

The Crimson Curse

A Ruby, Red as Blood

By Oestara M.

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Italic = stage directions. Bold = Sound Qs

CHARACTERS

1. AUNT MATILDA BENNET -Aubrey
2. ANDREA -Oestara
3. DUCHESS OF GLASTONBURY (ELEANOR) & CLARA -A VILLAGER-Annabelle
4. HARRIET VANE-Keiryn
5. JULIAN-Maks
6. MARY THE MAID-Julia
MRS. WILLIAMS-Julia
7. NEWSBOY & Newsman & Tom & Dimitri & Mr. Harris -Kai
8. OFFICER BALDWIN-Willow
9. OFFICER LOYD & random Villagers Rory, Mick-Lauren
10. REBECCA, ELIZABETH, MADISON (THE VILLAGERS)-Heather

CREW- running show -all cast

11. LIGHTS & OR SOUND-Emily

Pre-show -Read all about it!

1-Andrea buys a paper

INSERT SCENE 1A panic village

2-Julian brings an apple apology

INSERT SCENE 2A Rumors fly

3-Aunt Matilda tells a story

4-Duchess and her maid Argue

4a -Julian's story why he supports Dimitri

5-Newsworthy police dead baker-Tom

6-Bakery hate

INSERT SCENE 6-A Harriet Spy pg 11.1

7-Mary Talks

7a Julian angry newsman interviews

7b-Julian warns Dimitri

8-Forest painting

INSERT SCENE 8-A Village Conflicted pg 16.1

9-Apology to Julian

10- Aunt Matilda visits the Duchess

PRESETS:

1) Bench STAYS IN PLACE
WHOLE PLAY

2) Reserved signs

3) 4 NEWSPAPERS with the
stories in them

Each newsboy will have
one for their reader. May
have people pay newsboys
who roam the audience

11-Village gossips

11a-Julian defends Dimitri

12- Julian leaves a note Andrea panics

13- Andrea waits & waits

14-Search for Julian

15 Aunt Matilda show truth

SND Q 1 Welcome Intro emerg- to establish time

PRE-SHOW SCENE – all 4 characters sitting in audience or hidden around the room

Newsboy: 1) READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Julian2) Reading: BY THE PRICKING OF MY THUMBS, SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. It is said that Evil walks among us. The mysterious, The curse, The Strange, The Chilling Incidents that keep us beguiled. There are stories about curses following people throughout their lives. READ ALL ABOUT IT as we follow strange occurrences throughout the coming weeks.

Newsboy: 3) READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Officer Baldwin: 4)Reading: MURDER MOST FOUL. Amanda Hadley was found in her kitchen by her daughter on Saturday. Her daughter stated that her mother was in the middle of baking for the church social on Sunday. The pies in the oven were very burned and the local bobby figured she had been poisoned at least 2 hours prior to the discovery of her body. Mrs. Hadley worked as a housekeeper for the Simpson's for over ten years. It is noted that the Mrs. Elvira Simpson is the sister to Dorothy Bennet of the Mimico Bennets. Funeral services for Mrs. Hadley will be held at 3pm on September 4th at St. Mary's in Badger Drift with Reverend Stephen Wentworth officiating.

Newsboy: 5) READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Officer Lloyd: 6) Reading: THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD ROCKS THE COMMUNITY OF LITTLE WORTHY. A gardener came upon his employer Mr. Ackroyd early Wednesday morning as the gardener was trimming the roses behind the main house. The Gardener, a Mr. Rupert Thompson was "fairly bowled over" as he rounded the corner of the house and saw Mr. Ackroyd with a bullet hole right between his eyes. "I was so shocked I stood there looking at Mr. Ackroyd. It took me a bit of time before I ran up to the house to get help. I knew he was dead and there was nothing to do but go for the police." The neighbor, a Fleur Perkins witnessed a dark figure running across her back lawn, but could give no further information.

