TWELFTH NIGHT; OR, WHAT YOU WILL
Adapted by Barbara Cobb from the version by Charles and Mary Lamb, with original text from Shakespeare's play

Sebastian and his sister Viola, a young gentleman and lady of Messaline, were twins, and (which was accounted a great wonder) from their birth they so much resembled each other that, but for the difference in their dress, they could not be told apart. They were both born in one hour, and in one hour they were both in danger of perishing, for they were shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria, as they were making a sea-voyage together. Their ship was split on a rock in a violent storm, and the crew of the vessel, along with Viola, found themselves safe on shore, where Viola, poor lady, instead of rejoicing at her own deliverance, lamented her brother's apparent loss; but the captain comforted her with the assurance that he had seen her brother, when the ship split, fasten himself to a strong mast, on which, as long as he could see anything of him for the distance, he perceived him borne up above the waves. Viola was much consoled by the hope this account gave her, and now considered how she was to dispose of herself in a strange country, so far from home; and she asked the captain if he knew anything of Illyria.

"Aye, madam, well," replied the captain, "for I was bred and born not three hours' travel from this very place."

"Who governs here?" asked Viola. The captain told her Illyria was governed by Orsino, a "noble duke in nature as in name."

Viola said that she had heard her father speak of Orsino, and that he was unmarried then.

"And so is now," said the captain; "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 lesser ones will prattle of -- that he did seek the love of fair Olivia, a virtuous maid, the daughter of a count who died some twelvemonth since, then leaving her in the protection of his son, who shortly also died; and for the love of this dear brother, they say, she has abjured the sight and company of men."

Viola, who was herself in such a sad affliction, wished she could live with this lady. She asked the captain if he could introduce her to Olivia, saying she would willingly serve this independent lady. But he replied that this would be a hard thing to accomplish, because the Lady Olivia would admit no person into her house, not even the duke himself. Then Viola formed another project in her mind, which was, in a man's habit, to serve the Duke Orsino as a page. It was a strange fancy in a young lady to put on male attire and pass for a young man; but for the clever Viola, who was young and of uncommon beauty and alone and in a foreign land, it seemed a splendid plan.

She, having observed a fair behavior in the captain, and that he showed a friendly concern for her welfare, entrusted him with her design, and he readily engaged to assist her. Viola gave him money and directed him to furnish her with suitable apparel, ordering her clothes to be made of the same color and in the same fashion as those that her brother Sebastian used to wear, and when she was dressed in her manly garb she looked so exactly like her brother that some strange errors happened by means of their being mistaken for each other, for, unbeknownst to Viola, but as will soon be clear, Sebastian was also saved.

Viola's good friend the captain, when he had transformed this pretty lady into a gentleman, having some interest at court, got her presented to Orsino under the feigned name of Cesario. The duke was wonderfully pleased with the address and graceful deportment of this handsome youth, and made Cesario one of his pages, that being the office Viola wished to obtain; and she so well fulfilled the duties of her new station, and showed such a ready observance and faithful attachment to her lord, that in three days' time she – or he – became Duke Orsino's most favored attendant. To Cesario Orsino confided the whole history of his love for the lady Olivia. To Cesario he told the long and unsuccessful suit he had made to one who, rejecting his romantic advances and in fact despising his person, refused even to admit him to her presence; and for the love of this lady who had so unkindly treated him the noble Orsino, forsaking the sports of the field and all exercises in which he used to delight, now passed his hours in ignoble sloth, listening to music, both gentle airs and passionate love-songs, and neglecting all courtly company. Unmeet companion no doubt his grave courtiers thought Cesario was for their once noble master, the great Duke Orsino.

It is a dangerous matter for young maidens to be the confidantes of handsome young dukes; which Viola too soon found, to her sorrow, for all that Orsino told her he endured for Olivia she presently perceived she suffered for the love

of him, and much it moved her wonder that Olivia could be so regardless of this her peerless lord and master, whom she thought no one could behold without the deepest admiration, and she ventured gently to hint to Orsino, that it was a pity he should fancy a lady who was so blind to his worthy qualities. She said:

"Say that some lady – as perhaps there is – hath for your love as great a pang of heart as you have for Olivia. You cannot love her; you tell her so. Wouldn't that be enough to make the woman give up her suit? And shouldn't the same be enough to deter Orsino?"

