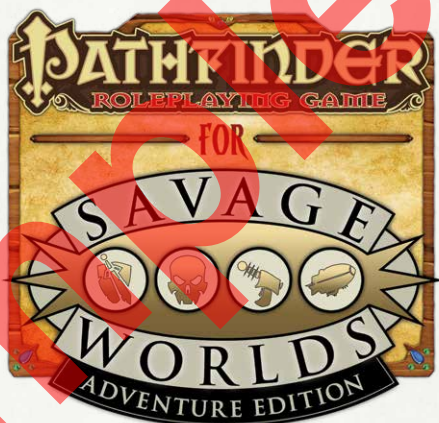


# RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

## BOOK 2: THE SKINSAW MURDERS



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# CREDITS

## Original Paizo Team

Development Lead: James Jacobs

Designers: Wolfgang Baur, Stephen S. Greer, James Jacobs, Nicolas Logue, Richard Pett, and Greg A. Vaughan

Additional Design: Brian Cortijo, Tim Hitchcock, Michael Kortez, F. Wesley Schneider, Owen K.C. Stephens, and James L. Sutter

Additional Development: Lisa Stevens

Cover Artist: Wayne Reynolds

Interior Artists: Dave Allsop, Rayph Beisner, Eric Belisle, Concept Art House, Vincent Dutrait, Wayne England, John Gravato, Andrew Hou, Imaginary Friends, Tyler Jacobson, Warren Mahy, Roberto Pitturru, Maichol Quinto, Wayne Reynolds, Florian Stitz, Eva Widermann, Ben Wootten, Kevin Yan, and Kieran Yanner

Cartography: Robert Lazzaretti

Additional Cartography: 99 Lives Design and Jason Engle

Creative Director: James Jacobs

Senior Art Director: Sarah E. Robinson

## Pathfinder for Savage Worlds

Rise of the Runelords Conversion: Michael Barbeau

Pathfinder for Savage Worlds Development Team: Chris Warner, Karl Keesler, Michael Barbeau, Donald Schepis, Shane Hensley, Jessica Rogers

Graphic Design & Layout: Karl Keesler, Thomas Shook

Logistics, Marketing & Customer Service: Jodi Black, Chris Landauer, Christine Lapp, Chelsea Kramer

Pathfinder for Savage Worlds Production Manager: Simon Lucas

## Paizo Licensing Team

President, Paizo Inc.: Jeff Alvarez

Chief Creative Officer, Publisher: Erik Mona

Vice President of Marketing & Licensing: Jim Butler

Director of Licensing: John Feil

Director of Brand Strategy: Mark Moreland

Director of Visual Design: Sarah Robinson

Creative Director: James Jacobs

Creative Director: Robert G. McCreary

Marketing and Media Manager: Aaron Shanks

Marketing Coordinator: Leah Beckelman

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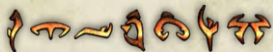
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Authors: Mike Barbeau and Shane Hensley

# BACKGROUND



AFTER SLUMBERING FOR MILLENNIA, RUNELORD KARZOUG WOKE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE LOST CITY OF XIN-SHALAST. UNABLE TO TRAVEL FAR FROM THE SOURCE OF HIS POWER, HE CONSCRIPTED THE STONE GIANT MOKMURIAN AS HIS MINION, BUT KARZOUG DEMANDED MORE. ENSLAVED GIANTS WERE WELL AND GOOD FOR WAR, BUT THEY LACKED FINESSE. KARZOUG NEEDED MORE SUBTLE AGENTS TO PROVIDE HIM WITH BOTH INTELLIGENCE ON THIS NEW WORLD AND SOULS TO FUEL HIS RETURN TO POWER. HE TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE MONSTROUS CREATURES THAT HAD CLAIMED SECTIONS OF XIN-SHALAST DURING HIS LONG SLEEP. OF ALL THESE, IT WAS THE LAMIAS WITH WHOM HE FORGED THE CLOSEST BOND.

Karzoug chose two lamia matriarch siblings to act as his agents in Varisia. One, a devious rogue named Xanesha, the other a deadly sorcerer named Lucrecia.

Lucrecia chose the backwater town of Turtleback Ferry as her hunting grounds. Xanesha opted for quantity over quality of greedy souls and came to the bustling city of Magnimar.

Unlike Lucrecia, who grooms greed in her victims as a farmer might raise cattle for the slaughter, Xanesha plans to hunt dozens of victims in the wild. Thus providing her master with sinful souls at a much faster rate.

Xanesha needed a cover before she could begin her work, though. Her investigations led her to an organization called the Brothers of the Seven, a secret society that was a cover for a cult of murderers known as the Skinsaw Men.

Xanesha insinuated herself into the cult by seducing its leader, a corrupt justice named Ironbriar. It wasn't long before she took charge of the cult completely.

Xanesha found that running a cult of killers suited her. They never questioned her background and assumed she was a divine agent sent by their sadistic deity. Xanesha never bothered to correct them.

She began directing her new minions to "harvest" greedy souls — primarily merchants, bankers, moneylenders, gamblers, and adventurers. These unlucky men and women

were brought back to the cult's headquarters, a lumber mill kept as a cover for the cult's sinister truths. There they were marked with the Sihedron Rune and then sacrificed.

Xanesha also learned of a group called the Red Mantis assassins, who were active in Varisia developing several horrific diseases to use as weapons. She formed an alliance with them to further augment her own wealth.

Xanesha suspected the caverns below a local manor built by a founder of the Brothers of the Seven might hold a disease she could sell to the Red Mantis, and in so doing make a tidy profit for herself. When a desperate noble named Aldern Foxglove approached her, the lamia matriarch saw a chance to satisfy two goals at once.

## THE FOXGLOVE LEGACY

Foxglove Manor was built nearly 80 years ago by a Magnimar merchant prince named Vorel. It was one of the first homes raised along the Lost Coast. Himself a founding member of the Brothers of the Seven, Vorel was forced to borrow money from his partners to build the manor. He promised them that after a century, ownership of the manor and its grounds would revert to the society.

Of course, Vorel Foxglove had his own sinister plans — a necromancer by trade, he spent the next 20 years researching methods to become a lich.

Yet on what was to be the eve of his triumphant transformation, his wife Kasanda uncovered his vile plan. She confronted him, ruined his phylactery, and triggered a necromantic backlash that destroyed Vorel's body in one horrendous blast of disease and decay. His soul became absorbed by the manor, and the house became the phylactery his wife had ruined!

In a matter of minutes, Kasanda, her child, and all of the manor's servants succumbed to a potent and horrific affliction spread by Vorel's vengeful spirit.

When nothing had been heard from Foxglove Manor for days, visitors found the family and servants dead of a mysterious disease. Disposal of the bodies was handled with utmost secrecy by the surviving Foxgloves of Magnimar, and they shunned the manor for decades to follow.

The building stood vacant for nearly 40 years before Traver Foxglove decided to move his family in. Traver hoped to reclaim his heritage and expunge the sour taint of the house's reputation. His wife Cyralie gave birth to Traver's only son, also named Aldern, not long after they moved in.

For six years, it seemed as if whatever was wrong with the manor had corrected itself. Traver's son and daughters grew into fine young aristocrats and their fortunes seemed to be booming.

In Traver, Vorel's unquiet spirit found unformed clay he could sculpt, and as the years wore on, Vorel's influence over Traver grew. In time, Cyralie became convinced that Traver's mental decline was caused by the manor.

Cyralie lit the servants' outbuilding on fire in a fit of desperation, then returned to the manor intending to do the same to it. Traver, now fully in Vorel's embrace, murdered her before she could light the fire.

The shock of watching his wife die freed Traver from Vorel's influence long enough for him to kill himself in despair.

