Carlo Gozzi
The Love of Thee Oranges

A Comedy in Three Acts

Original:

L'amore delle tre melarance

1761

Translation: John Lousis DiGaetani

Prince Tartaglia's life is filled with misery until an evil witch and her equally evil henchmen curse him to search for three giant oranges. But this quest proves more fruitful than anyone could have imagined as a once-lonely prince discovers love, friendship, and laughter when he encounters wizards, monarchs, and a wild narrator who isn't sure how far removed from the story he really is.

Ebook: http://originalbook.ru

The Love of Thee Oranges. Carlo Gozzi

CHARACTERS

Speaker of the Prologue
Silvio, King of Hearts, monarch of an imaginary kingdom; he is costumed like the figure on the playing cards
Prince Tartaglia, son of Silvio, heir to the throne
Pantalone, male servant and adviser to the King
Prince Clarice, niece to the King, second in line of succession to the throne
Truffaldino, a famous jester, later servant to Prince Tartaglia
Leonardo, First Minister of the realm; he is costumed like the Jack of Hearts on the playing cards
Brighella, a male servant to Leonardo
Celio, a good wizard
Fata Morgana, an evil witch
Farfarello, a devil
The Wind God, a mime role
Smeraldina, a female servant to Fata Morgana
A girl dressed in white (formerly an orange)
Another girl dressed in white (formerly an orange)
Princess Ninetta, another girl dressed in white (also formerly an orange)
Two country bumpkins
Creonta, an evil witch
A gate, a dog, a rope, and a cook
Palace guards and servants

The time is the imaginary present.

PROLOGUE

SPEAKER OF THE PROLOGUE: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen! But your humble servants, the actors of the old commedia dell'arte, are confused and embarrassed. They are standing there, behind the scenes, with their hands over their ears and with sad faces. And that isn't enough, because they can still hear people say: "They are dried out." "They always give the audience the same old comedies that stink of mold." "They're an affront, a farce, a joke, and a cheat."

I swear to you that to get back your esteem the actors back there would be willing to lose their teeth, and eyes even, and they sent me ahead to tell you that most sincerely. So please sit still and remain patient, dear audience, for a few moments until I explain some things to you, and then you can do what you will to me.

We players of the commedia dell'arte don't know how to please you anymore. A play that was such a hit many years ago is now no longer any good. The wheel of public taste moves with the wind it seems, and we can't predict where we eat regularly, and then our stomachs are full.

Today to be successful a comedy must have a complicated plot, many conflicts and surprising situations, some shady characters, and a sudden turn of events So we stand here with fearful hearts, looking at each other confused and afraid. Because it's necessary to eat, we'll turn once again to our old comedies and try again to entertain you.

Yet I don't know why it is that we can no longer interest you – we who were formerly threated so well by you. It seems incredible. Is our lack of slang, perhaps, the cause of this? Well, then, in this world everything is corruptible, even language, and we have the patience to endure anything, but your hatred and neglect are really too much for us to bear.

So we'll try anything to please you. We'll even try popular slang to regain you favor -- we'll hire some poets if need be. We'll sell our pants to buy some ink: we'll sell our shirts to buy some paper. If we don't have enough talent, well, we'll try to give you some amount of pleasure; that will be good enough for us.

Yet remember that nothing goes on forever, and that which is high today will be low tomorrow, and the reverse will happen. An old picture has a style, and that style can come back into fashion.

The old play we've got ready for you will make old people become like children again, and educated and cultivated parents will bring their children to see this show. There will be no superhuman geniuses here tonight, but we can easily exist without them, and we certainly don't hate the sound of money.

You will see a great many strange things tonight. Real wonders. You might have heard of them before, but you haven't seen them before coming here. You'll hear beasts and birds speaking aloud – in good prose too, not slang, and if the dialogue interests and amuses you, don't hesitate to laugh and applaud.

The actors are getting eager to start the show, but first I'd like to tell you the story…. I'm embarrassed and hesitant. I'm afraid you will boo and shout me down.

… It's about three oranges… and about love. Who's ever heard of that? Well, I've told you now, but don't blame me yet. Just be patient, my friends, and pretend that you are six years old again, in bed, sleepy, and you grandmother is telling you a story.

End of Prologue.

ACT 1

Scene 1

– a room in the palace. King Silvio, Pantalone, and guards.

SILVIO, KING OF HEARTS: Oh, my poor son.

PANTALONE: The poor boy.

KING: My poor son!

PANTALONE: Still no better?

KING: No. Worse!

PANTALONE: Worse!

KING: Worse. For ten years now he's been incurably sick. I've had the greatest doctors in the realm examine the boy. My poor Prince Tartaglia! My poor son! My sole heir! And all the doctors say the same thing – incurably ill.

PANTALONE: The poor boy.

KING: My only son a grave! (He weeps.)

PANTALONE: Try not to excite yourself so much, your majesty. Remain calm.

KING: A fatal and incurable illness: Terminal Hypochondria. The doctors give the poor lad no hope of recovery. Terminal. Terminal Hypochondria.

PANTALONE: Yes, but what do these doctors know? They don't know anything. Have you noticed that they always agree with each other? Have you tried and magicians yet?

KING: I've even tried magicians for poor Prince Tartaglia. Ah, my poor son! The poor boy.

PANTALONE: But your Highness, pss. (whispering so the guards cannot hear him) Ah I don't mean to be indiscreet, but, your Highness, could it be something you got a dose of in your younger days and communicated to him . . . later on? Maybe this… you know . . .

