

Twelfth Night – Act II Scene 5

Cast:

Toby – Olivia’s kinsman
Maria – Olivia’s waiting-gentlewoman
Fabian – a gentleman in Olivia’s household
Andrew – Toby’s companion
Malvolio – Olivia’s servant

Summary:

In this scene, Toby, Maria, Fabian and Andrew all play a trick on Malvolio. Malvolio is a servant of Olivia, a countess, and is also hopelessly in love with her. The others don’t like Malvolio very much, so they write a letter which will trick him into thinking Olivia cares for him as well, even though she doesn’t. Toby, Fabian, and Andrew hide in the bushes while Malvolio reads the letter.

Toby: Here comes the little villain. –How now, my metal of India?

Maria: Get you all three into the boxtree. Malvolio’s coming down this walk. He has been yonder i’ the sun practicing behavior to his own shadow this half hour. Observe him, for the love of mockery, for I know this letter will make a contemplative idiot of him. Close, in the name of jesting! *(They hide)* Lie thou there *(Putting down the letter)*, for here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling.

Maria exits

Enter Malvolio

Malvolio: ‘Tis but fortune, all is fortune. Maria once told me she did affect me, and I have heard herself come thus near, that should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion. Besides, she uses me with a more exalted respect than anyone else that follows her. What should I think on ‘t?

Toby: *(aside)* Here’s an overweening rogue.

Fabian: *(aside)* O, peace! Contemplation makes a rare turkeycock of him. How he jets under his advanced plumes!

Andrew: *(aside)* ‘Slight, I could so beat the rogue!

Toby: *(aside)* Peace, I say.

Malvolio: To be Count Malvolio.

Toby: *(aside)* Ah, rogue!

Andrew: *(aside)* Pistol him, pistol him!

Toby: *(aside)* Peace, peace!

Malvolio: There is example for ‘t. The lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe.

Andrew: *(aside)* Fie on him, Jezebel!

Fabian: *(aside)* O, peace, now he’s deeply in. Look how imagination blows him.

Malvolio: Having been three months married to her, sitting in my state –

Toby: *(aside)* O, for a stone-bow, to hit him in the eye!

Malvolio: Calling my officers about me, in my branched velvet gown, having come from a daybed, where I have left Olivia sleeping –

Toby: *(aside)* Fire and brimstone!

Fabian: (*aside*) Oh, peace, peace!

Malvolio: And then to have the humor of state; and after a demure travel of regard, telling them I know my place, as I would they should do theirs, to ask for my kinsman Toby –

Toby: (*aside*) Bolts and shackles!

Fabian: (*aside*) Oh, peace, peace, peace! Now, now.

Malvolio: Seven of my people, with an obedient start, make out for him. I frown the while, and perchance wind up my watch, or play with my – some rich jewel. Toby approaches; curtsies there to me –

Toby: (*aside*) Shall this fellow live?

Fabian: (*aside*) Though our silence be drawn from us with cars, yet peace.

Malvolio: I extend my hand to him thus, quenching my familiar smile with an austere regard of control –

Toby: (*aside*) And does not Toby take you a blow o' the lips then?

Malvolio: Saying “Cousin Toby, my fortunes, having cast me on your niece, give me this prerogative of speech –”

Toby: (*aside*) What, what?

Malvolio: “You waste the treasure of your time with a foolish knight—”

Andrew: (*aside*) That's me, I warrant you.

Malvolio: “One Sir Andrew.”

Andrew: (*aside*) I knew 'twas I, for many do call me fool.

Malvolio: (*seeing the letter*) What employment have we here?

Fabian: (*aside*) Now is the woodcock near the gin.

Toby: (*aside*) Oh, peace, and the spirit of humors intimate reading aloud to him.

Malvolio: (*taking up the letter*) by my life, this is my lady's hand! These be her very c's, her u's, and her t's, and thus makes she her great P's. It is in contempt of question her hand.

Andrew: (*aside*) Her c's, her u's, and her t's. Why that?

Malvolio: (*reads*) *To the unknown beloved, this, and my good wishes* – Her very phrases! By your leave, wax. Soft. And the impressure her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal – 'tis my lady! (*He opens the letter.*) To whom should this be?

Fabian: (*aside*) This wins him, liver and all.

Malvolio: (*reads*)

*Jove know I love,
But who?
Lips, do not move;
No man must know.*

“No man must know.” What follows? The numbers altered. “No man must know.” If this should be thee, Malvolio!

Toby: (*aside*) Marry, hang thee, brock!

Malvolio: (*reads*)

*I may command where I adore,
But silence, like a Lucrece knife,
With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore;
M.O.A.I doth sway my life.*

Fabian: (*aside*) A fustian riddle!

Toby: (*aside*) Excellent wench, say I.

Malvolio: “M.O.A.I. doth sway my life.” Nay, but first let me see, let me see, let me see.

Fabian: (*aside*) What dish o’ poison has she dressed him!

Toby: (*aside*) And with what wing the staniel checks at it!

Malvolio: “I may command where I adore.” Why, she may command me; I serve her, she is my lady. Why, this is evident to any formal capacity. There is no obstruction in this. And the end – what should that alphabetical position portend? If I could make that resemble something in me! Softly! “M.O.A.I” –

Toby: (*aside*) O, ay, make up that. –He is now at a cold scent.

Fabian: (*aside*) Sowter will cry upon ‘t for all this, though it be as rank as a fox.

Malvolio: “M” –Malvolio. “M” – why, that begins my name!

Fabian: (*aside*) Did I not say he would work it out? The cur is excellent at faults.

Malvolio: “M.” But then there is no consonancy in the sequel that suffers under probation. “A” should follow, but “O” does.

Fabian: (*aside*) And “O” shall end, I hope.

Toby: (*aside*) Ay, or I’ll cudgel him and make him cry “O.”

Malvolio: And then “I” comes behind.

Fabian: (*aside*) Ay, an you had any eye behind you, you might see more detraction at your heels than fortunes before you.

Malvolio: “M.O.A.I.” This simulation is not as the former, and yet to crush this a little, it would bow to me, for every one of those letters are in my name.