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CHARACTER / ACT BREAKDOWN

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Twelfth Night, or What You Will

KEY CHARACTERS:

Olivia...*a rich, beautiful countess*

Orsino...*The Duke of Illyria, in love with Olivia*

Viola/Cesario...*the twin sister of Sebastian, in love with Orsino*

Feste...*Olivia's clown, conscience of the play*

Malvolio...*Olivia's humorless steward*

Sir Toby Belch...*Olivia's often drunk uncle who lives with her*

Mariah...*Olivia's gentlewoman*

Sir Andrew Aguecheek...*suitor to Olivia, friend of Toby's*

Sebastian...*Viola's twin brother*

*Twelfth Night got its name from the date of its very first performance...the twelfth night, or January 6th. The alternate title was "What You Will", utilizing the play on words – Will, or William Shakespeare.

ACT I:

Duke Orsino of the land Illyria, is madly in love with the Countess Olivia, but she has no interest in him at all. She is in deep mourning over the death of both her father and brother. She will not speak with Orsino, accept letters or tokens or messages from him.

Viola and Sebastian are separated in a shipwreck, and Viola is rescued and finds herself in Illyria. She assumes her brother dead, though the captain says he saw Sebastian clinging bravely to the mast, so there is hope.

Alone in a strange country, she decides that it would be prudent to disguise herself as a boy (one of Shakespeare's favorite plot devices.),

and enter the employment of Duke Orsino. She takes the male name of "Cesario" and becomes the new delivery boy to attempt contact with the Countess Olivia.

Olivia houses her uncle, Sir Toby, and has a staff including a gentlewoman, Mariah, and a steward, Malvolio. Malvolio has ill will toward others and certainly looks down upon Toby and the rest of the staff, but is keen about Olivia. Her closest relationship is with Feste, there to cheer her.

Toby's friend, Sir Andrew, comes to visit with aspirations of wooing Olivia, all the while encouraged by Toby. Although Toby knows her disinterest and depression.

Viola, as Cesario, arrives at Olivia's and refuses to leave. Her stubbornness is intriguing to Olivia. Cesario is presented to Olivia and attempts to woo her in Orsino's name, but Olivia is more interested in the messenger than the message. After Viola leaves, Olivia thinks of a trick to get Cesario to return...she makes up a story that Cesario left a ring as a gift and she wants to return the ring. She sends Malvolio to find Cesario and return the ring.

ACT II:

Meanwhile, Sebastian thinks his sister is drowned in the shipwreck and that he is most likely the sole survivor...coincidentally, he comes ashore in Illyria too, and heads for Duke Orsino's.

Malvolio tracks down Cesario and delivers Olivia's ring and message. Viola recognizes the device that Olivia is using in an attempt to woo...Cesario. Thinking that she is indeed, he. The problem, however, is doubled by the fact that Viola has fallen in love with her employer...Duke Orsino...who is in love with Olivia...who is love with Cesario...who is Viola...who is the ONLY one who knows the truth.

Malvolio scolds Toby and Andrew for their carousing and drinking, and Mariah for both encouraging and participating in said behavior. They are extremely aggravated by his sourness, for being the perpetual killjoy. Mariah hatches a plan to get even with Malvolio...knowing his affection for Olivia, she leaves out a love letter to

him in Olivia's handwriting. He finds it and takes it in earnest. The letter directs him to dress and act outrageously- to smile always (an expression he never wears), to wear yellow stockings, cross-gartered (Olivia's least favorite color and style). He begins to picture himself elevated to the status of count...able to be Toby and Mariah's master.

ACT III:

The man who rescued Sebastian still wants to help him, and even lends him money. He must be careful though, he fought against Orsino some time ago and is a wanted man in Illyria, but he will help Sebastian as best he can.

Malvolio commits to dress and behave as the letter commands. When Olivia sees him, she thinks he has become completely unhinged mentally and asks Toby and Feste to take care of the poor, sick man. Also, Toby encourages Andrew to hotly pursue Olivia, even to challenge Cesario to a duel and eliminate his rival.

Olivia can't restrain herself anymore and confesses her love for Cesario...this puts Viola in a VERY uncomfortable position. Viola says that NO woman shall ever be the mistress of "his" heart. After Olivia leaves, Toby delivers Andrew's challenge to Cesario. She asks Toby to dissuade Andrew, but instead Toby tells Andrew that Cesario is getting prepped for the fight.

Sebastian's friend sees the duel beginning and jumps in to intervene because he thinks that Viola is Sebastian. The whole mess draws the attention of the local police, who break up the fray...they then recognize and arrest Sebastian's friend. He asks Cesario for help and to re-pay the money he loaned him, thinking he is asking Sebastian. She of course, has no idea what he's talking about, which causes further pandemonium.

ACT IV:

Toby continues to encourage Andrew who then decides to renew the duel with Cesario. Unfortunately, he finds Sebastian instead, who

beats Andrew soundly. Toby tries to stop Sebastian, but Olivia intervenes and naturally mistakes Sebastian for Cesario, suggesting that they just cut to the chase and get married. Sebastian is pretty confused, but when this beautiful woman asks him to follow her, he happily obeys. Olivia is thrilled.

Toby, Mariah and Feste continue to play with Malvolio's mind...they imprison him, calling him mad and possessed by the devil. Finally, Toby realizes that perhaps he's gone too far.

Sebastian is bewildered by Olivia's behavior, but delighted. He tries to find his friend to re-pay him, but searches in vain.

ACT V:

The officers lead Sebastian's friend to Duke Orsino, where Viola recognizes him and reports how he sided with her in the duel. The friend tells the story of how he rescued Sebastian from the shipwreck. Suddenly Olivia enters, looking for Cesario – her husband. Toby and Andrew complain that Cesario attacked and hurt them.

Viola denies that she married Olivia. She also denies that she attacked anyone. Finally, Sebastian enters and apologizes to Olivia for hurting her kinsman and his friend, but says that they started the fight and he merely ended it.

Viola and Sebastian finally see each other and are reunited in a beautiful moment. All of the confusion is finally put to rest....

Olivia is happily married to Sebastian. Cesario is finally free to be Viola and will marry Orsino. Malvolio gains his freedom and shows the letter to Olivia in confusion...she recognizes the penmanship as Mariah's. Toby and Mariah repent for their cruelty toward Malvolio and proclaim their love for each other, and are married.