KING: I beg your pardon! Don't even suggest such a thing! I have always been faithful, completely faithful, to my wife, the Queen. At least as long as she was alive.

PANTALONE: Well, let's not underestimate the prince. Maybe he got a dose himself. And maybe he's too shy to reveal the cause of his illness! Perhaps a boyish indiscretion on his part...

KING: No, Pantalone. No. I have had the boy fully examined by the greatest doctors in the realm, and all those great doctors have agreed completely on the diagnosis: an extremely grave, and probably terminal, case of hypochondria. The doctors have said, though, that there was one possible cure, though only just a possibility. If he prince can somehow be made to laugh, and soon, there is a chance for a cure; otherwise he will be underground soon. Oh, my poor boy. Just a little smile on his face would be a sign of an improvement in his condition. But it is impossible. Ah, it grieves me, Pantalone. I'm such an old man, already quite decrepit, and my only son lies on his deathbed, which means the crown will pass to my niece. Oh, my poor subjects! (The King weeps again.)

PANTALONE: There, there. Stop grieving like this or you'll be on a deathbed too. You'll never get the prince to laugh with this kind of behavior! Why, the whole court is in mourning! What I suggest is . . . order a festival! Order some games and a tournament! Have a party! Order a masked ball! Have a comedy staged for the whole court, including the prince. Hey! See if you can hire Truffaldino. He's great jester – guaranteed to make people laugh! I'll bet he, if anyone, can cure the prince of this terminal hypochondria. The prince has already met him and apparently likes

him, so give it a try! Maybe it will work. If he can get the prince to laugh, maybe he can cure him of this horrible disease. What have you got to lose! You've tried everything else.

KING: Hmmm. What you say sounds possible.

PANTALONE: Can it hurt? You've tried everything else.

KING: But the boy is so sick! All the noise might make him worse.

PANTALONE: But sick with hypochondria! It's all in his mind.

KING: Hmmm. . . Well, I'll try it. Order a banquet for the whole court! Order a . . . (Leonardo enters.)

PANTALONE: (aside) Oh, Leonardo. I don't trust him. I bet he wants the prince dead.

KING: Ah, Leonardo, I was just about to give orders for some festivities: a court banquet and then a masked ball with entertainment. I will also decree that whoever can make the prince laugh, by whatever means, will get a huge prize.

LEONARDO: But your Majesty, I beg you, reconsider these orders, for poor Prince Tartaglia is a very sick man. Such an uproar could easily cause his death.

KING: But, Leonardo, everything else we have tried has failed to cure the prince so we must try this as well. I myself will go to the kitchen and order a royal banquet for the whole court. Then I will arrange for some entertainments.

PANTALONE: Yes, your Majesty, you are right. (The King and Pantalone exit quickly, followed by the guards.)

LEONARDO: This is a foolish, hasty move that will not help a sick man get better. (Princess Clarice, appearing very neurotic and self-obsesses, enters and kisses Leonardo.)

CLARICE: I said I'd marry you, but only after the death of my cousin, Tartaglia. Then you will at last be the King and I . . . the Queen.

LEONARDO: Yes, my beloved. I eagerly look forward to the day when you and . . .

CLARICE: Yes. Yes. You say you love me, but what have you done to hasten our marriage? What? It could take Tartaglia years to die of hypochondria. Years! And you say you love me.

LEONARDO: Patience, my dear. Patience. My helper is Fata Morgana, and she is most powerful. She has given me magic potions to put in the Prince's food, and they are certain to hasten his death. Have patience, my dear. Fata Morgana will help us because she has hated the King of Hearts ever since she lost much for her fortune gambling on that card. But she loves the Jack of Hearts because she got back some for her money by playing that card. I guess she's a very superstitious witch. Well, anyway, she lives in a lake near the city. My source for this information is Smeraldina who is a servant to Fata Morgana.

CLARICE: But it is all so slow, so agonizingly slow, to kill the prince this way. This can last forever. Forever!

LEONARDO: I myself was at first doubtful about how long these magic potions would take to kill the prince. But be patient, my dear. What I am more worried about is the sudden and unexplained presence of a certain Truffaldino at the court, a person who seems most witty; and if Tartaglia laughs just once, he will be cured.

CLARICE: Oh, no! I saw that clown Truffaldino in the hallway. He is funny! The mere sight of him is enough to make most people laugh.

LEONARDO: Relax, my pet. Relax. I have sent my servant, Brighella, to Smeraldina to find out why this Truffaldino has suddenly appeared at court and to ask for Fata Morgana's assistance in getting rid of him. (Brighella enters, to Leonardo--)

BRIGHELLA: I've found out what you wanted to know. Truffaldino was sent to the court by a magician, Celio, who is an enemy of Fata Morgana and wants to help the King of Hearts. Celio sent Truffaldino to protect Prince Tartaglia, the King, and the people from the black magic of Fata Morgana. Celio and Fata Morgana hate each other and usually argue and come to blows whenever they meet on earth.

LEONARDO: What did you say!

CLARICE: We've got to kill that jester, and we have to kill him quickly. Quickly. How about arsenic or a bullet?

LEONARDO: No. No. Those magic potions will work better.

CLARICE: The jester Truffaldino will digest them as easily as Prince Tartaglia does.

BRIGHELLA: But I have one bit of good news for you. Morgana will be at these festivities for Prince Tartaglia, and she will make sure the prince will never laugh. She will place a magic curse on the whole party, making sure that all fails.

CLARICE: I hope all this works.

LEONARDO: It will work, my love. It will work . . . (They exit.)