But Orsino would not listen, for he denied that it was possible for any woman to love as he did. He said no woman's heart was big enough to hold so much love, and therefore it was unfair to compare the love of any lady for him to his love for Olivia. Now, though Viola had the utmost deference for the duke's opinions, she could not help saying that this was not true, for (and of course she could not tell him this) she knew that her heart had full as much love in it as Orsino's had. She said:

"Too well I know what love women feel for men. They are as true of heart as we. My father had a daughter who loved a man, as I perhaps, were I a woman, should love your lordship."

"And what is her history?" said Orsino.

"A blank, my lord," replied Cesario. "She never told her love, but let concealment, like a worm in the bud, feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought, and with a green and yellow melancholy she sat like Patience on a monument, smiling at Grief."

The duke inquired if this lady died of her love, but to this question Cesario returned an evasive answer; she had feigned the story, to speak words expressive of the silent grief she suffered because of her secret love for Orsino.

At some point, a gentleman entered whom the duke had sent to Olivia, and he said, "So please you, my lord, I might not be admitted to the lady, but by her handmaid she returned you this answer: The element itself, till seven years' heat, shall not behold her face; but like a cloistress she will veilèd walk, and water once a day her chamber round with eye-offending brine – all this to season fresh and lasting remembrance of her dead brother."

On hearing this, the duke exclaimed, "Oh, she that has a heart of this fine frame, to pay this debt of love to a dead brother, how will she love when the rich golden shaft has touched her heart!"

And then he said to Viola: "You know, Cesario, I have unclasped to you all the secrets of my soul; therefore, good youth, go to Olivia's house. Be not denied access; stand at her doors and tell her there your fixed foot shall grow till you have audience."

"And if I do speak to her, my lord, what then?" said Viola.

"Oh, then," replied Orsino, "unfold to her the passion of my love. Surprise her with discourse of my dear faith. It will well become you to act my woes, for she will attend more to you than to one of more grave aspect."

Away then went Viola; but not willingly did she undertake this courtship, for she was to woo a lady to become a wife to him she wished to marry; but, having undertaken the task, she performed it with fidelity, and Olivia soon heard that a youth was at her door who insisted upon being admitted to her presence.

"I told him," said Maria, Olivia's lady-in-waiting, "that you were sick. He said he knew you were, and therefore came to speak with you. I told him that you were asleep. He seemed to have a foreknowledge of that, too, and said that therefore he must speak with you. What is to be said to him, lady? for he seems fortified against all denial, and will speak with you, whether you will or no."

Olivia asked, "what kind of man is he?" and "of what personage and years?"

Another servant, a grumpy and melancholy fellow named Malvolio, described the young man, and Olivia said, "let him approach," curious to see who this young messenger might be.

Viola, disguised as Cesario, put on the most manly air she could assume, and, affecting the fine courtier language of great men's pages, she said to the veiled lady Olivia:

"Most radiant, exquisite, and unmatchable beauty, I pray you tell me if you are the lady of the house; for I should be sorry to cast away my speech upon another; for besides that it is excellently well penned, I have taken great pains to learn it."

"Whence come you, sir?" said Olivia.

"I can say little more than I have studied," replied Viola, “and that question is out of my part."

"Are you a comedian?" said Olivia.

"No," replied Viola, pretending to be the page Cesario; "and yet I am not that which I play." Again, Cesario asked Olivia if she were the lady of the house.

Olivia said she was; and then Viola, having more curiosity to see her rival's features than haste to deliver her master's message, said, "Good madam, let me see your face." With this bold request Olivia was not averse to comply, for this haughty beauty, whom the Duke Orsino had loved so long in vain, at first sight conceived a passion for the supposed page, the humble but seemingly very handsome Cesario.

Olivia first said sharply (as it was her nature to be somewhat forward), "Have you any commission from your lord and master to negotiate with my face?" And then, forgetting her determination to go veiled for seven long years, she drew aside her veil, saying: "But I will draw the curtain and show the picture. Is it not well done?"

