

Ruddigore

Synopsis

The operetta opens in the village of Rederring, with a troupe of professional bridesmaids who are out of work. They are distressed because the beautiful Rose Maybud will marry none of her suitors, since she is secretly in love with Robin Oakapple, a local farmer. The bridesmaids therefore try to persuade Rose's aunt, Dame Hannah, to marry Robin's faithful servant, old Adam, so that they do not lose their endowments. Hannah refuses, saying that she is pledged to maidenhood. She had a lover in her youth, but he turned out to be the cursed bad baronet, Sir Roderic Murgatroyd of Ruddigore, who was condemned to commit an evil deed every day forever.

Dame Hannah reproaches Rose for not returning the love of any of her suitors, but Rose complains that all the men of the village are too bashful, and it would be unbecoming of her to encourage them. Rose herself is a foundling, and bases her life upon a book of etiquette that was left with her when she was a baby. Robin Oakapple enters, and it is clear that there is a spark between himself and Rose, but both are too shy to admit it properly.

Robin is really Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd of Ruddigore, but he fled from home at the prospect of inheriting the curse, and has lived in the village of Rederring ever since. At this point Robin's foster brother Richard returns home from sea, and is promptly consulted by Robin about his love for Rose. Richard, who does everything according to the dictates of his heart, offers to speak to Rose on Robin's behalf. Of course, he promptly falls in love with her, and woos her for himself. Robin is stunned by the news of the couple's rapid engagement, and while apparently being happy for them, makes several insinuations about the unsavoury natures of sailors which cause Rose to choose him over Richard.

At this point Mad Margaret appears. She is looking for Rose, having heard that Sir Despard Murgatroyd, the current bad baronet of Ruddigore, plans to carry off Rose as one of his daily crimes. Mad Margaret is in love with Sir Despard, and so wishes to prevent such a course of events. Rose reassures Margaret that she is pledged to another.

Unfortunately for the happy couple Richard is aware of Robin's true identity, and to get revenge on his foster brother he tells Sir Despard that Robin is really his older brother Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, the true bad baronet. Sir Despard is desperate to get rid of the curse, and so breaks up Robin's wedding by revealing the truth. Rose is distressed, but ignoring Richard, promptly offers herself in marriage to Despard. However Despard, now a virtuous young man, refuses, saying that he must keep an earlier promise to marry Margaret. Robin collapses insensible at Rose's feet.

The second act takes place in the picture gallery at Ruddigore Castle, where the walls are lined with portraits of the dead baronets. Sir Ruthven and his servant Adam are worn out by the effort of having to commit a crime everyday, and are having problems thinking up their dastardly deeds. Adam's newest idea is to poison the beer of Richard and Rose who have come up to the castle to ask for permission to marry. Sir Ruthven is not yet as bad as that, and rejects the idea. He does however threaten to imprison Rose in a dungeon. Richard promptly brandishes a small Union Jack flag, a signal that not even the Bad Baronet of Ruddigore can defy, and Rose is saved. Sir Ruthven therefore permits the two of them to marry.

As night approaches, the figures in the picture frames of the gallery begin to come to life, and the late Sir Roderic steps out of his frame and reproaches Ruthven for not fulfilling the curse. Sir Ruthven begins to make excuses: on Monday it was a Bank Holiday, but on Tuesday he made a false income tax return, on Wednesday he forged his own will, and on Thursday he killed a fox ... This is just not good enough for Sir Roderic, and to encourage his nephew to do better he gives Ruthven a taste of the torture to be expected if he fails in his task.

Sir Ruthven promptly orders Adam to go to the village and carry off a maiden as today's crime. A reformed Despard and Margaret come to plead with Sir Ruthven to mend his wicked ways. Despard points out that although Ruthven has only been bad for a week, he is, in the eyes of the law, guilty of the crimes Despard committed in his stead for ten years.

