

## What You Will

(Enter Viola & Sebastian)

Viola            Do you want to fall in love?  
Sebastian        Yes, of course.  
Viola            I don't know what worries me more, the falling or the loving...  
Sebastian        I think you will find it very natural.  
Viola            You haven't yet though, have you?  
Sebastian        I might have done –  
Viola            No, I would know. Twins' instinct. (Silence). Do you think there's room for love?  
                    What if they came between us?  
Sebastian        It'll be worth the risk, Viola. I'm sure they'd understand. We could marry twins!  
Viola            Well, not yet. For now I'm happy to know you're here.  
Sebastian        As always. (Pause). As always.

(Enter Fool & Female Fool)

Fool             And so Viola and Sebastian, twins by birth -  
Female Fool     Though not identical –  
Fool             Became by their unspoken vows and introversion –  
Female Fool     Identical in practice.  
Fool             The comfort of the known and well-loved –  
Female Fool     And the annoying finishing of each other's –  
Fool             Sentences meant that others -  
Female Fool     Could no longer tell the difference between them. (Exeunt Sebastian & Viola).  
Fool             Now from brother and sister soon to be parted -  
Female Fool     To brother and sister parted forever. (Exeunt).

(Enter Olivia & her brother)

Brother         My dear Olivia, has he tried to contact you again?  
Olivia          Who?  
Brother         You know who. The suitor. He seems very persistent.  
Olivia          Persistence is never a good quality where men are concerned. Yes, he has left messages  
                    and no, I have not replied.  
Brother         How much longer will you be keeping this up?  
Olivia          I am not keeping anything up. I am happy as I am.  
Brother         This is happiness? Keeping the world at arm's length for the memory of a dead brother  
                    for whom you, if I recall rightly, didn't have much time for when he was alive. Which,  
                    I imagine, is the problem.  
Olivia          I have plenty of time for you now.  
Brother         I don't want to be accused of getting in the way. It's bad enough living in memories  
                    without that making it worse.  
Olivia          Well, you're not. Making it worse. That man has no idea who I am. He sees me a  
                    couple of times, can't control his hormones and before you know it he's head over  
                    heels in ...  
Brother         You can say it, you know.  
Olivia          It's all so very unnecessary.

Brother        No it isn't, believe me, it isn't. (Exeunt)

(Enter Fool & Female Fool)

Female Fool    Now, imagine a violent storm has overtaken Viola and Sebastian.

Fool            You'll have to imagine it, I'm afraid.

Female Fool    Fate has intervened and colossal outside forces conspire to tear them apart.

Fool            To survive they must separate.

Female Fool    Woken from their cosiness they are thrown apart and have to fend for themselves. (Exit Fool).

(Enter Sebastian, disorientated).

Female Fool    Sebastian? Are you all right?

Sebastian      We...

Female Fool    We?

Sebastian      My sister and me. We were together, as usual. Then there was great noise, commotion...

Female Fool    Tumult?

Sebastian      Yes, that's right. In all the confusion I made sure she was safe and then she disappeared from sight. And now we're apart (holds himself as though shivering). I can't find her anywhere.

Female Fool    Is it true you're always mistaken for one another?

Sebastian      (Distracted). I don't know, I've never really noticed.

Female Fool    And you're Sebastian?

Sebastian      Yes, of course. Yes.

(Exeunt. Enter Viola)

Viola            Sebastian? Sebastian? (Silence). What do you do when one half of you is swept away? What's left is just clinging to the rocks. What would he do? (Angry) What would he do? (Exits).

(Exeunt. Enter Olivia and Fool)

Olivia          (To herself) Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.

Fool            Madam?

Olivia          Remember you are dust –

Fool            Yes thank you very much, madam.

Olivia          Well, what is it, Fool?

Fool            Madam, do you not think you have mourned long enough? Though undoubtedly it's a very good mourning.

Olivia          'Good mourning', Fool? Oh Fool, you going to have to do much better than that. There are those who say employing a professional fool is an unnecessary luxury but I think a fool adds gravitas, dignity, to a court. When he's funny.

Fool            Madam.

Olivia          Is not foolery just philosophy on the cheap?

Fool            Madam?

Olivia          Very well, I leave the fooling to you. Now go and be funny. Somewhere else.

Fool            Isn't it time for the mourning to end? Wouldn't your brother wish it so? A world is out there waiting.  
Olivia         Oh fool. My brother is dead. I wish I was...I am tired. You mean well, fool. Mean well elsewhere.

(Exeunt. Enter Orsino and Female Fool, humming)