Scene 2

-- the hypochondriacal prince's bedchamber. Prince Tartaglia appears in a costume that is a comic parody of the invalid. He is resting on a large easy chair. Next to the chair is a table piled with medicine bottles, ointments, salves, pills, spittoons, how water bottles, and the rest of the trappings of the hypochondriac. He talks in a weak and wavering voice.

PRINCE TARTAGLIA: Ah, poor me! (He coughs.) What a fate! Ah poor me! I've tried the water treatment; it failed. I've tried the fresh air treatment; it failed. Then there was red meat cure -- a waste of time. Next I had the fruit diet, then the yogurt and vegetable diets -- all failures. Still I'm always weak, always sick, and always (he coughs pathetically) . . . Oh. It's time for my medicine, (He lovingly takes a spoonful of something out of one of the bottles.) Ah . . . it tastes awful, but I feel a little better. But my head still hurts. I get fainting spells and dizzy spells and I always have a fever and my joints hurt. I also get hot flashes and sometimes hot flushes -- one rises from the feet and the other goes down from the head. I need an enema at least once a week to keep my bowels regular. Otherwise, I'm blocked up for days.

(Truffaldino enters in a clown's outfit, does a series of comic routines, then asks--)

TRUFFALDINO: Funny?

TARTAGLIA: No. (Truffaldino does several more comic routines.)

TRUFFALDINO: Not funny at all?

TARTAGLIA: Boring. It gave me a headache and a hot flush. And, by the way, who are you?

TRUFFALDINO: I am the internationally famous comic and wandering court jester, Truffaldino. I make everyone laugh.

TARTAGLIA: Oh? You do? Hm.

TRUFFALDINO: Let me feel you pulse. (after checking it) Normal.

TARTAGLIA: It is NOT normal! Oh, my throat hurts and I (he starts coughing) . . . I have to spit . . . quick, get my . . .

(Truffaldino gets the spittoon for him; the prince spits into it. Truffaldino examines the contents of the spittoon very carefully.)

TRUFFALDINO: Ugh! It seems like old poetry.

(Sounds of music and people talking and laughing are heads offstage.)

TRUFFALDINO: You hear that! A festival! A masked ball! A banquet! Wouldn't you like to go?

TARTAGLIA: Are you insane? A festival in my condition? I'm very sick man and have to stay in bed near my medicines. (Truffaldino quietly begins to throw hs medicine bottles out the window.)

TARTAGLIA: Are you crazy? What are you doing. Stop! Stop, you lunatic! My medicines! Stop! I'll die without my medicines!

TRUFFALDINO: No ,ore medicines for you! To the banquet! To the ball! Come . . . come . . .

(He forces Tartaglia out of his chair and drags him out. The whole time Tartaglia is yelling and crying pathetically.)

TARTAGLIA: Stop! Stop! I'll die! I'm too sick to go out! Where's my hot water bottle? Stop! Stop . . .

Scene 3

-- a court room in the palace. Leonardo enters.

LEONARDO: Well, I have carried out the King's orders. A banquet, a masked ball, and entertainments have been decreed for today and the people are certainly desperate for some celebrations. Many people will come in costume and masked today, but I have ordered some to come as death heads and skeletons to depress the prince and make him even more melancholy. Well . . . it's time to let the crowds into the palace.

(Fata Morgana, dressed as a ridiculous old hag, enters.)

LEONARDO: Old lady, did you get in here before the door was opened? Who are you? Who let you in?

FATA MORGANA: Fool. Don't you recognize me? I'm Fata Morgana and I'm here to help you, for as long as I am present in this room, the prince will never laugh.

LEONARDO: (getting on his knees, and kissing her hand) Ah, my Queen, my Queen! I did not recognize you in your costume, but I am thankful for your supernatural help.

FATA MORGANA: That's more like it. Now open the doors and let the herds come in. (Fata Morgana retires, the doors are opened. The King, Prince Tartaglia, muffled and in a bathrobe, Clarice, Pantalone, guards, enter. The people, masked and in costume, follow them in. The King and Prince sit on the dais in the center of the stage.)

KING: Ah, welcome, my people. Welcome. Let the entertainments begin. And whoever can make the prince laugh gets this huge sack of gold! (He waves a large sack of gold.)

TRUFFALDINO: All right, your Majesty. Entertainment number one, a tournament!

(Truffaldino directs to begin a mock knightly tournament between people dressed as clowns. Everybody enjoys this and laughs.)

TRUFFALDINO: (aside to the King) Did the prince laugh?.

KING: (aside to the prince) Wasn't that funny!

TARTAGLIA: No. Not at all. The air is so stuffy in here, and all this noise is giving me a headache. Please, Daddy, allow me to return to my nice warm bed. I need my medicines.

KING: (aside to Truffaldino) No. He looks worse.

TRUFFALDINO: (announcing to the whole crowd) Entertainment number two. Guards, bring in the fountain. (The guards bring in a fountain spurting wine.)

TRUFFALDINO: Wine! Wine! Wine! (A group of drinks and gluttons hurry in. Their desperate efforts to get the wine causes everybody in the room to laugh, except the prince.)

FATA MORGANA: (entering) Wine? Wine? Did you say wine? (She goes to the fountain with a glass in her hand, trying to get some too.)

TRUFFALDINO: Who let you in here, you old hag.

FATA MORGANA: Fool. Mind your own business.

TRUFFALDINO: You don't belong in here. I've never seen you before.

FATA MORGANA: Oh, shut up.

TRUFFALDINO: You old witch! I'll call the guards to drag you away. (Fata Morgana hits him. He stands shocked a minute then he hits her back. She hits him: he hits her again and nocks her down, her legs go sprawling into the air.)