Adam now returns, having carried off Dame Hannah for his master. Hannah promptly tries to attack Sir Ruthven with a knife. Terrified, he calls on his late uncle, Sir Roderic, to come to his aid. He recognises Hannah as his former sweetheart, and orders everyone else to leave them alone. The two have a brief moment together, before Sir Ruthven rushes back in, having had a brainwave. He believes that whilst a Baronet of Ruddigore who refuses to commit a crime must die, that refusal is itself tantamount to suicide. Since suicide is deemed a crime, the only thing he must do each day therefore is refuse to commit a crime, and his curse will be fulfilled. This is all very satisfactory, particularly since Sir Roderic should therefore not have died, and may be counted as being alive again. Roderic is then reunited with Hannah, as much as a ghost may be, and Rose returns to Sir Ruthven. Richard accepts his lot philosophically, and marries Zorah, the chief bridesmaid.

Ruddigore has lots of scope for laughs, tears and scares. The relationships contained in the story are all complicated with lots of history before our story even begins. This gives every role more meat than there is in most of the G&S operettas and it's going to be a challenge to pitch the show correctly. To fully portray the richness of the tale every character needs to be able to turn on a dime from broad comedy to genuine emotion.

Here is a basic outline of each character in Ruddigore and the scenes to prepare for audition. The outlines show the way I think the lib portrays them, but there is plenty of room for your own interpretation. I look forward to seeing what you bring to the characters on the day. You do not have to learn the dialogue, but familiarity will definitely help your confidence at the audition.

Robin Oakapple/Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd: The main protagonist of the story, Robin is barely off stage – especially in act 2. He has previously faked his own death to try to avoid the family curse and is masquerading as a simple farmer. He portrays himself as shy and straightforward – but he also has an aristocratical confidence built into him. There is a duality to the Robin/Ruthven character that should come across in your portrayal. Robin gets swept along by circumstance as everything goes off around him, but all he really wants is a quiet life.

2 speeches to prepare.

ROB. Richard!

RICH. Robin!

ROB. My beloved foster-brother, and very dearest friend, welcome home again after ten long years at sea! It is such deeds as you have just described that cause our flag to be loved and dreaded throughout the civilized world!

RICH. Why, lord love ye, Rob, that's but a trifle to what we have done in the way of sparing life! I believe I may say, without exaggeration, that the marcfiful little Tom-Tit has spared more French frigates than any craft afloat! But 'taint for a British seaman to brag, so I'll just stow my jawin' tackle and belay. (ROBIN sighs.) But 'vast heavin', messmate, what's brought you all a-cockbill?

ROB. Alas, Dick, I love Rose Maybud, and love in vain!

RICH. You love in vain? Come, that's too good! Why, you're a fine strapping muscular young fellow – tall and strong as a to'-gall'n'-m'st – taut as a fore-stay – aye, and a barrowknight to boot, if all had their rights!

ROB. Hush, Richard – not a word about my true rank, which none here suspect. Yes, I know well enough that few men are better calculated to win a woman's heart than I. I'm a fine fellow, Dick, and worthy any woman's love – happy the girl who gets me, say I. But I'm timid, Dick; shy, nervous, modest, retiring, diffident, and I cannot tell her, Dick, I cannot tell her! Ah, you've no idea what a poor opinion I have of myself, and how little I deserve it.

RICH. Robin, do you call to mind how, years ago, we swore that, come what might, we would always act upon our hearts' dictates?

ROB. Aye, Dick, and I've always kept that oath. In doubt, difficulty, and danger, I've always asked my heart what I should do, and it has never failed me.

RICH. Right! Let your heart be your compass, with a clear conscience for your binnacle light, and you'll sail ten knots on a bowline, clear of shoals, rocks, and quicksands! Well, now, what does my heart say in this here difficult situation? Why, it says, "Dick," it says – (it calls me Dick acos it's known me from a babby) – "Dick," it says, "you ain't shy – you ain't modest – speak you up for him as is!" Robin, my lad, just you lay me alongside, and when she's becalmed under my lee, I'll spin her a yarn that shall sarve to fish you two together for life!