Orsino         For goodness sake stop that humming. I don't feel very well.  
Female Fool   I thought you could do with some mood music, my lord.  
Orsino         And the mood is, Fool?  
Female Fool   Unrequited love.  
Orsino         Ah yes. As they say 'A slap in the face, a knee in the groin still has not killed my stirring loin'.  
Female Fool   Indeed they do, my lord.  
Orsino         Still no replies then?  
Female Fool   From the entreaties, suggestions, begging letters, double entendres, single entendres, entendres of any multiplicity, flowers, bouquets, ice swans, pools of water that used to be ice swans, twelve lords a leaping, the somewhat obscure and little understood thirteen counts a capering and a chicken in a palm tree which I think was something of a misunderstanding with the trades people concerned...  
Orsino         And...  
Female Fool   Not a sausage. Nothing.  
Orsino         Ah well. Let us not despair. 'Tis early days yet.  
Female Fool   My lord. Perhaps 'tis time to reconsider. The countess is still in mourning.  
Orsino         Yes, a funny business that.  
Female Fool   My lord?  
Orsino         The rumour was she never liked her brother. Too bad. But luckily I have a plan to brighten her days.  
Female Fool   My lord?  
Orsino         I have decided to send a special envoy. There is nothing like the personal touch and I think you have the touch in question.  
Female Fool   No.  
Orsino         Think of it, Fool. The glamour. The glitz. Legate to the Count Orsino. Representative of the ruling classes. Intimate of the inbred. Broker of broken relationships.  
Female Fool   No.  
Orsino         You speak for me. You dally for me. My thoughts are your thoughts. My words are your words. My gut wrenching self deluding fantasies are –  
Female Fool   Stop! I have a better idea. There is a new arrival in the netherworld we call the servant's quarters.  
Orsino         Servant's...?  
Female Fool   Never mind. Turned up out of the blue only yesterday.  
Orsino         And is he the kind of red blooded male in my own mould?  
Female Fool   In a way, yes. I'll fetch... him. (Exits).  
Orsino         Now then let's suppose that music is food. Hmm. I can't see any future in that. metaphor. Can you eat music? Can it dribble down the arch of your partner's back so that it - (Enter Viola).  
Viola          You sent for me, my lord?  
Orsino         Ah, welcome to court, young master...  
Viola          Cesario, my lord.  
Orsino         Well then, young master Cesario, are there any more at home like you?

Viola Not any more, my lord.  
 Orsino Really? Now listen, Cesario, I have a special task for you.  
 Viola Oh yes?  
 Orsino It's rather delicate. You are to be my embassie de coeur, the spokesman of my heart, the one who bears witness to my deepest passions...  
 Viola Really my lord, you are too kind, I hardly know you...  
 Orsino ...and present them to the love of my life, the lady Olivia.  
 Viola Oh.  
 Orsino Now I'm sure that you, bursting with testosterone, can find the words to express those dark animal instincts, to harness these ancient primeval appetites and express them in undying poetry.  
 Viola Well, I suppose so. But why do you think I'm a...  
 Orsino Good, good, off you go then. I'll be expecting results by return (Exit. Enter Fool).  
 Fool Viola, what did you make of that?  
 Viola I am, fool, once again in my now familiar state – complete bewildered. I've lost a brother, I've lost a life and now, now, I've lost a gender.  
 Fool It's time to be philosophical. Sometimes you lose in order to gain.  
 Viola Well it's about time the balance started swinging the other way.  
 Fool By the way, what did you think of the count?  
 Viola Apart from the severe neediness? I thought he was rather cute.

(Exeunt. Enter Female Fool and Sebastian).

Sebastian I don't often talk like this to a woman you know.  
 Female Fool No?  
 Sebastian But I was wondering if you and I could... later...  
 Female Fool You miss her dreadfully, don't you?  
 Sebastian God, yes.

(Exeunt. Enter Olivia and Fool in silence. Clock ticking)

Olivia Are you going to say something funny? (Further silence). How about 'Is that your biological clock ticking?' It might be regarded as satire, which is the blue riband of comedy, is it not? (Again silence) I could look for professional humour elsewhere you know.  
 Fool I've withdrawn my labour.  
 Olivia How does that work then?  
 Fool I'm not funny on purpose.  
 Olivia And how does one know the difference?  
 Fool Please madam, leave it to the professionals.  
 Olivia Fool, fool. My brother is dead, I'm twice as old as I should be, the abyss is opening. I want you to be funny.  
 Fool And I find it hard to be funny when my audience is always punishing herself. Your brother is in a better place  
 Olivia (To herself) That's not what he says.  
 Fool So leave him there and – as the most expensive therapists say - move on.  
 Olivia Bring back the funny fool.  
 Fool And to help you on the way I'm pleased to report that you have a visitor...  
 Olivia No, fool.  
 Fool ...who has now been waiting some considerable time.

Olivia You know the rule – no visitors. (Pause) Who is it?  
 Fool A messenger from Count Orsino.  
 Olivia And is he funny?  
 Fool There's certainly something rather different about this one.  
 Olivia Very well. He can stay for as long as it takes me to get bored. It's bound to be funnier than listening to you (exit Fool). Why is that men are so decisive at precisely the wrong time about precisely the wrong things? (Enter Brother)  
 Brother Because, dear sister, we have to propagate the species. And if we don't get round to it, no-one will.  
 Olivia Why should propagating the species be of any interest to you?  
 Brother I'm thinking of my unborn nieces and nephews.  
 Olivia Be gone to your 'better place'.  
 Brother Now that is funny.

(Exits. Enter Fool with Viola)

Fool Madam will see you now (quietly) miss.  
 Viola Countess Olivia. I bring you greetings from my lord, the redoubtable and remarkable Count Orsino. He would like to fall at your feet and cover them with the honey of several pelicans. He would – why are you looking at me like that?  
 Olivia Do carry on.  
 Viola He would like you to know that he has been tried at the court of romance and been found guilty of love in the first degree – what is it?  
 Olivia 'Found guilty of love'.  
 Viola Which with the aid of anaesthetic and a pair of handcuffs – no that's it.  
 Olivia Whatever is the matter? Don't stop.  
 Viola I can see that you're not taking me seriously. They said it was hopeless. Farewell, adieu and good luck with the mourning (goes to leave).  
 Fool One moment madam (draws Viola to one side. Enter Brother). Viola, what are you doing?  
 Brother (To Olivia). Well then, what are we doing?  
 Viola Fool, this is not me – messenger to the misfits. Besides she is giving me some strange looks.  
 Brother I noticed the looks. Have you forgotten me already?  
 Fool You please her. And if you please her you please the duke and you'd rather like to please him wouldn't you?  
 Olivia He pleases me. Listening to him is the rekindling an old fire.  
 Viola Yes I would. Pathetic though it is I will keep that flame burning at least.  
 Brother Then burn, sister, burn (exits).  
 Fool Cesario wishes to attend on you again, madam, if you so desire.  
 Olivia I do so...desire. Now sir, convince me. Persuade me. Seduce me... with your words.  
 Viola If you will allow me to skip some dull bits, massage... martial arts... snorkelling...ah yes. He wishes you to be assured of his undying love and devotion which he looks forward to consummating at your earliest convenience, or inconvenience if you prefer that sort of thing. Your obedient servant (or master, see above) Orsino. (Pause) I can see you're not interested so I'll be off –  
 Olivia I found this all rather persuasive.  
 Viola Once again, farewell – you do?  
 Olivia If I show some interest will you be returning?  
 Viola I expect so, madam.

