

# THIRTEENTH NIGHT, or MALVOLIO'S REVENGE

(A Problem Play)

(full-length)

(How peculiar are the characters in *Thirteenth Night*!)

## **CHARACTERS: (13 main, plus 3 walk-ons)**

**MALVOLIO**, a Puritan bent on revenge

**MOLLY BRIGHTHEART**, his fiancée, a maid

**LADY OBLIVIA LOVECOCK**, a countess who likes girls in  
boys' clothes

**SEBASTIAN**, her husband, with a secret "pirate" past

**ANTONIO**, a loud and proud pirate, besotted with Sebastian,  
at least when Sebastian was a lad

**VIOLA**, Sebastian's twin sister, married unhappily to Porcino

**DUKE PORCINO**, lover of food, still in love with the  
Lady Oblivia and not his wife

**JOHN B. SIMPLETON**, a hard-working servant to Lady Oblivia

**LAWYER FESTER**, former Clown, now an attorney

**FABIAN**, his clerk

**SIR TOBY FARTTE**, a drunken knight, always in debt

**AVE MARIAH**, his wife, now on the wagon

**SIR ANDREW DRIBBLEDICK**, a foolish knight, a gull to  
Sir Toby

## **WALK-ONS**

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

#### Malvolio's House

MALVOLIO: (to audience)

There comes a time, I'm told, in each man's life  
When he must wed, lest there be certain "talk."  
At such a time in life have I arrived.  
And am determined thus to take a wife.  
She is but indifferent fair and of a certain age  
Which bespeaks of some neglect by other men,  
Though my maid, she I will not hold culpable,  
For she is good and does, I think, admire me.  
She could do worse than I, if truth be told.  
I claim not mere outward shine, but rather inner strengths:  
Fastidious in soul as well as dress — look you! —,  
No spendthrift, no libertine, no imbiber of fermented fruits,  
No smoker, no reader of the sportive rags.  
No lolly-gagger, unemployed dilly-dallying ne'er-do-well,  
Whose accomplishments always live in the next week,  
Or in the next beyond that, or in some next-to-next year!  
I live now, and if God so will, I shall in Heaven live in time.  
Here I have a pence or two in the pot — thank you very much.  
Which I have earned, no thanks to others or to rank.  
You need not know where that pot is, pardon me.  
But I have prospered from the insolvencies of others, shall we say?  
I doubt that I shall tell my fiancée, Molly, all of this.  
Have you not noticed how a woman can turn into a thieving shrew  
Once she has that legal wedding band upon her finger?!  
Especially one who till now has been but a lowly house-maid.  
In this marital obligation I now must venture on, alas, pell-mell.  
Yes, I will wed, I would hope that all would wish me well

(Exit.)

(Lights up on MOLLY.)

MOLLY: (to audience)

My word! I am to be married in a little month!  
Would you care to see my engagement ring? (Shows it.)  
Is it not a very pretty thing, though somewhat small?  
Yet I am not one to need a large and gaudy stone  
Above my knuckle to know that I am loved.  
Dear Malvolio, my betrothed, does respect and honour me,  
Even though I used to be his maid — two times a week.  
For the man is generosity itself, or very well will turn so,  
Once all his expenses are looked to and paid off.

(Cont'd.)

Why, but a day ago kind Malvolio gave me a spittoon,  
(Shows it.) Created by an artisan of some repute, I've heard,  
And said more such gifts would be mine, indeed,  
If I do not break his gift for at least five years.  
How many fiancés would think of such a gift?!  
Oh, some say he is a priggish and smug son of a . . .  
But I say his mother is no such thing! Nor he.  
If dearest Malvolio does have a flaw or two  
I'm sure that my abiding love will cut away those flaws.  
So, World, please wish me well for my nearby precious day.  
I leave my father's and my brothers' safety soon,  
As my employer and I are wed and settle down for life.  
And I become my own Malvolio's ever-lasting wife!

(Exit.)

(Re-enter Malvolio.)

MALVOLIO: (calling) Hello! Hello! . . . How slow you are, Molly, to answer me. Hello! Hello!

MOLLY: (re-entering) I am sorry, my sweet. I did not hear you calling until just now.

MALVOLIO: Not hear? Would you have me bawling like some lout at a footballer's game to get your attention?  
But let that go! There is something I would discuss with thee.

MOLLY: "With thee"?

MALVOLIO: Indeed Molly, I promised that I would stop using the old-fashioned form and try to be a modern man. I forgot again.

MOLLY: I don't mind reminding "thee." It is sort of sweet.

MALVOLIO: I hope that I am never "sweet," my dear. But it troubles me that you did not seem to hear me when I called. You were not that far away. You are not going deaf, I trust.

MOLLY: I have a popping in my ear from time to time, it's true. It comes and goes. I do not think it interferes with my oracular apprehension in any way.

MALVOLIO: "Oracular apprehension"? Verily, Molly, you have been at a lexicon again! It does not make you educated to use big words, especially when they are not always the correct ones.

MOLLY: I was just having a bit of fun. I meant nothing more by it.

MALVOLIO: So you say. Yet our words are like our clothing – best if they cover the essentials but not call overmuch attention to those essentials. Perhaps you ought to see a doctor of the ear, or a barber, sometime this week.

MOLLY: I will see about it.

MALVOLIO: Here we are, quite the pair, discussing your ears when there are important matters to be seen to before the month is out and we are one.

MOLLY: Matters? Oh, you mean the foods for the wedding meal. I ordered the cold soup you wanted for our guests.

MALVOLIO: It is “chilled” soup, my dear. There is no need to tell our guests they are getting cold soup when they can be told they are getting “gazpacho.”

MOLLY: I thought you did not wish me to use big words when small ones will suffice.

MALVOLIO: When it comes to feeding people for no other reason than they have agreed to attend our wedding, I say it is one’s duty to counter their concupiscence with a little ostentation. They will be flattered by a “gazpacho,” and it will cost no more than cold soup! But enough of this trivia. *These* trivia?

MOLLY: I do not think our wedding, or its feast, is trivial, dear Malvolio, if I may say so.

MALVOLIO: In the grand scheme of things, our wedding is but small potatoes – or small “gazpacho,” as the case may be.

MOLLY: (laughing) “Small gazpacho”! You are so witty, Malvolio! I wish that I could talk as well as you.

MALVOLIO: I fear you flatter me, Molly. It is not *that* witty. Just a little witty.

MOLLY: I am so besotted with you, dear, wise, thoughtful, verbal Malvolio, I find joy in your every syllable.

MALVOLIO: “Besotted” sounds rather unseemly; however, I do find the sentiment admirable in a future wife. So let it be. Now, as to more important matters, as you know our marriage cannot be formalized until my settling of scores with my former employer and her cronies is dealt with, once and for all.

MOLLY: But that was so long ago! Now that you are to be wed, surely you can let all that just die away?!

MALVOLIO: However long ago it was, my memory is longer. And I do not wish to enter into a protracted and wholesome marriage with this unsettled baggage of my revenges upon the whole pack of them undealt with. I am sure that you as well would prefer that “all that” not be hanging over our heads to spoil our wedded bliss. Is it not so?

MOLLY: What if they don’t like your revenges and decide to take revenges on you, and then you take more revenges for their revenges, and on and on forever?!

MALVOLIO: I will settle their hash – and their other vittles too – permanently the *first* time! So there will be no need for subsequent events.

MOLLY: Why not merely forgive them all? You are a good Christian. Is that not what we are instructed to do?

MALVOLIO: Oh, Molly, Molly, delightful non-child that you are! Your simplicity does you proud, and indeed turning the other cheek is a commandment we must follow, as Our Dear Lord directed us.

(Cont'd.)

However, if one forgives one's enemies too glibly or too soon, they tend to take advantage of the situation. The best time to turn the other cheek is when your enemies are on their knees begging for mercy. And that is fully what I intend to do. (Moves a butt cheek to demonstrate how he will turn the other "cheek.") I hope this demonstration with my buttock will not unduly inflame my future bride. I beg her indulgence.

MOLLY: Oh! I don't think this will turn out well. And I always try to see the bright side of things, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: It will turn out well, Molly. It will – if *you* will aid me in the completion of my plots. Two can succeed where one will falter. And then, afterwards, you and I will have our mutual remembrances of deeds well finished, to warm and coddle our long winter nights together, even into our nineties.

MOLLY: I don't know, Malvolio. I –

MALVOLIO: I guess then you do not love me, as you said but yesterday you did. Perhaps we are not meant to be as one. Is that what you are telling me, Molly Brightheart?

MOLLY: Oh, I am perplexed. My mind says one thing, yet my heart another.

MALVOLIO: I have drawn up a clear list of my targets, to share with you. (From his shirt he produces a long list.)

MOLLY: So long?

MALVOLIO: I am sure that we can dispatch the task by lumping – and I do mean lumping – some of them together. I have planned and plotted so long I do not think it will be that difficult to effect a solution for the pack, which shall leave me satisfied, and *them* quite unsatisfied. Would you hear my list?

MOLLY: I was about to see to my bridesmaids' dresses. I fear they are not pink enough, or have too few ruffles on the hips.

MALVOLIO: Well, suit yourself then, Molly. Yes, you go and make sure your bridesmaids look uglier than you, while I go off and ponder how much I really want a wife at all. (Starts to leave.)

MOLLY: All right then! I will listen to your list, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: (returns, takes out his list again) As you wish! You do not, I think, understand how abused I was by these monstrous folk – such insolences to me! You were not around, and therefore my feelings seem merely spiteful to your ears – your dear ears! – when in fact my grievances are great and justified, and Justice itself cries out for satisfaction. Our Dear Lord also bade us to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. What could be more Caesar's than satisfaction that jurisprudence has not been able to supply?!

MOLLY: I thought you tried to sue them all in court, and lost.

MALVOLIO: Thrown out, not lost. However, they will not underestimate Malvolio! Simply because my lawsuits were thrown out in the corrupted courts, it does not follow that I will bow my head and simper "Oh, my!" and "I guess it was not to be." *It be!*

MOLLY: I would hope that if I offended thee – you –, Malvolio, you would forgive the fault, not let it simmer and rancor for years and years. It cannot be good for your inmost soul.

MALVOLIO: Then let us hope that you never offend me, Molly mine.

MOLLY: I am getting an ache in my heart. Come, I will hear your list.

MALVOLIO: (taking out the list again, shaking it angrily) Highest on my list are these five: Ave Mariah, the former lady's maid who devised the cruel trick that so much embarrassed yours truly, carried out by three members of her – what I can only call her gang: Sir Toby Fartte (now her husband), Sir Andrew Dribbledick (their stupid gull), Fester, the ever-tiresome “jokester,” and Fabian, a commoner even more common than most.

MOLLY: Pray, what cruel trick was it that they played on you? I know, I know, you have spoken of it before, and more than once, but I cannot seem to keep it in my silly head.

MALVOLIO: How can you keep forgetting it?! Are you so old that dementia has begun? Content yourself, dear Molly, that when you assist me, as needed, in settling my revenges once and for all, upon the lot of them, then you will be so lucky as never to hear the tale of my great shame again! In short, Ave Mariah drew up a missive that had certain letters in it, including a capital “M.” Naturally I assumed it was addressed to me, placed in my path on purpose and written in a coded manner, as would befit the handsome lady I was led to believe had penned it.

MOLLY: But she did not, correct?

MALVOLIO: Very good, Molly. The Lady Oblivia was not in love with me, it seems, nor did she actually want me to come to her, all smiles and dressed in yellow stockings and cross-gartered, a fashion which I subsequently learned she abhors.

MOLLY: I do not know this fashion, I must say.

MALVOLIO: The fashion is immaterial. It could have been any ridiculous fashion – a stiff ruff around the neck or trousers worn below the buttocks, or what you will. The point is I was made to play the fool, believing I would impress the woman I worked for, a lady I confess I had aspirations toward. It is enough to realise that I was galumphing about in her esteemed presence like an abject idiot!

MOLLY: Remind me again what you did exactly.

MALVOLIO: Are you twitting me?

MOLLY: No.

(He decides that she is sincere.)

MALVOLIO: (demonstrating) I smiled. (He smiles goofily.) I smiled some more. (Smiles even more goofily.) And then I modeled my strange, preposterous fashion-ware for her to ogle at. Like so! (Parades like a fashion model.) And also kissed my hands so. (Kisses the backs of his hands.)

MOLLY: (laughing at him, somewhat against her will) Oh, dear Malvolio, how humiliated indeed you must have been!

MALVOLIO: The memory of it is still scalded in my brain. But you appear amused.

MOLLY: But was that all? It was just teasing. You lost nothing but a few moments of your dignity.

MALVOLIO: So say *you*! Dignity is everything! And they would not let it end with that. When my Lady Olivia screamed at my appearance and my smiling, they had me taken away and confined to a dark hole. I suppose you find that amusing too?!

MOLLY: No! I do not.

MALVOLIO: And there lay I in that dark pit, that pitiless pit, accused of being mad. I was no more mad than the rest of them – less so, in fact. And they thought it “funny.” One Fester in particular, a so-called Clown, merry-maker, wordsmith, proceeded to put on a learned man’s robe and call himself Sir Topas and to taunt me and taunt me for their sport! . . . I suppose you find tormenting the mentally ill amusing, hey, Molly?

MOLLY: No, sir.

MALVOLIO: Well, it is even less amusing when the person is *not* mentally ill – namely, me!

MOLLY: I am sorry for your misfortune, sweet chuck. (Touches his arm.)

MALVOLIO: I have heard that Fester, that good Sir Topas, has now become a lawyer, God save the mark! He is using his endless “fooling” with the meanings of words to make obscene profits for himself. He is part of a law firm called Fester, Fester, Fester, and Stench, a name I rather like, actually. Still, it is time for him to pay the piper. At last!

MOLLY: That is quite a list. But I should think –

MALVOLIO: I am not finished, Molly mine. Once I have settled the score against all of the above, I shall turn my attention to the other villains on my list, yay, to the ones of the highest sort. Indeed, I will have the very house I was humiliated in, the one possessed by my Lady Olivia herself!

MOLLY: Is this not very dangerous, Malvolio? The upper class!

MALVOLIO: It can be, for the wrong person. However, having mulled this over, and mulled it some more, then savored it, rehearsed it in my mind, and crossed all the *t*’s and dotted all the *i*’s, I am set on showing the Lady Olivia Lovecock and her husband, Sebastian, that they should not have trafficked with Malvolio the Avenger! Besides, that marriage is a strange concoction, if you ask me. She was “in love” with one Caesario, a girl disguised as a boy, but when Lady Olivia could not have *him*, she settled for a twin brother. What kind of marriage is that?! And even worse is the case of the man who supposedly “loved” Olivia, a certain Duke Porcino, who, when he could not have her, takes to wife the androgynous Viola, whom he had known before primarily as a *boy*, by the name of Caesario. I do not have absolute proof yet; however, if this not be rank pedophilia, I know not what it is! Not only will my thirsty revenge be slaked by our forthcoming deeds, it will rid the world of a – excuse my language, Molly – a sick *seducer* of boy-girls! Maybe a *ring* of them!

MOLLY: I did not know you knew such words, Malvolio!

MALVOLIO: I have always found it odd in this world that it is considered wrong to call the wrong by its rightful name, as though it is not the deeds but the *phrasing* of those deeds that is the sin.

MOLLY: I fear, Malvolio, that you shouldst commit more sins in avenging your wrongs than were committed against you initially.

MALVOLIO: Oh!?! Listen to the sage! Let me put it to you plainly, plain Molly Brightheart, this exordium: are you with me or against me? It is now the time to unfold all, before we seal our love with formal vows. Or perhaps *sever* all traffic, romantic and otherwise, between us today. What say you? Think it over. Hard!

(Exit.)

MOLLY: (to audience)

Oh, I should know better, I do suppose.  
But love leads me to actions beset with follies  
In the one that I have chose.

(Exit following after Malvolio.)

## SCENE 2

### Ave Mariah and Sir Toby's House

(Enter Sir Toby, with alcoholic shakes.)

TOBY: Oh, blessed Heaven, deliver me from this earth! I am wracked with every pain beknownst to mortal man! Is this what comes from a life of drunkenness? I have had more than my share of cakes and ale, and my body has now turned on me. My liver cries out! My bones creak! I think I am not long for this world, and yet how I love this world. And I want a drink in this world whilst I last. (Takes a long swig from a flagon of wine.)

(Enter Ave Mariah, his wife.)

TOBY: How now, sweeting!?

AVE MARIAH: Oh, Gesu, are you not dead yet?

TOBY: No, I thank you very much! How be you, Ave Mariah, light of my life?

AVE MARIAH: I am hung over and cannot shake the sick of it. It is some three days now. Toby, I do not think that I will drink again.

TOBY: Yes, perhaps it is time you took the pledge.



AVE MARIAH: Me?

TONY: Not me! (Hops or almost does.)

AVE MARIAH: It's too late, probably. Both our livers are shot. Even if we never take another drink, we are bound to shaky death, I fear.

TOBY: Be not so dire in your prediction, wench! There's some laughs yet left in the cask.

AVE MARIAH: In the *cask-et*, you mean. There will be plenty of grins from all the skeletons we encounter there, in the charnel house.

TOBY: Oh, Ave Mariah, do not tell me our lives are done. I do not think I can bear to hear those words.

AVE MARIAH: Then I will lie to you, since you would have it so. Sir Toby, you will live to be a hundred!

TOBY: Think ye so? Only that?

AVE MARIAH: I do.

TOBY: God bless you. You are my comfort in my old age. (Shakes.) A plague on these shakings of my flesh!

AVE MARIAH: It is the drink.

TOBY: It is the lack of drink!

AVE MARIAH: We take what comforts we can, when we reach our age. But I say no more drink for me. No more! I came for some ducats from you. I need to pay our bills.

TOBY: Why come to me then? I told you I have no ducats left. (Drinks some more.)

AVE MARIAH: So you say. But you have ducats for the drink you hold! Fork out!

TOBY: We have reached the bottom of the pot, the dregs. (Finishes his drink.) The income that we've lived upon these many years is *finito, kaput*, gone heigh ho!

AVE MARIAH: How can that be, for you are Sir Toby Fartte, with land and holdings?!

TOBY: I am. I was. My holdings I have gradually sold off to pay for your fine dresses and the rest.

AVE MARIAH: What fine dresses? I have none!

TOBY: Well, for our beverages then – our lagers, stouts, *vinos*, malt-liquors, meads, champagnes, sherries, and assorted aperitifs.

AVE MARIAH: It cannot have cost that much!

TOBY: Alas, lass, it has. It's hard for me to say, Ave Mariah, but your drink has driven me to ruin.

AVE MARIAH: You have matched me every swallow – your three to my one, in fact. Don't put it all on me!

TOBY: I am afraid I married a lush, my love.

AVE MARIAH: And so did I, say I!

TOBY: We can stand here calling each other names until the cows go out. But it will not change the fate that hangs over us both from this day forth.

AVE MARIAH: Well, what's to be done then? Can you not borrow some from your niece, the Lady Oblivia?

TOBY: She chased me from her estate the last time I was there – three days ago – and told me she would not give me tuppence more!

AVE MARIAH: But you paid her back for those other loans.

TOBY: In faith, I did not. Not one.

AVE MARIAH: Not one?!

TOBY: She will no longer foot my bills and indeed railed at my extravagance before she sent me packing and said never to return, unless it was with re-payments of what I already owe!

AVE MARIAH: She's become a hard lady.

TOBY: That she has. I blame it on her unhappy marriage, to that Sebastian that she wed on such a spurious spur of the moment. She had known the man but a day or two at most – and he was the twin of the boy she actually was infatuated with. It was bad enough to marry the first one, but to wed the second as a replacement was a sign of things to come. Still, she would not listen to her Uncle Toby, and now she is an unhappy wife. And all considered, not quite right in the head, if one may say so!

AVE MARIAH: But you encouraged her at the time, if I recall correctly.

TOBY: I was drunk and not my usual self. Further, we were all so happy then, everybody getting married off. She ought to have known it was a strange, unlikely match.

AVE MARIAH: I hope you do not feel the same about us!

TOBY: Oh, no, we're different, a match made in the highest heaven and for all time.

AVE MARIAH: I should hope so.

TOBY: (aside) What else can I say? (to Ave Mariah) But the matter on the table is where we can get some more money, now that I have squandered all of mine. *Where?!*

(Enter Sir Andrew, their house guest.)

ANDREW: I am here!

TOBY: God be praised!

AVE MARIAH: Thank Gesu!

ANDREW: Thanks, my fellow rascallions, my scamps! It is indeed warming to my heart to see how you both appreciate my being with you all these years, and no less this day.

TOBY: Of course, Sir Andrew! But of course!

AVE MARIAH: How could we not love you?

ANDREW: There have been times, I must say, when I thought perhaps you loved my money more than you loved me! Yet I told myself, "Sir Toby has plenty of money of his own, so his friendship to me is pure. Two fellow knights –"

AVE MARIAH: Brave knights!

ANDREW: Brave knights! Bold knights! Two brave, bold knights through thick and thick, always ready for a merry prank or a festive jape.

TOBY: That is us, Sir Andrew! That is us!

ANDREW: So then let me ask you how may suit to the Lady Teatsforth is advancing? I think this time it may at last be a match for me!

AVE MARIAH: (aside) God and the Devil willing!

TOBY: Your declaration advances, Sir Andrew. I know it does. Why, just this A.M. the Lady *Teazforth* – remember I told you the second *t* in her name is silent – sent word that she was much taken by the token you sent her via me.

ANDREW: The seven swans a-swimming?

TOBY: Indeed! She loves them, although one of them died in transport.

ANDREW: Oh, no. So it was only six swans a-swimming that I sent?

TOBY: Afraid so. But not to worry! It is not every day that a lady receives six swans in the post, and she could not but be impressed with your generosity, and I can assure you she will capitulate to your numerous charms in a month or less.

ANDREW: But, Toby, such is what you said with the ten other ladies that you promised me! And yet not one has consented, ultimately, to my suit at all. Nay, not even one has so much as . . .

AVE MARIAH: Name it not! This is still a decent household, though it sits on a cliff of desperation.

(Sir Toby puts his fingers to his lips, to warn Ave Mariah.)

ANDREW: I was going to say, not one of the ten has ever let me kiss her, not even on the brow.

TOBY: You are wrong there, Sir Andrew. Lady *Teazforth*, I know for a truth, let you place your thumb upon her girdle.

ANDREW: But it sounds more exciting than it was. She was not wearing the girdle at the time. I have spent half my fortune pursuing these esteemed ladies, and I am not exactly a lad any longer. I yearn for a woman, almost any woman, I dare say. She does not have to be a lady even! Female, yes. I draw the line there!

AVE MARIAH: Perhaps your name is part of the problem, Sir Andrew. You should consider changing it.

ANDREW: What is wrong with my name? It is a fine old Saxon name!

AVE MARIAH: Sir Andrew Dribbledick rolls off the tongue, I agree, but still it does not, perhaps, win fair lady's heart.

ANDREW: What poppycock! There can be no better name than Dribbledick. I can trace my family's origins back before the time of William the Intruder!

AVE MARIAH: Have it your way then, Sir Andrew.

ANDREW: I would not dream of changing the manly, forceful name of "Dribbledick." What would you have me called? Smith? *Fartte*?

TOBY: What's wrong with *Fartte*?

ANDREW: Well, you must confess, Toby, that your surname is a bit on the vulgar side.

TOBY: "*Fartte*" on the vulgar side?! It is spelled with two *t*'s and an *e*. So it is French in derivation. So how could it be vulgar in any way!? Besides, it's pronounced as if it had two *r*'s: So it's not *Fartte*; it's *Farrtte*. Very different!

ANDREW: Well, let that go. I did not care to discuss our names, unless it is that my name is to be joined to Lady Teatsforth's

AVE MARIAH: Teatsforth-Dribbledick, the toast of society! A wonder to all and sundry!

TOBY: You will have your lady, sir, before you are sixty, or I'm no gentleman!

ANDREW: Sixty?

TOBY: Did I say sixty? I meant – how old are you?

ANDREW: (actor supplies his real age)

TOBY: Before you are (gives the actor's age) and three months.

ANDREW: I thought it was one month.

TOBY: Be not so hasty, Sir Andrew. You will get a reputation for being impetuous, even quick on the draw.

ANDREW: No one can say I am quick on the draw to my face!

TOBY: You, sir, are a marvelous tale, of admirable self-restraint. You are right to boast of it.

ANDREW: Did I boast of it?

TOBY: You did!

ANDREW: When?

TOBY: You did, sir. Who would not boast of his purity, especially now that the Puritans are everywhere.

ANDREW: I thank you, sir, for this enlightenment. I praise God above that I am so free of carnal transgression!  
It cannot but be that the Lady (carefully) *Teazforth* will be impressed with the advance word about her husband-to-be.

AVE MARIAH: (aside) Sir Andrew Dribbledick the Inexperienced!

TOBY: Though there is one impediment, sir, to your connubial bliss.

ANDREW: Oh?

TOBY: The lady in question has asked for a guarantee of your commitment to her.

ANDREW: A guarantee? Are not six swans a-swimming enough?

TOBY: She has sent word that she can only consider your suit further, however close she is to deciding in your favor – of which she assures me! – if there is a “security” of your faith and deep affection.

AVE MARIAH: ‘Tis so?

TOBY: Yes. ‘Tis so. Have you not some chores to do, Ave Mariah?

AVE MARIAH: No.

ANDREW: What “security” are we discussing here? I have, it must be said, expended large sums of money in this household. Surely no more “security” is needed than that as to my fidelity. Is it not the lady who brings the dowry, not the man?

TOBY: You live here, Sir Andrew. You dine and drink almost three times a day. You need to give Ave Mariah and me some “security” as well. Do you think food grows on trees?

ANDREW: I suppose not.

AVE MARIAH: (aside) Not even apples, peaches, and pears!

TOBY: The hard matter is, dear Andrew, we cannot keep you here for free forever with your endless line of widows and others until you find the one.

ANDREW: I believe I pay more than my share, with gifts here, gifts there.

AVE MARIAH: He does, Toby.

TOBY: Wife, are you sure that you don't have some work in the scullery left undone?

AVE MARIAH: No, dear husband, I left the scullery when I married you. Have you forgot?

ANDREW: See, Ave Mariah agrees with me!

TOBY: Ave Mariah is such a *helpful, agreeable* person, she is so!

AVE MARIAH: I think, Toby, that perhaps there is some other way to settle things than to bother Sir Andrew with a demand for a "security" for yet more funds for either Lady *Teazforth* or for us.

TOBY: Ave Mariah, most darling though she is, seems not to comprehend how demanding the Lady *Teazforth* can be! She will have her "security" or there will be no more to discuss.

ANDREW: I do not doubt the lady's worthiness, for I saw her from afar at the fair last month. She was well appointed and showed herself quite aristocratic in her mien.

AVE MARIAH: Yet have you two conversed, *a deux*, as becoming two spouses to be joined?

TOBY: Nay, Ave Mariah, I think they have not been so intimate, and good say I, not being one to favor too much intercourse before a wedding.

AVE MARIAH: Hah!

TOBY: Ave Mariah, I fear that you do not conjoin with me, in my plan to help Sir Andrew to this wife.

ANDREW: Yes, Ave Mariah, would you deny me marital bliss like that of you and Toby?

AVE MARIAH: Marital bliss indeed! I just feel that maybe we have "helped" Sir Andrew enough by now.

TOBY: There are some words I would whisper in your ear, dear Ave Mariah, once our dearest friend, Sir Andrew here, is off to his day's tasks. I would not trouble him with our domestic minutiae.

ANDREW: I am off! I thought I would spend my day at my country estate, Walton Hall, which I have not visited since God knows when. There are some hares that are nibbling at the gardens that I must trap – if I am a man!

TOBY: Go then, Sir Andrew. And God speed you on your day's exploits. We hope to dine with you tonight, or breakfast tomorrow at the least.

AVE MARIAH: Farewell, Sir Andrew! Be not too hard on the hares. They but wish to live to hop another day.

ANDREW: I go! Look out ye rabbits! Sir Andrew Dribbledick has you in his sites!

(Exits.)

TOBY: (once Andrew is gone) What are you thinking, Ave Mariah? Don't you realise that we must gull him or we shall starve?!

AVE MARIAH: I doubt it will come to that.

TOBY: It will come to that. It has come to that! And you are not helping! We won't have to wait to die of our excessive eating and drinking all these years. We verily shall expire long before, for lack of basic stuffs like bread and water, never mind cakes and ales.

AVE MARIAH: It is only that I believe we have gulled Sir Andrew long enough. How many years has it been? 'Tis enough, whatever it is.

TOBY: You cannot abandon me now. We are in this together, for the long course.

AVE MARIAH: There comes a time when even gulls must be pitied more than taken advantage of. Sir Andrew's time has come.

TOBY: You have been complicit, and willing more than most, to gull whomever in the past. Witness: the lamentable Malvolio. As I recall, it was you who devised that gull!

AVE MARIAH: I do repent me of that scheme, and others too.

TOBY: Repent later, when there's time. For now we need to save the day, and our existence, by doing one more gull – of our own Sir Andrew, yes. After that, we can cease our gulls and die if it come to that.

AVE MARIAH: What gull is this? I do not approve.

TOBY: I would I had a willing partner. Will you at least listen?

AVE MARIAH: I am listening, but I am not hearing.

TOBY: I have a plan. I see no other way. Sir Andrew must be tricked into a willing outlay of enough funds to see us through our final days.

AVE MARIAH: With your drinking to excess and me abstemious?

TOBY: Whatever form it takes, there is no help but this. I propose that we make our dear live-in friend believe that *you* are Lady Teatsforth – from a safe distance, of course. His eyesight is not the best. And we shall convince him that the lady entertains his overtures, and more.

AVE MARIAH: And more what?

TOBY: Let that remain to be detailed as time and circumstance require. It is sufficient to say that you need to disguise yourself as Lady T and lead him to believe you want him to be yours forever more. And then to get the "security" from him, if we are to live!

AVE MARIAH: You jest. He would know me in a minute.

TOBY: He won't if you play your part well. And, Ave Mariah, do not doubt the human heart. Sir Andrew will melt with final love, fork forth the "security," save this property from being lost, and we will live to drink and eat another day!

AVE MARIAH: You are a rogue!

TOBY: And?

AVE MARIAH: And I am tired of being one.

TOBY: I take that as consent.

AVE MARIAH: It is not, but what choice have I?

TOBY: Trust me, wife, the closer to hungrier you become, the better you will think of my fine plan! (Shakes.) Confound these tremors! They're enough to kill a man!

(Both exit.)

### SCENE 3

(Enter Oblivia to Sebastian, her husband, sitting in a chair in his night clothes, ruffled, unshaven, reading a broadsheet.)

OBLIVIA: What, Sebastian, are you not dressed yet? They will be here at any moment. Do you wish your sister to see you looking like this? (She pretentiously tends to accent *ed*'s at the end of her words.)

SEBASTIAN: She has seen me before.

OBLIVIA: Have some pride in your appearance, man, for the sake of God! When was the last time you shaved?

SEBASTIAN: Don't know.

OBLIVIA: Or changed your clothes?

SEBASTIAN: Don't care.

OBLIVIA: Well, I care! All you do is sit around the estate and vegetate! That's why I invited Viola and the duke to visit. Maybe visitors will prompt you to have a care or two about something besides yourself!

SEBASTIAN: Leave me to these news. (Rattles his broadsheet.)

OBLIVIA: I know not why you keep reading these broadsheets; they do naught but make you furious. You would be more happy if less well-informed, like me, especially with that trash you read.

SEBASTIAN: Your jibes fall on the floor unheard.



OBLIVIA: (exasperated) Oh, you! You man!

SEBASTIAN: Did you see what the king has done now?!

OBLIVIA: No, and I don't want to know.

SEBASTIAN: He's given a royal amnesty to the Scots! It will lead to nothing but more rebellion by those blue-faced gits!

OBLIVIA: Here we go again!

SEBASTIAN: And they're translating the Holy Bible into some flouncy poetic balderdash that you can barely understand! Leave the Word of God alone, say I! It was written in English. Let it remain in English!

OBLIVIA: I must set about seeing that Viola's and Porcino's quarters are ship-shape. He has grown in size, I hear by good report, since last they visited. I have made their bed bigger by half to accommodate the two – or should I say the two and a half – of them?!

SEBASTIAN: I never saw what Viola saw in him even before he got so stout.

OBLIVIA: Nor I neither. He did pursue me with such vigor, in our younger days. I was quite thoroughly surprised when he married your sister, who is of a body type utterly distinct from mine, she being boyish, as it were, and I not at all! (Shows her curves.)

SEBASTIAN: (shaking the broadsheet) Look here! Now the poachers have all but decimated the game on all the surrounding lands, leaving nothing for the rest of us! It was not so in my day, I'll tell you that. They dealt with poachers then, believe you me! Not all this molly-coddling. They're plain criminals and deserve a good hanging or the rack at least!

OBLIVIA: (off in her own world) Yes, Viola, when she was dressed as Caesario, cut such a trim and fine figure, a veritable Cupid – but of teenage years and not fat, an important distinction. An Adonis or a Ganymede to make one's heart flutter in the most frightful ways. (Fans herself with the erotic memory.)

SEBASTIAN: (reading, shaking the broadsheet again) And if that were not sufficient, it says here that taxes are to be levied on our windows. On our windows! I ask you when will all this end?! Windows taxed! What is the world coming to!?

OBLIVIA: (to herself) I do hope Viola has packed a wardrobe that includes some boyish weeds. I do so love to gaze upon her when she strides in her trousers, or stands with one foot upon a stool, the other on the floor. *Oh! Oh!* Just in case she has brought only her women's wear this trip, I have, thoughtfully, bought some boyish togs that she can wear, to lounge about in whilst she's here.

