


Twelfth Night

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

 TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE



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- BACKGROUND -

Orsino, Duke of Illyria, loves the Countess Olivia—but she will have nothing to do with him. Orsino sends his page Cesario (the disguised Viola, who has fallen in love with him) to plead his cause. Olivia falls in love with Cesario.

Viola's twin brother Sebastian (whom she believes has drowned in a shipwreck) arrives in Illyria. Olivia mistakes Sebastian for his disguised sister, and Sebastian falls in love with Olivia. More complications follow before identities are revealed and the story is brought to a happy end.

- CAST OF CHARACTERS -

ORSINO Duke of Illyria

SEBASTIAN a young gentleman, Viola's brother

ANTONIO a sea captain, friend of Sebastian

A SEA CAPTAIN friend of Viola

VALENTINE and **CURIO** gentlemen

SIR TOBY BELCH Olivia's uncle

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK Sir Toby's friend

OLIVIA a rich countess

VIOLA Sebastian's sister; later disguised as Cesario

MARIA Olivia's gentlewoman in waiting

MALVOLIO Olivia's steward

FABIAN Olivia's servant

FESTE Olivia's jester

LORDS, A PRIEST, SAILORS, OFFICERS, MUSICIANS, and OTHERS

ACT 1

| Scene 1 |

An apartment in the duke's palace in Illyria. The duke, Curio, and lords enter. Musicians play.

DUKE: If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me too much of it. By gorging,
The appetite may sicken and so die.
(Listening briefly) Enough! No more!
It's not as sweet now as it was before.
Oh, spirit of love! How alive and fresh
you are!
In spite of being as deep as the sea,
Nothing precious comes to you without
Losing some of its value even in a minute!
Love has such variety that nothing can
Equal its extravagance.

CURIO: Will you go hunt, my lord?

DUKE: Hunt what, Curio?

CURIO: The hart.

DUKE *(placing his hand on his heart)*: Why,
That is what I'm doing. When my eyes first
Saw Olivia, I thought she purified the air.
That instant I was turned into a hart,
And my desires, like fierce and cruel hounds,
Have chased me ever since.

(Valentine enters.)

DUKE: Well? What news from her?

VALENTINE: My lord, I was not invited in.
Through her maid, the answer is this:
For seven summers, not even the sun
Will see her face. Like a nun, she will wear
A veil, weeping salt tears around her room,
To honor her dead brother's love, which
She wishes to keep fresh in sad memory.

DUKE: Oh, she who has such a tender heart
To pay this debt of love for a mere brother!
How will she love when Cupid's arrow
Strikes her heart?
Lead the way to sweet beds of flowers!
Love thoughts are richer under the bowers.

(All exit.)

| Scene 2 |

The seacoast. Viola, captain, and sailors enter.

VIOLA: What country is this, friends?

CAPTAIN: This is Illyria, lady.

VIOLA: What am I doing in Illyria?

My brother is in heaven. But maybe
He is not drowned. What do you think?

CAPTAIN: Luckily, you yourself were saved.

VIOLA: Oh, my poor brother!
Maybe he was saved, too.

CAPTAIN: True, madam. After our ship split,
When we were clinging to the drifting boat,
I saw your brother tie himself to a mast.
He was riding the waves
As long as I could keep him in sight.

VIOLA (*giving him money*): For saying that,
Here's gold. My own escape gives me hope
That he escaped, too.
Do you know this country?

CAPTAIN: Yes. I was born and raised here.

VIOLA: Who governs here?

CAPTAIN: A noble duke named Orsino.

VIOLA: Orsino! My father spoke of him.
He was a bachelor then.

CAPTAIN: And he still is—or was till recently.
A month ago, when I left, I heard rumors
That he sought the love of fair Olivia.

VIOLA: Who's she?

CAPTAIN: A virtuous maiden, the daughter of
A count who died a year ago. He left her in
The protection of his son, her brother,
Who died soon after that. For his dear love,
They say, she has given up the company
And even sight of men!

VIOLA: I wish I served that lady and could

Stay out of the public eye until I found out
Better what my situation is!

