

*The Pirates of Penzance*

**RUTH and KING.** Yes, yes!

**FRED.** He escaped from you on the plea that he was an orphan?

**KING.** He did.

**FRED.** It breaks my heart to betray the honoured father of the girl I adore, but as your apprentice I have no alternative. It is my duty to tell you that General Stanley is no orphan!

**RUTH and KING.** What!

**FRED.** More than that, he never was one!

**KING.** Am I to understand that, to save his contemptible life, he dared to practise on our credulous simplicity? (*FREDERIC nods as he weeps.*) Our revenge shall be swift and terrible. We will go and collect our band and attack Tremorden Castle this very night.

**FRED.** But stay –

**KING.** Not a word! He is doomed!

**TRIO.**

**KING and RUTH.**

**FREDERIC.**

Away, away! my heart's on fire;  
I burn, this base deception to repay.  
This very night my vengeance dire  
Shall glut itself in gore. Away, away!

Away, away! ere I expire –  
I find my duty hard to do today!  
My heart is filled with anguish dire,  
It strikes me to the core. Away, away!

**KING.** With falsehood foul  
He tricked us of our brides.  
Let vengeance howl;  
The Pirate so decides.  
Our nature stern  
He softened with his lies,  
And, in return,  
Tonight the traitor dies.

**ALL.** Yes, yes! tonight the traitor dies!

**RUTH.** Tonight he dies!  
**KING.** Yes, or early tomorrow.  
**FRED.** His girls likewise?  
**RUTH.** They will welter in sorrow.  
**KING.** The one soft spot –  
**RUTH.** In their natures they cherish –  
**FRED.** And all who plot –  
**KING.** To abuse it shall perish!  
**ALL.** Tonight he dies, etc.

*Exeunt KING and RUTH. Enter MABEL.*

**RECITATIVE. – MABEL.**

All is prepared, your gallant crew await you.  
My Frederic in tears? It cannot be

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That though you've lived twenty-one years, yet, if we go by birthdays, you're only five and a little bit over!

**RUTH. and KING.** Ha! ha! ha! ha!  
Ho! ho! ho! ho!

**FRED.** Dear me!  
Let's see! (*counting on fingers*)  
Yes, yes; with yours my figures do agree!

**ALL.** Ha! ha! ha! ho! ho! ho! ho!

**FRED.** (*more amused than any*) How quaint the ways of Paradox!  
At common sense she gaily mocks!  
Though counting in the usual way,  
Years twenty-one I've been alive,  
Yet, reckoning by my natal day,  
I am a little boy of five!

**RUTH and KING.** He is a little boy of five! Ha! ha! ha!

**ALL.** A paradox, a paradox,  
A most ingenious paradox!  
Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!, etc.

*RUTH and KING throw themselves back on seats, exhausted with laughter.*

**FRED.** Upon my word, this is most curious – most absurdly whimsical. Five-and-a-quarter! No one would think it to look at me!

**RUTH.** You are glad now, I'll be bound, that you spared us. You would never have forgiven yourself when you discovered that you had killed *two of your comrades*.

**FRED.** My comrades?

**KING.** (*rises*) I'm afraid you don't appreciate the delicacy of your position: You were apprenticed to us –

**FRED.** Until I reached my twenty-first year.

**KING.** No, until you reached your twenty-first *birthday* (*producing document*), and, going by birthdays, you are as yet only five-and-a-quarter.

**FRED.** You don't mean to say you are going to hold me to that?

**KING.** No, we merely remind you of the fact, and leave the rest to your sense of duty.

**RUTH.** Your sense of duty!

**FRED.** (*wildly*) Don't put it on that footing! As I was merciful to you just now, be merciful to me! I implore you not to insist on the letter of your bond just as the cup of happiness is at my lips!

**RUTH.** We insist on nothing; we content ourselves with pointing out to you *your duty*.

**KING.** Your duty!

**FRED.** (*after a pause*) Well, you have appealed to my sense of duty, and my duty is only too clear. I abhor your infamous calling; I shudder at the thought that I have ever been mixed up with it; but duty is before all – at any price I will do my duty.

**KING.** Bravely spoken! Come, you are one of us once more.

**FRED.** Lead on, I follow. (*suddenly*) Oh, horror!

**RUTH and KING.** What is the matter?

**FRED.** Ought I to tell you? No, no, I cannot do it; and yet, as one of your band –

**KING.** Speak out, I charge you by that sense of conscientiousness to which we have never yet appealed in vain.

**FRED.** General Stanley, the father of my Mabel –