SEBASTIAN: And read this, Oblivia! (Tries to show her a story in the broadsheet.)

OBLIVIA: Nay! Nay! I do not wish to become as peevish as you become when you read, and yet you will *not* not read the news!

SEBASTIAN: The broadsheets were better in the olden days. The print was bigger and the information was better researched. But now –

PORCINO: (calling from offstage) What ho! Our hosts are nowhere to be seen!

VIOLA: (calling) Sebastian, dearest brother, are you here?!

(Duke Porcino and Viola enter. He is very fat. She is very slender.)

PORCINO: (seeing Oblivia) Oh, my breath! I pant.

VIOLA: You must not walk so fast, dear husband, now that you have put on a penny's weight or two.

PORCINO: Oh, hush, Viola. I am as slender as ever I was!

OBLIVIA: Greetings, relatives! You have found us ere we could find you.

SEBASTIAN: (to Viola) Hello, darling sister!

VIOLA: Brother!

(They embrace.)

SEBASTIAN: Have you seen this scandalous broadsheet, Viola? Look at this story about those courtiers who were caught *flagrante*. (He huddles with Viola about the story. She is sympathetic.)

PORCINO: (to Oblivia, flirtatiously) My lady, you stay as fair as last you were.

OBLIVIA: (not the least interested in him) No, sir, I think you flatter me.

PORCINO: One cannot flatter enough what is so fine in Nature, a rosebud but newly opened, a precious jewel that should be displayed in the crown of nothing less than a monarch!

OBLIVIA: Porcino, you are obese in your tongue, so over-full of compliments you are to me.

PORCINO: Oh, lady, you know that I have always admired you. Sometimes I rue the day when I sent Viola to you to sue on my behalf, as Caesario the boy, for it led not to you becoming one with *me* but, rather, in my obligation – I one with *her* – while you married elsewhere. And not all's well in that quick union, it seems to me.

OBLIVIA: Naturally, I thank you for your compliments, Duke Porcino, but think we both have made our beds, and so we must stay in them. (to Viola) Come, sister, let not your brother tire you with those tiresome travails of the day. He will not cease unless you make him. (Pulls Viola away from Sebastian.)

SEBASTIAN: Wouldst have some tea? I will call a servant.

VIOLA: Not for me.

PORCINO: I will have tea, with some biscuits too, if you please. The walk from our coach to your house has quite famished me.

SEBASTIAN: (calling) Some tea there!

PORCINO: (calling) And some biscuits!

SEBASTIAN: And some biscuits!

(Enter the servant, John.)

JOHN: I will bring them, sir! (Exits, bowing.)

OBLIVIA: (calling him back) Wait. One thing more.

JOHN: (returning) Yes, milady?

OBLIVIA: Are the blue napkins washed?

JOHN: I believe so, Ma'am. I washed them myself.

OBLIVIA: Bring them.

JOHN: Yes, Ma'am. (Exits, bowing.)

OBLIVIA: Wait! One more thing!

JOHN: (returning) Yes, Ma'am?

OBLIVIA: Do we have white sugar to replace the brown for our guests?

JOHN: We do, Ma'am. I refined some myself late last night.

OBLIVIA: Good! We'll have that.

JOHN: Very good choice, Ma'am. (Exits, bowing.)

OBLIVIA: I know that. Wait! One last thing!

JOHN: (returning) Yes, milady?

OBLIVIA: Oh, I expect that's enough. Don't want to spoil the guests with too much attentiveness. Would we?!

JOHN: No, Ma'am. Is that all for now?

OBLIVIA: Yes. Don't tarry so much, Simpleton! You're keeping my guests waiting!

JOHN: Yes, Ma'am. I'm sorry, Ma'am. (Leaves, but not all the way this time.)

OBLIVIA: Simpleton! Why are you hanging back like that? Be off, you nincompoop!

JOHN: (Nods and backs away completely.)

OBLIVIA: (shaking her head) The help! But what can you do?! (to Viola) Are you certain, dearest, that you will not partake of some tea, at least?

VIOLA: All right. Let's make a party of it then.

OBLIVIA: (calling to servant) Simpleton! Come here again, sirrah! I'm not through with you.

JOHN: (entering again) Yes, Ma'am?

OBLIVIA: Be sure there is enough tea for four. (looking at Porcino) Or five. Plus the blue napkins and the white sugar.

JOHN: I will do so, Ma'am! (Exits.)

OBLIVIA: And don't dawdle! As you tend to do! We have very special guests today, who deserve the finest of what this household has to give! (to the others) I'm going to have to let that man *go* one of these days!

SEBASTIAN: (to the guests) So rest ye both! Have a chair, won't you? (Pulls out three chairs.)

OBLIVIA: No chair for me, husband?

SEBASTIAN: There is another in the next room over.

OBLIVIA: Surely you do not expect your wife to fetch a chair?

SEBASTIAN: Oh dear, such a bother! Excuse me. (He goes offstage for the chair.)

OBLIVIA: (seizing the opportunity, to Viola) So, Caesario, how goes your life?

VIOLA: It goes as well as most, I think. But I am Caesario no more, I believe you are aware, dear sister. . . . And your life?

OBLIVIA: Pray, I am the happiest wife that ever trod up the aisle to the parson! Is it not obvious?

VIOLA: I would not presume to know.

OBLIVIA: Is that a cramp in your hand, dear Caesario? (Grabs Viola's hand to examine it.)

PORCINO: Whence this "Caesario"?! She is Viola and has not been called that other, that boy's name, for some time now.

OBLIVIA: I keep forgetting. But the cramp! Does it not hurt?

VIOLA: What cramp, dear coz? I have no cramp. (Gently removes her hand from Oblivia's hands.)

PORCINO: Except monthly! (laughs coarsely) Hah! Hah! Hah!

VIOLA: (gently) Husband, forbear!

OBLIVIA: I am sure I see a cramp in your hand, my dear. Let me massage that hand before the cramp o'ertakes it. (Grabs Viola's hand again and rubs it.)

VIOLA: Madame, you do me too much honour to act as my physician.

OBLIVIA: No such thing. I only stroke your hand – the sweet fingers, the palm, the thumb – to head off screams of pain that you might otherwise endure.

VIOLA: (trying to disengage her hand) I thank you heartily, but I would now have back my hand. To drink the tea that is to come.

OBLIVIA: (holding on) The tea is not here yet, and that foul cramp needs a vigorous opponent. And that am I! (Rubs Viola's hand even more.)

PORCINO: (of Viola) She is always coming down with something: cramps, pustules, constipation!

VIOLA: Husband, please.

PORCINO: 'Tis true. I am a saint.

VIOLA: (to Oblivia) I believe that cramp is gone now. (Takes her hand away again.)

OBLIVIA: Pity then. But you know best, I suppose.

PORCINO: There must be cramps going around! For I do spy one now in the Lady Oblivia's hand!

OBLIVIA: In mine?

PORCINO: That cramp in my wife's hand must have leapt into milady's because of all the rubbing that you did.

OBLIVIA: I think not, sir.

PORCINO: I am certain of it. Ah, there be that cramp! (Grabs Oblivia's hand.)  
Just here, just so.

OBLIVIA: You do hold my hand too tightly, coz. You will give it a cramp indeed!

PORCINO: I seek but to obliterate all cramps in this dear household. (Nods at Sebastian.) Your husband, I am sure, has many cramps on many a day. Besides, milady's hand is moist with something that needs a cure, whether cramp or no.

OBLIVIA: You are mistaken, kind coz. My hand is splendid as it is. I would have it returned to me.

PORCINO: Splendid indeed is this hand!

(Sebastian returns with the chair, sees Oblivia's hand being held.)

OBLIVIA: Do not rile Sebastian when you've only just arrived.

SEBASTIAN: Her skin has a bit of creping, if seen in broad daylight.

OBLIVIA: I thank my husband for his gallant insight. I am sure they would not have noticed without your pointing it out.

PORCINO: (still holding on) Creping or no, it is a hand to wonder at.

OBLIVIA: And yet I have it not again. Perchance there is also some glue in the air.

PORCINO: Some glue, ah yes – our kinship. And who knows how deep that kinship yet may be?!

OBLIVIA: Who can tell, sir, who can tell what lies ahead?

PORCINO: I can! I employed a gypsy for a week to instruct me in the art of fortune telling. I can now tell your fortune, Madame. Will you indulge me?

VIOLA: A gypsy? Of this I have not heard before. A gypsy?

PORCINO: If I may use the lady's hand, I'll tell her fortune – and for free, unlike the gypsy!

SEBASTIAN: Oh, good! Come, Oblivia, I love to hear fortunes told! The only good thing about this broadsheet is the Zodiac chart!

VIOLA: I am sort of curious myself.

OBLIVIA: We have no time for fortunes, I'm afraid. The tea will be here shortly. (Removes her hand.)

SEBASTIAN: Go on, Oblivia, let's hear what Porcino has learned. (with an edge) I'm sure it will be marvelous.

PORCINO: Madame?

VIOLA: Possibly I will learn my own fortune if he reads yours. (meaning her fortune with her husband)

OBLIVIA: Well then, I will consent, if only to please Caesario – I mean, Viola! (Holds out her hand again.)  
But let's withdraw into the breakfast room and continue with our tea in there. (yelling) Simpleton!  
Are you listening? Keep up! Be aware!

(Exit all.)

(Enter JOHN with a tea service, sees that they have departed. Hurries after them.)

#### SCENE 4

##### Office of Fester, now a lawyer

(Enter Fabian, the cheeky law clerk, with the parchments of many lawsuits.)

FABIAN: (to audience)

My master is besieged with cases in the law. I think he does take on too many to do a good job with any of them. But he knows how to delude his clients and make them think he cares, I'll give him that. One day I'll have my own law office, if I live! I have learned a few tricks by working here, I warrant you!

(Enter John the servant, from outside.)

JOHN: Is this the firm of Fester, Fester, Fester, and Stench?

FABIAN: It is, sir, though Stench died last week.

JOHN: You have no more Stench?

FABIAN: Right, sir. Our Stench died. We are now completely out of Stench, but Lawyer Fester will be happy to assist you. What is your will?

JOHN: It is not about a will, but something else. You are Mr. Fester?

FABIAN: No, I am Mr. Fabian, his law clerk. Mr. Fester won't be in just yet. I meant what kind of case is yours?

JOHN: Maybe I should wait for him, as he's the head.

FABIAN: Suit yourself, sir. But I act on Mr. Fester's behalf. What you tell me is as if you were telling him. I am intimate with all his workings.

JOHN: I don't really want a lackey, just Mr. Fester.

FABIAN: A lackey! I beg to inform you that I am no lackey, sir!

JOHN: When is Mr. Fester in today?

FABIAN: I am afraid I would not know, sir. I am just a lackey. What do lackeys know?

JOHN: Does he not post his hours?

FABIAN: Maybe he does; maybe he does not. I would not have that knowledge, sir, being just a lackey as I am!

JOHN: I did not mean to demean your employment, sir.

FABIAN: Good day. I will tell Lawyer Fester that you were in. If I don't forget.

JOHN: But you know not even my name!

FABIAN: Oh, you are right. What is your name? (Takes out a quill to write with.)

JOHN: My name is John B. Simpleton.

FABIAN: A fine name if ever I heard one. (Deliberately puts the quill down.)

JOHN: Will you not write it down?

FABIAN: Oh, you got me there, sir! (Takes the quill again.) I have my quill again. Your name again?

JOHN: John B. Simpleton.

FABIAN: (writing) J.O.H.N. S.I.M.P. –

JOHN: You forgot the B. It's John *B.* Simpleton.

FABIAN: I did indeed forget it, sir. It must be because I am a lackey! (Throws the quill down.) And of course lackeys are illiterate, so how could I write down your name in any case?!

JOHN: I'm sorry if I offended you, Master Fabian.

FABIAN: Offended me? I took no offense, sir, at anything of yours!

JOHN: I would think that Fester, Fester, Fester, and No Stench would treat potential clients better than I seem to be being treated.

FABIAN: We have plenty to occupy us, as you can see. (Shows the parchments.) So if you wish to take your legal concerns elsewhere, you may. We do not *lack* for customers. Dost catch my drift? *Lack?!?*

JOHN: You are a poor representative of this law firm. That's all I'll say!

FABIAN: Thank you, Mr. John B. Simpleton – no Esquire, I presume. Good day!

JOHN: I don't think I will be back. (Starts to leave.) No good day to you, sir!

(As John starts to leave, Lawyer Fester enters.)

FESTER: What's this? A customer leaving?

FABIAN: He said he would be back when you are here.

FESTER: Well, I am here! What can I do for you, Mr. – ?

FABIAN: Simpleton. That's his name, not a description, or so he says.

FESTER: And a fine name it is too. British stock?

JOHN: Absolutely!



FESTER: Well then, you have come to the right place. What can I do to assuage your legal cares?

JOHN: I was trying to tell your assistant here –

FABIAN: His lackey!

JOHN: About my problem where I am employed – the lady I work for.

FESTER: Yes?

JOHN: Is there nothing that can be done about conditions there?

FESTER: (surprised) At your place of work? You mean *change* things?

JOHN: I'd like to, yes.

FESTER: (amazed) You want to hire a lawyer to assist you in *altering* conditions where you are employed?

FABIAN: Why don't you just quit?

FESTER: Fabian is right. People usually quit if they are displeased, or run away if indentured. Are you indentured?

JOHN: No, sir, I am not. I am a free man, as was my father before me, and his father before him. Only my lady does not seem to know it.

FESTER: Your whole family were servants?

JOHN: I did not say I was a servant, as I recall.

FABIAN: You didn't have to.

JOHN: How did you know? I dressed up a bit.

FABIAN: (rolls his eyes) Maybe from your carriage!

JOHN: My carriage? I have no carriage. I cannot afford one. I walked here.

FABIAN: It's obvious from the way you *carry* yourself, i.e., your carriage.

FESTER: Mr. Simpleton carries himself quite splendidly, Fabian.

FABIAN: Of course, if you say so, Mr. Fester.

FESTER: I do say so. Walk for us, Mr. Simpleton, and display your carriage for us.

JOHN: Walk for you?

FESTER: Up and down. I can tell your position in one minute. Want to test me?

JOHN: You can't!

FESTER: I have learned in the courts of law that an astute lawyer knows how to read his own clients, but even more so the clients of the other side as well as all the witnesses of both. One sharp eye is worth a thousand pieces of parchment.

JOHN: All right. What am I? (Walks back and forth, self-consciously, awkwardly.) I remind you I used to be a member of the neighbourhood Watch!

FABIAN: (aside) A simpleton, as any eye can tell!

FESTER: Indoor and outdoor servant. Mostly in, I'd say. Jack of all trades. Been employed for less than five years. Not trusted with valuables.

JOHN: How did you know all that?!

FESTER: Mr. Simpleton, it is not for me to reveal the secrets of my trade. Let me just say that your hands show signs of outdoor tasks, rough-hewn and sunburnt, but not so deep as a man at work for more than five years would have. Or one who works indoors a good part of the time. It is an estimate.

JOHN: And why will they not let me handle valuables? I am an honest man.

FESTER: No doubt, sir, no doubt. Perhaps it is because you . . . shall we say somewhat totter when you walk, and valuables in your hands might be at risk?

JOHN: I totter?

FABIAN: I thought it was more a teeter.

FESTER: No, totter.

FABIAN: You are the superior. But I felt it was more a teeter than a totter.

FESTER: I am sure whatever we call it, your employer merely wants to save you from any accidents that would harm you, were you to attempt carrying anything of value. Your lady's sensitivity.

JOHN: No, sir! That is exactly why I am here. Although I admire her and even respect her, the Lady Oblivia Lovecock, my employer, is somewhat insensitive. Indeed this very morning she criticised the way I served tea to her and her relatives and taxed me with too many chores at once. You have heard of the Lady Oblivia?

FESTER: I have, sir. I once upon a time worked for her myself. Before your time there.

JOHN: Truly?

FESTER: I was – I hate the term – her Clown. It was my duty to entertain her with quips and puns and generally messing about with words. Fortunately, now I am able to use my word skills in another field, that of the law, to much more important, and well paid, ends.

JOHN: And how did *you* find the Lady Oblivia, may I ask?

FESTER: Why, I just went to her front gate and rang the bell! Forgive me, Mr. Simpleton! Old jokesters do not die easily! I found the Lady Oblivia to be imperious at times, most times, except for those occasions when she was in love, or fancied herself in love, with someone. Then she was quite silly and giddy and not herself at all. I found her moods capricious and ultimately I left her employ because of them.

JOHN: Then you know what I mean about how hard it is to work for her.

FABIAN: Have you tried saying something to her about it?

JOHN: I would not, could not! She could let me go in a moment, and I would starve upon the town's parameters. One cannot openly criticise the one who employs you – and a member of the upper class at that!

FABIAN: Tell me about it!

FESTER: Fabian! See about today's cases. Over there! Go! (Points.)

FABIAN: Yes, boss! (Moves to another part of the office, starts moving parchments around noisily.)

JOHN: But maybe there is some recourse through the law?

FESTER: (to John) This field of complaints – legal complaints – against an unsatisfactory employer is a brand new area of law, but one that interests me entirely, and one that I would very much like to enter. So tell me more, Mr. Simpleton. Do tell me more.

JOHN: There are many incidences – if that's a word – of mistreatment that I could scarce recite them all. And yet I do so hate to tattle on my lady!

FESTER: A sampling should suffice.

JOHN: This morning she ordered tea for four and then demanded extra services— fetch this, fetch that, when she could have saved both her and me much trouble if she had said she wanted blue napkins and white sugar from the get-go. I had to make umpteen half-trips back and forth.

FESTER: So? I fail to see any legal case so far.

JOHN: She did it, not so much for the blue napkins or the white sugar as to impress her guests, her relatives, to demonstrate how she makes her household jump to her smallest desires.

FESTER: Could you not enlist some of the other household staff to help?

JOHN: I am the household staff!

FABIAN: All of it?

JOHN: All of it. Except for the cook.

FESTER: The lady has grown parsimonious, I see. What else? Did she call you names? There is a potential there, depending on the names.

JOHN: She did. She called me “sirrah.”

FABIAN: Not “lackey”?

FESTER: (ignoring Fabian) Is there something wrong with “sirrah”? It is a common enough term for a social inferior.

JOHN: But who is she to say that I am a social inferior?!

FESTER: You are not going to change the class system, trust me. She is the Lady Oblivia and you are only a servant – besides being her only servant! *Boing!*

JOHN: She likewise called me “simpleton”!

FESTER: Is that not your surname, sir? (playing on the words) A snipe against a servile servant with the surname “Simpleton” surely is not something sustainable in law. Excuse the word-play, if you will.

JOHN: She can call me demeaning names, but I can call her nothing but “milady.” When she called me “Simpleton,” she did not say it like it was my surname but as if I were in fact a true simpleton!

FESTER: It would be hard to rule on her tone of voice. Is there more?

JOHN: Let me think. (Thinks too long.)

FABIAN: Are you sure she did not call you stupid too?

JOHN: Yes! She said I was a “nincompoop.” She has said it many times.

FESTER: Now we may be getting somewhere. “Nincompoop,” she called you. And “stupid”?

JOHN: And “stupid”!

FABIAN: How about “numb-skull”?

JOHN: Many times!

FABIAN: Whyever that? It is a mystery!

FESTER: Fabian be still! (to John) “Numb-skull” and “stupid” may indeed begin to transgress the law. I had a case somewhat near to this not far long ago. The judge threw it out because he was traditional and thought any employer may call his workers any names he chooses and pay them what he wants, and there’s an end to it. However, some judges have begun to make distinctions in the terms that may be applied to staff. So tell me, Mr. Simpleton, are there any other insults that you have been subjected to? Write these down, Fabian.

FABIAN: Must I, Sir Boss?

FESTER: Of course you stupid numb-skull! What do I pay you for?

(Fabian reluctantly gets a parchment to write on.)

JOHN: The Lady Oblivia's husband, Sir Sebastian, once kicked me in the groin and said I was a eunuch!

FESTER: Better and better! Which part of the groin?

JOHN: Which part?

FESTER: Was it the penis proper or a testicle, or possibly two testicles?

JOHN: It was more than that. It so happens that I was born with a third testicle, and so I think that may indeed triple the offence!

FESTER: That's good, very good. If you had four testicles, I think we would have the case won already!

FABIAN: Any chance of that?

JOHN: I'm afraid I can only claim three, not more. I do believe I have reached the maximum number God has allotted me.

FESTER: Pity. Still, we must work with the testicles we have. Did Sir Sebastian do anything else?

JOHN: Let me think. (Thinks too long.)

FABIAN: God save us from his thinks!

JOHN: Now that I think upon it, he did once pour cold urine upon my head.

FESTER: He didn't!

JOHN: I recall it now quite vividly. It was the occasion of my lady's birthday. He had given her a present of, as is the custom, ten hens a-laying, which she objected to because she said she did not want to have to clean up after ten chickens plus their offspring and told her husband so. I happened to be in the room at the moment, having delivered the ten hens a-laying, and Sir Sebastian, instead of berating his wife for her ingratitude, seized the night pot of urine that he had set out for me to empty, and dumped its contents upon my head in his fit of pique at his wife!

FESTER: Wondrous news! This is something we can definitely use. Abuse by urine! Yes!

JOHN: And cold it was too, Mr. Fester!

FESTER: And how did this make you feel?

JOHN: Very bad? Warm urine I may have borne with grace and even gratitude since it was the dead of winter, but cold urine on my head was going too far, if you ask me! I do think Sir Sebastian did not plan to do it. It just happened at that moment.

FESTER: Did you develop any fevers, agues, or colds from this experience?

JOHN: I don't think so.

FESTER: Think again, Mr. Simpleton. Are you certain no symptoms of other maladies can't be traced back to this unfortunate incident with the urine on your head?

JOHN: And cold too, don't forget!

FESTER: How could I forget?! The image is emblazoned in my memory forever. Surely there were other consequences besides your unquestionable embarrassment. Pneumonia perchance? Something you have forgotten?

JOHN: I think I would remember pneumonia.

FESTER: Scrofula? Scabies? Bleeding at the nose or the other end?

JOHN: Let me think. (Thinks too long again.)

FESTER: Was your intelligence perhaps diminished?

JOHN: I don't think so. (Thinks some more.)

FABIAN: How long can any man think about his bleeding arse?

JOHN: I know! Not long after this urine on my head –

FABIAN: And cold urine, yes!

JOHN: I began to have episodes of walking in my sleep.

FESTER: Terrible, frightening episodes?

JOHN: Indeed! I once walked into my lady's chambers with nothing on but my nightshirt!

FESTER: No!

JOHN: My lady and her husband could have mistaken my intent because I also had an enormous . . .

FABIAN: Elephant on a leash?

JOHN: An enormous . . . It's hard to say.

FESTER: Erection?

JOHN: I did, sir. Enormous, as I walked in my sleep into their rooms.

FABIAN: I think he's just bragging.

FESTER: I am not sure this is the best argument. Her ladyship might claim you walked with lubricious intent and not from –

JOHN: Oh, Lady Oblivia did not see me walking in my sleep, I am quite certain, nor did Sir Sebastian, for they were, as one says, “preoccupied” under the covers of their bed. This was last year, when they slept together.

FABIAN: We need details! The law demands them!

FESTER: Not right now.

FABIAN: Sure it does.

FESTER: Do you have details?

JOHN: I am not a gentleman, but I aspire to be one one day. I do not think a gentleman would spell out such details.

FABIAN: Well, until you become a gentleman, say on!

JOHN: What say you, Mr. Fester?

FESTER: Perhaps a few. The Lady Oblivia, at least when last I saw her, was quite a beauty.

JOHN: She is still a beauty, though a lesser one. I will say this much. Sir Sebastian was atop the lady. And grunting was he mightily.

FESTER: A husband atop his wife is not that much, Mr. Simpleton.

JOHN: Well, the Lady Oblivia was lying face down. What do you make of that?

FABIAN: Yes, and?

FESTER: This case grows better and better. Perchance we will have the two of them up on charges of gross sodomy.

FABIAN: Why? A husband has a legal right to sodomize his wife.

FESTER: I am not so sure about that.

FABIAN: I am. Ask my wife!

FESTER: Who is the lawyer here, you or me?

FABIAN: Yes, master.

FESTER: This legal point we will parse further as need arises. Meanwhile, we will concentrate on Mr. Simpleton’s service conditions. Is there anything more, anything truly egregious that we can lay against the Lady Oblivia herself?

JOHN: She makes me labour both day and night.

FESTER: That is nothing. More?

JOHN: I get not even one day off for myself.

FESTER: No case in that! Think!

FABIAN: No, don't think! Just speak. Dost she ever bathe where you can see her nakedness?

JOHN: No, sir.

FABIAN: Never once?

JOHN: Never once, although she did one time display a nipple as she played at tennis.

FESTER: Ah! How displayed she this nipple?

JOHN: She was not wearing underclothes, I think, and as she leaned to her left to hit a passing shot, her nipple did press against her bodice.

FABIAN/FESTER: Yes?

JOHN: And the full imprint of that said nipple could be clearly seen by all the gathered. . . . How's that?

FESTER: It's dicey. Some might say that seeing milady's nipple imprint might be a perk of the position and not a drawback. Possibly this is not the way to proceed, though hearing these particulars does excite my interest, my legal interest.

FABIAN: And mine!

JOHN: The lady did also prevent me from having pastry puffs with the downstairs girl from our neighbour's.

FESTER: Because?

JOHN: She said she'd have no bastards conceived in her pantry, if she could prevent it.

FESTER: Were you intimate in the pantry with this downstairs girl from your neighbour's?

JOHN: We only shared pastry puffs, leftover ones. What do you take me for?!

FESTER: Just clarifying. We would not want the Lady Oblivia Lovecock to bring a lawsuit of her own, leveling a charge of you seducing a neighbour's maid.

FABIAN: And stalking her bedchamber!

JOHN: It never went beyond pastry puffs with some jam and innocent sleep walking!



FESTER: Would you be willing to swear to all this upon the Bible?

JOHN: I would, sir!

FABIAN: You have another appointment soon, Mr. Fester.

FESTER: Oh, right. (to John) Go home and think of every possible thing you can against Lady Oblivia. Then come another day when you have thought it all out in advance, and relate it to us.

FABIAN: And be sure to bring money with you for a retainer.

JOHN: So this one visit will not suffice?

FABIAN: Hah!

FESTER: I think you are somewhat ignorant of the law, Mr. Simpleton. It takes much manipulating of the facts to get you ready for trail, as you must appreciate.

JOHN: But –

FESTER: I just wish she had done even more to you so that your case would be air-tight. Rest assured that we will tease it and tease it into an action of what you will, in the months and years ahead. Good day for now. You can pay Fabian for today before you go.

JOHN: That's it?

FABIAN: Pay and then mosey on.

JOHN: There *is* one thing more that comes to mind while I'm here.

FESTER: And that is?

JOHN: The Lady Oblivia and Sir Sebastian both once, at the self-same moment, did spit on me and kick my bum.

FABIAN: So?

FESTER: Fabian, be still! (to John) Where did they spit on you?

JOHN: In their house.

FESTER: On which part of *you*? And while we're at it, which part of your bum did they kick?

JOHN: Which parts?

FESTER: It is vital to differentiate the spittle parts and the kicked-bum parts. Spitting on a servant's shoe is obviously not as culpable as spitting on his beard. And kicking a servant on one buttock is one thing, while both buttocks is assault and battery – double battery! – and thus much more serious in the eyes of the law. So which were these, Mr. Simpleton?

JOHN: The law is indeed complicated! As I recall, the lady spat on the left side of my codpiece – I wore a codpiece then – and kicked me on my right side of my left buttock. Sir Sebastian spat on the right side of my codpiece – which I wore a little to the left – and kicked me on the left side of my right buttock.

FESTER: Very good. Is there more?

JOHN: And then together they shouted in both mine ears that I was a *niggard* !

FESTER/FABIAN: (together, shocked) NO!

FESTER: Did they mean a stingy man?

JOHN: I was perhaps the pasty puffs, but I was not stingy with them.

FESTER: But they used the *n-word*, correct?

JOHN: Yes.

FABIAN: Why didn't you say this *before*?!

FESTER: Fabian's right. Now we have a case! For nothing trumps the *n-word*! We shall meet again soon, once I have drawn up the lawsuit on your behalf.

JOHN: Thank you, thank you.

FABIAN: God rest ye! Pay here!

JOHN: (paying from a purse) God rest ye!

(Fabian quickly hustles John out of the office.)

JOHN: (offstage) God rest ye!

FABIAN: (returning) I care not for that one, although not so small a purse had he! Especially for one of his estate. Still, I hope he never returns.

FESTER: When will you learn the business? If the lawsuit against Lady Oblivia fails, then we shall bring a lawsuit against Simpleton himself on her behalf for slander and get what he has!

FABIAN: (covering his ass) I knew that!

FESTER: You see what can happen when you keep pulling stuff out of clients, even imbeciles? You have to dig, Fabian! You have to dig! Now get to work and maybe one day you'll be half as good as *I* am! When it comes to the law, you have to be red in the claw! (Shows a hand as a claw.)

BLACKOUT

## SCENE 5

### Malvolio's House

(Enter Molly, wearing a bridal veil.)

MOLLY: (to audience)

I'm not supposed to wear this veil until the day I wed,  
Which is still some time away, but I could not resist.  
How does it look? (Poses as a bride.) I must not let him see me thus.  
He does not approve of wayward ways. Who would not love her husband so?  
I would love him so much less if he were less certain of all things.  
So stern, so unyielding, so full of righteousness.  
It gives my heart such confidence to know that he knows best.  
Or thinks he does at least. Of course, as everyone must know,  
Once a bride, who actually rules the household roost  
Can be quite different from what is supposed to be the case!

MALVOLIO: (offstage) Molly! Molly! Where have you disappeared to now?

MOLLY: I must put away this veil, to wear another day, my bridal day. (Hides the veil under a cushion on a chair.)

MALVOLIO: (entering) What have you there, Molly mine?

MOLLY: Oh, nothing. Some trifle. (Since some of the veil sticks out, she quickly tucks it under the cushion.)

MALVOLIO: Was it something to assist me in my revenges?

MOLLY: No, Malvolio, some woman's item, to be prepared – I mean, *repaired* with needle later in the day.

MALVOLIO: Why hide it you?

MOLLY: Why hide it? Hmm, I thought it best if no one sees it since it is soiled, unsightly. I know you like a tidy house.

MALVOLIO: Hmm, I do. And when you come here to live I trust that you will not hide your dirty laundry under my cushions and consider that "tidy."

MOLLY: Oh, never, Malvolio! Just this once. Here let me be rid of it. (Picks up the cushion and the veil together, trying to keep the veil out of sight.)

MALVOLIO: Your trifle is hanging out, a trifle.

MOLLY: Let me tend to it. (Throws the bridal veil into a laundry basket.) There! 'Tis past worrying about now. So tell me, darling dearest, what plans have you made for your revenges on those who were so cruel to you?

MALVOLIO: So you *are* interested? I had my doubts.

MOLLY: Oh, I am, I am!

MALVOLIO: Well then, let me inform you of what I have found out, from my spy. I have my own spy now.

MOLLY: Oh, who is that?

MALVOLIO: All in good time, my girl. Or not!

(MOLLY kicks the laundry basket out of sight.)

MOLLY: Oh, tell me everything!

MALVOLIO: I know for certain that Sir Toby, his Ave Mariah, and their foolish friend, Sir Andrew Dribbledick, are having financial hardship. Well, well! See what comes of wastrel living, imbibing every pleasure to be had. Their time is running out, and I propose to help them with the hourglass that counts their days! I have, I confess, slowly bought up Sir Toby's debts for some time now and have him nearly in my grasp. My spy confirms what I thought.

MOLLY: How so? Your grasp?

MALVOLIO: The particulars of my schemes are as yet not as finished as I would like. Suffice it to say they are roiling in my brain and will no doubt take perfect shape, and soon. I have heard a rumor that this same Sir Andrew intends to woo the Lady Teatsforth and win her hand and her fortune too. This would not be good for me.

MOLLY: No!

MALVOLIO: Precisely, Molly. It must not happen, not if I have anything to say about it. I do not know this Lady Teatsforth, but I will spoil that proposed marriage even as I find my own true marital bliss. As for "Sir Topas," one Lawyer Fester, and his underling, one Fabian, I hear that they are lying, shady lawyers now, taking on too many cases to do a decent job.

MOLLY: (innocently) Are there other kinds of lawyers?

MALVOLIO: Some. Lawyer Fester is, I believe, now working on a lawsuit brought by a man on the staff of an important household.

MOLLY: Whose?

MALVOLIO: I had best not name it just yet. The household is powerful and can do harm to those it wishes.

MOLLY: Is it . . . ?

MALVOLIO: I said I would not say. So press me not on this issue, please.

MOLLY: I want but to help you, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: Why would you not? However, the exact nature of the lawsuit that “Sir Topas,” the loathsome lawyer, will be involved with against this unnamed household has yet to be determined. Something tells me we won’t have far to dig to uncover all sorts of filth, greater filth than on any bridal garment hidden in a laundry basket, I would guess.

MOLLY: I’m sorry, Malvolio. I could not resist.

MALVOLIO: Apparently. It does not say much about your ability to control your emotions, my dear.

MOLLY: Be careful, dearest dear, with your emotions too. In reality, lawyers are no joke!

MALVOLIO: Fear not, Molly. I am on top of this at last. I have let my resentments reach such a point below freezing that when I serve the feast of my revenges it will be a cold, cold dish indeed. The best – or worst – I have left to last. The Lady Oblivia and her husband, Sebastian, are even now entertaining her husband’s twin sister, under circumstances that smack of potential adultery, and worse – best not spelled out for you, sweet, easily tempted Molly.

