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## **Family Plays**

From Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould's short story

# King of Lead

Gothic drama adapted by  
Ken Pickering

# Ring of Lead

*Gothic drama. Adapted by Ken Pickering. From Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould's short story The Leaden Ring. Cast: 2m., 3w.* This haunting play centers around Julia, an attractive young woman who seems to discard potential lovers like a blackjack dealer tossing cards around. But apparently one of the discarded lovers, who committed suicide when she rejected him, is not satisfied to rest in peace. What he does to get revenge makes an intriguing play. Superb acting roles present the cast of this play an opportunity to create a sense of gothic horror in its short time span that would be difficult or impossible to match in a much longer production. This show is unmatched for development of character and mood, and it's perfect for contests. *Set: Victorian parlor. Time: late 19th century or today. Approximate running time: 20 to 25 minutes. SFX CD available. Code: RC2.*

## Family Plays

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Ring of Lead

# Ring of Lead

*A play in one act*

by **KEN PICKERING**

*Based on "The Leaden Ring," a  
short story by Sabine Baring-Gould*

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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KEN PICKERING

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## ABOUT THE PLAY

“The Leaden Ring” is a short story by the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, a nineteenth-century English clergyman who is best remembered as the writer of the hymns “Onward Christian Soldiers” and “Now the Day Is Over.” In his day this remarkable man who had fifteen children and spent the later years of his life as a school master living in an attic room with a pet owl, was a very popular author. He died in 1924. This haunting play centers around Julia, an attractive young woman who seems to discard potential lovers like a blackjack dealer tossing cards around. But apparently one of the discarded lovers, who committed suicide when she rejected him, is not satisfied to rest in peace. What he does to get revenge makes an intriguing play.

Playing time is 20-30 minutes.



## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Ken Pickering, who lives in Canterbury, England, in the shadow of Chaucer's favorite cathedral, has written three other plays published by I. E. Clark: *BEOWULF*, an exciting musical adaptation of the famous Anglo-Saxon epic; *THE INSIDE STORY*, a zoological musical lamenting mankind's abuse of our environment; and *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS*, a musical adaptation of the beloved children's tale. *RING OF LEAD* is the first Pickering non-musical that we have published.

## *Characters*

**Julia Denant**—An attractive young woman

**Elizabeth Flemming**—Her elderly aunt, who has brought her up

**Doctor Crate**—A physician

**The Hon. James Lawlor**—A young man in love with Julia

**Sarah Rogers**—The housemaid or parlour maid



This dramatization was first presented in the Performing Arts Centre Theatre at Nonington College, Kent, England, and subsequently at the Studio Theatre at the London College of Dance and Drama.

### Synopsis

Scene 1: Julia's apartment

Scene 2: The same. The next morning.

Time: Late nineteenth century or the present



## PRODUCTION NOTES

### *Properties*

Gold Ring—in Lawlor's pocket

Piece of embroidery—on end table

Lead ring—substituted for gold ring on Julia's finger

### *Costumes*

Shawl for Julia; lace on her dress. Victorian Period or modern costumes.

### *Sound and Special Effects*

Wind

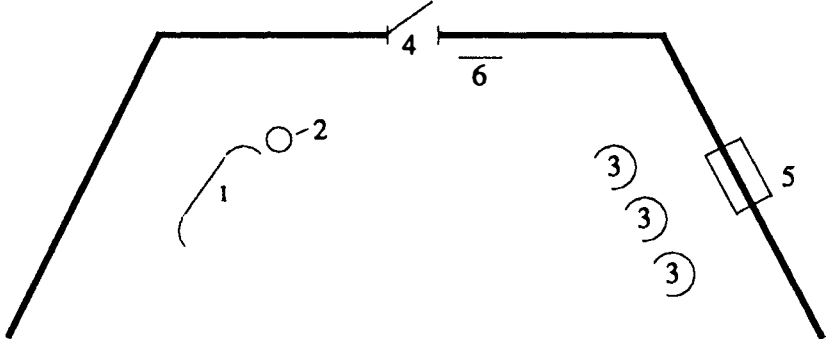
Rattling of the window

Blowing of curtains and Julia's hair and shawl

Pistol shots, explosion

*All are on a cassette  
tape available from  
the publisher*

### *The Set*



1—couch

2—end table

3—large chairs

4—door

5—curtained window

6—Bell cord for calling servants

Add set decorations as desired to give the impression of a Victorian parlor.

# RING OF LEAD

*[The setting is a Victorian parlour, rather heavily furnished. There are three large chairs and a couch. There is a curtained window. A doorway up center leads to an entrance hall. It is early evening.]*

## Scene I

*[ JULIA is moving restlessly around the room while her AUNT is seated in one of the large chairs]*

JULIA. Aunt, I must go to the ball, whatever you say!