Newsboy: 7) READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Mary: 8) Reading: THE CRIMSON CURSE: REAL OR IMAGINED. While The Duchess of Glastonbury refused to comment, Neighbors were quick to fill in details of the latest incident regarding the famous Ruby. "Death follows it" was the comment given by The maid. Locals all agree that "It mesmerizes anyone who sees it and makes them do terrible things." Over time many have stolen this famous jewel, and always it returns to its original owner leaving a trail of blood in its wake. A former servant gave an account of a thief who stole the jewel and was killed while trying to sell it. As the jewel makes its way from thief to jeweler from jeweler to Prince & Prince to Princess each to die under extraordinary circumstances. Is it a curse? Or is it justice for those who hold it is their right to take what they want?

SCENE ONE- Andrea buys a paper

SND Q 2 Intro to establish time period

A newsboy walks onto the stage, waving a newspaper.

Newsboy: "The Blood Ruby has been stolen again! Read all about it, only two pennies!"
Other town folk also buy newspapers -Mary-Officer Baldwin & Mick
Andrea enters the stage and stops upon seeing the boy.

Andrea: The Blood Ruby? *(To newsboy)* Excuse me, what is the Blood Ruby?

Newsboy: Read all about it! Only a tuppence!

Andrea: Fine. *Andrea buys the paper and as she walks away,* **NEWSBOY**
TAKES AWAY BOX AND PAPERS *Julian bumps into her making her stumble.*

Andrea: It is very rude to bump into someone without an apology!

Julian: I sincerely apologize...my fault entirely!

VOICE of MR. HARRIS: Come along Andrea! Teatime!

Andrea: Coming Father!

INSERT SCENE ONE A Panic Village Pg 2A

PROPS SCENE 1:

- 1) Newspapers-many ones grabbed by village folk
- 2) Tuppence
- 3) Box for papers etc.

PROPS SCENE 2:

- 1) Newspaper read by Andrea-
- 2) Apple

Clara: Oh this is just awful?

Harriet Vane: What is wrong?

Mary: Are you worried about your grandmother?

Clara: She lives next door to the Hadley's. What if she is next?

Mary: Oh I would not think like that Clara. It will do you no good.

Clara: Mama is all in a dither that grandmama will ask us to come stay with her until this is over.

Mick: Or worse she will come live with you.

Clara: Aye. That too. What is it I should do?

Harriet Vane: You wait. We shall all be murdered in our beds.

Mary: Oh stop Harriet. You will make Clara feel worse.

Harriet Vane: Well mark my words Mary Watson. We will all be dead!

Clara: Oh do you think so? What do I tell mother? I love my grandmother, but I do not want to live with her.

Mick: Ach! No need to worry your pretty little head about such things. The police will solve it.

Harriet Vane: Oh bother! They are rather dimwitted. Now I know we are in for it!

Mary: Harriet stop exaggerating. Clara need reassurance.

Harriet Vane: Well I am assuring you all that we WILL be murdered in our beds. Just you wait.

Clara: (crying) Mama will blame me when grandmamma gets killed. She will turn me out!

Mick: Good luck with her Miss Watson!

Mary: Oh just like that you abandon us Mick.

Mick: I know when I am out of my depth here missy. Best I take my leave afore I say something that may cause distress. (*exit shaking his head*)

Harriet Vane: Oh do stop carrying on so Clara. Death is a part of life.

Elizabeth: What on earth is happening. I can hear you all the way down the street.

Mary: Harriet is not helping calm Clara.

Elizabeth: Well I shall take Clara home and talk with her mother. Come with me Clara. (Exit)

Elizabeth: Are you well? Have you recovered from you interval with Clara?

Harriet Vane: I tell you Elizabeth, I am not well. Indeed not very well at all.

Elizabeth: Why? No one else to berate ...or Is the council creating extra work for you?

Harriet Vane: Oh when do they not? I tell you last week the session went on for nearly two hours overtime. I was still expected to type everything up on time.