ROB. Will you do this thing for me? Can you, do you think? Yes. (feeling his pulse) There's no false modesty about you. Your, what I would call bumptious self-assertiveness (I mean the expression in its complimentary sense) has already made you a bos'n's mate, and it will make an admiral of you in time, if you work it properly, you dear, incompetent old impostor! My dear fellow, I'd give my right arm for one tenth of your modest assurance

ROB. For a week I have fulfilled my accursed doom! I have duly committed a crime a day! Not a great crime, I trust, but still, in the eyes of one as strictly regulated as I used to be, a crime. But will my ghostly ancestors be satisfied with what I have done, or will they regard it as an unworthy subterfuge? (Addressing Pictures.) Oh, my forefathers, wallowers in blood, there came at last a day when, sick of crime, you, each and every, vowed to sin no more, and so, in agony, called welcome Death to free you from your cloying guiltiness. Let the sweet psalm of that repentant hour soften your long-dead hearts, and tune your souls to mercy on your poor posterity!

Old Adam: Faithful Servant to Robin/Ruthven and one of the few who knows about his sketchy history. He gets quite into the demands of bad baronetting and plays up to his evil sidekick role. A fun cameo.

ROB. This is a painful state of things, Old Adam!

ADAM Painful, indeed! Ah, my poor master, when I swore that, come what would, I would serve you in all things for ever, I little thought to what a pass it would bring me! The confidential adviser to the greatest villain unhung! Now, sir, to business. What crime do you propose to commit to-day?

ROB. How should I know? As my confidential adviser, it's your duty to suggest something.

ADAM Sir, I loathe the life you are leading, but a good old man's oath is paramount, and I obey. Richard Dauntless is here with pretty Rose Maybud, to ask your consent to their marriage. Poison their beer.

ROB. No – not that – I know I'm a bad Bart., but I'm not as bad a Bart. as all that.

ADAM Well, there you are, you see! It's no use my making suggestions if you don't adopt them.

ROB. (melodramatically) How would it be, do you think, were I to lure him here with cunning wile – bind him with good stout rope to yonder post – and then, by making hideous faces at him, curdle the heart-blood in his arteries, and freeze the verymarrow in his bones? How say you, Adam, is not the scheme well planned?

ADAM It would be simply rude – nothing more. But soft – they come!

Dick Dauntless: Handsome, dashing and filled with self-assurance. Dick is a sailor with some tricky jargon filled dialogue. He isn't as stupid as he seems at first and knows exactly what he has to do to get the girl. Whether or not he feels bad about messing up his foster brother's life in the process is open to interpretation ...

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RICH. Ax your honour's pardon, but –

SIR D. Ha! observed! And by a mariner! What would you with me, fellow?

RICH. Your honour, I'm a poor man-o'-war's-man, becalmed in the doldrums –

SIR D. I don't know them.

RICH. And I make bold to ax your honour's advice. Does your honour know what it is to have a heart?

SIR D. My honour knows what it is to have a complete apparatus for conducting the circulation of the blood through the veins and arteries of the human body.

RICH. Aye, but has your honour a heart that ups and looks you in the face, and gives you quarter-deck orders that it's life and death to disobey?

SIR D. I have not a heart of that description, but I have a Picture Gallery that presumes to take that liberty.

RICH. Well, your honour, it's like this. Your honour had an elder brother –

SIR D. It had.

RICH. Who should have inherited your title and, with it, its cuss.

SIR D. Aye, but he died. Oh, Ruthven!

RICH. He didn't.

SIR D. He did not?

RICH. He didn't. On the contrary, he lives in this here very village, under the name of Robin Oakapple, and he's a-going to marry Rose Maybud this very day.

SIR D. Ruthven alive, and going to marry Rose Maybud! Can this be possible?

RICH. Now the question I was going to ask your honour is – ought I to tell your honour this?

SIR D. I don't know. It's a delicate point. I think you ought. Mind, I'm not sure, but I think so.

RICH. That's what my heart says. It says, "Dick," it says (it calls me Dick acos it's entitled to take that liberty), "that there young gal would recoil from him if she knowed what he really were. Ought you to stand off and on, and let this young gal take this false step and never fire a shot across her bows to bring her to? No," it says, "you did not ought." And I won't ought, accordin'.

