



Medieval
Mystery



Sleuthing in the Middle Ages



1PG

Meyoka
STUDIOS

Interficio Plurimus Turpis





Medieval Mysteries



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Dedicated to the memory of
 Samantha Downing
 1967 - 2005



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 P.O. Box 46373, Seattle, WA 98146
 www.deep7.com

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Rules of Play

MEDIEVAL MYSTERIES: Sleuthing in the Middle Ages is a simple-to-learn roleplaying where players take on the roles of investigative monks, sleuthing nobles, detective scholars and nosey nuns in a series of mysteries set in England in the 12th Century. Created in the vein of Brother Cadfael by Ellis Peters, Matthew Bartholomew by Suzanne Gregory Owen Archer by Candace Robb and Crowner John by Bernard Knight, it is light yet intellectually stimulating. Pass the beer and pretzels!

Character Generation & Game Rules

Stats & Skills: Roll 1D3 for each stat (the bold entries on the character sheet). Then roll 1D3+3 for the total number of points to distribute into skills (the individual listings below each stat on the character sheet). Every skill starts at 0, and no stat/skill combination can be less than 1. Put no more than 3 points in any single skill. If you need extra points, you can take them from other skills, leaving them at -1 for each point taken. For example, if you have a WITS of 3, you can take Languages at -2 and add those two points to a different skill. If you don't see a skill you really want your character to have, just write it in the margin after confirming with the referee. Alternately, the referee may choose to have players build their characters with points. If so, distribute 8 points into the four primary stats, and use the rules that follow for secondary stats.

Secondary Stats: Roll 1D3 + 2 and put the number in GUTS, and 1D6 and write the result in BEARING. BEARING represents how impressive you are when you stride into the sheriff's castle or stare down a bunch of villainous brigands, and GUTS signifies your ability to handle stress. Every time something traumatic happens to you (like facing the hangman's noose or getting wounded), make a "GUTS Check" by rolling 1D6. If you roll equal to or lower than your GUTS number, your BEARING is unchanged. The more GUTS you have, the easier it is to keep your BEARING intact. If you don't make it, subtract 1 from your BEARING. If you completely lose your BEARING, you are reduced to the levels of a woeful peasant. If you are the lead investigator, you are automatically deposed and replaced (a lead investigator must have BEARING to lead an investigation). Other characters will no longer treat you with respect and only the most golden-hearted tavern wench will take pity on you. You may always put Character Points into BEARING at the end of the game.

Roll 2D6+5 and write the number in BLOOD. This is how much BLOOD you have. Every time you take damage, you will lose BLOOD. When you have lost all your BLOOD, you are dead.

REPUTATION is important any time you need to ask for favours or get what you want. Everybody's REPUTATION starts at 0. You must roll equal to or under your STURDINESS, APPEAL, CRAFTINESS and WITS stats on 1D6 to add 1 point to REPUTATION for each successful check (but you may only try once for each, at character creation time). Remember this is your overall REPUTATION, good or bad, according to your deeds. REPUTATION rolls are the same as skill checks; roll equal to or

under your REPUTATION on 1D6.

Background & Position Table: Roll on these tables to get your medieval birth status, current career and starting cash (in silver pennies).

Skill Checks

When the character performs an action (and by "action" we mean anything where the outcome may not be as certain as walking or tying one's shoes), determine what general skill will get it done. Add the skill with the stat it falls under to get the Target Number and roll equal to or below it on 1D6. Rolling a 1 is always a success, while rolling a 6 is always a failure. The referee may add to or subtract from the Target Number based on environmental factors (motion, weather, level of difficulty), so having a target of 6 isn't useless – it allows you to effectively absorb a -1 to your Target Number without having to worry too much.

Combat

When fighting, make a Fighting Skill Check for attack or defence, Agility Feat for evasion, or Shooting for ranged attacks. Both combatants will make their Skill Checks at the same time. Whoever has the greater margin of success has hit his opponent. Ties go to defender; if both opponents are attacking, a tied margin means both attacks succeed. Subtract the weapon's damage from the wounded character's BLOOD. Always add the attacker's STURDINESS to the total amount of damage done on non-ranged attacks. Damage from punches is the same as STURDINESS, and kicks do STURDINESS +1.

In the case of a test of wills or standoff between characters, roll 1D6 versus BEARING. Characters with REPUTATION can add it to the Target Number. The greater margin of success wins and the loser must make a GUTS Check or lose 1 point of BEARING. If neither roll is equal to or below BEARING, the one that achieves the smallest negative margin wins.

Armour

Certain clothing has Armour Value (AV). Padded Gambeson has AV 1, Leather AV 2, Studded Leather AV 3, Mail Shirt AV 4 and Mail Hauberk AV 5 (and a -2 penalty to Swimming and Stealth). A shield has AV 2, which is added to the AV of the armour worn. A leather helm has AV 2, a leather & steel helm has AV 4. A steel helmet has AV 6. When the character takes damage, subtract the AV from the damage dealt. If the character is wearing clothing with different Armour Values, use the highest AV.

Character Improvement

If the character survives a whole scenario, the player receives 1D3+5 Character Points, and adds 1 point to REPUTATION. If the character survives to the end of the scenario but is a replacement for a dead character, the player only receives 1D3+1 Character Points. Put these points into stats, skills, BEARING, BLOOD or GUTS. In general, 1PG characters are somewhat disposable, although this is less true of MEDIEVAL MYSTERIES than some of the other games in the series. Don't worry if your character visits the graveyard permanently. Just roll up a new one and join back in the fun.



For the Ref

This page is specifically for those intrepid enough to take on the duties of the referee. Whether you're a novice or a pro, here are some helpful hints for running a successful game of Medieval Mysteries

Deduce/Hunch

For each skill check made where a clue is discovered, you need to determine the success margin and have the player write the number of points in its space on the character sheet. When a character wants to get a hunch or to deduce something from one of his clues, he uses 4 of these points and receives appropriate information from the REF (no roll needed).

Deduce: gives information specific to one of the clues the character has found. So if one of the clues found was a knife, the character might receive information that the knife was made by Will the Cutler. Or that it belonged to Albert the Reeve. Or that it is one of a pair.

Hunch: gives less specific information than deduce. It is used where the players are stuck and want to receive a 'free lead.' For example, a hunch might be that they need to go and speak with the miller. Or that they need to go over the crime scene again. Or that one of the clues they found is quite crucial to solving the crime.

The Bad Guys

A good rule of thumb when creating a villain or villains is to make them durable enough to be a challenge, yet vulnerable enough to make the players believe they have a chance. If you have a plethora of rogues, give them enough BLOOD to take a few stabs or shots before falling. A lone knight might have 20 BLOOD or more and an impressive Fighting skill to boot (balance the challenge).

Setup & Gameplay

Play order is based on the CRAFTINESS stat - higher CRAFTINESS goes first. To keep the order coherent, you may seat your players in order of highest CRAFTINESS to lowest. A player with a higher CRAFTINESS may choose to hold his action and interrupt another player's action later in the order of play, but once an action is taken for the round, the player can take no further actions.

Important

Bad guys seldom kill the entire cast in a mystery novel although you can certainly lose a few if chasing down a bandit encampment on the moors. Usually a few key characters will survive to fight another day.

Cut to the Chase

Don't allow the mystery to become stagnant. Players get bored when their investigations get them nowhere. They need to be drip-fed clues regularly to keep the story moving along. That doesn't mean that they shouldn't be led on wild-goose chases

every now and again if their deductions are all wrong. But you need to keep these dead-ends to a minimum and even then, give them a point – maybe an excuse for an attack by muggers or an argument with a slighted noble. Get into the meat of the story as soon as possible. You don't have to plan a campaign. Each scenario should be played within a single evening, or 2 to 3 hours tops. If you want to bring back surviving characters and play another scenario, go for it! 1PG characters are generally disposable, but don't have to be if you really like playing them.

Set the Mood

Put on some appropriate soundtrack music; some early English folk would be good – I would particularly recommend The Medieval Babes or The Galliards. Monk chants are also ideal. Tell a visual story: describe the crime scenes so that there is a real sense of being there. Bring some of the facts of medieval life to the fore, especially the stark differences in the lives of the serf compared with the church and the nobility. But don't overdo it – remember the characters are, by and large, used to the stink of the city streets as they live in.

Keep the interest up

There are several ways to engage the players and keep up the sense of drama and excitement. Vivid descriptions can capture a group of even the most lacklustre of players. You can use ideas gleaned from movies, fiction and even historical records to give the combat a sense of danger and action. You can allow the players to take over some of the description of what happens, if this doesn't overstep the success or otherwise of their die rolls, especially if you know one of the players is very good at describing this sort of action.

Dramatic License

It is your prerogative as the referee to tell the story as you see fit. Never be afraid to say, "because I said so..." If you need to make a decision, roll a die for it. If you need to figure out how many soldiers are on watch at Exeter Castle, roll a die for it. If the task is really easy, give your players a +1 or +2 bonus to the Target Number. If

the task is really difficult, give them a -1 (remember rolling a 1 is always a success and a 6 is always a failure).

The Scenarios Included

There are six scenarios included with this game that can be played in whatever order you see fit. Feel free to design your own, and keep checking www.deep7.com for free scenarios to download!