CAPTAIN: That will not be easy. She will not
Consider any pleas—not even the duke’s.

VIOLA: You seem like a good man, Captain.
Will you—I’ll pay you well—help me
Disguise who I am? I want to serve this
duke.

You can present me as a young man to him.
It will be worth your trouble. I can sing, and
I can speak to him in many musical ways.
This will make me an attractive employee.
Whatever happens, time will tell.
Just be silent, will you? Well?

CAPTAIN: If silent I am unable to be,
Then may my eyes no longer see!

VIOLA: Thank you. (*She gestures.*) After you . . .
(*They exit.*)

| Scene 3 |

A room in Olivia’s house. Sir Toby Belch and Maria enter.

SIR TOBY: What the devil does my niece mean,
To take the death of her brother like this?
I’m sure worrying isn’t good for her health.

MARIA: Really, Sir Toby, you must come home

earlier at night. Your niece does not like your late hours. Your drinking will be the end of you. I heard my lady talk of it yesterday. She also talked about a foolish knight that you brought here one night to be her wooer.

SIR TOBY: Who? Sir Andrew Aguecheek?
He's the equal of any man in Illyria.

MARIA: What do you mean?

SIR TOBY: Why, he is rich!

MARIA: Perhaps. But his money will last only a year. He's a fool and a spendthrift.

SIR TOBY: Shame on you for saying so! He plays the violin, and he speaks three or four languages. He has all nature's finest gifts.

MARIA: He has indeed, like a natural born idiot! Besides being a fool, he likes to argue. Luckily, he also has the gift of cowardice. That slows down his zest in arguing. Without that, he would quickly have the gift of a grave—or so say those with brains!

SIR TOBY: They are scoundrels who say so!
Who are they?

MARIA: The same who say he's drunk every night in your company.

SIR TOBY: With drinking to the health of my niece! What, my girl? Speak of the

devil—here comes Sir Andrew Agueface.

(Sir Andrew Aguecheek enters.)

SIR ANDREW: Sir Toby Belch! Greetings!

SIR TOBY (*hugging him*): Sweet Sir Andrew!

SIR ANDREW (*to Maria*): Bless you, fair shrew. (*He thinks he's paid a compliment.*)

MARIA (*trying not to laugh*): And you too, sir.

SIR TOBY: Accost her, Sir Andrew. Accost her.

SIR ANDREW (*confused by a new word*): What does that mean?

SIR TOBY (*winking*): My niece's chambermaid!

SIR ANDREW (*misunderstanding*): Dear Miss Accost, I'd like to know you better.

MARIA: My name is Mary, sir.

SIR ANDREW: Dear Miss Mary Accost—

SIR TOBY (*interrupting*): You've got it wrong, knight. "Accost" means to make advances, take her on, flirt with her, attack her.

SIR ANDREW: My word, I wouldn't tackle her in this company. Is *that* what the word means?

MARIA (*turning to go*): Goodbye, gentlemen.

(Maria exits.)

SIR TOBY: Oh, knight! You need a glass of wine. When have I ever seen you so put down? Why, my dear knight?

SIR ANDREW: Sir Toby, your niece will not see me. Even if she did, it's four to one she'd have nothing to do with me. The count himself, who lives near here, is wooing her.

SIR TOBY: She'll have nothing to do with the count. She won't marry above herself—either in fortune, age, or intelligence. I have heard her swear it. Nonsense! You stand a good chance with her, man!

SIR ANDREW: I'll stay a month longer. After all, I'm a fellow with a playful mind. I love costume parties and dances, sometimes both together.

SIR TOBY: Are you good at dancing, knight?

SIR ANDREW: As good as any man in Illyria, provided he's my inferior. But I can't compare with an experienced man.

SIR TOBY: How good are you at a reel, knight?

SIR ANDREW: Well, I think I can dance as neatly as any man! (*He demonstrates, poorly.*)

SIR TOBY (*pretending to admire him*): Why have you been hiding all your talent? Why have these gifts been kept behind a curtain? They are likely to get dusty, like a painting. Why don't you dance the reel on your way to church and come home doing a fling? If I were you, my very walk would be a jig. What are you