SIR D. Then you really feel yourself at liberty to tell me that my elder brother lives – that I may charge him with his cruel deceit, and transfer to his shoulders the hideous thralldom under which I have laboured for so many years! Free – free at last! Free to live a blameless life, and to die beloved and regretted by all who knew me!

Sir Despard Murgatroyd: Initially a moustache twirling stereotypical Victorian villain, Despard is merely playing the part thrust upon him by Robin's avoidance of the curse. In reality he's an earnest young man just trying to do his best for everyone.

SIR D. Poor children, how they loathe me – me whose hands are certainly steeped in infamy, but whose heart is as the heart of a little child! But what is a poor baronet to do, when a whole picture gallery of ancestors step down from their frames and threaten him with an excruciating death if he hesitate to commit his daily crime? But ha! ha! I am even with them! (mysteriously) I get my crime over the first thing in the morning, and then, ha! ha! for the rest of the day I do good – I do good – I do good!

(melodramatically) **Two days since, I stole a child and built an orphan asylum. Yesterday I robbed a bank and endowed a bishopric. To-day I carry off Rose Maybud and atone with a cathedral! This is what it is to be the sport and toy of a Picture Gallery! But I will be bitterly revenged upon them! I will give them all to the Nation, and nobody shall ever look upon their faces again!**

(Enter Richard)

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Sir Roderic Murgatroyd: Ghost. It is Roderic's job to keep the current holder of the curse on track. He initially appears terrifying, but mellows when re-united with Dame Hannah in one of the most touching moments of the show. Just like all the other Bad Baronets, he's playing a part thrust upon him by circumstance ... but he plays it very well.

ROB. I recognize you now – you are the picture that hangs at the end of the gallery.

SIR ROD. In a bad light. I am.

ROB. Are you considered a good likeness?

SIR ROD. Pretty well. Flattering.

ROB. Because as a work of art you are poor.

SIR ROD. I am crude in colour, but I have only been painted ten years. In a couple of centuries I shall be an Old Master, and then you will be sorry you spoke lightly of me.

ROB. And may I ask why you have left your frames?

SIR ROD. It is our duty to see that our successors commit their daily crimes in a conscientious and workmanlike fashion. It is our duty to remind you that you are evading the conditions under which you are permitted to exist.

ROB. Really, I don't know what you'd have. I've only been a bad baronet a week, and I've committed a crime punctually every day.

SIR ROD. Let us inquire into this. Monday?

ROB. Monday was a Bank Holiday.

SIR ROD. True. Tuesday?

ROB. On Tuesday I made a false income-tax return.

ALL. Ha! ha!

1ST GHOST That's nothing.

2ND GHOST Nothing at all.

3RD GHOST Everybody does that.

4TH GHOST It's expected of you.

SIR ROD. Wednesday?

ROB. (melodramatically). On Wednesday I forged a will.

SIR ROD. Whose will?

ROB. My own.

SIR ROD. My good sir, you can't forge your own will!

ROB. Can't I, though! I like that! I did! Besides, if a man can't forge his own will, whose will can he forge?

1ST GHOST There's something in that.

2ND GHOST Yes, it seems reasonable.

3RD GHOST At first sight it does.

4TH GHOST Fallacy somewhere, I fancy!

ROB. A man can do what he likes with his own!

SIR ROD. I suppose he can.

ROB. Well, then, he can forge his own will, stoopid! On Thursday I shot a fox.

1ST GHOST Hear, hear!

SIR ROD. That's better. (addressing Ghosts) **Pass the fox, I think?** (They assent.)
Yes, pass the fox. Friday?

ROB. On Friday I forged a cheque.

SIR ROD. Whose cheque?

ROB. Old Adam's.

SIR ROD. But Old Adam hasn't a banker.

ROB. I didn't say I forged his banker – I said I forged his cheque. On Saturday I disinherited my only son.

SIR ROD. But you haven't got a son.

ROB. No – not yet. I disinherited him in advance, to save time. You see – by this arrangement – he'll be born ready disinherited.