The 1pg Companion

For those of you who like a bit more depth to your 1PG gaming sessions, check out The 1PG Companion for additional tabletop rules, such as running naval combat, building better NPCs, and additional character development rules.

Weapons

Item	Damage
Arrow	7
Axe	6
Bottle	2
Club	3
Crossbow Bolt	7
Hand Axe	4
Hammer	4
Horse Kick	6
Kick	1
Knife	3
Mace/Morningstar	5
Noose (per min.)	5
Polearm	7
Punch	0
Quarterstaff	4
Spear	5
Sword	6

*Add STURDINESS to the damage of all non-ranged weapons.



Medieval Mysteries

In this game, generally speaking one of the characters will be the primary investigator and the other characters will be sidekicks, friends, colleagues, apprentices, bodyguards, clerks, squires and assistants. How he or she became a sleuth depends on the game, the player's status and position and other factors. The character could be an appointed agent or representative of the church or the king; like a spy or an archdeacon's summoner. Maybe, the character's job is to investigate crimes, like a coroner (crownor) or sheriff. There are other possibilities and it's up to you, the Ref and other players to decide what suits you.

Cerebral scenarios

The Medieval Mysteries 1PG is a more cerebral role-playing game than many. The characters are expected to use their brains more than their brawn. That isn't to say there is no conflict in this game. The medieval period was a dangerous time, and anyone poking around and asking too many questions is going to run into trouble every now and again. But the game isn't one where the characters 'go on adventures'. Most of the action will take place in and around the city where the characters live. So, characters will get to know the locality pretty well, developing friendships, contacts, maybe even families. In other words the characters have a proper 'home-life' too.

Planning your mysteries

Some REFs like to wing their adventures completely and others like to have everything planned out in the finest detail. In The Medieval Mysteries 1PG, the basic planning is done for you. However, you still need to familiarize yourself with the scenario, more than you will do with most other 1PG titles. The difficulty is always how much to pre-prepare and how much to fill in the gaps as you go. This partly depends on how comfortable or experienced you are as a REF, how well you know your players and what you would expect them to do in a situation, and how familiar you are with the genre and medieval history generally. It may take a few gaming sessions before you find your own level.

What is the mystery?

One of the first steps is to decide what the mystery is. Most will be murders of some sort or another, but you could vary the game with a few robberies or a case of arson or even a spying mission. Some mysteries will use several of these elements. You don't even need to rely on medieval historical fiction for your scenarios. There are other sources you could plunder for good ideas. Some historical detective fiction, like Sherlock Holmes, Campion and Poirot can be tailored to suit. Modern mystery fiction is also a good source of material. There are plenty of movies and television series that are perfect for adaptation to your gaming needs.

Who did it and why did it happen?

Once you have determined what it is that the characters will be investigating you need to begin to sketch out a few ideas for who committed the crime and why they did it. Sometimes the 'who' comes before the 'why' and sometimes it is the other way around. You probably need to ask yourself a few questions like:

- Was it a single individual, or was more than one person

involved?

- Why did they do it - what was the motive?
- How did they do it - what was the weapon used, if it was a murder, for example?
- What did they do immediately after they committed the crime - for example, did they try to cover it up or make it look like someone else did it, or did they just run away?
- Did anyone else witness the crime? Are the witnesses reliable?
- What is the felon doing now?

Some of these questions will come easily and others less so, but you probably need to jot down a few notes as you go. Try to keep it simple. The players will undoubtedly complicate things enough as soon as they get going.

How is the crime discovered?

A key element is to determine how the body is found, the robbery spotted or the rape reported. It is worth giving serious consideration to this, as you don't want all of your scenarios to begin in exactly the same way. You want to mix things up a bit, by having different approaches to the discovery of the crime. A few possibilities are:

- The crime is discovered after the event by one of the characters
- The crime is discovered by one of the characters as it is being committed
- The crime is discovered by another individual, who reports it to the characters
- The lord, patron or superior to the primary investigator requests that the characters investigate the mystery on his or her behalf
- The crime is discovered as a result of an investigation into another (lesser) mystery
- The perpetrator himself reports the crime, but accuses someone else

Searching for clues

Once the crime is out in the open, the characters will have to start digging around to find some clues. This is a vitally important stage in The Medieval Mysteries 1PG and really what the game is all about. If they fail a roll, don't necessarily just tell them they have drawn a blank, but don't give them all the details that they would have got if the check were a success.

Remember it's a game!

The Medieval Mysteries 1PG is first and foremost a game, not a history lesson. It is not completely historically accurate and is not intended to be. The fiction that inspired this game is accurate only to a point - that point is where, for the sake of the story, the historically accurate has to fall by the wayside. As a REF or a player, you have to enjoy the game you are playing. If history takes away from this and becomes a chore, then you are welcome to drop the history in favour of your story. A case in point is the role of women in history. Generally speaking, women were second-class citizens. However, for the purposes of this game, female characters have the same options and chances as the male characters. They may not always get the same reactions from some of the NPCs though and society in general remains male dominated.

The medieval sleuths

Apothecaries as investigators: Apothecaries are astute, patient and educated and this makes them very good investigators. Of course, during the course of their work, they will often be dealing with patients who were the victims of various crimes and this may lead them into investigation work too. They are also very good supporting characters, being able to read and write and knowing what they do of ailments, injuries, dead bodies, and poisons.

Clergymen or monks as investigators: Player character clerics will often have a lot of time on their hands and being learned and educated will be keen to become involved in murder investigations to enliven their otherwise dull lives. A cleric character that is loyal to his Bishop could be chosen as a church agent, to lead an investigation into mysterious deaths, disappearances, thefts or cases of possible heresy. Other times a cleric could be a useful assistant to the lead investigator, especially with his or her writing skills, access to church records and church gossip. Often a cleric can gain the confidence of people otherwise reluctant to talk and gain entry to places that other characters cannot enter.

Crowners as investigators: Crowners make excellent primary investigators and, if there is a crowner in the group it would be hard to see the character as anything other than the lead investigator, or at least one of them. They have the abilities and skill selections that make them more than able to look into murders and other mysteries and they are capable fighters and can therefore look after themselves if confrontation arises. However, they often can't read & write and therefore still need a literate clerk to record things for the justices and there are other areas where they might need companions or associates to help out.

Men-At-Arms as investigators: Fighters, by their very nature as men of action are not generally best suited to the role of the lead investigator. They do have their uses as a support to the teams' primary investigator though - as bodyguards, and backup when going into a hostile situation, to make arrests or even to intimidate witnesses and suspected criminals.

Nobles as investigators: Some nobles are empowered to investigate crimes on their land; that is, where the crimes do not fall within a crowner's jurisdiction (murder and arson, for example). Therefore, whether they are good at it or not, character's who are nobles can make for enjoyable primary investigators, even if they might require a few associates and helpers. In other instances the king or the church will occasionally employ a noble to investigate specific mysteries, or to do a bit of spying work. This would usually be in cases where the noble in question is deemed competent and loyal enough to carry out such duties.

Rogues as investigators: Probably best as supporting characters, rogues have a number of extremely useful skills and have access to the parts of the city that most of the other types of character cannot gain access to. Rogues operating on the side of the law do have to be careful though, not to give the game away otherwise they could end up with half the underworld after them.

Foresters as investigators: Foresters are only really likely to become involved if a crime is committed on forestland or if the characters need some specialist help outdoors. Foresters can track and shoot a bow so they are useful even ignoring the fact that they are also officers of the crown and so have jurisdiction over areas of forest.

Examples of names

Norman, male

Adelard	Drogo	Hubert
Aldous	Edoh	Hugo
Almeric	Emeric	Humphrey
Arnaud	Francus	Jarvis
Bardolph	Fulco	Jocelyn
Barnard	Galdridus	Maynard
Bayard	Gallien	Odo
Bertrand	Geraldus	Ralph
Berengar	Gifford	Rogart
Charles	Godfrey	Rollo
Clerebold	Hamond	Vaughn
Curtis	Hermon	Walter
Diggory	Heward	Warrenus

Norman, Female

Alyon	Galiene	Richessa
Athelina	Ganleya	Richolda
Avelina	Geva	Rosalinda
Berengaria	Giselle	Rosamond
Ellenor	Maude	Selova
Emeny	Mathild	Wilmetta
Emma	Maynilda	Yvonne
Ermyntrude	Millicent	Yvette

Saxon, Male

Athelstan	Edmund	Lionel
Aldred	Edward	Osbert
Aldwin	Ethelred	Oswald
Altgar	Godard	Oswin
Aylwin	Grimbold	Siward
Baldwin	Harald	Ulric
Cuthbert	Kenward	Wulfric
Dunstan	Leofric	Wilfred
Edgar	Leofwin	Wistan

Saxon, Female

Ailda	Hildeth	Sedemai
Averell	Livith	Seburga
Edith	Lefwen	Stanhilda
Edid	Loera	Stonild
Estrilda	Mildred	Sungyve
Godith	Mydrede	Urith
Godeva	Osith	Wulveve
Hilda	Osthryd	Wulfhild



Medieval Life

Money

In the early part of the period this game covers, there were only silver pennies used as coinage. These were often split into two or four for small transactions. Sometimes they were also shaved or clipped by unscrupulous rogues. An average labourer could expect to receive two pennies a day for his hard work.

