

→ SARAH RUHL ←

EUPHROSYNE

(To audience) Everyone knew that Orlando was engaged to another—

(To a friend)

Me!

I wear his sapphire on my left hand.

(To the audience)

Yet Euphrosyne might drop all the handkerchiefs in her wardrobe upon the ice and Orlando never stooped to pick them up.

Euphrosyne drops a profusion of handkerchiefs on the ground.

EUPHROSYNE

Orlando! Orlando! I've dropped my handkerchief! Orlando!

Orlando and Sasha don't notice her.

CHORUS

But what most outraged the Court
was that the couple was often seen to slip
under the silken rope
which railed off the Royal enclosure
from the common people.

Sasha and Orlando slip under the rope.

SASHA

Take me away. I detest your English Court. It is full of prying old women. They smell bad. It is like being in cage. In Russia we have rivers ten miles broad on which one can gallop all day without meeting a soul. I want to leave the Court!

ORLANDO

Do you fancy seeing London?

SASHA

I don't know—what is in this London?

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→ ORLANDO ←

ORLANDO

The Tower, the Beefeaters, the jeweler's shops, the theaters . . .

SASHA

Ah! Yes. I would like to see your London.

ORLANDO AND SASHA

So they skated to London on the frozen Thames.
They got further and further away from Court.

The sound of skates scraping against ice.

ORLANDO

Hot with skating . . .

SASHA

And with love . . .

ORLANDO

They would throw themselves down on a solitary place . . .

SASHA

Wrapped in a great fur cloak . . .

ORLANDO

Orlando would take her in his arms and know . . .

SASHA

For the first time . . .

ORLANDO

The delights of love.

They kiss, wrapped in a great fur cloak.

SASHA

Then, they would speak of everything under the sun.

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START

ORLANDO
For instance:

SASHA
This man's beard!

ORLANDO
That woman's skin!

SASHA
A rat that fed from my hand!

ORLANDO
A face!

SASHA
A feather!

ORLANDO
Nothing was too small for such talk.

SASHA
Nothing was too great.
Sometimes Orlando would be melancholy.

ORLANDO
All ends in death.

SASHA
But I do not like Orlando to be melancholy. So I speak to him
enchantingly, wittily, wisely (but always in French, which I'm
afraid loses its flavor in translation).

She whispers French into his ear.

ORLANDO
You are a fox, an olive tree, an emerald.

Orlando tried to tell her what she was like—
Darling, you are a—a—

but words failed him.

He wanted another landscape, and another tongue. English was
too frank for describing Sasha. In all that the Princess said, there
was something hidden.

SASHA
(To the audience) What did she hide from him?

She touches his cheek and smiles mysteriously.

SASHA
(To Orlando) One day we will live in Russia together, where there
are frozen rivers and wild horses and men who gash each other's
throats open.

ORLANDO
(To Sasha) Yes, my love.

(To the audience)
But habits of lust and slaughter did not entice him.

*Orlando pulls Sasha up and they begin skating again.
The sound of skates scraping against ice.*

CHORUS
One day, after skating for twenty hours,
they reached a part of the river
where ships had anchored and been frozen.
Among them was the ship of the Russian Embassy.

The sound of a Russian sea-song sung by sea men.

SASHA
Greetings, countrymen!

Her countrymen greet her in Russian. She goes aboard the ship.

SASHA

(To Orlando) I'll be back soon, my love! Wait for me! I only want to say hello to my countrymen!

ORLANDO

Don't be long, darling!

CHORUS

So Orlando waited.
He walked up and down the ice.

ORLANDO

He thought only of the pleasures of life.

CHORUS

The sun was sinking rapidly.

ORLANDO

Still, he waited.
Sasha had been gone an hour.

The sound of a bell tolling the hour.

ORLANDO

Orlando was seized with dark forebodings.
He could wait no longer.

CHORUS

He dashed into the ship.

*Orlando opens a door to the ship. Inside the ship, Orlando freezes.
He sees Sasha on a sailor's knee.
She bends toward the sailor in slow motion, embracing him.*

CHORUS

Orlando blazed into such a howl of anguish that the
WHOLE SHIP ECHOED!!!

Orlando leaps at the sailor, Sasha throws herself between them.

Orlando collapses. Sasha revives him.

SASHA

Orlando, dear, are you all right? What is the matter? You must have been dreaming. You must have been faint!

ORLANDO

You—you bent towards a sailor—you kissed him.

SASHA

The room was dark—shadows must have moved. There was a heavy box, I helped one of my countrymen to move it.

ORLANDO

You did?

SASHA

Yes.

ORLANDO

It was very dark in the room.

SASHA

Yes, it was very, very dark.

ORLANDO

Yes. Kiss me and forgive me my folly.

They kiss.

ORLANDO

No! I saw you! You kissed him! You did! You did!

SASHA

I call upon the gods to destroy me if I, a Royal Romanovitch, laid in the arms of a common sea man!

I will leave this very night.

ORLANDO

Orlando looked at the sailor.

SEA MAN

(With Russian accent) The man was huge, wore common wire rings in his ears, and looked like a horse upon which a robin had perched in its flight.

The sea man winds heavy rope in his hands and looks at Orlando.

Orlando looks at Sasha.

Orlando looks at the sea man.

Orlando looks at Sasha.

SASHA

Well?

ORLANDO

Don't leave me, Sasha. You must forgive me. If I am a jealous fool, it is only because I love you.

SASHA

I forgive you this time. But you must never again doubt me, Orlando.

They link arms.

SASHA AND ORLANDO

And so they skated again towards London,
arm in arm.

ORLANDO

Suspensions melted in his breast, and he felt as if he had been hooked by a great fish through the nose and rushed through the waters unwillingly, yet with his own consent.

END