

# Special Investigative Press™

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**Civen Grain Shortage:  
The Economic Impact**

**Local News:  
Wraith Lord Missing in  
Action**

**Archon Reveals  
Knowledge of  
Veilwalker Behavior**



**Your Insight to  
the Freelands**

Special Investigative Press™ is a division of Steamy Ink Publishing®, proudly supported by the Journalist's Guild of Civen. Our mission is to deliver timely, accurate, and accessible information to the Freelands community, while remaining committed to spreading Civen values of knowledge and integrity.

Our unwavering commitment to journalistic integrity forms the bedrock of our work. We provide in-depth investigations into global events with potential local consequences, specifically designed to empower individuals with knowledge that truly impacts their lives and shapes informed decisions. Through robust community engagement, our aim is to foster a more informed, knowledgeable, and discerning citizenry across the Freelands.

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the Freelands

## Pandora Launches Freelands Attack

**MAPLEWOOD** – The Press. According to destruction of her life-town of Maplewood eyewitnesses, local vessel, the lich lost all healing resources were control over her army and recently repelled a full-scale assault from the quickly overwhelmed by was stabbed in the back the undead forces of Pandora, the sheer number of by one of her own, and a reported Lich of great wounded. An emergency the undead forces were power. The siege on the call was placed to the soon repelled and town, which lasted several Elven Temperance destroyed. hours last month, was League, whose missionaries reportedly arrived in quick time to provide critical aid and magical healing to the situation previously many victims. reported by this paper.

The battle was marked by turning point when two Pandorans - Micah and devastating casualties on adventurers - Audra - successfully found the side of the town's and destroyed Pandora's defenders, many who are phylactery. Eyewitnesses power within the familiar to readers of our sister paper Steamy Ink said that upon the Freelands.

## Vlean Conducting Formal Census

Residents are reminded that under Reports from the southern border confirm that Vleanoan officials, led by the Treaty of Pinedale, the Freelands remain independent territory. There is no legal obligation for any resident-Vleanoan heritage or otherwise-to conducting a formal census within the Freelands. While officially stated to be an effort to "identify Vleanoan citizens" for spiritual support, Special Investigative analysts warn that this data collection historically precedes attempts at annexation or tax levying. tomorrow.

# Where is Umbrex?

**Freelands** – In the days after Pandora's attack, serious questions are being raised about the promises and motivations of the other huge undead power: Wraith Lord Umbrex.

As we reported in our June 1603 issue, emissaries of Umbrex extended an offer of alliance to the Freelands. This pact was offered for the purpose of countering their mutual foe, Pandora, and positioning Umbrex as a necessary ally in the war. According to sources, Lord Umbrex and his forces were noticeably absent for the duration of the recent bloody conflict in Maplewood. It appears that he left the town to fend for itself against the very threat that he had offered to help fight.

The conspicuous absence has sparked some debate, with no clear indication of whether the

offer by Umbrex was a deliberate ruse, a sign of cowardice, or a calculated strategic move in which to allow two of his rivals, Pandora and the adventurers in Maplewood, to weaken one another.

Whatever the motive, the Wraith Lord's silence was a clear statement. With Pandora now essentially eliminated from the conflict, his position as the primary contender for the undead 'throne' is significantly strengthened. This raises new, more urgent questions: Will Umbrex now attempt to claim the power vacuum unopposed? Or, having allowed his two greatest rivals to exhaust themselves, will he now turn his forces on them? The Freelands must now reconsider the reliability of any such "alliances" as the war for the undead power vacuum enters a new, uncertain phase.

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## Banking Cures Anxiety: Guest Editorial

I was having a terrible day. My sheep got attacked by a kazvak, my rose bushes got replaced with stinging nettles, and I think I have the Bardic Plague. I went to the Bank of Abacus to take some coin out to buy a drum, and she looked me in the eye and told me my balance was

outstanding. I haven't stopped smiling since.

Finally, someone thinks I'm outstanding! Plus, knowing that my coin is backed by the security of the two people who broke Pandora's phylactery means the only thing disappearing from my vault is my anxiety. I've never felt safer!