Elizabeth: Oh dear, that must have been very difficult for you. *(she is sarcastic Harriet does not get it)*

Harriet Vane: Not as difficult as the time the council lasted until midnight. I typed my poor fingers to the bone I tell you.

Elizabeth: Mr. Blanc keeps me right until the last minute. Although he did get me a new Remington last week. I have to say the keys are quite smooth and makes it faster to type.

Harriet Vane: Oh are you the lucky one. The council is so cheap they screech when they have to spend money on anything. I had to threaten to quit just to get a new pencil. You would think they would bleed if they gave me new supplies.

Elizabeth: Have you heard the Bucher raised his prices again. It will be sausages for dinner this week.

Harriet Vane: Well I heard that the reason he raised his prices is because he has to pay for his wife's new Hats, from London of all places. The Gardener told Mary that no less than 15 hats were ordered ,and are all arriving next week from Mccullough and Wallis.

Elizabeth: How on earth could you wear 15 hats. You could wear one a day, and by the time you wore all of them people will have forgotten what the first ones looked like. New hats. The furniture ordered by Mrs. Hadley.... The new carriage of Mr. Ackroyd... People are certainly spending their money.

Harriet Vane: Do not speak so loudly. I tell you we will all be murdered in our beds. You wait and see. Of course by then it will be too late ... we shall all be dead.

Elizabeth: Not true. I work too hard to be killed. This is the longest I have relaxed in days.

Harriet Vane: I haven't sat this long since papa's birthday.

Elizabeth: Was that not last month?

Harriet Vane: Yes well I must return to work. I only have a short lunch.

Elizabeth: I as well. I was sent on an errand for Mr. Blanc and I must not dilly dally. *(both exit)*

SCENE THREE Aunt Matilda tells a story

**SND Q 4-Set CHANGE BENNET AUNT MATILDA & JULIAN SET UP
2 COUCH CUSHIONS with doilies on back TROLLEY w TEA THINGS
1 CHAIR, DOILIE ON CHAIR BACK, 1 TABLE WITH PHOTOS**

Aunt Matilda: So, you would like to hear the Story of the Duchess's Ruby?

Andrea: Yes please!

Aunt Matilda: It is said that a curse is only as strong as people's belief in it. A long time ago, there once was a diamond, white as snow. They are extremely rare. The family that owned it had it commissioned for their eldest daughter Katherine, who had a terrible disease that caused her to have seizures. But whenever she wore the diamond she could go without a single incident. One day, a thief broke in and took the diamond right from Katherine's throat while she slept. When she awoke she started to shake and had such a severe seizure that she died before anything could be done. Her mother was so upset she took to her bed and cursed who so ever touches the diamond other than family. Later, the thief's body was found lying on the ground, in a pool of blood. Beside him was the diamond. The thief's blood had fallen upon it where it lay, staining the diamond red, and turning it into a ruby. A ruby red as blood. It was returned to the family but too late for Katherine and her mother never spoke of Katherine again until she passed years later. With her daughter's name on her lips the Ruby passed onto the youngest sister. It was never clear how the Thief died. There was no knife or object that could explain how he could bleed to death. Whatever the cause of the thief's death was, everyone was sure that the ruby was cursed, and who ever took the gem, or possessed it without permission, would die.

Andrea: But surely that is just a story? That didn't actually happen?

Julian: Probably not. It is strange though. You see, the ruby has been stolen a few times. Each time, the body of the thief has been found. Killed by a 'wound' to the heart. No dagger anywhere near by, and beside them, the ruby, with a few drops of their blood upon it.

Andrea: Why don't the police lock the ruby up? That seems the most logical idea, no?

Julian: They've tried!

Aunt Matilda: The present owner The Duchess of Glastonbury is a bit... stubborn. She refuses to have the ruby locked away. She is titled, and wealthy, and therefore the most influential person in the village. The ruby is her property, and because it is always restored to her, she doesn't really care whether it gets stolen. The curse seems to ensure that it gets returned no matter what else happens.

