

Twelfth Night
or
What You Will

Written by William Shakespeare

Edited by Nathan J. Criman

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Twelfth Night is one of the most carefully plotted and expertly written of Shakespeare's romantic "Golden Comedies." The festive, gently satirical comic plot centers around a series of practical jokes and mistaken identities. The role of Viola is a challenging one for any actress as Viola finds herself shipwrecked on a strange coast where she must disguise herself as a young man to get along in society. This tale of love and courtship, mistaken identity, pride, and practical jokes is edited to 90 minutes. The action flows quickly and the archaic terms are eliminated. This is a fine version for actors from junior high school through college to perform.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Large, flexible cast, approx. 14m, 3f + courtiers, attendants and servants

ORSINO: Duke of Illyria

VALENTINE: Attendant to the Duke.

CURIO: Attendant to the Duke.

CAPTAIN: A Sea Captain, friend to Viola.

VIOLA: A lady of Messaline, twin sister to Sebastian.

SIR TOBY BELCH: Uncle to Olivia.

MARIA: Olivia's woman.

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: Suitor to Olivia.

FESTE: Olivia's Clown.

MALVOLIO: Steward to Olivia.

OLIVIA: A countess of Illyria in mourning for her brother.

SEBASTIAN: Twin brother to Viola.

ANTONIO: A sea captain, friend to Sebastian.

FABIAN: Servant to Olivia.

SERVANT: Servant to Olivia.

PRIEST

FIRST OFFICER

SECOND OFFICER

ATTENDANTS:

MUSICIANS

MERCHANTS

TOWNS PEOPLE

MERCHANTS

OLIVIA'S LADIES-IN-WAITING

LOCATION: A city in Illyria and the sea coast near it.

SCENE SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Scene 1 – Duke Orsino's Court

Scene 2 – Adriatic seacoast

Scene 3 – Estate of Lady Olivia

Scene 4 – Duke Orsino's Court

Scene 5 – Estate of Lady Olivia

ACT II

Scene 1 – The seacoast

Scene 2 – A street in the city of Illyria

Scene 3 – Estate of Lady Olivia

Scene 4 – Duke Orsino's Court

Scene 5 – Estate of Lady Olivia

ACT III

Scene 1 – Estate of Lady Olivia

Scene 2 – Estate of Lady Olivia

Scene 3 – A street in the city of Illyria

Scene 4 – Estate of Lady Olivia

ACT IV

Scene 1 – A street in the city of Illyria

Scene 2 – Estate of Lady Olivia

Scene 3 – Estate of Lady Olivia

ACT V

Scene 1 – Estate of Lady Olivia

ACT I
Scene 1

(Duke Orsino's Court. AT RISE: Enter DUKE ORSINO, CURIO, and other Lords; Musicians attending.)

DUKE ORSINO: If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! It had a dying fall:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love! How quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical.

CURIO: Will you go hunt, my lord?

DUKE ORSINO: What, Curio?

CURIO: The hart.

DUKE ORSINO: Why, so I do, the noblest that I have:

O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first,
Methought she purged the air of pestilence!
That instant was I turn'd into a hart;
And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
E'er since pursue me. *(Enter VALENTINE.)*
How now! What news from her?

VALENTINE: So please my lord, I might not be admitted;

But from her handmaid do return this answer:
The element itself, till seven years' heat,
Shall not behold her face at ample view;
But, like a cloistress, she will veiled walk.

DUKE ORSINO: O, she that hath a heart of that fine frame

To pay this debt of love but to a brother,
How will she love, when the rich golden shaft
Hath kill'd the flock of all affections else
Away before me to sweet beds of flowers:
Love-thoughts lie rich when canopied with bowers. *(Exeunt.)*

END OF SCENE

Scene 2

(The seacoast. Enter VIOLA, A CAPTAIN, and SAILORS.)

VIOLA: What country, friends, is this?

CAPTAIN: This is Illyria, lady.

VIOLA: And what should I do in Illyria?

My brother he is in Elysium. Perchance he is not drown'd: what think you?

CAPTAIN: It is perchance that you yourself were saved.

VIOLA: O my poor brother! And so perchance may he be.

CAPTAIN: True, madam: and, to comfort you with chance,

Assure yourself, after our ship did split,
When you and those poor number saved with you
Hung on our driving boat, I saw your brother,
Most provident in peril, bind himself,
To a strong mast that lived upon the sea;
Where, I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves
So long as I could see.

VIOLA: For saying so, there's gold:

Mine own escape unfoldeth to my hope,
Whereto thy speech serves for authority,
The like of him. Know'st thou this country?

CAPTAIN: Ay, madam, well; for I was bred and born

Not three hours' travel from this very place.

VIOLA: Who governs here?

CAPTAIN: A noble duke, in nature as in name.

VIOLA: What is the name?

CAPTAIN: Orsino.

VIOLA: Orsino! I have heard my father name him: he was a bachelor then.

CAPTAIN: And so is now, or was so very late;

For but a month ago I went from hence, And then 'twas fresh in murmur,
That he did seek the love of fair Olivia.

VIOLA: What's she?

CAPTAIN: A virtuous maid, the daughter of a count

That died some twelvemonth since, then leaving her
In the protection of his son, her brother,
Who shortly also died: for whose dear love,
They say, she hath abjured the company and sight of men.

VIOLA: O that I served that lady

And might not be delivered to the world,
Till I had made mine own occasion mellow, what my estate is!

CAPTAIN: That were hard to compass;

Because she will admit no kind of suit, no, not the duke's.

VIOLA: There is a fair behavior in thee, Captain;
I prithee, and I'll pay thee bounteously,
Conceal me what I am, and be my aid
For such disguise as haply shall become
The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke:
Thou shall present me as an eunuch to him:
It may be worth thy pains; for I can sing
And speak to him in many sorts of music
That will allow me very worth his service.

CAPTAIN: Be you his eunuch, and your mute I'll be:
When my tongue blabs, then let mine eyes not see.

VIOLA: I thank thee: lead me on.

(Exeunt.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 3

(Olivia's house. Enter SIR TOBY BELCH and MARIA.)

SIR TOBY BELCH: What a plague means my niece,
to take the death of her brother thus? I am sure care's an enemy to life.

MARIA: By my troth, Sir Toby, you must come in earlier o' nights:
your cousin, my lady, takes great exceptions to your ill hours.
You must confine yourself within the modest limits of order.

SIR TOBY BELCH: Confine!

I'll confine myself no finer than I am: these clothes are good enough to drink in;
and so be these boots too: an they be not, let them hang themselves in their own straps.

MARIA: That quaffing and drinking will undo you: I heard my lady talk of it yesterday; and of a
foolish knight that you brought in one night here to be her wooer.

SIR TOBY BELCH: Who, Sir Andrew Aguecheek?

MARIA: Ay, he.

SIR TOBY BELCH: He's as tall a man as any's in Illyria.

MARIA: What's that to the purpose?

SIR TOBY BELCH: Why, he has three thousand ducats a year.

MARIA: Ay, but he'll have but a year in all these ducats: he's a very fool and a prodigal.

End of Freeview

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