*-Penny Herder, Satisfied Customer*

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## Veilwalker Threat Remains Through Winter

**FREELANDS** – Authorities wish to remind the public that the Veilwalker threat remains a clear and present danger. An uptick in Veilwalker activity continues to be reported, especially in the high-risk zones around Maplewood and Pinedale Lake.

Most critically, this press has confirmed that new, more formidable Veilwalker variants are being encountered. These developments align directly with the intelligence provided by the Avatar of the Craftsman, Maudry, as reported in our May issue: the incomplete destruction of the Veilwalker Shrines has allowed the Entity to evolve its forces.

Adventurers report encounters with Veilwalkers exhibiting the exact abilities we were warned of, including the power to dominate undead and pin combatants in place. Other reports indicate

that they are able to bypass physical barriers, such as dissolving walls when contained in buildings.

Given this escalation, all citizens are asked to review the following standing procedures:

- **Avoid All Ichor:** Veilwalker Ichor (a thick, bluish-purple substance) is highly corrosive and causes immediate infection upon skin contact. It bypasses all known immunities. Do not touch it under any circumstances.
- **Combat Requirements:** Only Blightfyre alchemicals or infused weapons can permanently harm a Veilwalker. Those wishing to aid in this fight can register with the Varganien Commissary to be designated a portion of this resource.
- **Known Cure:** The only known cure for the Veilwalker infection remains an ordeal provided by Draconus. Those afflicted are urged to seek one of his Chosen as soon as possible.

# Grain Shortage Causes Economic Boom- But at What Cost?

-Sillas Gwilt, Economic Correspondent

**GARDENER'S GROVE** – Civen is facing a crisis. The Republic has been hit by a catastrophic season of drought and logistical failures, leading to a severe grain shortage.

In a surprising move, Civenite Patricians appear to be bypassing the Merchant's Guild to secure grain imports directly. These nobles have been spotted across the Freelands, making generous offers of coin and luxury goods to local farmers to feed the people under their care.

The sudden influx of commerce has thrown the market into chaos. Aggressive purchasing by the

Patricians has driven the price of wheat and barley up by nearly 20% in the last month alone.

While this price surge is a windfall for farmers, it poses a threat to everyone else. Local bakers are already warning of an impending bread shortage, as residents simply cannot compete with the purchasing power of the Civen nobility. If this trend continues, staple foods could become luxury items by mid-winter.

Sources within Civenopolis report that complaints have been made with the Senate regarding the "unregulated trade." However, the Senate appears to be ignoring these complaints. With the threat of civil unrest possible, they seem willing to turn a blind eye to keep their citizens fed.

With the Senate prioritizing food security over trade protocols, this aggressive purchasing shows no sign of slowing. As winter approaches, the Freelands must now contend with a market where our local staples are rapidly being transformed into foreign luxuries.

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# Archon Discusses Veilwalker Anomalies

-Poppy Katullin, Editor-in-Chief

**MAPLEWOOD**– Following the recent growing panic regarding the stability of the leylines, a group of druids called upon a Flora Archon to assess the damage caused by the Veilwalker shrines. Special Investigative Press was able to secure details of this interview. The findings are both reassuring and terrifying.

Contrary to popular theory that the shrines were corrupting or breaking the world's foundation, the Archon stated definitively that the leylines have not been damaged, "At least not yet or in any way we are aware of."

The Archon explained that the shrines function similarly to a typical caster, merely tapping into the power the leylines transport rather than disrupting the flow itself. "The use of magical power does impact the leylines, any use of it, but these "shrines" are no larger of a draw than any other typical mystic."

It appears the Veilwalkers were previously unable to connect to the leylines safely; the shrines acted as a conduit, allowing them to draw power and acclimate to our world's magic without destroying themselves in the process.