Julian: I personally think she's a bit crazy. Not in a bad way, just... forgetful sometimes.

Andrea: If you don't mind me asking, how did you learn the story?

Aunt Matilda: I heard it straight from Her Grace. You see, Eleanor and I went to school together, way back in the day. She was of course quite a bit older than me, but we constantly heard about this diamond which is not a diamond. She did her best to tell the whole school she was inheriting a cursed ruby. My goodness! Look at the time! I must be getting our tea. It has been lovely to meet you Andrea.



Mrs. Williams: Nonsense. He killed my husband. The said that maybe my Joseph was involved. *Pause.*

Andrea: What!?

Julian: Dimitri would NEVER do that! He is the most kind, gentle, caring...

Mrs. Williams: I know he did it. Don't try to make excuses for him!

Julian: He is my friend. Trust me when I say...

Mrs. Williams: Trust you? When you are defending that monster. Your word means nothing! Absolutely nothing! Now, GET OUT before I call back those two police. *(Exit with trolley- to take off Baking put back on fancy tea.)*

Julian: But you are not giving me a chance to.....

Andrea: Come on Julian. We had best leave. Maybe The Duchess will have some answers.

Julian: How could she accuse him of that! All because he's different! What makes people think others are beneath them.

Andrea: She is angry and hurt. I am sure she did not mean to be so cruel.

Julian: Sometimes I hate this village.

Andrea: Well I am new enough that I will reserve judgement.

INSERT SCENE SIX-A - Harriet the spy PG 11.1

PROPS SCENE 7:

- 1) Duchess door
- 2) Wooden chairs
- 3) Table w table cloth
- 4) Plain teapot & cups

SCENE SEVEN Mary talks

SND Q 10 Fancy SCENE CHANGE DUCHESS KITCHEN *A maid opens the door.*

Maid: Yes? Can I help you?

Andrea: Good afternoon! I was just wondering if we could talk to The Duchess?

Maid: She is not available..

Andrea: Oh... would you perhaps be able to help us? . We have a few questions about the curse... But if there is no one who wants to help us we might perhaps go talk to

Maid: Oh! If you really need someone who knows all about it...

Andrea: We do! *Pause.* Would you be so kind?

Maid: Well, I am not one to gossip...

Andrea: Oh no! Of course not! I just have a few questions.

Maid: Oh, all right! My name is Mary!

Tom: I do not think you have the skills to be doin' this missus.

Harriet Vane: I did not ask for your opinion. Only for your help.

Tom: Your mater would be rolling in her grave about now.

Harriet Vane: Well you gave your word.

Tom: Aye. I toll your maam that I would look after ye. I said notin' about risking my life for ye.

Harriet Vane: All I asked for was clothing. It is not as if you will be escorting me.

Tom: Spyin' on the Village might get ye killed.

Harriet Vane: I will not stand by and watch my neighbors fight each other. Go you have helped me and your duty is discharged.

Tom: Fool gel. She gonna get herself dead. (exit)

Harriet Vane: I will not take chances. But I will follow and document. (have to decide who she follows) (1. Officer Baldwin, 2. Rebecca or Madison, maybe the 3 Duchess would be a good red herring.)

SND Q 10 spy music follow - might use pink panther -might be too corny??

Harriet Vane: Now what? I have not seen anything suspicious. If only I could find Dimitri. Hw would be a prime suspect. (Dimitri come up behind Harriet)

Dimitri: Are you looking for me Harriet?

Harriet Vane: What? Harriet who? (*deepens her voice to sound male*)

Dimitri: You do fool anyone with your disguise. You think like everyone that I am a suspect.

But I do not hurt novone. You may follow me if you vish, ut I simply go back to the Forest vere novone can blame me.

Harriet Vane: how di you know it was me?

Dimitri: You valk like a girl and yourwrite everything in dat book of yours. Good Day Miss Vane.

