life  
Permanently  
Parched



"You'd think after a few days of feeling like a dried-up sponge, a glass of regular old water would start looking pretty good. Some guys just like what they like, I guess. I'll stick to not looking like I'm made of dust."

-Lenard Yarnette, Blanket Weaver

"So, he's just... choosing to be dehydrated? That's pretty big from someone who just helped poison the main water source for the town. My sheep had to drink from regular 'ol rain puddles, not fancy ones."

-Barney Smith, Master Shepard



"Honestly, I see where he's coming from. Nobody wants basic hydration anymore, everyone wants an *experience*. Personally, I'm waiting for the 'Artisanal Melted Iceberg from Varganien' blend. That one is much harder to get."

-Myrtle Higgins, Expert Pebble Grader

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## MISSED CONNECTION

**Me:** A cultist in a very distinctive plain black robe. I lost my boot in the mud along the trail during my hasty exit.

**You:** Had an incredibly quick sprint and terrifying glint in your eye, yelling about giving back the incredibly valuable yet shiny rock I had taken.

## Tired of Slimy Surprises?

Now selling Bog Lurker Repellent.

Keep your boots clean, limbs attached, and travels safe.

Effective, non-toxic to sensible folk. Inquire at E.B. Apothecary.

If you're still feeling energetic and wish to continue this spirited dialogue (perhaps in a less public venue, and with less running), send via courier to "Rock-loving Black-Robed Cultist". I promise to wear better boots next time.

# Deposits Under Scrutiny: Abacus' Risky New Friendship Exposed

We at Steamy Ink have been witness to several sightings that have set coin purses trembling in apprehension across Maplewood. Abacus, the esteemed head of the self-named Bank of Abacus and a beacon of financial stability, has been spotted repeatedly in the company of none other than Pitohui, notoriously known as Maplewood's most unpredictable and explosive resident.

Since opening the bank, Abacus has been lauded in these very pages as a pillar of our community. Her sharp mind ensures the safety and wise investments of your hard-earned coin. She has also been a staunch supporter of many women-owned businesses in Maplewood and is known for giving out low-interest loans to those in need. Her presence has always signaled financial stability, wisdom, and impeccable judgment.

Yet, her new companion, Pitohui, is a force of nature known less for stability and more for sudden, unprompted acts of chaos and violence. He is, after all, an out-and-proud Chosen of Darkness, a title that carries significant negative weight in many circles. Most darkness worshipers remain secretive, making his bold declaration of allegiance particularly unsettling and speaking volumes of his volatile nature and distinct lack of judgment. We need only recall the unfortunate incident with the Septon of the Fortune Brigade, a recent reminder of his public disregard for order.

While some optimists talk of Abacus's "taming influence", citing her past success with managing the likes of Sable Company, others can't help but

observe that even a truly devoted companion requires a firm hand. Pitohui remains an inherently unpredictable entity. When he has such close proximity to the person holding a good amount of the town's coin, it raises some pressing questions for anyone with a deposit at the Bank of Abacus.

One must seriously consider if a financial leader who now spends her evenings in such questionable company can truly be trusted. If her personal choices lean towards the wildly unpredictable, this implies a direct threat to the safety and security of your hard-earned coin. A penchant for unpredictable partners certainly has the potential to spill over into potentially disastrous fiscal decisions. Indeed, there is a real concern that your investments might be handled with the same reckless abandon as a casual stroll with a known town terrorist.



However, the true question we must consider: Is this alliance a testament to Abacus's boundless charity (perhaps an attempt to 'invest' in the rehabilitation of Maplewood's most notorious figures), or does it signal a new love of risky investments and even riskier company?

Rest assured, SIP will continue to monitor this unfolding relationship with keen interest. Our commitment to your financial well-being is as steadfast as our dedication to sharing the latest information. Only time will tell if this unlikely alliance proves to be a calculated risk—or a costly mistake.



# Dearest Reader,

It's that time again! Your favorite writer has been sharpening her quill to bring you the freshest whispers from the heart of Maplewood's most intriguing relationships. From perplexing pairings to baffling breakups, and even a few rare moments of bliss, prepare yourselves for the latest on who's tying the knot, who's simply tripping over their own hearts, and who's just desperately thirsty for... well, you'll see. Grab your strongest brew, because this month's dispatches are brimming with twists, turns, and a touch of heartbreak.