Languages and literacy

Saxon characters speak Middle English and Norman characters speak French. Each point of Languages gives another language option. Options would be Welsh, Cornish, German, Latin and so on. Alternatively, you could take Literacy as one of your choices.

The Three Orders of Society

Those who work: Throughout the long history of medieval serfdom, the serf was required to perform labour services for his lord. This was generally in the form of farming the lord's fields and looking after his livestock amongst other duties. Although the number of days devoted to working the lord's land varied from place to place, it was usually three days a week. At harvest time, the lord would demand even more of his serfs' time.

Life on the medieval manor was quite simple and uncomplicated. But by the same token it was probably also dull and uninspiring. Most serfs were unable to travel outside of their home manor, without their lords' permission. Not that many would have a reason to do so as their family would all live in close proximity. Nearly every day of the medieval peasant's existence was dedicated to farming arable land and so there was little time left over for things of an intellectual or cultural nature. For the most part the peasants accepted what their family, custom, and the village priest had told them. Peasants had a strong sense of the existence of God, believing that God was directly involved in human affairs and could reward the virtuous. Of course, they believed that God punished men and women for their sins. But life in the village community did entail cooperation and the values of a simple life.

Those who fight: The nobility influenced all aspects of medieval politics, economics, religion, and culture. As the second Estate, the medieval nobility had special legal status. A man who was a member of the nobility was free in his person and in his possessions. The only limitation of the nobility concerned their military obligation to their own lord. As a members of the nobility, they had certain rights and responsibilities: they could raise troops and command them in the field, they held their own courts of justice and they could even coin their own money. The nobleman was the lord of all those people who settled on his land. The medieval nobility was, of course, was an Estate of warriors, - those who fight.

The medieval nobility lived without working. They also ate far better than the people under them. Their bread was made of wheat, rather than barley. They ate far more meat than the serfs as they could hunt boar and deer on their own lands. They imported spices from exotic places to flavour their food. Even salt was an expensive commodity that only the rich could afford. Wine was a far more common drink amongst the nobility than the ale that the poorer folk had to drink.

Those who pray: At the top of medieval society was the clergy; those who pray. It was the village priest who was to oversee the spiritual life of his flock on the medieval manor. His duties were to administer the necessary sacraments with regularity and consistency. Of course, not all village priests were as dedicated to the holiness of their flock as they should have been.

Apart from the manor, the church was the main focus of community life. The parish priest was appointed by the lord of the manor and was given a house. He was obliged to carry money for alms with him, keep up the church, and provide hospitality to travellers. The priest was usually a commoner by birth. The priest officiated at church services, weddings, baptisms, funerals, and visited the ill. He earned his living from the income for parish lands, fees for services, and tithe money. The tithe income was divided up evenly between the parish priest, the church maintenance fund, the poor, and the bishop.

Monasteries

Monasteries were self-contained enclaves where monks or nuns chose to live a simple life of prayer and work. At least that was the theory. In practice monks at least were often criticized for their laxity and concern with worldly matters.

Monastic life was generally one of hard physical work, scholarship and prayer. Some orders encouraged the presence of 'lay brothers', monks who did most of the physical labour in the fields and workshops of the monastery so that the full-fledged monks could concentrate on prayer and learning.

The monasteries were practically the only repository of scholarship and learning. Monasteries acted as libraries for ancient manuscripts, and many monks were occupied with laboriously copying sacred texts (in a room called the scriptorium).

The abbey was under the authority of an abbot or abbess. The abbot could be a landless noble, who used the church as a means of social advancement. Under the abbot was the prior/prioress, who ran the monastery in the absence of the abbot. Other officers included the cellarer (in charge of food storage and preparation), and specialists in the care of the sick, building, farming, masonry, and education.

Medieval Medicine

Western medicine advanced very little in Europe during the Middle Ages. Scholarship fell into the religious sphere, and clerics were more interested in curing the soul than the body. Many theologians considered disease and injury to be the result of supernatural intervention and insisted that cures were only possible through prayer. No new medical research was conducted, and no new practices were created. Physicians simply perpetuated the church-approved classical techniques that were preserved in ornately decorated, hand-copied texts produced by monks. Christian concern for the ill and injured, as well as contact with the Arab world during the crusades, did, however, lead to the creation of many large hospitals built and run by monastic orders. Although little was done to cure the patients, they were usually well fed and comforted by a religious nursing staff.

Crime & punishment



Poisoning

The purveyors of medieval potions and poisons were apothecaries. They produced and sold preparations for a multitude of uses, and it was well known that many of these could be put to less beneficial purposes than those for which they were intended.

The high profile of poisons and poisoners, the fact that they worked unseen and their association with witchcraft resulted in a level of paranoia in some sections of the population. Methods of defence against poisons became very popular, and while some writings on antidotes, treatments and methods of avoiding poisons were quite reliable, there were also a great many creative, and entirely inaccurate, suggestions.

Fines

If peasants already had it tough being taxed for virtually everything in their day-to-day lives, fines or 'ameracements' imposed as a result of crime could be devastating. There was a rigid procedure enforced at every unexpected death, any deviation from the rules being heavily fined. The rules were so complex that probably most cases showed some slip-up, with consequent financial penalty to someone.

First finder: The first finder was supposedly the first person to come across the dead body. In practise he was probably actually the unfortunate who actually reported it. He was supposed to raise a search for the murderer by knocking on the doors of the four nearest households. There were fines for not doing this.

Hue & Cry: Once roused by the first-finder, the householders were supposed to go out in search of the murderer (whether there was an actual killer or not or no matter how long the body had lain where it was found). Next, the Bailiff of the Hundred had to be notified and he, in turn was to summon the Coroner. The locals were responsible for guarding the body and not moving it until the coroner arrived, which could be several days later. There were fines for not following these laws or indeed for not following them properly.

Inquest: The Coroner normally held the inquest immediately after viewing the body.

Murdrum fine: The murdrum fine was imposed on the whole village, where a suspected murder had taken place and the villagers couldn't confirm to the Coroner's satisfaction that the dead person was of English origin. In other words, it was assumed he was a Norman, unless proven otherwise. The murdrum fine dated back to the period just after the Norman Conquest, when a large number of the Norman conquerors were murdered up and down the country by aggrieved Englishmen.

The Deodand: This was the object that was the cause of the sudden death, whether it was a murder or an accident. The Coroner's jury had to make a valuation of the deodand and the Coroner would then commit it to the care of the Constable until the Eyre, when the Judges would decide if it was forfeit to the Crown. However, sometimes it was granted to the family of the victim, as compensation for their loss. All sorts of things could be declared deodand, such as dogs, horses, trees and so on. If a horse and cart ran over a man, the whole lot could be confiscated.

Capital offence: A capital offence included any homicide or

the theft of an article worth at least twelve pence. **Sanctuary:** If a criminal, fugitive or outlaw could reach a church or even just the church grounds, he could claim sanctuary. He had to come unarmed and must have committed no sacrilege. He then had 40 days breathing space from the law and he had to be fed and guarded by the locals. At the end of that time (or earlier) he had to confess his sins to the coroner and then the coroner had to arrange for his 'abjuration' from the realm. That is he had to give up all his possessions and go, on foot, to the nearest port and leave the country never to return.

The General Eyre: The Royal Courts of Law, called the General Eyre, was a system of justice that circulated slowly around the kingdom hearing cases that fell within the county Coroner's (Crown's) jurisdiction. This body took so long to return to each county that, unless careful records were kept, many cases never came to trial and much potential revenue was lost to the Crown. Its arrival within a community was one of the greatest affairs in medieval England, as the Eyre examined every detail of life since its last visit, as well as actual crimes.

Forest Law

A forest is an area of unenclosed countryside, consisting of a highly variable mixture of woodland, heath land, scrub, and agricultural land. Its purpose is to raise deer, which need a variety of land, i.e. woodland to rest and hide in during the day, and more open land in which to feed at night. It does not necessarily denote a wooded area, as such. Just as there were many laws surrounding deaths, murders and so on, there were many laws surrounding the Royal Forest and these were another source of great revenue for the Crown.

Legalities: Forest Law was a distinct legal system with its own courts and officers. The sole aim of forest law was to preserve the venison and vert (green undergrowth for feeding the venison) for the King's pleasure. The Royal edicts were administered by Crown officials, with no appeal or redress.

Effect on the people: The restrictions of Forest Law were very harsh. The residents of the forest were unable to cultivate the forestland, not allowed to hunt the large game and, very often weren't allowed to hunt the small game, such as hares. The felling of timber was prohibited and it could even be forbidden to gather acorns in some parts.

Foresters: Policing of the forests demanded a large network of forest officials who formed what was virtually a private army of the king. These were the Foresters. A Forester is an officer of a forest who works for the King through the Bailiff and Sheriff. He is sworn to preserve the vert and venison of the forest. His job entailed attending upon the wild beasts within his Bailiwick and to attacking any offenders and poachers, to bring them to the justice of the forest courts.



A brief glossary of medieval terms

Abjurer: A criminal who sought sanctuary in a church and elected to 'abjure' by confessing his sins to a coroner and then leave England forever, to avoid being hanged.