Smoke from the fire was seen as far away as Sandpoint, and when townsfolk arrived to investigate, they found the servants' outbuilding burnt to the ground and Traver dead by his own hand. His wife's body was found burned and dashed against the rocks below.

Cowering in a second-floor bedroom, though, the townsfolk discovered the Foxglove children. Aldern and his older sisters spent time in a Magnimar orphanage before they were claimed by Traver's second cousin and brought to the city of Korvosa.

Fifteen years passed before Aldern, now a grown man and a successful merchant, returned to the Lost Coast. Rich and popular, he secured a townhouse in Magnimar and set into motion his claim to the family home.

As he reestablished old family connections, he also approached the Brothers of the Seven. Aldern found the society welcomed him with open arms, and it was primarily through their influence that he was able to reclaim Foxglove Manor with such ease.

But Aldern Foxglove had trouble finding skilled laborers and servants to aid him in restoring his family estate — Foxglove Manor's reputation had taken firm root in local superstition.

Worse, the manor's cellars were infested with rats. Horribly diseased and aggressive, the rats kept to themselves as long as no one ventured too far into the basement.

The job was enormous, from the need to patch the leaky roof in dozens of places to dealing with the strange and repugnant fungus that grew so tenaciously in the basement.

It was about this time Aldern, returning from a visit to Sandpoint, happened upon a group of Varisians on the moor not far from Foxglove Manor. They were trapped by the terrible gale he himself was trying to get home through.

Seized by an uncharacteristic fit of charity, Aldern did one of the few selfless things of his life and brought the dozen Varisians home with him. He invited them to stay in his manor until the storm had ended, and in doing so, he brought Iesha into his life.

Iesha was surely the most beautiful woman Aldern had ever met, a maiden with raven-black hair and luscious curves, the voice of an angel and the heart of a lion. Aldern fell wildly and passionately in love with the Varisian woman and proposed marriage to her before dawn broke.



Overwhelmed by the man's handsome looks, social standing, apparent generosity, and wealth, Iesha accepted. They were married within the week. Alas, as Iesha would soon learn, there was more to Aldern than met the eye.

Aldern had a mean streak in him, one planted in his soul during his unpleasant upbringing and nurtured by his association with the Brothers of the Seven — in particular by the group's leader, Justice Ironbriar.

Aldern's passions and lust for Iesha gave way to jealousy and paranoia. He grew overprotective of his wife's honor to the extent of locking her in the manor during his trips to Magnimar. There Ironbriar continued to work at the man's soul, grooming him for induction into the Skinsaw Cult.

Then, one night after arriving home late from Magnimar, Aldern found Iesha and one of the carpenters together in the library.

Making a wildly inaccurate guess at what was going on, he brained the man with a statuette from a shelf, causing Iesha to fly into a frenzy. When Aldern recovered from his rage, he found he'd strangled his wife to death with her own silk scarf.

In a growing panic, Aldern disposed of the carpenter's body by throwing it down the

nearby well, but he couldn't bring himself to do the same with Iesha. Instead, he wrapped her corpse in a sheet and hid it in the attic, locking the door and intending to return later to deal with the evidence. He then fled back to the Brothers of the Seven in Magnimar to seek their advice.

The Brothers of the Seven promised they'd take care of his problem, asking him to avoid returning to his manor while they went to work. In the following days, Aldern explained to visitors that Iesha was visiting friends in distant Absalom and work on restoring his manor had come to a halt while he awaited more funds.

He kept up a brave face in public, but in truth, he was slowly being driven bankrupt, both morally and financially, by the Brothers of the Seven. Every week, they demanded more payments in return for their services, while at the same time providing him with the flayleaf he had become addicted to, drawing him further and further into their control.

They never did go to Foxglove Manor to hold up their end of the deal. That was when Xanesha decided to involve the temperamental noble in her plans. Promised his debt to the Brothers of the Seven would soon be paid in full, he was told he could finally meet the group's mysterious patron.

He was taken before Xanesha, who in her human guise informed Aldern that one final task remained before him.

It was a simple task, really — return to Foxglove Manor, catch one of the diseased rats that plagued the cellars, and return with it to Xanesha for her to study.

Eager to be free of his debt but nervous about returning to the scene of his crime, Aldern swore off the flayleaf, cleaned himself up, and headed north. He lacked the courage to go directly to Foxglove Manor though, and instead continued on to Sandpoint, where he attended the Swallowtail Festival.

When the goblins raided the town, Aldern's life was saved by the heroes. He grew obsessed with one of these strangers, realizing here might be someone he could use to climb out of his pit of depression.

Yet when he returned to Foxglove Manor after his stay in Sandpoint (avoiding the upper floors and the sounds of muffled sobbing), he had difficulty finding any rats. Vorel's spirit had wakened once again and caused the rats to retreat far underground.

When Aldern searched the basement, he heard a scratching from under the floor in a central room. Assuming the sounds to be the rats he sought, he dug through the floor and uncovered an ancient stairwell, one that led to Vorel's hidden laboratory under the manor.

In these caverns he finally discovered not only the rats he sought, but the source of their affliction: a disturbing patch of fungus that grew along a cave wall. Harvesting both, he unknowingly exposed himself to latent necromantic contagions. By the time he returned to Magnimar with the samples secured for Xanesha, he had all but succumbed to a potent form of ghoulish fever.

Xanesha recognized the sickness for what it was and encouraged its growth. Her influence lives on in Foxglove's undeath. She taught him the Sihedron ritual, and once his transformation was complete, sent him back to Foxglove Manor to build an army of ghouls and expand Karzoug's harvest.

## SYNOPSIS

When a string of murders strikes Sandpoint, the heroes begin piecing together clues and soon realize the region may well face a plague of ghouls. After investigating various murder scenes, interviewing victims, and running into trouble along the way, the search for answers leads them to Foxglove Manor.

There, they find the rumors about the mansion being haunted are true. Eventually they confront the murderer — a ghoulishly transformed Aldern Foxglove — only to discover he's been working for another group based in Magnimar, the Brothers of the Seven.

Retracing their steps, the heroes come to the largest city in western Varisia and uncover a sinister secret society, finally confronting its monstrous leader atop a teetering clock tower.

## ADVANCES & STORY AWARDS

The *Rise of the Runelords* Adventure Path alerts a GM when players Advance. The bar is displayed prominently at several intervals. Whenever one of these points are reached, allow the players to choose an Advance at the next convenient moment, usually some sort of rest after a difficult encounter.



### ADVANCEMENT AWARDED!

If the players reach an Advancement but have bypassed previous sections in the book, you should still allow them to Advance.

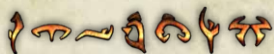


### STORY AWARD

In addition to Advancements, players may take actions that grant them additional rewards. The GM can grant these rewards to everyone, or just those she thinks contributed to the particular story element as she sees fit.

These awards are for the completion of specific events or milestones throughout the campaign. They are extra rewards granted in addition to the standard rewards GMs typically grant players in the course of play.

# PART ONE: MURDER MOST FOUL



A MYSTERIOUS KILLER IS AT LARGE IN SANDPOINT. A MURDERER STALKS THE STREETS THE MURDERER IS NONE OTHER THAN ALDERN FOXGLOVE, BY NIGHT TRANSFORMED INTO A GHAST AND TOLD BY XANESHA THAT, BY CARVING THE SIHEDRON RUNE UPON THE BODIES OF HIS VICTIMS BEFORE THEY ARE SLAIN, HE CAN SOMEDAY CLAIM THE OBJECT OF HIS MOST RECENT OBSESSION—ONE OF THE HEROES— AS HIS OWN. HIS FIRST VICTIMS HAVE EITHER NOT YET BEEN DISCOVERED OR HAVE BEEN HUSHED UP BY SANDPOINT'S SHERIFF IN AN ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE TOWN FROM RELAPSING INTO THE PANIC THAT GRIPPED THEM SEVERAL YEARS AGO WHEN ANOTHER MURDERER, A MAN NAMED CHOPPER, MENACED THE TOWN.