Harriet Vane: DRAT! This detecting is harder than I thought. **Andrea makes it look so easy.**

Julian: GO AWAY! (**PICKS UP PAINTING AND BRUSH-SUPPLIES**)
(OFFICER'S EACH GRAB A TREE AS THEY EXIT)

SCENE EIGHT a – INSERT –Village conflicted] pg 16.1

SCENE NINE Apology to Julian

SND Q 18 SCENE CHANGE TO DOOR BENNET'S NEXT MORNING

PROPS SCENE 9:
1) Bennet Door

Andrea: What have I done? How could I have been so wrong? I should go say I am sorry. But, maybe he would not want to see me! Oh, I don't know! What do I do? *Pause* I will go apologize. *(If a character talks to themselves there is pacing and a sense of purpose could it be done walking through the audience???)*

Andrea heads to Julian's house, and knocks on the door.

Aunt Matilda: Good Morning Andrea! Are you here to see Julian?

Andrea: Yes please. If he will talk to me...

Aunt Matilda: I think he will. This has been very hard for him, but he needs someone to confide in. Someone his age. I shall go get him.

Andrea: Thank you.

Julian comes to the door.

Andrea: Hello Julian...

Julian: What do you want?

Andrea: I... I just wanted to apologize.

Julian: I am not sure I want to talk to you. You should have trusted me. Been on my side no matter what!

Andrea: Please listen?

Julian: Fine.

Andrea: Look, Julian, I truly am so sorry. I cannot even imagine what you must be feeling. If my father died, I would be devastated. I made a terrible mistake about Dimitri and I sincerely do apologize. I... I understand if you hate me now, but... I had to say I was sorry.

Silence.

Andrea: I really do not know what else to say to make you understand how earnest I am...

She gives Julian a hug. He stands there for a moment, than hugs her back. (not sure if this age would hug) (I Would rather have them stand awkwardly looking at each other... Awkwardness is more natural and uncomfortable....silence is power... the audience will also be uncomfortable)

Julian: All right. I must admit, I did blame you, in some way, for what happened. If we had

Newsman: So tell me what happened.

Harriet Vane: I was walking to the church for choir practice and I overheard Mrs. Williams giving information to Officer Loyd about the duchess's maid Mary Watson.

Newsman: And did you hear what was specifically said?

Harriet Vane: Well she mentioned a knife, and digging in a grave. I would not want to be murdered in my bed.

Rory: Oiy is Harriet giving you her 'we will all be murdered in our beds theory. Do not listen to a word. She strains her credibility as far as she possibly can..

Harriet Vane: Since when is news about truth Rory Branigan? You are just as much a newsmonger as anyone.

Rory: Give it a rest Harriet. Whoever is doing this is long gone by now. The Ruby is back with the Duchess and everyone is safe.

Harriet Vane: I do not believe for a moment that Dimitri did anything wrong. He is a convenient Person to blame.

Newsman: So you do not believe he is guilty?

Harriet Vane: Guilty of being a foreigner that everyone feared perhaps.

Newsman: And you sir do you believe in the Russian's guilt.

Rory: (Looks around) It is not safe to discuss such things out in the open. Be vigilant in what you print. (exit)

Madison: (enter) Is there a social I did not hear about? Did I just see Rory?

Harriet Vane: No Madison there is no social. I was just talking with this reporter. Yes Rory was his usual ambiguous self.

Madison: Oh dear. You really do NOT think we will be murdered in our beds do you? It is complete nonsense. The Russian did it. And now we are all safe. We can get back to normal.

Newsman: So you agree with most of the village that Dimitri is guilty.

Madison: Of course. He is Russian and roamed the village like a thief in the night. WE best get to the Baker's before she locks up Harriet. You can discuss our impending doom another time. (both exit)

Newsman: VILLAGE DIVIDED... It seems that not all villagers agree that the death of The Russian named Dimitri is a good thing. Some villagers are reluctant to talk in the open. Are they safe now? Or Is there something happening below the surface. Is the maid Mary guilty of burying evidence? Was she instructed to do so by The Duchess? We will keep our readers informed.