

Act 2

Scene 1

Moments after she had left Olivia's house, Viola was tens of miles away on the outskirts of a nearby town.

What was going on?! Was she, in fact, a goddess with a superpower? From the future? From another planet? How could this be?

Also, her walk seemed different somehow, less like someone pretending to be a giant, more like ...well, like a normal human man!

And who was that sea captain who was talking to her?

"Will you stay no longer, Sebastian? Nor will you not that I go with you?"

This could make your head explode; why was he calling Viola Sebastian?

"My stars shine darkly over me, Antonio; I crave your leave that I may bear my evils alone."

BLIMEY! Where did that deep voice come from? Had she borrowed it from a bloke with a big beard?

"Some hour before you took me from the breach of the sea was my twin sister drowned."

Well, that's just wrong, isn't it? If you've been following the story at all, like me, you'll remember that it was her twin BROTHER who had drowned. At least, she was pretty sure that he had. Ninety percent. There was some doubt, it's true. Now that I think about it, the rest of the sailors on the boat *did* tell her that they'd seen him swimming like a human dolphin (or words to that effect). Hmmmm. Could I be mistaken? As I see it, there are two possible explanations here: one, Viola has slipped through a hole in the very fabric of space-time into an alternate universe, or two, this isn't Viola, but Sebastian her twin brother, not drowned after all. It's one, isn't it. *Definitely* one. What do you think? Two? TWO?? Ridiculous. I suggest we keep listening...

"My father was that Sebastian Of Messaline whom I know you have heard of. He left behind him myself and a sister, both born in an hour."

Ok, you're right, this is Viola's twin brother, miraculously survived, though also heartbroken and also convinced that his twin had been drowned.

Antonio, first his rescuer and now his friend, was deeply worried at the grief he saw, and wanted, with all his heart to help.

"If you will not murder me for my love, let me be your servant."

But Antonio had done more than enough: Sebastian could not ask for more; he said goodbye.

“Fare ye well at once. I am bound to the Count Orsino’s court.”

As Sebastian turned and walked away, Antonio muttered,

“I have many enemies in Orsino’s court, but come what may, I do adore thee so,
The danger shall seem sport and I will go.”

Scene 2

Moments after she had left, when Viola (the real Viola) was still near Olivia’s house, when a soberly dressed figure with a very haughty expression approached.

Malvolio had always suspected there’d been a terrible mistake and that he’d been swapped at birth. Somewhere, a Duke and Duchess had been given a really lower-class, common baby, whilst he - their real son - noble, brilliant, dashing handsome, with a very majestic nose - had been brought up by servants. It had been awful, and now he himself was a servant. Ghastly. But, inside, he knew that he was still better than everyone else and comforted himself by letting them know it. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria, Feste - better than all of them. And definitely better than this young servant of Orsino’s who couldn’t even grow a beard, and, what’s more, walked as if his trousers had been fashioned out of tree bark. And now he had had to chase after this servant, almost run - how undignified - to catch up with him.

“Were not you even now with the Countess Olivia?” he panted.

“Even now, sir; on a moderate pace I have since arrived but hither.”

Ah. A joke. How hilarious. About as funny as Feste the Clown. Malvolio decided to punish this youth with one of his Special Looks. This involved speaking to the person without looking at them at all, instead, staring moodily into the distance. That would teach him respect!

“She returns this ring to you, sir: you might have saved me my pains, to have taken it away yourself.”

He threw the ring contemptuously at Cesario. Or, he would have, if he hadn’t been doing the Special Look. As it was, the ring bounced off a tree and rolled back between Malvolio’s feet. He ignored it nobly.

“She adds, moreover, that you should put your lord into a desperate assurance she will none of him.”

His duty completed, Malvolio turned and left.

Viola was puzzled.

“I left no ring with her: what means this lady?”

Staring at the ring for some moments, she started to blush as the truth slowly dawned:

“She loves me, sure! The cunning of her passion invites me in this churlish messenger. None of my lord's ring! Why, he sent her none. I am the man!”