An important part of this adventure is the unmasking of the murderer as none other than Lord Aldern Foxglove. The same nobleman whom the heroes saved from the goblins at the start of *Burnt Offerings*.

Keep the pace of events up for the first part of this tale: A murderer is at large, and as the body count mounts, a tangible sense of fear and frustration grows on the streets. By the time they confront the villain, the discovery of his identity should be all the more shocking to them.

As the investigation moves forward, a plague of ghouls in the Sandpoint region quickly drives away memories of goblins. Here is a menace that can't be frightened by dogs or easily defeated by organized resistance, a menace that rises in the bodies of the dead. Without the aid of the party, the ghoul plague of Sandpoint could have devastating repercussions.

Aldern Foxglove, now the Skinsaw Man, operates from his ruined family seat at Foxglove Manor—a place now called the Misgivings by the locals for its tragic history. Approximately six miles southwest from Sandpoint, Foxglove Manor looms on a remote promontory overlooking the Varisian Gulf.

Foxglove's undead state allows him to use the water to mask his tracks as he emerges from the surf or rivers to do his horrible work. By using waterways, he makes it impossible to

track him to Foxglove Manor—the characters must piece together the location of his lair by investigating the sites of his murders and the spread of his plague.

## OBSESSION

In the previous book, the party rescued Aldern Foxglove from a band of goblins and then possibly accompanied him on a boar hunt. Though he hid his desperation well, Aldern was deep in debt to the Brothers of the Seven at the time.

When the characters rescued him, he became obsessed with one of them, seeing in this hero a misplaced opportunity for his own redemption. Aldern's obsession stems from one of three sins: lust, envy, or wrath.

**Lust:** If the character is female, Foxglove lusts after her, intending to replace his beloved Iesha and hoping in a twisted way that, in so doing, he'll somehow redeem the murder of his previous lover. Aldern wants to show the character how powerful he is, how clever he is, and how ruthless he is.

**Envy:** If none of the heroes who rescued him are beautiful females, Aldern instead becomes insanely jealous of a rescuer who struck him as particularly brave and powerful. He wants to take that character's place, to prove his own might and wit.

Aldern seeks to ridicule and drive out the character, involving him in a web of intrigue in which the hero might even get the blame for the murders himself.

**Wrath:** If neither of the two conditions above can be met, Foxglove's obsession has been twisted by his new undead state, and he now hates his rescuer and wants to destroy him. Aldern attempts to implicate the Pathfinder as the murderer in the hope the "defender of Sandpoint" will be hanged.

Aldern's obsession with the character compels him to steal relics and objects he or she discarded. Try to foreshadow the discovery of Foxglove's "collection" in area B37 by informing the hero that minor personal items go missing now and then.

None of these items should be particularly valuable—you want to unnerve them, after all, not lure him or her into a hunt for a missing piece of gear or favorite treasure.



## SHERIFF HEMLOCK'S PLEA

After the heroes deal with Nualia and the goblins in *Burnt Offerings*, give them some time to rest and recover from their adventures. There's no need to start this book the very same day they return triumphant from Thistletop.

Once you judge enough time has passed and the characters are ready for another adventure, they are approached by a sullen and grim-faced Sheriff Hemlock, who's decided to take the heroes into his confidence regarding a new string of murders.

After the newcomers aid in defending Sandpoint, Sheriff Hemlock sees them as strong allies for the town. The nature of the murders reminds him of Chopper's spree several years ago (see **Sandpoint** in the *The Guide to Varisia* for more information).

He wants help investigating the crimes before things reach the same level of hysteria they did then, and that means coming to the

champions of Sandpoint. After greeting the characters and securing a relatively private place to talk, he says the following.

*"First, let me thank you again for all you've done for Sandpoint. It's fortunate you've proven yourselves so capable, because we've a problem I think you can help us with—a problem I wish I didn't have to involve anyone with, but one that needs dealing with now before the situation grows worse.*

*"Put simply, we have a murderer in our midst—one who, I fear, has only begun his work. Some of you doubtless remember the Late Unpleasantness, how this town nearly tore itself apart in fear at the killer we called Chopper. I'm afraid we might have something similar brewing now.*

*"Last night, the murderer struck at the sawmill. There are two victims, and they're... they're in pretty gruesome shape. The bodies were discovered by one of the mill workers, a man named*

*Ibor Thorn, and by the time my men and I arrived on the scene, a crowd of curious gawkers had already sprung up.*

*I've got my guards stationed there now, keeping the mill locked down, but the thing that bothers me isn't the fact that we have two dead bodies inside. It's the fact that this is actually the second set of murders we've had in the last few days.*

*"I come to you for help in this matter—my guards are good, but they were barely able to handle themselves against the goblins, and what we're facing now is an evil far worse than that.*

*I need your help. But I'm afraid you'll need help too. You see, I'm afraid this particular murderer knows one of you as well."*

At this point, Hemlock passes a blood-stained scrap of parchment to the hero you have chosen to be the target of Foxglove's obsession (see Handout 2-1). That character's name is written in blood on the outside of the folded parchment; inside is a short message depending on the type of obsession that

*You will learn to love me, desire me in time as she did. Give yourself to the Pack and it shall all end.*

*Your Lordship*

*We have spoken of this before, my master. Now it begins. Join the Pack and it will end.*

*Your Lordship*

*I do as you command, master!*

*Your Lordship*

character has engendered in Foxglove's diseased mind.

**Lust:** "You will learn to love me, desire me in time as she did. Give yourself to the Pack and it shall all end."

**Envy:** "We have spoken of this before, my master. Now it begins. Join the Pack and it will end."

**Wrath:** "I do as you command, master!"

Whichever note is used, it's signed "Your Lordship" (one of Aldern's three personalities to emerge since his transformation into a ghast — the other two being the Hurter and the Skinsaw Man).

## OBSESSED

Don't forget one unlucky hero is the obsession of Aldern Foxglove. From time to time, the individual should notice something of theirs is missing. Aldern is crafty, so the character should have no idea what actually happened to their missing belongings.

Sheriff Hemlock explains the note was found pinned to the sleeve of the latest victim by a splinter of wood. He comforts the heroes with his belief that this was left at the murder scene to throw suspicion onto them, and while he certainly doesn't believe they had anything to do with the murders, if word of the note gets out, he's afraid the town's reaction might not be as understanding.

For this reason, and since he doesn't want to start a general panic, he asks them to keep as quiet as possible about the murders.

Of course, it's possible the party won't want anything to do with the investigation. Sheriff Hemlock won't force them to help, but Foxglove is a cunning foe. New murders occur every few days, and if left alone for too long, the situation can get out of control, as detailed in **Additional Murders** on page 29.

Once things go bad, Hemlock might try to hire the party if he has to, promising them a 500 gp reward if they can help stop the killings. Worse, the growing number of notes left by the killer could make it look like the adventurers are harboring a murderer.

## THE LEADS

Before they race off to investigate the murders, Sheriff Hemlock runs the current list of clues by them. He informs them that while he'll be working with them to figure out what's going on, he suspects he'll have his hands full keeping the peace in town.

By deputizing the strangers, he hopes the best possible minds and resources will be focused on solving the murders, leaving him and his guards to the task of keeping Sandpoint from erupting in a panic.

He promises the group all the support they want, but again asks them to keep their investigations quiet for the town's sake.

