

Blood-Red Rubies

A scenario for Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play set in Bretonnia
by Markus Widmer

He felt the yearning again. For many weeks now he had known the feeling. This powerful voice from deep inside his soul. Tremouille! The ignorant fool! Carrying away his treasure, his precious. The delicately formed fibres of gold! The diamonds cut to perfect minute shapes! As he slipped inside his dark, hooded robe, his eyes were fixed on the stiletto on his workbench. He reached for it and gently caressed its steel. Tremouille. You shall pay for taking what is mine. Was and is and always will be.

Introduction

This adventure is based on a classic German novella by E.T.A. Hoffmann called "Das Fräulein von Scuderi". If you think that most of your players will identify the source immediately, don't use the scenario. However, it is my experience that most players only come to think of possible analogies to stories they know *after* the gaming session, because they are too busy role-playing and having fun to think about literature.

The adventure is set in the city of Gisoreux, the capital of Bretonnia. I have used unofficial material on the city kindly provided by Peter Butterworth of the Bretonnia Project. While I have made much use of the political situation of Bretonnia and its unique atmosphere, I have not included lengthy descriptions of the city and its locations and districts. This should make it easier for you as a GM to create your own version of Gisoreux or transport the plot to a different setting.

Another Bloody Murder

When the PCs arrive in Gisoreux, the city is in a state of turmoil. Flocks of people are gathering about boys selling 'La Gazette'. This is the latest thing in Bretonnia, a printed newspaper full of facts, rumours and opinions. Using their elbows, the PCs will be able to get hold of a copy for a couple of coppers. Which isn't strictly necessary (neither is the *Read and Write* skill), because the news is everywhere. The honourable Chevalier Albin de Tremouille has been found murdered in a back alley of Gisoreux's social centre, the Jongleurs district. His heart was apparently penetrated by a very sharp blade and a very precious piece of jewelery was taken from him. It seems that Tremouille planned to take the jewels as a gift to his lover. This is the fifth nobleman killed in exactly the same way. Naturally, the paper as well as the city's gossip is full of speculations. Most people speak about a band of unscrupulous thieves wandering the streets at night, dubbed the 'Diamond Dogs'. Viscount Brossard, the governor of the city, has apparently entrusted the Cardinal's secret police with the matter, the so-called 'Chambre Ardente'. Its head, Jacques de Créssier, has been talking of introducing a curfew and other radical restrictions of the citizens' personal freedom to finally get hold of the killers. Everyone he has been able to get hold of has been questioned in a way that makes the Inquisition look like choirboys, but with no results. The Diamond Dogs remain a mystery.

A Certain Commotion

At first the lowly populace of Gisoreux reacted with as much as a malicious sneer to the news of the murders. Finally the noble fops get what they deserve! The news of a possible curfew, however, is a different matter. The freedom-loving Bretonnians are outraged that the tyrannical Chambre Ardente dares to curtail their personal liberty just because a few nobles had been foolish enough to get themselves killed. As the PCs are enjoying the sights on the "Ile de Gisoreux", the Sully Cathedral and the all but deserted Palais-Royal, the notice a crowd of people gathered around an agitator. "People of Gisoreux", he shouts at the angry masses, "have we not seen this before? Did it not happen a million times? Some decadent nobleman indulges in lechery, only to find himself killed for it! A so-called knight going after his so-called chivalric duty. Which is, to sneak out in the middle of the night to his paramour - or should I say whore - to perform unspeakable sins? He carries with him the pay for his harlot, in the form of jewellery. The diamonds he paid for with the money he pressed from us! From the people who work to try and provide for their families, only to be trodden upon by arrogant nobles! Is it not right then, is it not truly the Gods' justice that this thief should be slain by other thieves?" The people seem to agree, judging by their angry shouts. "And what is happening now, dear friends? Who is being punished for these deaths, which were the nobles' own fault? We are, of course, the poor, the hungry, the righteous. We are supposed to close our doors and shutters and stay at our miserable homes at night so that the lechers can enjoy their pleasure freely! We are being raided and pressed and tortured and killed for their own crimes!" Now the masses are at their boiling point. Unfortunately, right at that moment a small but elegant coach tries to cross the square. It only takes the agitator a gesture in its direction to unleash the mob towards the coach. Whether they want it or not, the PCs are drawn with the angry people. They stop the horses and start beating up the coachman. At the same time, the coaches' doors are opened and two elderly women are harshly drawn out, a gentlewoman and her servant. Their screams pierce the mob's uproar, as the players will have to choose what they want to do. Even if their attitude towards the nobility is negative, they hopefully will not endure that the mob will beat two old women to death. The best way to help is to try and stop the crazed people by some sort of shock. A pistol shot or a shout announcing the arrival of the Musketeers, may help to turn the mob's bloodlust into panic. A PC agitator may make use of his social skills, a fighter may disable a leading man in an impressive way, though this is risky. Use standard thug profiles for the mob and adjust their number to the PCs abilities. Remember that a mob is dangerous, but also easily manipulated.

