

START

---

*Scene 2: The Queen*

*The Queen extends her hand.  
Orlando kneels before her.*

ORLANDO

Such was Orlando's shyness that he saw no  
more of her than her ringed hand in water, but  
it was enough.

ORLANDO AND CHORUS

It was a memorable hand.

THE QUEEN

A thin hand with long fingers always curling as if 'round orb or  
scepter;

ORLANDO

a nervous, crabbed, sickly hand;

THE QUEEN

a commanding hand, a hand that had only to raise itself for a head to fall; yes, the Queen had a hand—

ORLANDO

—Orlando guessed, attached to an old body that smelt like a cupboard.

THE QUEEN

Come.

*Orlando approaches the Queen and kneels at her feet.*

THE QUEEN

The Queen studied Orlando.  
She read him like a page—Eyes, mouth, nose, hips, hands . . .  
By God! He has the shapeliest legs of any nobleman in England!

ORLANDO

He only felt something press against his hair . . .

*The Queen kisses Orlando's hair.*

CHORUS

He had been kissed by a queen without knowing it.

THE QUEEN

What is your name, dear boy?

ORLANDO

Orlando.

THE QUEEN

Orlando! And what do you want to be when you grow up, Orlando?

ORLANDO

I would very much like to be a poet, Your Highness.

THE QUEEN

Ah, romance, folly, poetry, youth! I think you would make a fine poet, Orlando. And I have always wanted a gentleman just your age. How would you like to come to Court, Orlando?

ORLANDO

To Court—that's a very great honor, Your Highness.

THE QUEEN

Yes.

The Queen plucked a ring from her finger—  
The joint was rather swollen—

Orlando, I want to give you this ring. I hereby name you my Treasurer and Steward.

ORLANDO

Thank you, Mum.

CHORUS

And the Queen took Orlando to Court.

THE QUEEN

For the old woman loved Orlando.

CHORUS

Lands were given him  
A great house assigned him.

THE QUEEN

He was to be the son of her old age.

CHORUS

And the flower bloomed and faded.  
And the sun rose and sank.

*The Queen leads Orlando to her bedroom and pulls him down among the cushions.*

→ SARAH RUHL ←

THE QUEEN

I hope that you will stay with me always.

ORLANDO

Yes, Mum.

CHORUS

And the flower bloomed and faded.  
And the sun rose and sank.

THE QUEEN

Shall we play a game, Orlando?

ORLANDO

Yes, Mum. What is the game?

THE QUEEN

First you recite a Petrarchan sonnet on my eyes,  
and then I challenge you to an ode upon my feet.

ORLANDO

Yes, Mum.

THE QUEEN

And if they are very good, you may kiss me.

ORLANDO

Yes, Mum.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate . . .

THE QUEEN

That's enough, Orlando. I believe I've heard that one before. But  
it was very, very good, and you may kiss me.

*She kisses him, passionately.*

→ ORLANDO ←

THE QUEEN

This—

CHORUS

The Queen breathed—

THE QUEEN

Is my victory!

CHORUS

And the flower bloomed and faded.  
And the sun rose and sank.

*Orlando sighs.*

THE QUEEN

What *is* the matter, Orlando?

ORLANDO

Mum?

THE QUEEN

Are you quite content? You don't seem your usual self. Did you  
enjoy the parakeets from the Azores?

ORLANDO

Very much, Mum.

THE QUEEN

Perhaps you are bored. Perhaps you do not play with boys your  
own age quite enough.

ORLANDO

How could boys my own age compare with a queen, Mum?

THE QUEEN

That's the spirit, Orlando.

END