

Cast of Characters

Viola - Trans woman in her early 20s, studying graduate-level Literature at an urban university. Forced to return home during summer school to take care of her parents, who have been immobilized after a car crash. Has not medically transitioned and struggles with not being out to her parents.

Orsino - Young head of a large investment firm in suburban Illyria, recently inherited from deceased parents. Madly in love with one-night romance Olivia. Infamous in the local community.

Olivia - Undergraduate liberal arts student in the same city as Viola. Mourning the recent loss of her brother. Something of an influencer online.

Sebastian - Viola's twin brother. Leaving for an internship at a financial consultant company abroad. Suffers from lack of direction.

Antonio - Foreign broker who recently pulled off a major international embezzlement scheme stealing money from offshore accounts (including a large one that Orsino's company held). Pulled back into embezzlement in an attempt to impress Sebastian; the lack of his usual caution will prove dangerous.

Valentine and Curio - Junkie friends of Orsino's from high school, living off parents' trust funds.

Maria - Best friend of Olivia's from childhood, with a long-standing crush on Olivia's cousin Toby. Studying theatre and a prodigy at impressions.

Toby - Cousin to Olivia, studying for the bar at the same university as her. In a friend group with Olivia, Maria, Andrew, Feste, and Fabian.

Andrew - Toby's best friend from law school, self-assured that he can get Olivia to fall for him.

Feste - Family friend of Olivia's. Fashioned himself as an "artist" and has a penchant for leaving on expensive vacations and playing disrupting pranks, but Olivia is always willing to bail him out and forgive him.

Fabian - School friend of Olivia's.

Malvolio - Former classmate of Olivia and friends - now a drop-out working at their local cafe. Book-smarts, not street-smarts type. Constantly performing favors for Olivia, but his admiration of her is clouded by his grumpy, rude exterior.

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EXT. PARKING GARAGE STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

Three young men sit splayed across an open-air staircase, a cloudy night sky above them. The sturdiest and most attractive of them--ORSINO--flips his phone over distractedly in his hand and smokes a cigarette in the other. He is wearing rumpled work clothes, and he's kicked off his loafers. The other two--CURIO and VALENTINE, wear casual clothes.

ORSINO

She's--what can I do?

He leans back, as if in defeat.

CURIO

(mildly)

I get it, man.

ORSINO

No. Meeting her was like one of those moments when everything seems to make sense--what is it...?

CURIO

Like a eureka?

ORSINO

No, I mean, an epiphany. You know, when your whole body and your mind like freeze up for a second, in wonder. And she was that feeling-- I mean, she's gorgeous, but talking to her... really, it was a religious kind of thing.

VALENTINE

(jokingly)

Oh come on, you can't start thinking she's an angel just because she's hot or whatever.

ORSINO

(a bit haughty)

I knew you guys wouldn't get it. It's not like that at all. She's like the best part or hook in a really great song you've never heard before, one that really makes you feel like you're living, like the beat drop in that kind of...

(trails off)

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VALENTINE

Jesus.

CURIO

See, if he had just messed around with a couple girls in school we wouldn't have him--yeah, you--slobbering around like some poor lost puppy.

ORSINO

Shut up.

CURIO

(sarcastically)

My apologies, Your Highness. It's just that it's a shameful waste of your good looks, and it's a hell of a lot harder for me to get a hook up with Mr. Dreamy Eyes stealing the competition.

The air is stuffy and silent. The friends readjust and look up at the clouds, and Orsino takes a long DRAW of his cigarette.

ORSINO

I think I'm in love with her. I am. I'm in love with her.

CURIO

(groans audibly)

Now you shut up.

(when Orsino says nothing in response)

Look, save us, already, and just--here--

He grabs for Orsino's phone, but Orsino puts it out of his reach.

CURIO

--text her.

VALENTINE

Can't do that. Her brother?

ORSINO

How do you know about that?

VALENTINE

I dunno, comments on one of her posts. Fans of hers saying stuff.

CURIO
I can't believe she has like,
actual fans.

