

Twelfth Night



The Shorter Shakespeare

*Adapted from William Shakespeare
by Tracy Irish*

Characters

The twins

Viola: a young lady who is shipwrecked and disguises herself as a boy, named Cesario

Sebastian: Viola's twin brother, who is also shipwrecked but is rescued separately from his sister

The captains

Captain: the ship's captain who rescues Viola

Antonio: another captain who rescues and helps Sebastian

Orsino's household

Orsino: Duke of Illyria

Valentine: a gentleman

Curio: another gentleman

Olivia's household

Olivia: a countess, in deep mourning for her father and brother

Sir Toby Belch: Olivia's uncle

Sir Andrew Aguecheek: Sir Toby's friend who wishes to marry Olivia

Maria: Olivia's lady-in waiting

Malvolio: Olivia's steward who runs her house

Feste: a jester or fool

Fabian: a servant

Others

A servant

A priest

Old Captain: an older version of the Captain, he explains and links the action.
(Because he is not one of Shakespeare's characters, the modern text for the Old Captain is printed in a different colour.)

Twelfth Night *or What You Will*

The Old Sea Captain enters

Old Captain: An old sea captain like me who's spent his life on the high seas could tell you many a strange tale, for my time was a time of discovery and conquest. But the strangest tale I have to tell is a tale set beside the Mediterranean, in my own home country of Illyria. It's a tale of love, but with some odd twists!

Now, the ruler of Illyria in those days, was a Duke called Orsino; a strong, handsome man who loved poetry and music. He believed his greatest love was his neighbour, the beautiful Countess Olivia. Although he longed for her love, he did not talk to her himself. Instead he sent messengers to her while he stayed at home and wallowed in his suffering. More in love with love than with Olivia, if you know what I mean.

Olivia, though, had vowed to spend the next seven years mourning her dead brother and wanted nothing to do with Orsino!

Act 1 Scene 1

Duke Orsino's palace

Orsino is relaxing and listening to music with Curio, other servants and musicians

Duke Orsino: If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting¹,
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.

Curio: Will you go hunt, my lord?

¹ overeating



Michael Grandage's production of *Twelfth Night*. Photo: Manuel Harlan

Duke Orsino: What, Curio?

Curio: The hart ¹.

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.²
That instant was I turn'd into a hart,
And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
E'er since pursue me.

Valentine comes in

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 element³ itself, till seven years' heat,
Shall not behold her face at ample view,
But like a cloistress⁴ she will veiled walk,
And water once a day her chamber round
With eye-offending brine⁵; all this to season
A brother's dead love, which she would keep fresh
And lasting, in her sad remembrance.

¹ deer ² plague ³ sun ⁴ nun ⁵ tears

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 shaft¹
Hath killed the flock of all affections else.

They leave

Old Captain: Olivia had no interest in Orsino, despite his many messages. Her father and brother had died within a year and now she was left alone to run her house and her life. She had decided to hide from the world in mourning for her brother for seven years.

All of this, any gossip could have told you. My involvement with their story began with the lovely lady, Viola. I was a younger man then, and Viola and her twin brother had been passengers on my ship when the winds caught us and hurled us into a terrible storm. My old ship was smashed and snapped in two. By great good fortune, I survived and so did some of my men. We were thrown up by the waves onto the shore of my homeland, Illyria. And the gracious lady, Viola, was with us.

Act 1 Scene 2

The sea-coast

Viola, a younger looking Captain, and Sailors come in

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.²

Perchance he is not drowned. What think you, sailors?

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,
I saw your brother, in peril, bind himself
To a strong mast, that lived upon the sea;

¹ Cupid's arrow ² heaven

Viola and the Captain



Liverpool Everyman, Photograph: Stephen Vaughan

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.
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 his 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 – as you know,
 What great ones do, the less will prattle of –
 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 abjured¹ the company
 And sight of men.

Viola: O, that I served that lady!

