

Twelfth Night - The Story

Viola and her twin brother **Sebastian** are shipwrecked and are washed ashore separately on the coast of Illyria, each thinking the other is dead. Viola dresses as a boy, calls herself **Cesario** and finds a job in the household of **Orsino**, the **Duke of Illyria**. Orsino is in love with **Olivia**, a local countess and employs Cesario to visit her and try to make her love him.

Olivia isn't interested in love because her father and brother have recently died. She lives with her waiting-lady **Maria**, her servant **Malvolio** and her jester **Feste** and refuses all Orsino's advances. Her uncle **Sir Toby Belch** lives nearby. He is a heavy drinker and is friendly with another drinker, **Sir Andrew Aguecheek**, who also wants to marry Olivia. He is a wealthy but stupid knight.

Olivia falls in love with Cesario, thinking she is a boy. Viola, (Cesario), meanwhile falls in love with Orsino but can't tell him because he, too, thinks she is a boy.

Eventually Sebastian makes his way to Olivia's house. Olivia, thinking he is Cesario, proposes to him. He is a bit puzzled as to why this beautiful and wealthy woman should want to marry him but accepts and they are married immediately. This, of course, causes a lot of confusion, which is eventually resolved and Orsino marries Viola.

There is a second story (a sub-plot) interwoven with this main story. Malvolio is rather a sour-faced, pompous man. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria decide to play a trick on him. Maria writes a letter in Olivia's handwriting, pretending to come from Olivia and declaring her love for Malvolio. In the letter she claims to love bright yellow leggings, particularly on people who smile all the time. In reality she hates yellow leggings and Malvolio's smile is like something out of a horror film! Sir Toby and Sir Andrew watch from behind a bush while Malvolio reads this letter and starts to strut, imagining how he'll be able to put the two men down once he is married to Olivia.

When he next meets Olivia, he is dressed in gaudy yellow leggings and an even gaudier grin. He refers to things in the letter and Olivia thinks he has gone mad and has him locked up. Eventually all is resolved, Malvolio is released and Maria marries Sir Toby Belch, and they all live happily ever after!

Much of the humour comes from the mistaken identities. Sir Andrew offers to fight Cesario for Olivia's hand. Cesario, being a woman and unused to fighting, is of course horrified. Some time later Sir Andrew meets Sebastian, assumes he is Cesario and attacks him. Sebastian easily fends him off but has no idea why this man has suddenly sprung upon him.

When he first arrived in Illyria, Sebastian was in the company of a sea-captain, **Antonio**, who had rescued him from the shipwreck and nursed him back to health. Antonio gave Sebastian a bag of money to find lodgings, while he kept a low profile because he had fought sea battles against the Illyrians in the past. Antonio meets Cesario and asks for his money back but of course Cesario doesn't know what he's talking about.

So - the story is a romantic comedy revolving around Viola's disguise as a boy and the confusion with her twin brother Sebastian.