Ale: A brewed alcoholic beverage

Alehouse: Most families brewed their own ale in the middle ages as water was not always clean enough to drink. Occasionally, one of the families who brewed the best ale in the village would start to sell their ale to their neighbours, who would stop by to gossip. This would become the village alehouse - not quite a tavern.

Amerce: To impose a fine on a person or village.

Apothecary: A dispenser of medicines, who was often also a physician.

Bailey: The outer enclosure of an early Norman castle

Bailiff: Overseer of a manor or estate who directs the farming or other outdoor labour. Also an official who assists a sheriff and who has the power to execute writs, processes, and arrests.

Baldric: A diagonal strap over the right shoulder of a Norman warrior to suspend a sword scabbard on the left hip.

Baron: Any major landowner, especially those powerful enough to have political influence.

Bowyer: A craftsman who made bows.

Burgess: A freeman or citizen of an English borough. Usually a person of substance, like a merchant or craftsman.

Byrnie: A Saxon word for a hauberk or mail shirt.

Chapman: A peddler, who carried his wares on his back.

Cog: A small merchant ship with one mast and a sail.

Constable: A peace officer with less authority and smaller jurisdiction than a sheriff, or an officer of high rank, usually serving as military commander in the absence of a monarch or the governor of a royal castle.

Coroner: A position dating from the 12th century, the Coroner was charged with keeping local records of legal proceedings in which the crown had jurisdiction. The Coroner also investigated any suspicious deaths (particularly among the Normans, who as the ruling class wanted to be sure that their deaths were not taken lightly).

Croft: A small area of land around a village house, for growing vegetables or rearing a few animals

Curfew: The prohibition of open fires in town after dark. During the curfew, the city gates were closed, from dusk till dawn. **Destrier:** A knight's warhorse.

Eyre: A circuit court held by itinerant royal justices in medieval England. They moved from county to county on a circuit that could take up to seven years to complete.

Farm: In the medieval sense, the total tax required by the King for the county. The 'farm' was collected by the sheriff and delivered to Winchester or London twice a year. It was a fixed sum per county and if the sheriff could collect more he could pocket the difference.

First Finder: The first person to discover a corpse or witness a crime

Fletcher: A maker of arrows.

Forest: Strictly, a wild area with or without trees. The Royal Forests were areas sequestered by the king, whether he owned the actual land or not, where only he could hunt and take the profit from various activities, such as wood-felling, forges, brewing and so on.

Forester: An officer, similar to a gamekeeper, directly responsible for enforcing the harsh forest laws and taking offenders to the forest courts. The Foresters badge was a horn.

Gambeson: A padded, quilted coat worn under mail to diffuse the force of blows. Some poorer soldiers might wear one as their main armour.

Gleeman: A medieval itinerant singer; a minstrel

Hauberk: A long-sleeved mail coat.

Hide: An old English measure of land, usually the amount held adequate for one free family and its dependents.

Hue & Cry: The term used when the first finder raised the nearest households to give chase when a crime had been committed.

Jongleur: Itinerant entertainers, like minstrels who sing, dance and juggle.

Jury: The medieval jury were witnesses, local people who were obliged to gather and tell what they knew of a crime or a dispute.

Justiciar: The chief minister - a high-ranking noble or churchman appointed by the king.

Kirtle: A woman's dress or skirt, which reached to the ankles.

Mantle: A loose sleeveless coat worn over outer garments

Murdrum fine: A fine or amercement levied on a village by the coroner when a person is found slain and the locals cannot confirm that he is of English stock

Ordeal: method of trial in which the accused was subjected to physically painful or dangerous tests, the result being regarded as a divine judgment of guilt or innocence.

Ostler: A servant in a stable or inn who took charge of the horses.

Outlaw: Literally, anyone outside of the law, usually an escaped criminal or a fugitive. They often lurked in forests and any person was entitled to kill them on sight to collect a bounty, as they were 'wolfs heads'.

Palfrey: A small, docile horse suitable for use by a woman.

Posse: A group of armed men, called out by the sheriff or a coroner in order to hunt outlaws or defend the realm.

Presentment of Englishry: Following the Norman Conquest of 1066, there were many Normans killed by aggrieved locals, so the law decreed that anyone found murdered was Norman, unless they could prove otherwise. This involved a fine on the nearest village if the deceased was determined to be Norman or even if it was unknown.

Reeve: The foreman appointed in each village by the lord of a manor to oversee daily routine.

Sanctuary: An ancient and religious offer of mercy. A fugitive or gaol-breaker could claim forty days immunity from the law if he reached a church.

Sergeant A sergeant was a senior man-at-arms or a law officer, below a town bailiff.

Sheriff: The king's officer of a county or an administrative region who was charged mainly with judicial duties and tax collection. The Sheriff was often quite corrupt

Squire: The servant of a knight, often aspiring to knighthood himself.

Sumpter: A pack horse or mule.

Surcoat: A loose outer coat or gown, often worn by a knight over his armour.

Tabard: A short, heavy cape of coarse cloth formerly worn outdoors. Or a tunic or cape like garment worn by a knight over his armour and emblazoned with his coat of arms

Trial-by-battle: An ancient right to settle a dispute by fighting to the death

Tunic: The main men's garment of the middle ages

Verderer: A man serving as an official in charge of the royal forests. He was responsible to the sovereign, not the Warden. There were usually four in each royal forest. The verderer's badge was an axe.

Vert: The vegetation of the forest - trees, bushes and pasture, the use of which was subject to forest law.

Villein: A villein is, in the feudal system, a member of the class of serfs tied to the land

Warden of the Forest: The senior forest administrator, appointed by the king, who was responsible for organising the Forest Eyre. The Warden had to nominate the foresters, but not the verderers, who were individually responsible to the king.

Wattle & Daub: A common building technique in the middle ages. Clay or plaster is applied over a woven framework of hazel withies (branches).

Wimple: A ladies headdress of linen or silk

Woodwards: Employed by private landowners to protect the vert and venison, but outside the royal forests. Although they were servants of the landowner, they still had to adhere to the same oaths and codes as the foresters. Their badge was a billhook.

A brief glossary of the medieval church

Abbess: female head of a nunnery of the Benedictine or related orders

Abbey: large religious house of one of the orders of the Benedictine

Abbot: the head of a monastic house of the Benedictine or related orders, and of certain orders of Augustinian canons

Acolyte: the highest of the minor orders of the ministry

Aisle: part of a church, parallel to and divided by piers or columns from the nave, choir or transept

Alms: money collected for the relief of the poor

Altar: a table or slab consecrated for celebration of sacraments

Archbishop: a bishop with authority over a group of bishops

Archdeacon: a cleric having a defined administrative authority delegated to him by the bishop in the whole or part of the diocese

Augustinian: An Order of friars

Belfry: the upper storey of a tower where bells are hung

Benedictine: order of monks or nuns

Bishop: the highest order of minister, able to confer holy Orders

Canon: 1) member of the secular clergy belonging to a cathedral or collegiate church; 2) a member of the Augustinian or regular canons who lived under semi-monastic rule

Canoness: nun belonging to an Augustinian or related order

Canon law: the law of the church, imposed by authority in matters of faith, morals and discipline

Cardinal: the former clergy of Rome and the immediate papal advisors.

Carmelite: order of mendicant friars

Cassock: the ordinary garment of a priest; a simple close fitting tunic with sleeves

Cathedral: the church that contains the throne, or official seat, of the bishop of the diocese

Chalice: the cup for holding the wine

Chancel: the eastern end of the church containing the high altar, where the mass is celebrated

Chapel: 1) a part of a church with a separate altar, which may be dedicated differently to the church as a whole; 2) a self contained building of worship, the saying of prayers or the celebration of masses for the dead, but which does not serve the functions of a parish church

Chaplain: a priest who was paid an annual wage to serve in a parish church or dependent chapel

Cistercian: monastic order derived from the Benedictine

Clergy: any member of Holy Orders, or of a monastic order

Commandery: monastic house of the order of Hospitallers

Confession: the rite of confession of sins to a priest in order to obtain absolution

Consecration: to make sacred

Consistory courts: The ecclesiastical courts, which had the right to try clerics, rather than the secular courts.