**Daitasha**- After being spotted back in Maplewood, Asha seems to have vanished once more, leaving us to wonder if Daitoro's idea of a "supportive partner" involves her being... exceptionally domestic. He did seem to need someone to tend to a plant a few months ago.

**Draieon**- Honestly, there isn't much to say about these two. Thaeiron is... well, Thaeiron. Draug, ever the devoted husband, continues to refuse an ordeal despite his rather obvious infection. They may seem like your average elf couple, but Draug, perhaps it's time to realize that 'average' doesn't mean 'immune to personal responsibility.'

**Enzor**- After his breakup with Lapis earlier this year, Enzo has quickly rebounded and is once again spending time with X'Nor! He appears to take his duty as a Firekeeper very seriously, or at least, that's what he tells people he's doing when he's spotted around the Steamy Ink Publishing offices while Lapis is visiting.

**Evidacted**- Poppy insists Evilynn and [redacted] are doing just great and that we absolutely must not write about them. Naturally, we're going to anyway! It's just proving terribly difficult to get a decent scoop now that they're never awake when we are. On the bright side, I now have less competition for my best friend's ear and she even talks to me, not Evilynn, about her love life!

**Kythnar**- Once again, Kythnar and Valdunar prove to be the least dramatic couple on the planet. We truly wish we had more juicy details to share, but honestly, it's almost suspicious how normal they are. When asked how their relationship has remained so blissfully drama-free, Valdunar simply shrugged, saying, "I don't know, but it seems to be working."

**Lorelaz**- With an unusual lack of assassination attempts against Lorelei this year, one might expect them to have tied the knot already! Yet, it appears their long-awaited wedding is still on the horizon. Lorelei is reportedly still planning on her stunning blue wedding dress, and the couple will soon be handfasting by Lover's Rock. It promises to be a beautiful ceremony, and all are invited!

**Mahktori**- While Catori said her goodbyes to everyone, it seems she managed to miss one very important person: Makhno. He's been spotted listlessly lingering near the archery range, accosting passersby to ask if they've seen her. Our sources say he simply can't believe she'd leave without a proper farewell. Perhaps she just... did, Makhno. We're all watching to see how long he'll keep his lonely vigil.

**Pitorus**- Arcturus and Pitohui continue to confound onlookers as Maplewood's most controversial 'good-boy-meets-bad-boy' couple. How Arcturus allows Pitohui to remain by his side, even after Pitohui unprompted stabbed a Septon in the middle of town with several witnesses, is truly beyond us. One has to wonder if there's some yet unknown motive on the beloved Septon's part for allowing such... eccentric behavior.

**Sablecule**- Still thriving, or rather, still striving to make as much money as possible with as little effort as necessary within their contractually obligated love. It does appear, however, that Abacus found some new companions and has, for now, left the polycule. We hear these new friends might actually pay for their own drinks.

**Tippy**- Titus and Poppy recently received a marriage contract, though it remains unsigned at the time of printing. Poppy, who once made a promise that I could write a scathing announcement should she ever get engaged, is now positively glowing because I've discovered Civinities don't actually do engagements. Look for a scathing contract announcement to come soon.

*Yours truly,*  
*Madam Mapleleaf*

**We shouldn't even have to say this again, but apparently we need to take up valuable advertising space to make a very clear public safety announcement.**

Touching  
+  
Veilwalker Ichor  
=  
Instant Infection



**Druids, even you aren't immune to being a bit stupid sometimes. Keep your hands off the goo while doing that ritual unless you enjoy involuntary transformation and becoming our next front-page article (looking at you, L).**



Just when we thought the score was settled, Makhno pulled out a victory over Catori in an archery duel on her very last day in town. Our favorite wood elf wasted no time, rushing a note to SIP to crow about the updated Chosen of the Soldier vs. Chosen of Grak tally now being a solid 4-2 in his favor.



However, the plot thickens! Shortly after his triumph, a rather dejected-looking Makhno was spotted around town, looking quite lost. Some snooping quickly uncovered the heartbreaking truth: he was utterly clueless about Catori's permanent travel plans. You can still find him occasionally giving long, wistful glances at the archery range, as if hoping his long-gone rival will magically reappear for another shot.

Steamy Ink's Official Tally: 4-3, Makhno. Some victories cost more than others, it seems.

To Pay off the  
Soldier's  
Gambling Debt

25

To Help Fight  
Veilwalkers

30

Poll:

Why are the Sept ACTUALLY  
Trying to Open This vault?

To Retrieve Their Secret Brownie Recipe

90