

"The Suitcase"

A hotel room; London. 20 August 1948. MARIE PROVAZNIKOVA, coach of the Czech women's gymnastic team, is in a frenzy, packing a large suitcase which sits open on a hotel bed.

MARIE

Drahy! Hurry! We have maybe an hour before the Americans' bus leaves for Heathrow.

(a little frantic)

Drahy, what are you doing!? We need to be on that bus!

(DAL PROVAZNIKOVA enters with an armful of things which he proceeds to jam into the suitcase.)

DAL

Here's the Provaznikova family photo album, my medicines, six hundred American dollars --

MARIE

(snatching the money; hiding it her shoes)

We have to hide that!

DAL

our parkas, two pairs boots....

MARIE

Parkas! We don't need parkas.

DAL

(excited)

Sure. Once your gymnastics world tour starts in Atlanta without us and the Czech officials realize we've defected, we'll be "on the run"!

MARIE

We'll be on the run, yes, but we'll be in Georgia.

DAL

Georgia, sure. Frozen tundra!

MARIE

No, that's Soviet Georgia. Atlanta-Georgia is south of Kentucky.

DAL

I'm putting in the parkas.

MARIE

Drahy. Dalya!

DAL

You never know. Look, I know Georgia's in the South. I'm just trying to be prepared. See? A compass, an American flag, and a whistle only dogs can hear.

MARIE

What's the whistle for?

DAL

To ward off wolves.

MARIE

Dal. Stop panicking. We don't have time now for new plans. We've thought this through for two years. I coached the Czech women's gymnastic team to win the gold medal last night; tonight we join the Americans on a world exhibition tour starting in Atlanta, where we stay behind. Svoboda<sup>10</sup>! Freedom! You can become a professor and teach Socialism and not have to lick Communists' boots ever again!

DAL

(loudly; on a soapbox)

Svoboda! Когда будьте люди раговорного жанра и поговорить!<sup>11</sup>

MARIE

Da, my husband, but later! We've got to get the suitcase packed before --

(A prim government official, GRISCHA, enters stiffly, without notice.)

GRISCHA

Dal Provaznikova?

DAL

What do you want?

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<sup>10</sup> *Tr. Freedom.*

<sup>11</sup> *Tr. "When will the people stand up and speak?" Pronunciation: Kogda bud' te lyudi ragovornogo zhanra i pogovorit'*

GRISCHA

Office of Emigration. May I see your papers, please?

DAL

(hackles instantly rising; a trigger reflex)

My papers?

GRISCHA

Before you get on the American bus to the airport, we need to see your papers.

DAL

(bristling; starts to speak; thinks better of it)

My papers! Government officials, how many times a week do you need to see my --

(DAL bristles, and starts to speak. HE thinks better of it; lapses into silence. But then HE purses his lips, and does not make a move to produce papers. MARIE swoops into action; SHE produces their papers. DAL is about to speak when SHE kisses DAL squarely on the mouth.)

MARIE

(grinning affectionately)

Such an adorable man! Here are our papers, sir.

(SHE hands both sets of papers to GRISCHA. DAL fumes, but covers his lips into silence. After a brief glance, GRISCHA returns one set of papers right back to her.)

GRISCHA

I need only his. You are freed to go, Marie Provaznikova, but I will keep your husband's papers at my office as he will be staying here in Czechoslovakia while you take your American gymnastics tour.

(GRISCHA hands DAL a small grey governmental chit.)

GRISCHA

He can come to my office in Prague and collect his papers when you return to this country.

(turns to DAL; a little chilling)

*Do svidaniya,*<sup>12</sup> Comrade Provaznikova!

(GRISCHA exits. Silence. MARIE sits. DAL fumes, starts to speak, thinks better of it, then resume his packing of the suitcase.)

DAL

I will tuck the photo album here, safely. And...without my medicines, there's more room for another pair of boots!

(MARIE rises, and removes the boots from the suitcase, putting them back into the closet.)

DAL

You're right. You can *buy* shoes in America. American shoes! The shoes of freedom.