SIR ROD. I see. But I don't think you can do that.

ROB. My good sir, if I can't disinherit my own unborn son, whose unborn son can I disinherit?

SIR ROD. Humph! These arguments sound very well, but I can't help thinking that, if they were reduced to syllogistic form, they wouldn't hold water. Now quite understand us. We are foggy, but we don't permit our fogginess to be presumed upon. Unless you undertake to – well, suppose we say, carry off a lady? (addressing Ghosts.) Those who are in favour of his carrying off a lady? (All hold up their hands except a Bishop.) Those of the contrary opinion? (Bishop holds up his hands.) Oh, you're never satisfied! Yes, unless you undertake to carry off a lady at once – I don't care what lady – any lady – choose your lady – you perish in inconceivable agonies.

ROB. Carry off a lady? Certainly not, on any account. I've the greatest respect for ladies, and I wouldn't do anything of the kind for worlds! No, no. I'm not that kind of baronet, I assure you! If that's all you've got to say, you'd better go back to your frames.

SIR ROD. Very good – then let the agonies commence.

SIR RUPERT MURGATROYD (the First Baronet), SIR JASPER MURGATROYD (the Third Baronet),

SIR LIONEL MURGATROYD (the Sixth Baronet), SIR CONRAD MURGATROYD (the Twelfth Baronet),

SIR DESMOND MURGATROYD (the Sixteenth Baronet), SIR GILBERT MURGATROYD (the Eighteenth Baronet), SIR MERVYN MURGATROYD (the Twentieth Baronet):
Ghostly ancestors. Scene stealing opportunities in the show stealing scene.

Read all lines for Ghosts 1-4.

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SIR ROD. That's better. (addressing Ghosts) Pass the fox, I think? (They assent.) Yes, pass the fox.

Dame Hannah: Hannah is an outwardly sweet old lady with a feisty side. She has the responsibility of setting the spooky scene at the beginning and tying up the emotional loose ends at the end of the show. She is the most sensible and “normal” of the whole bunch, acting as a way into the story for the audience. There’s a lot going on in this deceptively difficult role.

ROB. Dame Hannah! This is – this is not what I expected.

HAN. **Well, sir, and what would you with me? Oh, you have begun bravely – bravely indeed! Unappalled by the calm dignity of blameless womanhood, your minion has torn me from my spotless home, and dragged me, blindfold and shrieking, through hedges, over stiles, and across a very difficult country, and left me, helpless and trembling, at your mercy! Yet not helpless, coward sir, for approach one step – nay, but the twentieth part of one poor inch – and this poniard (produces a very small dagger) shall teach ye what it is to lay unholy hands on old Stephen Trusty’s daughter!**

ROB. Madam, I am extremely sorry for this. It is not at all what I intended – anything more correct – more deeply respectful than my intentions towards you, it would be impossible for any one – however particular – to desire.

HAN. **Bah, I am not to be tricked by smooth words, hypocrite! But be warned in time, for there are, without, a hundred gallant hearts whose trusty blades would hack him limb from limb who dared to lay unholy hands on old Stephen Trusty’s daughter!**

ROB. And this is what it is to embark upon a career of unlicensed pleasure!

(DAME HANNAH, who has taken a formidable dagger from one of the armed figures, throws her small dagger to ROBIN.)

HAN. **Harkye, miscreant, you have secured me, and I am your poor prisoner; but if you think I cannot take care of myself you are very much mistaken. Now then, it’s one to one, and let the best man win!** (Making for him.)

Rose Maybud: Very prim and proper and a slave to etiquette, Rose is very inexperienced in the ways of the world. Her heart is easily won depending on circumstance. She takes herself very seriously. A child pretending to be all grown up.

2 speeches to prepare

HAN. Whither away, dear Rose? On some errand of charity, as is thy wont?

ROSE A few gifts, dear aunt, for deserving villagers. Lo, here is some peppermint rock for old gaffer Gadderby, a set of false teeth for pretty little Ruth Rowbottom, and a pound of snuff for the poor orphan girl on the hill.