Hopefully, the PCs will save the noble lady. She will quickly regain her composure, thank the adventurers in a courtly manner and introduce herself as Comtesse Sanssouci. She will ask the players how this commotion has been aroused. After hearing the facts, she will shake her head, smile faintly and say: "Now this is very ironic, since I have just seen the Cardinal as well as Governor Brossard and told them that this whole curfew business is ridiculous. I say, if a chevalier is not willing to risk his life in order to see his beloved lady, he is not a courtly man indeed. Be that as it may, I would like to invite you to my house in Delamoenia to thank you. I expect you tomorrow night." She bids the PCs farewell and enters her battered coach. The badly beaten coachman remounts and drives off.

As the players will learn easily, Delamoenia, or Delamoen, is one of the city's best districts, where many noble houses are still maintained, although most aristocrats have moved to Oisillion with the court. Other mansions have been bought by the

richest of merchants who like to align themselves with the nobility. As the players learn these things, they notice that the news of Comtesse Sanssouci's pleading with the city's leaders is already spreading. Many people are of the opinion that now the lady has appealed to the chivalric code, it will be impossible to establish the curfew. Thus the same people who have tried to beat her to death in the afternoon take her to be their champion in the evening.

A Strange Visitor

Should the PCs somehow think that watching the Comtesse's house at night would be a good idea, they will witness the following scene. A cloaked and hooded figure sneaks up to her door and knocks loudly, again and again. The door opens and the players may recognise the servant they saved earlier that day. She looks shocked as the hooded man speaks to her. If one of the characters has *Acute Hearing*, he or she may hear that the man wishes to see the lady urgently, on a matter of life and death. The chambermaid refuses, she obviously wants to protect her lady from this strange intruder. They argue for some time, until the man gives her a wooden box, apparently for the Comtesse, and leaves rapidly. If the players want to follow the man, have them roll the appropriate *Shadowing* tests. Give Olivier, for he is the hooded fellow, a +20 modifier, because he really knows his way around the city. If Olivier notices the players, he will try to evade them and not return to his house before manages to lose his tails. If the PCs actually follow Olivier unnoticed, they will see him enter a house in the North Bank district. This is the house and workshop of the greatest of all jewellers, Edgare Legrand.

An Assignment at Dinner

If the players were not at the Comtesse's house at night, they will probably use their spare time to get new clothes or at least clean their old ones. The whole town is now full of the news of Lady Sanssouci's chivalric appeal, and there is approving though slightly cheeky commentary in the Gazette. The PCs may also witness a procession in black with an ornate coach obviously carrying a coffin. Apparently, the remains of Chevalier de Tremouille are in the latter, being transported to their final resting place at Oisillon. In the evening, the Comtesse will welcome them in her house, where the characters will be fortunate enough to eat an enormously rich dinner with the best wine they have ever tasted. If the players ask her about the strange visit of the previous night, she will delay her answer. After dinner, Comtesse Sanssouci becomes rather quiet. Then she tells the PCs that an unknown man came to see her the previous night, but her trusty maid would not let him in. He left a gift for her, though. The Comtesse shows the players an ornate wooden box. She opens it, revealing an incredibly beautiful necklace encrusted with huge rubies. "With this, a note came, thanking me for what I did at the Governor's. I fear that I have gained the favour of the Diamond Dogs themselves, and that these rubies are stained with blood."

Madame Sanssouci is looking for someone to settle this delicate matter for her. She chose the players because she was impressed by their courage the day before, and of course she would like to keep the matter under a veil of utmost secrecy. Since she has no-one she can trust in the city, she is willing to entrust the affair to a group of strangers, who hopefully have no interest in slandering her. "I beg you, my dear friends, to help me once again like you did yesterday. Find the man who brought this

to me, and, even more importantly, find the man to whom these jewels belonged, may Shallya have helped him to remain amongst the living!" The Lady then discreetly hints at the fact that she is willing to pay each PC 15 Gold Crowns (or more, if the GM is feeling generous), five of which up front. If the players are not willing to do the task, let the Lady cry and faint. If that doesn't do the trick, forget it. Let your players spend their days in the inn, if they want to. And by the way - no haggling with noble ladies! The Comtesse won't let the players take the jewels with them until they have located their owner.