MOLLY: I had my ears cleared of wax yesterday and can hear quite perfectly now. So it *is* Lady Oblivia then!

MALVOLIO: Alas, I have spilled the name, so great is my despite! I must be more careful! But since I have said the name, let me add this: Besides the way she treats her servants, the deepest secret that my very own spy has uncovered is that the Lady Oblivia has a peculiar fascination with . . . girls dressed like boys! With this perverse information, I am sure that I will be able to seal her fate. For it is her that I hate the most, to tell the truth, resisting my considerable charms, as she did. The whoring bitch! So her husband, the Duke Porcino, and Viola, the boy manqué, I am afraid must all suffer along with her ladyship, though they, none of them, directly injured me.

MOLLY: Wouldst harm even those who have not injured you?

MALVOLIO: They are kinsmen of the dratted Lady Oblivia and so they must take what comes their way, and by ruining them I double or treble Oblivia’s grief!

MOLLY: Malvolio, have you considered that these sentiments in you are not seemly?

MALVOLIO: Not seemly? What nonsense! They are seemly if I find them so. And even if they are not, I will have it so! I checked my Bible yesternight and my index finger fell upon the pertinent passage – “revenge is mine, saith the Lord!”

MOLLY: But does that not mean it is not *our* job but God’s?

MALVOLIO: Oh, Molly, Molly, Molly, sweet, simple Molly, do not pretend to be able to interpret Scripture better than your betters!

MOLLY: Malvolio, I do not feel quite good about all this as it unfolds.

MALVOLIO: More nonsense, Molly. Listen for once!

MOLLY: It seems to me I listen constantly.

MALVOLIO: Now I need you to hie thyself to the Lady Oblivia's estate to verify these reports I have heard. She does not know you by sight, correct?

MOLLY: She does not, I am sure.

MALVOLIO: But she knows me. So you must infiltrate her household and get those damning particulars that I can use to bring them all to utter ruin.

MOLLY: To utter ruin?

MALVOLIO: No slaps on the wrist from yours truly, unless it is a slap with a scimitar.

MOLLY: 'Tis harsh, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: They should have thought of that when they locked me in that black hole and treated me like a mad man. Perhaps they turned me *into* a mad man. Hah! And now they must be hoist with their own petard.

MOLLY: Excuse me, Malvolio, but what is a "petard"?

MALVOLIO: A device for blowing up something, of course. They treated me like a man possessed, and I have, by Lord Gesu, become indeed a man possessed.

MOLLY: But how can I get inside that household? I am no spy!

MALVOLIO: I will see that you do. It has been arranged. I know someone who works there, a servant of low class. His name is John B. Simpleton. He will let you in. He is my paid spy.

MOLLY: And what am I to do there once inside?

MALVOLIO: I have taken pains to write up instructions for you, Molly mine. Perpend! (Produces the instructions from his clothing.) Read it o'er and memorize the schemes. Destroy the paper. You cannot carry these instructions with you to read there, lest they fall into the wrong hands. (Hands her the instructions.) You canst read, am I right?

MOLLY: Malvolio! Of course I can read.

MALVOLIO: Be not so self-righteous. Most of your sort can't. It is a fact.

MOLLY: I went to the sixth grade of the local grammar school. I was a maid only out of family necessity.

MALVOLIO: Yes, yes. You are almost an Aristotle then, my dear.

MOLLY: I would not go that far.

MALVOLIO: Nor would I. I spoke in jest, Molly. Did you not say you enjoy my sense of humor?

MOLLY: (aside) A different kind would be more kind.

MALVOLIO: And here is your main task. Besides whatever you overhear or happen to see, I want you to look as boyish as you can when and if you encounter Lady Oblivia.

MOLLY: Boyish?

MALVOLIO: Make her make a move, however loathsome. Catch her red-handed!

MOLLY: Malvolio, what are you asking of me?

MALVOLIO: We will bring her down with you the catalyst.

MOLLY: But, Malvolio, I don't think that I can –

MALVOLIO: Just bring her to the brink and perhaps get some token or some incriminating overture from her.

MOLLY: You are asking much, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: Great loves risk much, I have been told. I must be off now, to finalize my other schemes. I am most troubled with the Lawyer Fester and his clerk, how to finish them off. Ideal would be a plot that involves the whole caboodle of them, struck down at once, in horror and despair, from top to bottom. All this can happen with your help, my dear.

MOLLY: Oh, my!

MALVOLIO: Read and commit to memory. Can you do that? Perhaps you can squeeze it in between bridal fittings.

MOLLY: Yes, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: And thus we set my revenges in motion once and for all!  
(Exits.)

MOLLY: Ah me, I wish I did not wish to be married so intensely. At times I suspect that Malvolio may have more flaws than even I can love into virtues. And yet . . . (Retrieves the bridal veil from the laundry basket.) And yet like many, many before me, come tyranny or teardrop I cannot, cannot, cannot stop!  
(Puts on the veil again and begins to read the instructions given to her by Malvolio.)

(Exits.)

## SCENE 6

### Outside Malvolio's House

(Enter Antonio, dressed as a pirate, to Molly as she is leaving the house without the instructions, still in her bridal veil.)

ANTONIO: (loudly) Ho there, bride!

MOLLY: No, sir, I am no bride!

ANTONIO: (blocking her way) What's this then? (Touches the bridal veil.)

MOLLY: It is a friend's. I was seeing if it would fit her.

ANTONIO: Running in the street dressed like a bride and yet no bride, you say?

MOLLY: This is Delyria, sir!

ANTONIO: Then I am in the right place. I thought I was lost, but now I see I am not!

MOLLY: What would you, sir? Are you a pirate, as you appear to be?

ANTONIO: I *was* a pirate, some years ago. I am reformed and no longer touch rum or booty. Well, maybe just a little of each. When my parrot died, I told myself, Antonio, you must re-configure your life. And so I have, yet I retain my pirate's garb as a memory of my past. But can you tell me, bride, or what you will, whether there be one Sir Sebastian by the surname Pennysworth, that resides somewhere in these parts, or no?

MOLLY: Why do you inquire, if I may ask?

ANTONIO: I once knew this Sebastian, on a ship. There we kept company both day and night every moment for seven months.

MOLLY: Were the quarters on the ship so close-quartered as all that then?

ANTONIO: Not at all. It was a capacious ship, but I admired and loved this Sebastian so much – in a manly, pirate way, of course – that I could not bear to be separate from him for even a moment.

MOLLY: Surely not even in the head of the ship?

ANTONIO: Even in the head at times, if all be told.

MOLLY: I see.

ANTONIO: It was a manly, pirate company we kept, wench! What are you asperigating?

MOLLY: Asperigating?

ANTONIO: What imply you?

MOLLY: Nothing. Love is strange and takes many forms.

ANTONIO: What I want to know is if this Sebastian might, by chance, still dwell in this part of the world. I cannot get him out of my head. The last I saw him he was just wed to a certain Lady Bolivia, or



(Cont'd.)

Olivia, or maybe Oblivia. It broke my heart to see him marry this woman, who he scarcely knew, and who in truth loved his boyish sister, Viola, more. Would you have any word of him? Did you follow all that?

MOLLY: It so happens, sir, that I *do* know a little of the Lady Oblivia and her Sebastian.

ANTONIO: Could you lead me to him? I will recompense you heartily. (Takes out some coins.) For your trouble.

MOLLY: You mean them no harm, do you?

ANTONIO: What do you take me for?! I just want to reminisce about the old days.

MOLLY: In truth I may be going to their estate quite soon.

ANTONIO: The Heavens be praised! You can take me there? I have missed my Sebastian these last few years and want to hold him in my arms and rain kisses upon his lips and chin and eyelids, as once I did!

MOLLY: In a manly, pirate way.

ANTONIO: Indeed!

MOLLY: Who knows. Perhaps you may be of service to my future husband and myself, Antonio the Pirate. So come along and we shall see what we shall see. By the way, felt Sebastian for you as you did feel for him?

ANTONIO: I must admit that Sebastian never felt as much for me as I felt for him, though on cold winter nights he did, as Zeus is my witness, feel for me in the dark and laid his bosom on my bosom.

MOLLY/ANTONIO: (as one) In a manly, pirate way!

MOLLY: You have persuaded me, sir, to help you to re-find your Sebastian. Some voice in my ear tells me it cannot but bode well for all concerned.

ANTONIO: I thank you most sincerely. You have made my journey worthwhile, and now I pray that Zeus Himself will reward my long, long search. Away!

MOLLY: No doubt he will. And in a manly, pirate way!

(Exit together.)

## SCENE 7

A park.

(Malvolio is impatiently waiting in a public park.)

MALVOLIO: Blast! Where is that fool? Perhaps I should not have let a man so slight of brain as Simpleton undertake my spying for me, though it could not be helped, as he is the only one in Oblivia's household I could find to betray her – for my price. How dare he keep me waiting?!

(Enter John.)

JOHN: Excuse me, Sir Malvolio. I hurried as fast as I could. It took longer from the lawyer's office to here than I anticipated.

MALVOLIO: Hereafter, anticipate better!

JOHN: It won't happen again.

MALVOLIO: I should hope not. What did you learn from the arch-fiend lawyer Fester and his lackey?

JOHN: Good news! They *are* interested in my bringing a lawsuit against my lady, just as you had hoped. They seemed eager for all that is bad about her.

MALVOLIO: Good news indeed. Could you agree on what to sue her for?

JOHN: That is less good news.

MALVOLIO: How so?

JOHN: They are not positive the insults and abuse from the Lady Oblivia and her husband will suffice in a court of law to make an absolutely winning case.

MALVOLIO: Are they not hopeful whatsoever?

JOHN: They are partly hopeful.

MALVOLIO: Say it, man!

JOHN: They do feel that the greatest charge which they can bring, above everything, is that they once did call me a "niggard."

MALVOLIO: They did? And you are not even a stingy man. Thank God, for that word! We must ruin them in the courts in one way or the other! I will not be content until they are chained and howling in a dark pit, the way I was!

JOHN: Then you will be satisfied at last!

MALVOLIO: Oh, no, Simpleton, I will never be satisfied. However, I may be finished with 'em. Assure me the lawyer and his man had no inkling of any plot against *them* when you were there?

JOHN: I am fair sure they have no suspicion at all. They think me a simpleton. The more fool them! I am not as dumb as I seem.

MALVOLIO: As it may or may not prove. But let that go. They have not associated you with *me* in any way?

JOHN: Not in the slightest. They utterly swallowed my grievances against my lady, perchance because most of them are true.

MALVOLIO: I cannot stress enough that they must not know that you are set by me to bring them down. And paid well for it indeed!

JOHN: Paid well? Speaking of which, I could use another transfusion of . . .

MALVOLIO: Of my blood?! Do you think I am made of money?

JOHN: I think you rich enough from all the property foreclosures and real estate speculations you have engaged in since you left my lady's house.

MALVOLIO: Not your business, sir. But mine!

JOHN: You know I hate to bring these charges against my Lady Oblivia, whom I in fact much admire, even love, despite the names I am called, but for my onerous load of work and somewhat for the few ducats that you have tempted me withal.

MALVOLIO: You are tempting Fate if you do irritate me, Simpleton.

JOHN: I need something more, for the lawyer took a fee already and wants more as a retainer when next I visit him. (Holds out his hand.)

MALVOLIO: Hold not out your hand with such brazenness, for every eye to see! In matters subterfuge be more circumspect.

JOHN: As you wish, sir. (Turns, holds out his hand behind his back, as if being surreptitious.) How's this?

MALVOLIO: Oh, God save me! Here, take these and shut them out of sight! (Hands John some coins.)

JOHN: I thank ye, Sir Malvolio. (Begins to count the money.)

MALVOLIO: Are you a dunce for real or are you just pretending and are really sly underneath? You are counting it out *here*?!

JOHN: I do not want to have to come back to you if it is short.

MALVOLIO: Has it not crossed your mind that the Watch may be about, and, though idiots to a man, they still might spy our spy-work and raise an alarm?

JOHN: The Watch are not about. They are sleeping behind the hedge as usual. May I ask you, sir, if you have thought of requesting from the Lady Oblivia some monetary compensation for the way they treated you? Money can salve the most savage hearts. You could save yourself much plotting and the pitfalls of the law.

MALVOLIO: Did I ask for your opinion?

JOHN: No.

MALVOLIO: Perhaps there is a reason for that. First, they would probably not agree, seeing no fault in tormenting the mad, so commonplace it is. Second, no monetary recompense would be large enough to recompense *this* heart with lucre! Third, I would not take it, even if God Himself appeared and told me to. Let me quote no less than Signor Nicolo Machiavelli on the point: "He who believes that new benefits will cause great personages to forget old injuries is deceived." And, fourth, I lost in court before when I tried! I will not lose again!

JOHN: I know not who this Signor Match Your Belly may be, but he sounds to me to be hard-hearted to a fault.

MALVOLIO: I have read his *The Prince* many, many times and consider him my mentor, as much as any other is my mentor. A wise, if not a good, man! He is to me a kind of second Bible!

JOHN: Well, it matters not to John B. Simpleton. If you will not make amends in peace with your enemies, if can only hop to my advantage.(Pats the money.) I simply brought it up in your best interests, Sir Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: I'm sure you did. Let me correct you. I am not "sir." Not yet!

JOHN: I should read this Signor Match Your Belly. Do you think?

MALVOLIO: I think he would be too complicated for your taste.

JOHN: My taste may not be as simple as you think.

MALVOLIO: I came not to discuss books. We must set in motion the next episode of my "arrangements for my friends." (Tips his hat to an unseen passing person, in the audience.) Madame! (aside to John) There's Mrs. Skittleskattle, a notorious gossip.

JOHN: Her? (Points.)

MALVOLIO: (loud enough for the gossip to overhear) My friends need my assistance, as you know, and I thank God every day that I am capable of *helping* my dear friends!

JOHN: I think she has gone.

(MALVOLIO checks to be sure.)

MALVOLIO: Let us continue my plans. We now have Lawyer Fester and Fabian about to bring charges against the Lady Oblivia and her husband, who will be convicted, but who will no doubt bring a counter lawsuit against the lawyers, leading to their disbarment and early death, if all goes well. The law will devour all of them!

JOHN: Will they sue me too?

MALVOLIO: Hardly likely. You have no money. And if they do, you can plead mental incompetence, get off, and come and work for me.

JOHN: I am beginning to worry that I got involved in this.

MALVOLIO: Well, you did! And you are in up to your neck. No backing out now!

JOHN: (about Mrs. Skittleskattle) I think she's eavesdropping on us again.

MALVOLIO: (loud enough for the gossip to overhear) Well, it is time for you to deliver my best wishes and to check on their health. After all, Sir Toby and his wife and their dear friend Sir Andrew are very dear, dear friends of mine. Do let them know that I *think* about them constantly!

JOHN: Now she's gone again.

MALVOLIO: A plague on these public assignations! But I don't want you seen coming and going to and from my house. Find out everything you can and quickly! Everything!

JOHN: "I do understand you, sir!" (Winks ostentatiously.)

MALVOLIO: Set forth and get the lay of the land. Those three are facing financial ruin because of their vulgar, drunken ways. I – you and I – must see to it that they –

JOHN: (about the gossip) She's back!

MALVOLIO: (switching tone) – see to it that they do not succumb to penury or want, or, God forbid, to starvation!

JOHN: Now she's gone.

MALVOLIO: (about the gossip) She is a terrible snoop, even by my standards. She once reported a man for mewing like a cat. She said he was communing with the Devil. But soft! To conclude: You have first-hand knowledge of the shady tricks Fester and Fabian concoct to wrest money from their clients?

JOHN: Indeed! They wrested it from me.

MALVOLIO: All the better to finish them off. And Lady Oblivia still hankers after girls dressed like boys?

JOHN: Yes. She gave her sister-in-law some such clothes to wear even yesterday.

MALVOLIO: How disgusting! Now investigate Sir Toby and his minions to see how I can pull down their houses upon their heads and send them rummaging in rubbish heaps, to find their cakes and ale among the trash! Go, Simpleton! I will, as I said before, reimburse you more, for your spying when all is said and done. If we do not destroy these sinners with one thing, we will destroy them with another!

JOHN: If I do not triumph in these tasks, may I shame the family name of Simpleton!

(Exits.)

MALVOLIO: (looking after John) Something tells me I may not have hired the very best spy, being overly frugal. But I will repair any undue bumbling of his, for I am a veritable Signor Match Your Belly myself – both a fox to discern the snares *and* a lion to terrify the wolves!

(Exits.)

## SCENE 8

### A Public Square

(Enter Ave Mariah well dressed as Lady Teatsforth, with a face veil.)

TOBY: (entering, faking it) Is that you, Ave Mariah, or is it the *actual* Lady Teatsforth I see before me?!

AVE MARIAH: (unveiling herself) It is I. Yet I think no one, not even Sir Andrew, will mistake me for her ladyship.

TOBY: Be not of such little faith! It is not just the dress. It is even more so the bearing. Act like a true lady and all the world will believe you are one.

AVE MARIAH: It is not in my nature.

TOBY: Then defy Nature and be as grand as you can be! Come, impersonate the great ladies you have seen.

AVE MARIAH: It will not work, I tell you. (Tries walking like Lady Teatsforth, very grand, with her bosom thrust forward.)

TOBY: Not bad! The head held higher still. (Arranges her head.) The nose in the air.

AVE MARIAH: Like so? (Holds her nose very high in the air.) More royal than the royal?

TOBY: I like it! You are the very picture of aristocracy.

AVE MARIAH: But I cannot speak like a lady. My low-born tongue will betray me. Of that I'm sure.

TOBY: Not so. Speak not. Be disdainful and aloof. Sir Andrew will expect it.

AVE MARIAH: Then how am I to secure the "security" of his so-called love, if I am not to speak to him?

TOBY: Trouble not yourself with so much worry. I will tell him that you plan not to speak to him today, because of a debility with your voice.

AVE MARIAH: We should have rehearsed this more, Toby! If only you were not drunk so much!

(A noise off. Where else?!)

TOBY: Here comes Sir Andrew, as I told him to. Go off and then return again, and remember you *are* Lady *Teatsforth*! So live up to your name!

(Ave Mariah goes offstage.) (Enter Andrew.)

ANDREW: Toby! There you are! Methought you said upon the village green, back there.

TOBY: I said the village square, right here.

ANDREW: Village green.

TOBY: The village square! But no matter. We are here.

ANDREW: But where, pray tell, is the Lady *Teazforth*? (Says it carefully.) Is she not coming after all?

TOBY: Be stout of heart, Sir Andrew! Even now I have seen her and spoke with her.

(Enter Ave Mariah opposite, in disguise, acting very haughty.)

ANDREW: Oh, there she is! (Sighs.) A vision of exquisite loveliness!

TOBY: Perfection itself, if you like that type.

ANDREW: Shall I go to her now and make my suit? I have brought the “security” that you asked me to bring.  
(Shows a bag of coins.)

TOBY: Good man! It should finalize the marriage. (Pumps a fist into his palm.)

ANDREW: I still hope that she will not require this “security” of my love, but, rather, read it in my eyes, my sighs, or even in my thighs. (Parades his legs as though they are very tempting.)

TOBY: These are thighs indeed to win the Queen herself!

ANDREW: Think so? (Parades more.)

TOBY: You would seduce the cruelest caliph in the East, I doubt it not.

ANDREW: Then stop me not! I will to Lady *Teatsforth* and display my charms. (Starts toward Ave Mariah.)

TOBY: It's *Teazforth*! Wait, Sir Andrew! Wait!

ANDREW: Why?

TOBY: I told the lady not to speak with you today.

ANDREW: Not speak? Then why are we here?

TOBY: Her throat is sore from some swamp nearby. She fears that her rough voice will offend thee. I will serve as go-between for the two of you.

ANDREW: Our pimp?

TOBY: Watch your words, Sir Andrew Dribbledick! I am no pimp or bawd. I am a marriage broker, if you please. Others would charge sacks and sacks of gold for what I do, and yet I do it only out of kindness to my friend. (Pats Andrew on the shoulder.)

ANDREW: Tell the lady I am *warm* for her. I like the way she comports herself. But she seems somewhat indifferent to me.

(Toby signals Ave Mariah to thrust her bosom out more, using his own bosom to demonstrate. Ave Mariah is reluctant.)

TOBY: Hold, Sir Andrew. I will speak to her. (Goes to Ave Mariah.) We almost have him. Thrust your bosom out more! Like *so!* (Demonstrates.)

AVE MARIAH: Toby, I am being a lady, not a walker of the streets!

TOBY: You are under-playing the part, and will ruin all if you continue thus.

AVE MARIAH: Less is more.

TOBY: When it comes to bosoms, more is more! (Shows her how to thrust her bosom quickly so that Andrew doesn't see.) More!

AVE MARIAH: I do not want to be doing this at all! It is undignified, and we have gulled Sir Andrew enough!

TOBY: You must do this, Mariah – I mean, Lady *T*. Or we are ruined.

AVE MARIAH: Maybe *you* should have dressed up like her then!

TOBY: You have to do it just so – with plenty of bosom but also plenty of haughty arrogance!

AVE MARIAH: (Attempts being both bosomy and arrogant) I cannot do this.

ANDREW: Toby, a word with you.

TOBY: (going to Andrew) Yes, my friend, what troubles you?

ANDREW: This lady is very proud, is she not?

TOBY: She is! She is! Look at that nobility!

ANDREW: She has not looked my way even once.



TOBY: She says that you have brought out such modesty in her.

ANDREW: I have?

TOBY: She says that when you displayed your thighs she could not any longer look your way, because you inspired such lust in her! Even now she is fighting herself, hence the somewhat conflicted postures.

ANDREW: I completely understand. I feel a certain amount of lust myself when I gaze upon my thighs.

TOBY: But of course you do. (aside) God save me from these two!

ANDREW: Tell the lady that I fancy her and would her hand were mine.

TOBY: Hallelujah! Where is the “security” you brought?

ANDREW: She still wants the “security” even though she has seen my thighs?

TOBY: She says she affects your person more than Eve affected Adam, or Venus affected Adonis. The “security” would be but a kind of promise, a mere symbol of your love for her. Where is it?

ANDREW: I put it down somewhere, when displaying my thighs.

TOBY: Good Heavens, man, do you not know there are thieves about? Everywhere!

ANDREW: Oh, it’s over there. (Gets the money bag.) I have lost it not. But see if the lady still requires this “security.” I think it likely that this is no longer an issue between us. I ask that you ask her, Toby.

TOBY: Hold here. I will ask. (Goes to Ave Mariah, his knees hurting.) He does not want to surrender the “security.”

AVE MARIAH: If I were him, I wouldn’t either.

TOBY: He wants to think it’s because you lust for his thighs.

AVE MARIAH: What?!

TOBY: He needs a sign from you that you fancy him for himself. Wave to him.

AVE MARIAH: Toby!

TOBY: Wave! (She reluctantly waves.) (rushing back to Andrew) Did you see that, Andrew? She is desperate for you.

ANDREW: I thought as much. So no need for the “security” then!

TOBY: (rushing back to Ave Mariah) He needs another sign that you want the “security” handed forth!

AVE MARIAH: Oh, God!

TOBY: He must not be lost to us at this advanced stage!

AVE MARIAH: All right, but this is the last thing I will do. Shall I just yell “Give me the bag of gold!” at him?

TOBY: No! Do not give up the game! I told him you can’t speak today.

AVE MARIAH: What sign more can there be?

TOBY: You know better than I what men want.

AVE MARIAH: Tell him this: “Sir Andrew, your thighs remind me of two fine oak trees.”

TOBY: (going back to Andrew) “Your thighs remind me of two fine oak trees.”

ANDREW: Thank you, Toby. But what does *she* say?

TOBY: *I* don’t think your thighs are like two fine oak trees! She does!

ANDREW: Maybe she wants to give me a “security” then? It can help me tremendously with my debts.

TOBY: No, she doesn’t! You’re going to lose her if you don’t act.

ANDREW: Well, with my thighs, maybe I don’t have to settle for just some old Lady Teatsforth.

TOBY: (rushing back to Ave Mariah) More! He needs more! Do something!

AVE MARIAH: What?!

TOBY: Flip something at him!

AVE MARIAH: How about this? (She flips her hair provocatively toward Andrew.)

TOBY: Men like that?

AVE MARIAH: They can’t resist.

TOBY: He does seem to be responding.

(Andrew strokes his thighs and waist seductively.)

AVE MARIAH: I may collapse in laughter and spoil it all.

TOBY: Don’t you dare. He is almost ours. (rushing to Andrew) Did you see the way she flipped her hair? That was her sign that she wants the “security.”

ANDREW: That’s not what I saw. I saw a woman bewitched by my thighs. So where is *my* “security?” Yes, where indeed is mine?

(Toby, winded, runs back to Ave Mariah.)

TOBY: He demands a “security” from you. We must win this battle. Quick! Form a money bag with your hands.

AVE MARIAH: How subtle you are, Toby!

TOBY: Well, what then? I’m running out of options. And air!

AVE MARIAH: Let me try this. (Makes a girlish pout by pursing her lips.)

TOBY: What’s that? Are you sick?

AVE MARIAH: I’m signaling that I am favorably disposed toward him. (Makes another girlish pout, aimed directly at Andrew.)

TOBY: Let me see. (Rushes to Andrew.) Did you see her sign to you?

ANDREW: I certainly did. And I’m going to give her what she wants in return.

TOBY: You are? Oh, thank God!

ANDREW: Here goes. (Makes the same girlish pout, aimed toward Ave Mariah.)

TOBY: What the hell are you doing?

ANDREW: I’m giving her tit for tat.

TOBY: You are going to drive her away, you idiot! She moved her mouth like that because she is hungry, nothing more. Her family, though esteemed, is fallen on less prosperous times, and she would have of you a few coins to see her through until your wedding. (loud enough for Ave Mariah to hear) Hungry! She is *hungry*!

ANDREW: She wants my money more than me, I fear.

TOBY: Oh, no, friend Andrew, it is not that at all. You misread her overtures.

(They look at Ave Mariah, who is now miming rubbing her stomach.)

ANDREW: She’s telling me she’s pregnant?

TOBY: No! Never! Those gestures mean she is looking forward to sharing many meals with you over a long and happy married life. And living on her money!

ANDREW: Are you quite certain? What is she doing now?

(Ave Mariah is miming receiving a money bag, delighted, and then taking a gold coin from the bag, expressing exaggerated surprise and then thankfulness. She wiggles the imaginary coin in Andrew’s direction.)

ANDREW: She is not asking me to buy her, I hope!

TOBY: Andrew, I fear that you have grown cynical in your later years. The lady is merely showing her modest gratitude for your gift, or gifts, that in your magnanimity you might choose to bestow on her.

ANDREW: My what?

TOBY: Strike now. Or die an old bachelor!

ANDREW: She does seem a fair lady, from this distance, and one whose every movement, though odd, is a delight.

TOBY: Exactly!

ANDREW: And yet is there not one more sign that she might give that she wants me more than any “security” that I might give to her?

TOBY: Andrew!

ANDREW: But one!

TOBY: (hurries to Ave Mariah) He wants one more proof of your sincerity about him.

AVE MARIAH: I am out of proofs, Toby!

TOBY: I think we’ve worn him down. One more and we will have his gold. Be resolute!

AVE MARIAH: There is only one thing left I can think of.

TOBY: What’s that?

AVE MARIAH: Go to him and tell him that I wish to see him dance.

TOBY: Dance?

AVE MARIAH: Any dance at all. To decide once and for all if we are suited to be wed.

TOBY: He may not do it. I sense a growing reluctance on his part.

AVE MARIAH: His part is not reluctant, I warrant you, but he has grown cautious with so many gulls that we’ve subjected him to. Go! And tell him I will be dancing too, over here.

TOBY: I will see. (Goes to Andrew) The lady wants to see you dance.

ANDREW: She does? Which one? A Galliard? A Salterella?

TOBY: What you will. But dance like you mean it! (Signals Ave Mariah to begin her dance.) See her, Andrew. Is she not a catch, worth far more than a paltry bag of gold?

(Ave Mariah starts her female courtship by less than enthusiastically: flipping her hair, touching her breasts as if bored, striking coy, fake poses now and again.)

ANDREW: (watching her) *Wowzer!* Let me join in that. (Begins his courtship dance, bobbing his head like a pigeon, flapping his arms like wings, making bird noises.)

TOBY: What I must do to earn some cash! It's harder than if I actually worked for it!

(After several gyrations Ave Mariah and Andrew conclude their courtship dances.)

ANDREW: I think I'm in love!

AVE MARIAH: He's not that bad!

ANDREW: I plight this "security" as my promise of my eternal love! (Holds up the bag of coins toward her.)

TOBY: I'll carry it to her, if you like.

ANDREW: No, I want at least to touch her hand.

TOBY: Her hand?

ANDREW: (not sure) Her girdle?

TOBY: Come hither, milady. And take Sir Andrew's gift.

(Ave Mariah signals that she will do so.)

(Ave Mariah and Andrew come toward each other. She tries to look like the haughty Lady Teatsforth, and he sends a few remaining rituals from his pigeon courtship dance. They meet and he hands her the bag of gold. She extends her hand to him. He takes it, hesitates for a moment when he sees that it is rather coarse for a lady's hand. But then he kisses it anyway. Ave Mariah giggles.)

ANDREW: My one and only lady!

(Ave Mariah starts to speak, but Toby rushes over to prevent her.)

TOBY: Speak not, milady! Remember your voice is lost. We would not want it to be *lost* forever from inopportune use of it just now.

(Ave Mariah nods her head in agreement.)

ANDREW: Oh, happy day!

TOBY: Oh, happy day indeed! I will see the Lady T makes her way back to her estate in safety. Come, milady!

(He takes her by the hand. He tries to take the bag of gold from Ave Mariah, but she won't let go of it.)

AVE MARIAH: (*sotto voce*) I will carry it! It is the token of his love!

ANDREW: Goodbye, fair wife to be!

(Ave Mariah waves fetchingly at Andrew, also waving the bag of gold high.)

TOBY: Goodbye, dear Andrew! You have won the prize this time! Let us go now, the lady in one hand, the “security” in t’other!

(Exit with Ave Mariah waving to Andrew while struggling with Toby over the bag of gold.)

ANDREW: I thank you, Toby, for your kindness in bringing me to this place.  
For without you, I would still a lonely bachelor be! . . .  
Now I shall go forth and have a crumpet – and a pee!

(Exit all.)

## INTERMISSION

## ACT II

### SCENE 9

#### Outside the Home of the Lady Oblivia and Sebastian

(Enter Antonio, fast.)

ANTONIO: Hurry, mistress. Keep up! I thought you were leading the way!

(Enter Molly, removing her bridal veil and folding it up and putting it away.)

MOLLY: Sir, I go not to the estate of Sebastian and Oblivia with such a yearning as apparently you do. I hang back from an unwanted chore, whist you thrust headlong into what you want. . . . But we are now here.

ANTONIO: Are you certain this is the house? I see no signs upon its front.

MOLLY: Here no signs are ever put where one might be able to read them. That would be, to Delyrians, considered forward, pushing, and of the common horde.

ANTONIO: A strange custom, but like one I have seen in England. But as a foreigner, I will say no more, as long as I soon embrace my dear companion of yesteryear, the slender, handsome Sebastian of my dreams!

MOLLY: How many years has it been, sir, may I ask?

ANTONIO: I have lost count, but too many.

MOLLY: To be clear, you do mean Sebastian Pennysworth, the husband of Lady Oblivia?

ANTONIO: I do. Why?

MOLLY: I believe that he may have changed since last you saw him. I have only seen him from afar, but “slender” and “handsome” are not words that I would choose.

ANTONIO: *I* have not changed, so why should he?! Is not my form trim and dashing? (Shows off.) I maintain my physique by climbing in the standing rigging, up the main mast, sometimes up the mizzenmast and sometimes up the spanker-mast, which, as you probably know, is the aft-most mast of a fore-and-aft or, in other words, the gaff-rigged mast, both starboard and portside.

MOLLY: I knew that, of course! . . . You are not still a pirate, I hope!

ANTONIO: The anti-pirate laws have made it not safe to say that one is so. So I say these days that I am retired or that I work as an entrepreneur.

MOLLY: Entrepreneur? My word, it is a fancy term for an old business.

ANTONIO: But enough of nautical concerns, however fascinating. I would have my Sebastian in my arms again, as of yore.

MOLLY: Yes, I gather so. To kiss him everywhere.

ANTONIO: Upon his nose, his earlobes, and his tongue!

MOLLY: Even his tongue?

ANTONIO: As we do! In a manly, pirate way!

MOLLY: What you will! My own love is not something I can much boast about.

ANTONIO: Who is this love, may I ask?

MOLLY: A man born humorless and full of self, now prosperous from buying properties in distress, a man not settled in his soul as much as he would have others think, intent on settling scores with those who have wronged him in the past.

ANTONIO: And yet you love this man?

MOLLY: Sometimes.

ANTONIO: And sometimes not? I think I understand, and pity you.

MOLLY: Oh, do not pity me, Antonio. I will re-make my Malvolio once we are one!

ANTONIO: Oh, miss, you are too innocent of life's ways. Your intended will not change the way you want, but just become even more like himself as years wear on.

MOLLY: I cannot believe that, sir. It cannot be.

ANTONIO: It is my observation. Even when men walk the plank, they cannot be except as they have been. The brave man will plunge bravely to his death. The cringing coward will hang on to the plank until we stomp on his fingers with our boots to make him let go. (Demonstrates.)

MOLLY: Yet both are dead.

ANTONIO: 'Tis true. But a good death is better than a bad one!

MOLLY: I hope I never have to face such a choice.

ANTONIO: I do think I spy nobility in your demeanor, miss.

MOLLY: You are kind, sir, for all your bluster. Have you thought of what you will do if Sebastian has changed in ways you may not care for?