PRINCE TARTAGLIA: (who has been quietly observing all this, starts to laugh) Ha! Ha! Ha! (All the people in court look in amazement and are happy the prince is laughing except for Leonardo and Clarice.)

KING: My dear Truffaldino, you get the prize! (He hands him a large sack of gold. General rejoicing and applause on stage.)

FATA MORGANA: (furiously stopping all the rejoicing) Stop this! Shut up! Silence! Shut up and listen to me. (talking directly to the prince, who stops laughing) Listen to me, you braying ass. I will now place a curse on you that will make you stop laughing forever. I will put a spell on you, and you will fall in love with three orange and chase them to the distant corners of the earth. You will not rest until you possess one of them. You can love only three particular oranges, not

any oranges. Run! Run! Find them if you can! (She laughs triumphantly, then disappears.)

TARTAGLIA: Where are the three oranges? Where are they? The three oranges! Where? Where?

(He rushes offstage.)

KING: Prince! Stop! Stop! My son! Stop!

(General confusion on stage.)

End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1

-- in one of the prince's rooms.

PANTALONE: What a change! What a change! Who would have believed it! The dying prince is now a raving lunatic desperate to leave the court – and all because of that witch's curse. Nothing can calm the prince down or restrain him. He keeps asking his father the King for iron shoes so he can walk around the whole world if necessary to find the three oranges. He's desperate to find these three oranges that he's never seen. How good can they taste? How juicy can they be? And so now the King has ordered Truffaldino to get the prince a pair of iron shoes! This whole thing is beginning to sound like a fairy tale.

(Pantalone exits.)

(Prince Tartaglia enters with Truffaldino.)

TARTAGLIA: Well, where are they? Where are they? I've waited for over an hour now. Where are they?

TRUFFALDINO: But where am I supposed to find a pair of iron shoes?

PRINCE TARTAGLIA: Did you try a shoe store?

TRUFFALDINO: No. I went to a blacksmith and he thought I was a lunatic.

TARTAGLIA: Well, then try a shoe store. . . . I've got to have them. I've got to get to those wonderful, beautiful, succulent, juicy three oranges. Grandmother told me they were two thousand miles away and under the power of the evil witch, Creonta. I have got to find them and rescue them from Creonta's castle. I must save them and make them mine, so get my armor amd let us go immediately. You can be my squire. (Some comedy here with the armor, a parody of the dressing of the hero before battle.)

TARTAGLIA: Wonderful. Let us leave now. Quickly. (The King, Pantalone, and guards enter. One of the guards carries a pair of iron shoes on a silver tray. The following scene should be played in a mock tragic style.)

KING: Stay, my son. Stay. I beg you, for you will surely die on such a long journey. Do not leave the court, I beg you.

TARTAGLIA: No. No. Get out of my way, for I must find those three oranges. Otherwise, I will become the dying hypochondriac I was before. Get out of my way. Go!

KING: How much sharper than a serpent's tooth is an ungrateful child! Ah, this younger generation. I get no respect in my own palace. (Meanwhile Truffaldino helps the prince put on the shoes.)

TARTAGLIA: Come, Truffaldino, we must go.

KING: No, Stay, Stop.

PANTALONE: But we've got so many oranges in the kitchen already. Wouldn't three of the, do.

TARTAGLIA: My destiny calls me! Farewell!

(Prince Tartaglia and Truffaldino exit quickly. The King faints. Pantalone fans him.)

(Princess Clarice, Leonardo, and Brighella hurry on to the stage.)

CLARICE: (to Pantalone) What was all that noise about. Why is the King so weak and pale? What has been going on here? Why are you creating such a fuss.

LEONARDO: What is meaning of this.

PANTALONE: Well, the King has just collapsed, and the prince has just gone off to find three oranges, and you want to know what all the fuss is about!

BRIGHELLA: What are you talking about? All this sounds like a fairy tale to me.

KING: (recovering, then raving in a tragic manner.) Oh, alas is me! Alas! My son! My poor son! My son is dead! The whole court must dress in black. I will end my days in weeping and loneliness. Alas. Alas.

PANTALONE: oh, my King. I will weep with you. We will shed our tears together into one handkerchief -- then give that handkerchief to some poet to inspire him.

KING: Oh, shut up, Pantalone.

(The King exits, followed by Pantalone and the guards.)

CLARICE: Ah, Morgana!

LEONARDO: Yes. Fata Morgana is a powerful, supernatural force, and she is on our side.

BRIGHELLA: What a girl she is. You've got to hand it to that Fata Morgana.

CLARICE: Well, now that you will soon be king and I will finally become queen, we'd better come to some understanding about rights and division of powers. I want to be in charge of the armies, and I want to be the minister of war. Even if I should lose a battle, I would be so charming that the generals on the other side would surely do as I say and declare me the victor. Yes. I must be in charge of the armies.

BRIGHELLA: And since I've helped you two all along, I want to be in charge of the court's entertainments. I want to be the master of revels.

CLARICE: I will agree to that, so long as there are many great tragedies in the court theater.

LEONARDO: Well. I would prefer some comedies.

BRIGHELLA: Yes. What about those old commedia dell'arte plays? Wouldn't they be fun to see again?

CLARICE: Oh, no. So boring!

LEONARDO: Yes, they are so long and boring and have so little to do with real life. Just buffoonery.

CLARICE: And those silly costumes! So unreal! I hate those old commedia plays.

LEONARDO: Such a bore!

(They both exit.)

BRIGHELLA: Well, I like them. I think they're fun. (He exits.)

