

# Whodunit in the Castle?

Learning History Through Immersive and  
Participatory Murder Mysteries

# Why Murder Mystery Tours are Better for Understanding Historic Sites

- **Active Participation**  
Visitors become investigators, engaging directly with the site's history instead of passively listening.
- **Immersive Storytelling**  
Crime and intrigue draw participants into the narrative, making the historical context vivid and compelling.
- **Exploration of Daily Life**  
Scenarios reveal how people lived, worked, and interacted within the space.
- **Emotional Connection**  
Solving mysteries creates memorable, emotionally engaging experiences that deepen understanding.
- **Multi-Perspective Learning**  
Encourages critical thinking by exploring various motives, roles, and viewpoints within the historical setting.
- **Accessible and Fun**  
Makes complex historical and social dynamics easier to grasp through play and performance.
- **Transforms Silent Spaces**  
Breathes life into static sites like castles, churches, or monasteries, helping visitors understand their original purpose and use.

## My Experiences with Murder Mystery Tours



*"That it might become a Most Splendid Passing" –  
A Curious and Most Melancholic Case of Murder concerning the  
Untimely Demise of the Turk Louis ... with Parts for Gentlefolk to  
Assume*



*"We shall seize that which Providence hath ordained as our due" –  
A Most Wondrous and Perilous Encounter within the Noble  
Residence*



**Brother Fulbert and the Novice of the Lord of Darkness –  
The First Tale of Brother Fulbert**

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## What shall we do now?

- Practical Example: Explore how Murder Mysteries Tours can transform visitor experiences.
- Look at what is needed to design a Murder Mystery Tour and develop together a simple, short and site-specific mystery for a Viking Open-Air Museum.





# Brother Fulbert and the Novice of the Lord of Darkness – The First Tale of Brother Fulbert

Example

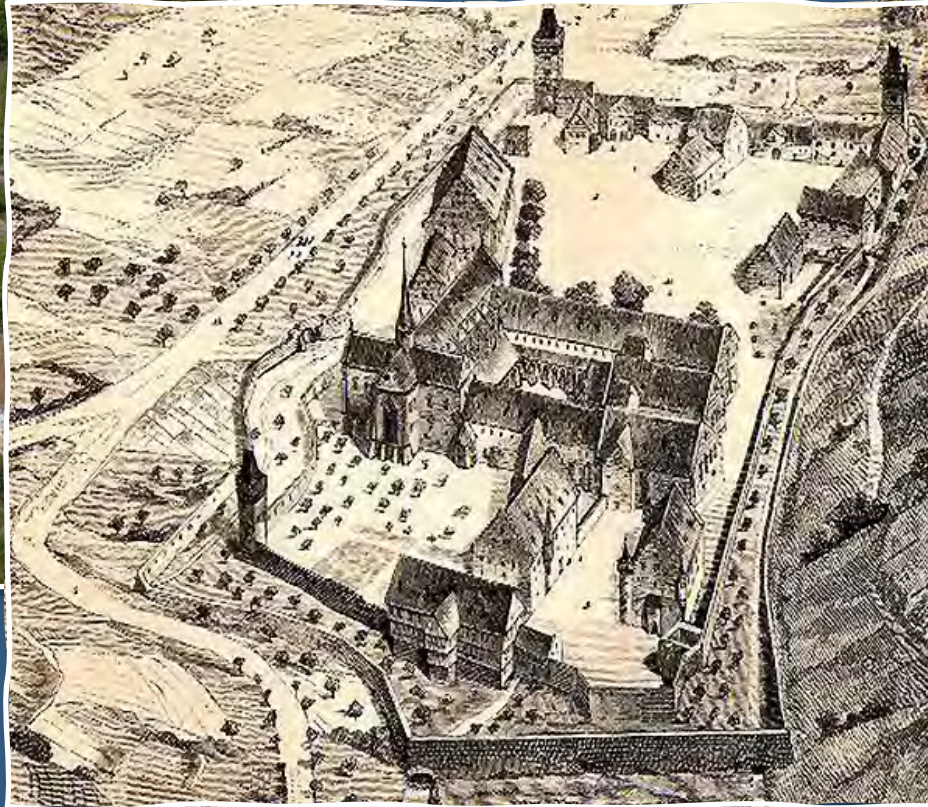
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# UNESCO World Heritage Site

## Maulbronn Abbey



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## Introduction by the civil guide at the monastery model from 1460 at the Tourist Information



- **Historical Context**

Introduction to the Mainz Archdiocesan Feud (1461–1463), the political conflict involving Diether of Isenburg, Adolf of Nassau, and Frederick I of the Palatinate, including the siege of Maulbronn and the Battle of Seckenheim.