Convent: an enclosed and regulated monastic institution

Cowl: a loose gown with hanging sleeves and a hood, worn by Benedictine and other monks

Crozier: pastoral staff

Crusade: series of military campaigns waged by Christian countries in the Holy Land from the 11th to the 13th century to recover the area from Islam; used more generally for any military campaign on behalf of the church

Crypt: a chamber or vault beneath the main floor of the church

Deacon: the rank in the ministry below the priest, with a major role in the collection and distribution of alms

Dean: the dean of a cathedral controlled its services and with the chapter, supervised its fabric and property; a rural dean assisted the bishop in administering a sub-division of an archdeaconry

Deanery: a group of parishes forming a subdivision of an archdeaconry; also referred to as a rural deanery

Dominican: order of mendicant friars founded in the early 13th century

Ecclesiastical: pertaining to the church

Excommunication: a censure imposed by church authority that excludes those subjected to it certain deprivations and disabilities

Exorcist: the second of the minor orders of the ministry; the power of exorcising evil spirits was never confined to this order although they assisted in this process

Franciscan: order of friars founded by St Francis of Assisi in the early 13th century in Italy

Friars: members of one of the mendicant orders, the four main orders being the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites and Austin friars; they were largely involved with the outside community

Friary: a community of friars

Grand Master: title of the heads of the military orders of Templars and Hospitallers

Habit: the distinctive clothing worn by monks

Heresy: the formal denial or doubt of any defined doctrine of the church

Heretic: person who has expressed formal denial or doubt of any defined doctrine of the church

Hospitallers: military order first recognised in 1113, founded to assist in the Crusades

Inquisition: the official persecution of heresy by special ecclesiastical courts

Lay: with reference to the laity, or persons who are not members of the clergy

Lay brother: member of a religious order who is not bound to the recitation of the divine office and is occupied in manual work, generally adult converts

Lay sister: female member of a religious order who is not bound to the recitation of the divine office and is occupied in manual work, generally adult converts

Manuscript: a written work transcribed by hand

Monastery: a community of monks

Monk: a male member of a religious community living under vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; strictly it is confined to members of those bodies which live a communal life

Mystery plays: religious drama performed at major festivals, commonly performed out of doors

Nun: a female living in a regular order under vows of poverty, chastity and obedience

Nunnery: an establishment of nuns

Ordination: the rite of admission into the ministry of the church

Pilgrimage: a journey to a holy place from motives of devotion, to obtain supernatural help, or as a form of penance

Priest: a minister of the church empowered to administer the sacraments

Prior: the deputy of an abbot in a major Benedictine institution; or the head of a lesser Benedictine house

Prioress: the head of a nunnery

Priory: a monastery; in the Benedictine orders a house dependent upon an abbey

Relic: the mortal remains, or any components thereof, of a saint;

Reliquary: a container for the relics of a saint

Sacrament: a visible sign of a sacred thing; in the late medieval church there were deemed to be seven sacraments, representing life cycle rituals; baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, ordination, marriage, confession and extreme unction

Sanctuary: The part of the church containing the high altar

Scriptorium: a room where manuscripts were transcribed

See: Commonly used for the territorial unit of administration in the church, governed by a bishop; also known as a diocese

Shrine: a reliquary, a sacred image of special importance or a holy place, especially one connected with pilgrimage

Summoner: An officer who works for the archdeacon to bring sinners to the consistory courts for trial as a way of levying fines for the church

Templars: order of military monks founded in 1119 to assist in the Crusades; also known as the Knights Templar

Teutonic Order: military order founded in the Holy land after the Third Crusade

Tithe: the tenth part of produce from the land and of other income, collected to support a parish priest for his services

Vestments: the ceremonial clothing of the clergy

Vial Murder

A sample investigation

This scenario is left deliberately open so that you can pretty much use it whatever location or period you decide to set your own Medieval Mystery 1PG campaign in. I would suggest that you read it through to the end (it isn't that long) and decide which of the endings you prefer. You can then tailor the lines of questioning, the responses from the various NPCs and so on to the ending you have selected. The alternative is to get the gist of the scenario and not necessarily have the conclusion pre-determined, allowing your players to come up with the solution themselves. This may be a bit more difficult though and is recommended for more experienced REFs.

What is the mystery?

A wealthy local wool merchant, Nicholas Brace, aged about 50 falls dead from his horse, whilst talking to a local outside the inn that he had stayed at for the previous night. Brace had been conducting a little business at the port a day or so's ride out of his hometown and was returning home. He had to stop at the inn as it was getting late and he was fearful of not making it back to town before nightfall. He was talking one moment to the local carter Peter and the next moment, according to Peter he stopped talking, 'looked like the Devil had possessed his soul', and keeled over, falling from his horse 'like a sack of cabbages'.

Getting the characters involved

If the primary investigator is a crowner, then he is required to investigate anyway. If one of the characters is a noble, you could have the death occur on his manor and therefore he might feel obliged to investigate. An apothecary could be drafted in to see if he can determine what was in the empty vial. If nothing else, you can have character requested by the sheriff or some other person in authority to look into the death 'because he was a respected burgess in the town and we must be seen to do the right thing'. The family lawyer could even draft in some investigators, because there is a technicality in the will about method of death.

Clues

To all intents and purposes, it looks like death by natural causes, perhaps a heart attack. The only odd thing that a search of the body and his possessions will reveal is an empty potion vial in his belt pouch. Otherwise the body is whole (maybe with a bruise or scrape where he fell from his horse). There is actually a small drop of the potion left in the vial and an apothecary character (or NPC) could figure out that this is a slow-acting poison with time, access to his shop and a successful check.

Witnesses

The only witness to the actual event was Peter who, being a god-fearing soul, is apt to let his imagination run away with him. He will be adamant that Nicholas Brace had been possessed by the Devil, if pressed (besides, it's more gossip-worthy that way and might get him a few rounds in the tavern later). None of the other locals know very much about the death. The innkeeper will say that Brace came in late in the afternoon, ordered a huge meal and plenty of ale a retired early. He seemed fine, if a little 'red in the face' and 'short of breath'. Earlier in the evening, he may have been sat with somebody, who he seemed to know (see *other possibilities: A rival merchant*)

Friends & family

Brace was a well-known burgess around town. He was married to Hilda, pretty and a lot younger than him. They have no children (a sore point with Hilda). Hilda will explain that Nicholas was in ill health and had been seeing an apothecary in the town, where he obtained his medicine. She did try to tell her husband not to eat so much rich food or to drink so much, but he wouldn't listen. One thing the characters might notice is that she doesn't seem as distraught as perhaps she might be, in the circumstances. If the vial is produced, Hilda will acknowledge that it

was his and she will tell them the name of the apothecary, if asked. The apothecary is Walter Stanshill, respected, if a little ancient, but also a family friend.

Other merchants knew Nicholas well, being a pillar of the community, but have little to add to what Hilda has said. However, one person, Brace's sister Martha, says that she was always suspicious of Hilda, who she says is a money-grabbing strumpet. She says that she told Nicholas that Hilda was always up to no good with one of his apprentices, Aylwin, but Nicholas wouldn't have a bad word said against his wife. Secretly, Martha says that she thinks that Hilda had been poisoning her husband. She is certain that Hilda had visited another apothecary and obtained a poison for vermin, which she was exchanging for Nicholas's medication. But Martha has no proof of this.

If the characters approach Walter Stanshill, they will see that his shop is a little messy and that he does seem a little old to still be dispensing medicines. However, he was Brace's friend and there doesn't seem to be any reason that he should want to see him dead. He too told Nicholas to lay off the spicy food and the wine and to get a bit of air now and again. He had prescribed him a remedy for his pain (if a character is an apothecary or they seek confirmation, it will be found that what was prescribed was normal for this type of complaint).

Gossip

Around town the gossip is that there is an apothecary in town who is a specialist on poisons. You could use Bartholomew Matthews from the final mystery in this section, called "A Gathering of Crows" if you wish, as a suitable NPC Apothecary. Other gossip (from at least two fairly reliable sources) though, might help to confirm what Martha says about Hilda, in that she has been seen with Aylwin on more than one occasion, in a situation that 'wasn't appropriate for a married woman'.

Who did it, how and why?

I present a few possibilities that you can consider. That way, you can develop the investigations in the way you want them to go and according to your player's skills.

Aylwin did it: He loves Hilda and couldn't wait to marry her (at which point, incidentally he would also be closer to taking over the family business as Hilda has no interest in running it). He obtained poison from Bartholomew Matthews and secretly exchanged it for Brace's medication before he left for his port warehouse. He did it for love.

Hilda did it: Hilda didn't love her husband. He couldn't give her children and he was old, ugly and fat. She stands to inherit his business, his wealth and clears the way to have children before she is old and grey. She got the poison from Walter Stanshill, on the pretext that the family home had been infested by rats that she was trying to kill with the poison.

It was an accident: Brace's dodderly old friend Walter Stanshill, who should no longer be practising, accidentally mixed up some of the ingredients and ended up putting poison into the vial that was intended for his friends medication.

A rival merchant did it: One of Nicholas's rivals killed him. He did it because Nicholas was a hard businessman and had slowly putting him out of business. He arranged to meet him in the inn and when reasoning didn't work, he slipped poison into his wine in desperation.

Martha did it: Martha hated her brother. Many years ago, when she was married, Nicholas drove her husband out of business and drove him to an early grave. She never forgave him for this but was hoping to inherit his business when he died, which she figured wouldn't be too long because of his ill health. Then the old fool went and married a young slattern and that has driven Martha to take drastic action, whilst trying to pin the murder on Hilda.

Tourney of Secrets

Background

High-spirited young knights, drunken squires, colourful gleemen, rich merchants, shifty pickpockets and horse thieves are pouring into the city for a one-day jousting tournament. This is a time for labourers and peasants to lay down tools for one day and have a little rest from their long hours of backbreaking toil. It is also a time when the revelry can get out of hand and drunken brawls often break out in the taverns, spilling out into the city streets.

Introduction

Early in the morning of the tourney, a young girl is found asleep against the church altar. When awakened, she claims the sanctuary of the church, claiming that she killed a man last night. She is clearly shaken and has blood on her clothing. She is reluctant to say more. Fetch the player characters.

Ref's Information

The girl is Rosamund, the miller's daughter. She was attacked in an alleyway near to the city gate leading out to the tournament field. The intent of the attacker was obvious as she is a pretty girl. However, in the struggle she somehow managed to grab his dagger from his belt and stabbed him. She was terrified and ran straight to the church.