So, a woman - Olivia - is in love with Cesario - who is not a man, but secretly a woman - Viola - who is in love with Orsino - who really is a man, but who loves Olivia, who really is a woman, and Viola, because she is also Cesario, and it is Cesario's *job*, has to persuade Olivia to marry the man that she - Viola - loves. You now have my permission to be confused.

Scene 3

BUURP!
Not for nothing, Sir Toby thought with great satisfaction, was his last name Belch. This had to be one of the best parties he had ever thrown. It had everything: drinking, dancing, huge pies and, to cap it all, he had just won the All-Illyria Burping competition. Nobody had even got close to his one and a half minutes of continual burp, which had been so powerful that it had blown out all the candles. Now the room was dark and, he thought proudly, pretty whiffy. So whiffy, in fact, that most of the guests had decided to leave....

As he re-lit the candles, Sir Toby noticed with pleasure that, even though the sun would be up in a couple of hours, both Feste and Sir Andrew were still partying. In fact, Sir Andrew was just showing Feste an extraordinary dance move which he called The Heron Struck by Lightning. Could they continue the party with just three of them? Of course they could! He put his arms around his fellow revellers and they started to jump up and down, up and down, faster and faster.

“Does not our life consist of the four elements?” shouted Feste.

“I think it rather consists of eating and drinking!” roared back Sir Andrew, leaping like a salmon returning home. This was the very cue Sir Toby had been waiting for...

“Marian! A stoup of wine!” he called at the top of his lungs.

Seconds later, Maria came running in, pulling her dressing gown around her and rapidly shoving Sir Andrew away as he tried to pull her into their jumping circle.

“What a caterwauling do you keep here?” she hissed in a furious whisper.

Ah Maria, thought Sir Toby. What a wonderful woman. The sight of her made him break into song!

“Three Merry Men and Three Merry Men and Three Merry Men are we!”

This song, with its easy to learn words, had been a recent hit, and Feste and Sir Andrew joined in heartily...

Maria, fearing that the awful noise would bring down the wrath of Malvolio upon them all, gestured frantically.

“For the love of God, Peace!”

Too late. They could hear Malvolio stamping down the corridor, and the end of his nose, which seemed to enter several seconds before the rest of him, quivered with rage.

“My masters, are you mad? Have you no manners but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night!”

Sir Toby and friends stared at their shoes, trying not to giggle. But Malvolio had not finished. He looked down his long beak at Sir Toby.

“Sir Toby, my lady bade me tell you, if you can separate yourself and your misdemeanours, you are welcome to the house; if not, she is very willing to bid you farewell!”

As he returned to his bedchamber, Malvolio felt a certain satisfaction with the telling off he had given to Sir Toby and his friends.

That was a mistake.

For, after he had gone, Maria revealed a plan to make Malvolio look like the biggest fool in Illyria. So skilful was she at imitating her mistresses' handwriting, she said, that she could write a letter to Malvolio professing love and he would be sure to believe that it was from Olivia. He would find the letter, as if by chance, on one of the paths in Olivia's garden. And Maria, Sir Toby and their friends would all be hidden nearby so that they could watch and savour every second.

Scene 4

Meanwhile, back at Count Orsino's house, Cesario - or Viola, as we know her - was having a difficult time. There's quite a lot of truth in the phrase 'Liar, liar, pants on fire' in that, lying for a long time, and having flaming pants are both very uncomfortable. And this was just how Viola - or Cesario, as Orsino knew her - was feeling.

It wasn't just having to wear boys' pants and boys' trousers, put on a boy's walk and a boy's voice, it was also having to lie about her passionate feelings for Orsino. Because the stronger the passion, the more difficult it is to hide. So, when Orsino's court musicians started to play a particularly romantic piece of music, Viola could not help her feelings showing on her face.

The music stopped and Orsino turned to her.

“How dost thou like this tune?” He was gazing at her with a particular intensity that Viola both liked and feared.

“It gives a very echo to the seat where Love is throned.”

As she spoke, she could not help heaving a long and heartfelt sigh.