Hemlock provides the following list of leads.

- **SANDPOINT LUMBER MILL:** The most recent murders took place here. The bodies are still present and little has been done with the crime scene. Sheriff Hemlock suggests this should be the first place the heroes investigate since he would like to clean the mill up and get the bodies buried.
- **IBOR THORN:** Sheriff Hemlock has interrogated Ibor, the man who discovered the bodies at the lumber mill. He doesn't suspect the frightened man knows much more, but of course the investigators are welcome to talk to him themselves.
- **VEN VINDER:** This merchant is Sheriff Hemlock's only suspect, though he's fairly certain Ven is innocent and the murders were committed by someone else.
- **THE FIRST MURDERS:** Three con men from the town of Galduria were found murdered in an abandoned barn south of town a few days ago. Their bodyguard survived the assault but has gone insane and was sent to Habe's Sanatorium, a privately run respite for the mentally disturbed.
- **THE RUNE:** The star carved on one victim's chest certainly has significance to the killer, but Hemlock's at a loss as to what it means. Perhaps an expert on runes (such as local scholar Brodert Quink) can be consulted?

## SANDPOINT LUMBER MILL

One of the mill's operators, a penny-pinching man named Banny Harker, has been engaged in a semisecret affair with the daughter of a local shopkeeper. He and Katrine Vinder had been meeting at the mill often of late, using the noise of the log splitter to cover sounds of their trysting.

Harker's name was one of many on the list provided to Foxglove by Xanasha, but Katrine was not — she was merely in the wrong place at the wrong time late last night.

After spending a few hours watching the activity at the mill from the safety of the marsh across the river, Foxglove crossed the water and clambered up the mill's walls, entering through the upper floor.

The ghast quickly overpowered Harker and set about preparing his body for the ritual to consign his greedy soul to Karzoug, but was interrupted as Katrine entered the room, seeking her lover's arms. A struggle ensued, and after Katrine managed to injure Foxglove with an axe, he pushed her into the log splitter.

She died instantly, allowing Foxglove plenty of time to finish his gruesome task and slip back out into the night, returning to Foxglove Manor via the waterways.

The Sandpoint Lumber Mill stands on the shore of the Turandarok River. A sizeable crowd has gathered outside by the time the party arrives, and groups of nervous-looking town guards stand at the mill's entrances.

A Common Knowledge roll is enough to reveal the mill was running last night. Harker and Thorn, the two millers, often worked late into the small hours, which had become a bone of contention around town as the noisy mill and its infernally creaky log splitter kept neighbors awake.

The guards have already been informed by Sheriff Hemlock of his intent to deputize the heroes of Sandpoint, and even if the sheriff doesn't accompany them to the mill, the guards nod silently and step aside to allow the party entry.

The mill is a well-built wooden structure with very thick walls. The roof is of wooden shingles, and doors are simple timber and unlocked.

## NETWORKING

If the heroes are having difficulty finding clues, they can attempt a Networking roll. Perhaps a local hunter has found the tracks in the marsh, or a drinking buddy has information about the sanatorium.

The mill machinery has been disengaged, but if it is started again, everyone inside the mill subtracts 2 from their Notice rolls.

There are several points of interest to the heroes as they investigate the site, each detailed below.

**THE TIMBER PIER:** Timber is delivered to the mill via a small pier that extends out into the Turandarok River. A Notice roll made by anyone investigating the pier reveals a set of muddy footprints leads from one end of the pier up to the mill.

A Survival (tracking) roll reveals a barefoot human man clambered up from the mud under the pier, crossed over to the mill, and then scaled the wall to an upper-floor window.

**THE MURDER SCENE:** The mill interior is coated with sawdust strewn with footprints and splashes of blood. A Survival (tracking) or Notice -2 roll reveals a desperate struggle took place here several hours ago. A raise tells the investigator that one set of barefoot prints reeks of rotten meat.

Harker's body, Katrine's body, a suspicious axe, and a lingering stench of rotten flesh constitute the primary clues.

**THE ROTTEN SMELL:** The lingering scent of decay in the air is curious—it smells almost as if an animal died somewhere in the room and its remains were allowed to ripen.

This is the lingering scent of Foxglove's undead body, a smell that is strongest on the blade of the suspicious axe and a few of the footprints he left behind.

**KATRINE'S BODY:** Poor Katrine was killed instantly when Foxglove pushed her into the log splitter. Her mangled, ruined remains lie on the mill's lower floor amid heaps of

bloodstained firewood. A pale-faced, obviously upset guard stands at attention nearby.

The log splitter is powered by a waterwheel and consists of a chute in the floor with rotating saw blades that cut logs as they are fed in.

While there are no clues among Katrine's mangled remains, try to impress upon the characters her horrible fate and the cruel efficiency of the log splitter as a deadly weapon—this helps foreshadow events awaiting the explorers later in this adventure.

**HARKER'S BODY:** Harker's body has been horribly desecrated. The poor man has been affixed to the wall by several hooks normally used to hang machinery. The body is mutilated, the face carved away, and lower jaw missing entirely. His bare chest is defaced as well, bearing a strange rune in the shape of a seven-pointed star.

This rune (the Sihedron Rune) should be familiar to the heroes, especially if they own the Sihedron medallion once worn by Nualia. Its appearance on the chest of a murdered man should drive home its importance, though they won't yet know what it means.

An Occult roll is enough to identify the marking as the Sihedron Rune, an antiquated glyph symbolizing arcane magic once practiced in ancient Thassilon.

Closer examination of the body and a Healing roll reveals the presence of several additional wounds. Unlike the deeper slashes on the body, numerous smaller gashes seem to have been made by claws—claws on a five-fingered, human-sized hand.

The rotten scent permeates the wounds. The body is only recognizable as Harker's by a faded tattoo of a raven across his lower abdomen. The desecration of his body, such as his missing face and jaw, means he is unable to be reached by supernatural powers, such as *divination*. Due to the unholy ritual, any attempt to gain additional information about this murder via a power (such as *locate*) is hindered and only provides vague information.

**THE SUSPICIOUS AXE:** A handaxe is embedded in the floor near the log splitter, as if it had been dropped there. The handle is covered with bloody finger-marks (left by

Katrine), and a close examination of the head reveals two things of note.

First, smears of what look like rotten flesh and fragments of bone are caked on its blade. Second, the stink of rotten meat is strong on it. Anyone who examines the blade this closely is nauseated by the smell.

An Occult roll identifies the lingering stink of corruption as beyond what a corpse can normally produce. The axe was likely used within the last 24 hours against some form of corporeal undead. With a raise, the scent can be identified as having come from a ghast's flesh.

**THE MARSH:** If the heroes think to investigate the marsh on the other side of the river from the mill, a Notice roll at -2 reveals a relatively dry spot bearing a number of barefoot human tracks and a lingering stink of rotten flesh.

A Survival (tracking) roll reveals the tracks lead from and into the river, but never away from the site. The spot is hidden by several low banks of nettles, but offers a perfect view of the mill to anyone hidden here.

## IBOR THORN

Harker's partner Ibor is a young man, handsome if a bit narrow-faced. He is still in shock after having discovered the bodies when he arrived at work this morning.

Though the sheriff already interrogated Ibor, Hemlock admits they might be able to get something out of the miller he could not. He cautions them to be gentle in their interrogation, though — Thorn's been through a lot in the last few hours.

Ibor waits in a holding cell below the Sandpoint Garrison. He is indifferent toward the investigators. Unless he's made Friendly, he refuses to say anything more, claiming nervously that he's already told the sheriff everything he knows.

If the heroes can secure Ibor's cooperation, he sighs heavily. He can confirm Harker had

frequent midnight trysts with Katrine, and though her father, Ven, is the protective type, Ibor doesn't think he's capable of doing what was done to the victims.

