

ARCHDUKE

Gentle creature, forgive me for the deceit I have practiced on you.

He kisses her hand.

ORLANDO

Indeed, it was very cruel of you to deceive me.

CHORUS

In short, they acted the parts of man and woman for ten minutes with great vigor—

Orlando swoons and the Archduke catches her.

ORLANDO

Lal How you frighten me!

The Archduke chases Orlando around a table.

CHORUS

And then the two fell into natural discourse.

ARCHDUKE

Dearest lady, my story is a tragical one. (Tee-hee.) I am a man and have, indeed, always been one. (Haw-haw.) I saw a portrait of you long ago—at the time when you dressed in the stockings of a man— (Tee-hee.) —and I fell hopelessly in love with you. I knew no way of winning you but to dress as a woman. I was desolated—ruined—when you fled to Constantinople. (Haw-haw.) For to me, you were and always will be the Pink, the Pearl and the Perfection of your sex.

He kisses her hand.

ORLANDO

(To the audience) If this is love, there is something highly ridiculous about it.

The Archduke falls to his knees.

ARCHDUKE

Listen. I have more land in Romania than any nobleman in England. The shooting— (tee-hee) —is excellent. True, the pheasants have suffered from poultry disease in my absence— (haw-haw)—

ORLANDO

The peasants?

ARCHDUKE

The pheasants!—but that can be put right, my dear, and all will be well—I am certain of it—if only we lived in Romania together.

CHORUS

As he spoke,
tears ran down the sandy tracts of his cheeks.

ORLANDO

Orlando was beginning to be aware that women should be shocked when men display emotion in their presence, and so, shocked she was.

She slaps the Archduke.

ORLANDO

How dare you cry in my presence!

ARCHDUKE

I must apologize.
I cannot help but feel moved
to tears in the presence of your great beauty.
I must leave you now.
But I will return tomorrow for your answer to my proposition.

He kisses her hand.

CHORUS

That was a Tuesday.
He came on Wednesday.

He kisses her hand again.

CHORUS

He came on a Thursday.

He kisses her wrist.

CHORUS

And he came on a Friday . . .

He kisses her inner elbow. She slaps him.

CHORUS

Each visit began, continued, or concluded with a declaration of love:

ARCHDUKE

I love you.

ORLANDO

Thank you very much.

CHORUS

But, in between, there was much room for silence.

Orlando and the Archduke sit down next to each other.

A long silence.

The Archduke fidgets and knocks over a potted palm.

Another long silence.

ARCHDUKE

I shot an elk in Sweden.

ORLANDO

Was it a very big elk?

ARCHDUKE

Well, it was not as big as the reindeer I shot in Norway.

Silence.

ORLANDO

Have you ever shot a tiger?

ARCHDUKE

I've shot an albatross.

Orlando yawns. She looks out the window.

ORLANDO

Is an albatross as big as an elephant?

ARCHDUKE

(Whispering) I adore you.

ORLANDO

Look, it's beginning to rain.

Orlando pretends she doesn't hear and smiles brightly.

The Archduke fidgets.

ORLANDO

Will you have a cup of tea?

ARCHDUKE

Yes, please.

ORLANDO

One lump or two?

ARCHDUKE

One please . . . *(In a lower tone)* . . . my darling.

ORLANDO

Oh, I know a game! See that fly buzzing about?

ARCHDUKE

Yes.

*Their eyes follow an imaginary fly circling overhead.
The chorus makes buzzing sounds.*

ORLANDO

I bet you five hundred pounds that the fly will settle on *my* lump of sugar rather than on yours.

ARCHDUKE

That's a delightful game . . . my darling. I bet you five hundred pounds.

They watch the fly circle the room The fly lands on Orlando's lump of sugar.

ORLANDO

Ha ha! I've won! Five hundred pounds please!

He hands her five hundred pounds.

ORLANDO

(To the audience) What's the good of being a fine young woman in the prime of life if I have to pass all my mornings watching flies with an Archduke?

There must be some way out of this difficulty!

CHORUS

But she was still awkward in the arts of her sex, as she could no longer knock a man over the head.

ORLANDO

Orlando thought of a plan.

Oh dear, I do believe my plants are dying.

The Archduke looks at the plants.

CHORUS

While the Archduke was gazing at her plants, she gently pressed the life out of a fly.

ORLANDO

(Pressing the life out of a fly) I'm sorry little fly. There. Quite dead.

CHORUS

Her reckoning was that the Archduke would detect the fraud, and, as cheating is a heinous crime, he would refuse to have anything further to do with her.

ORLANDO

Loo! I've won again while you weren't looking! See?

ARCHDUKE

So you have, my pretty! I didn't even hear a fly buzzing about!

CHORUS

A dead fly looked to him much the same as a living one. She played the trick twenty times and he paid her over twenty thousand pounds. Finally, the Archduke could be deceived no longer.

ARCHDUKE

That fly is dead!
You killed that fly!
You pasted it onto your sugar lump!
Didn't you? Did you?

ORLANDO

Yes.

ARCHDUKE

That you won my fortune is nothing. You are welcome to it. It's only that you deceived me . . . It hurts me to think you capable of it. To love a woman who cheats at play is, I'm afraid, impossible. And yet, you are, after all, only a woman. Allowances must be made. Perhaps I can forgive you . . . out of the wildness of my passion . . .

ORLANDO

Orlando feared such a speech. And now, after concealing a toad under her blouse all morning, she dropped the toad down the shirt of the Archduke.

*The Archduke howls.
Orlando laughs.*

ORLANDO

She laughed.

ARCHDUKE

The Archduke blushed.

ORLANDO

She laughed!

ARCHDUKE

The Archduke cursed.

ORLANDO

She laughed.

ARCHDUKE

The Archduke slammed the door.

ORLANDO

Heaven be praised!
I am alone.

END

CHORUS

With the twelfth stroke of midnight,
the darkness was complete.
All was darkness
all was doubt
all was confusion.
The Eighteenth Century was over;
The Nineteenth Century had begun.