ANTONIO: I do not know. I do not claim to be a wise man, except about other people.

MOLLY: Well, let us carry on, no matter how wrong may be our private hopes. For we are merely human beings and must follow our lives where they will go!

(Enter John.)

JOHN: Molly Brightheart? Is that you?

MOLLY: How do you know my name?

JOHN: You know me not, but one I know knows you and has described you to me and me to you.

MOLLY: Would that person be Malvolio?

JOHN: I cannot divulge a confidence. But are you not a bride to be?

MOLLY: Are you not the indoor spy he mentioned to me?

ANTONIO: Such mystery!

JOHN: (to Antonio) What brings *you* here, sir?

MOLLY: This gentleman here and I were admiring the Lady Oblivia's exterior, her house, I mean.

JOHN: It is a very fine house, though the exterior is inferior to the interior.

MOLLY: We wouldst love to see the interior. Is it possible? (conspiratorially) Perhaps there are "tours" of her stately home?



JOHN: Perhaps for the right people.

ANTONIO: Do you imply, sir, that I am not the right people?

JOHN: I was told to expect this lady, but no one else.

ANTONIO: I am a former close companion of the man named Sebastian who resides within. I am sure he will remember me. (Shows off his muscles.) And would embrace me as before.

JOHN: Do you have some form of identification?

ANTONIO: Does not my attire inform you of who I am?

JOHN: If you are a pirate, do you think I would just let you in? But I try to see beneath the surface of things, sir.

MOLLY: What is your name?

JOHN: John.

MOLLY: It is good you are cautious, John. But I believe this gentleman is trustworthy. I wish to see every inch of this house, the gardens too. Are there gardens?

JOHN: Extensive ones, I assure you, miss.

MOLLY: Is now a good time?

JOHN: I will have to see. My lady is entertaining her husband's sister and her husband, a duke.

MOLLY: This is the very house that my fiancé was humiliated in. He even might want to buy it. Let us consider this an inspection of his and my future residence.

JOHN: I think it best if none within see us on the tour, all things considered. Don't you agree with me?

MOLLY: I agree!

JOHN: And you, sir?

ANTONIO: I must agree, it seems.

JOHN: I have a club within, in case you act like a pirate.

ANTONIO: Even pirates are not pirates all the time!

JOHN: Let me check, to see what's what, who's where. And more. Wait here. (Goes inside the door with a key.)

MOLLY: (to Antonio) Fortune is with us. He knows me. I can't wait to see the house that Malvolio plans for us to live in!

ANTONIO: In someone *else's* home, Molly?

MOLLY: 'Tis true; that's hard.

ANTONIO: So there is a bit of pirate in you too, Molly Brighthouse, I see.

MOLLY: Oh, I wonder if Malvolio is changing me more than I am changing him, and we're not even married yet!

ANTONIO: Be careful of what you wish for, lady.

MOLLY: And you as well, sir.

ANTONIO: I will not be satisfied with just a tour of the inside of this house. I will hold Sebastian in my arms again, raining deep kisses on –

MOLLY: Yes, yes, I know. On his –

ANTONIO: His elbows and his shins, that sweet place behind his knees. Even on his –

JOHN: (re-appearing, carrying a large club) It's safe! Come with me. But keep to whispers, I implore.

ANTONIO: Your club would insult me, sir, except that I take it as flattery of my manhood, which is like that of Thor!

(Molly beckons Antonio in. The three go inside the house.)

## SCENE 10

### The Office of Fester and Fabian

(Fabian is filing parchments, not easily, a visual joke.)

(Enter the lawyer Fester.)

FESTER: Good news, Fabian! A new client is coming in today.

FABIAN: The more the merrier – even if we never get them to court! With so much business, I think I will be made a partner in this firm soon.

FESTER: Labor not under an illusion, Fabian. I said no word about a partnership.

FABIAN: Fester, Fester, Fester, and Fabian! I like the ring of it.

FESTER: Too many F's, I think.

FABIAN: There can never be too many F's if Fabian is one of them.

FESTER: Gather materials that demonstrate our legal prowess with divorce. Our new client will be here anon.

FABIAN: Prowess with divorce?! We have never handled a divorce, have we? Not one.

FESTER: I know, but I could not refuse this case. It involves some with money born.

FABIAN: Who would that be?

FESTER: Let's just say it concerns a duke.

FABIAN: A duke!

FESTER: There will be mighty costs for a duke's divorce, it seems to me.

FABIAN: Mighty costs! Does his wife know that he wants a divorce?

FESTER: It is not the duke who wishes the divorce.

FABIAN: No? How delicious. Names! Names!

(The shop's bell rings.)

FESTER: You will know soon enough, Fabian. Soon enough. (Answers the door.)

(Viola enters, dressed as a boy.)

VIOLA: Mr. Fester?

FESTER: It is I. And who may I inquire might you be, boy?

FABIAN: Be off! We do not want any windows cleaned or our floors scrubbed! Be off!

VIOLA: I have come to discuss a delicate matter, sirs. I sent word before. I am Viola, the wife of Duke Porcino.

FESTER: Excuse us, Madame. We did not recognise you as you are.

FABIAN: Not at all. Stay! Stay! Would you care for a cuppa?

VIOLA: Actually I would. I have traveled quite a distance to be here today.

FESTER: I take it you have dressed like a boy to protect yourself from ruffians on the streets.

VIOLA: Not really. I am a house guest to a certain grand lady, and she, for reasons best known to her, insists that I wear boy's clothes whenever I am in her presence.

FESTER: How odd.

VIOLA: It is, sir, and yet I know not how to tell her no. I prefer women's wear, both day and night, at home, abroad, or anywhere. But, since I am her house guest, I try to humor her. As I was wearing these clothes anyway, I thought I would wear them here. They *are* convenient!

FABIAN: Especially when you piss!

FESTER: Fabian! Please! Watch your words. The Lady Viola is . . . well, a lady in every sense.

VIOLA: I must correct you, sir. I am wed to a duke, 'tis true, but I did *not* take his title when I joined my name to his. We had an arrangement – pre-nuptial – that protects him, Any children we might have had, of course, would have inherited his estate and title, according to the order of their birth. However . . .

FESTER: However?

VIOLA: However, we have had no children, nor are we likely to, I'd say.

FABIAN: And that's why you want to divorce the duke? He is to blame?

VIOLA: Who can say who is to blame for being childless, if indeed "blame" is the proper word to use? No, I wish to terminate my marriage because my husband does not love me, never has, and only agreed to marry me because . . . because everyone else was getting wed.

FESTER: I see. And do you think love really necessary in a marriage? There are other, larger considerations than mere personal happiness.

VIOLA: Marriage without love is like a church without grace!

FABIAN: Or a prison without prisoners!

FESTER: I find your sentiments intriguing, Madame, for in my observation there are many marriages without love. Lust tamed, property, and possibly offspring, yet rarely love. People seem to do quite well without it.

FABIAN: They may have had it once, this love, but like most things it died somewhere along the road of life. Like my wife and me, I warrant.

VIOLA: I am contented if others can be happy without love in their lives. I cannot. I have tried for years to make my duke care for me as I care for him. To no avail.

FESTER: Does he beat you?

VIOLA: Never.

FESTER: Not that it matters. We certainly couldn't use wife-beating as a reason for divorce. Does he "perform" his husbandly duties as he should?

VIOLA: I have no complaints in that regard.

FESTER: Too bad. We might be able to use impotence as a reason for divorce.

FABIAN: But it's tricky. Remember the butcher's wife who tried to get a divorce for that, and he had her charged as a witch who used spells upon his what you will.

FESTER: And she was hanged. I recall it now. Goody Hornsby was her name.

FABIAN: But childlessness! I am sure we could use that somehow. Are you positive that he gives his duty to you as he should? How often?

VIOLA: I do not want to go that route. It could be me at fault, with my boyish frame. I'd rather something else be used.

FESTER: What then? Let me ask you this. Is this divorce a new thought for you?

VIOLA: I have contemplated this for many, many nights and only just decided yesterday. My husband and I are staying in the vicinity, and I noticed your sign outside on our carriage ride past here. I took it as a –

FABIAN: – a sign?!

VIOLA: I took it as a message that I should inquire about a divorce whilst I am here. There are no lawyers for divorce near where I live.

FESTER: I tell you, frankly, divorce is a new component of the law. Very few have been granted up to now.

VIOLA: Henry VIII had one, I do believe.

FABIAN: Several, plus several even messier terminations. If I were a female, I wouldn't have married *him*, not with his record!

FESTER: Fabian, you are worth every penny I pay you.

FABIAN: You don't pay me much!

FESTER: Exactly my point!

VIOLA: I believe there have been a few other divorces as well.

FESTER: "What God has joined together let no man put asunder." It is difficult to overcome the Biblical injunction.

FABIAN: Unless you're a horny king with the Divine Right!

VIOLA: Still, you think perhaps you can do something in my case?

FESTER: No beatings, no denial of his marital duty, not childlessness. What ruse – I mean good argument – can we use to bring about your desired result?

FABIAN: You may just have to stay married, Madame.

VIOLA: May I offer one?

FESTER: Pray, do.

VIOLA: My husband is in love with one of higher rank than I. He loved her when I met him and fell head over heels for him. He still loves her, no matter what I say or do. I have devoted myself to his care and well-being, and yet he loves this other woman.

FESTER: So she has alienated his affection from you?

VIOLA: No, he has never had affection for me.

FABIAN: And this lady is?

VIOLA: I cannot say her name.

FESTER: Does this lady know that the duke loves her?

VIOLA: How could she not? He has taken every opportunity to throw himself at her, to compliment her, to moon and sigh when she is around his person. He barely looks at me, but he is all eyes for her.

FESTER: Are you sure there has been no more than this?

VIOLA: I don't think I am deluded on this point, sir.

FABIAN: True love never did run smooth!

FESTER: Fabian! (to Viola) Once more — are you absolutely positive that your husband has not been physically unfaithful to you with this anonymous lady?

VIOLA: She wants none of him and only tolerates him because he is her kinsman through me and through her husband, who is my twin brother. Is all this clear?

FESTER: If you can sort out all of this I'm sure that I will be able to as well. Are you quite certain your husband has not been unfaithful with *other* women beyond this one lady? The wife is often the last to know, you know. We'd have the case won pat if that were true.

VIOLA: He is obsessed with that one woman. And if he and she are having an affair, or ever had, or ever will, I will eat glass in a sandwich and a toad. That's how sure I am!

FESTER: No need, no need, Madame!

FABIAN: Do you think you could *get* him to commit adultery with somebody? Adultery is fool-proof in the law.

VIOLA: I do not want to hurt my husband, let's be clear. He is not an evil man, just not in love with me. I am sure he has never physically committed adultery. He cares only for food and this woman, and she cares naught for him.

FABIAN: But she does for thee?

VIOLA: I cannot speak for her. All I know, she definitely likes to see me dressed as a boy.

FABIAN: She always demands that you dress that way when you are around her?

VIOLA: She will hear of nothing else.

FESTER: We must investigate those two to see what's what.

FABIAN: And who's who!

FESTER: And who's what is where!

VIOLA: I must go now. I will be missed at my hosts'. This of course must remain completely hush hush.

FESTER: Tut! Tut! It goes without saying, Madame.

VIOLA: How much do I owe you?

FABIAN/FESTER: (together) Three ducats. / Four ducats.

VIOLA: Shall we compromise on three and a half ducats? (Takes some coins from a small purse.) Here, gentlemen.

FESTER: I thank you, young sir, from the bottom of my heart.

FABIAN: And mine too!

VIOLA: Good day. You will send me word of what you think the law will allow us in my case?

FESTER: Of course. (Starts to see her out.)

VIOLA: There is one more thing.

FESTER: Yes?

VIOLA: If I "succumbed" to this lady's advances, which I have not in any way so far done, would that constitute a reason for divorce?

FESTER: But would that not make *you* the adulterer?

FABIAN: Adulteress!

VIOLA: It would.

FESTER: Well then, you would be the offending party, and, if there were a divorce, you would get nothing.

FABIAN: Nothing! . . . Maybe a branding!

VIOLA: A branding, did you say?

FESTER: I am afraid the law and society do not look on adulteresses with anything but contempt – and punishments multiple, to boot.

VIOLA: So I have heard. Who has not? . . . And yet I think, if it is necessary to be free of this marriage in which I find myself, I should risk this contempt and these punishments, no matter what they are.

FESTER: Madame, it must be a terrible marriage indeed to risk so much.

VIOLA: Perhaps others can bear one like mine, or ones much worse, but I have decided that I can no longer bear my own. Good day.

FESTER: Good day, Madame.

FABIAN: (obnoxiously) God bless!

(Viola exits.)

FESTER: Our business grows and grows!

FABIAN: And may they hope to have their cases done before the end of this decade!

FESTER: Or the end of time!

FABIAN: Or Kingdom come!

FESTER: (rhyming) Or before our clients reach a sanitarium!

(Fester and Fabian look at each other, then “low five” one another about the case.)

## SCENE 11

### Oblivia and Sebastian’s House

(Enter Viola, dressed as a woman, to Porcino, her husband, as he is eating.)

PORCINO: You went out, Viola?

VIOLA: I did.

PORCINO: And where, may I ask? (Eats.)

VIOLA: I wandered about the estate.



PORCINO: Should not you have asked my permission before you did?

VIOLA: I forgot. And you were sleeping.

PORCINO: I tell you frankly I do not like your moods of late. You are not yourself, my dear, too downcast and mercurial. (Eats.)

VIOLA: Perhaps you will not have much longer to be fretted about it.

PORCINO: You mean you will mend your ways?

VIOLA: Something like that.

PORCINO: Our hostess tells me that you have been avoiding her.

VIOLA: Have I?

PORCINO: I do not see how you can neglect our hostess when she has been kind enough to invite us here and supply such delicious meals, like this.

VIOLA: I am sure you supply enough attention to our hostess for the both of us.

PORCINO: What means that? I do but render her her due.

VIOLA: I am sure that you think you do.

PORCINO: She is a most exquisite lady, don't you think?

VIOLA: Do you think she feels the same way about you – about us, I mean?

PORCINO: She does! She is a little shy with me, standoffish, and even abrupt. I attribute that to her modesty. I would not like a woman friend of mine to be too pert, too provocative.

VIOLA: Oblivia is hardly shy. Or modest.

PORCINO: You ought to spend more time with her, since we're here. She's complained to me that she can rarely find you, although she searches high and low.

VIOLA: It is a big house.

PORCINO: She and Sebastian may not invite us back if you do not do your part!

VIOLA: What a pity. However, I'm sure you won't mind coming here by yourself.

PORCINO: (eating) Naturally I would mind. We are a couple, Viola, in case you have forgot!

VIOLA: So it says on our marriage certificate. So said the reverend at the altar. It must be true.

PORCINO: Will you be joining us for lunch?

VIOLA: Is not what you are eating lunch?

PORCINO: This is my elevenses. It is so delicious I may have slipped over into the twelveses!  
(Laughs, eats.)

VIOLA: I am tired and think I will lie down.

PORCINO: So early in the day?

VIOLA: Yes, so early in the day. (Starts to exit.)

(Enter Oblivia.)

OBLIVIA: (seeing Viola) There you are! Where have you been, my little lost rogue?!

PORCINO: She was wandering over your lovely estate, Oblivia.

OBLIVIA: (ignoring him completely) You must tell me when you wander. I like to wander too. We could, together, wander yonder.

VIOLA: I was indisposed and sought some solace in myself.

OBLIVIA: You were out before breakfast, you sly scamp!

PORCINO: Yes! You don't know what you missed, my love. Boiled beans to satisfy a king! And toast with muckleberry jam!

VIOLA: Cold, no doubt.

PORCINO: And rashers of fat, greasy bacon! Yum, yum! You should have been here.

VIOLA: I saw the faces of the pigs the other day when I wandered near the barn. Do you know that the pigs have names?

PORCINO: Pigs? Names? (Snuffles inadvertently.) You can't be serious!

VIOLA: Bluebell and Mr. Porkers, and Lizzie Darling, and many more.

OBLIVIA: I told Scarborough not to give them names. It only makes it harder for him to slaughter them when the time comes.

VIOLA: I think I will eat no more things with faces or names.

PORCINO: Oh, Viola, you are too soft-hearted for your own good! You can't tell me a pig was not created to be eaten!

VIOLA: Excuse me, if you will. (Starts to leave.)

OBLIVIA: No, wait! I see that you have *donned* your women's weeds again. Would you not feel more comfortable, in your rambles on the grounds, if you wore other clothes? Like these. (Produces boy's trousers, shirt, and cap from a secret cache.) Pray, put them on!

VIOLA: Not now, please.

OBLIVIA: But they are so much easier to walk about in than dresses! There is no doubt.

VIOLA: Perhaps that's true. Still I prefer dresses.

OBLIVIA: Try these trousers on! (Holds them up.) I'll help you into them.

VIOLA: I really think not.

PORCINO: Viola, do not act rudely to our fair hostess here.

VIOLA: You cannot expect me to change my clothing in public!

OBLIVIA: I have a curtain you can use. (Produces a curtain.)

VIOLA: You have a secret curtain?

PORCINO: Very obliging of the lady. (Eats.)

OBLIVIA: I'll hold it for you, whilst you change. (Hands the boy's clothes to Viola and holds up the curtain with both hands.)

VIOLA: Is this not strange?

PORCINO: Dearest Oblivia merely wishes to see that you are properly clothed.

OBLIVIA: Indeed. (Shakes the curtain temptingly.)

VIOLA: I only just now got into my women's wear!

PORCINO: Come, wife! Your obligation as a house guest demands that you disrobe.

VIOLA: All right, husband, since you insist. Let me do what both of you would have.

PORCINO: I will not peek, if it is your modesty that hobbles you. (Covers one eye but keeps eating.)

OBLIVIA: Nor I neither. (Shakes the curtain again.)

VIOLA: You promise you will avert your eyes?

OBLIVIA: I would cover them like your Porcino here, but that I must use both hands to hold this curtain twixt us. (Leers toward Viola.)

VIOLA: You could *close* your eyes!

OBLIVIA: I will avert them.

VIOLA: May my change be quick. (Starts to change out of her dress into the boy's clothes.)  
(to Olivia) I thought you said you would avert your eyes.

OBLIVIA: I do! I do! (Averts her eyes from Viola, but as Viola changes clothes Olivia moves her eyes and head to watch.)

VIOLA: Lady Olivia, your gaze!

OBLIVIA: My eyes have not *veered* once!

PORCINO: Are you changed yet, Viola? Do hurry. I can hardly see my food, and that is the best part of eating!

VIOLA: These trousers are somewhat difficult.

OBLIVIA: Shall I help you with the buttons, Caesario?

PORCINO: (one eye still covered, looking down) Caesario! I remember that old name!

VIOLA: I do not! Nor do I answer to it anymore.

OBLIVIA: Do up your trouser buttons, Caesario!

VIOLA: Give me time, I pray. (Fiddles with the buttons.)

OBLIVIA: (ecstatic) Oh! Oh! Oh! Those buttons, those slim fingers on those buttons!

VIOLA: You like them, Madame?

OBLIVIA: Oh, yes! It fills me with . . . I know not what to call it.

VIOLA: A fuzzy thrill?

OBLIVIA: No, a hostess's deepest excitement in seeing her guest well *dressed*! Do you not feel it too?

VIOLA: I confess I do not feel a thing, perhaps inconvenience. But what you will!

OBLIVIA: Put on the cap! Put on the cap!

PORCINO: (eye covered, looking down) Put on the cap!

VIOLA: (rhyming) My transformation now is at last complete! As I put on the cap that "caps" this somewhat strange sartorial treat!

OBLIVIA: Oh, now you are perfection itself! The boy's cap was that final touch!

VIOLA: (teasing) Not the cap perhaps at a *tilt* instead? (Changes position of the cap.)

OBLIVIA: (more ecstatic) (aside) Oh! I fear that I shall faint!

VIOLA: (more teasing) Or perhaps like *so*? (Adjusts the cap a different sexy way.)

OBLIVIA: Methinks you do toy with me, dear boy.

VIOLA: No more than you with me, dear Madame.

OBLIVIA: (almost to herself) Do you think there might be something wrong with me?

VIOLA: I could not say, nor would I, being a guest.

OBLIVIA: (quietly) You are the only one I feel such feelings for.

VIOLA: (quietly) Then 'tis pity, on both sides, I fear.

OBLIVIA: I will not let this end. I cannot!

PORCINO: Is it all finished now?

OBLIVIA: Uncover your eyes, Porcino. Behold the revelation!

PORCINO: She's almost a boy, I swear she is.

VIOLA: I'd swear too – but that is not ladylike.

OBLIVIA: Wouldst thou swear, Caesario, in the figure of a boy?

VIOLA: No. I have no words.

OBLIVIA: Just one? And with avidity!

VIOLA: (strikes a male pose, but not forcefully) Damn!

OBLIVIA: (ecstatic) Oh! Such a bad boy you are, Caesario!

VIOLA: I think you're right. I am a very *bad* boy, a rotten boy. (meaning not convincing as a male)

PORCINO: You two have been my entertainment as I et! And so clean and wholesome!

VIOLA: A veritable dumb-show indeed.

PORCINO: But you spoke during it!

VIOLA: We did, and as we have never spoke before.

OBLIVIA: And we shall never speak again, unless our words inflate to deeds. Or I am not Lady Oblivia  
Lovecock of Delyria!

(Oblivia folds up the curtain, departs, then comes back and takes Viola's dress.)

VIOLA: I think I must cut all my obligations; they are taking their toll, overwhelmingly.

(Exits, away from Oblivia.)

PORCINO: How rude! Neither one of them said so much as an adieu to me!

(Exits, a third way.)

## SCENE 12

### Another Room in Oblivia and Sebastian's House

(Enter John B. Simpleton, Molly, and Antonio, stealthily.)

JOHN: (whispering) So far, so good. No one has banished us from this house, not yet.

MOLLY: (whispering) Would the owners really banish us?

JOHN: (whispering) If they suspected that you and Malvolio want to own it and move them out, they would.

MOLLY: Malvolio was so badly treated here, it has made him unforgiving.

JOHN: I have heard tales of it but did not witness it myself.

MOLLY: Perhaps living here will erase his cheerless past. New memories placed atop old ones may purge the  
old away.

JOHN: And make new memories for the Lady Oblivia that she will wish to purge away herself.

MOLLY: Do you not like your lady?

JOHN: It comes and goes.

MOLLY: Having been in service, I know what you mean.

JOHN: Kindly step this way. (whispering again) And keep your voices down.

ANTONIO: (loudly) I do not have to mute my voice inside this house. I am sure Sebastian, my bunk mate and  
my bosom friend of the past, will welcome me with pleading arms!

JOHN: Sebastian? Your bunk mate?

ANTONIO: And bosom friend! Ah, those were the days!

JOHN: But soft. Here comes my master even now.

(Enter Sebastian.)

SEBASTIAN: A plague on those gardeners out there! Those scum! They have left prickles on our roses.  
The hired help one gets these days! . . . What's here?

JOHN: Good day, Sir Sebastian. I was just showing these folks the house. They're friends of mine. I hope you do not mind.

SEBASTIAN: Of course I mind! It's my house. I don't want others trespassing on my lands, picking up knickknacks! Check them for valuables before they leave!

ANTONIO: (aside) I recognise that voice! It is Sebastian's, though I must say his outward appearance is not as I remember it. He is not the lad that once I knew!

SEBASTIAN: (recognising him) Antonio?

ANTONIO: It is I indeed!

SEBASTIAN: Antonio, you old pirate, you! You haven't changed a bit!

ANTONIO: (lying) Nor you, my friend.

SEBASTIAN: What brings you to these parts? How long has it been now?

ANTONIO: I was . . . I just . . . I . . .

SEBASTIAN: The cat has got his tongue.

MOLLY: I think he may just be overwhelmed to see you again.

ANTONIO: That's it!

SEBASTIAN: Give me a hug, Antonio!

ANTONIO: I will! . . . I must. (They embrace.)

JOHN: Good friends of old re-united. Is there a happier sight in all this world?

SEBASTIAN: Just how much have you told these two about our friendship, Antonio? Our past and casual friendship?

ANTONIO: I told them we were close.

SEBASTIAN: (close to Antonio) How close?

ANTONIO: I told them the truth. Of the kisses that I used to place upon your many body parts.

SEBASTIAN: Oh, God! Do not tell Olivia, my wife. She does not know much about my “pirate” days.

ANTONIO: No?

SEBASTIAN: I have omitted that period from any recitation of my life.

ANTONIO: But why? You were so kissable, my friend. Back then.

SEBASTIAN: That’s all behind me now. All behind me.

ANTONIO: I remember those days when some of the other pirates tried to get behind you!

SEBASTIAN: (lest the others hear too much) Please! Antonio!

ANTONIO: But I protected you from the others. Did I not?

SEBASTIAN: Did you?

ANTONIO: Do you not recall when I cut Mad Billy the Redhead to the quick when he advanced upon you?

SEBASTIAN: I’m afraid I’ve quite forgotten that.

ANTONIO: Or when Walter the Walleyed tied you to the plank and was about to have his way with you?

SEBASTIAN: Alas, I cannot recall a single thing.

ANTONIO: Not when I sliced him from the navel to the chaps and saved your butt?! Ah ha! How surprised he was, was Walter!

SEBASTIAN: Perhaps it was another Sebastian you did this for.

ANTONIO: It was you! I know it’s you, even though you have changed with time.

SEBASTIAN: Came you to see *me* at this time?

ANTONIO: I did!

SEBASTIAN: I was much slimmer then, I think.

ANTONIO: So true! But let me kiss you anyway. For old times’ sake. (Holds out his arms.)

SEBASTIAN: Perhaps we should hold off on these kisses.

ANTONIO: You are not as you were, yay almost unrecognisable; still, I will not let that deter me from affectionate display! (Holds out his arms again.)



SEBASTIAN: Are you certain it was not some other Sebastian or Percival or Clive?

ANTONIO: Some other Sebastian indeed! (aside) I do not want to kiss *him* either. But my heart is big. Like this house.

SEBASTIAN: I think these persons here might misunderstand our former selves and what we were to each other. To say nothing of my wife.

ANTONIO: We shared manly, pirate kisses, night and day, for months and months. Is there something wrong with that? Why do you cringe and lower your voice now?

SEBASTIAN: 'Twas a long time ago.

ANTONIO: (aside) I will be gone from here as soon as I can, and yet he owes me at least a kiss. (aloud) Come, Sebastian, companion of my bed roll at Tripoli, of my couch in our douche at the baths of Caracalla. A single kiss!

SEBASTIAN: (aside) I guess I must. Out of hospitality.

ANTONIO: (aside) He raises no appetite in me now. But courtesy is courtesy.

(They kiss, but reluctantly.)

ANTONIO: (aside) My duty's done.

SEBASTIAN: (aside) It does bring back *some* memories.

JOHN: (aside) Hmm, I would think Malvolio would find Sebastian's past of interest.

MOLLY: (aside) I must not tell Malvolio of what I suspect between these two. He would not rest until they were incarcerated in a jail. Though I love the man, I would not cater to his every whim, especially his most severe Puritan propensities.

(Enter Oblivia.)

OBLIVIA: What's this? Some festive occasion?

SEBASTIAN: Not so, dear wife, not so. An old, somewhat friend of mine, that's all.

ANTONIO: Charmed, Madame.

OBLIVIA: And your name, sir?

ANTONIO: (loudly) Antonio of Bulgaria!

OBLIVIA: The men there are known as "buggers," I've heard. What role played you with my husband – in his *life*, I mean?

ANTONIO: He was David to my Jonathan!

OBLIVIA: (suspicious) Really? How *was* your Jonathan?

ANTONIO: Splendid, Madame! Quite Biblical in the best Old Testament manner.

SEBASTIAN: A casual time, now gone, an interlude among men in war.

OBLIVIA: So many explanations for so casual a time! Well, well, perhaps there are other secrets to be found out in this household, if one can sniff them out.

SEBASTIAN: Why don't we go in to lunch? I heard Duke Porcino say that he was famished, and Viola will probably join us, in her boyish garb. We will prove a jolly band today, I think. Shall we go?

JOHN: Are we finished with the kisses then?

OBLIVIA: Kisses?

MOLLY: The manly, pirate kisses.

OBLIVIA: Pray tell, may I asked who kissed who?

JOHN: If I remember correctly, Sir Antonio kissed Sir Sebastian. Or was t'other way around?

OBLIVIA: How very intriguing. Is that how *you* remember it, Sebastian, husband dear?

SEBASTIAN: I remember naught! It's all a vague blur.

ANTONIO: I should be going. My ship hauls anchor soon.

MOLLY: Your ship?

OBLIVIA: Oh, no, my new friend, Antonio. I am sure there is so much more you can delight us with! Tales of strange sea adventures, whales, monsters, Sebastian's merry pranks upon the deep! Come, come, we must learn *all!*

SEBASTIAN: (aside) I fear I will never hear the end of this.

OBLIVIA: (to Molly) And you too, young woman, won't you join us for lunch?

MOLLY: Me? (hesitantly) I don't . . .

OBLIVIA: You are afraid that you are not properly *dressed* for so fine a place as this?

MOLLY: Is my dress too shabby? (Suddenly tries to act boyish.) 'Tis a bad dress for one like me! I suppose.

(Oblivia shows a special interest now in the boyish Molly.)

OBLIVIA: Do not worry. It just so happens that I have some boys' clothes you can wear.

MOLLY: Boys' clothes? Oh, have you sons then?

OBLIVIA: No, no sons, and if I did they would not be of your age. I am not old enough for that.

MOLLY: I thought you might have been.

OBLIVIA: Look I that *aged*?

MOLLY: Not at all. (lying) You look but seventeen or so yourself.

OBLIVIA: I do admit to eighteen, if severely *pushed*.

ANTONIO: But you're really . . . ?

OBLIVIA: No more of age! It is a gruesome subject, is it not?

MOLLY: It comes to all, Madame, I do believe. There is no shame in it.

OBLIVIA: But it will not come to *me*! (Produces another set of boys' clothes, as if she has then hidden everywhere.) Here, put these on, and I will drink in your youth, a veritable fountain of it!

SEBASTIAN: My love, surely we can't wait for the young woman to put on these clothes. Our guests must be fed. (Starts off.)

OBLIVIA: No one will be fed until she puts them on. Stop, all!

(All stop abruptly.)

SEBASTIAN: Dearest wife, perhaps this girl does not care for boyish togs –

OBLIVIA: Don't be ridiculous! Who would not want to wear such clothes? I had them specially made for occasions just like this.

SEBASTIAN: They may not fit, my dear.

ANTONIO: They look like the clothes you used to wear, Sebastian, when you and I were together in our pirate past.

SEBASTIAN: I think not.

OBLIVIA: Sebastian grows more interesting each day I know him.

SEBASTIAN: Antonio is a bit clouded in his memories.

OBLIVIA: I am beginning to believe others may be more clouded. (to Molly) Hurry, girl! Your clothes await you! Let the parable of the wedding guest be your instruction. The guest was invited to the wedding feast but came in the wrong clothing and so was thrown out, where there was darkness and gnashing of teeth!

MOLLY: Well, I wouldn't want to go against the Bible. (Begins to put on the boyish clothing.)

OBLIVIA: I love such piety! As for you, Sebastian, you would deny me and my clothing folly, and yet you, it seems, have had far more folly in your past than I!

SEBASTIAN: Dear Oblivia, I think this may not be the time, in front of others here, to dwell upon the boring, distant past.

ANTONIO: Oh, you were never boring, Sebastian, my lad, at least not then.

OBLIVIA: My questions grow within my skull, a very tumor of numerous inquiries!

MOLLY: I'm almost done, except for – (Jumps up and down to tighten her tights.)

SEBASTIAN: I apologise for the inconvenience of everyone because of my dear wife's . . . idiosyncrasy, shall we say?

OBLIVIA: Apologies are for peasants! (to Molly) Oh, it is well done! Your name again?

MOLLY: Molly Brightheart.

OBLIVIA: You are so very boyish now, which is more than one can be said of my Sebastian. I must find a boy's name to call you! Maybe Rodrigo?

ANTONIO: She's still a *girl!*

OBLIVIA: I know! Who would have it any other way?

ANTONIO: I like a lad who is in fact a lad.

(Enter Porcino.)

PORCINO: Are we to have no lunch today, for God's sake!?

SEBASTIAN: We were just about to go there.

(Enter Viola, still dressed as a boy.)

OBLIVIA: How glorious! A *pair!* (Puts Molly next to Viola.) Oh, yes!

VIOLA: I am somewhat tired of having to live my life always as a twin.

SEBASTIAN: Sister dear, you know my wife. There is no denying her.

OBLIVIA: But everyone loves twins!

PORCINO: I'm hungry. Can we go?

OBLIVIA: Simpleton, run on ahead. Why have you not already done so, anticipating my needs?! Tell cook we have two more today for lunch.

SEBASTIAN: Go, obey your lady.

JOHN: Yes, Sir Sebastian. (He runs out.)

OBLIVIA: Are we all dressed up in our best finery at last? Or what passes for finery.

SEBASTIAN: I'm getting hungry myself. In a manly, pirate way!

OBLIVIA: Lead on, Sebastian, in a manly, pirate way!

MOLLY: (to Viola) Shall we? (Offers her arm to her "twin.")

VIOLA: I guess. (Takes Molly's arm.)

OBLIVIA: (behind the "twins") Oh my, what a vision, even for the blind!

PORCINO: Come, take my arm, Oblivia. I will lead you to our feast.

OBLIVIA: I must decline, dear Duke. But go on, go on! I follow from behind, like an observant mother goose with her ducklings! (She gestures for all to walk ahead of her.)

SEBASTIAN: Don't you mean goslings, dear wife?

PORCINO: Are we going to have goose?