ORSINO
I bet she doesn't even remember
me.

CURIO
(rolling his eyes at
Valentine)
Pass the smokes.

Orsino tosses the pack to Curio. A stranger cuts through the stairway, raising his eyebrows at them.

ORSINO
(softly, to himself)
O-liv-i-a.

He sighs.

INT. CROWDED CAFE - AFTERNOON

Outside a bustling urban cafe, with LAUGHTER and the sound of HISSING steam filling the room, rain comes down in torrents. The storm makes the sky dark and moody, though the interior of the coffee shop is cozy. Two identical twins stand by the counter, waiting for their order: SEBASTIAN, a young man in a casual business suit and carrying a heavy travel duffel, and VIOLA, a young trans woman in the funky attire of a liberal arts student. Viola is still drinking from a cup of coffee--it appears that they were recently sitting down and talking.

SEBASTIAN
... So you'll be okay by yourself
this weekend?

VIOLA
Oh, yeah. It's no problem, really.

SEBASTIAN
I feel bad leaving after this,
especially 'cuz you're taking off
school for mom and dad. I feel
selfish.

VIOLA
No, you should go. I just felt
like I needed to tell you.

SEBASTIAN
(earnest)
I am glad you did.

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VIOLA

Thanks.

WAITER

(announcing)

Chocolate croissant.

Sebastian takes his food and grabs his bag, giving a hug to Viola.

SEBASTIAN

I'll miss you a lot.

VIOLA

You'll be too busy having fun for that. You're gonna do great over there.

SEBASTIAN

Thanks.

(heading out the door)

Ok, bye, Viola!

Even though his delivery is a bit awkward, Viola smiles.

INT. VIOLAS'S CAR - NIGHT

Viola drives along a dark highway, passing a sign that reads "Welcome to Illyria: City of Good Neighbors."

She winds her car through increasingly opulent suburban boulevards, before parking a little bit down the street from a respectable two-story house. In the front seat of her car, she wipes off her makeup, reties her hair into what resembles a man-bun, and takes off her feminine jewelry--taking on the outward appearance of a man. She pulls a sweatshirt over her blouse. She sighs, disheartened at her appearance.

Plot Outline

Act I, by scene

1. After work, Orsino complains to his friends, Valentine and Curio, of his frustrating love for Olivia, who he dare not contact then due to her brother's death.
2. Viola is on the way to her suburban home, Illyria, to take care of her parents, who are bed-ridden while recovering from a car crash. Before leaving, she meets with her twin Sebastian at a coffee shop, who is about to catch a plane for his summer internship abroad.

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Viola has just come out to her brother about her gender over coffee, and before departing Sebastian expresses regret that she is sacrificing her summer so he can further his career, especially when she will be misgendered in their hometown. She assures him she will be fine and they part amicably.

3. Viola arrives at home, disheartened at having to re-embodiment the identity of "Cesario" despite her parent's otherwise kindly natures. Well-loved in the neighborhood, they ask Viola to return the dishes that many "get-well" meals have been delivered in to their owners-one of whom is the recently-orphaned Orsino.

4. Neither Orsino nor Viola know one another-though she knows of him-because he went to a private boarding school. After returning the dish, he engages her in polite conversation and soon learns that she attends the same school as his beloved Olivia. Meanwhile, Viola begins to fall for his charming, disheveled personality. Orsino begs her to speak with Olivia at school and ask if he can visit her while she mourns. Viola hesitates but eventually agrees.

5. On the university green, Maria, Toby, and Andrew discuss Olivia's mourning depression and Andrew's foolish pursuit of Olivia.

6. Sebastian arrives at his internship. On his first day, in the company's cafeteria, he is approached by Antonio, who appears to be interested in his experience thus far but also critical of the company. Noticed by security, Antonio is anxious to leave the building, but tries to do so while still engaging Sebastian in conversation. Sebastian, unaware of Antonio's unwelcome nature, agrees to meet up with him later on.

7. Viola, who has been invited to drinks with Orsino and his friends, learns about the night that made Orsino fall in love with Olivia and herself falls more for Orsino.

