

*Twelfth Night*  
by William Shakespeare

Character list and plot synopsis by Garrett Eisler  
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## Who's Who

**Viola**

A shipwrecked woman posing as a man ("Cesario") to get by.

**Sebastian**

Viola's twin brother, separated from her in the shipwreck.

**Orsino**

The ruling duke of Illyria. Loves Olivia.

**Olivia**

A proud heiress who spurns all suitors—until Cesario comes along.

**Antonio**

Captain of the wrecked ship who has a checkered past in Illyria. Befriends Sebastian.

**Sir Toby Belch**

Olivia's fun-loving, mischievous uncle.

**Sir Andrew Aguecheek**

A wealthy bachelor who is Sir Toby's drinking companion and an unwanted suitor of Olivia's.

**Malvolio**

Countess Olivia's priggish, vain steward. A killjoy.

**Feste**

Servant to Olivia. A wise fool.

**Maria**

Olivia's servant. In love with Sir Toby.

## The Story

In the small dukedom of Illyria, beautiful Countess Olivia mourns her recently deceased brother and swears off love for seven years out of respect. Her suitor Orsino, Duke of Illyria, is heart-broken but determined to win her.

Into this world arrives Viola, a young woman shipwrecked off Illyria's shore. She had been traveling with her twin brother, Sebastian, now feared dead. Stranded in a strange land, she poses as a man in order to gain employment with the duke. Orsino, taken in by the disguise, soon makes "Cesario" one of his confidants. When he asks her to woo the obstinate Olivia on his behalf, Viola succeeds too well; she makes such a passionate case that the countess ends up more attracted to Cesario than to "his" master. Making the love triangle all the more complicated is Viola's own growing attraction to Orsino, which she cannot reveal while maintaining her disguise.

Sebastian, as it turns out, survived the shipwreck and resurfaces in Illyria, accompanied by his rescuer, Antonio. Sebastian fears Viola has perished at sea and seeks refuge with the duke. Antonio wishes to help Sebastian, but cannot come with him since he has enemies at court.

Meanwhile, Olivia's uncle, Sir Toby Belch, wants her to marry his foolish crony, Sir Andrew Aguecheek. The two men are fond of carousing with the clown Feste, which angers Olivia's uptight steward, Malvolio. To help them get back at Malvolio, the maid Maria forges a love letter from Olivia asking him to woo her in a bizarre "cross-gartered" costume. Malvolio takes the bait but, looking ridiculous, is humiliated when Olivia rejects him. Sir Toby and his pals continue the jest by pretending to lock Malvolio up as a madman and tormenting him in his cell.

Orsino again dispatches Cesario to convey his love, subjecting Viola to yet more unwanted advances from the countess. Tensions rise as Sir Toby goads Sir Andrew into dueling Cesario over Olivia's honor and Orsino accuses his page of seducing his beloved. Then, in the nick of time comes Sebastian, who, of course, looks just like Viola's alter ego, Cesario. Mistaken identity runs rampant until the twins are joyfully reunited and a happy ending ensues for *almost* everyone.