HAN. Ah, Rose, pity that so much goodness should not help to make some gallant youth happy for life! Rose, why dost thou harden that little heart of thine? Is there none hereaway whom thou could'st love?

ROSE And if there were such an one, verily it would ill become me to tell him so.

HAN Nay, dear one, where true love is, there is little need of prim formality.

ROSE Hush, dear aunt, for thy words pain me sorely. Hung in a plated dish-cover to the knocker of the workhouse door, with naught that I could call mine own, save a change of baby-linen and a book of etiquette, little wonder if I have always regarded that work as a voice from a parent's tomb. This hallowed volume (producing a book of etiquette), composed, if I may believe the title-page, by no less an authority than the wife of a Lord Mayor, has been, through life, my guide and monitor. By its solemn precepts I have learnt to test the moral worth of all who approach me. The man who bites his bread, or eats peas with a knife, I look upon as a lost creature, and he who has not acquired the proper way of entering and leaving a room is the object of my pitying horror. There are those in this village who bite their nails, dear aunt, and nearly all are wont to use their pocket combs in public places. In truth I could pursue this painful theme much further, but behold, I have said enough.

ROSE Sir, you are agitated –

RICH. Aye, aye, my lass, well said! I am agitated, true enough! – took flat aback, my girl; but 'tis naught – 'twill pass. (aside) This here heart of mine's a-dictatin' to me like anythink. Question is, have I a right to disregard its promptings?

ROSE Can I do aught to relieve thine anguish, for it seemeth to me that thou art in sore trouble? This apple – (offering a damaged apple).

RICH. (looking at it and returning it). No, my lass, 'tain't that: I'm – I'm took flat aback – I never see anything like you in all my born days. Parbuckle me, if you ain't the loveliest gal I've ever set eyes on. There – I can't say fairer than that, can I?

ROSE No. (aside) The question is, Is it meet that an utter stranger should thus express himself? (Refers to book.) Yes – “Always speak the truth.”

RICH. I'd no thoughts of sayin' this here to you on my own account, for, truth to tell, I was chartered by another; but when I see you my heart it up and it says, says it, "This is the very lass for you, Dick" – "speak up to her, Dick," it says – (it calls me Dick acos we was at school together) – "tell her all, Dick," it says, "never sail under false colours – it's mean!" That's what my heart tells me to say, and in my rough, common-sailor fashion, I've said it, and I'm a-waiting for your reply. I'm a-tremblin', miss. Lookye here – (holding out his hand). That's narvousness!

ROSE (aside) **Now, how should a maiden deal with such an one?** (Consults book.) **"Keep no one in unnecessary suspense."** (aloud) **Behold, I will not keep you in unnecessary suspense.** (Refers to book.) **"In accepting an offer of marriage, do so with apparent hesitation."** (aloud) **I take you, but with a certain show of reluctance.** (Refers to book.) **"Avoid any appearance of eagerness."** (aloud) **Though you will bear in mind that I am far from anxious to do so.** (Refers to book.) **"A little show of emotion will not be misplaced!"** (aloud) **Pardon this tear!** (Wipes her eye.)

RICH. Rose, you've made me the happiest blue-jacket in England! I wouldn't change places with the Admiral of the Fleet, no matter who he's a-huggin' of at this present moment! But, axin' your pardon, miss (wiping his lips with his hand), might I be permitted to salute the flag I'm a-goin' to sail under?

ROSE (referring to book). **"An engaged young lady should not permit too many familiarities."** (aloud) **Once!** (RICHARD kisses her.)

Mad Margaret: Poor Margaret has been driven insane by the consequences of the curse. Her love for “evil” Despard has tipped her over the edge. Her role is certainly broadly comedic, but there are also flashes of self awareness and a real melancholy which makes it a challenge to portray.

ROSE A maiden, and in tears? Can I do aught to soften thy sorrow? This apple – (offering apple).

MAR. (Examines it and rejects it.) **No!** (mysteriously) **Tell me, are you mad?**

ROSE I? No! That is, I think not.