A Notice roll reveals Ibor's holding something back. If pressed, or if he is made helpful, he admits Harker had been "cooking the books" for some time. Ibor's quick to point out he never took part in the scams, but does admit Harker might have stashed away quite a lot of money by skimming over the past several years.

The Scarnettis, the noble family that owns the lumber mill, have a reputation for being ruthless. There are rumors they're responsible for burning several competing grain mills in the region. Ibor wouldn't put it above the Scarnettis to hire someone to kill Harker if they found out he'd been embezzling money.

In fact, the Scarnettis have nothing to do with the murders, and an investigation of Titus Scarnetti and his family should quickly turn into a dead end, even when it becomes apparent Harker was indeed embezzling.

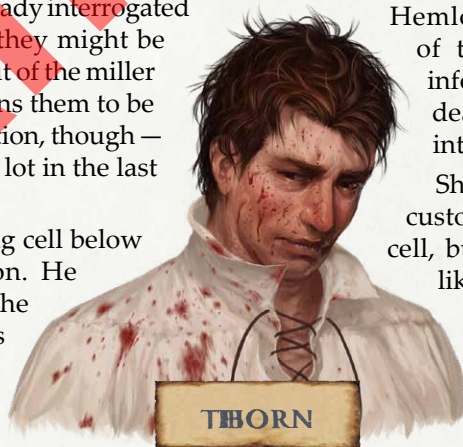
Feel free to expand on this red herring as you wish. The detail that's important for the characters to learn is that Harker was greedy, the only tie between all of the eventual murder victims.

## VEN VINDER

Ven was the first person Sheriff Hemlock visited after learning of the murders, but after he informed Ven of his daughter's death at the mill, the man flew into a rage.

Sheriff Hemlock took him into custody and let him cool off in a cell, but even though Ven fought like a devil, Hemlock's sure his rage is born from the death of his beloved daughter and not from guilt at being caught. He's prepared to release Ven, but if the characters wish to speak to him first, he lets them do so.

If in the previous chapter the party made an enemy of Ven, the shopkeeper suspects the heroes have something to do with Katrine's



death. In this case, Ven wastes no time accusing them of murdering his child, calling them jackals, deviants, and worse.

Though his accusations have little effect now, they take root in the minds of several of Sandpoint's citizens. Ven is well liked, and if he suspects the strangers were involved in his beloved daughter's murder, many in town are predisposed to accept his accusations. These seeds of suspicion grow as the adventure continues.

The heroes may actually grow to suspect Ven killed Harker and his own daughter in a fit of wrath at finally discovering proof of their affair. If they do, let them — every murder mystery needs a few red herrings.

Eventually, the fact that Ven has little connection with the other murders should exonerate him. In any event, Sheriff Hemlock has no reason to keep him locked up once Ven's wife corroborates his alibi — he was at home all evening during both sets of murders.

## THE SIHEDRON RUNE

Though Sheriff Hemlock doesn't recognize the strange seven-pointed star carved into the dead man's chest, the heroes likely do: It's the same star from the dungeons below Thistletop and on Nualia's magic amulet.

A Common Knowledge roll lets a Pathfinder know that an expert on the ancient ruins that dot Varisia's landscape dwells in Sandpoint, living in the shadow of the Old Light, the town's own Thassilonian ruin.

If they don't make this connection, the expert may seek them out on his own once knowledge of the strange star pattern leaks into the rumor mill.

This person is a human named Brodert Quink, an authority on Varisian history who moved to Sandpoint to study the Old Light. Brodert is tremendously excited to be involved in a murder investigation, and does everything he can to aid the heroes.

Unfortunately, much of the lore about ancient Thassilon has been lost; what does remain has been gathered from barely legible carvings on the surviving monuments or extracted from myths and oral traditions.

Brodert knows Thassilon was a vast empire ruled by powerful wizards. The sheer size of the monuments they left behind testifies to their power, and the unnatural way many of these monuments have resisted erosion and time testifies to their skill at magic.

Most sages place the height of the Thassilonian empire at 7,000 to 8,000 years ago, but Brodert thinks the empire was even older — he suspects (correctly) it collapsed no sooner than 10,000 years in the past.

Much of what Brodert has to say is vague theory based on conjecture. Still, he can tell the investigators a few things of interest about the star — namely, it seems to be one of the most important runes of Thassilon.

The star is known as the "Sihedron Rune," and signifies not only the seven virtues of rule (generally agreed to have been wealth, fertility, honest pride, abundance, eager striving, righteous anger, and rest), but also the seven schools of magic recognized by Thassilon (divination magic, was not held in high regard by the ancients).

Brodert notes with a smirk that much of what is understood about Thassilon indicates its leaders were far from virtuous, and he believes the classic mortal sins (greed, lust, pride, gluttony, envy, wrath, and sloth) rose from corruptions of the Thassilonian virtues of rule.

In any event, the Sihedron Rune was certainly a symbol of power, one that may well have stood for and symbolized the empire. The fact that the killer carved it into the flesh of his victim might point to the fact that he's some sort of scholar. As soon as Brodert comes to this conclusion, he just as quickly proclaims himself to be innocent!

Anyone who makes an Academics roll at -2 can provide much of the same information about the Sihedron Rune as can Brodert, but a visit to the old sage can still verify that information and serve to introduce yet another of Sandpoint's locals to the heroes.

## THE FIRST MURDERS

Sheriff Hemlock explains that two days ago, a patrol of guards along the Lost Coast Road were assaulted by a deranged man near an abandoned barn south of town along

## HANDOUT 2-2

*Messrs. Mortwell, Hask, and Tabe—*

*A deal has come about that I need capital for. It involves property and gold, and though I am not at liberty to tell you the exact details, it will make us all rich. Come to Bradley's Barn on Cougar Creek tonight. We can meet there to discuss our futures.*

*Your Lordship*

the banks of Cougar Creek. The man was obviously sick and insane, his flesh fevered, eyes wild, mouth frothing, and clothes caked with blood.

The guards subdued him, but when they checked inside the barn they discovered the mutilated bodies of three men. Though all three bodies were far too disfigured to identify, one of them carried a piece of parchment that Hemlock gives to the party to read (reproduced as Handout 2-2).

The note identifies the bodies as Tarch Mortwell, Lener Hask, and Gedwin Tabe, three notorious con men and swindlers known well to Sheriff Hemlock as local troublemakers. He personally forbade the three men from operating their con games and barely legal operations in Sandpoint, and wasn't particularly surprised at the time to find them murdered — it was only a matter of time before they tried to swindle someone worse than them, after all.

But in light of the mill murders and the fact that Mortwell, Hask, and Tabe all bore the same seven-pointed marking on their chests that Harker did, Hemlock is convinced there is something worse than revenge afoot.

The bodies of all three men lie in a cool basement room below the Sandpoint Garrison, not far from the holding cells containing Ibor and Ven. The heroes are welcome to examine them if they wish.

Though decay has set in, a Healing roll reveals all three bodies bear claw marks similar to those the heroes might have discovered on Harker's body.

The insane man has been identified as one Grayst Sevilla, a local Varisian thug. He's been given over to the care of Erin Habe, caretaker of an independent sanatorium south of town; if the heroes wish to speak to Grayst to learn more, Sheriff Hemlock welcomes them to try but warns them Grayst is "a bit off his rocker" and they shouldn't expect much. He provides them with a letter of introduction to Habe if they ask.

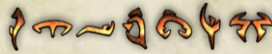
### WHAT THE SKINSAW MAN DID

Two days ago, the Skinsaw Man lured these greedy swindlers to Bradley's Barn with a note he knew they couldn't resist. Suspicious, the three men hired a Varisian thug named Grayst to guard them. Unfortunately, even the four of them were no match for the Skinsaw Man, who easily overpowered them all.

