



Arts Engagement  
and Education

## VIOLA

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

From *Twelfth Night*

by William Shakespeare: <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk>

Gender: Female/Feminine Presenting

Style: Classical Comedic

Age Range: 13-19

**Link to Buy Script** <https://www.target.com>

### **Play Synopsis:**

In the kingdom of Illyria, a nobleman named Orsino lies around listening to music, pining away for the love of Lady Olivia. He cannot have her because she is in mourning for her dead brother and refuses to entertain any proposals of marriage. Meanwhile, off the coast, a storm has caused a terrible shipwreck.

A young, aristocratic-born woman named Viola is swept onto the Illyrian shore. Finding herself alone in a strange land, she assumes that her twin brother, Sebastian, has been drowned in the wreck, and tries to figure out what sort of work she can do. A friendly sea captain tells her about Orsino's courtship of Olivia, and Viola says that she wishes she could go to work in Olivia's home. But since Lady Olivia refuses to talk with any strangers, Viola decides that she cannot look for work with her. Instead, she decides to disguise herself as a man, taking on the name of Cesario, and goes to work in the household of Duke Orsino.

Viola (disguised as Cesario) quickly becomes a favorite of Orsino, who makes Cesario his page. Viola finds herself falling in love with Orsino—a difficult love to pursue, as Orsino believes her to be a man. But when Orsino sends Cesario to deliver Orsino's love messages to the disdainful Olivia, Olivia herself falls for the beautiful young Cesario, believing her to be a man. The love triangle is complete: Viola loves Orsino, Orsino loves Olivia, and Olivia loves Cesario—and everyone is miserable.

### **At this Moment:**

Malvolio (The steward in charge of the servants at Olivia's house) catches up with Cesario. He gives Cesario the ring from Olivia and explains that Olivia doesn't want it and has nothing more to say to the Duke, but would like Cesario to return to tell her how Orsino reacts. Although momentarily confused because he didn't leave any such ring, Cesario plays along by refusing to take the ring back. Malvolio, growing angry, throws the ring at Cesario's feet, then storms off. Alone, Viola picks up the ring and realizes that Olivia has fallen in love with "Cesario," and that by taking on her disguise she has created an impossible love triangle: Orsino loves Olivia, Olivia loves Viola/Cesario, and Viola loves Orsino.

Because Orsino takes Viola for a man, she has no chance with him; and because Olivia takes her for the pageboy Cesario, she is in love with someone who does not even exist. Overwhelmed, Viola remarks that only time can solve this mess.

### **Monologue (Act II Scene II)**

I left no ring with her: what means this lady?  
Fortune forbid my outside have not charm'd her!  
She made good view of me; indeed, so much,  
That sure methought her eyes had lost her tongue,  
For she did speak in starts distractedly.  
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: if it be so, as 'tis,  
Poor lady, she were better love a dream.  
Disguise, I see, thou art a wickedness,  
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.  
How easy is it for the proper-false  
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!  
Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we!  
For such as we are made of, such we be.  
How will this fadge? my master loves her dearly;  
And I, poor monster, fond as much on him;  
And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me.  
What will become of this? As I am man,  
My state is desperate for my master's love;  
As I am woman, now alas the day!  
What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!  
O time! thou must untangle this, not I;  
It is too hard a knot for me to untie!

**Helpful Links: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2aMKzV6MGo>**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uzRZK3M208>**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jg1qTs5pdeM>**