Go for Gold!

The players may want to question Madame de Sanssouci's maid Odette, who talked to the stranger delivering the jewellery. This won't help them much, however, since Odette tends to over-dramatise the situation. She will describe the visitor as a very tall man in a dark hooded cloak with gleaming red eyes and a voice inspiring terror in every chaste maiden's heart! In fact, Olivier Lapine is not even tall. Unfortunately for the PCs, there were no witnesses other than Odette.

Thus the jewellery itself is the players' only clue. They will have to find someone who can identify it, or at least speculate about its origins. In fact, this is rather easy. Anyone half-way interested in jewels, such as the local thieves and fences, any jeweller and any noble man or woman (except Lady Sanssouci, who doesn't care much for the fancy stuff) can tell the PCs that the piece must have been made by Edgare Legrand, Gisoreux's master jeweller. His house, shop and workshop are located in a single, rather stately building in the North Bank district, the city's commercial center (for a floor plan, take a look at Rogni's shop in *Middenheim: City of Chaos*, page 76). When the players arrive there, the shop's door is opening. A foppishly dressed nobleman leaves the premise, ranting about something being "worth its price" or not. He carries a small box draped in red velvet. This is Conte Jacques Debussy, of whom we will hear again later. Once he is out of the way, the PCs will perceive a lowly servant of the shop, one Olivier Lapine. He asks them how he can help them.

As the players will want to see Legrand, Olivier will show them into a simple room with a counter. No jewellery is to be seen at all, the room is almost empty. Olivier knocks at a door behind the counter, opens and then mutters something to an unseen person. Enter: Edgare Legrand. A stout man with a broad face and unkempt hair, dressed rather simply for someone so rich. Edgare will treat the players roughly, for he is upset by being disturbed while working twice in a row. If the PCs describe the Lady's jewels to him, his eyes will start gleaming. "Where did you get these? They are mine! I made them! Give them back to me!" He will not only shout, but try and jump over the counter to assault the players. Further questioning is futile, considering this fit of madness. Even if the PCs managed to calm Legrand down, he would never admit to having sent the piece to the Comtesse (which he did), nor will he tell them whether he had sold the jewellery to someone (which he didn't). Olivier will try and hold back Legrand while advising the players to leave.

Rubbing Shoulders with Cr ssier

Use this event any time the player characters are having their supper or a drink in an inn of more or less questionable repute. The door to the bar room will fly open with a

sudden crash and officers of the *Chambre Ardente* will flow into the inn, shouting about and threatening everybody. The last person to enter is Jacques de Cr ssier himself, a lean, imposing figure. He will slowly walk about the room, glare at people and say things like: "So this is where Gisoreux's reputable citizens have their supper. Or could it be that there are characters amongst you who are being tormented by an ill conscience? Yes, search them thoroughly, my friends. I suspect there is more to them than meets the eye." Get the PC's paranoia running, but don't provoke a confrontation just yet. If everyone is quiet and docile, the *Chambre Ardente* will leave with a few snickering remarks from Cr ssier.

Desperate Measures

Olivier is getting worried about his master's obsession and wants to save Madame Sanssouci's life. Meanwhile, the Lady herself orders the PCs to her house to hear about what they found out. She is in a hurry, since she has an appointment with the head of the *Chambre Ardente*, Jacques Cr ssier. Thus the reporting will take place in the Comtesse's coach. While the coach is crossing the bridge over to the Ile de Gisoreux, a hooded man presses through the crowd and jumps unto the side of the coach. He throws a note at the Lady and drops off. The fact that Odette is fainting should be prove enough for the players that it was the same man who delivered the jewels to the Lady's house - they are, of course, quite correct. The players will probably jump right out of the coach to follow the hooded stranger. Let them chase him through the crowd, toppling carts and fighting their way through a number of chickens they accidentally released. Make it really, really difficult for them to catch the man. But if they do, they'll be surprised to see the face of the lowly handyman Olivier. The latter will beg the players to let him go, in order to avoid further evil-doing. He swears that he is neither thief nor murderer. He won't further comment if the PCs mention that they are suspecting Legrand himself, for he is in love with his daughter, Madeleine, and wants to save the old man along with her. Olivier will do anything to avoid being handed over to the watch. Make sure he succeeds, because he has yet a part to play. The note he gave to Madame Sanssouci says: "You may not keep the jewels given to you. Send them to Legrand's, else your life is endangered."