Foxglove had little interest in slaying Grayst, and instead bound him with rope, letting the man watch as he prepared the three swindlers for sacrifice, a display that drove Grayst mad. As the ghast worked, he spoke to his audience, and when he was done Aldern left Grayst a parting gift — a bite to the shoulder that infected him with ghoulish fever.

Grayst lapsed into a fever-haunted state of delusion, and only managed to escape his bonds the next day when he heard others passing by — others who turned out to be Hemlock's men.

## PART TWO: THE THING IN THE ATTIC



THE SAINTLY HAVEN OF RESPITE, BETTER KNOWN LOCALLY AS HABE'S SANATORIUM, IS RUN BY ERIN HABE, AN EXPERT ON DISEASE AND MENTAL DERANGEMENT. INDEPENDENTLY WEALTHY FROM HIS YEARS AS A DOCTOR IN MAGNIMAR, HE CHOSE TO BUILD THIS SANATORIUM IN A REMOTE DALE SOUTH OF SANDPOINT BECAUSE OF ITS SECLUSION. HE HOPED THAT HERE, HIS WARDS WOULD FIND THE PEACE OF MIND THEY NEEDED TO HEAL, JUST AS HE HOPED TO FIND THE PRIVACY TO CONTINUE HIS EXPERIMENTS INTO WHAT CAUSED THEIR RESPECTIVE DEMENTIAS WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT OTHER FOLK MISUNDERSTANDING HIS SOMETIMES NECESSARILY BLOODY METHODS.

Unfortunately for Erin Habe, building the sanatorium consumed all of his funds — and since his patients are not the type who can pay for his services (nor are they generally the type to have relatives who would pay), Habe soon had to turn to an outside source of funding to keep his sanatorium up and running.

Habe wanted a silent partner to back his research, someone wealthy who could pay for the institution's expenses but wouldn't meddle in the day-to-day affairs. He believed he'd found his backer in the form of an elderly man who claimed to be a retired businessman eager to put some of his money back into society to better its ills.

This man was, unknown to Habe, a smooth-talking necromancer named Caizarlu Zerren. Caizarlu was a member of the Magnimar Sczarni gang known as the Gallowed in his youth. Unfortunately, his dalliances in necromancy eventually went too far even for his fellow criminals, and they ran him out of town.

In true Sczarni style, as he fled, the necromancer stole a small fortune in gemstones and jewels.

The necromancer spent several months drifting from town to town in Western Varisia, but when he heard rumors a man was looking for an investor to help run a sanatorium, Caizarlu realized it was an opportunity he could not pass up.

This was an excellent opportunity to get himself a new base of operations hidden from the Sczarni (who he could only assume were still hunting him), but also a sanatorium would be an excellent place to harvest materials for his necromantic experiments.

Convincing Erin Habe he was little more than a kindly retired businessman with a large wallet was unusually easy, and for the past few years, Caizarlu lived in Habe's basement as the silent partner Habe always wanted.

Their arrangement has evolved beyond one of landlord and tenant, though — for whenever one of Habe's patients passes away (the alienist's experiments are not always safe for the patients), Caizarlu is always willing to dispose of the body.

As long as the elderly Varisian pays the bills, and as long as what goes on down in the basement stays in the basement behind locked doors, Erin Habe has no complaints.

The arrival of Grayst has upset this arrangement in numerous ways, however, for the first time in the sanatorium's history, here is a patient who equally intrigues both sinister scientists.



### ADVANCEMENT AWARDED!

After their first fight in the sanatorium award the Pathfinders their fourth Advance. They are now Seasoned Rank.



## SANATORIUM FEATURES

The squat, stone building that serves as the sanatorium has three floors under a stout, stone-flagged roof, and is built in the lee of the limestone escarpment known as Ashen Rise. All doors are stout wooden ones (Hardness 10), and a brisk sense of cleanliness fills the place — floors are scrubbed and walls are freshly painted white.

Narrow windows, no more than four inches wide, allow for air circulation but are too small to allow access into the building. The somewhat sour smell of burning incense abounds — a scent Habe has found soothes most deviant minds.

All of the doors in the sanatorium can be locked. When they are, a Thievery roll at  $-2$  picks the lock. Erin Habe carries keys to every door in the sanatorium, save those in the cellar (those are carried by Caizarlu).

Erin Habe has many secrets he doesn't want made public — not the least of which is the fact that he knows his downstairs neighbor is a necromancer or that his own experiments on his patients push ethical and moral boundaries.

When Sheriff Hemlock arrived at the sanatorium's front door a few days ago, Habe was worried the man had come to investigate the place — specifically, both Habe's questionably ethical research methods and the nature of his cellar-dwelling source of income.

It was with barely hidden relief that he realized Hemlock was merely handing him another patient, a half-crazed man named Grayst Sevilla.

In the past few days, Grayst has become Habe's favorite subject. Not only is this man obviously insane, driven so by some still-undiscovered trauma, but he also suffers from a terrible disease that causes a hideous physical malaise.

Habe has recently determined Grayst has contracted ghoulish fever, and is almost as curious to see how long the Varisian can hold out against the illness as he is to witness his expiration. Needless to say, Habe is unhappy to receive visitors at this time, and views them as a distraction from his work with Grayst.

Yet he doesn't want to arouse undue suspicion, and with a bit of convincing allows the investigators to speak to his patient — under supervision.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The heroes have many options when it comes to gaining access to Grayst. If they use diplomacy, they may only have one combat (defending themselves against Grayst).

If, on the other hand, the heroes resort to violence, you can run a chase or Dramatic Task. Erin is happy to open the cell doors and force the party to deal with the patients as he attempts to escape or get the necromancer.

Further complicating the situation is Caizarlu's anticipation of Grayst's impending death—the elderly necromancer is eager for the body to be moved to his cellar so he can observe the transformation from life to undeath firsthand.

The sanatorium is also home to a pair of deformed orderlies—escaped tiefling slaves from Cheliox whom Erin hired for their muscle and frightening appearances.

The two tieflings are brothers, and work in overlapping shifts—at least one of them is always on patrol in the sanatorium, keeping an eye as much on the often violent inhabitants of the place as on anyone who might be trying to sneak into the building to poke around.

## SANATORIUM KEY

Detailed below are brief descriptions of the rooms in the sanatorium.

**A1 VERANDA:** The old floorboards of this wooden veranda creak under any weight—Stealth rolls made by moving characters subtract 2 from the total as a result. During the day, the door to area A7 remains locked, while at night both this door and the front door into area A2 are locked.

**A2 RECEPTION:** This room contains a desk and three chairs—two to the west, one to the east. A cord hangs from a hole in the southern wall above a sign that reads, “Ring for service.”

A tug on the cord rings bells in areas A4, A9, and A10, alerting Erin Habe to visitors—he arrives in a minute or so to greet the visitors (see **Meeting the Doctor**, below). The doors to areas A3 and A4 are always kept locked.

**A3 ERIN'S ROOM:** Erin doesn't spend much time in this bedroom—often, his obsession with work sees him slumping off to sleep in a chair elsewhere in the sanatorium. At night, there's a 25% chance Erin is here—if he's not, he can be found in area A10, going over his latest round of observations and notes taken from Grayst's deteriorating condition.

A small coffer on the headboard contains Erin's meager life savings—the coffer is locked (Thievery to open) and contains 41 gp.

**A4 WORKROOM:** This disused area serves as a combination kitchen and sewing room. In the sanatorium's early days, Erin had planned on allowing his less violent patients a few hours each day to stitch clothing and undertake other tailoring busywork. Unfortunately, his current lack of patients capable of such work has seen this room fall into disuse save by the orderlies (twice a day when meals are prepared).