Captain: That were hard to compass²,
 Because she will admit no kind of suit,
 No, not the Duke's.

Viola: There is a fair behaviour in thee, Captain,
 And though that nature with a beauteous wall
 Doth oft close in pollution³, yet of thee
 I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
 With this thy fair and outward character.
 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.
 What else may hap to time I will commit.
 Only shape thou thy silence to my wit.

Captain: Be you his eunuch⁴, and your mute⁵ I'll be.
 When my tongue blabs, then let mine eyes not see.

Viola: I thank thee. Lead me on.

They leave

¹ sworn to avoid ² arrange ³ nature...pollution: appearances can be deceiving ⁴ a male servant who has been castrated, so looks and sounds girlish ⁵ someone who can't speak

Old Captain: I helped her to disguise herself as a boy. She looked the image of Sebastian, her poor brother. I agreed to keep her woman's clothes, and her secret.

She had no desire to return to her home without her brother, so, on her instructions, I introduced her to Orsino's court as a young gentleman in need of employment.

Well, I should tell you a little more about the young Countess Olivia before we go on. The only family she had left was a drunken uncle, Sir Toby, who was more hindrance to her than help. But she did have her devoted steward, Malvolio, who was in charge of all her household affairs. He was a rather too serious and pompous man for my taste. I had no love for the man after he had me put in prison – for such a small crime!

(He shakes his head and laughs)

Well I am not the only one who despised Olivia's steward as you will see.

Malvolio believed that Lady Olivia could love him! He was as unsuitable as her other ridiculous suitor at that time, Sir Toby's friend, Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

Someone else has a part in my tale, Lady Olivia's witty chambermaid, Maria.

Act 1 Scene 3

Olivia's house

Sir Toby, obviously drunk, and Maria come in

Sir Toby: 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 cousin¹, my lady, takes great exceptions to your ill hours. 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: Who? Sir Andrew Aguecheek?

¹ relative



Open Air Theatre production, Regent's Park London

Maria: Ay, he.

Sir Toby: He's as tall a man as any's in Illyria.

Maria: What's that to the purpose?

Sir Toby: 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.

Sir Toby: Fie, that you'll say so. He plays o' the viol-de-gamboys¹, and speaks three or four languages word for word without book, and hath all the good gifts of nature.

Maria: He's a fool, he's a great quarreller; and but that he hath the gift of a coward, 'tis thought among the prudent he would quickly have the gift of a grave.

¹ musical instrument

Sir Toby: By this hand, they are scoundrels that say so of him.
Who are they?

Maria: They that add, moreover, he's drunk nightly in your company.

Sir Toby: With drinking healths to my niece. I'll drink to her as long as there is a passage in my throat and drink in Illyria. What, wench! Here comes Sir Andrew Agueface.

Sir Andrew comes in

Sir Andrew: Sir Toby Belch! How now, Sir Toby Belch?

Sir Toby: Sweet Sir Andrew!

Sir Andrew: Bless you, fair shrew.

Maria: And you too, sir.

Sir Toby: Accost, Sir Andrew, accost.

Sir Andrew: What's that?

Sir Toby: My niece's chambermaid.

Sir Andrew: Good Mistress Accost, I desire better acquaintance.

Maria: My name is Mary, sir.

Sir Andrew: Good Mistress Mary Accost –

Sir Toby: You mistake, knight. 'Accost' is front her, board her, woo her, assail her.

Sir Andrew: By my troth, is that the meaning of 'accost'?

Maria: Fare you well, gentlemen.

Sir Toby: An' thou let part so, Sir Andrew, would thou mightst never draw sword again.

Sir Andrew: An' you part so, mistress, I would I might never draw sword again. Fair lady, do you think you have fools in hand?

Maria: Sir, I have not you by the hand.

Sir Andrew: Marry, but you shall have, and here's my hand.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch



Michael Grandage's production of *Twelfth Night*. Photo: Manuel Harlan

Sir Andrew holds his hand out to Maria who ignores it and leaves, shaking her head in despair

Sir Toby: O knight, when did I see thee so put down?

Sir Andrew: Never in your life, I think, unless you see canary¹ put me down. Methinks sometimes I have no more wit than an ordinary man has; but I am a great eater of beef, and I believe that does harm to my wit.

Sir Toby: No question.

Sir Andrew: An' I thought that, I'd forswear it. I'll ride home tomorrow, Sir Toby.

Sir Toby: Pourquoi², my dear knight?

Sir Andrew: What is 'pourquoi'? Do or not do? I would I had bestowed that time in the tongues that I have in fencing, dancing and bear-baiting. O, had I but followed the arts! Faith, I'll home to-morrow, Sir Toby. Your niece will none of me; the Count himself, here hard by, woos her.

Sir Toby: She'll none o' the Count; she'll not match above her degree, neither in estate, years, nor wit. I have heard her swear't. Tut, there's life in't, man.

Sir Andrew: I'll stay a month longer. I am a fellow o' the strangest mind i' the world. I delight in masques and revels sometimes altogether. Shall we set about some revels?

Sir Toby: What shall we do else? Were we not born under Taurus?

Sir Andrew: Taurus? That's sides and heart.

Sir Toby: No, sir, it is legs and thighs.³ Let me see thee caper.

Sir Andrew jumps and clicks his heels

Sir Toby: Ha! Higher! Ha! Ha! Excellent!

Sir Andrew continues his jumps as they leave

¹ wine from the Canary Islands ² French for 'why'

³ different signs of the zodiac were believed to influence different parts of the body

Old Captain: Heh, heh, well you can see why Olivia would not be interested in a fool like Sir Andrew. But why did she not like Duke Orsino? According to Sir Toby it is for the very reason that the Duke is richer, older and wiser than she is. Meanwhile, our lovely Viola settled marvellously into her role as a boy and quickly became a favourite of Duke Orsino's under the name, Cesario.

Act 1 Scene 4

Duke Orsino's palace

Valentine comes in with Viola who is in her disguise as Cesario

Valentine: If the Duke continue these favours towards you, Cesario, you are like to be much advanced. He hath known you but three days, and already you are no stranger.

Duke Orsino comes in with his Attendants

Duke Orsino: Who saw Cesario, ho?

Viola: On your attendance, my lord, here.

Duke Orsino: Thou know'st no less but all. I have unclasped
To thee the book even of my secret soul.
Therefore, good youth, address thy gait unto her.
Be not denied access; stand at her doors,
And tell them, there thy fixed foot shall grow
Till thou have audience.

Viola: Sure, my noble lord,
If she be so abandoned to her sorrow
As it is spoke, she never will admit me.

Duke Orsino: Be clamorous and leap all civil bounds¹
Rather than make unprofitable return.

Viola: Say I do speak with her, my lord, what then?

Duke Orsino: O, then unfold the passion of my love.
It shall become thee well to act my woes;
She will attend it better in thy youth.

¹ be clamorous...civil bounds: make yourself heard, don't worry about being polite

Viola: I think not so, my lord.

Duke Orsino: Dear lad, believe it.
I know thy constellation is right apt
For this affair. Some four or five attend him –
All, if you will, for I myself am best
When least in company. Prosper well in this,
And thou shalt live as freely as thy lord,
To call his fortunes thine.

Viola: I'll do my best
To woo your lady. (*To herself*) Yet, a barful strife!¹
Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife.

They leave

Old Captain: So Cupid's arrow had struck Viola but she could not reveal her true self to the Duke. Instead she must carry his message of love to the fair Olivia. So love makes fools of us all. It was certainly about to make a fool of Olivia, better even than the fool, Feste, could.



Michael Grandage's production of *Twelfth Night*. Photo: Manuel Harlan

¹ barful strife: a difficult and unwanted task, full of obstacles