- **Interactive Element**

The civil historian gives participants monastery roles and name tags, turning them into active characters in the mystery.

- **Cliffhanger**

A recent mysterious death is revealed—guests are asked to help investigate.



# Monastery Maid in the Monastery Courtyard

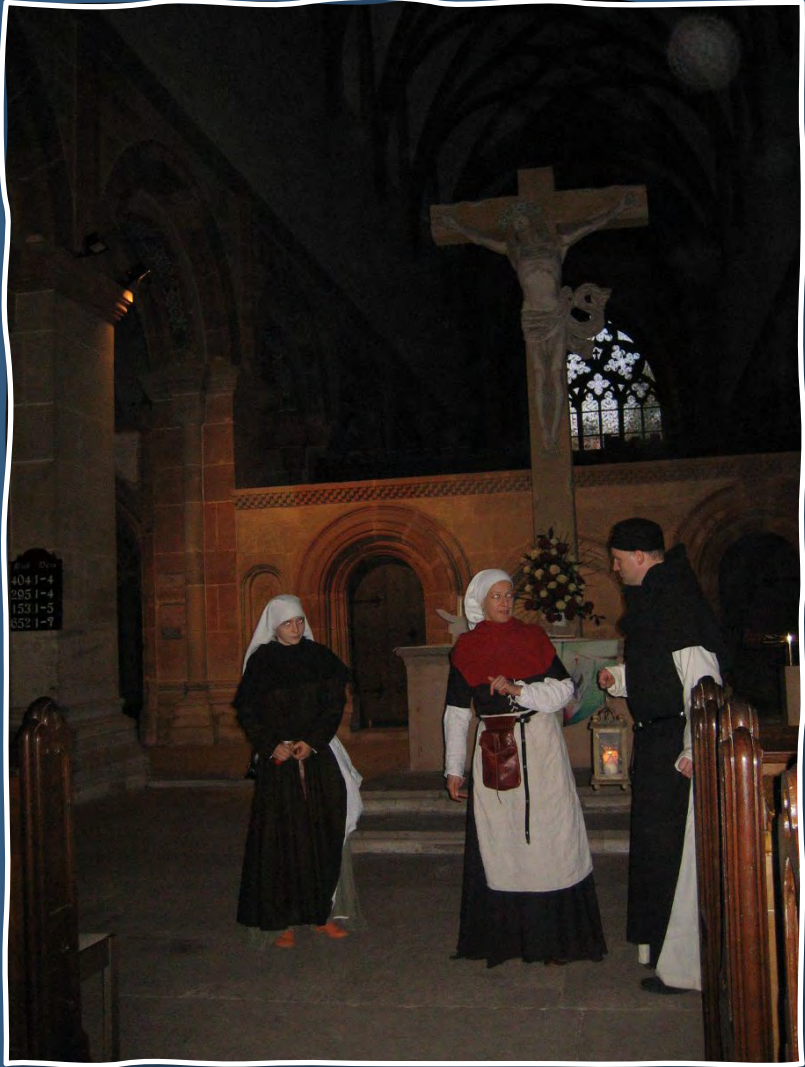


- **Historical Setting & Character Role**  
The monastery maid, servant to Field Captain Roland, explains her presence in the monastery amid the Mainz Archdiocesan Feud.
- **Monastic Life Insights**  
She shares strict Cistercian rules (chastity, silence), the harshness of daily life, and duties of lay brothers.
- **Mystery Introduction**  
The maid reveals the mysterious drowning of Brother Marinus, marking the first clue in the murder mystery.





## Brother Herbert & the Missing Brother



- **Suspicious Disappearance**  
Brother Herbert reveals that Brother Claudatius is missing and hasn't been seen since lunch.
- **Tensions Rise**  
The maid suspects novice Godefried brought evil to the monastery, citing odd features and unsettling events.
- **Authority and Duty**  
Brother Herbert quotes scripture to justify his actions, defends Godefried, and prepares to redress the dirty novices.