The door opening into the stairwell down to the basement is kept locked—Erin does not have a key. This and the basement it leads to was one of Caizarlu's nonnegotiable conditions for funding the sanatorium.

**A5 ORDERLIES' ROOMS:** Each of these small bedrooms serves one of the two orderlies. They are tiefling brothers—Gortus and Gurnak. After escaping slavery in Cheliox and stowing away on a ship bound for Mag-nimar, they responded to an advertisement for work up along the Lost Coast.

The promise of pay, free rooms, and most importantly a place to hide out for a few years was too much to resist, and they've been working for Erin ever since. Gortus and Gurnak are bullies and brutes, and won't hesitate to get physical with the characters if Erin wants them “escorted” from the premises.

**Gortus and Gurnak:** See below.

## GORTUS AND GURNAK

**Type:** Neutral Outsider (Tiefling)

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6, Taunt d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

**Edges:** Block, Frenzy

**Gear:** Club (Str+d6), thick leather vest (+2).

**Special Abilities:**

- **Darkvision:** Tieflings ignore penalties for Illumination up to 10’.

**Languages:** Abyssal, Common, and Infernal.

**A6 STORAGE:** Dusty tailoring supplies, including bolts of plain cloth and boxes of sewing supplies, vie for space in this cluttered room with food and water stores.

**A7 WORKER’S ENTRANCE:** This room contains a few oiled raincoats hanging on pegs—the orderlies use this entrance to come and go from the building when they make their patrols of the grounds.

**A8 GUARDPOST:** The door leading into area A9 is reinforced with iron bands (hardness 12). It’s normally kept locked.

**A9 CELLBLOCK:** The central part of this room is sometimes used as a common room for the patients, but the two current “guests” generally prefer to spend all their time in their cells. The northwestern cell is occupied by Blind Sedge (human), an old farmer who has no family and lost his sight to a goblin attack.

The southwestern cell is occupied by a man named Wald (human), a larger-than-life, 97-year-old man whose tenacious grip on life is matched only by his senility. The two men shriek and holler if they hear motion in the central room, but since their cell doors are kept locked, they’re harmless.

**A10 EXAMINATION ROOM:** The central feature of this room is a large operating table on which Erin performs many of his surgeries and examinations on patients.

A cabinet along the north wall is exceptionally well stocked with all manner of obscure and frightening-looking surgical tools. A Healing roll notes the supplies are

both well-used and unnecessarily invasive for what should be a sanatorium.

Erin can be found here if he isn’t in area A3, studying a patch of skin he’s harvested from Grayst. If startled, he overreacts and flees the room, opening the doors to cells A11 and A13 if he can so as to cover his flight downstairs to get Caizarlu’s help in defeating the intruders.


A secret door (Notice roll at –2 to spot) is hidden in the western wall of a closet to the southeast.

**All PIDGIT’S CELL:** The door to this high-security cell is made of iron (Hardness 14)—and for good reason, since the cell’s sole occupant is a crazed wererat named Pidgit Tergelson. Pidgit’s been under Erin’s care for as long as the sanatorium’s been operating, and the wererat’s condition has only worsened over the years.

Erin is researching a possible link between Pidgit’s lycanthropy and his mental disorder, but often spends months or even years all but ignoring him as other projects come up.

If Pidgit’s cell is opened (as might be the case if Erin opens the door in an attempt to cover his retreat from the heroes), the wererat creeps from his cell until he spies any slashing weapon, whereupon his insanity kicks in and he frantically tries to secure the blade for himself, fighting to the death if he has to.

Pidgit spends all of his time these days in hybrid form, and has effectively forgotten he was once a human being.

 **Pidgit Tergelson:** See below.

## PIDGET TERGELSON

**Type:** Evil Humanoid (Wererat, Hybrid Form)

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d4, Stealth d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

**Edges:** Dodge

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor +2:** Thick hide.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a wererat can assume one of three forms: dire rat, hybrid, or original form.

- **Environmental Weakness:** Silver.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Lycanthropes may attempt a natural healing roll every round unless the Wounds were caused by silvered objects.
- **Fear (-1):** Wererats chill the blood of all who see them.
- **Infection:** Anyone Wounded by a naturally-born wererat's bite must make a Vigor roll or contract lycanthropy (see the *Bestiary*).
- **Low Light Vision:** Lycanthropes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Manic:** If presented a blade, Pidget must make a Spirit roll or become obsessed with acquiring it. He attacks the wielder of the blade above all other targets.
- **Size 1:** Wererats are stout creatures.

**Languages:** Common.

**A12 EMPTY CELL:** This high-security cell is currently empty. The door is unlocked.

**A13 GRAYST'S CELL:** This high-security cell is currently occupied by Grayst Sevilla. See page 22 for details on this unfortunate "patient."

**A14 CAIZARLU'S LAB:** This large room combines the features of a wizard's laboratory and a catacomb—several tables bearing bodies covered by drapes dominate the room, while tools ranging from shovels to dissection implements sit on shelves against the wall. An Occult roll confirms this is a necromantic laboratory.

During the day, Caizarlu is always here, while at night, he's here 50% of the time (otherwise he's sleeping in area A16.) Currently there are three bodies on tables, humans who were "patients" in life, and whose bodies are preserved via gentle repose.

A Notice roll spies a wand of *farsight* (17 charges) hidden in a slot in a table leg. The only other item of interest is a map of the Sandpoint hinterlands Caizarlu has been using to track what he calls "ghoul activity."

The necromancer gathered this information over the past several days, and has noted in particular an increase in ghoulish sightings around the southern farmlands and along Foxglove River.

Caizarlu's current research is concerned with developing a method by which one

could track a ghoulish lineage back through several "generations" of ghoulish attacks.

His research has stalled, and he's hoping Grayst will succumb soon so he'll be able to dissect the body to gather more data before it rises and becomes much more difficult to study.

One takeaway from his notes is the very strong possibility of what he calls a "ghoulish source" having risen to prominence in the region.

**A15 ZOMBIE STORAGE:** Caizarlu keeps six ex-patients in storage here. All six are human zombies created via a scroll of *zombie*. He keeps the door to the room locked when he's not here, but unlocks it while he's working so if he needs help, he can call the zombies out for assistance at any moment.

- **Human Zombies (6):** See below.

## HUMAN ZOMBIE

**Type:** Evil Undead (Zombie)

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Athletics d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

**Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

**Edges:** —

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bite/Claws:** Str.
- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison; ignore penalties for Illumination up to 10" (60 feet).
- **Weakness (Head):** Called Shots to a zombie's head do the usual +4 damage.

**A16 CAIZARLU'S ROOM:** The necromancer spends his nights here, in a relatively stark room that features a simple bed, a study table, and a plain wooden chair. His spellbook sits atop the desk.

There are also quite a lot of notes in the spellbook concerning ancient Thassilonian traditions of magic, including a few drawings of the Sihedron Rune. You can use these notes to give the heroes further information about the rune if they missed opportunities earlier

in the adventure, but Caizarlu's interest in the rune is coincidental — he has no actual connection to the Skinsaw Murders.

## TREASURE

The necromancer's spellbook contains all spells he has gathered in his many years of arcane research. The spellbook always smells of fresh dirt and is worth 800gp.

## MEETING THE DOCTOR

Erin Habe's initial reaction to visitors is Unfriendly. Unless made Friendly, he refuses anyone entry, claiming he's in the middle of some frightfully important work and cannot be disturbed. Presenting Hemlock's letter of introduction grants the heroes +2 on Persuasion or Intimidation rolls.