Viola replied in words that sounded markedly like a Shakespeare sonnet: "It is beauty truly blended, whose red and white Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on. Lady, you are the cruelest she alive if you will lead these graces to the grave and leave the world no copy."

"Oh, sir," replied Olivia, mocking both Cesario’s seeming pretention and the convention of the blazon, "I will not be so hardhearted. I will give out schedules of my beauty. It shall be inventoried, and every particle labeled, as, item, two lips, indifferent red; item, two gray eyes with lids to them; item, one neck; one chin, and so forth. Were you sent here to praise me?"

Viola replied, "I see what you are: you are too proud. But you are fair. My lord and master loves you. Oh, such a love could but be recompensed though you were crowned the nonpareil of beauty. Orsino loves you with adorations, fertile tears, with groans that thunder love, and sighs of fire."

"Your lord," said Olivia, "does know my mind. I cannot love him. Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble, of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth. All voices proclaim him learned, valiant, and gracious. But yet I cannot love him. He might have taken his answer long ago."

"If I did love you in my master’s flame," said Viola, "I would make me a willow cabin at your gate, and call upon my soul within the house, hallow your name to the reverberate hills, and make the babbling gossip of the air cry out ‘Olivia!’ Oh, you should not rest between the elements of earth and air, but you should pity me!"

"You might do much," said Olivia. "What is your parentage?"'

Cesario replied: "Above my fortunes, yet my state is well. I am a gentle . . . man."

Olivia now reluctantly dismissed Cesario, saying: "Go to your master and tell him I cannot love him. Let him send no more, unless perchance you come again to tell me how he takes it."

Olivia offered Cesario some money, but Cesario declined and said, “Farewell, fair cruelty.”

When Cesario was gone, Olivia repeated Cesario's words, "'ABOVE MY FORTUNES, YET MY STATE IS WELL. I AM A GENTLE . . . MAN.' And she added, "I'll be sworn thou art! Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit do give thee fivefold blazon." And then she wished to herself that Cesario were the master. "How now? Even so quickly may one catch the plague," she said, perceiving the fast hold that the young page had taken on her affections. She called her grumpy servingman Malvolio and sent him after Cesario with a ring, under the pretense that Cesario had left it with Olivia as a present from Orsino. She hoped by thus artfully making Cesario a present of a valuable ring that she should give him some idea of her designs on him.

"I left no ring with her. What means this lady?" said Viola, as it dawned on her that Olivia had fallen in love with . . . Cesario.

"Poor lady, she were better love a dream. How will this fadge? My master loves her dearly, and I poor monster, fond as much on him, and she, mistaken, seems to dote on me. What will become of this? O Time, thou must untangle this, not I; it is too hard a knot for me t'untie!"

Olivia's uncle, Sir Toby Belch, and Sir Toby's friend, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, meanwhile, were biding their time with the fool, or court jester, Feste. Feste sang what is called a *carpe diem,* or "seize the day," song.

What is love? 'tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
        What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty.
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;
        Youth's a stuff will not endure.

Meanwhile, Cesario reported to Orsino that Orsino's suit for the love of Olivia was not going well. Orsino now called on Feste, who seems to have served both noble households, for a melancholy song, and Feste put aside his comic disposition to sing this:

Come away, come away, Death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath,
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strewn:
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O, where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there!

Viola heard the words of the sad old song, and felt the pangs of unrequited love, and bore testimony in her countenance of feeling exactly what the song expressed. Duke Orsino noticed that his page and friend looked sad, and Cesario immediately suggested that he return to the lady Olivia. "Give her this jewel," said Orsino, and sent Cesario on his way.

Back at Olivia's, Maria, Olivia's clever, crafty, and smart lady-in-waiting, had devised a "gull" or trick to play on the melancholy and very irritating Malvolio. "I know this letter will make a contemplative idiot of him," she said. "Here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling." Maria, Toby, Andrew, and another servant Fabian hid as Malvolio approached, deep in contemplation and talking to himself:

“To be Count Malvolio. There is example for it. The lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe. Imagine me, having been . . . three months married to the lady Olivia, sitting in my state, calling my officers around me, in my branched velvet gown, telling them I know my place, and they should know theirs.”