(All exit except Oblivia.)

OBLIVIA: We'll see who's the goose, and whose goose is cooked! When the truth comes out at last – about my dear husband's so-called pirate past!

(Exit.)

### SCENE 13

#### Another Room in Oblivia and Sebastian's House

(Enter Oblivia, Sebastian, Porcino, Viola, Molly, and Antonio, after lunch.)

PORCINO: What a splendid lunch! Seven courses, each a delight! And that goose in gooseberry sauce!  
(Smacks lips.)

SEBASTIAN: We thank you, sir.

OBLIVIA: 'Twas our delight to serve you, Duke. (aside) Though you barely left any food for the rest of us!

ANTONIO: I too thank you, Lady Oblivia, for your hospitality, even if Sebastian here was rather reticent throughout.

OBLIVIA: No, I thank *you*, sir, for giving me such insight into those old pirate days. I had no idea my husband had enjoyed so many rollicking times in your company.

SEBASTIAN: Not that many. Scarcely any, if we truly count.

OBLIVIA: How many times does it take to make a pirate a full-blown pirate, hmm?

ANTONIO: Well, now I must be gone! My ship sails at sunset from the harbor yon.

MOLLY: You are not retired then?

ANTONIO: I am, yet sometimes I long for the jolly swagger of my shipmates and I sign on again for a tour or two.

MOLLY: I suppose one can't very easily admit to being a pirate, can one?

ANTONIO: I look forward to the day when piracy is legal!

MOLLY: I have heard that it can be very harsh when aboard a ship. 'Tis true?

ANTONIO: 'Tis somewhat true, young lass. The beatings and the savagery, the life in chains for the smallest infraction! It is not the life for all. Yet I enjoy it, I must say, from time to time, with the right crew.

OBLIVIA: Perhaps you, Sebastian, should sign on for a tour with Antonio. It might do you a world of good.

SEBASTIAN: You *will* keep harping on this topic, my dear, won't you?!

OBLIVIA: Only until the day you die!

SEBASTIAN: It seems strange to me that my pirate days seem to fascinate and yet offend you so mightily, and yet you have your peculiarities, shall we say, with Molly here and Viola, the latest two of more than I can count.

OBLIVIA: What might those be? I see no "peculiarities" other than your own.

SEBASTIAN: Is it not amazing how some can find fault, or vice, in others that they fail to recognise in themselves?

ANTONIO: It has been a marvel to be in this house, but now I must away. Farewell! Farewell all!

OBLIVIA: No goodbye kiss? Come, Sebastian, give Antonio a kiss. I would like to see how you two used to do it. Won't you humor me?

SEBASTIAN: I will not humor you! No more of this!

ANTONIO: (aside) I cannot escape their domestic bliss! (aloud) I go! I sail! I kiss you all!  
(Throws general kisses.)

MOLLY: We all feel them.

ALL: (except Antonio) In a manly, pirate way!

MOLLY: I too must go. I will be missed by my fiancé.

OBLIVIA: A fiancé? And who is that, may I ask?

MOLLY: I am not at liberty to say his name.

OBLIVIA: His rank then? Is it higher than mine own?

(Enter John.)

JOHN: Excuse me, milady. Will there be anything else before I scrub the dishes?

OBLIVIA: I don't know. Let me think.

MOLLY: I thank you for the lovely tour and luncheon. You were kind to take in a wandering stray. Perhaps your servant can show me out?

OBLIVIA: (to Molly) Oh, do not go so soon!

MOLLY: Ma'am, I must.

OBLIVIA: But I have not seen you two, the twin boys, engage in after-luncheon games.

VIOLA: What games, dear coz? I think there can be no games.

MOLLY: Indeed, no games, for I –

OBLIVIA: Just innocent merriment, no more. Not like some I could name. Who knows what games he played?

SEBASTIAN: She'll have you standing on your heads, with your legs spread wide, as she sings naughty catches twixt them, if memory serves.

VIOLA / MOLLY: What!?

(John backs out.)

OBLIVIA: Pay my husband no mind, just as I do, you two. He has no mind for Art.

SEBASTIAN: You call it Art? Singing between boyish girls' uplifted legs? Art, you say?

OBLIVIA: It is new! As usual, I am before my time!

MOLLY: I really think that I must go now.

PORCINO: And I too. I feel a nap settling upon my lids. It is this walking everywhere that tires me so! . . . Till supertime! (Exits.)

MOLLY: I go out this way, if that be right? (Starts to leave.)

SEBASTIAN: I shall show you the way out of our estate. This way, young “fellow,” or what you will.

MOLLY: I will send these clothes back to you when I am home again.

OBLIVIA: Keep them. I have more.

SEBASTIAN: She does. You would not believe.

MOLLY: And my dress is . . . ?

(Re-enter John with Molly’s dress.)

JOHN: I took the liberty of bringing it, Miss. (Hands it to her.)

MOLLY: Thank you so very much.

OBLIVIA: You don’t have to thank servants! Go! No one’s forcing you! And, Simpleton, you go scrub the dishes!

(John bows and exits.)

SEBASTIAN: Come, lass, or lad. I’ll lead you to the escape route I can tell you so dearly wish.

(Sebastian starts to lead Molly off.)

MOLLY: Adieu!

(Oblivia is pissed and does not answer her. The others acknowledge her leaving.)

(Sebastian and Molly exit.)

(Oblivia and Viola are now alone.)

VIOLA: I must likewise take my leave, a stroll perhaps to digest that perfect lunch, or to read a bit in the shade – by myself.

OBLIVIA: Stay a moment, dear Caesario. A word with you.

VIOLA: You are persistent, Madame, in your hospitality. I’ll give you that.

OBLIVIA: (boldly) Is that all you are prepared to give, my dear? (Grabs Viola’s hand.)



VIOLA: What more can I give?

OBLIVIA: If Sebastian can have his pirate, why not I? I'm sure you know what I mean. Enough of this toying with our hearts. Your hand is hot and moist!

VIOLA: I do not, Madame, know what you mean.

OBLIVIA: Call me not "Madame." It is too cold, too formal, when the hand I hold is ripe with heat!

VIOLA: Perhaps it is your own heat you feel, Madame.

OBLIVIA: Oblivia! (Kisses Viola's hand passionately.) Call me Oblivia!

(Enter John as if to ask a question but backs out immediately. He sees the kiss, but the two women don't see him.)

VIOLA: I can barely find my words.

OBLIVIA: What would they be, those words, if you could find them?

VIOLA: I thought you fancied that girl who just left, Rodrigo.

OBLIVIA: Out of sight, out of mind. But *you* are always in my mind!

VIOLA: I confess your hands are not repugnant to my touch.

OBLIVIA: Say on, fair lad!

VIOLA: I wish you would not address me so. I am a woman under this.

OBLIVIA: *Oh*, how well I know!

VIOLA: Underneath these boyish clothes there is no boy nor anything of a boy's, or a man's.

OBLIVIA: It is my fondest dream!

VIOLA: But your last name! You are Lady Lovecock, are you not? I thought –

OBLIVIA: It is my family name. You can't help your family name. I did not name myself!

(Enter John to see what is going on.)

OBLIVIA: I need no cock to feel this love!

(John backs out quickly.)

VIOLA: Your husband will hear us, dearest coz!

OBLIVIA: I care not what he hears, or sees. I have long suspected there was something in his past, and now I know what it was! So Sebastian's disapproval holds no reproof for me. Come to my private quarters. . . . I have some after-luncheon mints!

VIOLA: Oh, no, not those!

OBLIVIA: No one will see us there. Sebastian has not visited me there for ages.

VIOLA: Are you sure?

OBLIVIA: He no longer bothers me in that way. Thank God! But I'll be *damned* if he will have his "pirate" ways behind my back! I beseech you, Caesario or Viola, or what you will, to meet me in my rooms, just steps away down that corridor and to the left. (Points.) Won't you consent?

VIOLA: It has more than crossed my mind, I do admit.

OBLIVIA: Let that be prelude to yet more. (Kisses Viola on the lips.)

VIOLA: (about the kiss) Oh dear, it is not that bad!

OBLIVIA: I go! I will expect you. Let me freshen up a bit. Come in five minutes, down that corridor and to the *left*. Adieu till then!

(Exits.)

VIOLA: Oh my, I do not know what to do. And yet I must decide. Stay with my Porcino and sag under the weight of his loveless ice? Or adultery – and as a boy – with penury and branding as the price?

## BLACKOUT

### SCENE 14

#### Sir Toby and Ave Mariah's House

(Enter Ave Mariah dressed as Lady Teatsforth in a different dress, without a veil.)

AVE MARIAH: How impeccable I look! The real Lady T has not a jot of worth on me! (Strikes grand poses.)

(Enter Toby, drunk, with two flagons.)

TOBY: Ave Mariah? What are you doing here looking like that when Sir Andrew is in the house?!

AVE MARIAH: He won't come into our bedroom.

TOBY: Good God, find some sense, woman! Even he might figure out what's going on!

AVE MARIAH: I see that you have found more alcohol.

TOBY: You bet your fancy petticoats I have!

AVE MARIAH: You're going to drink away all the gold we gulled from Sir Andrew by next week, or before, if you don't watch yourself.

TOBY: No, I won't. And you know why?

AVE MARIAH: I don't!

TOBY: Because I have spent it all already!

AVE MARIAH: You haven't!

TOBY: Have!

AVE MARIAH: It has only been two days!

TOBY: Cakes and ale aren't as cheap as once they were. And you should talk! How many new gowns is that for you?

AVE MARIAH: I earned the money as much as you, and I can spend it just as fast.

TOBY: In faith, I've always said you were my match!

AVE MARIAH: I had planned to have, besides new gowns, a weekend at a chateau in France. But now I can't go!

TOBY: And I will be out of drink before the day is done. Oh, Ave Mariah, what is to become of us?

AVE MARIAH: Indeed I know not, my chuck. The two of us can't seem to hold tuppence together for more than a minute at the most.

TOBY: And Andrew is beginning to make loud groans because the Lady T, who he thought he secured with his "security," has proven elusive to his grasp. But he can't find you here, in our home, only in a public place!

ANDREW: (upon a balcony) Where is my bride?! I must have my bride! You promised me a bride!

AVE MARIAH: Something tells me he wants his bride.

TOBY: What are we going to do? I don't think we can fob him off one more time with false promises and non-existent lady friends.

AVE MARIAH: Do you think he can see me in here, that he's coming over? Should I cover myself? Can't you find some excuse, or some quarrel, and send him packing from this place?

TOBY: I could, but we will need his remaining bags of gold soon enough. Remove that gown! Be Ave Mariah!

(Ave Mariah is torn between taking the gown off and put something else over it.)

ANDREW: (from a different location nearer) This is a house of charlatans and thieves! A curse upon you both!

TOBY: (to Ave Mariah) I think he speaks of you, my dear.

AVE MARIAH: That's odd. I thought I heard him speak *your* middle name, dearest Toby.

ANDREW: (at a different location, nearer still) I was promised Lady *Teats*forth! Where is she? Where is that delicious wench?

TOBY: He can't seem to remember that the bloody "t" in her name is silent!

ANDREW: (very near) I will silence more than "t's" around this house! I want the lady now! I want that woman now! . . . I want any woman now!

TOBY: I believe he just called your name, Ave Mariah.

AVE MARIAH: I heard nothing!

TOBY: Sneak outside and come back as you are, in your Lady T finery. Put on your veil and go and "visit" Sir Andrew where he shouts. He won't know it is you, in his present state, nor, I warrant you, should it take that long. Maybe you could rub his thighs and mime that you find them delectable. He is so vain he will pop his champagne immediately, and you will have no more to do than that. What's a rubbed thigh to you?

AVE MARIAH: Hah! It won't be champagne, I'm sure of that!

TOBY: It will buy us some time, Ave Mariah mine.

AVE MARIAH: Andrew is an animal despite his "Sir." I cannot bring myself to lift one hand to touch one thigh.

TOBY: Then just brush against him with a naughty wink. I promise he will "bring forth" his all in three seconds flat. Especially if you say, "I have sighs for your thighs!"

ANDREW: (just outside, groaning, horny) I want who I want when I want it!

AVE MARIAH: Good God! The man has gone mad. No! No! I can't do this!

ANDREW: If I don't get satisfaction by tonight, I am going to set fire to this house and burn it to the ground!

TOBY: Did you hear that, Ave Mariah?

AVE MARIAH: We barely own this house anyway! What's the difference if it burns?

ANDREW: (banging on their door) I'm coming for my hosts! Where are my hosts? Hosts, my arse! My leeches is what they are!

TOBY: (to Ave Mariah) A change of plan! Quickly put away those lady weeds and be yourself for now.

(Ave Mariah hurriedly removes her Lady Teatsforth gown and puts on her everyday, less-elegant clothes. She finishes just as Sir Andrew enters.)

ANDREW: Ah, there you two be!

TOBY: Or not to be!

ANDREW: But it is too late to flee. From me. . . . Said he! (seeing the gown Ave Mariah is folding) What's that gown that you hold? Is it not like the one I saw the haughty Lady T wear? Only in a different hue?

AVE MARIAH: It is, Sir Andrew. Your eye is sharp.

ANDREW: Like my brain!

AVE MARIAH: Indeed, like your brain.

ANDREW: I always get right to the point.

AVE MARIAH: Your brain indeed comes to a point – most quickly.

ANDREW: What is that gown, I say? Is the Lady *Teaz*forth here, at last? And undressed?

TOBY: She *is* upon the premises, Sir Andrew.

AVE MARIAH: Yes, in seclusion, in another room.

TOBY: 'Tis true! A distant room!

ANDREW: We have but four rooms in this house. How distant can the lady be?

TOBY: She is both near . . . and far.

AVE MARIAH: A veritable sprite she is, hither and thither in a moment, now here, now gone.

ANDREW: Is this some riddle?

TOBY: That's it! You have seen the very essence of that most magical of ladies, a lady of your dreams – and also in a room somewhere.

ANDREW: Which room is that? (Starts to go off.)

TOBY: Oh, you must not seek her out, Sir Andrew. You must not that!

ANDREW: And why not? Methinks I have waited long enough.

AVE MARIAH: The lady is indisposed.

ANDREW: What's that to one such as I, a man of parts who waits and waits and waits!?

AVE MARIAH: Can't you wait a little more? Sir Andrew, what's a little more?

ANDREW: No! I have waited till I'm blue in the . . . face. (He means in the balls.) I will go to her and fornicate my love to her.

TOBY: I think you mean "dedicate."

ANDREW: I mean "fornicate"! I have put out my "security," my bag of gold, and I will have my prize! (Starts to leave again to search for his lady.)

AVE MARIAH: Then you leave me no option, Andrew dear, but to tell you in what way the lady is indisposed.

TOBY: Yes, tell us. I am all ears too.

AVE MARIAH: (hesitating) Ah . . . the lady is . . . gaseous, one might say.

ANDREW: What is gas to one such as I?

AVE MARIAH: And she is bleeding too.

ANDREW: She has been injured in a duel?

AVE MARIAH: No, Sir Andrew, it is her time of the month.

ANDREW: Oh, that! I can overlook it, if *she* can.

TOBY: A stalwart gentleman! A man of utmost strength!

AVE MARIAH: (to Toby) You're not helping. (to Andrew) And there's even more.

ANDREW: More than gas and bleeding? What, pray tell?

AVE MARIAH: The Lady T is likewise – how shall I gently phrase it?

ANDREW: Fertile?

TOBY: Un-bathed?

ANDREW: Full of lice?

AVE MARIAH: Yes. All of those. How did you know?

ANDREW: I care not! I will have her, or my "security" returned! (Starts to leave again.)

TOBY: (pleading) Ave Mariah!

AVE MARIAH: There *is* one more thing that may dissuade you yet from your intended course with that lady.

ANDREW: No gas, no bleeding, no pregnancy, no un-bathed flesh, no head of lice, nay, not even *nether* lice, can stay me from my appointed and sacred course!

AVE MARIAH: She is also leaking.

TOBY: (crinkling his nose) *Eww!*

ANDREW: (stopping) Did you say “leaking”?

AVE MARIAH: I did.

ANDREW: Do you mean . . . ? (Points to his bottom.)

AVE MARIAH: I do.

TOBY: (under his breath) Thank you, Ave Mariah *Fartte!*

ANDREW: (thinking about it) Well . . . *how* leaky is she?

TOBY: (a warning) *Andrew! Please!*

ANDREW: Just a thought!

AVE MARIAH: *Eww!*

ANDREW: You have convinced me, Ave Mariah, to desist, for now.

AVE MARIAH: God bless you, Sir Andrew Dribbledick! You are a god!

ANDREW: I am.

TOBY: So you will not seek out the hidden lady in her room?

ANDREW: How long think you her situation will be as it now is?

AVE MARIAH: It is a very, very, very bad case she has.

ANDREW: *How* bad?

TOBY: Andrew, do you need a *diagram*?

ANDREW: I will respect the lady’s indisposition, if I must. But trust me, I will not be fobbed off again forever. Of that you can be sure! I paid a ”security”!

TOBY: Come with me, Sir Andrew. I will lend you some periodicals of mine. They may serve to divert you for this time.

ANDREW: I have seen your periodicals, Sir Toby, and they are not enough. I tell you, plainly, not enough are they!

TOBY: There is one you haven't seen. It just arrived by post. It's called "Royalty in the Stocks." It is very special, if you catch my drift.

ANDREW: "Royalty in the Stocks"? Well, perhaps just a glance, to tide me over until Lady "T" is herself again.

TOBY: Yes, dear friend, come this way. The periodical awaits! Ave Mariah will tidy up in here, I think. Won't you?

AVE MARIAH: I will!

(TOBY and ANDREW bump into each other as they try to exit.)

TOBY / ANDREW: Excuse you!

(The two exit.)

AVE MARIAH: (taking the gown) Come Lady T, off you go! For now you must not show yourself to him. Pardon me for libeling your name. The lies I must invent to stay alive are my increasing shame!

(Exits.)

## SCENE 15

### Malvolio's House

(Malvolio is seated at a writing desk with a quill, ink pot, and paper, engaged in his financial affairs.)

MALVOLIO: (about some debt owed him) Aha! Take that! (Writes something.)

(Enter John B. Simpleton.)

JOHN: Knock, knock, sir!

MALVOLIO: (looking up but not responding)

JOHN: Knock, knock, sir.

MALVOLIO: I heard you. Why do you say what you are saying, Simpleton?

JOHN: Because I did not knock outside before I entered. I did not want to frighten you.

MALVOLIO: You could not frighten me if you tried. What do you want?



JOHN: I managed to sneak away from my lady's house, sir. I bring information, information that you seek, information that you sought me to seek, information that –

MALVOLIO: For God's sake, out with it! What information – new information – do you have?

JOHN: Might you find it in your heart to find a coin or two for a poor, would-be gentleman, trying to make his – ?

MALVOLIO: Who, you? No.

JOHN: Not a single coin? I did walk some distance to bring you what I have. I also eavesdropped.

MALVOLIO: I gave you money before.

JOHN: I know, sir, but it was so little, and so long ago.

MALVOLIO: There will be no more coins, unless the information you bring is more detailed, and harmful, to the parties involved than so far you have brought.

JOHN: But you wouldn't want me to lie!

MALVOLIO: Oh, shut up! I loathe a sniveling servant more than I can say. Speak or go.

JOHN: As you will, Sir Malvolio, – future Sir Malvolio! It does so happen that I have seen many of those folks you hate doing things and have learned some new facts.

MALVOLIO: What facts?

JOHN: Good, useful ones.

MALVOLIO: I'll be the judge of that. What things?

JOHN: Well, at this luncheon that my lady had yesterday, some interesting events took place. Some very scandalous things, I would venture.

MALVOLIO: Will you get to the point before I stab you with this quill?!

JOHN: Here be these facts, sir. One, the Lady Oblivia and her husband, Sir Sebastian, do quarrel.

MALVOLIO: So? So do many of the so-called happily married. I fully intend to quarrel with my bride to be.

JOHN: But it seems they are almost at each other's throats because of actions from the each of them.

MALVOLIO: And these actions would be what?

JOHN: Well, it seems the Lady Oblivia is surely . . . queer for girls in boys' attire. Is this information not worth something to he who brings it?

MALVOLIO: He who, who ha! I know this already. Say on. What else?

JOHN: Well, Sir Sebastian has a suspicious “pirate” past with one Antonio.

MALVOLIO: Ah! Now we are getting somewhere. “Pirate” past?

JOHN: On a ship.

MALVOLIO: Yes, pirates are known to frequent ships. What else?

JOHN: I think they did things . . . together.

MALVOLIO: Such as?

JOHN: I don’t know the proper terminology. But something like “All hands on dick” or “first class semen.”

MALVOLIO: You heard them use these terms?

JOHN: Some of them came up during the lunch they had. I think I heard them right.

MALVOLIO: Was my Molly there?

JOHN: She was. Lady Oblivia had her dress up like a boy!

MALVOLIO: So my plan worked! Did it go any further than lunch?

JOHN: Further?

MALVOLIO: You are innocent, aren’t you? Have you ever seen Lady Oblivia *do* anything with these boyish girls she likes?

JOHN: No. What would she do?

MALVOLIO: Have you ever *heard* of anything else she does with them?

JOHN: It’s possible that Lady Oblivia likes to hold these boy-girls by their ankles. Like this. (Demonstrates with his hands.)

MALVOLIO: And then what?

JOHN: That’s pretty “interesting” in itself, is it not?

MALVOLIO: It is curious, but there must be more she does.

JOHN: Oh, there is.

MALVOLIO: *Yes?!*

JOHN: She sings naughty catches betwixt their legs.

MALVOLIO: She does what?

JOHN: Sir Sebastian said that she likes to sing songs as she holds them thus. (Sings and demonstrates.) “Rock-a-by, baby, in the treetop.”

MALVOLIO: That is a lullaby, not a catch. Does she sing all three parts of the catch?

JOHN: I think maybe. I have never heard her myself.

MALVOLIO: She just *sings*? No more?

JOHN: (hiding that he saw Olivia being intimate with Viola) What more could she do, do you think?

MALVOLIO: You do not need to know what I think. Are you sure you haven’t seen more?

JOHN: It is a big house.

MALVOLIO: Back to Sebastian. Who is this Antonio?

JOHN: A Bulgarian.

MALVOLIO: A Bulgarian. Do you mean . . . ?

JOHN: Yes. He had an accent!

MALVOLIO: And what *precisely* had he to do with our Sebastian? This is no time to be circumspect.

JOHN: It seems they were great pals, some years ago.

MALVOLIO: This is very important. What sort of “pals” are we talking about?

JOHN: I did not hear everything they said, but evidently they shared “manly, pirate kisses” and spent day and night bosom to bosom for months and months on end. Of course it could just mean their ship was full.

MALVOLIO: Have you ever been anywhere, Simpleton?

JOHN: No.

MALVOLIO: I thought not. They shared *kisses*, you say? Like where?

JOHN: Patagonia?

MALVOLIO: Like where on the ship?

JOHN: Above deck, below deck? Maybe on a lanyard.

MALVOLIO: I meant where were the kisses on *Sebastian*?

JOHN: Oh, apparently they were everywhere.

MALVOLIO: And Sebastian did not deny these kisses?

JOHN: He did not deny them but seemed to think they mattered less than did Antonio.

MALVOLIO: And were there kisses between them at the luncheon? This is very important. So think!

JOHN: (thinking hard, too long) They kissed . . . in front of us. And . . .

MALVOLIO: (threatening John with the quill) For God's sake, man!

JOHN: I think this Antonio did not enjoy the kiss so much this time, but Sir Sebastian sort of did.

MALVOLIO: Interesting. And his wife now knows of these "manly, pirate kisses" in a way she didn't know before?

JOHN: I believe that is the case, sir.

MALVOLIO: Has Oblivia kissed any of these boyish girls in your presence?

JOHN: (lying) No, sir.

MALVOLIO: No? You're not protecting your lady, I hope!

JOHN: I'd better be getting back home, sir.

MALVOLIO: (musing) They probably both think their "eccentricities" will be ignored because they are of the upper class, but they do not know Malvolio and what he can do with this when it is exposed.

JOHN: I thought you would like it, sir!

MALVOLIO: Shut up. What else? Are you sure Molly did nothing untoward? A husband should always arm himself with such knowledge.

JOHN: I got her into the house on a "tour." But she got invited to lunch when Lady Oblivia saw her. She had to agree to wear boys' clothes.

MALVOLIO: Did she agree easily, or did she resist as would be becoming?

JOHN: I couldn't say, sir.

MALVOLIO: So Molly was part of this strange luncheon. Did she let Oblivia hold her ankles and sing naughty catches betwixt them?

JOHN: I was in and out, sir. I saw only a little.

MALVOLIO: Surely you would recall seeing such things! Think, man. I would like to know what Molly did. Should she prove obstreperous o'er time.

JOHN: I thought your Molly quite fetching in her borrowed garb.

MALVOLIO: Oh, for God's sake, shut up!

JOHN: Yes, sir.

MALVOLIO: What about the others there?

JOHN: The Duke Porcino was a guest.

MALVOLIO: And I suppose he ate.

JOHN: He ate and ate and ate.

MALVOLIO: What about the Lady Viola?

JOHN: She was there, dressed like a boy.

MALVOLIO: Will this perversity know no end?! I bear no special animus for that woman or for her duke. Still, it does not hurt to note down observations of other people's transgressions. So she too was dressed as a boy? It is difficult to get my head around. Oblivia had the twin Viola dressed as a twin of Molly?

JOHN: Sort of, sir.

MALVOLIO: Was Sebastian dressed as a twin as well?

JOHN: Of who, sir?

MALVOLIO: I don't know! Of this Antonio! Don't be a blockhead. Of Viola and Molly, of course!

JOHN: (after a pause) Would not that make them triplets, sir?

MALVOLIO: You're right. Shut up. Who else? Are you sure you saw no hanky-panky, no downright smut?

JOHN: Smut could be in the eye of the beholder.

MALVOLIO: I'll be the judge of what's what – and what's smut, for that matter! How many actually attended?

JOHN: I counted six.

MALVOLIO: You can count?

JOHN: Some days are better than others, sir. But I can count.

MALVOLIO: I won't say "Thank you, Simpleton" for bringing me these observations, for that would only make you proud. But this I will say: you did better than I thought you would when I hired you.

JOHN: And so cheaply too, did you not?!

MALVOLIO: If you are still angling for more coins, you are wasting your breath. (coldly) Goodbye.

JOHN: No instructions further, sir?

MALVOLIO: Yes, bring me more like this, even filthier yet. Who knows? Maybe you will receive another coin perchance.

JOHN: I will bless that day.

MALVOLIO: You had best return to your duties at your lady's. We would not want you to be let go for being so often gone.

JOHN: I am so often gone because I am bringing information to you.

MALVOLIO: (sarcastic) I am sure your lady would find that an adequate excuse not to kick you out for duties unfulfilled! It seems to me there are plenty of others roaming about these parts who would gladly have your post. No?

JOHN: (downcast) Goodbye, sir.

MALVOLIO: Enough talk! And next time, knock before you enter. (Waves John away.)

(John exits.)

## **BLACKOUT**

### **SCENE 16**

#### Malvolio's House

(Malvolio gets up from his chair, starts to put away his writing materials. There is a noise on the far side of the stage.)

MALVOLIO: What noise is that? (Moves closer.)

(Enter Molly with some men's shirts.)

MOLLY: It is I, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: So I see. (going toward her) I have not, however, seen you for some time. *Why* would that be?

MOLLY: Your floor squeaks. That's the noise you heard.

MALVOLIO: I was going to have it fixed, but perhaps it is God's way of keeping me alert to danger.

MOLLY: Perhaps it just needs to be fixed. I was just about to do some darning of your shirts. (Starts to leave.)

MALVOLIO: Were you? How thoughtful you are, Molly dear.

MOLLY: So I would like to continue on my way.

MALVOLIO: (stepping between her and her exit) Hold awhile, Molly, if you would. You have told me nothing of your visit to Lady Oblivia's.

MOLLY: Oh, nothing much of consequence was evident to me.

MALVOLIO: And yet you were there for some time, I do believe.

MOLLY: I was there and back almost at once. I did not even get inside the house.

MALVOLIO: No? What a shame.

MOLLY: So, as you see, I have nothing to report, and I did not wish to bother you with nothing.

MALVOLIO: It's a good thing that you don't make your living as a spy.

MOLLY: I would hate to be a spy indeed. May I go?

MALVOLIO: Please stay, my coming bride.

MOLLY: Did you say "cunning bride"?

MALVOLIO: I did not. Should I have?

MOLLY: I did what you required of me, Malvolio, but nothing did I see that would interest you, I'm sure.

MALVOLIO: Absolutely nothing?

MOLLY: Not a thing. I believe Lady Oblivia held a luncheon.

MALVOLIO: But you did not attend?

MOLLY: How could I attend? I barely know that house.

MALVOLIO: So you say. You are certain that you did not attend some meal? Maybe it was a brunch?

MOLLY: I heard them dining. But I was not part of it. . . . They were quite loud.

MALVOLIO: So loud that you could hear them from outside?

MOLLY: . . . Yes.

MALVOLIO: Lady Oblivia did not gift you with leftovers from the luncheon – perhaps some sausages, tarts . . . boys' clothing?

MOLLY: I took naught from that house.

MALVOLIO: I'm sure you would not lie to me. What about Sebastian? Nothing there?

MOLLY: He is a valiant gentleman, I'm sure.

MALVOLIO: Was not there one Antonio as a guest as well, from Bulgaria, or was it some place else?

MOLLY: I was in and out so quick I did not see.

MALVOLIO: Ah, so you *were* inside the house after all?

MOLLY: Their servant, one John Simpleton by name, who you know. He ran me through the house in a trice.

MALVOLIO: How long is a "trice," Molly?"

MOLLY: Seeing but little, I did not linger long, but I did see a painting of Our Precious Lord. It –

MALVOLIO: Do not try to distract me with Our Precious Lord, Molly mine. Did you see Sebastian and the Bulgarian engaged in any "postures" curious or strange?

MOLLY: I cannot say I did.

MALVOLIO: You cannot say you did? Or *will* not say you did?

MOLLY: As a Christian, I try to forgive. Besides, they were in another section of the house. It's a big house.

MALVOLIO: So you say. Heard you not of their "manly, pirate kisses"?

MOLLY: Nay, nor saw none neither.

MALVOLIO: Did Sebastian acknowledge this Antonio from his pirate past?

MOLLY: I really do not know, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: Why are you being so obdurate, my dear?

MOLLY: Why are you so curious about such things? I am answering as clear as I can. I cannot tell what I did not witness.

MALVOLIO: But that's why I sent you, Molly, wife to be! Could you not have eavesdropped more, even if you were not at that luncheon itself? Hmm?

MOLLY: I consider eavesdropping a fault, perhaps a sin.



MALVOLIO: Like *lying*? Do not be silly, Molly. Nowhere in the Scriptures does it forbid eavesdropping, especially on the guilty!

MOLLY: What about “false witness”?

MALVOLIO: If it’s true, then it’s not “false witness,” as you must surely know. I seek only what is true. Do you not?

MOLLY: I fear you will use it for some un-Christian purpose, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: Molly, am I not a pious man? I loathe the vices of this world, especially in my fellow man. I’d root them out and send them all to Hell, in this life and the next. You know I would!

MOLLY: Can we not leave judgment to our King above?

MALVOLIO: He *misses* some! It is my path to support the Lord when he blinks or looks away.

MOLLY: I have not such holy eyes as you, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: I’m sure you don’t, Molly dear. Still, you need not make your virtue dull!

MOLLY: I am sorry that I cannot tell you more. I am devoid of anything but what I said.

MALVOLIO: And yet I have learned *so* much today, from you.

MOLLY: You did?

MALVOLIO: I did! Just not about the ones I deem my enemies.

MOLLY: Who then, Malvolio?

MALVOLIO: That remains to be seen, perhaps.

MOLLY: I hope I have not disappointed you.

MALVOLIO: Yes, by your failure to bring me tidbits from the luncheon. At least you provided more than I had thought about.

MOLLY: I did?

MALVOLIO: You did, you did, you did, you did, you did!

MOLLY: I’m not so sure I like your mood, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: It is hardly for you to like or dislike my moods. It is for me to like or dislike yours! But let me not inconvenience you a moment more. Be off. Be off, to your tasks, as such they be. Perhaps we can dine tonight, and at supper you may recall more of what you may have seen and heard during your time, however brief, among the upper set. For now, good day, my precious love.

(Molly starts to kiss him goodbye.)

MALVOLIO: (stopping her) Nay, not! Until we wed.

(Exits.)

MOLLY: Ah me! He would not kiss me, not even on the cheek.

My heart is faint. Perhaps something to drink? Some cold milk, some hot tea?  
Or is it deeper still than earthly thirst, this pain that troubles me!

(Looks after Malvolio, then exits the other way.)

## SCENE 17

### Office of Lawyer Fester and Fabian

(Enter Fester.)

FABIAN: Business is somewhat slow this day, I'm afraid.

FESTER: Then I suppose we should do some labor on the cases that we have.

FABIAN: We should.

(They look at each other and then "high-five" one another.)

FESTER/FABIAN: But we won't!

(The doorbell rings. Then Viola enters, dressed as a boy.)

VIOLA: Are you seeing clients now? I did not make an appointment.

FESTER: There will be a small charge today, I'm afraid.

FABIAN: I will be able to handle that.

VIOLA: It is no matter. Don't you remember me? I was here before.

FESTER: Of course we do! You are . . . (Can't remember her name.)

FABIAN: (searching through the parchments) You're Mrs. Carbuncle! The vicar's wife!

FESTER: That's right!

VIOLA: No, I am Viola, wife to Duke Porcino.

FABIAN: Oh yes, the adulteress.