## Arrival of Brother Fulbert of Hennegow and His Adlatus Stefan

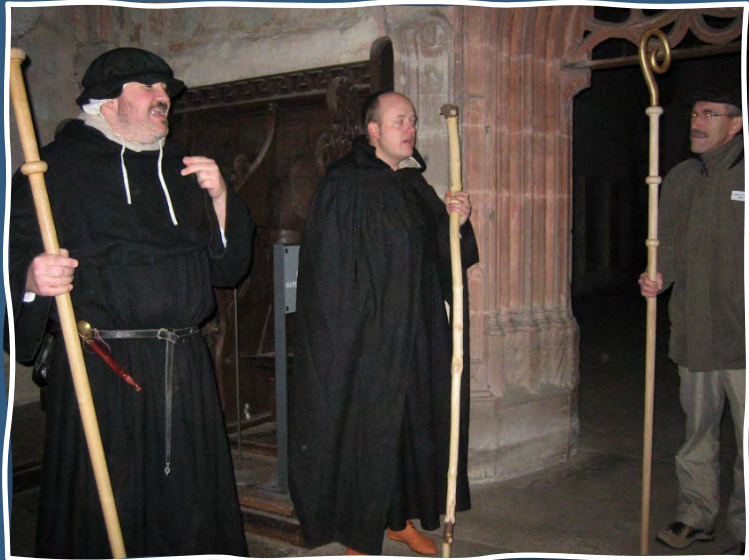


- **Unexpected Arrival at Dusk**  
Brother Fulbert and his adlatus Stefan arrive at the church during evening prayers, requesting hospitality but keeping their purpose secret.
- **Traditional Welcome Ritual**  
Guests receive symbolic bread and salt, a brotherly kiss, and a foot washing insisted upon by the monastery maid.
- **Hidden Setup for the Mystery**  
While rituals distract the audience, a “corpse” is secretly placed in the calefactorium and the children (novices) are led away to receive first clues.





## Brother Fulbert Tells the Group About the Military Conflicts



- **Historical Background**  
Brother Fulbert reveals he was a soldier during the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 and still has a battle injury.
- **Political Intrigue**  
He discusses the Mainz Archdiocesan Feud (1461–1462), a conflict over the Archbishop's position.
- **Hidden Mission**  
Fulbert hints at a secret diplomatic journey from Heidelberg to Stuttgart

## Discovery of the Second Corpse in the Calefactorium



- **Shocking Discovery**  
The children (novices) find a charred corpse in the calefactorium, triggering a dramatic scene with screams and lighting effects.
- **Suspicious Clues**  
Near the body lie a key and a charred finger — the finger is unmistakably Claudatius’.
- **Confirmed Murder**  
Claudatius is missing elsewhere in the monastery, and the circumstances point clearly to foul play, not accident.





## THE INVESTIGATION BEGINS

The group stays together. Brother Fulbert of Hennegow, together with his adlatus Stefan, takes over the investigation as an experienced and well-traveled Benedictine.

The goal:

- gather all clues,
- examine suspects, and
- analyze motives.

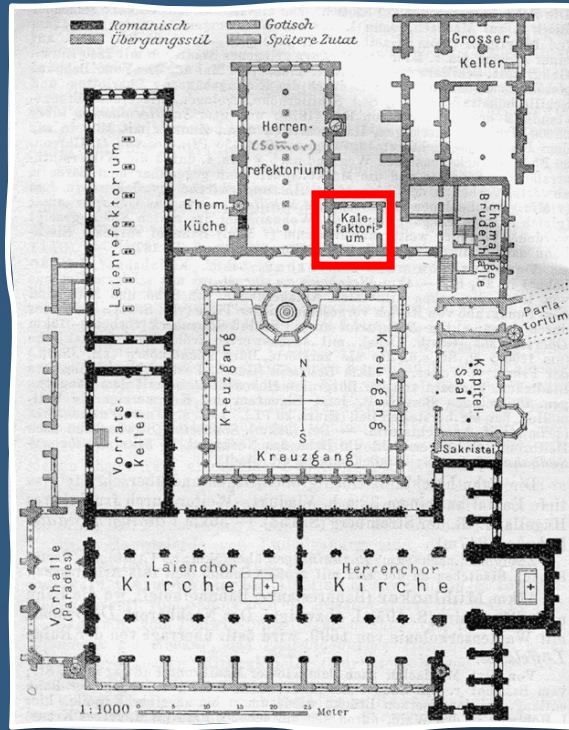
The maid assists in explaining the monastery roles.

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# Who was the murderer? The stations to narrow down the suspects

## Station 1: The Calefactorium – the Heating Room



- **Suspicious**  
Jodokus (sacrist), Cosmas (medic), and Fastredus (merchant) were near the scene or involved with firewood duties.
- **More Clues**  
The maid provides hints about Godefried (novice), Aurelianus (tax collector), Rusticus (herbalist), and Damian (healer).
- **Plot Twist**  
A mysterious monk was seen washing hands in the fountain hall after lunch — identity unknown.