Actually, Rosamund did not kill her attacker, whose name was Fulco de Brett, an impoverished merchant who had come to the city looking to make a few pennies at the tourney. After Rosamund fled the scene, another man, Godard (a mercenary looking for employment) happened across the injured man. Finishing the job, he then set about removing what valuables he could find (the dagger, a silver belt buckle and a purse with 3 pennies in it) and then dragged the body further back into the alley before leaving the scene.

After robbing the body, Godard went around some nearby taverns to try to sell his ill-gotten gains. He eventually sold the belt buckle to a chapman named Wistan and then got himself a room and drank himself silly all night.

Getting the characters involved

If one of the characters is a cleric of some sort, he or she could come across Rosamund as she is sleeping at the church altar. If not, then the characters will have to be fetched to the scene by the priest that found her.

A crowner would need to hear the girl's confession anyway, so that would be a natural introduction. If there are no clerics or crowners amongst the PCs, then one of the characters could be a member of Rosamund's family. Or she could have a slight injury from her fall and requires the services of an apothecary. Anyway, once the characters are involved, she will tell the story pretty much as set out in the introduction. If there is a female character amongst the PCs, it becomes obvious to the rest that the girl would rather talk to the female alone. If not, it will take some very sympathetic words to get her to open up further.

Once she begins to talk, she will relate much of the opening paragraph of the REFs information. One particular point that she will recall very clearly is that her attacker had a silver belt buckle with a serpent design on it. It was quite noticeable because of the design and because of its possible value.

The Murder Scene

The characters will undoubtedly visit the scene of the supposed crime in the first instance. They will be able to find the poorly hidden body but with an appropriate notice check, they will also be able to determine that this is not where the actual attack took place. The body has been dragged to its current location a few feet further back into the alley. There is dried blood where the body lay previously, although it has been partially covered with dirt as if an attempt was made to disguise it a little. The body is missing its purse, dagger and belt buckle. The belt itself has been tossed aside. The body is dressed well, but the clothes have been darned

and patched on closer inspection, indicating a once wealthy individual, fallen on hard times. There are some scratches on the man's face, a stab wound in the man's side and another one in the man's neck. The facial scratches are indicative of the signs of a struggle. Any character with knowledge of knives or knife wounds (a man-at-arms, rogue or crowner most likely) will also spot that the side-wound, whilst very bloody, would probably not have been fatal if attended to by an apothecary. However, the neck wound would have been fatal and seems to have been done too precisely to be an accident.

Investigations at the Tourney Field

The name of the dead merchant is not known yet, so characters could try to find out who he was. Asking around in the city would prove fruitless, but outside the city walls around the tourney field some of the merchants will know him from his description (especially if the silver belt buckle is mentioned, because it is particularly fancy and memorable). Indeed, Fulco had his own 'pitch' which Griffen, a pastry seller, was watching over for him, whilst he just "popped into town". Griffen says he noticed Fulco had his eye on a pretty girl as she walked past last night and had just assumed that Fulco "got lucky", although he is surprised that Fulco hasn't returned to his pitch yet this morning.

Wistan the Chapman

Wistan is a slightly dodgy petty thief and peddler. He will try to avoid the characters when they start asking questions. However, when they actually come to find him (maybe having got information from Wilf; see below) he will try to get away (something he is quite good at), because he believes he is in trouble for some other crime. However, one he has been apprehended, a search will reveal the silver belt buckle and further questioning will bring to light that he bought it from a soldier, whose name he does not know, but who is probably still sleeping it off where he left him, at the Rose & Crown tavern, in the centre of the city.

Investigations in the city

Another possibility (maybe using a hunch) is that the real murderer will try to sell the stolen belt buckle or the dagger. If the characters go to any shops in town, a couple of merchants will remember a "hard-looking" man trying to sell a rather well made belt-buckle but none of them wanted it (because he looked like trouble), although Wilf, a silversmith, says that he thought that one of the out-of-town merchants might have bought it, because he is sure he saw money changing hands. One cutler will remember Fulco coming into his shop to have the dagger sharpened in the afternoon. He knows the man was a merchant and that he had a pitch out at the Tourney field, but nothing more than that.

The Rose & Crown

Once Wistan has been questioned, characters will no doubt high-tail it over to the tavern. Godard is a dangerous customer and is very alert to danger. He will be awakened by noises downstairs and will have his sword and new dagger ready. However, he would prefer to try to escape if the characters haven't covered all exits properly. If forced to fight, he will try to exploit weaknesses so is more likely to run at poorly armed characters to force his way past than be trapped into a fight by well armed fighting men.

Wistan

STURDINESS 1; APPEAL 2/Bluff 1, Gossip 1; CRAFTINESS 3/Craft 1, Sneak 1; WITS 2/Appraise 1, Notice 1; BLOOD 12
Equipment: Cudgel (3 damage)

Godard

STURDINESS 2/Fight 2; APPEAL 1; CRAFTINESS 2/Agility Feat 1; WITS 2/Notice 2; BLOOD 20
Equipment: Sword (6 damage), dagger (3 damage) Studded Leather (AV3)

The Unknown Knight

Background

When dead bodies are discovered, it often means trouble and fines for the village that found the body. Sometimes, therefore the people from the village will move the body beyond the boundaries of their own village. This is a scenario that uses this unusual facet of medieval life.

Refs Information

Sir Alco de Bracey was travelling home from several years of fighting abroad when he was attacked on the road in the vicinity of the village of Dunstone. He was ambushed, pulled from his horse and killed with a powerful blow of a mace to the head. The knight's assailant took the horse and everything on it and looted the body. The body was rolled off the track and into the stream that runs alongside the track. The killer then departed the scene.

Watkin was the man unfortunate enough to find the body in the brook. When he returned reluctantly to his village to report the death of a stranger to the Reeve, Arthur, it was decided that they must move the body a few hundred yards along the brook so that it lay outside the village boundary. Unfortunately, this put it inside the boundary of the village of Wellbrook.

Sir Alco was the first son of Sir Bevis de Bracey (who died a few months ago in a fall from his horse whilst out hunting) and was therefore in line to inherit the De Bracey lands. However, Sir Alco was believed killed in the Crusades. With the second son Tevis recently joining the monastery, the youngest son Lewin was due to inherit.

Tevis

Tevis saw his opportunity when his father died to inherit the family manor. He was making his preparations but then received a letter from his older brother Alco to say that he hadn't been killed, merely wounded and that he would be returning home. He told no-one about the letter and instead hired a mercenary, named Saxby, to await news of his brother's homecoming in the nearby port town and, at an appropriate opportunity kill him, making it appear that it was a simple robbery. In a stroke of genius, Tevis also made the pretence of being interested in becoming a monk, to throw the scent off himself and set his younger brother Lewin, up as the inheritor and therefore placing the suspicion for the murder firmly upon him.

Lewin

Lewin, being the third son of Sir Bevis De Bracey, has never really anticipated inheriting his father's lands. However, with the news of Alco being killed overseas and his older brother, against everyone's expectations, going off to lead a monastic life he is left in charge.

Getting the characters involved

As usual, if there is a crowner amongst the characters, he will be expected to investigate. The young lad who found the body, Alstan, will be sent by the villagers to fetch him. The other main option is that the villagers cannot afford any fines that might come their way if the dead man cannot be proven to be Saxon and they are hopeful that one of the characters can look into it for them. The villagers of Wellbrook believe the body has been placed here but that the man didn't die here.

Wellbrook

At the scene of the reported discovery of the body, characters will see that the man himself was clearly a wealthy fighting man but has no weapons, money nor is there a horse nearby. There is a nasty head wound, which could have been caused by a fall from a horse (but which any man-at-arms might recognize as a blow from a mace). However, there are no recent signs of horse hoof prints on the track above the stream, nor are there signs that he fell into the stream at this point. At this stage, this could easily be the result of an accident although the body has been looted. The villagers will be very vehement in their denial that they had anything to do with robbing the dead man. A search of their houses

will reveal nothing, of course.

The actual murder scene

If the characters search further down the stream, they will find evidence that something fell into the stream here. If the characters do not search, then at some point the young lad Alstan will draw the characters' attention to something he found further upstream – a gilt tunic button. They will then find evidence of a horse prints and a struggle on the track above the stream at that point as well as blood on the grass. This puts the murder scene well into the environs of Dunstone village.

Dunstone

Questioning the villagers of Dunstone (with some appropriate threats if need be) will force the information from Watkin that he and Arthur moved the body. They also found a ring that the attacker failed to find and will reluctantly give it up. This ring has a crest on it, which, with appropriate general knowledge checks or asking in the right circles, will prove to belong to the De Bracey family.

The De Bracey Manor

The De Bracey family home is about 15 miles further along the track that the knight was killed upon. Lewin will be there and, if shown the button or the dead body described, will tell them that it sounds like his older brother. He is very surprised that his brother was coming home though, because he was supposed to be dead. He will want to see the body and when he does he confirms it as his brother. Lewin will also tell the characters of his father's death a few month's ago and that had his older brother not joined the monastery, he would inherit. It is clear that he realizes the suspicion will fall upon him but he seems philosophical about it.