FESTER: Fabian!

FABIAN: Excuse me! The lady with the loveless marriage.

FESTER: Of course!

VIOLA: I still love my husband.

FESTER: The duke!

VIOLA: Yes, the duke.

FESTER: Who has never loved you! And you want all his money and the title! Yes?

FABIAN: No, that's Lady Warte from Cargill Mews.

FESTER: Oh, that's right. *This* lady wants a divorce and nothing else.

VIOLA: And preferably no branding.

FESTER: We do work on contingency, besides our other charges, I hope you know.

FABIAN: If we take on your case, there won't be much for us, our share.

VIOLA: You can have the branding, if you wish. I thought you had agreed, when last I was here, that you *would* take on my case.

FESTER: (to Fabian) Were we quite that *certus*, Fabian? I don't recall that we were. Did we sign a contract?

FABIAN: You are correct. I thought we left it hanging. You always like to leave it hanging. You always like to leave it hanging.

FESTER: Especially when it is a genuine hanging! (Pretends to have a rope around his neck.)

FABIAN: (to Viola) By the way, how's it hanging?

FESTER: We get no complaints from the hanged about the way we've handled their case! That is *certus*!

VIOLA: Perhaps I should seek counsel elsewhere then?

FESTER: You're here! We long to hear of your legal agonies!

FABIAN: We do!

VIOLA: Well, as I said the other day, I am willing to do whatever I must to be quit of my marital entanglement.

FESTER: And, after much deliberation, did we not determine that you have no case for a divorce?

VIOLA: Except for adultery, you said, Mr. Fester.

FESTER: And has your husband, the prince –

VIOLA: The duke.

FESTER: The duke! Has he committed adultery at last?

VIOLA: No . . . *I* have.

FESTER: Madame, you take my breath away!

FABIAN: And mine.

FESTER: (to Fabian) After the leeks and onions you had for breakfast, I thank God for that! (bows)  
I've still got it!

VIOLA: Er . . . about my case?

FESTER: Oh yes, your case. You admit to having committed adultery?

VIOLA: I do.

FABIAN: Knowing the penalties?

VIOLA: I do.

FABIAN: Branding is no fun, I've heard.

FESTER: Don't listen to him. We'll get you a really small brand. No bigger than this. (Demonstrates)  
Nothing is too good for our clients!

FABIAN: You will have no income, you realise.

FESTER: (to Fabian) We'd better arrange to have our fees come out of the duke's end.

FABIAN: (to Fester) You're right.

(Both men see the dirty joke in Fester's last speech.)

FABIAN: (leading) And from what I know –

FESTER: (finishing) That duke has a very large end!

(They "high five" each and then try to do it with Viola. But she demurs.)

FABIAN: Doesn't he?

VIOLA: If you mean does he have wealth, yes, he does. I also have some savings.

FESTER: That's all we need to know.

FABIAN: And you are willing to sign some parchments that you are guilty of adultery?!

VIOLA: I am. Where do I sign?

FESTER: Fabian, fetch those parchments that we have been working on so hard.

FABIAN: Which ones are those, Mr. Fester, if you please?

FESTER: You remember! The ones that took us weeks and weeks to prepare for this client!

VIOLA: I was here only a few days ago!

FESTER: I refer of course to the pre-divorce preparations and the . . . the . . .

VIOLA: Oh, it matters not! Let me sign!

FABIAN: Here be that special parchment that we prepared. (Pulls out a blank parchment and shows it to Viola.)

VIOLA: But there is nothing on it.

FESTER: The invisible ink parts are here! And here! And here! (Points to parts of the parchment.)

VIOLA: Oh, what you will! Give it me!

FESTER: Not so fast. We do need a few more details.

FABIAN: We do indeed!

VIOLA: Such as?

FESTER: Who did you commit this adultery with? And where?

FABIAN: And how many times?

FESTER: Exactly!

VIOLA: It happened yesterday.

FABIAN: Yes?

VIOLA: At someone's home.

FESTER: Whose?

VIOLA: I don't wish to . . .

FESTER: We need both names, Madame. Both!

FABIAN: Or more, if there are more. The new divorce laws are very strict on that.

FESTER: Very strict. We must watch every scruple –

FABIAN: And tittle –

FESTER: And jot –

FABIAN: Of the marriage laws. Marriage is a sacred sacrament!

FESTER: And divorce is an even more sacred sacrament! (Touches the parchment.)  
(to Fabian) Is it a sacrament?

FABIAN: Indelibly! We cannot proceed without another name on this document.

VIOLA: All right. . . . No, I cannot say the name!

FESTER/FABIAN: His name! What's his name?

VIOLA: It's *her* name.

FESTER/FABIAN: Her name?

VIOLA: You don't believe me?

FESTER: It is not that we don't believe you, Mrs. Prince –

VIOLA: I am called Viola.

FESTER: It is only that I am not sure that we can call it adultery when two women do –

FABIAN: (interrupting, sexually excited) Did you say two women did it?!

FESTER: (completing his sentence) – two women are involved, yes.

FABIAN: (excited) Without any men involved?

VIOLA: It was so.

FESTER: However much my assistant here may find it provocative, I doubt that there is a divorce issue here. I believe the law states: "Without a phallus there can be no malice."

VIOLA: How preposterous! You mean I must leave here unsatisfied?

FESTER: I'm afraid you must.

FABIAN: No! Maybe we just need more details. Lots of details!

VIOLA: What kind of details?!

FABIAN: (to Fester) We can't leave this poor woman unsatisfied!

FESTER: I believe that's how you always leave the women in your life. Is it not so, Fabian?! *Boing!*

FABIAN: (not sincere) Good one, boss.

FESTER: I thought you'd like it. (to Viola) I think your lawsuit is hopeless, Madame.

VIOLA: Wait! There is one detail I have not mentioned, not so far.

FABIAN: Oh, pray tell us what it is!

VIOLA: I – I – I was dressed as I am now when it happened.

FABIAN: (deflated) As a boy?! Why would you do that?

VIOLA: It was not my idea. My companion wished it.

FABIAN: The other lady wished it?

VIOLA: In the worst way.

FESTER: Is there a good way?

FABIAN: And this happened recently?

VIOLA: Yes, after a luncheon.

FESTER: Postprandial adultery!

FABIAN: And where was this adulterous liaison practiced?

VIOLA: In a stately home.

FESTER: It wouldn't be the home of the greatest lady in these parts, by any chance?

VIOLA: It was.

FESTER: The Lady Oblivia Lovelock!

FABIAN: She's an aficionado of boys?

VIOLA: Girls or women dressed as boys, to be exact.

FABIAN: Sorry, it does nothing for me.

FESTER: Fabian, we are not interested in what interests you or doesn't!

FABIAN: (mockingly) My lips are sealed!

FESTER: (to Viola) Let's be quite clear. How shall I say it? You did the deed with the Lady Olivia occur at her estate after a luncheon?

VIOLA: I wrestled with my fate. But ultimately I went down that corridor and to the left. (She is not telling the whole truth and nothing but.)

FESTER: And does your husband know of this?

VIOLA: Not at all.

FABIAN: He was nowhere near?

VIOLA: Oh, he was there. But he sees little except food.

FESTER: His reputation is wide-spread.

FABIAN: Like him!

FESTER: (to Viola) You know you would not have to tell the duke? He would probably never know of this adultery.

VIOLA: Most likely true.

FESTER: You could go on for years like this.

FABIAN: The duke might die and leave you rich.

VIOLA: I know I could stay as I am. But I will not! I want not his money nor his name.

FESTER: Yet what of us? We must get paid.

VIOLA: You will be paid, if I have to prostitute myself.

FESTER: No need to go that far.

FABIAN: (intrigued) Really?

FESTER: Fabian!



VIOLA: I never should have taken a vow for life when I knew, even at the start, that the duke barely cared for me. It was always Oblivia, Oblivia, the blasted Oblivia!

FABIAN: And so that is why you committed the adultery with Oblivia? Jealousy!

VIOLA: (surprised) No, I do not think so.

FESTER: Look into your inmost heart.

VIOLA: I could be wrong, but I think it had more to do with Oblivia forcing those boys' togs on me, and too much wine with lunch, or the near occasion of sin – down that corridor and to the left – than with Oblivia herself or what my *husband* thinks of her.

FABIAN: (mockingly) Oh, who can read the human heart!

FESTER: Be quiet, Fabian. You are as tedious as a winter's tale!

FABIAN: I've always rather liked a winter's tale.

FESTER: It is summer now, and we must get this unhappy woman's divorce happily sorted out.

VIOLA: So where do I sign? (Reaches for the parchment.)

FABIAN: Sign here, Madame. (She signs.) And here! (She signs.) And here. (Signs.) And here. (Signs.) And here! (Signs.) And over here! (She signs.)

FESTER: (pointing) And initial over here. (She initials the parchment.)

VIOLA: Is anything actually going onto the parchment?

FESTER: Don't worry, Madame Viola. Remember, we use invisible ink.

FABIAN: And we will of course fill in the rest as needed for your case.

VIOLA: Fill in . . . ? (She hesitates.)

FESTER: Initials here.

(Viola signs.)

FESTER: (taking the parchment) That should do it.

VIOLA: I may be acting the utter fool; still, I cannot go another day as I am.

FABIAN: Thank you, Ma'am. I will just file this, if I may. (Takes it from Fester.)

VIOLA: What you will!

FESTER: And a hey, nonny, nonny, nonny! I think you are well on your way to marital freedom!

VIOLA: Good. Can I choose which side I want to be branded on?

FABIAN: We'll do our best.

FESTER: But no promises!

VIOLA: At least can I pray that you will be quick about this – with no law's delay?

FESTER: Yes, you can certainly pray that that will happen.

VIOLA: Till next time then. Thank you and good day. (Exits.)

FESTER: (archly to Fabian) She wonders if she can pray that we will be *quick* about it!

FABIAN: (archly) Indeed, she can pray all she likes!

FESTER: And pray!

FABIAN: And pray!

FESTER/FABIAN: (together) And pray and pray and pray!

(They "high five" and "low five" one another and laugh and stumble about.)

(Enter Sir Andrew.)

ANDREW: Some service here, you two! I am Sir Andrew Dribbledick, a gentleman.

FABIAN: (not impressed) Yes, sir!

FESTER: How can we assist you, sir gentleman?

ANDREW: I want to sue Sir Toby Fartte and his wife, Ave Mariah Fartte, for taking my bags of gold and for false claims and misleading advertisements for their offices as procurers of one lady's love as promised me.

FESTER: Did you say "procurers"?

ANDREW: And for breaches of promise, for malfeasances in office – multiple! – as promissory procurers, and other assorted unfulfilled obscenities they are guilty of!

FESTER: So many charges.

FABIAN: (to Fester) And they go both ways!

ANDREW: Was that person who just left here the Lady Viola, the wife of the Duke Porcino?

FESTER: We could not tell you that, Sir Andrew. It would violate the trust between a lawyer and our client!

ANDREW: Oh, sorry.

FABIAN: But we can tell you – yes it *was!* We have *other* upper-class clientele, you see!

ANDREW: And she was here because?

FABIAN: She wants free of her marriage vows.

ANDREW: (shocked) No!

FABIAN: We can say no more. The lawyer-client privilege is sacrosanct!

ANDREW: Naturally.

FABIAN: Her heart some other *lady* craves.

ANDREW: *No!* . . . How naughty! But tell me more! My own case can wait!

FESTER: Well . . . maybe just a *little*.

## BLACKOUT

### SCENE 18

#### Outside Oblivia's House

(Enter Sir Toby in dim light.)

TOBY: (to audience)

There is no hope for it, alas, for all the money's gone.

The debts piled up, and almost to the roof. So high!

I dare not try to gull Dribbledick again – not at this time.

He may explode and even accidentally injure me.

Yet could there be one hope left in this heart? (Points to the house.)

I must to Oblivia and plead my case once more.

She screamed at me and chased me from her home the last time I was here,

But what is family for, if not for forgiveness, reconciliation – and for loans?!

I hope she's home. I dared not send ahead to ask her if I could come again.

So here goes naught perhaps. Oh, I am nothing if not desperate!

(He moves closer to the front of Oblivia's house and begins to call.)

TOBY: Oblivia! Oblivia! Are you there? (Silence.) It is thy kinsman, one Sir Toby Fartte! (Silence.) No reply? Would she this Fartte be silent?! (Winks.) I'll try again, over here. (Moves.) Darling, precious niece! Oblivia! Hear you not your relative? Must I rasp my throat in calling to my only niece? Here, let me try one more time. (Moves again.) Oh, Oblivia! Guess who's here!

(Oblivia appears above, at a window or on a balcony.)

OBLIVIA: Who, by the devil's damn, Sir Toby, is that you?

TOBY: I know it to be dark, darling niece, but I could not wait till morn to see thy face again.

OBLIVIA: I instructed you last time never to return. Your drunken ways disgust me, is't not clear?!

TOBY: I know, dearest Oblivia, how you feel. Yet allow me one last plea unto your gentle heart.

OBLIVIA: I do not have a gentle heart!

TOBY: (aside) I know that well. (to Oblivia) And yet I do not think you can let me and Ave Mariah, my dear wife, perish in this parish, full of want. (Claps hands in prayer.)

OBLIVIA: You should perish that thought, uncle dear. I have given you my last "loan," a loan that is ne'er returned – I do not thank you! Why would I ever give you more?

TOBY: Came I not today for any loan. But alone to see my sainted niece, my only living relative!

OBLIVIA: You are full of bull droppings, Uncle Toby, always was. You could not care less for your "sainted niece" than if she was – an empty pot of ale!

TOBY: It never crossed my mind to ask for more, because I know I have been remiss in paying back my debts.

OBLIVIA: Remiss? You have never paid back a debt to anyone in your entire life!

TOBY: I know, I know. Yet I propose to turn around my life, starting from this very day.

OBLIVIA: It's night.

TOBY: From this night forth, I will be renewed. And you are the first to know!

OBLIVIA: I'll believe it when it's done. And not until. I will remonstrate no more! I go!

TOBY: Do stay, Oblivia! There's more.

OBLIVIA: Don't bother throwing compliments this way – about my wondrous eyes, my glorious locks, my snowy breasts. It will not work.

TOBY: Your handsome brow, your full set of teeth!

OBLIVIA: It will not work, Uncle Toby. I know I am vain, but coming from you, besides whose sincerity I doubt, it is more than creepy for an uncle to spout such things to a niece. I go!

TOBY: If my potential ruin will not move you to give a ducat, nor compliments flung like roses among your barbs, at least listen to one more note of mine.

OBLIVIA: I am deaf to you, Uncle Loan. But I will listen to you one more time. And just one word! (She is almost gone.)

TOBY: Caesario!

OBLIVIA: What's this?! (Returns.) Did I hear right?

TOBY: Or should I say Viola dressed as Caesario, dear niece?

OBLIVIA: What have you heard?

TOBY: (aside) A lucky break for me! That Sir Andrew sought the law against me. For I now know my niece's past and will exploit this home.

OBLIVIA: I'm waiting while you are talking to yourself!

TOBY: I have heard that Viola, or Caesario, or what you will, has been seen going to and from lawyer Fester's office.

OBLIVIA: And why is that?

TOBY: I have heard that she is seeking ways to free herself from her marriage to the duke.

OBLIVIA: To be with me?! Could my dearest hope come true? How know you this?

TOBY: I learned it from Sir Andrew.

OBLIVIA: But is he reliable? How learned he these news?

TOBY: He happened to be at Fester's office as Viola was leaving there.

OBLIVIA: Interesting. And why, pray tell, was this Sir Andrew at a lawyer's?

TOBY: Why? . . . Because he is suing two rapacious villains who have fleeced him to within an inch of his entire fortune.

OBLIVIA: Which villains are those?

TOBY: Which villains? . . . Why, Lord and Lady Drainege, that's who.

OBLIVIA: I do not know these villains. Nor do I wish to. Do I?

TOBY: You don't.

OBLIVIA: But you are sure that Viola wants to end the tyranny that is her marriage vow?

TOBY: I don't know if it's a tyranny or not. But she does want out.

OBLIVIA: Of course it's a tyranny! She's married to a man, isn't she?!

TOBY: She is that.

OBLIVIA: But how do you know that she wants to be free so that she can become my slave – my slave of love,  
I mean?

TOBY: How could she not but give you what you want, sweet niece?

OBLIVIA: So true!

TOBY: You are so adamant, yet so feminine.

OBLIVIA: So true! Yet is it me she wants? Sometimes I feel – a mere twinge it is – that maybe Viola doesn't  
really like those boyish clothes I so adore.

TOBY: How could she not?

OBLIVIA: So true! And Sir Andrew learned all this from the lawyer himself?

TOBY: Indeed.

OBLIVIA: And you trust this Andrew?

TOBY: Oh, Andrew is a foolish git and brings false allegations almost daily against those who have  
been kind to him.

OBLIVIA: I thought you said he was reliable!

TOBY: Oh, he is in *your* case!

OBLIVIA: You're positive he saw *Viola* at Fester's office?

TOBY: He knows it was she, despite the clothes of the other sex.

OBLIVIA: Then lives my heart! She has not abandoned me for sure, as I had feared. Of course why would she  
leave her husband *except* for me?!

TOBY: (prying) Niece, is there more here than even I surmised? Have you seen Caesario of late perhaps?

OBLIVIA: I have, dear uncle! And he/she so disappointed me!

TONY: (all sympathy) Sad day! Wouldst you wish to share with me how he/she disappointed you? Was it because, upon close inspection, he/she had no . . . cock?

OBLIVIA: You cannot be serious. Why do all think that I love cock? What is a cock to me? A bird in the barnyard! Uncle Toby, I trust I can unfold my heart to you, if not as a cherished family member, then because you depend on me for money for your debts.

TOBY: Unfold away, sweet niece!

OBLIVIA: I have *worshiped* him/her for, lo, these many moons. Yet nothing occurred. Then, on the day of a recent luncheon, he/she was convinced to come to my rooms after the luncheon.

TOBY: And did he/she so?

OBLIVIA: No, he/she did not! It was just down the corridor and to the left, and yet he/she never came!

TOBY: No! The reprobate!

OBLIVIA: A veritable wretch! Yet none more wretched here than I, without Caesario's forbidden love!

TOBY: His/her special love!

OBLIVIA: Oh, so special!

TOBY: I have heard the rumors. You wished to take this special love from simple eyeing of the boyish clothes to grasping his/her . . . ?

OBLIVIA: Oh, let me say it, happily! Grasping both ankles with my hands and singing naughty catches with him/her just so! (Demonstrates holding the legs.)

TOBY: And from that to more?

OBLIVIA: It was my plan, and Caesario agreed, or so I thought, fool that I was. Naturally I went first to freshen up –

TOBY: How could you not?!

OBLIVIA: And yet because I did, that willful, spiteful boy-girl failed to pace my corridor and left me waiting like a trull!

TOBY: That he/she brute!

OBLIVIA: A brute indeed! A luscious brute!

TOBY: Are you sure that this person did not merely lose his/her way in that corridor?

OBLIVIA: (quickly) You think?

TOBY: Why else would Caesario not come to your embrace? Who would be such a foolish fool as to bypass your snowy breasts?!

OBLIVIA: Enough, uncle, on my breasts!

TOBY: Of course, dear niece. My apologies.

OBLIVIA: Yet you are correct. Caesario would of course have come to me had he/she not lost his/her way. Why did I not see this before?!

TOBY: Or maybe he/she wished to be un-wed before sealing your mutual love!

OBLIVIA: I know Viola to be a believing Christian true, and so would not want to violate the marriage vows, even though Porcino is an oaf.

TOBY: That's why she did not come to you! No other reason can there be!

OBLIVIA: So there's still time to taste our love! Those boyish clothes embraced by my arms! A whirlwind of delights beyond the range of naughty catches sung betwixt those legs! I am tremulous with the merest thought!

TOBY: My niece, I rejoice for you! Caesario is still within your reach!

OBLIVIA: I believe you are correct, kind sir. Oh, Uncle Toby, how fortuitous is your visit here! You have brought me news that kindles still my flame, when I considered it all but snuffed out.

TOBY: It is my only goal to give my niece, my gull – I mean my *girl*, my precious, niece-y *girl*, all that she needs to be happy in this life!

OBLIVIA: Let me come down there and embrace thee, Uncle Toby, dear! You have rescued me from thickening despair. (Starts to descend.)

TOBY: (to audience) These are my lucky days. If Sir Andrew had not sought to litigate, I would not know Viola's plans, and, to give myself my due, if I had not remembered Oblivia's strange infatuation, I would not be standing here, about to fleece my niece again! I am a happy man!

OBLIVIA: (appearing below) Dearest Uncle Toby! Come to me! I do forgive thee for thy past. And vow to love you as once I did. I knew our estrangement could not last!

(They embrace.)

TOBY: And so do I, dear niece, love and ever embrace thee. . . .  
(aside) And so thank God above for my mad family!

**BLACKOUT**



## SCENE 19

### A pier

(Antonio is about to board a ship.)

ANTONIO: (to audience)

I should not have tried to seek Sebastian out again,  
Not after all this time. We both have changed, or one of us,  
And now the memory of bygone days is gone and lost.  
My mistake it was to try to capture former love, alas,  
A love so wholesome, pure, and innocent was ours.  
I will never try to do such again. Enough! No more!  
I now must board this rough and readied ship I see. Away!  
To face the shipboard pangs of yet another pirate day!

(Turns to leave.)

(Enter Sebastian in a hurry, dressed as a pirate.)

SEBASTIAN: Antonio! Do not leave, I pray! It is I, Sebastian, who follows you!

ANTONIO: Sebastian? What brings you to this three-masted pirate ship? I thought all this was left behind?

SEBASTIAN: So thought I too, until I mulled it o'er. I find I miss my pirate days more than I thought possible.  
Your re-appearance in my life, Antonio, has stirred fierce memories.

ANTONIO: I hope you do not plan to come with me!

SEBASTIAN: In faith, I do! Is there something faulty with my plan – or my clothes?

ANTONIO: You – I – There is no room upon the ship!

SEBASTIAN: Surely there is always room. If not, we can share one bunk as we did before.

ANTONIO: But you must have a reservation before you sail!

SEBASTIAN: A reservation on a pirate ship? How odd.

ANTONIO: So many want the jobs of swabbing decks and hauling keel and other irksome tasks upon a vessel  
such as this.

SEBASTIAN: They do?

ANTONIO: They do, they do. We have a glut of men.

SEBASTIAN: I do lament me to hear of this.

ANTONIO: And were you not always sick at sea, at least once per day, if memory serve?

SEBASTIAN: I was. Yet I was but a green lad then. Now my stomach is stouter for the sea! (Pats it.)

ANTONIO: 'Tis stouter indeed, I cannot deny. But can you leave your wife like that? (Snaps his fingers.)

SEBASTIAN: She left me long ago, with all the boyish tricks she has! (Snaps his fingers.)

ANTONIO: (very interested) She performs boyish tricks for you?

SEBASTIAN: No, she has boyish tricks for *her*.

ANTONIO: Hmm, she is quite an interesting lady, is she not?

SEBASTIAN: We've grown apart, alas. But I would, with you, renew the distant past!

ANTONIO: "Alas" and "past" do not rhyme, Sebastian, however much you may wish. The past has passed and, I see, cannot be recovered.

SEBASTIAN: Oh, Antonio, do not board that ship without me by your side!

ANTONIO: Sebastian, I think you know that I once cared for you, and I declared it too for all the world to see.

SEBASTIAN: You did. . . . But now?

ANTONIO: Our time is past. This "but" of yours tells me both of us have lighted the way to other shores.

SEBASTIAN: What "butt," pray tell, do you now speak of, friend? I do not smoke!

ANTONIO: I have changed even more than you, old friend. Oh yes, we once rained kisses on each other's parts –

SEBASTIAN: We did! We did!

ANTONIO: And snoozed and napped and slept and dreamed in each other's arms.

SEBASTIAN/ANTONIO: (together) In a manly, pirate way.

ANTONIO: But now I have changed my ways, in truth, and I must go upon that three-masted ship.  
(Starts to leave.)

SEBASTIAN: Changed how, Antonio?

ANTONIO: Let me speak it plain, Sebastian. I am no longer satisfied – have not been for years, in fact – with simple kisses, however numerous or prolonged.

SEBASTIAN: You mean you now require – ?

ANTONIO: Sterner stuff. Do you comprehend my drift?

SEBASTIAN: You now demand (dawning) . . . Oh, that!?

ANTONIO: Yes, *that*. In fact I live for it!

SEBASTIAN: You mean that thing the other pirates wanted from me when –

ANTONIO: When you were but a winsome lad. That deed we never did in all our days as one. So now you see why I must leave, and you cannot come. Our incompatibility's the bar that separates our souls.

SEBASTIAN: I see what you are saying.

ANTONIO: I am rude and savage now in bed. When I knew you, I was a different man. And you a different boy. Adieu! (Runs off.)

SEBASTIAN: Wait! I can change!

ANTONIO: (above) It is too late, Sebastian! Let's not even talk of it. You do not know true sailors' ways.

SEBASTIAN: Yet I can learn!

ANTONIO: Nay! I fear you are too old to learn!

SEBASTIAN: I too old? I'm only \_\_\_\_\_. (Actor gives his real age.)

ANTONIO: Oh yes, too old for the task you would be required to perform.

SEBASTIAN: You are certain, Antonio?

ANTONIO: I am most certain, my former special friend. So let us not go there! Let us part as what we were, not as some other selves that are not meant to be. . . . Is that some gift, some parting gift, that you have brought for me?

SEBASTIAN: No, it is my gear packed in a hurry for the trip once I left behind my life for thee.

ANTONIO: Oh, no, Sebastian. You should have asked me before you ran. I hope it is possible for you to return to your home, to your Oblivia.

SEBASTIAN: To my oblivion, I think.

ANTONIO: You did not tell her what you were about to do!?

SEBASTIAN: I am afraid I did, my friend. I am afraid I did.

ANTONIO: We must always watch our words, lest people throw them in our face. Think you she will take you back?

SEBASTIAN: I know not what she will do.

ANTONIO: The money's mostly hers?

SEBASTIAN: Indeed.

ANTONIO: A shame. Yet do you not have as much on her as she on you? Your wife pursues boyish girls and even dresses them and sings naughty catches betwixt their legs. That's as strange as anything I've seen, even on a pirate ship, and surely gives you ammunition to lodge at her, should she dislodge an arsenal about what you were about to do!

SEBASTIAN: Oblivia is strangely made, in more ways than just the boyish girls she craves. For some reason she does not see herself as flawed, just rather "pert." However, if I run off to "pirate ways," she'd have a fit and even have me carted off to jail.

ANTONIO: That is a standard double and unfair! How dare she, or all the world, think it "pert" and la-de-da if she likes boyish girls, but some of us like boyish boys! But I will not speechify about this gall, monstrous though it be – although this perch is quite the soapbox, truth be told, because I must haul anchor with the rest and sail forth upon the pounding, bounding main!

SEBASTIAN: Farewell, my friend. I wish that I could go with thee.

ANTONIO: Farewell, my boy. I will think of thee – at sea! On all the seven seas!

SEBASTIAN: (removes a wrapped item from his gear) I do have something you can take. This souvenir, old friend, of what we were before! (Holds up the item.)

ANTONIO: Do throw it to me. Canst do? (Holds out his hands.)

SEBASTIAN: I canst. (Throws the wrapped item to Antonio.) Keep it near your heart, Antonio. Never have I given such to any other man.

ANTONIO: Let me see what you have thrown to me. (Looks inside.) Now what could this be, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN: It is hardtack, now but a crust, that I would have you have.

ANTONIO: But why hardtack (Checks it, bites it.) that is old and hard as rock? It can't be baked this year. Neither you nor I could ever nibble it, nor would it nourish you or me in any way now.

SEBASTIAN: It is hardtack that I saved from long ago. I've kept in a cloth you once gave to me. It is the biscuit that I took from our last meal as one.

ANTONIO: Oh no, Sebastian! You've kept it all this while? I did not know.

SEBASTIAN: I told no one, of course, but always kept it near my heart. From time to time I took it out and pressed it to my lips. It brought back the memory of what we were, each to each, now dead, alas, now dead.

ANTONIO: Oh, Sebastian, you have touched my heart. I had no idea your memory of me was so sweet. Forsooth, I felt you had forgotten me o'er time. Yet now I see the very proof here in my hand that in your way you did once love me too.

SEBASTIAN: I did.

(There is a moment — we think the two become a couple and sail away together.)

ANTONIO: Well, here's your hardtack back! (Throws it to Sebastian.) I would not steal our souvenir. And here, take from me a gift! (Takes out his gift, throws it to Sebastian, who catches it or doesn't.)

SEBASTIAN: I am overwhelmed! What is this gift?

ANTONIO: Try it on. See if it fits thee.

SEBASTIAN: (unwrapping the gift) Ah! . . . What is this? I cannot really tell.

ANTONIO: Lift it up above your cheek.

SEBASTIAN: Above my cheek? Like so? (He does.)

ANTONIO: Now press it to your face.

SEBASTIAN: To my face? Like this? (Presses the eye-patch on his cheek.)

ANTONIO: A little higher, Sebastian. (Demonstrates where an eye-patch goes.) It is not a mole!

SEBASTIAN: Now I see! (Places the eye-patch over one eye.) Or make that at least half-see! Does it become me, Antonio? What do you think? (Stands hands on hips, with the eye-patch in place.)

ANTONIO: It is you, Sebastian. It is you! Wear it in this new phase of your life. Wear it proudly where'er you prowl, whether hither or thither!

SEBASTIAN: I will, sir. That I will. I thank you for setting me on to happy days.

ANTONIO: Adieu, adieu, Sebastian! I must leave now, and you must go. That way! (Points.) To our separate —

SEBASTIAN: — manly, pirate ways!

(Antonio disappears. Sebastian lingers, a bit sad, touching the eye-patch, then takes a small bite out of the hardtack biscuit that he has saved all this time.)

SEBASTIAN: Partings are a part of life, and we must endure them as best we can.  
But I do not think I can form a couplet, not just now, just to round it off.

(He walks off slowly.)

## INTERMISSION

## ACT III

### SCENE 20

#### A Room in Oblivia and Sebastian's House

(John B. Simpleton is scrubbing the floor, with a brush and pail, on his hands and knees.)

(Enter Oblivia.)

OBLIVIA: Oh, there you are, Simpleton! I have been looking everywhere for you.

JOHN: I've been right here for over an hour, scrubbing yet another floor. How did you miss me, milady?

OBLIVIA: It's a big house. By the way, be sure to scrub the privy from top to bottom – and thoroughly, need I add?! And soon!

JOHN: Of course, milady.

OBLIVIA: I like it clean, clean! Oh! There is a spot over there you missed. (Points.)

JOHN: Where's that, Madame?

OBLIVIA: Over there! In that nook. Can't you see it? Or maybe it's a cranny. It looks like muck. Have the hounds been in the house again?

JOHN: I'll get it later, milady, if I may. I —

OBLIVIA: You'll get it now! You know I can't abide a dirty floor.

JOHN: I will have to walk on what I've done already, Ma'am, to clean that part again.

OBLIVIA: I care not! Clean what you walk on once you've cleaned that spot that I can't endure to see over there. This minute!

JOHN: Yes, Madame. (Moves the brush and pail to a place we've seen him already clean.) Here, Madame?

OBLIVIA: I think that's the one. It doesn't look quite so mucky from this angle now. But when I came in, it did.

JOHN: So should I clean it here again or not?

OBLIVIA: Oh, I don't know! How tiresome you are, Simpleton! Let me look at that muck again, from where I was. (Walks on the part he has cleaned.)

JOHN: (warning her gently) Madame, that's where I . . .

OBLIVIA: I may have been wrong. From here it looks fine. Let me see from over here. (Walks on another part that he has cleaned.)

JOHN: Be careful, Madame. I already scrubbed that part. . . . I wouldn't want you to slip and break your neck.

OBLIVIA: Of course you wouldn't. How thoughtful, Simpleton. You are a treasure, even if you are quite a stupid dunce.

JOHN: Thank you, Ma'am.

OBLIVIA: Did I hire you or did you come with the house?

JOHN: I did not with the house, milady, but it was expected that I would follow my father and work here.

OBLIVIA: How wonderful! Is it not nice when there is continuity in a home, generation after generation?! It gives society such a sense of peace.

JOHN: If you say so, Lady Oblivia.

OBLIVIA: I do say so! And when you are *finished* with these floors, there is another task I have for you.

JOHN: It will be my pleasure, Ma'am.

OBLIVIA: Of course it will!

JOHN: What is it, Ma'am? May I know?

OBLIVIA: You *can* write, as I recall?

JOHN: I'm serviceable, Madame, with a pen.

OBLIVIA: I want you to employ your very finest cursive hand and write – and address as well – some invitations to a private ball of mine – a *masqueraded* ball. I do so love a ball of masquerade! Here are the names of the invited and also the text of what the invitations should contain. (Hands him a paper.)

JOHN: (taking it even though his hands are already full) Thank you, milady.

OBLIVIA: Be very careful with the ink. No foul smudges, no loathsome blots. Each invitation must be a semi-precious gem. Proofread them twenty times apiece. I do not want my guests to think that I am illiterate or slovenly.

JOHN: No, Ma'am. Is it a special occasion for which you hold this ball?

OBLIVIA: Indeed! My husband has run off to be a pirate, and I am celebrating!

JOHN: You are not unhappy he is gone?

OBLIVIA: Naturally I'm miserable, but what can one do?! And clean up any spelling errors or grammatical lapses that you may find.

JOHN: As best I can.

OBLIVIA: Your best had better be the best, Simpleton, if you like your job here in my house. *Agreed?*

JOHN: Is that all, Madame, or may I beg for more?

OBLIVIA: Is that some “tone” I sense beneath those words?

