

Twelfth Night  
or  
What You Will

*Written by William Shakespeare*

*Edited by Nathan J. Criman*

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PUBLISHED BY

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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.

## **End of Freeview**

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