The Monastery

The characters will no doubt want to speak with Tevis and will therefore need to go to the monastery. There, they can speak with Tevis, who seems overly pious although not quite as surprised as his younger brother about the recent discovery of Alco's body near Wellbrook. If any of the monks are questioned about Tevis, the characters will learn that he hasn't yet taken his vows and seems reluctant to do so. The characters could press Tevis further on the matter, but he is a tough nut to crack without evidence of his wrongdoing.

Finding Saxby

There are several ways the characters could track Saxby, the actual killer, down. He stole a very good horse and sold it to a horse dealer at the nearest market town. Questioning horse dealers in the area will lead characters to a description of the mercenary. Someone in the villages of Dunstone or Wellbrook may have seen him hanging around shortly before the murder was discovered or riding away on a horse later. If the characters persevere with Tevis they might make him crack, but not before he tries concocting some sort of story first. By following the leads they are given, the characters can eventually track Saxby back to the port-town where he first waited for Sir Alco to land. He is staying in a tavern, awaiting a ship to France so that he can lie low for a while, under orders from Tevis. He will fight first, but if being beaten, he would rather try to bargain his way out than be killed. He will then relate how Tevis put the proposition to him.

Saxby

STURDINESS 3/Fight 2; APPEAL 1; CRAFTINESS 1/Agility Feat 1, Sneak 1; WITS 1; BLOOD 12

Equipment: Mace (5 damage), Leather Jerkin (AV2)

Tevis

STURDINESS 2/Fight 2, Ride 2; APPEAL 2/Bluff 1; CRAFTINESS 2; WITS 2/ Notice 2; BLOOD 16

Equipment: Sword (6 damage) Mail Shirt (AV 5)



The Maiden & The Simpleton

Background

Like “A Vial Murder”, this scenario is left deliberately open so I would suggest that you read it through to the end (it isn’t that long) and decide which of the endings you prefer. You can then tailor the lines of questioning, the responses from the various NPCs and so on to the ending you have selected. The alternative is to get the gist of the scenario and not necessarily have the conclusion pre-determined, allowing your players to come up with the solution themselves. This may be a bit more difficult though and is recommended for more experienced REFs.

What is the mystery?

A pretty young local girl, Mary Carter, is discovered brutally murdered, in a ditch by the roadside one evening. She has clearly been violated as her clothing has been torn and pulled up over her hips and the marks on her neck are indicative of strangulation.

Getting the characters involved

The characters, who are known to look into this sort of occurrence, are called in by the person who found her, Peter the Priest. He tells the characters that he was heading into the village when he saw the simpleton Odo bending over her body with his hands around her neck, throttling her. When the simpleton noticed him approaching, Peter says that “Odo let out a strange demonic wail and loped away towards the moors, like the monster he is”.

Clues

There is nothing really at the scene of the murder that can help. Mary has a blue-black bruise on her face and signs of strangulation marks around her neck. It is apparent that Mary has been punched and then she has been strangled.

Witnesses

The only witness appears to have been Peter, who is adamant that Odo was throttling Mary. Peter will state that Odo is a lecher and is always ogling the pretty village girls and it was only a matter of time before something like this happened. Peter is also convinced that Odo is a changeling and crosses himself when talking about him.

Friends & family

Mary is the daughter of Adam the Carter and his wife Livith. They also have a son Robert and another son Jeffrey, from Adam’s first marriage (his wife died in childbirth).

The father and two sons are all for grabbing up stout cudgels and going off across the moors to take out their revenge on the simpleton. Little sense can initially be obtained from these three. However, Livith is able to tell the characters that Mary was a gorgeous girl that turned the heads of most of the young (and older) men in the village, but she had no particular boyfriend. She does suggest that they might find out more from Mary’s best friend Elena.

Speaking with Elena (a much plainer girl than Mary was), will reveal that Mary wasn’t quite the maiden that her parents believed. Elena says that Mary used to tease Odo, telling him to meet her at various out of the way places but never go there and other spiteful tricks. Also, she was seeing two village lads, Ned the son of Hergest, the landlord of the alehouse and another one, whose name even Elena doesn’t know.

Ned will be distraught, of course. He was hopeful that he would marry Mary one day. However, unlike most of the rest of the village, Ned does not believe that Odo killed her – he says that the simpleton doted on her and would never do anything to harm her.

Searching for Odo

If the characters go searching for Odo (or if they allow Adam and his

sons to search for the simpleton) the search will be fruitless. Odo has clearly run off to his hiding places across the moors and it is impossible to search every place he could possibly be.

Gossip

There is gossip around the village, of course. Mostly, the gossip centres around how lovely Mary was and how she was sweet and pretty and the perfect match for Ned, who everyone believes would have married her. Mostly, they all believe that Odo was a changeling, as confirmed by their priest. Odo is the son of the Hag of the Moors, and she consorts with all manner of spirit and demon, so it makes sense. The villagers are two-faced though, because they are not slow in going to the hag when they need a cure for their ailments.

However, Hergest, the landlord of the alehouse, does believe that he saw Mary and her half-brother Jeffrey arguing earlier on in the day that she was murdered. It seemed that he had been trying to persuade her to do something for him, but Hergest says he didn’t overhear that part of the conversation, just Mary running away, as if crying.

Who did it, how and why?

I present a few possibilities that you can consider. That way, you can develop the investigations in the way you want them to go and according to your player’s skills.

Odo did it: If Odo did kill Mary, he did it because she teased him once too often. He probably didn’t mean to kill her – he doesn’t know his own strength. However, he will need to be tracked down and will not come quietly.

If anyone other than Odo killed her, Odo was just unfortunate enough to find her first. He was trying to awaken her, when Peter spotted him, thinking she was just sleeping. He ran because Peter is always horrible to him and scared him.

Peter did it: Peter actually killed Mary, because he fell under her spell and he really couldn’t restrain his lust any longer. After the act, he couldn’t risk her telling anyone. He was fleeing the scene when he noticed Odo, so saw a perfect opportunity to deflect the blame.

Jeffrey did it: Jeffrey loved his half-sister and, because they are only half-brother and sister does not believe that there is anything wrong with them becoming husband and wife. Mary is disgusted at the thought. Jeffrey decided he had to try one more time and followed her along the track trying to make her see his point of view. The situation got out of hand.

Jeffrey plus someone else did it: In this version of events, Jeffrey actually committed the sexual assault on Mary and afterwards, when she was sobbing, punched her to quieten her, knocking her out. He then ran away. One of the other villagers then found her and strangled her, for their own reasons; possibilities are as follows:

Elena: She was jealous of her friend because she turned all the heads and could have had any male in the village.

Hergest: Because he did not believe this strumpet of a girl (who sleeps with her own brother) was good enough for his son.

Odo’s mother: Because Mary was so cruel to her son.

Other options: You could use the character Hugo Farrond from scenario number 6: “A Gathering of Crows”. He could be the secret lover that Mary used to visit and who Elena does not know about. Mary actually liked him because he was different to the other “boys” in the village.

The Relic of St Erangydd

Introduction

A body is discovered in the woods in the vicinity of the hamlet of Crowthorne. The body is that of a man and it has clearly been deliberately dumped or hidden amongst bushes and nettles and has apparently been there for several days.

Refs Information

The body is that of Hereward from Crowthorne, an occasional servant at the nearby Templar chapter house. A few days ago, whilst he was working there, he spotted a pilgrim to the chapter house taking the relic of St Erangydd (a finger bone) and replacing it with a bone that he had in his belt pouch.

Hereward, being slightly impetuous and seeing the thief getting away decided to follow him, rather than waste time trying to report the matter to the Grand Master. The thief realized he was being pursued and managed to throw Hereward off. The thief then met up with his employer, a relic hunter named Guido, the agent of Bishop Cynon from Wales.

Guido decided that he needed to prevent the theft being reported to give him time to get away and so sneaked back into the woods with his bow and shot Hereward as he was returning to the chapter house to report the crime.

Getting the characters involved

If one of the characters is a forester, he could be the one to find the body. If there is a character clergyman, he could be one of the Templars in the chapter house or, the church that he belongs to could receive an urgent request from the Grand Master. Other methods are readily invented to bring other character types into the mystery.

Clues

The dead man has been shot in the back with an arrow. Anyone with an expertise with arrow making or bows (foresters for example) reckons that the arrows were not made locally, as they do not recognize the style of manufacture or the type of fletching used. The body has been thrown into the bushes, indicative of at least two men (or one extremely strong one). Tracks around the area indicate three men a few days ago, one of which was presumably the dead man.

Crowthorne

Asking around the village, the body will be recognized. The village Reeve had organized a search when Hereward did not return home for two nights, but they found nothing. The villagers do not recall any strangers in the area at the time and have little else to add. They do all agree on one thing; that Hereward was a little headstrong and apt to act without thinking. He was also a pious individual and was very pleased the day he obtained a job in the chapter house, "so that he could be nearer to the power of the saints".

The chapter house

The characters will no doubt want to ask questions here. It is apparent that pilgrims come here from far and wide to receive the blessings of the Relic, because there will be several here when the characters arrive.

The Grand Master says that he had little to do with the dead man but that some of the servants might know something. One of the servants, Griswold the Shepherd, says that he saw Hereward following swiftly behind a robed pilgrim the day that Hereward disappeared. He says that Hereward seemed to be following the stranger as he entered into the woods. The other servants say that Hereward spent as much of his time near to the Relic as he possibly could although they know nothing else that can shed a light on his death.