JOHN: No, milady.

OBLIVIA: I should hope not. There are always plenty of would-be servants who would love to service me.

JOHN: I thank you, Madame, for my post. If that is all, I will get back on my hands and knees to finish this task I have here.

OBLIVIA: Be sure to wash your hands before you do those invitations. Is that clear? And not with this stinking, filthy water in the pail. I’ve seen your lot trying to cut corners with my health!

JOHN: I wouldn’t ever do that, Ma’am. I will draw fresh water from the well. Will that be all?

OBLIVIA: Of course that’s not all! When these floors are done, the invitations writ by hand – and *addressed* as well – double check those addresses with the post, then carry each one to the persons on my list. And do it before this night doth fall. I want the ball to be this Saturday – *this* Saturday, not *next* Saturday, the day after tomorrow after tomorrow. Clear? (Starts to leave.)

JOHN: Yes, Ma’am. . . . Ma’am!

OBLIVIA: (stopping) Yes, Simpleton?

JOHN: By your leave . . . have you ever given any thought to perhaps . . .

OBLIVIA: Yes? Out with it!

JOHN: To hiring more help.

OBLIVIA: Around here?

JOHN: It’s a big house.

OBLIVIA: Are you mad as well as stupid, Simpleton? One servant is more than enough for what we need. I know it’s fashionable, but to have more than one servant I believe not only is to squander one’s money, it is pretentiousness personified! Carry on!

JOHN: Yes, Ma’am. (Goes back to scrubbing the floor.)

OBLIVIA: And now I must see cook about the food. At least you don’t have to prepare that, Simpleton, just serve it. (singing) La, la, la, la! A ball, a ball! I am unafraid. La, la, la, la! Sebastian’s gone, and I’m to have a ball of masquerade! (loudly) *La!* (Exits.)



## SCENE 21

### Sir Toby and Ave Mariah's House

(Toby and Ave Mariah are on the floor, full clothed, under a blanket, having sex.)

(Enter Sir Andrew.)

ANDREW: I just want you two to know that I am leaving this house!

TOBY: (sticks head out from blanket) Goodbye!

AVE MARIAH: (sticks head out from blanket) Goodbye, Sir Andrew!

(They go back to having sex.)

ANDREW: (not noticing that they are having sex) Aren't you going to ask me why I am leaving?

TOBY: (under the blanket) No!

AVE MARIAH: (under the blanket, indifferently) Why are you leaving?

(The two change their sexual positions under the blanket.)

ANDREW: I am leaving because I have been shabbily mistreated in this household. I will not enumerate the endless humiliations I have suffered at your hands! . . . The frustrated hopes! . . . The endless gulls! . . . The bad food! . . . The –

AVE MARIAH: (incensed) Bad food?! (Looks out from the blanket.)

(Toby pulls her back under.)

ANDREW: Atrocious food – bacon not fit for swine to eat! Eggs runny from the yolk! You know I hate that, and still you made them run! . . . Are you listening to me, you two?

AVE MARIAH/TOBY: We are! Goodbye! (The blanket moves.)

ANDREW: And I want you to know that I am suing you in a court of law.

TOBY: You have told us that already!

ANDREW: I do not wish to be underhanded in any manner. That is why I am telling you again, as an upright gentleman who always tells the truth.

TOBY: Except when you're lying!

ANDREW: Right. Except when I'm lying. Yet I never lie without cause or provocation. It is you two who have lied and trapped me in your web for years!

AVE MARIAH: You could have left long ago.

ANDREW: I could have, yes, but I trusted you, about Lady T and all the rest.

TOBY: She may yet be yours, Sir Andrew, if you but hold on.

ANDREW: I will not hold on another day! I am gone! (Doesn't leave.)

AVE MARIAH: (peeking from under the blanket) Is he gone?

ANDREW: I am not. I have not said my entire piece. I wish to leave in peace, even though I am suing you through lawyer Fester.

TOBY: (peeking out) Say your piece and leave in peace. Can't you see I want a piece myself?! (Goes back under the blanket, pulls Ave Mariah under.)

ANDREW: Don't you two try to hide under those covers. That won't work with me! Show yourselves, like men, to me!

AVE MARIAH: I'm not a man!

TOBY: Thank God! Andrew dear, believe me you would not wish to see either of us face to face at this time.

ANDREW: And, pray, why not? I'll soon be gone, and there'll be no more face to face, to face when I am gone!

TOBY: We hear you not! See you in court, my friend!

ANDREW: Wait until the judge hears how you cozened me!

TOBY: You are as guilty as the two of us – seeking ladies beyond your reach!

AVE MARIAH: You would have taken their money too, if you had been able to get even one!

ANDREW: Beyond my reach?! Calumny abounds within this filthy hovel! My reach is great! My state is great! 'Tis always been my fate to make women, rich and poor, love me and want me for a mate – except of late.

TOBY: (looking out from blanket) Stop rhyming! (to his wife) Ave Mariah, what's our lucky number?

(Ave Mariah looks out from under the blanket; then she and Toby get into the 69 position under the blanket.)

ANDREW: Will you two not be still?! How can you hear me under there like that? And don't claim it's cold. It's not!

TOBY: (under the blanket) We can't hear you! Goodbye!

ANDREW: So I'm going, I say! (He doesn't want to leave.)

(No answer.)

ANDREW: Remember who it was that heard of Viola's divorce and conveyed that news to you, which you conveyed to your niece, thus re-animating her love for you!

(No answer. Andrew lingers.)

ANDREW: I could withdraw my lawsuit . . . if you apologise. (No response.) I could let you try again, to get me Lady *Teazforth* as my bride . . .

(Enter John, looks around.)

JOHN: I have an invitation for you all!

(Toby and Ave Mariah stop moving under the blanket.)

TOBY: (looking out) From who?

JOHN: From your niece, the Lady Oblivia, for a ball, a ball of masquerade.

ANDREW: (joyful) A masquerade! I do so love a masquerade! Am I invited too?

TOBY: But you are about to leave, my friend.

JOHN: (bowing to Sir Andrew) Pray, do not let me impede your way.

ANDREW: (not wanting to leave) True, I do not have time to hear this news. . . . But just when *is* this ball of masquerade?

JOHN: I have here the invitation. (Holds it up.)

TOBY: Read it, Sir Andrew, if you like. Oh, but you're going away!

ANDREW: I will read if, if I like! (Takes the invitation from John.) I have never been to a ball of masquerade, actually. (clearing his throat, then reading the invitation) Hum! "It is my pressure to invite you to my home," it says.

JOHN: That should be "pleasure," sir, not "pressure." My handwriting is not all that it could be.

ANDREW: Did not the Lady Oblivia pen this invitation herself?

JOHN: The words are hers. The penmanship, such as it is, is mine.

AVE MARIAH: A true lady would pen such things herself.

JOHN: My lady is so very busy during her days; she has no time for it.

TOBY: My niece is a paragon of comely grace and naturally would delegate such menial tasks as this to one lower on her echelon. Read on, Sir Andrew!

ANDREW: (reading) "If you would give me the horror of your company"—

JOHN: That's "honour," sir.

ANDREW: (reading) "— the honour of your company, on Saturday, *this* Saturday, not *next* Saturday, the day after tomorrow after tomorrow, I would be delighted to see you at my ball of masquerade from nine to one, clothing optional." Clothing optional?

JOHN: I think my lady meant to say "costumes optional."

ANDREW: I am not going to this ball without a costume on!

JOHN: I am sure my lady thanks you for that, sir.

ANDREW: (to Toby and Ave Mariah) I do think I would look good dressed as a Fool!  
What do you two think?

TOBY: The perfect choice!

AVE MARIAH: (excited) And I will go as Lady T —

TOBY:(cutting her off) *T*-rrific! I'm sure whatever choice you make will be marvelous. *T*-rrific!

JOHN: Shall I tell the Lady Oblivia that you all will come? She does request an answer, please.

ANDREW: (referring to the invitation) Yes, it says here: "R.S.P.P." I think that means "*Repondez* if you need a chamber pot." Such balls can be quite long, I've heard.

JOHN: If I may, I think it is supposed to be "R.S.V.P." It is my writing's fault, again, I fear.

ANDREW: (pretentiously) I do not know if I can attend a ball of masquerade if there are so many errors in the invitation!

TOBY: Then don't go. Ave Mariah, do you want to go, my dear?

AVE MARIAH: You couldn't stop me. Let me go and start getting ready now. (Throws off the blanket, starts to run off.)

JOHN: You still have lots of time, Mrs. Fartte. It's —

TOBY: (correcting) That's *Farr*te!

JOHN: Sorry.

AVE MARIAH: It's the day after tomorrow. That's barely time enough!

JOHN: It's the day after tomorrow *after* tomorrow!

AVE MARIAH: Is that *this* Saturday or *next* Saturday?

JOHN: This Saturday!

AVE MARIAH: I make that three days! (Off she runs.)

JOHN: (to Toby) So that is a definite yes from two of you?

TOBY: It is.

JOHN: (to Andrew) And you, sir, may I put you down?

ANDREW: Put me down?! No, sir, you may not put me down! I'll draw my sword if you do and lop away your nose! (Draws his sword.)

TOBY: I believe this fellow means should he put you on the guest list, Andrew dear.

ANDREW: He does?

JOHN: I do.

ANDREW: (putting his sword away) Tell the Lady Oblivia that I accept. But I may arrive alone, as my companions here are not as once they were to me.

JOHN: What you will, sir. Good day. I must be off, for I have other invitations to deliver. (Hands out two invitations, bows and leaves.)

TOBY: I'm glad you are going to the ball, Andrew. I think it will do you good. You can dance and flirt. Who knows what might come of that?!

ANDREW: You think?

TOBY: One never knows in this life when love may pierce a heart. Why not a ball of masquerade and you dressed as a Fool?!

ANDREW: Why not indeed! But I am taking my own carriage there. (Grabs an invitation.)

TOBY: I wouldn't have it any other way. (Bows, starts to leave.)

ANDREW: One word with you, Sir Toby, ere you leave.

TOBY: (stopping) Yes, Andrew, what is it you'd like me to know?

ANDREW: I could not help noticing when I came in that you and Ave Maria were . . .

TOBY: Yes, we were. You could have knocked.

ANDREW: I could have, that is true.

TOBY: And your question is?

ANDREW: What *were* you two doing under there?

TOBY: (at a loss for words) What were we . . . ? You're joking, sure!

ANDREW: I tell no jokes! What do you mean?!

TOBY: Oh, Andrew, I think we need to have a talk.

ANDREW: A talk? Of what? Is this a trick?

TOBY: Yes, Nature's trick. But one I thought you knew. Come with me, lad. It's time you learned at – what's your age?

ANDREW: (actor gives his real age)

TOBY: I don't know what you had planned for any of the ladies we arranged for you. Indeed I dare not specify it in my mind. But apparently it's time you learned at a thing or two! (Places his arm around Andrew's shoulders and leads him off.) Come, my man, I insist.

ANDREW: What thing or two? Is there something I have missed? (Exit together.)

## SCENE 22

### Viola and Sebastian's House

(Duke Porcino is eating at a table)

(Enter Viola, dressed as a woman in an actual dress.)

VIOLA: Good day, husband.

PORCINO: Good day, my dear. Come join me for a meal.

VIOLA: I've had my meal today. I need no more.

PORCINO: You had a meal without me?

VIOLA: I did.

PORCINO: But why? Sometimes I think you dislike me. We haven't dined together in some time.

VIOLA: (trying to summon up the courage tell him she is divorcing him) Kind husband . . . dearest Duke . . .  
Porcino, son of Porcinos back to God knows when . . . My Angus.

PORCINO: Yes?

VIOLA: There is something I would like to say.

PORCINO: Is it about the mutton? You're right, it is somewhat gray and fat. (He eats it anyway.)

VIOLA: It's not about the mutton, my love.

PORCINO: Is it about the pheasant necks? You're right, they are rather gamey and full of shot. (He eats them anyway.)

VIOLA: No, my love, it's not about the pheasant necks. Nor about the mustard sauce or the buttered baby green beans!

PORCINO: The mashed peas then? You're right, they are somewhat stale. (Starts to take a bite.)

VIOLA: Angus!

PORCINO: (stops eating) What?! I'm listening.

VIOLA: I am trying to tell you something important!

PORCINO: What could be more important than what we eat? That is what keeps us healthy, don't you know?  
The more one eats, the more one's health!

VIOLA: There are other healths than constant mastication!

PORCINO: You eat right, you act right, my dear.

VIOLA: I came to tell you that I'm . . .

PORCINO: Let me guess! I love a guessing game! You're dicing me some quail for sandwiches for afternoon tea?

VIOLA: Not so. Guess again.

PORCINO: Is it breaded suet perhaps? With some sugared lollies and some cheese?

VIOLA: No, I'm afraid it isn't any one of those.

PORCINO: Then it's something for high tea this evening! Dumplings, chicken brains, and fresh calves' tongue on toast!?

VIOLA: Porcino!

PORCINO: Don't tell me! It's for dinner then! Crayfish casserole and fish eyeball soup and chips!?

VIOLA: No!

PORCINO: Then late supper, it must be! Blood sausages and wilted garden herbs, with chips!?

VIOLA: None of those, nor is it a midnight snack of sweetmeats and jellied eels upon a tray beside your bed!

PORCINO: You've beat me, I confess, for I cannot cuss it out, my love.

VIOLA: Oh dear, oh dear, I can't bring myself to spell it out.

PORCINO: Have you indigestion, Viola? There are some winter-mints on the table over there.

VIOLA: No winter-mints will cure my heartburn, no!

PORCINO: Hah! I've got it. Could it be a stoup of claret and melted cherries without stones that you are bringing me tonight in bed?

VIOLA: Excuse me, husband. I feel faint. I must withdraw and better shape my words. I will to you again.  
(aside) I will not leave him wondering and uncomforted ere I go. But I will go indeed! (Starts to exit.)

PORCINO: You feel faint, Viola dear, because you fail to eat. It is not good for you. Come have something here. I think I may have left a scrap or two.

VIOLA: I thank you, but I must withdraw for now.

PORCINO: I do so love my food! Perchance one day I will be able to show pictures of it to my friends even if they are not around! (He fights off a sudden near-puke.) Oh! This came. (Points to an envelope on the table.) I think it is an invitation of some sort.

VIOLA: (returning) From whom? And what does it say?

PORCINO: I have not had time to read it yet. It may be from the Lady Oblivia.

VIOLA: From Oblivia and you not find the time?

PORCINO: I needed both hands to eat. Why don't you read it to me now? It is, I believe, addressed to both of us.

(Viola snatches the invitation up and reads it silently.)

PORCINO: What says that lady fair?



VIOLA: It's to a masqueraded ball. (aside) Oh, dare I go?

PORCINO: One with costumes, do you mean?

VIOLA: I do. . . . But should we go?

PORCINO: Of course we shall go. I have already accepted for the two of us.

VIOLA: Unread?

PORCINO: The servant who brought it said he thought they would be serving Flemish goat cutlets! My favorite!  
Naturally we must go and be seen.

VIOLA: But in disguises?

PORCINO: I think I shall go as Lothario, the best lover of all time. Who better than a real lothario at this ball,  
no? Oh, and there's a box that came with the invitation. Over there.

(Viola gets the box and holds it up unopened.)

VIOLA: I think I know what sort of garb Oblivia would have me in. If I go.

PORCINO: *If you go?! If I go, you must go. Open it! Open it! Did she send some food?*

VIOLA: No, she didn't. No! No! No! (Runs off with the box.) It is not food!

PORCINO: Well . . . how rude! How rude! How rude!

**BLACKOUT**

## SCENE 23

### Malvolio's House

(Enter John, weary, with some invitations and a package tied with twine.)

JOHN: Greetings to this house! . . . Is someone here?

(Enter Molly.)

MOLLY: I am here.

JOHN: You live here?

MOLLY: I will once I marry Mr. Malvolio.

JOHN: Then you'll be Mrs. Malvolio?

MOLLY: That's the usual arrangement.

JOHN: Is the date set?

MOLLY: How can I help you?

JOHN: You probably do not remember me, miss, but I gave you the tour and served you luncheon at my lady's estate.

MOLLY: But I do remember you. You served us admirably.

JOHN: I thank you, miss. I do my best.

MOLLY: I thought you handled all those plates and silverware and endless courses very well.

JOHN: It's nice to be noticed.

MOLLY: What have you there? (Gestures at the invitations and package.)

JOHN: It's an invitation, miss.

MOLLY: And it is for?

(Enter Malvolio.)

MALVOLIO: For me, of course. Is this not *my* home? Give it me. Ah, my two spies, each one more incompetent than the other! One I send to a lawyer, the other I send to gather incriminating evidence. And what do I get from both? Nothing! . . . Give it me.

JOHN: (hesitating) Ah, sir . . . I . . .

MALVOLIO: For God's sake, give it me! What's wrong with you?

JOHN: I am sorry, sir, but this invitation is not for you.

MALVOLIO: What?!

JOHN: It is for one Molly Brightheart. That's you, miss, is it not?

MOLLY: For me!?

MALVOLIO: Impossible. Who sent it?

JOHN: Lady Oblivia Lovecock.

MALVOLIO: Unfortunate name! You're sure it's not for me?

JOHN: It says plainly, sir. (Shows the invitation to Malvolio.)

MALVOLIO: I see. I suppose one cannot expect invitations from one's enemies, can one? Are you quite certain there is not also one for me?

MOLLY: Let me open it. Perhaps it mentions you inside, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: I would not go if I were begged! . . . (overly curious) What does it say?

MOLLY: (opening and reading the invitation) "Dearest Molly Brightheart, it is with almost sisterly affection, from our one meeting, that I summon you to my estate for a ball of marmalade." "A ball of *marmalade*?" Is that code for something?

JOHN: Excuse the mistakes, miss. They're my fault. It should read "ball of masquerade."

MOLLY: I'm sure that a ball of marmalade must be fun too!

MALVOLIO: Good grief!

MOLLY: "Come this Saturday, not next Saturday, the day after tomorrow after tomorrow, from nine to one." (She counts silently on her fingers.) "Dress as you like, but it would please me to a fare-thee-well if you would wear the clothes that I enclose within." (Looks inside the small envelope.) The clothes *within*?

MALVOLIO: What obscenity is this?! Olivia wants you to come to her naked!?! (Snatches the invitation from Molly's hand.)

MOLLY: Naked! . . . *Naked*?

JOHN: Excuse me, miss. My lady also sent this package with this note. (Shows the package.)

MALVOLIO: Of course you did! I see that your work for the Lady Olivia is as inept as that you have done for me.

JOHN: I am sorry, sir. I have many jobs.

MOLLY: A ball of masquerade and in a grand house! Oh, my!

MALVOLIO: Your days of frequenting such people are done, my dear. You are not going. The place will be crawling with people of the worst sort, degenerates and the cross-clothed, and even those who want to dance!

JOHN: But of the upper classes, sir!

MALVOLIO: Precisely! Let this be your R.S.V.P. (Thrusts the invitation back into John's hands.)

MOLLY: Oh, no!

MALVOLIO: What? You *want* to go?!

MOLLY: It would be impolite to refuse an invitation so gracefully penned.

JOHN: That's my penmanship, miss!

MOLLY: I have been invited by the mighty!

JOHN: Yay, even summoned, miss. You don't ignore a summons from the Lady Oblivia.

MALVOLIO: What are these clothes he's brought? (Takes the package.)

MOLLY: No doubt some costume I'm to wear. The gracious lady knows how poor I am and hence sends me something fine.

MALVOLIO: Shall we open it, like "spies?"

MOLLY: It is addressed to *me*, Malvolio.

MALVOLIO: So what? When we are wed, I shall open everything of yours, as a moral husband must!

MOLLY: You will?!

MALVOLIO: What's wrong with you, Molly?! Naturally I will. This invitation and this package of God knows what have quite unhinged your faculties. Away with them!

JOHN: (to Molly) Miss?

MOLLY: I guess I must let them go, if I am to be wed.

MALVOLIO: Enough of this folderol! Take the invitation and the box and tell the Lady Lovecock that we curse her very name!

JOHN: So that's a no?

MALVOLIO: Yes, oaf, we're not coming! Not even one of us!

JOHN: Just want to get the guest list right. My lady will be disappointed, miss. I know she will.

MOLLY: And so will I. I have never been to a ball of any kind.

MALVOLIO: Good! What they have there is every vice known to men!

JOHN: And women too, sir. Women are welcome, just the same as men.

MALVOLIO: Apparently, the grand lady does not need spies to find her out in her "oddities." She reveals herself each day with more and more impunity.

JOHN: I don't think the Lady Oblivia cares very much what others think about her, sir.

MALVOLIO: She will when she is in a dark hole and howling for her girls in boyish clothes! The tide is turning back to holiness again! And not a moment too soon!

JOHN: Will that be all, sir? And miss?

MOLLY: That's all today . . . What is your name?

MALVOLIO: Who cares what his name is! See him out. Out! And take this rubbish with you when you go. I will away to prayers and another fast. (Starts, then stops.) Are you certain the lady did not include an invitation for yours truly somewhere?

JOHN: No, Sir Malvolio. But I don't believe she has your latest address. That must be why she didn't include you.

MALVOLIO: Oh, shut your lips, Simpleton. Don't try to soothe it o'er. I would not go in a heathen costume to a dance when invited by a transvestite-loving whore to save my soul! (Starts to leave, stops.) Molly, when you have seen him out, I want to see you within!

(Exits.)

JOHN: (with the package) I'm sorry, miss, that you cannot go. It should prove quite a jolly time.

MOLLY: I am sorry too. But Malvolio's mind is set . . . in stone.

JOHN: So you have been a spy too? We're two spies, it seems! (Smiles.)

MOLLY: Neither one of us, I think, must give up our day job to be permanently spies. (Smiles.)

JOHN: I think you're right. I am not very good at it. But I work hard.

MOLLY: You may be a bad spy, but you appear to be a good man . . .

JOHN: . . . John.

MOLLY: That's everything, John.

JOHN: I try to be, miss. I suspect you are the same, only smarter. I wish you well in your marriage to Malvolio. It's good that you have got yourself a good man – a good man who is so very “good” indeed.

MOLLY: Perhaps too “good” for me, if truth be told. And yet I do so wish to be a wife! . . . Let's step over here, John, and see about this ball.

(They step to the side, and Molly longingly looks at the invitation again.)

JOHN: (in a whisper) Do you mean, miss, that you might defy Malvolio and attend it anyway?

(Molly takes the package from him.)

JOHN: (impressed) Miss!

MOLLY: Yes!

JOHN: That's this Saturday, not next, the day after tomorrow after tomorrow!

MOLLY: I know! . . . Who is Malvolio to tell me where I may go and what I am to, or not to, wear? Now run and tell your mistress I will be there!

(Both exit in opposite directions.)

## SCENE 24

### Lawyer Fester's Office

(Fester and Fabian are in the midst of a quarrel.)

FABIAN: Oh, for the sake of God, who does most of the work around here?! Me!

FESTER: You file parchments! That's what you do! You idler! You clown!

FABIAN: When people come to this office, I give them charm. That's what I give them! Charm!

FESTER: You have about as much charm as a skunk's stinkhole! Oh, get to work. No wonder we never get to court with any of our cases.

FABIAN: *You* get to work. Start on the cases you started before you hired me!

(The doorbell rings. John enters.)

FESTER: (to Fabian) A customer!

(Both put on fake friendly smiles.)

FABIAN: Yes! How can we help you, sir?

JOHN: You don't remember me? I was here before.

FESTER: We see a plethora of clients. We are much in demand.

FABIAN: Because we do so good a job! Naturally we are hard pressed to recall a name or two –

JOHN: (to Fabian) You did not like it that I called you a "lackey."

FABIAN: Did I? Oh, yes. . . . Well, what can the law firm of Fester, Fester, Fester, and *Fabian* do for you today?

FESTER: Make that no *Fabian* at the end. My clerk misspoke, Mr. . . . ?

JOHN: Simpleton. I spoke with you concerning the Lady Oblivia, about the way she treats me in her service. She herself I mean not to harm, for she is, by and large, a grand lady. In truth, it was not my idea to sue her but someone else's. But –

FABIAN: Do you want to sue the lady or not?

FESTER: Ah, now I recall it perfectly. We almost have your case done. Don't we, Fabian?

FABIAN: (lying) We do! Fester, Fester, Fester, and Fabian always does the job!

FESTER: At least Fester does. That is why *his* name is so prominently displayed outside.

FABIAN: Although it could be more about someone's ego than competence.

JOHN: (seeing that they are quarreling) I could return some other time. I was just in the vicinity with some errands for my lady and thought that I might check in to see if . . . (Shows the invitations.)

FESTER: Pray tell, what have you there? Invitations?

JOHN: Oh, they are, sir, just not for you.

FABIAN: (enjoying the rejection of Fester) Hah! So much for former employers!

FESTER: They aren't, by chance, some ruse? Invitations, yes, but invitations to a *court*! Counter-charges to your case to be filed?

JOHN: I don't think so, sir. Have you filed on my behalf then?

FESTER: We are just about to, very near!

JOHN: Oh, good! I do love my lady, I affirm. I just want her to give me a day off now and then. And maybe hire a second servant besides me for some of the chores. And not call me names!

FABIAN: Sounds like a case *I* can really get behind at last!

FESTER: (to John, but also meant for Fabian) Don't wish too hard for another servant. She could hire one and let *you* go!

JOHN: I hadn't thought of that.

FABIAN: Be sure you have dirt aplenty on your employer, to be safe.

FESTER: Remember. The law can cut both ways. (to John) As I recall, we said that the suing for damages against your lady would be best. Correct?

FABIAN: For calling you despicable names.

JOHN: And don't forget the cold urine on my head!

FESTER: Your case is all but done. Fabian here has seen to that.

FABIAN: A comma or a dash yet to do!

JOHN: That is so good to hear. I hope that I can last until my case is filed.

FESTER: And won!

JOHN: And won! I am exhausted on most days. And I will be expected to serve at the ball of masquerade.

FABIAN: (slyly) A ball?

FESTER: (even more slyly) Which ball?

JOHN: The one my lady is throwing for her friends. The one you're not invited to.

FABIAN: It sounds won –

FESTER: Terrible! Who'd want to go to something one is not invited to?

FABIAN: I would consider going. People will most likely be drunk and in masks, and who knows what may come out of that! More cases to take on!

JOHN: That's true. The last time Lady Oblivia held a ball, someone got smashed in the face with a birdbath.

FESTER: No!

JOHN: Yes. Me!

FABIAN: That's why our law firm needs to see for itself what is going on there, to keep a nose out.

FESTER: For yourself, you mean.

FABIAN: Talk about "for yourself." That's *your* highest calling!

JOHN: I can come back another time.

FABIAN: No, Simpleton. There is no time like the present. Let me inspect that invitation.

JOHN: I could not do that, sir. 'Twould be wrong. It would violate my lady's trust.

FABIAN: Even though you're suing her in court? Just let me take a peek. (Snatches the invitation from John.)  
Aha! This one is addressed to . . . (Tries to read it.) I can't make it out. Is it . . . Lord and Lady  
Drainege?



JOHN: That is correct, sir. They are from the *lochs* in the cold, Scottish north. (He says *lochs* with a very heavy Scottish burr, as does everybody from now on. Everyone also covers themselves with their arms and shivers with the “cold” whenever it is said.) The Lady Oblivia has decided to invite them although she has never met them, because they are rumored to be bad landlords, always a plus in her mind.

FABIAN: I have heard of them. The Draineges. Very bad landlords from the *lochs*.

JOHN: In the cold, Scottish north. (Shivers.) I’ll have to post their invitation in order to reach them in time. It’s *this* Saturday, not *next* Saturday.

FABIAN: Is that the day after tomorrow after tomorrow?

JOHN: It is! Very high in society, they are, the Draineges, I believe.

FABIAN: And who else is going to this ball?

JOHN: I cannot cough that up. I cannot.

FABIAN: No need to cough it up. Just tell me a few names.

FESTER: Is Lady Viola, by any chance, going too?

JOHN: She has been invited, yes. . . . Only I can’t tell you that.

FESTER: Come over here, Simpleton. Let me show you the parchments for your case.

JOHN: Oh, I’d like to see those!

FESTER: Are these they, Fabian? (Looks through blank parchments.)

FABIAN: I’m sure you know, boss, with your finger on the pulse of Fester, Fester, Fester, and . . . Lackey.

FESTER: If my clerk, Mr. Fabian, wants to advance in this firm, perhaps he should work more efficiently with the head. (He urges John to come and look at the parchments. Then he signals Fabian that some trick on Simpleton is being planned.)

(Behind John's back Fabian spreads his arms with a silent question to Fester about what is going on.)

FESTER: (to John) Here are your parchments!

JOHN: (looking through parchments) I don’t see anything written on them.

FESTER: Hold them with both hands and look exceeding close – we use the finest invisible ink that money can buy.

FABIAN: And our small print is second to none!

JOHN: I must hold the remaining invitation, sir, I'm afraid.

FESTER: Mr. Fabian will gladly hold the invitation for you, Mr. Simpleton.

FABIAN: With pleasure! (Snatches the invitation from John.)

JOHN: I must not lose it!

FABIAN: It is more than safe with me.

FESTER: Look, Simpleton! See your name here! (Shows place on parchment.)

JOHN: (peering very closely at the parchment) My name is here?

FESTER: Just there. (Points.)

JOHN: I think I may need spectacles.

(Fabian holds up the invitation out of John's sight and indicates to Fester that he is stealing it.)

FESTER: Undoubtedly you do need spectacles. But rest assured we are devoted to your case! And soon you will be on easy street – almost a lord!

FABIAN: And you can tell your friends that you owe it all to the firm of Fabian, Fabian, Fabian, and Fabian!

FESTER: My lackey has got the name wrong, as usual. But trust me, you will be taken –

FABIAN: – advantage of –

FESTER: – care of!

JOHN: My! You two are good with words!

FESTER: Words are our business, Mr. Simpleton! Getting them just so.

FABIAN: Mr. Fester is almost as good as his staff.

FESTER: Three times as good, or even four. Thus his name above the door!

JOHN: (seeing that they are quarreling) I can come back another time.

FABIAN: Do!

FESTER: (smiling) Thank you for coming.

JOHN: (surprised) But –

(They both usher John out the door.)

FABIAN: (to Fester) What do you mean showing a client his legal parchments?! Do you want to lose his business?!

FESTER: I wanted you to steal that invitation.

FABIAN: Well, I did! (Holds it up.)

FESTER: Hide it, in case he comes back for it.

FABIAN: He'll think he lost it. (Hides it.)

FESTER: Not the one for Lord and Lady Drainege from the *loch*s in the cold, Scottish north! (Shivers all over.)

FABIAN: Or he'll think it somehow got mailed to them. When –

FESTER: When the Drainege's show up at the ball!

FABIAN: When we go, I'm *not* going in a dress as Lady Drainege!

FESTER: Well, I'm not either! But we've got to get in. A high class drunken ball of masquerade is a ball made for lawsuits! We'll be rich!

FABIAN: You'll be rich! I'll still be hourly. Yet whose idea was it to sneak into this ball? Mine!

FESTER: It was mine!

FABIAN: It was mine and mine alone!

FESTER: You are deceived, Fabian.

FABIAN: Who actually stole the invitation, hmm?

FESTER: Who signaled you to steal the invitation, hmm?!

FABIAN: You are impossible. You won't give me any credit for what we do. To say nothing of the bad pay.

FESTER: You have no degree in law.

FABIAN: I've studied here with you!

FESTER: I have no degree myself. So studying with me means next to nothing when it comes to you.

FABIAN: "Next to nothing." You're right. That is *you* in spades.

FESTER: Let me tell you why you will always be a factotum, a clerk, and a lackey.

FABIAN: I can outwit you any day of the week and twice on Wednesdays.

FESTER: You will always prove to be a loser. You “lose” business for us, more than you gain. You think you're 'charming.' But you are simply smart-mouthed. You “lose” parchments because you really cannot file! You also “lose” your train of thought every day of the week and thrice on Wednesdays! And if you ever sued to become a partner in this law firm, you would “lose” that in court as well! . . . You can also afford to “lose” a little weight, to go with the hair you’re “losing”! Got it!? *Loser!*

FABIAN: And do you know how I respond to all your twisted words?

FESTER: No! How?

FABIAN: Like this. (Walks over and slaps Fester across the face.) Like *that!* And need I add I will be starting my own, competing law firm!?

## BLACKOUT

### SCENE 25

#### Oblivia’s House, the Ballroom

(Enter Oblivia, dressed as Zeus, with a white beard and a white toga.)

OBLIVIA: I think two more chairs here! (Points.)

(Enter John following with two chairs.)

JOHN: Where, Madame?

OBLIVIA: Over here. (Points.)

JOHN: (grunting because the chairs are heavy) Here? (Starts to put them down.)

OBLIVIA: No, perhaps over there! (Points across the stage.)

JOHN: (tired) Over there, Ma’am?

OBLIVIA: Yes, over there, not here.

(John starts to scoot the chairs across the floor.)

OBLIVIA: Are you *scooting*?!

JOHN: Ah . . . I thought I might . . .

OBLIVIA: Pick them up, man! Do you want to leave marks on my beautiful, newly scrubbed floor?

JOHN: I suppose not, but –

OBLIVIA: You know what? I believe those chairs will be fine where they are now, after all.

JOHN: Oh, thank you, Ma'am!

OBLIVIA: Why thank me? I don't understand? (immediately) Or they could go over . . . there.  
(Points to a totally different spot.) Yes, over there. Proceed! And leave plenty of room for dancing!  
I have put the musicians in the next room so that my guests won't be crowded. And because  
musicians tend to be not of the right class.

JOHN: I will, Ma'am. (He carries the two chairs to the place indicated.)