Jodokus (sacrist)



Cosmas (medic)



Fastredus (merchant)



Godefried (novice)



Aurelianus (tax collector)



Rusticus (herbalist)

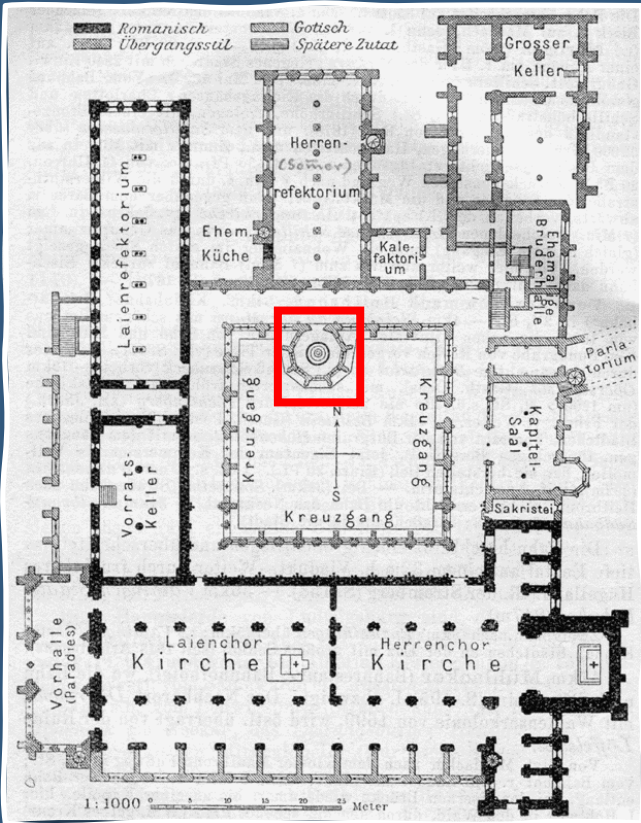


Damian (healer)



## Who was the murderer? The stations to narrow down the suspects

## Station 2: The Fountain Hall



- **Clue Found**  
A vial with traces of hemlock poison was discovered in the fountain hall.
- **External Access**  
Aurelianus (tax collector) and Fastredus (merchant) had opportunities to bring poison from outside.
- **Internal Knowledge**  
Rusticus (herbalist), Cosmas (medic), Damian (healer), and novice Godefried had expertise or experience with medicinal herbs and poison.



## Jodokus (sacrist)



Cosmas (medic)



## Fastredus (merchant)



## Godefried (novice)



## Aurelianus (tax collector)



## Rusticus (herbalist)

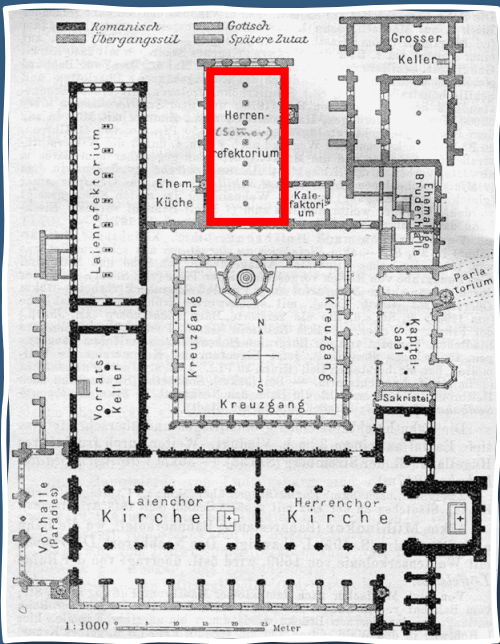


## Damian (healer)



# Who was the murderer? The stations to narrow down the suspects

## Station 3: Refectory of the Fathers



- **Seating Clues from Brother Herbert**  
Brother Herbert recalls Cosmas (medic) and Aurelianus (tax collector) sitting near Claudatius.
- **Alibis Eliminate Suspects**  
Rusticus (herbalist) and Damian (healer) are ruled out due to solid alibis.
- **Unseen but Busy – Fastredus**  
Fastredus (merchant) wasn't seen—he was cooking, a task that rotates and may be given as punishment.