If the Relic is closely examined, it will be noticeable that the finger-bone is not as old as it should be, not does it appear to be the index finger of a girl, but possibly the little finger of a man.

History of the Relic of St Erangydd

The characters might want to investigate something of the Relic's past to see whether this throws up some more information. If they do, they have a few ways they can do this. Those that can read might want to look up some old books in the library of the chapter house. However, this will take a REPUTATION roll, as the Grand Master doesn't let just anybody have access to their books. Otherwise there might be information in the library of the nearby monastery, although it is harder to find here. The other alternative is to ask around. The Grand Master will not be willing to say much about the Relic. However, the servants might say more.

Essentially, the Relic of St Erangydd used to belong to the village of Caerdoc in Wales. It was on display in the local church, but one day a wandering chapman stole it. It went out of sight afterwards for several years, but then came to light in the ownership of a French knight, having passed through several hands by that time. The Grand Master purchased it and brought it back to England, for his new chapter house.

Bishop Cynon has recently discovered that a church in his own bishopric once owned the relic of a Welsh Saint and then he heard that it was on display in a Templar chapter house near Crowthorne. First of all, he wrote several times to the Grand Master and then he paid him a visit a few months ago, but each time he was snubbed.

Visiting the Bishop

The characters might want to pay a visit to Bishop Cynon at this point. It is a journey of several days and it will take great pressure and REPUTATION rolls to see him.

The Bishop is actually quite a good man and did not intend for anyone to be killed in recovering what rightfully belongs to his people. When the characters tell the Bishop about Hereward's death, he will be most apologetic and regretful and will tell the characters that he employed Guido as his agent. He says that Guido might still be in the village of Caerdoc, as he only recently brought the Relic to him to receive his payment.

Who was the thief?

Guido is the only person who knows the thief, so if characters kill Guido, they will not learn who he was. If they do not kill Guido and question him further, he will say that he never knew his name, he simply recruited him in the town near to Crowthorne and then paid him off when he brought him the relic.

In actual fact, Guido did not pay the thief; he killed him too. When characters return to Crowthorne, they will learn that another body has been found in the woods – this one wearing a pilgrim's robe. It doesn't take much to realize that this is actually the mystery thief.

Wrapping up

The characters only had to solve the mystery of the dead body. They did not have to become involved in the argument about the ownership of the Relic. If you want to involve them in this (or they choose to involve themselves) then you can carry on this scenario in whatever direction you choose.

Guido

STURDINESS 2/Fight, Shoot 2; APPEAL 2; CRAFTINESS 2/Agility Feat 1, Sneak 1; WITS 2; BLOOD 14

Equipment: Bow (7 damage), Axe (7 damage) Leather Jerkin (AV2)

A Gathering of Crows

Introduction

This is not actually a scenario as such. It is a collection of NPCs, each of which can spark your own ideas for a mystery scenario of their own, or you could put the whole collection together as an ongoing campaign-style mystery, as each character is connected to another in one way or another by their secrets. You could strip away some secrets if they do not fit your ideas or add further secrets in so they are entwined together even more than they are currently. Alternatively, you could simply use the characters as stock NPCs to fill roles in some of the earlier mystery scenarios (for example Bartholomew Matthews can be used in the scenario "A Vial Murder").

Bartholomew Matthews

Background: Townsman

Position: Apothecary

STURDINESS 1; APPEAL 2/Gossip 1; CRAFTINESS 2;

WITS 3/Appraise 2, Gen Know 2, Poisons 2

(Languages: Literacy, English, Latin); BLOOD 11

Height: Average Weight: Average Age: 38

Belongings: Good clothing, medical bag with vials of medicines, a small sharp knife, birthing forceps and bandages, dagger (3 damage), purse containing 20 sp

Bartholomew has recently moved into a small rented shop in the city. He left his previous establishment in Gloucester amidst rumours that his medicines had poisoned a few of his patients. Whilst these rumours remained unfounded, it was considered best by the Apothecaries Guild in Gloucester that he move elsewhere as they had already been attempts on his life as a result. He has recently taken on an apprentice, Arnold Blakely.

Secret: Bartholomew is an evil psychopath and the rumours in Gloucester were true. He became fascinated with poisons and decided to test out some of his concoctions on his patients. He may start again very soon in his new location.

Gareth Bowman

Background: Yeoman

Position: Man-At-Arms

STURDINESS 3/Shoot 3, Fight 1; APPEAL 2/Gossip 1;

CRAFTINESS 1/Agility Feat 2, Craft 1; WITS 2/Appraise 1, Notice 1

(Languages: Welsh, English); BLOOD 17

Height: Tall Weight: Average Age: 23

Belongings: Good, though well-worn clothing, studded leather (AV4), sword (6 damage), dagger (3 damage), longbow (7 damage), purse containing 3sp

Gareth is a Welsh archer recently returned from fighting overseas. He is now kicking around town looking for gainful employment, preferably in his specialist area of mercenary or fighting man, but otherwise anything goes, as he is pretty low on funds at the moment.

Secret: An old mercenary companion of Gareth, Sagard, stole Gareth's hard-earned savings from years of campaigning (about 120 sp) and fled back to England several months ago. Gareth has tracked him to town and is planning to exact his revenge by killing him.

Sagard

Background: Serf

Position: Rogue

STURDINESS 2/Drink 1, Fight 2, Shoot 1; APPEAL 2/Bluff 1, Disguise 2, Gossip 1; CRAFTINESS 2/Agility Feat 1, Sleight 2, Sneak 1; WITS 2/Notice 1

(Languages: French, English); BLOOD 13

Height: Average Weight: Slight Age: 20

Belongings: Good, though well-worn clothing, leather (AV3), sword (6 damage), dagger (3 damage), purse containing 8sp

Sagard is a thief and conman who ended up on campaign overseas simply as a means to avoid capture by the sheriffs of several cities in which he carried out his "trade". He has already spent Gareth's money

and has come to this city for a particular reason.

Secret: Sagard has discovered that he is actually the bastard first son of the nobleman Lord Henry Farrond and, as such, is the rightful heir to the Lords property.

Hugo Farrond

Background: Noble

Position: Forester

STURDINESS 2/Shoot 2, Fight 1, Ride 1, Drink 1; APPEAL 1/Etiquette 1; CRAFTINESS 2/Agility Feat 1, Craft 1; WITS 2/Gen Know 1, Laws 1, Notice 2

(Languages: French, English); BLOOD 14

Height: Short Weight: Stocky Age: 22

Belongings: Average clothing, leather (AV3), hand axe (4 damage), staff (4 damage), crossbow (7 damage), and a purse containing 19sp

Hugo is the nephew of the noble Lord Henry Farrond, who used his position to help the otherwise lazy and useless Hugo gain his post as a Royal Forester. Hugo is completely and utterly corrupt and contemptible. There is nothing that he won't turn a blind eye to, if sufficiently reimbursed.

Secret: Hugo is also an evil sex-monster. He uses his position (and sometimes sleeping draughts purchased from Bartholomew Matthews) to encourage the local girls to sleep with him. One young girl, Helwisa went missing recently from the area and, despite a search led by Hugo, she hasn't been found. That is because Hugo raped her and then killed her, hiding her body in the forest. Hugo is likely to strike again sometime soon.

Sister Agnes

Background: Landowner

Position: Nun

STURDINESS 1/Ride 1; APPEAL 3/Etiquette 1, Gossip 1;

CRAFTINESS 2/Sneak 2; WITS 3/Gen Know 1, Laws 2, Notice 2,

Languages 1

(Languages: Literacy, English, Latin, French); BLOOD 9

Height: Average Weight: Slight Age: 25

Belongings: Nun's habit, satchel with ink, parchment and goose feather quills and a purse containing 1sp

Sister Agnes is a sleuthing nun and she has been investigating the case of the missing girl, Helwisa. She is very suspicious of Hugo Farrond but has not yet acquired the evidence to support her suspicions. She is quite a worldly nun and, because of some successes in the past in tracking down some of the priory's stolen relics, she is given quite a free reign when things need looking into.

Secret: Sister Agnes is Lord Henry Farrond's secret mistress. She sneaks out of the abbey whenever she has the opportunity and meets him in one of several places that they have arranged for their trysts over the years. Lord Henry's faithful servant Ulric is the only other person who knows about this secret affair although another nun, Sister Angelica suspects that Agnes is up to something.

Lord Henry Farrond

Background: Noble

Position: Man-At-Arms

STURDINESS 2/Fight 2, Ride 2; APPEAL 3/Etiquette 1, Seduction 2;

CRAFTINESS 1; WITS 2/Gen Know 1, (Languages: English, French);

BLOOD 15

Height: Tall Weight: Average Age: 45

Belongings: Excellent clothing, quality sword (6 damage) dagger (3 damage), Mail Hauberk (AV6), purse containing 85sp

Lord Henry is somebody who is essentially fair and honourable in most things but fell for Agnes the moment he saw her and set about seducing her, despite her vocation.

Secret: Lord Henry is secretly seeing Sister Agnes from the nearby priory. Also, when he was a younger man, Lord Henry did sleep with one of the local maidens, Oriel, Sagard's mother. He did not know she had a son by him.