From Predator to Prey

That night, the story takes a strange turn. The PCs probably won't be able to witness the main events. Even if they are watching Legrand's estate, he will escape unnoticed into the night, because he uses a secret underground exit, leading from his workshop to a dead tree two streets across. They should be more lucky with Debussy, who leaves his house in the middle of the night to visit his lover. Legrand will roam the streets that night, as he had done so many nights before, looking for the jewellery he created and gave away for money. Obsessed with his own creations, he will get them back, even if it means the death of his former customer. That night, he is looking for Jacques Debussy. Unfortunately for Legrand, Debussy is a rather shrewd fighter. When Legrand attacks him, Debussy will dodge his stiletto, disarm him and kill him with his own weapon. The 'Diamond Dog' is then left bleeding in the alley. Unseen by Debussy, however, Olivier has witnessed the entire scene, although he wasn't able to recognise Debussy in the darkness. Olivier followed his master that night, for he feared further bloodshed, though he did not expect Legrand to be the victim. Shocked at the sudden turn of events, Olivier rushes to his mentor and tries to

save his life. In that moment, a patrol of the city watch catches him, leaning over a body with his hands drenched in blood. If the players are present, they won't be able to prevent the murder. Everything happens much too quickly, it is dark and they should keep their distance to avoid being detected by Debussy. If one of the players rather than Olivier is caught by the watch with his hands drenched in blood, give him a chance to flee. If a PC is caught and jailed, you will have to modify the scenario only slightly, but it will be a rather boring game for the player whose character is shackled.

Most likely, however, the players will hear this story the next day: a certain Lapine has killed his master, the great jeweller Legrand. It seems to have been a crime of passion, since Lapine was in love with his master's daughter, Madeleine, but Legrand would never have accepted such a marriage. The *Chambre Ardente* further suspects that none other than Olivier Lapine is the leader of the notorious "Diamond Dogs".

The PCs will now hopefully want to find out more about these mysterious events. If not, the Comtesse will ask them to. They have three main possibilities: visit Olivier in jail, question Madeleine or seek out his last costumer, Jacques Cr ssier.

Olivier

With the help of the Comtesse it should be possible for the players to see Olivier Lapine. He is a broken man, not only because he is accused of murder. It will be rather difficult to get him to talk. Force or intimidation won't work. The PCs will have to gain Olivier's trust, most effectively by appealing to his beloved Madeleine. He will certainly tell the players that he loves Madeleine and that he did not kill Legrand. If the PCs are doing really well, Olivier might even have recognised Legrand's killer, Debussy. He will, however, never accuse the latter publicly, for several reasons. Firstly, nobody will believe him. Secondly, if asked for the killer's motive, he would be forced to admit that Legrand attacked Debussy, and that his master and the father of his love is a madman, a serial killer and a jewel thief. That would ruin Madeleine's life, and hence Olivier will rather suffer himself than destroy Madeleine.

Madeleine

You can use this NPC in a very flexible way. The *Chambre Ardente* will have searched Legrand's house (though they will not have found the secret compartment in which he kept his stolen jewelery) and questioned Madeleine. If you want a challenge, have Cr ssier keep Madeleine in custody for further questioning. In that case, the players will either have to find a way past Cr ssier into the *Chambre Ardente* itself or they won't hear Madeleine's testimony. Legrand's house is being watched and secured by the *Chambre*. Comtesse Sanssouci wouldn't be able to help much here. If you want to help your players a little bit, have the *Chambre* set her free after questioning. Madeleine will run to Sanssouci, whom she knows because she used to work for the sisters of Shallya in her spare time. If the PCs are stuck, the Comtesse could summon them and introduce the players to Madeleine. She will, of course, beg them to help free Olivier, who couldn't possibly have killed her father.

Debussy

The nobleman is easily found but less than co-operative. He obviously will deny any accusation of murder (or even adultery). Blackmail is useless, unless it is very

cunningly conducted. The best way to communicate with Debussy is by using the Comtesse.