Olivia            Then tell him that my love, though negligible, is not quite non-existent and he may continue to hope against hope.  
Viola            Excellent, thank you, madam. Farewell (Exits).  
Fool             So, madam, mourning turns to lunch-time when hunger will be satisfied.  
Olivia            Still withdrawing your labour, fool?

(Exeunt. Enter Sebastian and Female Fool).

Sebastian        You know, fool, loneliness isn't what it's cracked up to be. I've lived like a hermit for, some hours now and I don't think I can take any more.  
Female Fool     You need company, Sebastian?  
Sebastian        I don't ask for much, fool. Just a few things in common: same outlook, same background, same age –  
Female Fool     Same womb, same genes.... Now, Sebastian, what would she have done? Mope around like you?  
Sebastian        I think... she would have been disorientated too. But, being her, she couldn't bear it for long and she would throw then herself into some mad enterprise without thinking of the consequences.  
Female Fool     Like joining a large ducal court as a mere servant?  
Sebastian        Yes, that sort of thing. But she would be so discomfited by the deception you would hardly know her. So much so that –  
Female Fool     They might mistake her for a young man?  
Sebastian        Yes! Poor Viola! (Pauses) Poor Viola, poor me. Still it's an idea.  
Female Fool     What, cross-dressing?  
Sebastian        No, joining a large court. I might get to meet some interesting people.  
Female Fool     I know just the place... And do you want to be mistaken for a girl?  
Sebastian        Hm... let me see. No! (Exits, enter Fool)  
Fool             How are they doing?  
Female Fool     As well as can be expected.  
Fool             Time for some new characters?  
Female            New, yet reassuringly familiar. Watch this space!

(Enter Orsino & Viola)

Orsino            If morris dancing is the food of love get out your hankies and bang those sticks! Cesario, old friend, confidante, lovmaker, dreamweaver, tell me, have you softened the lady's heart?  
Viola            I rather think I have, my lord.  
Orsino            Go on.  
Viola            Her latest message advises you that if you were the last man on earth and assuming there was a requirement for the human race to continue and taking into account the almost certain genetic corruption due to your offspring having to intermarry, then loving you is preferable to suicide.  
Orsino            Marvellous, Cesario, this is real progress. Now, for the next step... What's the matter, old thing? You look a little glum.  
Viola            Perhaps, my lord, it is time to hand this task over to someone else, so I could spend more time here... with you.  
Orsino            When you've made such an important breakthrough? Nonsense. I know what you're thinking.  
Viola            You do?

Orsino Yes, you're thinking, 'Let's spend some quality time with my lord, a-roistering and ... a-boistering. Wine women & wong?  
Viola Wong?  
Orsino (As they exeunt) Suzie Wong, a very good friend of mine...

(Enter Andrew & Maria)

Maria Now, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, you know my mistress is not seeing anyone, let alone unsuitable suitors.  
Andrew Now then, servant, if that you truly be –  
Maria Maria, sir.  
Andrew You are mistaken. My good friend and relation of the lady, Sir Toby, who, for reasons of economy cannot actually be seen, assures me that I am only a winning smile from captivating her heart.  
Maria And in this case, sir, a miss is as good as a smile.  
Andrew I am told, servant, for that is what you are, that you have a quicksilver mind, though I have seen little evidence of this so far. If this is so then you should be able to change her mind.  
Maria Wonders I can perform, impossibilities I can bring within reach, mad priggish servants I can humiliate by exploiting their pride and Freudian tendencies, but make you attractive...  
Andrew How much?  
Maria Can you afford me?  
Andrew How much, servant – (Enter Sebastian)  
Sebastian Excuse me.  
Andrew What?  
Sebastian Look, I don't want to interrupt the purchasing of her favours, but I hope you're getting discount.  
Maria What? And who do you think you are?  
Sebastian You know, I'm not sure any more.  
Maria Oh yes?  
Sebastian So I thought I would explore my character by becoming a lowly character in the court of a great house.  
Maria Oh really?  
Sebastian I don't know why – it just seemed like a good idea.  
Andrew Well, this all very interesting. Servant, if that is indeed your designation, turn your attention to my business please.  
Sebastian I think we've established what sort of business that is, thank you.  
Maria (To Sebastian) Ridiculous as it may seem I feel strangely drawn to you and your predicament. I believe, although it will have to be confirmed with Mr Malvolio, that we have a vacancy in the stables. How would you feel about mucking out?  
Sebastian Well, you know what they say, where there's muck there's the potential for some particularly nasty diseases.  
Maria Good, good. You seem familiar, have we met before... (exeunt Maria & Sebastian).  
Andrew Well thank you and good night. (Calling after them) I'll sort it myself then, servant, though I doubt you deserve the name. If you want a job doing... find some other mug. Now I wonder where Malvolio is...? (exits).

(Enter Olivia and Malvolio).

Malvolio Naturally I saw through the intended trick straightaway, madam. A little too obvious. Some are born to gratingness, some achieve gratingness –

Olivia Yes, thank you, Malvolio.

Malvolio - while I think Maria grates in a way entirely her own.

Olivia That will do. And we both know that you can stop that grinning. Now. (Enter Maria)

Malvolio Of course, madam. You didn't think I was that stupid, did you?

Maria Are you still wearing the bright yellow underwear? (exit Malvolio in confusion).

Olivia Oh Maria, the foolishness of men. Is that fool Aguecheek still hanging around?

Maria I'm afraid so, madam.

Olivia I do wish Toby could manage to finance himself without encouraging the likes of Aguecheek with the idea that I am in need of a man.

Maria Are you madam?

Olivia Maria, you know what it is with men. They are always leaving. If they ever arrived in the first place. (Silence). You wanted something?

Maria I want to report that I've taken on a young man in the stables.

Olivia Really, Miss Maria, did I have to know that?

Maria I mean, madam, that I have employed a new stable-lad. I shall present him to you at a suitable opportunity.

Olivia Very well, I'm sure you know best. (Pause). Just when you're beginning to rely on them... (Enter Malvolio).

Malvolio Another emissary has arrived from the count, madam.

Olivia Is it Cesario?

Malvolio If you mean the young gentleman who visited before, yes it is. Show him in, Malvolio. (Exit Malvolio).

Olivia How do I look, Maria.

Maria As attractive as ever, madam.

Olivia Not matronly in any way?

Maria No madam. Mature and responsible.

Olivia I don't want to be responsible.

Maria Good. I'll leave you to him then. (Exits, ostensibly crossing fingers. Enter Viola).

Olivia Master Cesario, how pleasant to see you.

Viola (Unenthusiastically) Madam.

Olivia Well...

Viola (Gets out letter, glances at it, sighs). Madam, can I be frank with you?

Olivia Do you have something to declare?

Viola I do have this long speech from the count, madam, but frankly...

Olivia You know I not in the least bit interested in him, don't you.

Viola Of course, but my job is on the line here.

Olivia So if I show no interest –

Viola I get dismissed, which means I won't see him anymore...

Olivia I can see you have great loyalty towards the duke.

Viola You won't believe how much, madam

Olivia Well, we'll have to see what we can do. I will call you in a short while and you shall have my reply (exits).

Viola I don't know how I do it. Lose a brother. Obsess about an older man. Older man's in love with older woman. Older woman obsesses about me. Isn't that enough trouble for one person? (Enter Maria).

Maria What are you doing here? Back to the stables and do some work, young man!

Viola (To herself) Apparently not. Whatever you say, whatever you say (exits. Enter Sebastian from opposite direction).

Sebastian (Looking stunned/besotted) Whatever you say.  
 Maria I've told you once.  
 Sebastian (Absent-mindedly) Told me what? Who was that fascinating woman?  
 Maria Which fascinating woman?  
 Sebastian I just caught a glimpse of her. She looked fairly important in an order-the-servants-about sort of way. Seemed a bit gloomy though.  
 Maria That was your mistress –  
 Sebastian Mistress, now that's an idea...  
 Maria Your mistress, my mistress. The countess Olivia. (Enter Olivia).  
 Olivia Maria?  
 Maria My lady? (To Sebastian) Now, off to the stables with you. (Exit Sebastian reluctantly).  
 Olivia Now, Maria, for reasons that will no doubt prove exasperating for you, I wish to make the most of the Duke Orsino's servant's company.  
 Maria The Duke Orsino's servant's company, my lady?  
 Olivia Yes, Maria, the rather exciting young man duly arrived from the idiot.  
 Maria I don't think I've met him, my lady.  
 Olivia No matter. When he returns I wish to keep him here a little longer, I need to send someone else back with the return message, if only to keep the duke from coming here himself. Have we somebody with time on his hands, who's perhaps a little less necessary than most...?  
 Maria I can think of just the person, my lady.

(Exeunt. Enter Orsino & Female Fool).

Orsino I'll tell you what, fool, if love was the music to my food, I wouldn't need to lubricate the cornets.  
 Female Fool Your lordship has a fair point.  
 Orsino Oh fool, what's it all about?  
 Female Fool It, my lord?  
 Orsino Love, fool, love. You know, the whole 'head over heels falling for a distant woman who, quite apart from mourning her dead brother, has no real need for love anyway, especially if it involves the rather dodgy inbreeding of the aristocracy' thingy. What's it all about?  
 Female Fool They say that love is the distant echo of a cry for help heard from a glacier long long ago.  
 Orsino Do they, fool, do they really?  
 Female Fool Or it can be as close as the warmth of today's underwear.  
 Orsino Oh well done fool. You've just restored my faith in the whole romance thing. Bring on the woman in black. (Enter Viola). Cesario, Cesario, welcome back, I was just thinking of you.  
 Viola (Brightening) Were you, my lord?  
 Orsino Of course. Now cheer up and tell me how much the countess loves me.  
 Viola (Depressed again) Well... she is beginning to show some interest...  
 Orsino Is she really? Excellent work, Cesario. I would hug you for joy, but obviously we men are far too inhibited for any spontaneous emotional outbursts. (Viola looks even more miserable). Now, to think of something rather elegantly romantic. Any ideas, fool?  
 Female Fool How about a sonnet, your grace?  
 Orsino Hm, a sonnet. Rather long, aren't they?  
 Female Fool Or a couplet, my lord. Weather's a good metaphor.  
 Orsino Shall I compare thee to depression over the Azores?

Female Fool 'Over you the bounteous rain and morning dew fair washes – '  
 Orsino ' - And I can picture you, fair maid, in nothing but galoshes'. Elegance personified!  
 Viola Can I ask you something, my lord.  
 Orsino Cesario?  
 Viola How can you be sure about who you are?  
 Orsino So it's philosophy now, is it?. Well...I am the duke. People recognise me as such and call me 'your grace' or 'my lord'. I love Olivia. Is that enough?  
 Viola Fool?  
 Fool I amuse people so they need me.  
 Viola Recognised and needed. I see. (Exeunt)

(Enter Andrew and Malvolio).

Andrew I tell you, Malvolio, she only has eyes for him. It's hopeless. I've been hanging around for days being manly and romantic. He pops in a couple of times with his boyish vulnerability and she's virtually throwing herself at him. I tell you, Malvolio, she doesn't seem quite so desolate now.  
 Malvolio Madam does have her moods, it's true.  
 Andrew Moods, Malvolio? Moods hardly covers it. Madness is nearer the mark.  
 Malvolio Believe me, sir, it's not madness. I should know. Madam is a little stressed.  
 Andrew Stressed? Damn near undressed by now I should think.  
 Malvolio Might I respectfully suggest an alternative?  
 Andrew You know, Malvolio, you a man to be relied upon. In the ever changing winds of feminine caprice a chap like you is solid, secure and maybe just a little bit attractive.  
 Malvolio Madam has many well-off friends – pardon?  
 Andrew Malvolio, you have hit the nail on the head. Alternative? Of course an alternative life style! How attractive would you say Orsino is? (Malvolio is speechless). Good. That's decided. We're off to see the wizened... (Exeunt).

(Enter Olivia and Maria).

Olivia Make sure your servant delivers the message as soon as Cesario arrives again. It's about as far as I can go to keep the duke interested without actually encouraging him. It does say that I will keep his messenger here while I think of a ...deeper response.  
 Maria Madam (exits. Enter Brother).  
 Brother It's all getting a little feverish, isn't it?  
 Olivia What is?  
 Brother This...interest in the boy.  
 Olivia Does it bother you?  
 Brother It might. You didn't behave like this while I was alive.  
 Olivia No, I didn't, did I.  
 Brother So you think I was inhibiting you?  
 Olivia No, of course not... well, yes...oh, I don't know. I'm sure your company was a good thing but now I'm feeling an excitement, an exhilaration that I've not had before. Yes, fine, it may be the frustration of an older woman finding its target in the nearest available youth but... I think there's substance to this. I think that I can now at last lay your memory to rest.

(During this speech Brother has exited. Olivia looks around for him as she exits. Enter Maria and Sebastian).

Maria Sebastian!  
 Sebastian Why do horses smell?  
 Maria I don't know. Now, this letter –  
 Sebastian It's important because if I don't understand them, I can't be their friend.  
 Maria Why do you want to be a servant?  
 Sebastian So I can forget.  
 Maria And have you?  
 Sebastian I can't remember.  
 Maria Well, this will take your mind off things. Of all the trusted, and mostly competent, members of the household you have been chosen to take this message from the countess to the Duke Orsino. Do your best to make a favourable impression and wait for a reply. As long as you like. Go!

(Exit Sebastian. Enter Malvolio).

Malvolio What business do you have with the duke's messenger?  
 Maria I have no business with the duke's messenger, Malvolio. My business is with the messenger to the duke. And as far as I can see it's just as well our mistress does not want to succeed.  
 Malvolio It seemed to me that you were trying to dominate him?  
 Maria I think I have every right to – what do you mean, 'dominate him'?  
 Malvolio I haven't forgotten your little subterfuge. Humiliated in front of our mistress then left bewildered in the dark.  
 Maria It was no more than you deserved.  
 Malvolio You may be right. However since my rehabilitation I have been wondering who else is deserving of a lesson.  
 Maria Have you?  
 Malvolio There's a darker side to you, isn't there? One that I've seen emerging over time.  
 Maria There is?  
 Malvolio So I was wondering, given the right circumstances, if we might see it at the fullest of its dark heart.  
 Maria Might this mean a darkened room, strange voices and a sudden denouement?  
 Malvolio If you like.  
 Maria Say the word, Mister Malvolio, say the word!

(Exeunt. Enter Fool & Female Fool)

Fool Well, how do you think it's going?  
 Female Fool Not too bad. We have a nice variety of characters. A plot, which although it has an element of mistaken identity, is by no means dependent upon it.  
 Fool And I think we're shedding a little light on love, wouldn't you say.  
 Female Fool Maybe, but that's not up to us, is it?  
 Fool Anyway, to work. There's still some unravelling to do before we rest!  
 Female Fool To work! (Exits. Enter Viola, looking miserable, as usual).  
 Fool Viola, welcome. How goes it?  
 Viola Back to the mad woman's court now. I never thought they would be so much travelling.  
 Fool Perhaps one day we will be able to communicate without travelling great distances. Think how useful that would be. (Silence). You look miserable. Surely the glamour of international diplomacy gladdens the heart.

Viola           The fact is, fool, it stinks. I journey from one aristocratic household to another like a world-weary shuttlecock. From one besotted nob to another. Haven't they got anything better to do?

Fool            Well...

Viola           They, both of them, think I'm a man. The lady has fallen in love with me and I've fallen – well, never mind. To keep in with one I have to encourage the other. You can say that things are not looking up.

Fool            Chin up. Things may change.

Viola           What's the thing it's always darkest before?

(Exeunt. Enter Female Fool & Sebastian).

Female Fool    Sebastian, how goes it?

Sebastian      You know me fool, always look on the bright side. So where's the boss?

Female Fool    The boss?

Sebastian      The boss, the head honcho, numero uno. The duke.

Female Fool    Ah yes, the duke.

Sebastian      Where is he? For I have a missive from my mistress, a cornucopia of charismatic cadenzas on our old friend, love. Why I don't know, as she hasn't the least interest in him. But, hey, that's aristos.

Female Fool    What are you doing Sebastian?

Sebastian      You know, fool, I don't really know. Since I lost my sister I've been, well, lost. I thought, what would she have done?

Female Fool    And...?

Sebastian      I thought that she'd want to hide herself away where nobody would know her and she wouldn't have to say what had happened and how upset she was at losing...me. So I thought I'd be a servant in a large household for a while. Though I doubt she would have gone that far!

Female Fool    Indeed. And where does falling for the employer fit in with this?

Sebastian      That was just a bonus. I can't imagine Viola doing anything like that!

Female Fool    You twins, you know each other so well. (Enter Orsino). Here comes the duke now, as I believe they say. Good luck!

Orsino          Cesario, Cesario.

Sebastian      What strange greetings they have here. Cesario yourself, your grace.

Orsino          You seem a little distracted. Why are you still here?

Sebastian      (Aside) This is going to be harder than I thought. I've just got here, my lord. I bring a message from the Lady Olivia.

Orsino          Already? Good work, Cesario.

Sebastian      Cesario! This is going to be easier than I thought.

Orsino          Well, go on then.

Sebastian      My mistress would fain make it known that her love is like a misty bauble that makes man both careworn and circumspect yet in its myriad ministrations can turn youthful zeal into recidivous middle age. And there lies its unenviable enigma: to be licentious yields luminescence yet also, as ages run, begats lassitude. With knobs on.

Orsino          That's good, is it?

Sebastian      I think you should be rather encouraged my lord.

Orsino          Fine fellow, Cesario!

Sebastian      Cesario! (To Female Fool) Why does he keep saying that?

Orsino          Cesario. (To Female Fool) Why does he keep saying that? (To Sebastian) You know, we make a good team. I've grown rather fond of you in our little adventures together.

In a masculine, all men together in the washtub sort of way, of course. When the lady Olivia is happily installed here you must serve us both.

Sebastian I hope I'm up to the challenge, my lord.

Orsino Who knows, if things had been different, a chromosome here or there... If I'd been inclined differently, well, not that differently actually, we could've made a go of things...

Sebastian My lord?

Orsino But it is not to be. Now, while the iron of love is still red hot red hot it's time to press my suit, shirt and a few wild flowers. In person. (Sebastian looks puzzled).

Female Fool I think he means he wants to go and see her.

Orsino With the full might and majesty of my retinue and court.

Female Fool Which at the moment amounts to me.

Sebastian Are you sure? I don't think that's what she wanted –

Orsino Come! We shall venture forth and claim her hand!

(Exeunt. Enter Andrew).

Andrew Well that's just typical. I travel from one court where the young upstart is making cow eyes at the object of my affections and here he is doing exactly the same thing at this court. I obligingly change my plans, not to mention my orientation and blow me, so to speak, if he's not upstaging me here as well. Enough is enough. To lose one intended is unfortunate, to lose two looks like I will have to care a little less and fight a little more. (Exits).

(Enter Malvolio and Maria)

Malvolio It looks, Mistress Maria, as though the Duke's messenger is here for another day.

Maria I don't know why. She isn't the least bit interested in the Duke.

Malvolio I wouldn't be so sure. The message she sent by your stable lad was less frosty.

Maria She's not being worn down by the twerp?

Malvolio Love flows in mysterious ways, my lady. Sometimes an obvious attempt to alienate, to humiliate, to crush another into repentant ash, only succeeds in bringing them closer. Is that not so, Maria?

Maria It does happen, yes.

Malvolio I was foolish, you made me look foolish, and who feels foolish now? (Enter Viola)

Maria Yes, but are you still the fool?

Viola Hello, I'm a bit lost. Could you tell me where the nearest ladies, er.. gents is?

Malvolio Yes, master Cesario, I'll be with you in a moment.

Maria Sebastian, get back to the stables.

Malvolio I don't think I'll be anything but a fool.

Maria Don't fools rush in though?

Viola I'll find them myself then... (enter Sebastian from the opposite direction).

Sebastian Hello! I'm back! Does anyone want to know how I got on?

Malvolio I said I'd be with you in a minute, Cesario.

Maria Stables, Sebastian!

Sebastian Very well, I just thought you'd be interested, but why should you be...Cesario! (exits, mumbling)

Malvolio I do like it when you're when you're dominant.

Maria Would you like to take some dictation... (Exit Maria & Malvolio. Enter Fool).

Viola Fool, thank goodness it's you. Everyone's a little mad today.

Fool Welcome to my world, Viola

Viola How much longer do I have to put with this? Male, female, loved, unloved.

Fool A little while longer. We're soon approaching the end. Listen carefully and you'll hear it coming. (Exits. Enter Andrew).

Andrew Ah ha! Or rather, oh ho! But not eeh hee as that's rather silly. You have returned to pursue the deadlier of the species. And there I was not knowing which way to turn!

Viola I'm sorry, do I know you?

Andrew Everywhere I turn I find you've been before me. Woo the sorrowful countess I thought, but no, I find she's turned to you for comfort.

Viola I think you've got –

Andrew Then I recalled that there's more than one member of the nobility in this land and so I adjusted my sensibilities and went to court the duke. And do you know what I found?

Viola Duke...Orsino?

Andrew That once again the suitor's side of the bed was still warm and it had your impression upon it.

Viola But I haven't...we haven't...he doesn't know.

Andrew A likely story, when I heard you myself declaiming –

Viola Declaiming?

Andrew Declaiming your love to him in blank verse. So blank in fact I had no idea what exactly you were saying but the intent was perfectly clear.

Viola I'd dreamed of doing that but never...

Andrew Of course psycho-analysis says I should talk through my deep-seated insecurities caused by a mother I never really loved but I say 'poo' to psycho-analysis. Poo! It's time for men to stand up and be counted!

Viola Good, because I'd rather like to sit down.

Andrew So, have at you, sir (Adopts fencing posture).

Viola Somehow my dreams have been projected and your psyche is acute enough to detect that.

Andrew I'm waiting, sir. (Enter Female Fool).

Viola Oh, I'm not fighting, idiot. Fool, you were right. Things are changing. I need some idiot free air (Exits).

Andrew You know, fool, it's so very frustrating. He blocks my every romantic adventure and now I can't even hit him. (Enter Sebastian).

Sebastian Fool, hello. What a day I've had. Over to Orsino's, did the declaiming, waited patiently and now he wants to –

Andrew So now you admit it! It's not my psyche now.

Sebastian Do you mind not being mad for a moment, I was talking.

Andrew Now, sirrah, you have confessed your misdeeds are you ready for some fighting?

Sebastian Much as I'd love you to confront you manfully I have some urgent news for the Lady Olivia. Fool, can I leave him in your care? If he gets unpleasant...too late! (Exits).

Andrew He runs once more! Is there a gentleman left in this kingdom? (Enter Viola) Back again?!

Viola Yes, actually I was really interested in what you had to say about me and the Duke? Do you think we're compatible?

Andrew Compatible? You ask me to tell you whether you're compatible?

Viola Because I think we are, but there are so many differences: nobility, commoner, master, servant, extrovert, introvert, Virgo, Aries...

Andrew And yet, comfortingly, you both share the same gender. I give up. Get me to a nunnery! (Exits).

Viola Well, isn't that interesting, fool. Just when I was about to despair, a complete stranger tells me there's something happening between me and the Duke.  
Female Fool Love moves in mysterious ways, Viola.  
Viola At last, fool, things are beginning to look up.

(Exeunt. Enter Sebastian & Fool)

Sebastian Things aren't getting any better, fool.  
Fool Really?  
Sebastian I thought that this servant thing would lead to enlightenment. But it's largely about horses.  
Fool Isn't that what you expected?  
Sebastian In concept, yes. The mighty steed, the winged Pegasus, the mount of kings. In fact they produce rather a dull amount of excrement.  
Fool So you may have lost a sense of purpose?  
Sebastian Yes. Apart from when I was given the role of romantic emissary – you know the legover legate. It felt as though I was onto something after encountering the darkly mysterious countess. (Enter Olivia).  
Olivia Fool, you have returned.  
Fool Madam.  
Olivia Every other court in the country seems to have been benefiting from your buffoonery.  
Fool Prepare to laugh again, madam.  
Olivia Fool you know the veil of sorrow under which I remain contritely concealed (sees Sebastian) – well, hello!  
Sebastian Greetings, my lady.  
Olivia I see you have returned. Another message from the duke. I assume?  
Sebastian Even better than that. The duke is on his way, as we speak.  
Olivia Marvellous. That fool of a stable lad did too good a job.  
Fool I think he did his best, madam.  
Olivia I don't suppose, Cesario, that you would want to discuss the qualities of stable personnel in private would you? (Sebastian looks puzzled).  
Fool I think he would very much like to do that, wouldn't you... Cesario?  
Sebastian Cesario! Of course lead on, decorous and enticingly attractive lady.

(Exeunt. Enter Malvolio and Maria).

Maria I don't care who he is. If Sir Andrew goes round insulting servants then he has no sympathy from me.  
Malvolio It wasn't one of the servants, it was Orsino's messenger. The one our mistress has a crush on. (Enter Viola). Here he is now. Cesario!  
Viola Do you want to hit me now? I've not been flirting with anyone.  
Maria Never mind all that. Have you delivered the message?  
Viola I have delivered so many messages they are coming out of my ears. He loves you. I don't love him, but I love you. I don't love you but I love her. And so it goes.  
Maria Well then, back to the stables.  
Viola You know, that sounds much the best place to be. I shall talk to the animals. (Exits).  
Malvolio That was rather harsh, wasn't it? Sending Orsino's messenger to the stables.  
Maria From muck he emerged, to muck he shall return.  
Malvolio I like it when you talk dirty.  
Maria I don't think you will...

(Exeunt. Enter Orsino and Female Fool).

Orsino           How strange. Nobody here. They must know I'm coming. Cesario's very good at communication. Of course, fool, normally the very size of my court, the dimensions of my extensive entourage is enough to take a lady's breath away.

Female Fool    Yes, my lord.

Orsino           Was that one of those double entendre thingies?

Female Fool    My lord, you are indeed a one.

Orsino           Good. As it is, for reasons of economy, my entourage amounts to you. And you a mercenary of merriment at that. A pundit of puns, a rapacious rib-tickler –

Female Fool    You are too kind, my lord.

Orsino           But let us all in our collective imaginations conjure up a flood of humanity, all at my command. Wagons, halt! So this is Olivia's place. As gloomy as I expected. If interior decorating is the food of love, a quick coat of paint will see me soon unloosening her charms. (Enter Andrew).

Andrew         The little weasel. I will have my revenge.

Orsino           Ha, my good fellow. Would you tell the countess Olivia that I have arrived?

Andrew         If he thinks that dramatically changing personality will allow him to get the better of me –

Orsino           What has happened to you?

Andrew         I've fallen foul of an hermaphrodite. A child of androgyny.

Orsino           Oh bad luck. Anyone I know?

Andrew         He paid court to the object of my dreams.

Orsino           Who is...?

Andrew         The lady Olivia.