Scene 2

-- a large, ominous wilderness. Celio, the magician, is making circles on the ground. Celio is the protector of Prince Tartaglia and is summoning the devil Farfarello to his aid.

CELIO: Farfarello! Farfarello! I order you here. Farfarello! Come here. Obey me! Farfarello!

FARFARELLO: Who calls me?

CELIO: It is I, your master, who orders you! I, Celio.

FARFARELLO: Who orders me from the bowels of the earth? Who? Are you a real magician or just a stage magician? If you're inly from some silly old play, I will go back to the bowels of the earth.

CELIO: I am a real magician. Stay! I order you!

FARFARELLO: Are you sure you're not out of some play or opera? That silly costume doesn't look very authentic.

CELIO: Enough of this impertinence. Now tell me. I order you. Has Truffaldino done any good work yet? I sent him to the King of Heart's court to help Prince Tartaglia to laugh and be cured of his terminal hypochondria. Has this happened?

FARFARELLO: You know, you sound very authentic. I'll obey you. Well, I can report that Prince Tartaglia did laugh and did recover his health, nut then your great enemy, Fata Morgana, ruined your efforts.

CELIO: Oh, rats!

FARFARELLO: She cursed the prince to fall in love with three oranges and he is chasing after them, desperately in love and desperately passionate – for those three oranges. Truffaldino is with the Prince, trying to help him, but Morgana has a wind god blowing them away from their homes. This evil spirit has blown them a thousand miles and more away from their castle and soon they'll land, half dead from all that blowing around, in the castle of Creonta. I've got to go back to the bowels of the earth now. So long.

(The devil disappears.)

CELIO: Ah, cursed woman. That cursed Fata Morgana, evil sorceress that she is. I must protect Prince Tartaglia and Truffaldino once they arrive at Creonta's castle. I must try to dissuade them from this desperate task or help them find those three fatal oranges. They are both good boys and useful to society, after all.

(Celio exits.)

(Prince Tartaglia and Truffaldino blow in, followed by a devil with a bellow blowing on their behinds to make them run. Once they're on stage, the devil stops blowing the bellows and disappears. They both fall once the pressure of the bellows ceases.)

TRUFFALDINO: Oh!

TARTAGLIA: I'm glad that stopped. What a trip we have had.

TRUFFALDINO: That was a really fast tour! We passed a lot of beautiful spots, but I wish we could have stopped a while.

TARTAGLIA: Ah, there it is! The castle of Creonta.

TRUFFALDINO: I'm tired and hungry. Did you bring some money? Let's get something to eat.

TARTAGLIA: We must storm the castle of Creonta! We must rescue those three oranges for I love them. We must . . .

TRUFFALDINO: But I'm hungry and we've come a long way. How about some rest?

TARTAGLIA: How can you be concerned with food now when the castle is there in the distance? Look! Look! Let us go there. (Celio enters.)

CELIO: Stop. Stop, hasty prince. The Castle of Creonta is frought with dangers for you and your servant. There is an old iron gate rusted by time; there is a mean, hungry watchdog; there is an ugly old rope, wet and damp and bewitched; and an old witch of a cook who does not have a broom and must sweep out her oven with her own sagging breasts.

TARTAGLIA: Don't try to scare me with those horror stories. I am determined to try to save those three wonderful oranges that I love. I must rescue them from the witch Creonta. I must help them. I must save those three beautiful, juicy oranges.

CELIO: Well, young man, since you are so determined to get to those three oranges, I will help you. Here is some magic oil for the rusty old gate, and here is some bread to feed the dog, and here is broom for the old witch of a cook so she won't have to use her beasts anymore. As for the wet rope, just hang it out to dry in the sun. If you are lucky enough to get to the three oranges, take them and leave the castle at once. If you can do all this, my boy, I will sent the god of the winds again and with his bellows he will blow you home. Be careful, my young prince, and may heaven protect you.

TARTAGLIA: Thank you, my lord.

(Celio disappears.)

TARTAGLIA: Come, Truffaldino. Let us go now.

TRUFFALDINO: What's the big hurry? This dog and witch and whole venture is beginning to sound very dangerous to me, so I think . . .

(Tartaglia quickly exits. Truffaldino follows him.)

Scene 3

-- in Fata Morgana's castle

BRIGHELLA: Yes. . . . So. . . . I think he's dead.

SVERALDINA: Dead? Wonderful! Now we'll be in control around here, thanks to Clarice and Leonardo.

BRIGHELLA: Yes. We're rid of that lunatic, hypochondriac of a prince. (Puff of smoke, enter Fata Morgana.)

FATA MORGANA: All right. Shut up, you two. We've got troubles. That evil wizard Celio is helping Tartaglia and Truffaldino, who unfortunately are not dead. I've learned this from one of my spies. Smeraldina, you come follow me. We must make sure those two are out of the way. If dear, sweet Creonta doesn't kill them, we must.

(Fata Morgana and Smeraldina exit one way, Brighella the other.)

Scene 4

-- a courtyard in the witch Creonta's castle. As the lights come up, Prince Tartaglia and Truffaldino are putting oil on the gate and the gate slowly swings open so they can enter. Immediately the dog starts barking and attacks them, but Prince Tartaglia throws him some bread which he happily eats. Truffaldino, obviously very afraid, helps the prince to uncoil the rope and they hang it up to dry. The cook enters quickly.

THE COOK: What is going on here? Who are you? Stop! Stop right where you are!

TRUFFALDINO: Dear Madame, we have brought a gift for you. A broom. A broom for your oven.

(He grandly gives her the broom.)