If the characters manage to make Habe Friendly, he agrees to let them interview his patient Grayst, but only for a few minutes. He asks them to wait in area A4 with him while he sends the orderlies upstairs to gather Grayst and bring him down to meet the heroes.

Habe remains nervous and twitchy the entire time — he's worried the interlopers might see something in the sanatorium that would arouse suspicion, and wants them out of the building as soon as possible.

If these newcomers make any threatening moves (such as drawing weapons or casting spells), the jumpy doctor shrieks and reacts as detailed below under his tactics.

 **Erin Habe:** See below

### ERIN HABE

**Type:** Neutral Humanoid (Human Scholar)  
**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6  
**Skills:** Academics d8+2, Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Notice d6, Occult d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6  
**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)  
**Edges:** Command, Scholar, Quick

**Gear:** Dagger (Str+d4), leather jacket (+2), manacles, 2× potion of minor *healing*.

**Languages:** Common, Shoanti, and Varisian.

## TACTICS

If Erin panics, he tries to flee to area A3 or area A10, whichever is farther from the heroes, and barricades himself in the room.

If he has a chance, he'll open the doors to areas A11 and A13, or pound on the door leading downstairs from area A4 to bring more dangerous foes than him into the fight.

If reduced to 1 Wound or cornered, Erin drops to his knees and begs for mercy. He blames his sinister experimentation on Caizarlu, saying the necromancer forced him to take part in several experiments and warning the heroes that Caizarlu dwells downstairs.

If they seek Caizarlu out, Erin takes the first chance he can to flee — if he escapes, he heads south to Magnimar, hoping to lose himself in the big city and, someday, repair and rebuild his reputation.



The Pathfinders earn a Benny if they manage to secure an interview without resorting to violence.

## MEETING THE PATIENT

Grayst's skin is pale and looks gangrenous, his hair wild and eyes milky white. Anyone seeing him who makes a Healing roll realizes he's quite sick and close to death, and anyone who gets a raise realizes Grayst is in the advanced stages of ghoulish fever.

Grayst is mostly non-responsive, wrapped as he is in a straitjacket, but a Persuasion roll is enough to get him to respond to questioning. Unfortunately, the man has little to say apart from incoherent mumbblings about "razors"



and “too many teeth” and how “the Skinsaw Man is coming.”

This all changes as soon as the hero with whom Foxglove is obsessed comes into view.

Foxglove spent some time talking about this one, even showing Grayst a cameo painting he'd had made of the character. When he sees this individual, Grayst's eyes bulge and he speaks:

*“He said. He said you would visit me. His Lordship. The one who unmade me said so. He has a place for you. A precious place. I'm so jealous.*

*He has a message for you. He made me remember it. I hope I haven't forgotten. The master wouldn't approve if I forgot. Let me see... let... me... see...”*

Grayst's message for the hero depends on the nature of Foxglove's obsession.

**Lust:** “He said that if you came to his Misgivings, that if you joined his Pack, he would end his harvest in your honor.”

**Envy:** “He said you should come to the Misgivings soon, to meet the Pack, for they have something wonderful to show you.”

**Wrath:** “The master said the bodies are signs and portents, that when he is done, you shall be remembered forever and the Misgivings shall be your throne!”

A Common Knowledge roll is enough for a character to recognize “the Misgivings” as a local name for a run-down and abandoned estate further south — a place called Foxglove Manor.

At the climax of his speech, the message delivered, Grayst collapses and issues a low moan. One round later, his moan rises to a shriek, and as he lurches to his feet, his arms tear free of the old straitjacket.

The man has nearly succumbed to ghoul fever, and though severely ill, remains as strong as he ever was.

He lunges at the hero he was speaking to, eager to kill the one whom his “master” loves more than him.

The orderlies do their best to get Habe to safety before they step in to help, but anyone who tries to protect the targeted hero is assaulted by the diseased man as well.

🗡️ **Grayst Sevilla:** See below.

### 🗡️ GRAYST SEVILLA

**Type:** Evil Humanoid (Human)

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

**Hindrances:** Delusional (Major), Loyal

**Edges:** Arcane Resistance, Brawny, Brute, Bruiser, First Strike

**Gear:** —

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bash:** Str+d6.
- **Size 1:** Grayst's transformation makes him larger than the average man.

**Languages:** Common, Varisian.

### TACTICS

Grayst focuses his anger on the one he recognizes as being the object of Foxglove's obsession. He ignores all other targets, even provoking attacks, in an attempt to get to him.

Grayst fights to the death.

GRAYST SEVILLA



## AFTERMATH

After Grayst's outburst, Habe begs for the heroes' forgiveness. He honestly had no idea the man would react in such a manner, but more to the point, desperately wants to avoid having any bad word of mouth get around about him.

Only if the visitors promise their silence (with a successful Persuasion roll to back it up) does Habe allow them to leave without panicking. Otherwise, he assumes they'll be turning him in and tries to flee to recruit Caizarlu's aid in capturing the intruders.

Grayst, unfortunately, remains insane. His transformation has progressed past the point of magical healing, leaving him destined to live the rest of his short life as a madman. Aside from the clues he's given the party already, he has little more to offer them in the unlikely case he survives.

## THE NECROMANCER


The old Varisian necromancer Caizarlu Zerren is a red herring. Though evil and a dabbler in undeath himself, he has nothing directly to do with the Skinsaw Murders or the cult.

His notes in the basement can still inform the party about some of the other events unfolding in the region, but for the most part, Caizarlu is intended to be a foe to confront and defeat.

Exactly how Caizarlu becomes involved with the characters depends entirely on how they handle themselves in seeking an interview with Grayst.

If the necromancer hears the sounds of combat or shouting above, he gathers his six zombies from area A15 and comes to investigate — he's pretty comfortable with his current living situation, and won't suffer what he believes to be a group of misled do-gooders to ruin a good thing.

However, if the characters are diplomatic, he might simply introduce himself in an attempt to gauge the mettle of the adventurers. Perhaps attempting to throw them off his scent.

 **Caizarlu Zerren:** See below.

## CAIZARLU ZERREN

**Type:** Evil Humanoid (Human Wizard)

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Occult d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (4)

**Hindrances:** Curious, Suspicious (Minor)

**Edges:** Elan, Extraction (Imp), Favored Powers (Wizard), Wizard

**Powers:** Blast, bolt, boost/lower Trait, deflection\*, detect/conceal arcana, dispel\*, illusion, invisibility, light/darkness, protection\*. **Power Points:** 15

**Gear:** Masterwork dagger (Str+d4, AP 1), potion of major healing, potion of minor intangibility (GASEOUS FORM), wand of detect arcana (15 charges; Spellcasting), key ring (contains keys to areas A15 and A16), 11pp, 4gp, 14sp.

**Special Abilities:**

- **Class Abilities (Wizard):** Arcane Background (Wizard), Arcane Bond (Object—Dagger), Armor Interference (Any), School (Necromancy; Abjuration, Enchantment), Spellbooks.

**Languages:** Common, Necril, Shoanti, Thasilonian, and Varasian.

## TACTICS

Caizarlu casts *protection* and *illusion*, creating a mirror image of himself before entering combat. He lets his zombies engage foes in melee while he hangs back to cast spells, starting with *deflection* and following with his offensive spells. He uses his potion of major healing if reduced to one Wound.

Caizarlu attempts to flee if reduced to one Wound and unable to heal. If flight isn't an option, he miserably begs for his life.

## AFTERMATH

If Caizarlu escapes the battle, or if the heroes accept his surrender and then let him go, the old man nurses a bitter grudge against them for ruining a good thing.

He may well show up later in the campaign as a recurring villain if you wish — after he's gained a few more Advances and a few more undead minions, of course!