Orsino           What? Where is he? I'll have a go at him myself.

Andrew         He also paid court to the object of my other dreams.

Orsino           What?

Andrew         He has been dallying with a gentleman.

Orsino           This is too much. The blackguard!

Andrew         Yes, the rat has been making eyes at that larger rodent, Orsino.

Orsino           Hanging is too good for him, her – pardon?

Andrew         Fresh from his sexual overtures here he scarcely draws breath before he goes to the idiot Orsino and starts the same thing over there. Outrageous.

Orsino           Er.. yes. Scandalous.

Andrew         Of course Orsino's too stupid to realise. And you are...?

Orsino           A wellwisher. You must seek help. I must seek help. Who is this miscreant, this all-things-to-all men?

Andrew         He sometimes answers to the name of Cesario, although even he seems to be in doubt about that. I wish you well in return, friend. I'm off to where men stay men. (Exits)

Orsino           How can this be, fool? Cesario. Has he been dallying with the countess behind my back? Has he been dallying with me behind my back?

Female Fool    I think all will be clear before long, my lord.

Orsino           Where did that man get the idea that Cesario had been, for want of a better word, wooing me. I mean, I like Cesario. He has a certain boyish charm, and yet a sadness, an untold story behind the eyes. In a certain light...never mind, 'tis not to be. To the matter in hand. Where is Olivia? Show me the way to happiness, fool.

Female         I think the way to happiness lies with the one you truly love, my lord.

(Exeunt. Enter Viola & Fool).

Viola            So where do you think the way to happiness lies, fool?  
Fool             With the one you truly love, Viola  
Viola            You know who I truly love and happiness doesn't seem to lie there.  
Fool             Do you still miss your brother?  
Viola            Always and everywhere. But...  
Fool             But?  
Viola            ...losing Sebastian has made me wonder who I am. We could never be told apart and I could never understand that. I knew I was different, a planet humming in my own universe but I suppose it never really showed. We were lost in each other. Now I can feel the cold air, see my own breath.  
Fool             And do you like who you've found?  
Viola            I'm getting used to her. She has some familiar traits.

(Enter Malvolio and Maria)

Malvolio        The duke is here and he wants Cesario by his side when he greets the countess.  
Maria            And I'm looking for the stable lad. There's been some funny business with Sir Andrew.  
Malvolio        Well, fool, have you seen him?  
Maria            Or him? (They look at Viola blankly. Fool shrugs his shoulders. Viola shrugs her shoulders. Exeunt Maria and Malvolio).  
Viola            Fool, they didn't, they didn't...  
Fool             Recognise you. Welcome back, Viola.

(Exeunt. Enter Olivia and Sebastian).

Sebastian        ...and that's how I came to be in your court.  
Olivia            And your sister?  
Sebastian        Though her memory is always with me. I have to be myself now. Now that I've had to explain it to you who I am and why I'm here, I begin to understand for myself.  
Olivia            I think I can understand that too. I'm still trying to lay to rest a brother and forcing myself out on a grey and uncomfortable road.  
Sebastian        It's not supposed to be easy, apparently  
Olivia            I threw myself at the first half-decent man, well, young boy, available. But there was something about him...  
Sebastian        I could see from the start something familiar in you. Coolness, courage and more than a hint of comeliness.  
Olivia            And you are the full colour version of something I've seen only in shades...  
Sebastian        Now I feel a weight has been removed –  
Olivia            And I can start again!

(Enter Malvolio & Maria).

Malvolio        Excuse us, madam, but have you seen the messenger Cesario? I felt sure he would be with you.  
Olivia            Malvolio, you are wrong. I no longer have a need for him.  
Maria            I am looking for that stable lad. I've got a few choice words to say to him.  
Sebastian        And I no longer have a need for him.

Malvolio        By the way, madam, the duke is here. I've put him off for as long as I can, but I think he is getting a little impatient.

Olivia            Show him in, show him in. (Exit Malvolio & Maria). Now I'm definitely ready to deal with him. (Enter Orsino & Female Fool.). Ah, fool, welcome back. I see you've brought another fool with you.

Orsino            A fool for love, maybe.

Female Fool     Although introductions seem unnecessary. Countess, the duke Orsino. Duke, the countess Olivia.

Orsino            Madame, at last.

Olivia            Sir. (A longish silence).

Orsino            This is a little embarrassing. (More silence). It's never happened to me before.

Olivia            It's nerves, I expect. Would you like to try again in a few minutes?

Orsino            I came to claim my love but find myself unable to. You seem very happy as it is.

Olivia            I have found my true love, duke. You should try it.

Orsino            Perhaps I will, madam, perhaps I will. Well, I'll be off, then.

(Enter Fool & Viola).

Fool              Before you go, my lord, have you met Viola?

Orsino            Viola? The name I don't recognise, neither the face, but then again...

Viola              My lord?

Orsino            Somehow you're more familiar to me than my own thoughts and... you're beautiful.

Viola              My lord –

Orsino            Orsino

Viola              - you have really no idea how long I've been waiting for this. (They embrace).

Female Fool     And, Viola, there's someone else you really should meet.

Fool              Isn't there...Sebastian?

(Sebastian and Viola re-united at last. They stare at each other, scarce believing. They embrace, but realise what they have gained since they lost each other. Fondly they let go and go back to their respective partners).

Orsino            It's remarkable how alike they look.

Olivia            But you can see the differences.

Orsino            They have the same eyes.

Olivia            Yes, now I think they do.

Fool              It falls to us I think to end proceedings.

Female Fool     Indeed. Lovers are united, brother and sister re-united...

Fool              All that was secret is now made plain...

Female Fool     Or is it? The future is ...what you will

All                What you will!