“Bolts and shackles!” exclaimed Toby, and Fabian shushed him, “Peace, peace!” At this moment, Malvolio, still none the wiser that he was being watched, spotted the letter on the ground.

“By my life, this is my lady Olivia’s hand. These be her very c’s and u’s and t’s. ‘To the unknown beloved, this, and my good wishes.’ To whom should this be? If this should be me? ‘M.O.A.I. doth sway my life.’ ‘M.O.A.I.’ If I could make that resemble something in me! ‘M.” Malvolio. ‘M.’ Why, that begins my name! ‘A.’ should follow, but ‘O.’ does . . . Every one of these letters are in my name! ‘If this fall into thy hand, revolve. In my stars I am above thee, but be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Remember who commended thy yellow stockings, and wished to see thee ever cross-gartered. If thou entertain’st my love, let it appear in thy smiling; thy smiles become thee well.’ I will do everything that she will have me do!”

Toby, Andrew, and Fabian could barely contain themselves until Malvolio had walked away.
“I could marry Maria for this device,” said Toby. Andrew concurred, and both agreed that this jest was better than any dowry.

Meanwhile Cesario arrived for a second visit to Olivia. He found no difficulty in gaining access to her. And when Cesario told Olivia that she was come once more to plead in her lord's behalf, this lady said:

"For him, I think not on him. For his thoughts, would they were blanks, rather than filled with me! But would you undertake another suit, I had rather hear you, than music from the spheres."

This was pretty plain speaking, but Olivia soon explained herself still more plainly, and openly confessed her love; and when she saw displeasure and perplexity in Cesario’s face, she said: "Oh, what a deal of scorn looks beautiful in the contempt and anger of his lip! Cesario, by the roses of the spring, by maidhood, honor, truth, and everything, I love thee so that, in spite of all your pride, nor wit nor reason can my passion hide."

Cesario responded, “I have one heart, and no woman has, nor never none shall mistress be of it save I alone. And Cesario hastened from Olivia’s presence.

Meanwhile, Sebastian, the brother of Viola, had arrived in Illyria, with a former pirate turned good guy, Antonio, who had rescued Sebastian from the sea after the shipwreck. Antonio’s pirate past made him *persona non grata* in Illyria, so Antonio headed for the inn where the two were to stay, while Sebastian began the search for his dear lost sister Viola.

Also meanwhile, Malvolio, carefully re-costumed in cross-gartered yellow stockings and wearing a big and completely uncharacteristic smile, presented himself to Olivia, quoting from the letter that he believed Olivia had written to him: “Some are born great, and some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.” Olivia exclaimed,” why, this is very midsummer madness.” At this very moment, a servant reported to Olivia that Cesario had arrived, and Olivia told Sir Toby to “have a special care of Malvolio,” while she pursued Cesario: “I would not have him slip away from me for the half of my dowry.” Malvolio thought Olivia was talking about him in both the former and the latter remark, and thus was sure that Olivia and he would be married in no time at all. Sir Toby had a different plan: “we’ll have him in a dark room and bound. Olivia is already in the belief that he’s mad. We may carry it thus for our pleasure and his penance ‘til our pastime prompt us to have mercy on him.”

Just then Sir Andrew arrived with a saucy letter he had written to Cesario, challenging Cesario to a duel for the hand of the lady Olivia. Sir Toby delivered the demand for the duel to Cesario, who, of course, had no interest at all in getting into a fight. Toby then returned to Andrew, egging him on to fight Cesario, and again returned to Cesario insisting that Andrew would not back down. Cesario and Andrew were brought together for the duel, and their weapons were drawn.

Suddenly, a complete stranger to Viola, the former pirate and savior of Sebastian, Antonio, intervened:

"Put up your sword. If this young gentleman has done offense, I take the fault on me; and if you offend him, I will for him defy you."

Even before Viola could to thank him, or inquire the reason for his kindness to her, or even ask his name, officers apprehended the stranger in the duke's name, to answer for an offense he had committed some years before.

