

*As You Like It*, William Shakespeare, Adapted by Barbara Cobb

A long time ago in France, there lived a Duke named Senior and his beautiful daughter Rosalind. Rosalind's best friend and cousin was Celia. Celia's father, Frederick, was Duke Senior's younger brother, but Frederick could not have been more unlike his older brother: whereas Duke Senior was good and noble and cared deeply for the people of his dukedom, Frederick was envious and covetous and wanted power and wealth for himself. Not long before, Frederick forced Senior out of his dukedom and took it over, placing himself on the throne and sending Senior into exile in the Forest of Arden. There Senior and many of his loyal followers lived, killing only as many deer as they needed for sustenance and taking care of the forest that sustained them. Senior's daughter Rosalind was not exiled with her father, but lived sadly but comfortably with her dear cousin Celia in the palace of the usurper Duke Frederick.

In this dukedom lived two brothers, Oliver and Orlando. Oliver, the elder, had inherited his father's estate and the responsibility to care for his younger brother Orlando. Oliver, though, did not live up to his father's bequest, and treated his brother like a farmhand, housing him in the barn with the animals and denying him an education and all of the other privileges that should come from being born into a wealthy family. Despite Oliver's bad treatment, Orlando flourished in manners, arms, and arts. "I have as much of my father in me as you," he would tell Oliver, as he went about his chores.

Orlando, giving up hope that he should ever be treated like anything but an animal, determined to try to gain the favor of Duke Frederick by wrestling in a tournament presided over by the Duke. Charles was the name of the reigning champion, and Orlando knew he was no match for this seasoned contender, but he also knew that he had no hope in Oliver's household. At the wrestling match, Orlando met Rosalind and Celia, who both urged him not to fight Charles, but, hearing Orlando's insistence, they gave him their best wishes for success. Whether it was because of the presence of the beautiful ladies, or because of Orlando's own sense of hurt and need, somehow Orlando threw Charles and emerged the victor. "What is thy name, young man?" asked Duke Frederick. "Orlando, my liege, the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys," said Orlando. "I would thou hadst been sone to some man else: the world esteemed thy father honorable, but I did find him still mine enemy. Fare thee well, gallant youth," said Frederick, as he dismissed Orlando without any reward.

Rosalind, seeing this injustice, approached Orlando and put a chain that she had been wearing around his neck: "Wear this for me, one out of suits with fortune." And Rosalind was in love. "What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue?" said Orlando, realizing that he, too, had fallen in love with the beautiful noblewoman.

Back at the royal palace, Rosalind and Celia chatted about the wrestling match and the brave Orlando. Suddenly Duke Frederick stormed into their chamber and ordered Rosalind into exile. "She is too subtle for thee, and her smoothness, her very silence and her patience speak to the people. Thou art a fool: thou wilt show more bright and seem more virtuous when she is gone," said the Duke to his daughter Celia, as he stormed back

out of the chamber. Celia was furious with her father and she and Rosalind agreed immediately to flee Duke Frederick's court and head for the Forest of Arden, where Rosalind's father, the rightful Duke Senior, was now living. For safety, they decided to disguise themselves, Rosalind as a young shepherd man named Ganymede, and Celia as Ganymede's shepherd sister, Aliena. "What if we assayed to steal the clowning fool out of your father's court?" suggested Rosalind, and Celia agreed, and thus Touchstone, the court jester became their traveling companion.

Meanwhile, as Orlando toiled on his brother's estate, Adam, the old servingman, ran to him and informed him that Oliver was planning to murder Orlando. Adam urged Orlando to flee to the Forest of Arden, and offered himself up as Orlando's servant. Orlando praised dear Adam's loyalty and kindness, and the two began their journey.

When Rosalind and Celia, disguised as Ganymede and Aliena, the shepherd siblings, arrived in the Forest, they discovered a sheepcote, or shepherd's house, and a shepherd who worked there, Corin. Corin informed them that the house was for sale, and Aliena exclaimed, "I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it." Immediately Aliena bought the sheepcote, and she and her "brother" Ganymede made it their home and made Corin the caretaker of their new estate.