Jodokus (sacrist)



Cosmas (medic)



Fastredus (merchant)



Godefried (novice)



Aurelianus (tax collector)



Rusticus (herbalist)

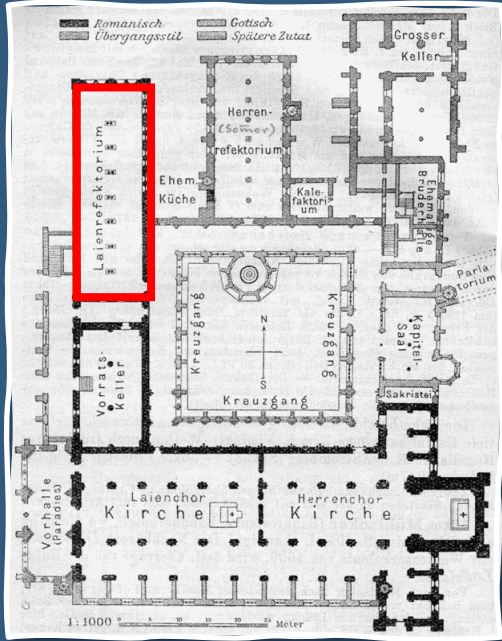


Damian (healer)



# Who was the murderer? The stations to narrow down the suspects

## Station 4: The Lay Refectory – Who Was Claudatius?



- **Suspect Motives Revealed**  
The group discusses possible motives of Cosmas (medic) and Aurelianus (tax collector).
- **Identity of the Victim**  
Brother Herbert confirms the victim was Claudatius, the Cellerar — responsible for supplies and keys.
- **Crucial Evidence Found**  
A key and a charred finger near the body confirm the Cellerar's identity; the key was found by novices near the heating room.



Jodokus (sacrist)



Cosmas (medic)



Fastredus (merchant)



Godefried (novice)



Aurelianus (tax collector)



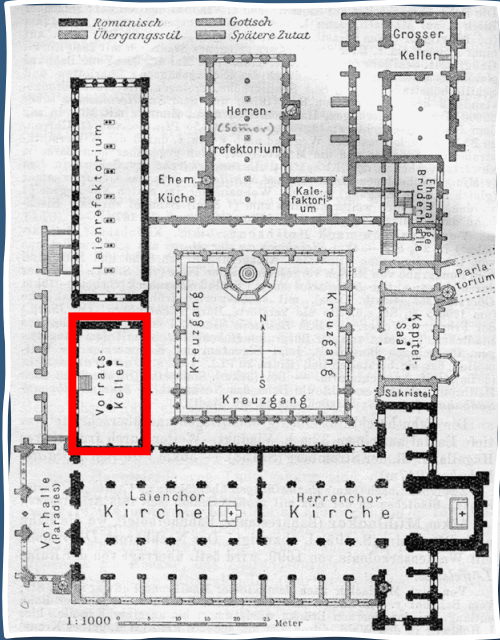
Rusticus (herbalist)



Damian (healer)

# Who was the murderer? The stations to narrow down the suspects

## Station 5: The Cellarium (via Cloister into the monastic Storehouse)



- **Authority Intervenes**  
Field Captain Roland of Neuenheim tries to take over the investigation, accuses Godefried of demonic possession, and rewards the maid for a misleading tip.
- **Classic Misdirection**  
Roland suddenly blames Rusticus the gardener — referencing the cliché that "*the gardener is always the murderer.*"
- **A Suspicious Discovery**  
In the cellar, the group finds a pouch labeled "pepper." Brother Fulbert suspects it's actually gunpowder, hinting at a deeper conspiracy.



Jodokus (sacrist)



Cosmas (medic)



Fastredus (merchant)



Godefried (novice)



Aurelianus (tax collector)



Rusticus (herbalist)

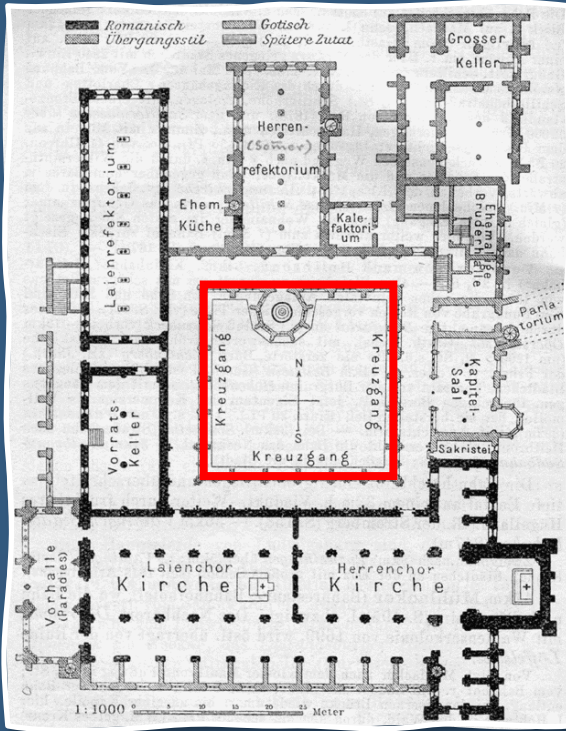


Damian (healer)