AUNT. It is not possible, Julia. I cannot conceive how the idea of attending the county ball can have entered your head after poor, young Mr. Hattersley's death.

JULIA. But Aunt, Mr. Hattersley is no relation of ours.

AUNT. No relation perhaps. But you know the poor fellow would not have shot himself if it had not been for you.

JULIA. Oh! Aunt Elizabeth, how can you say so! The verdict was that he took his own life when in an unsound condition of mind. How could I help his blowing out his brains, when those brains were damaged?

AUNT. *[Rising as JULIA paces around the room]* Julia, do not talk like this. If he did go off his head, it was you who upset him first by drawing him on, leading him to believe that you cared for him, then throwing him over when the Honorable James Lawlor appeared on the scene. Now just consider: what will people say if you do go to this assembly?

JULIA. *[Stops pacing and faces her aunt]* What will they say if I do NOT go? They will immediately set it down to my having cared deeply for James Hattersley...they will even think there was some sort of engagement.

AUNT. I am sure they will not think that. But really, Julia, you were all smiles and encouragement for a while. *[Approaching her]* Tell me now, did Mr. Hattersley propose to you?

JULIA. *[Hesitating and turning away]* Well...yes, he did...and I refused him.

AUNT. And then he went and shot himself in despair. Julia, you cannot have the face to go to the ball.

JULIA. *(With increasing desperation)* Nobody knows that he proposed. And precisely because I do go everyone will conclude that he did not propose. I do not wish it to be supposed that he did.

AUNT. But his family must have known!

JULIA. Aunt, they have enough trouble without their looking in the paper to see who was at the dance.

AUNT. *[Ignoring the last remark]* His terrible death lies at your door, Julia. How can you have the heart...

JULIA. I don't see it. Of course I am terribly sorry. I'm awfully sorry for his father, but I cannot bring him to life again. Why couldn't he be like Joe Pomeroy when I rejected HIM...go and marry one of his landlady's daughters?

AUNT. Now that's another of your delinquencies; you lured on young Pomeroy till he proposed...then you refused him...and the wretched fellow, in a fit of mortified vanity, married a girl greatly beneath him in social standing. You may well have wrecked his life and hers as well.

JULIA. *[Indignantly as she crosses away from her aunt]* I cannot throw myself away as a charity to prevent this man or that from doing something foolish!

AUNT. *[Approaching her]* What I complain of, Julia, is that you encouraged young Mr. Pomeroy until Mr. Hattersley appeared, and then you tossed Mr. Hattersley aside as soon as you came to know Mr. Lawlor...

JULIA. But, Aunt...

AUNT. Nowadays a girl lays herself at a man's feet if she likes him...where do you see a girl like Viola's sister, who let concealment, like a worm in the bud, feed on her damask cheek?

JULIA. *[Almost bursting with frustration]* Aunt...I have no wish to be like Viola's sister...neither do I want people to think that James Hattersley cared for me or I for him...or that he ever proposed to me...so I SHALL go to the ball.

AUNT. Well, you know my feelings about this dance. I do not approve. I distinctly disapprove...I think your going to the ball is in very bad taste...poor Mr. Hattersley...

JULIA. Aunt, will you please stop talking of Hattersley! He is buried...

*[The LIGHTS begin to fade and flicker and there is the SOUND of a cold wind and the gradual rattling of windows. As the wind grows louder, the curtains and Julia's hair and shawl begin to blow around]*

JULIA. *[Looking desperately around]* ...Is the window open near your chair?

AUNT. *[Totally unaware of what is going on]* No, why do you ask?

JULIA. There is such a terrible draught.

AUNT. Draught! I do not feel one. Perhaps the front door is open.

JULIA. *[Looking out into the entrance hall]* It is blowing harder...it is deadly cold. *[Trying to wrap her shawl around her]* I cannot see where it is coming from.

AUNT. Julia, what is this?

*[The SOUND of the wind grows even loud and Julia's hair streams in the wind. She holds her head. There is the sudden loud report of a PISTOL SHOT. JULIA screams. With her hands over her ears she sinks into a chair in a faint. AUNT ELIZABETH runs to her and tries to revive her. She rings for a servant and calls:]*

AUNT. Rogers! Rogers, come at once! Julia...what is it...what is the matter?

ROGERS. *[Entering at the door]* Did you call for me, ma'am?

AUNT. Rogers...go quickly and call Dr. Crate from next door...Miss Julia is not well.

