

ACT 1

Scene 2

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 drowned.—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 practice)
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, *giving him money* 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 his 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 sight
And company 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 shalt 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.

They exit.