(MARIE returns to the suitcase, and quietly removes the parkas. SHE hangs them up. DAL watches. SHE returns to the suitcase for more items; HE touches her arm. SHE stops. **GO.**)

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<sup>12</sup> *Tr. Goodbye.*

Marie. Stop unpacking.

DAL

I'm not going.

MARIE

You are going.

DAL

Not without you.

MARIE

GO, MARIE. GO.

DAL

MARIE  
(speaking over him)  
But if I defect, the party will come after you....

DAL  
THAT MEDAL IS YOURS MARIE,  
YOURS ALONE.

MARIE  
(speaking over him)  
Without you, I am silenced. You are my mouthpiece..

DAL  
GO, MARIE. GO.  
A DREAM HAS A PRICE, MARIE.  
DEEP DOWN WE'VE BOTH ALWAYS KNOWN.  
THE FIGHT WILL GO ON, MARIE.  
EVEN SO.  
YOU'LL BE MY VOICE NOW.  
YOU DON'T HAVE A CHOICE NOW.  
YOU MUST GO.

MARIE  
Do I need to remind you how many of your university  
colleagues --

DAL  
I know, but --

MARIE

-- were rounded up in that Communist *coup d'etat* in February? Slotzen, Belski, Rushenko, Dmitri Lusevitch!, all tried with treason and executed.

DAL

We can't be afraid. It is all over if we are afraid.

GO, MARIE. GO.  
YOU'RE STRONGER THAN ME, MARIE.  
YOU'LL SURVIVE.

MARIE

(trying to interrupt him)  
But, Dal, you were my inspiration....

DAL

GO, MARIE. GO.  
THE PLAN HASN'T CHANGED, MARIE.  
YOU'LL GO, AND KEEP IT ALIVE.

MARIE

(trying to interrupt)  
You are the reason I even dare to...

DAL

WE'VE PLANTED A SEED, MARIE.  
IT WILL GROW.  
THIS ISN'T ABOUT ME.  
AND WITH OR WITHOUT ME.  
YOU MUST GO.

MARIE

If I speak out, they will execute you.

DAL

Then that will confirm to the rest of the world you must be speaking the truth, which will only help our cause.

MARIE

(smiling finally)  
Then they will not execute you.

DAL

And that will allow me to write you every day.

MARIE

You will not know where to send the letters.

DAL

Care of the American gymnasts. They will feel sorry for you. They will love forwarding the letters to their little anti-Communist friend! It will be "*fun*" to them.

MARIE

Maybe in time...the Czechoslovakian officials, they will let you come to me.

DAL

They'll not be able to stop me. I will come to you every night in your sleep. I will come to you every morning when you wake. My Marie, I will be with you always and always, and no ocean and no governmental papers or even execution will keep me from you.

MARIE

I COULD....

DAL

GO, OR SUFFER IN SILENCE WITH ME....

MARIE

I SHOULD....

DAL

GO, IT'S STILL WHAT WE PLANNED IT COULD BE....

MARIE

I MUST....

DAL

GO, AND SPEAK FOR THE PEOPLE, MARIE.

MARIE

I WILL....

DAL

GO, AND SPEAK FOR THEIR RIGHT TO BE FREE.

MARIE

FOR YOUR RIGHT TO BE FREE.

DAL  
GO, MARIE. GO.

MARIE  
NO, DRAHY, NO!

DAL  
DON'T THINK ABOUT ME, MARIE,  
I'M JUST ONE MAN.

MARIE  
TO ME YOU'RE MORE THAN JUST A MAN.

DAL  
GO, MARIE. GO.

MARIE  
NO, DRAHY, NO!

DAL  
WE BOTH KNEW THE RISKS, MARIE,  
IT'S TIME TO FOLLOW THE PLAN.

MARIE  
ALONE, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN.

DAL  
I'LL JOIN YOU ONE DAY, MARIE.  
THIS I KNOW.  
TO HAVE ME BESIDE YOU.  
FREE, AND BESIDE YOU.  
YOU MUST....

MARIE  
When you visit me...in my dreams...bring my parka. There's no  
room for it in the suitcase.

BOTH  
GO. GO (MARIE) GO. GO.

(MARIE breaks from him, burying herself in the  
task of finishing the packing. HE helps her.  
Lights fade.)