# Who was the murderer? The stations to narrow down the suspects

## Station 6: Cloister Garden



- **Shocking Demonstration**  
Brother Fulbert ignites a mysterious powder in the cloister garden — it flares up instantly. It's gunpowder.
- **A Hidden Agenda**  
Fulbert, a military man, suspected a traitor was in the monastery, working for Württemberg.
- **Deadly Discovery**  
The plan involved blowing up the monastery wall from inside. Claudatius (cellarer) found out — and paid with his life.



Jodokus (sacrist)



Cosmas (medic)



Fastredus (merchant)



Godefried (novice)



Aurelianus (tax collector)

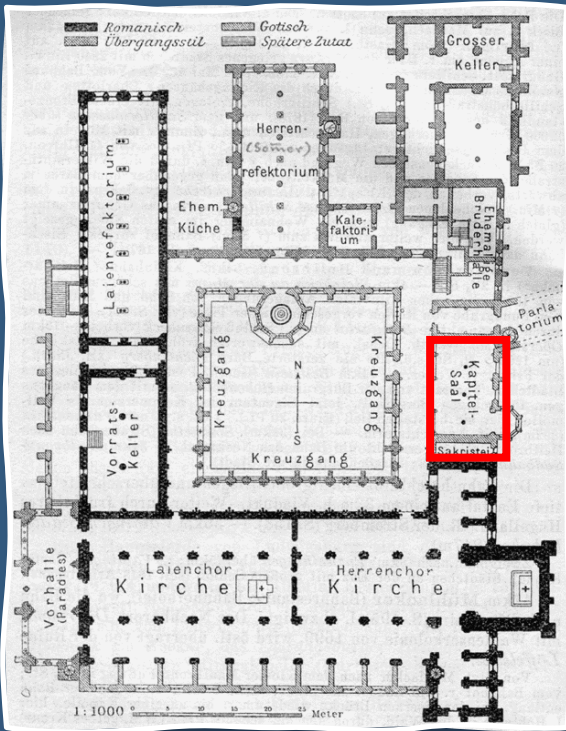


Rusticus (herbalist)



Damian (healer)

# Chapter Room: Resolution and the Tribunal



- **Clearing Suspects**  
Cosmas (medic) and Novice Godefried are no longer suspects — both could not have left the monastery.
- **Aurelianus (rent collector) Ruled Out**  
Although he had the opportunity, Aurelianus had no motive to kill Marinus the coachman — he rode a mule and didn't need a coachman.
- **The Real Culprit: Fastredus (merchant)**  
Fastredus (merchant) had access to gunpowder via his travels, a motive to silence both victims, and the opportunity — as cook — to poison Claudatius and dispose of the body.



Jodokus (sacrist)



Cosmas (medic)



Fastredus (merchant)



Godefried (novice)



Aurelianus (tax collector)



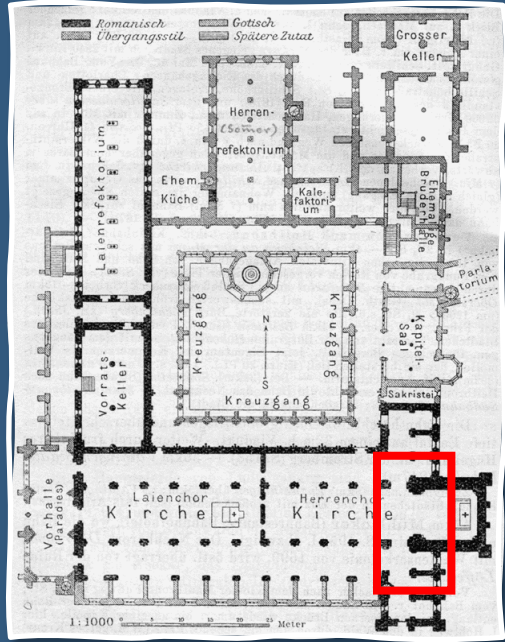
Rusticus (herbalist)



Damian (healer)



# Penance Circle in the Abbey Church – The Abbot Calls for Repentance



- **Public Confession**  
Fastredus (merchant) confesses his sins before the community in the Abbey Church, following Brother Herbert's counsel.
- **Justice Delivered**  
The Field Captain escorts Fastredus away to face the consequences of his actions.
- **Reflective Farewell**  
The tour ends with a solemn moment reflecting on guilt and redemption, followed by a Q&A and guest send-off.