MAR. **That’s well! Then you don’t love Sir Despard Murgatroyd? All mad girls love him. I love him. I’m poor Mad Margaret – Crazy Meg – Poor Peg! He! he! he! he!** (chuckling).

ROSE Thou lovest the bad Baronet of Ruddigore? Oh, horrible – too horrible!

MAR. **You pity me? Then be my mother! The squirrel had a mother; but she drank and the squirrel fled! Hush! They sing a brave song in our parts – it runs somewhat thus:** (sings)

“The cat and the dog and the little puppee

Sat down in a – down in a – in a –”

I forget what they sat down in, but so the song goes! Listen – I’ve come to pinch her!

ROSE Mercy, whom?

MAR. **You mean “who”.**

ROSE Nay! it is the accusative after the verb.

MAR. **True.** (Whispers melodramatically.) **I have come to pinch Rose Maybud!**

ROSE (Aside, alarmed.) Rose Maybud!

MAR. **Aye! I love him – he loved me once. But that’s all gone. Fight! He gave me an Italian glance – thus (business) – and made me his. He will give her an Italian glance, and make her his. But it shall not be, for I’ll stamp on her – stamp on her – stamp on her! Did you ever kill anybody? No? Why not? Listen – I killed a fly this morning! It buzzed, and I wouldn’t have it. So it died – pop! So shall she!**

ROSE But, behold, I am Rose Maybud, and I would fain not die “pop.”

MAR. **You are Rose Maybud?**

ROSE Yes, sweet Rose Maybud!

MAR. **Strange! They told me she was beautiful! And he loves you! No, no! If I thought that, I would treat you as the auctioneer and land-agent treated the lady-bird – I would rend you asunder!**

ROSE Nay, be pacified, for behold I am pledged to another, and lo, we are to be wedded this very day!

MAR. Swear me that! Come to a Commissioner and let me have it on affidavit! I once made an affidavit – but it died – it died – it died! But see, they come – Sir Despard and his evil crew! Hide, hide – they are all mad – quite mad!

ROSE What makes you think that?

MAR. Hush! They sing choruses in public. That's mad enough, I think! Go – hide away, or they will seize you! Hush! Quite softly – quite, quite softly!

Zorah & Ruth: The bridesmaids open the show and are confidently led by Zorah & Ruth. Zorah is the bossy one, and is not at all impressed by Rose Maybud. Ruth is perhaps a bit cheekier. As well as the opening dialogue there will be some opportunities for physical comedy along the way.

Read both Zorah & Ruth's lines for the audition.

HAN. Nay, gentle maidens, you sing well but vainly, for Rose is still heart-free, and looks but coldly upon her many suitors.

ZOR. It's very disappointing. Every young man in the village is in love with her, but they are appalled by her beauty and modesty, and won't declare themselves; so, until she makes her own choice, there's no chance for anybody else.

RUTH This is, perhaps, the only village in the world that possesses an endowed corps of professional bridesmaids who are bound to be on duty every day from ten to four – and it is at least six months since our services were required. The pious charity by which we exist is practically wasted!

ZOR. We shall be disendowed – that will be the end of it! Dame Hannah – you're a nice old person – you could marry if you liked. There's old Adam – Robin's faithful servant – he loves you with all the frenzy of a boy of fourteen.

HAN. Nay – that may never be, for I am pledged!

ALL. To whom?

HAN. To an eternal maidenhood! Many years ago I was betrothed to a god-like youth who woo'd me under an assumed name. But on the very day upon which our wedding was to have been celebrated, I discovered that he was no other than Sir Roderic Murgatroyd, one of the bad Baronets of Ruddigore, and the uncle of the man who now bears that title. As a son of that accursed race he was no husband for an honest girl, so, madly as I loved him, I left him then and there. He died but ten years since, but I never saw him again.

ZOR. But why should you not marry a bad Baronet of Ruddigore?

RUTH All baronets are bad; but was he worse than other baronets?

HAN. My child, he was accursed.

ZOR. But who cursed him? Not you, I trust!

HAN. The curse is on all his line, and has been ever since the time of Sir Rupert, the first Baronet. Listen, and you shall hear the legend: