

Twelfth Night

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SCENE II. The sea-coast.

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, 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,
When you and those poor number saved with you
Hung on our driving boat, I saw your brother,
Most provident in peril, bind himself,
Courage and hope both teaching him the practise,
To a strong mast that lived upon the sea;
Where, like Arion on the dolphin's back,
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,--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 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;
And though that nature with a beauteous wall
Doth oft close in pollution, 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:
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.
What else may hap to time I will commit;
Only shape thou thy silence to my wit.

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

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