The stranger said to Cesario:

"This comes with seeking you." And then he asked for a purse of coins, saying: "Now my necessity makes me ask for my purse, which I lent to you earlier, and it grieves me that I cannot serve you. You stand amazed, but be of comfort."

His words did indeed amaze Viola, and she protested she knew him not, nor had ever received a purse from him; but for the kindness he had just shown her she offered to lend him some money.

Antonio said to the officers, "this youth whom you see here I snatched out of the jaws of death. Thou hast, Sebastian, done good feature shame."

Antonio said a few more things, but all that Viola heard was the name Sebastian. As Antonio was dragged off by the officers, Viola said to herself, “Prove true, imagination, oh, prove true, that I, dear brother, be now mistaken for you!”

Viola returned to Orsino’s, and coincidentally, at that very moment, Sebastian wandered up to the very spot of the now-abandoned duel. Sir Andrew was still there, and spotted Sebastian, whom he presumed was Cesario. Andrew drew his weapon and struck Sebastian. Sebastian, a trained fighter, immediately responded with three quick blows. “Are all the people mad here,” Sebastian exclaimed.

By the time Olivia arrived on the scene, Sebastian was ready to take on Toby and Andrew, both of whom he was sure were madmen. Mistaking Sebastian for Cesario, Olivia immediately invited him to come into her house, expressing much sorrow at the rude attack he had met with. Though Sebastian was as much surprised at the courtesy of this beautiful stranger as at the rudeness of his unknown foes, he went very willingly into the house with Olivia, and Olivia was delighted to find Cesario (as she thought him) suddenly sensible of her attentions.

Sebastian did not at all object to the fondness the lady lavished on him. “What relish is in this? How runs the stream? Or I am mad, or else this is a dream. If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep!”

“Nay, come, I prithee. Would thou’dst be ruled by me!”

“Madam, I will,” was all that Sebastian could say. He was rather inclined to think Olivia was not in her right senses; but perceiving that she was mistress of a fine house and that in all but her sudden love for him she appeared in the full possession of her reason, he well approved of the sudden courtship.

Olivia, finding Cesario (as she thought Sebastian) in this good humour, and fearing he might change his mind, proposed that they should be instantly married. Sebastian was more than happy to consent!

In the meantime the officers of justice brought their prisoner, Antonio, before Duke Orsino. Viola, as Cesario, was with Orsino; and when Antonio saw Viola, whom Antonio believed was Sebastian, Antonio told Orsino that he had rescued this youth from the perils of the sea and that for three months, both day and night, he had taken care of this ungrateful youth.

As Olivia entered, Orsino called Antonio’s story madness, since for the past three months Cesario had been serving as Orsino’s page. Olivia then addressed Cesario as her “lord,” and Orsino was outraged that his page apparently had subverted his suit to Olivia, and ordered Cesario to leave with him immediately.Viola obeyed most willingly. “Where goes my Cesario?” pleaded Olivia, and Viola, still as Cesario, replied, “After him I love more than my life.” Olivia, however, prevented their departure: “Cesario, husband, stay,” and the priest who had married Olivia to Sebastian arrived just then and attested to the truth of this assertion.

Suddenly, in the midst of this confusion, Sebastian appeared.

Orsino looked at Sebastian and at Cesario. “One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons, a natural perspective, that is and is not!” Antonio asked, “Which is Sebastian?” and Olivia simply said, “Most wonderful!”

As the confusion was resolved, Olivia claimed Sebastian as her husband, and Orsino asked for Viola's hands, to see her "in thy woman's weeds," and then asked for her hand in marriage.

All this time, Malvolio had been kept in a dark room, with Feste, disguised as a religious man named Sir Topas, feigning to treat Malvolio for his madness. Having escaped, Malvolio came to blame those who had gulled him in a complaint to Olivia. Olivia took one look at the letter and stated, very matter-of-factly, "this is not my writing; 'tis Maria's hand."

At this point Fabian announced that Toby has married the clever Maria, and that the entire jest should "pluck on laughter," rather than "revenge." Malvolio, though, disagreed: "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!"

Feste ends the play with a festive song that doubles as an epilogue:

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.