Orsino started to talk rapidly; he knew it! He was sure that Cesario had been, possibly still was, in love. Was this true? Viola was taken aback, scared at first but then, daringly, realised she could answer honestly, without giving herself away. Yes, she replied. Ah! What kind of woman? Rather like you, master. Really? Unlucky for you! And how old? The same age as you, master. Too old! Orsino laughed heartily.

As the musicians played again, Viola thought what a thrilling game this was, to speak the truth and yet not to be suspected. She turned to look at Orsino and saw that the laughter on his face was fading as the music turned sadder. As the last chord rang out, he dismissed the musicians and the rest of the servants, leaving the two of them alone.

“Once more Cesario, get thee to yond same sovereign cruelty. Tell her my love.”

“But if she cannot love you sir?”

“I cannot be so answer’d. To her in haste. Give her this jewel. Say my love can give no place, bide no deny.”

Scene 5

It was a lovely day. The sun was shining, the scent of the flowers in Olivia’s garden was wafting on the gentle breeze and all seemed to be well. Somewhere here, though, a trap had been set. Not that it looked like a trap. The best ones don’t. It was just an ordinary piece of white paper sitting in the middle of a garden path. What on earth could be so dangerous about that? And why, right next to this path and this piece of paper, was there a tree that seemed to be shaking?

Just then, a head popped out of the tree, still laughing. It was Maria’s. Seeing a figure approaching in the distance, she turned quickly to the rest of the crew - Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and their friend Fabian.

“Get thee into the box tree! Malvolio’s coming down this walk! I know this letter will make an idiot of him!”

The tree ceased to shake as the four conspirators stifled their giggles and hid.

Alone. Such bliss to be alone, thought Malvolio. With no one else around he could imagine himself in charge. And really, that was how it should be... or perhaps even could be?

“To be Count Malvolio” he said, hugging himself with pleasure. Perhaps it wasn’t such a ridiculous thought.

“The Lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe,” he mused to himself. And if the yeoman could do that, then it wasn’t beyond the bounds of possibility that Malvolio could wed Olivia!! After all, hadn’t Maria once told him how fond her mistress was of him?

Now, if he was *Count* Malvolio, what would be the first thing that he’d do? Ah yes ...

“Seven of my people make out for him: I frown the while; and perchance wind up my watch. Toby approaches: courtesies there to me. Imagine! Cousin Toby you must amend your drunkenness.”

Whilst Malvolio imagined Sir Toby bowing low before him, the real Sir Toby, still in the tree, was purple with rage.

“Shall this fellow live?”

Quick as lightning, Fabian clapped his hand across Sir Toby’s mouth.

“Peace!!” he hissed. Sir Toby was about to spoil the game, for Malvolio had just spotted the piece of paper.

“What employment have we here?”

He stooped, picked up the letter and unfolded it.

“By my life, this is my lady’s hand.”

He began to read.

“Jove knows I love; but who? M.O.A.I. doth sway my life.”

It was like a firework display going off in Malvolio’s chest, those were all letters in HIS name. This could be nothing else but what he had always desired - a declaration of love from Olivia! Wait though, there were instructions for him to follow.

“In my stars I am above thee, but be not afraid of greatness. Be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants. Remember who commended thy yellow stockings, and wished to see thee ever cross-gartered. Thou art made, if thou desir’st to be so. Farewell. The Fortunate Unhappy.”

Malvolio quivered with pleasure; his dreams were coming true at last!

“I thank my stars. I will be strange, stout, in yellow stockings, and cross-gartered!”
He read on:

“Here is yet a post script; ‘Thy smiles become thee well. Therefore in my presence still smile, dear my sweet I prithee.’ Jove, I thank thee, I will smile.”
And so Malvolio left the garden, the serious servant grinning broadly as he almost danced his way down the path.

As he left, the four conspirators emerged from their hiding places. All stood staring at the retreating figure until, as the garden door closed, Sir Toby let out a wild hoot of laughter and turned to Maria.

“I could marry this wench for this device!”

“So could I too,” chimed in Sir Andrew.
But Maria held up her hand.

“If you will then see the fruits of the sport, mark his first approach before my lady: he will come to her in yellow stockings, and 'tis a colour she abhors, and cross-gartered, a fashion she detests; If you will see it, follow me.”