8. Over dinner, Antonio and Sebastian seem to become engrossed in one another, even after Antonio confesses that he is very much wanted for crimes in the city. The two begin an affair.

9. Olivia, very distraught, has been dragged out to lunch at the coffeeshop where Malvolio works by Maria. Upon Feste's surprise return from a poorly-timed excursion, Maria chastises him for not supporting Olivia during mourning, as does Malvolio, but Feste ends up lifting Olivia's spirits.

10. After a few weeks at home, Viola approaches her parents about returning to school for a few days (to do the favor for Orsino), but they have already agreed that they can manage on and off by themselves, so she doesn't have to explain herself. On the way to the city, Viola has the chance to present herself as a woman, and instantly appears more comfortable.

11. Viola tracks down Maria and asks to speak with her. Outside Olivia's apartment, she is at first refused, but eventually Olivia becomes intrigued enough to let her in. Viola relays Orsino's love to Olivia, but Olivia seems much more interested in Viola herself and says she can come back, even though she's not interested in Orsino.

Malvolio arrives with a folder of homework he's completed for Olivia, but Olivia immediately asks him to follow after Viola and return a ring to her.

12. Malvolio begrudgingly brings the ring to Viola, who is waiting for the subway and was on the phone with Sebastian, who is keeping his affair a secret. Tucked inside the ring is a note from Olivia, and Viola suddenly realizes the issue of the love triangle.

13. At the coffee shop, Toby and Andrew are making a drunken scene, soon joined by Feste but then interrupted by Maria. Malvolio then comes over and makes even more of an upset than Maria by loudly and awkwardly telling them off for disrespecting Olivia's peace (even though she is not there). His absurd overreaction inspires them to think Malvolio is in love with Maria, and they begin plotting a prank against him.

14. Still attending his internship, Sebastian slowly learns more about Antonio's embezzlement scheme and why he lives so secretly. After a few weeks and an unencouraging experience with finance, he lets his impulsive mood take over and begins to skim a bit off of the top at work.

15. Orsino and Viola spend more time together back in the suburbs, while Orsino muses on his love for Olivia but also makes a few remarks that make him seem interested in Viola (or, to him, Cesario). Shaking the latter effect off, he urges Viola to try again to convince Olivia to go out with him.

16. A montage of Viola carrying messages back and forth to Olivia and Orsino, Antonio and Sebastian working together to steal from Sebastian's company, Viola failing to be able to contact her twin, and Maria working on the prank against Malvolio.

17. Watching Malvolio from a nanny cam they have set up, Maria, Toby, Andrew, and Fabian observe as Malvolio receives a fake drunk voicemail from Olivia (actually Maria, doing an impression of her) in which Olivia seems to confess her love for Malvolio, but states she does not think they would work out because of the differences in their status and potential. Malvolio falls for it and vows to act on her fake instructions to act like a fool in front of her.

How I would end the script:

- * Orsino would come to terms with the fact that he likes Viola as Cesario and not only as an addendum when Viola is revealed to be a woman (via coming out to him in the end of the play).

- * Though Sebastian initially gets caught up in a kind of whirlwind, rebound romance with Olivia after being estranged from Antonio, once he finds out that she thought he was his sister and did not actually like him for himself (an assumption she would be under because they hooked up rather than talking to one another), he decides to call it off. He doesn't get back together with Antonio, and after both agree that they weren't very good influences on each other they part ways. While these three characters would not end the plays in serious relationships, they would be healthier in the long-run.

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* Malvolio will become a self-embarrassing nuisance via his pursuit of Olivia, including his messy attempts to engage her in socialite circles in which he is unwelcome. While he will not learn from his mistakes, Maria and her co-conspirators will eventually lay off of him. At the end of the screenplay they'll turn their pranks on Orsino's idiotic friends, Valentine and Curio.

* Viola would be accepted upon coming out to Orsino, whom she would start dating, as well as her other friends and family. However, this moment would not be construed as funny nor overly serious, and the humor would be focused in the prior confusion.