THE COOK: A broom! A broom! I've been using my poor old breasts to clean out that oven. Now I can use this broom for the oven instead. Oh, thank you!

(Meanwhile Prince Tartaglia has gone into the castle and comes out pulling a wagon with three huge, magic oranges on it. Then a horrible voice comes out of the castle.)

VOICE OF CREONTA: Stop, thief! Drop those oranges immediately! You, cook, grab those two and throw them into your oven immediately!

THE COOK: No, I won't. I've been cleaning that damned oven of yours year after year. You've never given me a broom, but those two nice young men did. I'm not going to obey you anymore.

COIVE OF CREONTA: Rope, you rope! Hang those two thieves by neck until they are dead.

THE ROPE: No, I won't. Did you forget, Creonta, all those years you let me lie here rotting? But they stretched me out in the sun to dry, so I'll let them pass by unharmed.

VOICE OF CREONTA: You dear, faithful watchdog – man's best friend – tear those two apart!

THE DOG: No. I won't. Those two gave me some bread but you kept me starving. I'm not obeying you anymore.

VOICE OF CREONTA: You, gate! Lock immediately. Keep them here in ,y courtyard and I'll catch them myself and eat them alive.

THE GATE: No, I won't. When did you ever oil me? Never. You just let me rust year after year, so I won't lock those two in here.

(Prince Tartaglia and Truffaldino stand amazed at hearing this.)

TARTAGLIA: Oh, you gate, you dog, you rope, you cook – you're all so kind. Thank you very much.

(Tartaglia and Truffaldino quickly exit with the three oranges. The ugly, horrible Creonta enters, looking like a monstrous witch.)

CREONTA: You miserable gate! You stupid dog, you. And you, you rope! And where is that bitch a cook? Ah, my poor little oranges! My three lovely oranges! Oh . . . Oh… (She roars.) Oh, God! God! God, how could you have allowed this? I bet you don't even exist! How could you let this happen to me? If you do exist, God, I dare you to strike me dead!

(A thunderbolt. She is struck dead.)

End of Act II

ACT III

Scene 1

-- a large tree, underneath it a stone seat, several rocks, a meadow and a lake in the distance. Smeraldina alone, waiting.

SMERALDINA: Well, where is she? She told me to meet her here and I've been waiting for oven an hour. So where is the witch? Where is she? People think it's easy being a servant to a witch. They only see the glamor, the honor, but they don't know the half of it. They don't see all the . . .

(Fata Morgana enters.)

FATA MORGANA: Well, I've just come from hell with some bad news.

SMERALDINA: Dud you except good news from there?

FATA MORGANA: Getting too clever, are you? As I said, bad news from hell. Prince Tartaglia and Truffaldino have gotten the three oranges, thanks to the help of Celio.

SMERALDINA: I thought you said this would never happen? I thought you said they were in your power? I thought you said you were all-powerful?

FATA MORGANA: Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Even powerful witches have an occasional bad day. So, shut up! Those two men will be coming here soon, and they will be completely in my power. Now you, Smeraldina, must do as I order you. Here are two pins. If you see a beautiful young princess sitting in that seat, put this pin in her hair and she'll turn into an animal.

SMERALDINA: I'll believe it when I see it.

FATA MORGANA: You doubt my power? Now listen, you, after she has turned into an animal, you sit there in her place. Prince Tartaglia will soon be forced to marry you and make you his queen. During the wedding night, pit this order pin in his head and he, too, will become a beast. You are then to leave castle and let Princess Clarice and Leonardo rule the kingdom. Understand?

SMERALDINA: But wait a minute. Why can't I become the queen?

FATA MORGANA: Obey me, Smeraldina, or I'll turn you into a beast as well. Besides you are not really of royal blood. Princess Clarice's family is very old and goes back for generation.

SMERALDINA: But my family is very old too, and we go back for generation and generation and generation and . . .

FATA MORGANA: Sh . . . Sh . . . I hear somebody. Come with me.

(They exit.)

(Truffaldino enters, pulling the wagon on which there are the three large oranges.)

TRUFFALDINO: What a wind! Uff! It's nice to be able to sit for a while, but now that I'm free of that terrible tornado, I can remember how hungry and thirsty I am. The prince, I am sure, will be here soon and he never worries about ignoble things like hunger and thirst. But I am not so noble, and I am hungry and thirsty now. What can I find to eat around here? Ah, some nice fresh oranges! Shall! I eat one of these?. I don't think the prince would approve, but I can always buy another one, and besides, I'm dying of hunger. I'll do it.

(He cuts open one of the oranges. Out of it comes a lovely young girl dressed in white.)

FIRST GIRL IN WHITE: Oh, please give me some water! Please, or I'll die of thirst. Oh, I'm so thirsty. Quick, don't be so cruel. Oh, help me . . . help me . . . (She collapses and is dying.)

TRUFFALDINO: Oh! Oh! Where can I find some water?

FIRST GIRL IN WHITE: Help me, please . . . help me . . .

TRUFFALDINO: I'll cut another orange open to get some orange juice for her. That will help her.

(He cuts open another orange, out of which comes a second girl in white.)

SECOND GIRL IN WHITE: Oh, I'm dying of thirst. Please, please, give me something to drink. I'm dying of thirst. Oh, please help me! Cruel man, help me . . . help me . . .

TRUFFALDINO: Oh! Oh! What can I do? What can I do? Where can I find some water? Where?

FIRST GIRL IN WHITE: Oh, what a fate. I'm dying of thirst! I'm dying . . .

(She dies.)