End of part one ...

Now follows the second part ...

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# Seven Secrets for Writing a Successful Murder Mystery Tour

- **SECRET #1: Give all suspects a motive.**

Every suspect must have a clear reason for wanting the victim dead, as motive is what guests will investigate first.

- **SECRET #2: Use lots of red herrings.**

Introduce misleading clues to divert attention and create investigative dead ends, increasing the mystery's complexity.

- **SECRET #3: Develop at least three storylines.**

Create multiple interconnected narratives that explain the relationships and motivations among the suspects.

- **SECRET #4: Provide information about only motive at the start of the investigation.**

Reveal only the "why" initially; details of "how" (means) and "when" (opportunity) should unfold later for suspense.

- **SECRET #5: Use "means" and "opportunity" to identify the killer.**

The killer will emerge through logical deduction based on how the murder was done and who had the chance.

- **SECRET #6: Be theatrical.**

Make the story engaging and humorous with dramatic writing and colorful character details.

- **SECRET #7: Drop the "smoking gun" clue when the party is 75% over.**

Hold back key evidence until late in the game to maintain suspense and excitement.



MURDER MYSTERY TOUR AT THE VIKING  
OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

# BLOOD MEAD IN SKJOLDHEIMR – A MURDER BEFORE LINDISFARNE

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## Introduction and Historical Setting by a Civil Guide at the Visitor Centre: Spring 793 AD



- **The Spark of the Viking Age**  
The 793 raid on the Lindisfarne monastery by Scandinavian Vikings marked the dramatic beginning of the Viking Age in Europe.
- **A Sacred Target Falls**  
The attack shocked the Christian world—monks were killed or enslaved, treasures stolen, and the sanctity of holy sites was shattered.
- **Ominous Signs and Rising Tensions**  
Contemporary sources saw the brutal raid as a divine omen, while a murder in a Viking village hints at deeper unrest before the larger storm.



## Introduction and Historical Setting by a Civil Guide at the Visitor Centre: Welcome to Skjoldheimr

- **A Fortress of Warriors and Ambition**  
Skjoldheimr is a rugged Viking stronghold on Norway's coast, known for its strategic harbor, harsh beauty, and a population trained from childhood in survival, war, and seafaring.
- **A Society Forged by Tradition and Power**  
The village thrives on clan alliances, ancestral honor, and divine favor — ruled not by one leader, but by shifting pacts among rival chieftains and a deep sense of legacy.
- **Gathering of four Powerful Viking Chieftains**  
Their mission: to finalize a bold plan to raid Lindisfarne and claim glory, gold, and the favor of the gods.

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## Introduction and Historical Setting by a Civil Guide at the Visitor Centre: Four of the most powerful Viking chieftains



Hroald the Cruel



Bjarnulf Ironhand



Ketill Longship



Ylva the Red

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## Introduction and Historical Setting by a Civil Guide at the Visitor Centre: Murder Before Glory



On the second morning of the gathering, one murder will shake the village to its roots.

**Hroald the Cruel**, feared warrior and brutal tactician, is found dead — headfirst, drowned in a vat of mead in the brewery.