Wrapping Things up

After Legrand's death, the scenario can take many different turns. You should make it clear to the players that their task is to free Olivier without in turn ruining Madeleine's reputation by letting everyone know her father's true nature. This aim can be achieved in many different ways. There is the possibility that the PCs will want to free Olivier (and possibly Madeleine) by force and then help them to flee. This is not completely impossible, but you should make it hard for them, since both the city prison and the Chambre Ardente are heavily guarded. The Comtesse will not agree and withhold any help. It is preferable for the players to use the political dynamics of Gisoreux for their own purposes. They might put pressure on Debussy by leaking facts and rumours to the Gazette and the Chambre Ardente. Even better, they might be able to convince Debussy that he won't have to accuse himself to save Olivier. If only he is willing to say that he saw Olivier help and not kill Legrand, the young man's life will be saved. Make the PCs plead for justice in a melodramatic role-playing scene, have Debussy finally agree grudgingly and gear yourself up for the happy ending, when Olivier and Madeleine will embrace and cry and swear eternal love.

The Cast

Comtesse de Sanssouci

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
3	30	35	2	2	5	45	1	45	73	73	35	50	85

Alignment: good

Skills: Charm, Heal Wounds, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Sing, Wit

The Comtesse may have lost the charms of youth, but at 67, she is still a figure of great authority and moral integrity. Alone in a land of decadence, she holds up the values other only talk about, such as chivalry, compassion and honour. She is a steady worshipper of Shallya and is a generous donor to the temple. What is more, she often helps the sisters treat the sick and the wounded herself.

Her influence is considerable. She is well acquainted with the king and sees him regularly. The city's authorities do not like her, but they cannot show that publicly. If the players make friends with the Comtesse, she can be a very powerful ally.

Edgare Legrand, Artisan - Jeweller

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
5	65	32	4	4	8	65	1	85	45	45	33	25	25

Alignment: insane

Skills: Ambidextrous, Art, Drive Cart, Evaluate, Gem Cutting, Haggle, Metallurgy, Shadowing, Very Strong, Very Resilient

Legrand is a man possessed by beauty. He is a genius, crafting the most beautiful jewellery one has ever seen. However, he has serious difficulty parting with the finished pieces. If he does, he will grow restless and uneasy during the following days, regretting what he had done. This amounts to a fit of madness, in which he seeks out the man who bought his jewels, kills him and steals the piece back. He then hides the jewellery in a secret compartment of the strongbox in his workshop. Legrand loves his daughter very much, even more so since her mother had died. Nevertheless he has always neglected her, being obsessed with his work. He thus was hardly aware that Olivier was in love with Madeleine.

Olivier Lapine, Artisan's Apprentice

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	35	35	3	4	7	35	1	39	25	30	30	30	35

Alignment: neutral

Skills: Drive Cart, Very Resilient, Read&Write

Olivier is a good chap in a bad spot. He is madly in love with Madeleine, but sadly aware of her father's madness. When he is sent to deliver the jewels to the Comtesse, he finally realises that Legrande is the killer everyone is looking for. He is resolved to follow his master every night to avoid further bloodshed. However, he will never call Legrande a murderer, since he fears that he would thus ruin Madeleine's life. Furthermore, he loves the crazy old man.

Jacques Cr ssier, Witch Hunter

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
3	58	64	3	4	11	57	3	48	56	24	58	75	45

Alignment: law

Skills: Excellent Vision, Read and Write, Scroll Lore, Secret Language - Classical, Theology, Public Speaking, Marksmanship, Silent Move - Urban, Specialist Weapons: Crossbow Pistol, Lasso, Net, Throwing Weapons

Cr ssier is a dedicated man. He will do everything to further the Cardinal's cause, which is, basically, to gather as much power as possible. First and foremost, however, he will be busy re-installing law and order in Gisoreux. Cr ssier does not care much if he is punishing and killing a few innocents while looking for the Diamond Dogs: "The Gods will protect the truly innocent."

Jacques Debussy, Noble Duellist

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
5	66	61	4	4	10	52	2	40	48	65	61	43	68

Alignment: neutral

Skills: Read and Write, Dodge Blow, Blather, Charm, Etiquette, Heraldry, Luck, Ride, Wit, Gamble, Public Speaking, Consume Alcohol, Musicianship, Disarm, Marksmanship, Specialist Weapons - Pistol, Parrying Weapon, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure, Strike to Stun

Debussy is a ladies' man, although he is married with children. His wife doesn't care much about him or his excessive lifestyle, though. The man has distinguished himself as a charmer and fighter of courtly duels, killing many opponents. He has made it a rule for himself to change his lover every twelve days at least, but he always conducts his affairs with style, giving gifts and inviting her to dinner. Half the children of Gisoreux are rumoured to be his. Debussy has etiquette and morals, but no real conscience. He will, however, never risk to lose face in public.