SECOND GIRL IN WHITE: I'm dying, you cruel man. Oh, oh! Help me . . . help me . . . helm me . . .

(She dies.)

TRUFFALDINO: Oh! Oh! May be if I can open the third one? I can use the orange juice from the third one to save the other two.

(As he is about to cut open the third orange, Prince Tartaglia enters quickly in a rage.)

TARTAGLIA: Stop! Stop! We've got to be near water. Stop!

(Truffaldino runs off.)

TARTAGLIA: Oh, these poor young girls. Dead? Dead? That stupid Truffaldino. Didn't he hear what Celio told us – to have water nearby when we opened the oranges. (The price calls offstage.) Hey! Hey, you two men, please give these two a decent burial. Here's some money for your work.

(Two country bumpkins enter.)

FIRST BUMPKIN: Sure thing, boss.

SECOND BUMPKIN: How about a little more money, prince?

TARTAGLIA: (giving more money) Here, for your efforts.

SECOND BUMPKIN: We will bury the two girl, boss. (The two bumpkins carry the two girls offstage and exit.)

TARTAGLIA: How big and beautiful this orange is! How lovely and tender is its skin. I must cut it open. (he takes out his sword and opens the last one. Out pops the last girl.)

NINETTA: Who took me out of my orange? Oh! I', dying of thirst! Help me! Help me! Bring me some water! Please! Please! (She collapses.)

TARTAGLIA: There's some water, but what can I carry it in? Ah, my iron shoes.

(He takes off one of his iron shoes and runs to get some water from the lake. Then he comes back on stage.)

TARTAGLIA: Excuse the vessel, but here's some water.

(She drinks the water.)

NINETTA: Oh, thank you, Prince. You have saved my life.

TARTAGLIA: Not at all, my dear woman. But tell me, how did you become an orange?

NINETTA: Well, I wasn't always an orange. I am a princess and Ninetta is my name. I am the daughter of Concul, King of Antipodes, but I and my two sisters were turned into oranges by the wicked witch Creonta. I know it all sounds so improbable, but believe me, it really happened.

TARTAGLIA: Oh, I believe you, my princess . . . and . . . I love you. I am Prince Tartaglia. Come to my court and become my wife – my queen.

NINETTA: Well, isn't this a bit sudden? But you're so handsome, and it's so nice to be a princess again instead of an orange. It's wonderful . . . like a fairy tale.

TARTAGLIA: But it's really happening. Come and be my wife, Princess Ninetta.

NINETTA: But I have nothing suitable to wear at your court, my dear prince.

TARTAGLIA: Well, then, I'll bring the whole court to you along with some fine clothes fit for a princess, and I promise to marry you.

NINETTA: You do? My love! My dear water boy! I will wait for you.

TARTAGLIA: Yes, yes, my wife. Wait for me here on that stone seat.

NINETTA: I promise to wait.

TARTAGLIA: (kissing her) I promise to hurry back and marry you

(He exits.)

(Smeraldina enters sneakily.)

SMERALDINA: Oh, Princess, what lovely hair you have!

NINETTA: Yes, it is beautiful, isn't it.

SMERALDINA: Oh, but I see a curl out of place in the back of your head.

NINETTA: You do? Where? Where? I've been in a very awkward position in an orange for a long time.

SMERALDINA: Oh, were you?

NINETTA: Yes, I was in a rather large orange, and it mussed my hair.

SMERALDINA: Here, let me fix it for you.

(She puts the pin in her head; Ninetta turns into a dove and flies off.)

SMERALDINA: Wow! Morgana was right! Sometimes that witch surprises me.

(Smeraldina sits on the chair and assumes a royal air. Sounds of a royal march are heard offstage. The King of Hearts enters, with Prince Tartaglia, Leonardo, Princess Clarice, Pantalone, Brighella, and the court.)

TARTAGLIA: Here is the spot, father, and there is the princess, my bpide. (looking at her) But who are you?

SMERALDINA: I am Princess Ninetta, the girl you promised to marry.

TARTAGLIA: No, you're not. I will not marry you.

SMERALDINA: But you promised to marry me . . . you promised.

(She bursts into tears.)

(Princess Clarice, Leonardo, and Brighella smile knowingly to each other.)

KING: My son, a royal promise is a royal promise. You must keep your word.

TARTAGLIA: But . . .but . . . I won't marry her. She's not . . .

(Smeraldina weeps louder.)

KING: My son, you will marry this princess. Let us all go back to the palace. I order you! All back to the palace!

(The band strikes up the royal march; all march offstage.)

Scene 2

(the royal kitchen. Suddenly Celio and Morgana appear.)

CELIO: You wicked witch. I have discovered all your evil tricks, but Pluto will help me. You evil witch! You cursed witch!

FATA MORGANA: What did you say, you charlatan? Don't you dare aggravate me. I'll hit you so hard you'll collapse and die.

CELIO: I'll hit you as often as you touch me. I'll put a curse on you: Hocus, pocus – all your powers are now ended – void and without force will all your spells become. All Morgana's spells, potions and powers I now declare inoperative, curtailed, cancelled, ended, null and void.

FATA MORGANA: Oh really! Now I'll put a spell on you: Oh resplendent Phoebus I invoke thee! Oh ye clouds and sunlight of the heavens, I invoke thee as well! Oh, you magical horse Pegasus! May all Celio's powers and spells be completely without power.

CELIO: Fata Morgana and all her powers must come to an end. Let Price Tartaglia and his realm be happy at last.

(They fight. Celio wins. He exits, dragging the vanquished Fata Morgana offstage.)

(Truffaldino enters.)