OBLIVIA: Or –

JOHN: Madame, I must take my post at the door. The guests will be arriving soon.

OBLIVIA: Oh, that's right. You are to announce them tonight, are you not?

JOHN: I am.

OBLIVIA: Well, be very careful about projecting their names for the whole assembly to hear. I wish to impress  
with the quality of my guests.

JOHN: Indeed, milady.

OBLIVIA: Be sure to pronounce each and every name and title precisely.

JOHN: Yes, Ma'am. (Starts to leave.)

OBLIVIA: *And* be most insidious in checking the invitations.

JOHN: Do you mean "assiduous," Lady Oblivia?

OBLIVIA: Yes. One of those words! Having you been studying, Simpleton?

JOHN: I confess I have, when I get the chance.

OBLIVIA: Not good, not good. My point is – do not let any crashers through my door. You are to be a veritable  
Serbian –you know, that dog – at the gates of Hades! Clear?

JOHN: I am your Cerberus, milady.

OBLIVIA: Let no one in who did not get invited. And only those who R.S.V.P.*ed* !

JOHN: No, Ma'am.

OBLIVIA: I will never forgive, nor invite again, the dreadful Lord and Lady Drainege from the *lochs* in the cold, Scottish north! (Shivers all over.) They could not be bothered to even send their regrets!

JOHN: I'm sorry, milady. Perhaps their invitation got lost in the post.

OBLIVIA: I don't care! They still should have R.S.V.P.*ed*! They are obviously not as well bred as the name Drainege would portend!

JOHN: May I go now to my other task?

OBLIVIA: Away! I will see to the musicians and the food and drink in the adjoining room. I think everything is set. However, one can never be overly prepared. I want this to be the greatest ball of masquerade this county has ever seen – talked about for months, for years, even written up by the historians of the age!

JOHN: I'm sure it will be, Ma'am.

OBLIVIA: Clear, crisp diction when announcing my guests as they enter! No Cockney crap, I warn you!

JOHN: No, Ma'am. May I ask a question?

OBLIVIA: What?

JOHN: If it is a ball of masquerade, doesn't it defeat the purpose if I announce each guest?

OBLIVIA: Oh, they'll all get mixed up and drunk and won't be able to remember who's who and what's what.

JOHN: If you say so, milady.

OBLIVIA: If I am not here, direct them to the refreshments. (Points off.) If they have wraps, be sure to see to those as well.

JOHN: Wraps too?

OBLIVIA: Don't start on that again, Simpleton! I am not going to be ostentatious and have servants all over this house, as if I have to prove how grand I am with multitudes of help!

(John bows.) (Oblivia sees something offstage.)

OBLIVIA: Hoy there, you, you musicians! I would a word with you about the tunes!

(Exits.)

(John quickly takes off one day uniform and dons a more formal one, as a herald. He finds a trumpet and blows into it, to practice a little, not well.)

(Some music of circa 1571 starts in the adjoining room.)

JOHN: How nice. (Enjoys the music briefly.)

(Then he sees some guests approaching the door where the guests are to enter. He quickly arranges a small portable staircase and takes his place as herald. Each time someone enters, John blows the trumpet, sometimes well, sometimes not.)

(The door opens. Viola and Porcino arrive at front door. He is dressed as a fat Lothario. She is dressed as a boyish Ganymede.)

(Trumpet sound from John.)

PORCINO: (looking in) Are we the first to arrive?

JOHN: You are, my lord. (He takes out the R.S.V.P. list with his free hand.)

PORCINO: Good! That means there will still be food!

VIOLA: (shaking her head) Angus.

JOHN: I think I know who you are, but may I see your invitation, please?

PORCINO: (not pleased) We're supposed to bring the invitation?

VIOLA: (Takes out the invitation from a pocket.) I have it

PORCINO: Thank God for that. That was a close one. I'm famished. I haven't had a bite since supper!

(Viola hands the invitation to John.)

JOHN: Thank you, Ma'am. I mean . . . (He knows that she is meant to be a boy.) (Checks the invitation, then prepares to announce them.) The Duke Porcino and his wife, the Lady Viola!

(The Duke and Viola step further in. Porcino trips, but Viola catches him.)

PORCINO: You need to have those steps looked to, man!

JOHN: What steps? (correcting himself) I will, sir. My lady is in the next room. May I compliment you both on your choice of costumes tonight.

PORCINO: You may! (Porcino waits for the compliment.)

JOHN: (awkward, having given the compliment once) Your costume is splendid, my lord.

VIOLA: Thank you.

PORCINO: Can you tell who we are supposed to be?

JOHN: I could not guess, my lord.

PORCINO: (Parades.) Is't not obvious? (Looks large and "romantic.")

JOHN: Gargantua?

PORCINO: No!

JOHN: Goliath?

PORCINO: No! No! I am Lothario, world renowned for love! (Strikes another pose, heavy lidded.)

JOHN: Of course, sir. Now I see. (to Viola) And you, young sir, I suspect you must have received your costume from my lady.

VIOLA: I may have.

JOHN: You too look splendid. I'm sure she'll approve.

VIOLA: But will *I*?

(Another tune begins offstage.)

PORCINO: (hearing the music) Come, page boy to Lothario! The music, the food! (to John) Where are the two? If food be the music of love, and it is, play on!

(John points to the offstage adjoining room.)

PORCINO: (cocks an ear) I hear! (cocks his nose) I smell! (Rushes off to the other room.)

(Viola tags after him, somewhat embarrassed.)

JOHN: Enjoy yourself tonight!

VIOLA: (reluctantly following her husband) We shall see. (Exits.)

(Sir Toby and Ave Maria appear at the upstage door. He is dressed as himself. She is dressed as Lady Teatsforth with a thick face veil.)

(John hurriedly blows the trumpet.)

TOBY: (handing the invitation to John) We're here.

JOHN: You are milady's uncle, I believe. Or someone dressed like him.

TOBY: (defensively) It says costumes optional. So don't try to throw me out! I am back in my niece's good graces.

(He is obviously drunk. He takes out a jug of wine and takes a slug.)



AVE MARIAH: Toby, don't be so belligerent! We just got here!

TOBY: Oh, you want me to be belligerent *later*? (Laughs.) Well, I can do that too!

AVE MARIAH: As if I didn't know!

TOBY: Announce us, announce us! Tell everybody I'm Dionysus, the god of wine!

AVE MARIAH: And beer and ale and every other goddamned thing!

JOHN: (juggling the invitation, the guest list, the trumpet) (announcing) The Honourable Sir Toby Farrtte –

TOBY: (prompting) “Your lady's uncle.”

JOHN: The Lady Oblivia's uncle!

TOBY: (drunkenly gesturing at Ave Mariah) And her!

JOHN: (announcing) And the Mrs. Farrtte!

AVE MARIAH: (correcting him) No, Lady *Teazforth*.

JOHN: (clearing his throat) The Lady *Teazforth*!

AVE MARIAH: Very good.

(Ave Mariah grandly descends the steps, chest out, and goes toward the next room, following the music.)

(Sir Toby enters next, but he is so drunk he staggers and falls down.)

TOBY: For the sake of God Almighty, fix those steps!

JOHN: Yes, Sir Toby. I'll fix them in the morning.

(Toby, still on the floor, takes another swig and belches.)

AVE MARIAH: Toby, pace yourself!

(Sir Andrew now appears at the door and enters, dressed as a motley Fool with cap and bells.)

(John blows the trumpet.)

ANDREW: I am with Sir Toby – only I'm not. Our names are on the same invitation, but I am not on speaking terms with him. We came in separate carriages. So I don't have my own invitation. But I am somebody!

JOHN: I'd recognise you anywhere, Sir Andrew.

ANDREW: (pleased) Oh, would you? (Shakes his Fool's cap with bells.)

JOHN: (announcing) Sir Andrew Dribbledick!

ANDREW: (prompting) Knight of the realm.

JOHN: Knight! . . . Come in, sir. The dancing will be in here. The food and music are in there.  
(Nods toward offstage.)

ANDREW: (petulantly) I will not dance tonight. Nor do I wish any food.

JOHN: What you will, sir.

ANDREW: And what I *won't* either!

(He enters, trying to look dignified, but looking very much the Fool.)

TOBY: (calling) Old sod, you came!

ANDREW: (calling back) I am not speaking to you!

TOBY: Let bygones be bygones! Come hither and have a slug of wine with me. (Offers his jug of wine.)

ANDREW: I have given up drink. It makes me act the fool!

AVE MARIAH: (to Toby) I will be in the next room. (Exits haughtily.)

(Andrew sees Ave Mariah exit but does not recognise her as Sir Toby's wife. He comes running over to Sir Toby.)

ANDREW: Who is that grand lady who just went inside? Is it not the Lady *Teazforth*?!

TOBY: It's – (starts to say it is Ave Mariah but changes his mind) It's her all right, as I live and breathe.

ANDREW: She looks particularly alluring tonight, doesn't she? It isn't possibly somebody else dressed up like her, is it?

TOBY: I'm sure she came as herself, like me.

ANDREW: I'm going to speak to her closely this time. I swear it!

TOBY: At least, since our little talk, you will know what you are speaking to her about.

ANDREW: I have been thinking about it. What you told me can't be right, Toby. It sounded so filthy and disgusting and even degrading and obscene.

TOBY: Right! And you save it for the one you love!

ANDREW: Are you sure it's something people do for real, not just in your periodicals?

TOBY: Some day you will see, my friend. It feels better than it looks.

ANDREW: I think I am beginning to fall in love with Lady T!

TOBY: Go for it, brother. You deserve it.

ANDREW: I do! After everything you've put me through! I'm still suing you, don't forget! For breaches!

TOBY: (aside) I'm trembling in my "breeches."

ANDREW: And now I'm going to board the Lady *Teazforth*! And without your interference!

(Suddenly Ave Mariah returns, surprising Andrew. He freezes.)

AVE MARIAH: Toby, are you coming in?

ANDREW: Her voice is familiar, but I can't quite place it. (then to Ave Mariah) Good evening, Lady *Teazforth*. We have not been formally introduced. However, we have had some commerce together in the street.

AVE MARIAH: (disguising her voice) Commerce, sir? In the street?!

ANDREW: Oh, yes, Madame, we did. I am Sir Andrew Dribbledick underneath this disguise. I gave you a bag of gold once.

AVE MARIAH: (disguising her voice) It must have been some other lady that you dealt with.

ANDREW: Let me say, gallantly, now that I see you up close, that I do not regret that bag of gold, if it led me to this treasure before me.

AVE MARIAH: (disguising her voice) I think you think that's flattering, sir.

ANDREW: I do. May I offer you a punch?

AVE MARIAH: (disguising her voice) You want to punch me? (Puts her fists up.)

ANDREW: (laughs) Oh, the lady is witty! A bonus to her beauty!

AVE MARIAH: (disguising voice) Yes, get me the punch. Make it virgin, if you would.

ANDREW: It is my pleasure to do so. . . . And "virgin" means?

AVE MARIAH: Sans alcohol. I no longer drink it.

ANDREW: Ah! Now I understand! I will return anon! With that virgin that you crave! I too prefer virgin!  
(Hurries toward the next room.) Wait for me!

AVE MARIAH: (to Toby) Psst!

TOBY: (coming nearer) What?

AVE MARIAH: He thinks I'm really Lady T.

TOBY: He must be blind as well as a blockhead.

AVE MARIAH: He's sort of endearing.

TOBY: *What?!* To confuse you with a real lady? Come on! (Takes a swig.)

AVE MARIAH: Oh, go swig over there! You're a swine, Toby Fartte. You're a swine!

(They separate.)

(Enter Lady Oblivia from the offstage room, still as Zeus, now with a paper lightning bolt in her hair.)

OBLIVIA: Welcome all! To my ball of masquerade! (Applause from others.) I see that a few guests have arrived! Don't tell me who you are! Half the fun tonight is the guessing of the guests! (Makes an immediate bee-line to Viola as Ganymede.) And who could *this* boy here possibly be?

VIOLA: Lady Oblivia, I am –

OBLIVIA: Tut! Tut! Tonight we are not ourselves!

VIOLA: I came to tell you that I can't –

OBLIVIA: Enough! Tonight everyone *can*! What happens in Delyria stays in Delyria! (to guests) Have you all had something to drink? Some food? Simpleton, go and bring our guests some food and drink!

JOHN: But, Madame, there are yet more guests to be announced. (Waves the trumpet.)

(Suddenly Sebastian appears at the door, dressed as Antonio the pirate.)

SEBASTIAN: I'm back home, Oblivia. Pray, what's going on?

(John scrambles to blow the trumpet, but Oblivia beats him to it.)

OBLIVIA: (blows the trumpet ironically) Ladies and gentlemen, my lost husband, Sebastian! (to Sebastian) Don't tell me! You've come as a *pirate*!

SEBASTIAN: (sort of downcast) I did not know you were having a party. I wish I could be a jolly pirate and even do a pirate jig, but I am of a melancholy humour tonight.

OBLIVIA: Everybody dance! No domestic quarrels this evening! That's the rule tonight!

SEBASTIAN: Good luck with that, dear wife. (Moves into the room.)

(Andrew returns with two cups of punch.)

ANDREW: Did I hear a command to dance?! (Shakes his bells.)

TOBY: Oh, God, no! (Takes a drink.)

OBLIVIA: Ah, there is my Uncle Toby, my long-lost relative!

TOBY: My dearest niece! (They embrace.)

OBLIVIA: And where's your precious wife, What's Her Name?

TOBY: What's Her Name couldn't come. She came down with the plague.

OBLIVIA: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. I hear that's going around.

ANDREW: (to Ave Mariah) Ah! You are still here!

AVE MARIAH: I am, sir

ANDREW: I feared you might take off. I find that ladies often do. Some punch?

AVE MARIAH: Why, thank you. That's more than my hus — (correctly herself) more than any other man here has offered me.

ANDREW: I hope you like it.

(Each takes a sip.)

AVE MARIAH: It's good. No alcohol. (Touches her tongue.)

ANDREW: They have food within there too. Maybe we can share some stew later. (Touches his tongue too.)

AVE MARIAH: Anything is possible tonight, as our hostess says.

(They toast each other.)

(There is another commotion at the upstage door.)

ANDREW: What's that?

(Enter Antonio the pirate, dressed as himself.)

JOHN: Sir, have you an invitation?

ANTONIO: I do not! I did not know there was a . . . what is this? A ball of masquerade?

JOHN: It is, sir.

ANTONIO: Then it would appear that I am not properly attired! This is just my day dress!

OBLIVIA: (to Sebastian) So I see you invited your “pirate” friend behind my back!

SEBASTIAN: I know not what you mean. I bid him adieu at his ship.

OBLIVIA: I’ll just bet you did!

SEBASTIAN: I did. That is not Antonio. It’s somebody dressed like Antonio, no doubt at your behest, to embarrass me.

OBLIVIA: I do not know what your meaning is, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN: That can’t be Antonio. He departed from me in no uncertain terms.

JOHN: (to Antonio) You do have to have an invitation, sir, even though your costume is appropriate.

ANTONIO: (loudly) I have no invitation, and this is no costume! I want to see Sebastian!

SEBASTIAN: (coming over) What is it you want, sir?

ANTONIO: I wish to speak with you.

SEBASTIAN: (not believing it is Antonio) And who are you?

ANTONIO: I am Antonio, the manly pirate from your past! You saw me at the pier.

SEBASTIAN: Can I be sure it’s you and not some impostor in a pirate costume?

ANTONIO: Did we not share some hardtack!? A biscuit.

SEBASTIAN: We did! But I thought you left me.

ANTONIO: I did not get on that ship. I have been searching for you since.

SEBASTIAN: But you’ve been here before.

ANTONIO: I know, but I have a terrible sense of direction, especially for a pirate. May I speak to you in private?

SEBASTIAN: In private, or right here, just like anybody else!

OBLIVIA: No, that man can’t come in!

SEBASTIAN: (to John) Yes, he can. I'm giving him a special invitation.

OBLIVIA: Just look at him! He looks like a pirate. And we all know what that entails!

SEBASTIAN: Excuse my wife. By the way, what are you dressed as, Oblivia?

OBLIVIA: I am Zeus, of course. (Shakes her lightning bolt.) We'll have no "manly, pirate ways" in here!

SEBASTIAN: What's sauce for the Zeus is sauce for the rest of us. But no need to worry, dear wife. We are past all that. (to John) Let Antonio the pirate enter.

(John starts to blow the trumpet.)

ANTONIO: No need! I am my own trumpet! (loudly) I now enter this house!

SEBASTIAN: Come over here, Antonio, and tell me what you will, pirate to pirate.

(Sebastian and Antonio go to a more secluded section of the room and begin to talk in earnest.)

OBLIVIA: Why is nobody dancing!? Dance away! Let me go and ask the musicians to play a *different* tune. Sebastian ought to like that!

(Exits, beckoning the others to follow. But they don't)

AVE MARIAH: (to John) Simpleton! (She goes to him and quietly asks him something, apparently where the privy is. He points her offstage in another direction.)

ANDREW: (hurrying over) Toby, Toby, I think I have met the right woman at last.

TOBY: (about Ave Mariah) In faith?

ANDREW: Lady T is wonderful, kind, and abstemious, and seems to like my company.

TOBY: Really?!

ANDREW: Her only defect is perhaps her voice. It is a little strange. But I can live with that.

TOBY: But can she live with yours?

ANDREW: So I have finally have met the Lady T, and she is everything that I could want.

TOBY: Did you ask if she is married?

ANDREW: (surprised) I thought you said she was a widow.

TOBY: She could have lied. She could have gotten married again. You'd better ask.

ANDREW: Oh, not tonight! Let me have one night of total joy!

TOBY: You wouldn't want to piss off her man now, would you?

ANDREW: If she is married, why isn't her husband here with her?

TOBY: Maybe he is home in bed sick.

ANDREW: Or drunk! I bet she's married to a horrid drunk! That's why she's looking for a new husband.

TOBY: What?!

ANDREW: She expressed to me some dissatisfaction in her life.

TOBY: About her man?

ANDREW: She was very discreet and named no names. But I believe I spied some trouble in her home.

TOBY: Bloody hell you did!

ANDREW: Why so angry, Toby? Do you not wish me well? You always said you wanted me to win a wife.

TOBY: Not just *any* wife!

(John blows the trumpet.)

JOHN: (announcing) Miss Molly Brightheart!

(Enter Molly at the upstage door, also dressed as Ganymede.)

OBLIVIA: (making a bee-line to Molly) Ah, my dear! You've come! And in the clothes I sent!

MOLLY: How could I not?

OBLIVIA: (to John) No invitation is needed here. (to Molly) You look just like a Ganymede! Can there be anything more invigorating?!

(Oblivia helps Molly into the room, ogling her.)

MOLLY: What a grand ballroom you have through there, it seems, Lady Oblivia.

OBLIVIA: We try. We try. Some punch? Some stew? Shall I bring you in some, or shall we go into the other room? Yes, let's go into the music room. (Nods.) That way. What say?

MOLLY: (apprehensive) Which room is that?

OBLIVIA: You naughty boy, did you mean some other room with a bed perchance?



MOLLY: You misunderstood me, milady. I am not sleepy, not the least.

OBLIVIA: Not sleepy? Maybe the wine will make you so, and when the ball is over tonight, perhaps you will fall into a bed somewhere. We will have to see, will we not? It is a big house! . . . Shall we?

(She locks arms with Molly and starts to lead her to the next room.)

MOLLY: This is my very first ball, did you know?

OBLIVIA: (insinuatingly) Is it? Well, I'm sure it won't be your last, my dear.

(They go off arm in arm.)

OBLIVIA: (to the others) Dance! Dance, everyone!

(Nobody dances, self-conscious.)

(There is a commotion at the upstage door. A very elegant, ugly Mary Queen of Scots woman appears. John whispers to her, asking who she is. She whispers something back.)

(John blows the trumpet.)

JOHN: (announcing) Lady Drainege of Scotland!

(Fester dressed as Lady Drainege strikes a pose at the top of the door.)

(Immediately Fabian enters behind, likewise dressed as an elegant, ugly Lady Drainege, in an identical gown.)

(John blows the trumpet.)

JOHN: (announcing) And also . . . *Which* of you is Lady Drainege?

FABIAN/FESTER: (together) I am!

JOHN: Where is Lord Drainege?

FESTER/FABIAN: (together) He couldn't come!

FABIAN: What are you doing here? *I* stole the invitation, not you!

FESTER: I stole it!

JOHN: I thought that invitation got lost in the post!

FABIAN: No, somehow it was found! (Hands it to John.)

FESTER: Aren't we fortunate.

JOHN: So I didn't lose it after all?

FABIAN: (aside to Fester) Why did *you* have to come as *Lady Drainege*!?

FESTER: (aside to Fabian) Because I thought *you* wouldn't!

FABIAN: You think I'd dress up like this if I didn't have to get in here and get some business for my new law office?

JOHN: You are both welcome, ladies, I'm sure. Do you require a second trumpet sound?

FABIAN: No!

FESTER: (to John) Your lawsuit against the Lady Oblivia is almost finished. I'm on very good terms with your lawyer.

FABIAN: (handing John a business card) I recommend Fabian, Fabian, Fabian, and Fabian, if you want to change lawyers, and I would if I were you.

FESTER: We'll just see about that! (Raises fist.)

JOHN: Ladies, please. Won't you enter?

(Fester and Fabian enter together as two grand Lady Draineges. They separate immediately once inside.)

JOHN: (to audience, wiping his forehead) Whew! I'm escaped on that one, thank the Lord. I don't believe Lady Oblivia has ever met the Draineges in person!

(Enter Oblivia with Molly, both now with food and wine cups.)

(Enter Porcino, racing in.)

PORCINO: Everybody, come have some food! There's plenty of stew left! And they just brought out some horse meat canapés! The best I ever et! (Runs back inside.)

OBLIVIA: He's an oaf, but I like that. One always appreciates an appreciative guest.

MOLLY: How could you not? (She waves at John across the way. He waves back, self-consciously.)

OBLIVIA: Do you know our Simpleton?

MOLLY: A wee bit.

OBLIVIA: Socially?

MOLLY: I would not call it "socially." We have met. He's nice.

OBLIVIA: My dear, it does not do to socialize with staff. If one does, they get pretensions.

MOLLY: But I am of the same class as him, I'm sure. We both work a daily job.

OBLIVIA: Well, we'll have to see about that then, won't we, dear? I know people.

MOLLY: Lady Oblivia, I do not want there to be any misunderstanding about who I am or why I came here tonight. I –

OBLIVIA: (cutting her off) Hush now, Molly Brightheart. This Zeus is not going to carry you off against your will. That is not my way. I am no pirate, like some I might name. (Glares at Sebastian and Antonio still conferring.) (suddenly yelling) Why the fuck is nobody dancing at my ball?! (The musicians in the next room start to play a minuet or some such, only faster.) That's better! (Still nobody dances.) Oh, for Heaven's sake, let me start it then! (Claps her hands.) Let us do that latest craze – the one where everybody bows and goes to the top and then dances down between the lines and says a few words, and then goes back to the top. (to Molly) What's that called?

MOLLY: I'm afraid I do not know.

OBLIVIA: (to John) What's it called, Simpleton?

JOHN: (making up the name) The Fancy Fancy Step!?

OBLIVIA: That's it! The Fancy Fancy Step. Come, Molly, we'll make two! (to the others) Come, come!

SEBASTIAN: (coming over) Antonio and I will dance too. (He and Antonio take their places for the dance.)

OBLIVIA: Come, all the rest! Come! Come! Come! (calling to the next room) Everyone, come in here, I say!

(The guests in the next room, where the musicians and food are, come into the ballroom. Ave Mariah as Lady Teatsforth has just returned from the privy. She has a long piece of old-fashioned toilet paper, made of parchment, attached to the heel of her shoe. Nobody notices it except the audience.)

OBLIVIA: No slack-about now! This is a ball, don't forget!

(Sir Andrew offers his hand to Ave Mariah, and she takes it, to the chagrin of Sir Toby. Porcino and Viola, as partners, join the dance. Even Fester and Fabian as the two ugly Lady Draineges start to join in, all encouraged by Oblivia.) (yelling to the offstage musicians) The Fancy Fancy Step! Hit it, fellows!

(Ever mercurial, suddenly she takes Viola's hand.)

(The dancers form two lines face to face, with each first bowing to his or her partner; then the couple at the top joins hands and dances down to the front of the stage, where they exchange a few words before separating and returning to the top of the lines.)

OBLIVIA: (leading the dance with Viola) (downstage in front of the other dancers) I don't want you to think I have a 'thing' for Ganymedes. I think of *you* as very special. Can we meet later? Remember, down the corridor and to the *left*.

VIOLA: Oh, right.

OBLIVIA: No, *left!*

(They dance up the sides and to the top of the two lines of dancers.)

(Porcino tries to dance with Oblivia, but she fobs him off on his wife, Viola.)

PORCINO: (downstage, to Viola) Have you tried the horse meat canapés?! They are a marvel!

VIOLA: Not yet.

PORCINO: There aren't that many here, for a grand ball.

VIOLA: One man's grand ball is . . . oh, never mind!

(They return to the top of the lines of dancers.)

(Sir Andrew and Ave Mariah dance down to the bottom of the lines.)

ANDREW: You dance like a queen! (The parchment toilet paper is dancing with her.)

AVE MARIAH: (disguising her voice) You're pretty royal yourself!

(Toby comes dancing down the line by himself, with his wine jug and catches up with Ave Mariah. Sir Andrew returns to the top by himself, bells a-jingle.)

TOBY: (about Sir Andrew) You're encouraging him far too much!

AVE MARIAH: (disguising her voice) So what if I am?

TOBY: You seem to forget that you aren't really Lady T. Your name is Mrs. Fartte!

AVE MARIAH: (disguising her voice) Something tells me I may not want that name anymore.

TOBY: You'll have to spend the rest of your days speaking in that voice.

AVE MARIAH: What marriage is without disguise? At least he doesn't drink! And he's a gentleman.

(Sir Andrew has spotted the toilet paper on Ave Mariah's shoe and moves down to remove it surreptitiously. He, Ave Mariah, and Toby all return to the top.)

SEBASTIAN: (now downstage, to Antonio) But! But! I thought you said my butt was too old!

ANTONIO: Butt me no butts! We'll find *another* way!

OBLIVIA: (yelling at them) Hey! Keep it moving!

(Both return to the top of the dancers.)

FESTER: (as Lady Drainege, to Fabian) You'll regret coming here tonight. I'll sue you as an impostor, to say nothing of grievous bodily harm from your slap – plus attempting to purloin my legal practice!

FABIAN: (as Lady Drainege) Do I look worried? None of your charges, if you bring them, will ever come to trial! Hah!

(Oblivia comes close to them.)

OBLIVIA: (downstage) So one of you is Lady Drainege, I infer.

FESTER/FABIAN: (together) I am!

OBLIVIA: (confused) A most interesting couple! Twins, I love twins! I'm so glad invited you, even if you failed to R.S.V.P.

(Oblivia and the two Lady Draineages, after they shiver all over, dance to the top of the lines.)

(There is a commotion at the upstage door.)

(Enter Malvolio in Puritan drag, sinister and unforgiving.)

(John blows the trumpet.)

(All stop and look.)

OBLIVIA: (before John can announce him, stepping toward him) And do you have an invitation, sir?

MALVOLIO: My revenge is my invitation – anywhere I wish to go! (Points at her.) Don't correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe this ball of masquerade is nothing more than a disguise to hide the deadly sin of . . . transvestism!

(There is a gasp from some of the others.)

MALVOLIO: And I am here as the representative of a righteous God to shut it down! (Gestures to two police officers off, who now enter with pitchforks.)

OBLIVIA: Well, get out! You were not invited!

MALVOLIO: Not invited? What is that to me?! You think I care if I am invited to this den of iniquity?

TOBY: Hey! That's my niece you're talking to!

MALVOLIO: (spreading his arm across the room) Inebriates and unseemly garments worn with impunity everywhere!

PORCINO: Who's he again? The caterer?

VIOLA: I'll explain it later.

MALVOLIO: Look and see, world! Girls dressed like boys! And men dressed like women! And some men dressed like . . . pirates!

ANTONIO: So!?

MALVOLIO: And Molly, is that you, my would-be bride? You came even though I forbade you to! You know what this means, of course? Our wedding is off!

MOLLY: (stepping closer) You know something, Malvolio. There has been something "off" about our wedding from the beginning. It never should have been "on."

(John comes over and takes Molly's hand in his to comfort her, and she consents.)

MALVOLIO: So behind my back, my two spies have been colluding against me!

MOLLY: No, we haven't. It just happened.

MALVOLIO: Molly? . . . Do you really want to be Mrs. Simpleton?

JOHN: I'm going to change my name, legally!

MOLLY: To what?

JOHN: Maybe Brightheart!

MOLLY: Ah! What you will, John! What you will.

JOHN: I think our wills are one.

(They kiss.)

AVE MARIAH: And I am changing my name as well! No more Mrs. Fartte!  
(Takes Sir Andrew's hand.) Or even the pretentious version Farrtte!

ANDREW: My love!

AVE MARIAH: (in her regular voice, to Andrew) Do you not really know who I am?

ANDREW: Let's just say: I have my suspicions. (He winks broadly.)

TOBY: My God! (He has to throw up and runs off through the upstage door.)

MALVOLIO: How delicious! Are you all to be married in prison? (Sees Fester and Fabian trying to sneak out.)  
Wait, you two in the queen dresses! (They stop.) (coming up to them) And who are these two  
*grand dames*?! More grist for the prisons! (Malvolio pulls off their wigs, one with each hand.)

FESTER: (unveiling more) Yes, I am no *dame*, Malvolio, *grand* or otherwise. I am the man you once knew as  
Sir Topas or Oblivia's clown called Feste. Now I am called Lawyer Fester! Let's see who has the law  
on his side!

MALVOLIO: Looking as you do, I am more than confident about who will win in law.

FABIAN: (to Malvolio) I'll take your case, if it's against him! (meaning Fester)

FESTER: *Or!* I can propose a truce, Malvolio!

MALVOLIO: A truce?

FESTER: Let's join forces, you and I. I no longer have a legal partner – not that I ever did! I propose that we  
take my special knowledge of the law. I specialize in procrastination.

MALVOLIO: Go on. I'm interested.

FESTER: Plus, there is my way with words, my ability to argue on either side of the truth. Combine these skills  
with yours, which I understand consist of foreclosures, real estate speculation, hedge funds, self-  
righteousness, and what you will, and how can we lose?

MALVOLIO: I have a blind widow of ninety and a cripple with palsy almost on the ropes right now!

FESTER: We will be a twosome to be reckoned with throughout the county wide!

MALVOLIO: I think I have found someone at last! Together we can rule, not just this county, but even Wales!

FABIAN: No!

FESTER: Ignore him, just as I have. Are we agreed, Malvolio? (Offers his hand.)

MALVOLIO: Agreed! A greed to astound the universe, the stars, the very Heavens above!

FESTER: Once enemies, now we, Fester and Malvolio, legally entwined!

MALVOLIO: Make that Malvolio and Fester Incorporated, and it's done!

FESTER: Done! (They shake hands.)

OTHERS: No!

(Suddenly there is a loud thunderclap. God appears on a device with wheels.  
He has a long white beard, a white toga, a crown of laurels, and real lightning bolt  
or two in his hand.)

MALVOLIO: What in the name of the Almighty is that?!

JOHN: I could be wrong, but I think it's God from a machine. (Blows the trumpet.)

GOD: You got it! (Threatens with the lightning bolt.)

FESTER/MALVOLIO: No!

(God throws several bolts at Fester and Malvolio, with flashes, killing them instantly, plus the two police officers of the Watch.)

Pause.

GOD: Well, my job is done here! I am a righteous God! (Rolls off on his machine through the upstage door.)

JOHN: *Whew!* That was a close one! It could have gone either way.

(Another pause.)

OBLIVIA: Well, what the fuck do we do now? My floor's a mess! (Looks at John.)

JOHN: I'm not cleaning it up, milady. I'm afraid Molly and I are moving on, for better jobs and as a couple.

MOLLY: We will open an inn. And far, far from Delyria.

VIOLA: And so am I too moving on. Angus, this is goodbye.

PORCINO: What? Goodbye? You? Who?

VIOLA: (to Oblivia) Is it still down the corridor and to the left? (Offers her hand.)

OBLIVIA: It is, my boy, it is. (They holds hands.)

SEBASTIAN: (to Oblivia) Goodbye, wife. I see that you have made a new bed. And so have I!

ANTONIO: 'Tis true! What's good for them is good for us!

SEBASTIAN: (Taking Antonio's hand.) Oblivia, I hope this time we both will have in our lives more than a flirtation with . . . clothing.

OBLIVIA: I don't know about you, but I know I will!

PORCINO: (dawning, to Viola) Are you leaving me? This news of you, of us, may drive me to over-eating!

VIOLA: I'm sorry, Angus. You'll adjust. As for me, I am just going through a phase. We'll see how long it lasts.

FABIAN: Hey! What about me? I'm out of a job. And I hate the law, actually. It truly is an ass!



PORCINO: Do you like to cook? And talk? And not have sex with me?

FABIAN: I love it all!

PORCINO: Then you are hired on the spot.

FABIAN: Then I accept! (Raises two thumbs to signal his agreement.)

OBLIVIA: What's left to sort out? Alas, I fear my ball of masquerade is ruined!

ANTONIO: Well, we could dance, I suppose.

OBLIVIA: Of course we could! After all, I've already hired the musicians! (calling) Hey! Play!

(Soon a tune begins. They all think about it for a minute.)

(Then they do the Fancy Fancy Step again, with the new inter-personal configurations, stepping around and over the bodies of Malvolio, Fester, and the two police officers as necessary, incorporating them into their festive and happy ending.)

**SLOW FADE**

**THE END**