The most alarming intelligence confirms that the Veilwalker threat is extra-planar. The Archon confirmed that unlike every other creature on this continent, which derived from Illumitas, these beings are "unnatural in every sense of the word," noting that while they mimic elementals, they are fundamentally alien. "They behave as elementals do, shaping the world to their instructions. Simply connecting themselves to the leylines will not allow them to create as we elementals do... That would require them to connect more fundamentally to the leylines."

The interview also shed light on the historical isolation of Vargainen. The Maelstrom severed the leylines between the continents, trapping elementals in Vargainen without guidance from the Elemental Plane for centuries. "The leylines between Vargainen and Novitas were severed by the Maelstrom," the Archon revealed. "Elementals present when the Maelstrom started remained there until it ended. They couldn't freely leave that place... The elemental planes lost touch with those working there."

It also revealed that the leylines are reconnecting; "The leylines desire to be whole, as it is their natural state; but it will take time for them to mend."

What we have been able to determine is that, in druidic terms, the enemy is merely an invasive species of plant that has learned to graft itself onto the world's root system to siphon its nutrients. Only time will heal the leylines between Novitas and Vargainen.

On Saturday December 6th I will be offering card readings in the town of Maplewood. I am not a medium, I merely ask the Gods for a message, lay out the cards, and interpret them for you.

I have been told many times that my readings are "so accurate it's creepy". Give it a try and see for yourself at Mirabelle's Market!

Prices vary, as I change for my time.

I offer a brief single card reading as a sample for 1 coin.

**ICE CREAM WILL  
BE AVAILABLE  
AT MIRABELLE'S  
MARKET!**

Friday December 5th @9pm

Saturday December 6th  
10:00 am until 2:00 pm.

Available in chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry for only 3 coin per scoop while supplies last!

Toppings available for extra coin.

It has come to my attention that the effects of mycanoid spores are exactly the opposite of blight symptoms.

I would like to conduct an experiment to find out if mycanoid spores help alleviate the symptoms of blight and provide some relief.

Mycanoid spores will be provided for free to all volunteers. You will be asked to document your experiences daily and fill out some questionnaires.

If you have any questions or want to volunteer, please send a note via Crimson Courier to Mirabelle Frizzelle.

One year ago I sat at this very desk, battling the Veilwalker infection in my own veins, listening to the Entity whisper that my individuality was a burden and that joining the hivemind was the only logical solution.

Well, I have some bad news for the Entity: I don't surrender to hostile takeovers, and I certainly don't accept mergers that only list me as a subsidiary.

I survived, and frankly, the experience was illuminating. It taught me that in a world trying to consume us, information is the only weapon that doesn't dull or run out of ammunition.

When I founded this publishing house, it was to chronicle the lives of my neighbors. But as the need for sharing information became greater, so did the need to expand beyond the borders of Maplewood. The threat we face does not respect town lines, and so neither will we.

Thanks to the backing of the Breaking Bulletin Consortium, I am proud to tell you that this year, Special Investigative Press became the premier news source for the entire Freelands.

Whether you are reading this in a snow-covered outpost near Gersh or a hidden hamlet near the Vlean border, you are holding the result of my most ambitious logistical expansion to date. We are the first paper to have successfully implemented a regional press model. This means that while our cover pages show the global threats that unite us—the Piscene Civil War, the Economy, the Veilwalkers—our interior sections are now customized to your specific location. They are written by the journalists in your community, not someone three towns over pretending to know what is impacting you.

To manage this, I have been hiring experienced Freelands reporters to help me with the larger stories. Silas Gwilt is tracking the markets so you don't get swindled. Marcus Thorne is analyzing the siege lines. And while the Civen Consul is busy hyperventilating about my "disregard for personal safety" and trying to keep me sequestered indoors, I am busy ensuring that every citizen of the Freelands has the intelligence they need to survive the winter.

If 1602 was the year we were afraid, 1603 is the year we got organized. We are bigger, we are louder, and we are everywhere.

Read the reports. Check your sources. And please, please *stop touching the Veilwalker ichor*.

Yours Truly,  
*Penelope Anne Katullin*  
CEO, Steamy Ink Publishing