Orlando and Adam also arrived in the Forest of Arden, and Adam, being old, was exhausted. Orlando set out seeing to find food for his trusty servingman and found Duke Senior and one of his courtiers, Jaques (pronounced Jay-Queueze), just settling down to a forest feast. Orlando burst upon the two courtiers, weapon drawn, and demanded food. The kindly Duke said simply, "What would you have? Your gentleness shall force more than your force move us to gentleness." At this, Orlando let down his weapon. "Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you. I thought that all things had been savage here." The Duke reiterated his invitation for Orlando to join them, but Orlando deferred the invitation until he could bring old Adam there to eat as well. When Adam arrived, Duke Senior welcomed him, and all feasted together.

Meanwhile, Duke Frederick called Oliver to the court, demanding that Oliver produce Orlando, dead or alive. Oliver told Frederick, "I never loved my brother in my life," and Frederick said simply, "More villain thou." At this, Oliver set out to find his brother and bring him to the Duke, as commanded.

Orlando, meanwhile, was writing love poems about his beloved Rosalind, and was plastering them all over the Forest of Arden. Rosalind and Celia, with Touchstone, happened upon some of Orlando's poems, and Celia immediately recognized that Orlando was in the Forest, too. When it dawned on Rosalind that these poems were written about her, and were written by Orlando, she was beside herself with love. Then she realized that she had a problem: she was disguised as Ganymede, a man. What was she to do? Before she had time to work this out, Orlando greeted her – or should I say, him! – and the two shared some witty dialogue. Orlando told the young man Ganymede of his love for Rosalind, and Ganymede told Orlando that he had a plan to help Orlando get over his crush. "Call me Rosalind," said Ganymede to Orlando, "and I will cure you

of your love.” “I would not be cured,” said Orlando, but he agreed to the little charade anyway. “Come every day to my sheepcote and woo me as Rosalind,” said Ganymede, and Orlando followed.

Later that day, Rosalind, as Ganymede, happened upon two shepherds, Silvius and Phebe. Silvius was dying for Phebe’s love, and Phebe, taking one look at Ganymede, decided that this “sweet youth” Ganymede was the apple of her eye. Ganymede, escaping Phebe’s gaze and grasp and rejoining “his” sister Aliena, happened upon Oliver, who had come to the Forest seeking Orlando. Oliver told Ganymede and Aliena a harrowing story: Oliver, sleeping on ground in the forest, had been accosted by a poisonous snake, and by chance Orlando had happened on the scene and scared off the snake. At that very moment, a lioness had crouched, ready to pounce on the still-prone Oliver, and Orlando had intervened, saving Oliver’s life once again, but injuring Orlando in the process. Ganymede fainted, and, coming to, said, “I wish I were at home.” Aliena comforted her brother and assured Oliver that Ganymede would recover. Oliver promised to convey this news to the recovering Orlando.

Shortly thereafter, Oliver informed Orlando that he had fallen in love with Aliena, that they would marry and live and die as shepherds there in the forest, and that the family estate was now Orlando’s. Ganymede arrived at Orlando’s cottage and the two marveled at the speedy love that had brought together Aliena and Oliver. Orlando was happy for his brother, but sad for himself: he wanted to be with his dear Rosalind. Ganymede told Orlando that he had been trained as a magician and would solve Orlando’s problem. Suddenly Silvius and Phebe appeared. Ganymede coaxed Phebe to look favorably on the faithful shepherd Silvius. Ganymede got Phebe to agree that, if Phebe could not, for some reason, marry Ganymede, that Phebe would marry Silvius. Phebe agreed. She got Orlando to agree that, if Ganymede could produce Rosalind, Orlando would marry her. And Ganymede made clear that he would marry “no woman.”

In the presence of Duke Senior, everyone was assembled, and Rosalind entered, dressed not as Ganymede but in women’s attire. Everyone was amazed. Orlando took her hand and promised himself to her. Phebe, seeing that there was no Ganymede for her to love, took Silvius’ hand and promised herself to him. Duke Senior rejoiced at being reunited with his daughter, and was given the news that the usurper, Duke Frederick, had given up the dukedom and had become a monk.

And they all lived happily ever after.