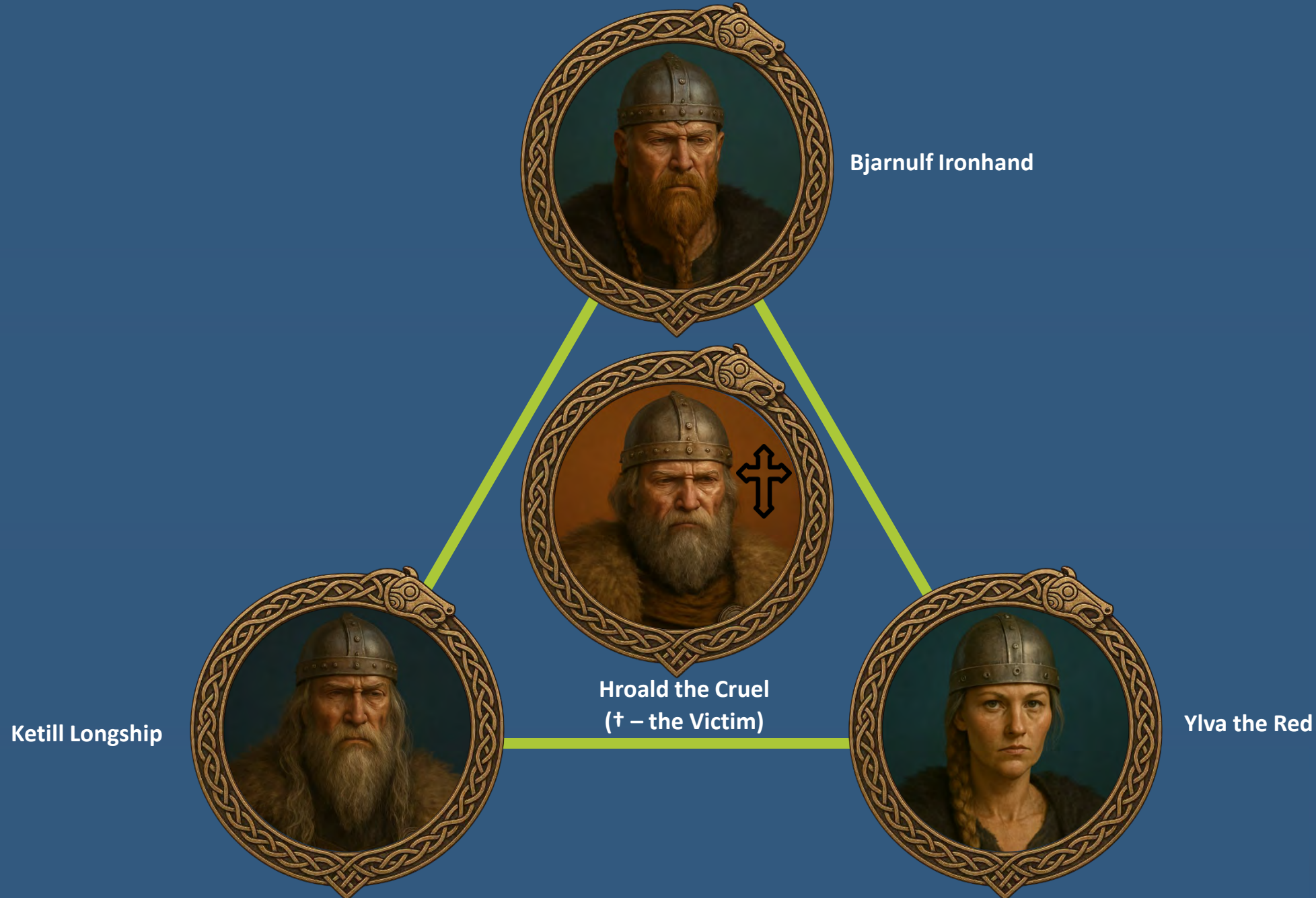
No signs of a struggle. No blood.

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## The main Suspects? – The Three Remaining Chieftains



## You Are the Villagers – And the Investigators

- **Immersive Roleplay Experience**

You are not just observing — you become a villager of Skjoldheimr, living the life of a shieldmaiden, smith, cook, or healer with deep ties to the community. Some of you will be witnesses that will be questioned.

- **Objective of the Tour**

As you explore the village, you'll gather clues at significant locations, uncovering motives and opportunities linked to three chieftains suspected of murder. And don't think you're above suspicion — you're as suspect as the three Chieftains themselves.

- **Decide the Fate**

The tour concludes with a village council where participants discuss evidence, accuse suspects, and deliver justice.

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# SKJOLDHEIMR



The Chieftain's Hall



The Brewery



The Kitchen



The Forge



The Boathouse



## Final Revelation – In the Chieftain's Hall



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The Turning Point (Plot Twist) — The man suspected of murder has himself been murdered.



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Only one unexpected suspect had ...

- **The means**

The poison — He knew how to use it, herbal knowledge and access.

- **The opportunity**

He was there, always. He served the mead and found the key. The scroll was forged by a steady hand trained in ink and scripture.

- **The motive**

A vow, forged in fire and memory, to stop the next holy massacre. To stop those who would have brought death upon another monastery — Lindisfarne.

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# THANKS FOR LISTENING!



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