ROGERS. Yes ma'am. *[Exits]*

JULIA. *[Gradually coming round from her swoon]* Oh Aunt...are all the windows broken?

AUNT. Broken...how?

JULIA. With the explosion...the blast must have damaged them.

AUNT. Explosion! What explosion?

JULIA. Yes. That gun that was discharged. It stunned me...were you hurt?

AUNT. But I have told you—I heard no gun...no explosion...now come...*[taking her arm]* let me help you to the couch...you must lie quietly until the Doctor arrives.

JULIA. *[Jerking away]* I tell you I don't need a doctor. Why will you not believe me?

AUNT. *[Helping her move to the couch]* Now I insist you must rest.

JULIA. *[Now on the couch]* But I did hear a gun. It was as though a bullet had been discharged into my brain. I wonder that I escaped. Who could have fired at us?

AUNT. My dear, no one fired. I heard nothing. I know what it was. I had the same experience many years ago. I slept in a damp bed and awoke stone deaf in my right ear. I remained so for three weeks...then one evening

when I was moving around the room in some excitement all at once I heard a report as of a pistol in my right ear, and immediately I heard quite clearly again. My dear, it was wax!

ROGERS. [*Entering with DR. CRATE*] If you please, ma'am, the doctor is here.

AUNT. Oh, doctor, I am so sorry to have troubled you. My niece here tells me she heard an explosion in her ear and it caused her to faint. I have been telling her that it was simply the effect of shifting wax.

JULIA. Why will no one believe me! I have not been deaf. What I heard I heard.

DOCTOR. Then you have not recently noticed that you were deaf?

JULIA. No! And what about my hair?

DOCTOR. Your hair?

JULIA. It is all blown about and dishevelled—and look, the lace is hanging loose from my dress. It was the wind...the terrible cold wind blowing through the room.

AUNT. Doctor Crate, I am at a loss to explain this illness...if that is what it is...it seemed to come upon her so suddenly.

DOCTOR. Was the young lady in a state of some excitement?

AUNT. Well, we had talked. We did have a slight disagreement it is true...affairs of the heart, you know.

DOCTOR. Ah!

AUNT. But nothing that could possibly lead to this.

DOCTOR. There you are wrong I am afraid, madam.

AUNT. What do you mean, Doctor?

DOCTOR. Hysteria, madam, pure hysteria...a classic case I can see...the treatment is simple. Keep her from excitement for a few days. [*Reaching down into his bag*] She is to take this tonic for the nerves twice daily...she will soon recover. [*Feeling Julia's pulse*] Mm, just as I thought.

JULIA. [*Screaming*] Leave me alone. Leave me. I am NOT HYS-TERICAL!

DOCTOR. [*To Aunt*] I think it best if we do leave Miss Denant alone for a while.

AUNT. Very well...I'm sure this is only wax in the ears. Rogers, make sure that my niece is comfortable, will you, while I see the Doctor out. [*Exit with DOCTOR*]

JULIA. You believe me, don't you, Sarah...you believe I heard the shot?

ROGERS. *[As she makes Julia comfortable]* Well, Miss. I'm afraid I didn't hear it...but I'm sure if you did...you wouldn't deceive us.

## BLACKOUT

### *Scene 2*

*[The next morning. JULIA is alone in the same room. She sits in a chair looking relaxed and composed. Enter AUNT ELIZABETH]*

AUNT. Julia...I am very glad to see you so much recovered. The Honorable James Lawlor has called to see you. Shall I send him away...it is most unwise for you to see him.

JULIA. Oh no, you must not do that! Please...please let him see me.

AUNT. How can you entertain such a thought at this time?

JULIA. Aunt. He has called out of concern for my condition...I promised him...

AUNT. You promised him what?

JULIA. Will you call him in!

AUNT. You are a headstrong girl, Julia. I do not approve. *[Calling into the hallway]* Tell Mr. Lawlor to step this way!

*[LAWLOR enters and stands awkwardly, expecting Aunt Elizabeth to leave. JULIA motions to AUNT to leave, and after a long silence with much eye contact and clearing of throats, the young couple are left alone together]*

LAWLOR. *[Crossing to Julia]* Oh, Miss Denant! I was so disappointed not to see you at the ball last night.

JULIA. *[Hesitantly]* I...I was very unwell; I had a fainting fit...I could not go.

LAWLOR. It threw a damp on our spirits...that is to say, on mine. I had you booked for several dances.

JULIA. *[Trying not to appear upset]* Well, you were able to give them to others.

LAWLOR. But that was not the same to me. I did an act of charity and self denial...I danced instead with the ugly Miss Burgon