TRUFFALDINO: Well, Prince Tartaglia is finally getting married and the King has ordered me to help prepare the wedding feast. But the poor prince is still not happy and won't even talk to his bride. Well. But roasting chicken is my job.

(Truffaldino starts roasting a chicken on a spit. Suddenly a dove appears.)

DOVE: Good day, Mr. Cool.

TRUFFALDINO: Well, good day, Miss White Dove.

DOVE: I hope you fall asleep and the chicken burns so that Smeraldina, that ugly hag, does not get to eat any of it.

(Truffaldino falls asleep. The roast chicken burns. The dove exits.)

(Pantalone enters yelling and awakens Truffaldino.)

PANTALONE: Where is that chicken? Truffaldino, aren't you ready with it yet? The King and court have had soup and salad, and they're waiting for the roast chicken. The King has ordered it. Where is it?

TRUFFALDINO: A huge white dove was in here and put me to sleep.

PANTALONE: Have you been drinking again? Making up silly stories?

TRUFFALDINO: No. No. Honestly! I saw a . . . (The white dove reappears.)

DOVE: Oh, I hope you fall asleep and the chicken burns so that Smeraldina, the ugly hag, does not get to eat a thing.

(Truffaldino begins to fall asleep again, but Pantalone rouses him. The two of them starts chasing the dove – comic chase scene here. When they catch the dove, they stroke her and discover the pin in her head.)

PANTALONE: What is this doing here?

TRUFFALDINO: I don't know. I'll put it out.

(Truffaldino pulls the pin out and the white dove is transformed into Princess Ninetta.)

TRUFFALDINO: Oh!

PANTALONE: Oh!

NINETTA: Oh, thank you so much!

(The King enters.)

KING: Where is the roast chicken I ordered? The wedding guests are all waiting for it. Truffaldino, where is the chicken?

(Prince Tartaglia enters, recognizes Ninetta instantly, and rushes to her.)

TARTAGLIA: Princess Ninetta! My Ninetta!

(They embrace.)

KING: What is going on here? Who is this? Who is this girl?

NINETTA: I am Princess Ninetta, but I was turned into a white dove by a magic pin that Smeraldina put into my head. I am the princess who is supposed to marry Prince Tartaglia. I was formerly an orange, but I don't want to go into that now, but I certainly want to marry the prince.

TARTAGLIA: Oh, yes! Yes! Yes!

(He kisses her.)

(The King stands in amazement as Smeraldina enters the kitchen.)

SMERALDINA: Where is my chicken? I'm still hungry. And where is my darling? Where is the prince? He left the table so suddenly. Oh, there you are.

(Leonardo, Clarice, and the rest of the court follow her in.)

CLARICE: So where is the next course? Where is the chicken? I'm still hungry.

(Silvio, the King of Hearts, pompously sits on a butcher table, turning in into a throne.)

KING: (To Prince Tartaglia and Princess Ninetta.) There has been dirty work afoot. You two leave at once. (They exit.) Now why, Smeraldina, did you put a spell on that sweet girl?

SMERALDINA: Me? A spell. Oh, not me! What are you talking about? I would never put a spell on a sweet girl like that. Why I . . .

(Celio suddenly appears.)

CELIO: You are lying, Smeraldina. You are the agent of the evil Fata Morgana, who is now dressing hew wounds in hell. Leonardo, Princess Clarice, and Brighella are also her agents.

LEONARDO / CLARICE / BRIGHELLA: Oh, no! We are not!

KING: I order Smeraldina, Leonardo, Princess Clarice, and Brighella all immediately banished from my court and sent into exile.

(The palace guards surround all four of them and march them out.)

LEONARDO: Oh, woe is me! Woe is me! Woe is me!

CLARICE: But . . . but . . . but . . . but . . .

BRIGHELLA: Darn . . . darn . . . darn . . .

SMERALDINA: Oh . . . oh . . . oh . . .

(The four above should all be talking alternately as they are lead out by the palace guards.)

KING: And now, let us have a real wedding at last. Go to the Prince and Princess and order them here.

(A guard goes out. The Prince and Princess reenter, arm-in-arm.)

KING: We will now have a real and happy marriage. Let us a;; celebrate a royal wedding bound by love.

TARTAGLIA: Thank you, father.

NINETTA: Thank you, my lord.

(Prince Tartaglia and Princess Ninetta kiss, general merriment and assorted hurrahs on stage.)

End of Play

Recommendations:

Emma, Northanger Abbey, Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Gobseck, Father Goriot, The Magic Skin by Honoré de Balzac

The Decameron by Giovanni Boccaccio

Don Quixote of La Mancha by Miguel de Cervantes

Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

The Idiot, The Brothers Karamazov, Crime And Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Faust Parts I & II , The Sorrows of Young Werther by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The Overcoat by Nikolai Gogol

The Hunchback of Notre-Dame , Les Misérables , The Man Who Laughs by Victor Hugo

Trois hommes dans un bateau. Sans oublier le chien! by Jerome K. Jerome

The Trial , Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka

A Hero of Our Time by M. Y. Lermontov

Martin Eden , The Call of the Wild, White Fang by Jack London

Moby Dick Or The Whale by Herman Melville

Thus Spake Zarathustra by Friedrich Nietzsche

Eugene Onegin , The Queen of Spades by Alexander Pushkin

Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson

The Antiquary by Walter Scott

Othello, King Lear by William Shakespeare

Fathers and Sons , A House of Gentlefolk by Ivan Turgenev

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain

Dick Sands, the Boy Captain by Jules Verne

The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde

Amok, Chess Story by Stefan Zweig