

510E # 14

# Scene Twelve

(*Viola's balcony. NURSE finds VIOLA.*)

NURSE. Look, My Lady, a letter to Thomas Kent.

VIOLA. Who from?

NURSE. From the playwright, William Shakespeare.

[*MUSIC NO. 12: "THE BALCONY"*]

He was desperate to speak to "Master Kent."

VIOLA. Oh, I can't believe it. (*reads the letter*) "I have never heard my words spoken with such honesty. I am writing a comedy of quarrelling families reconciled in the discovery of Romeo to be the very same Capulet cousin stolen from the cradle and fostered to manhood by his Montague mother that was robbed of her own child by the Pirate King! And I would have you play Romeo Montague – a young gentleman of Verona."

NURSE. Verona, again?!

VIOLA. Is Master Shakespeare not handsome?

NURSE. He looks well enough for a mountebank.

VIOLA. Oh, Nurse! He would give Thomas Kent the life of Viola de Lesseps' dreaming.

NURSE. My Lady, this play will end badly.

VIOLA. 'Tis a comedy. It ends with a pirate jig. As you love me and as I love you, you will bind my breast and buy me a boy's wig. Rehearsals begin tomorrow.

NURSE. Your father—

VIOLA. From tomorrow away in the country for three weeks.

(*MARLOWE and WILL have appeared under Viola's balcony.*)

MARLOWE. (*sotto voce*) Look. There she is. This is her balcony.

WILL. Oh, great heaven!

MARLOWE. Go on and speak to her.

WILL. I don't dare! The nurse is there.

NURSE. My Lady, You'll catch your death out here.

VIOLA. Leave me, Nursey.

NURSE. Believe me, this will all end in tears.

(*NURSE exits. VIOLA reads the letter again.*)

VIOLA. Romeo, Romeo... a young gentleman of Verona. A comedy. By William Shakespeare.

MARLOWE. Well, go on. (*shows WILL*) My Lady.

VIOLA. Who is there?

WILL. Will Shakespeare.

NURSE. (*offstage*) Madam!

VIOLA. Anon, good Nurse, anon. Master Shakespeare?

WILL. The same, alas.

VIOLA. Why alas?

WILL. A lowly player.

VIOLA. Alas indeed, for I thought you the highest poet of my esteem and a writer of the most brilliant comedies that capture my heart.

WILL. Oh – I am him too.

NURSE. (*offstage*) Lady Viola.

VIOLA. Anon, good Nurse, anon. (*to WILL*) I will come again.

(*VIOLA goes in to deal with NURSE.*)

MARLOWE. Enough. She takes the bait, let's go.

WILL. Nonsense. I'm just getting somewhere.

MARLOWE. "A lowly player"?! You're supposed to be a poet. Get out of there before you shame us all.

(*VIOLA returns.*)

VIOLA. If they find you here, they will kill you.

WILL. And you can bring them with a word.

VIOLA. Not for the world! Speak to me. Inspire me.

WILL. (*trying rather pathetically to be poetic*) Alas I cannot for I am...struck dumb by your beauty.

VIOLA. Come, come. Good poet. These are hackneyed tropes. Extemporise, improvise. Fill me with your words.

MARLOWE. Leave.

WILL. (*to VIOLA*) Now?

VIOLA. Yes. Translate our base tongue into the golden verse of love.

WILL. Erm... (*under his breath*) Pigs!

VIOLA. What was that?

MARLOWE. Recite something you know.

WILL. I've gone blank.

MARLOWE. Anything.

WILL. Help me, Kit!

MARLOWE. "Shall I compare thee...?"

WILL.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

MARLOWE. Well, it's not exactly Philip Sidney.

VIOLA. Go on.

WILL. (*to MARLOWE*) That's as far as I got.

MARLOWE. As far as you got?!

WILL. Help me, Kit!

MARLOWE.

Rough winds...

WILL.

Rough winds...

MARLOWE.

Do shake...

WILL.

Do shake...

MARLOWE.

The darling buds of...May.

WILL. Isn't that spring?

MARLOWE. It rhymes with "day."

WILL.

The darling buds of...May.

MARLOWE.

And summer's lease...

WILL.

And summer's lease...

MARLOWE.

Hath all too short a date.

WILL.

Hath all too short a date.

VIOLA. Oh this is beautiful, Will... More...

MARLOWE. Dunn di dum di dum di...got it...

But thy eternal summer...

WILL. (*repeating as he goes*)

But thy eternal summer...

MARLOWE.

Shall not fade...

WILL.

Shall not fade...

MARLOWE.

Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest...

WILL.

Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest...

MARLOWE.

Nor shall death...

WILL. Don't mention death...

MARLOWE. Death is good.

WILL.

Nor shall death...

MARLOWE.

Brag thou wandrest in his shade.

WILL.

Brag thou wandrest in his shade.

MARLOWE.

When in eternal lines to time thou growest.

WILL. (*to MARLOWE*) What does that mean?

MARLOWE. Just say it.

WILL.

When in eternal lines to time thou growest.

MARLOWE.

So long as men can breathe...

WILL.

So long as men can breathe,  
(*adding his own bit*) or eyes can see...

MARLOWE. Not bad...

WILL. (*now inspired*)

So long lives this...

MARLOWE. That's it.

WILL.

...and this gives life to thee.

MARLOWE. Bravo.

WILL. I have it back, Kit.

VIOLA. Oh, it's beautiful.

WILL. It's nothing, really.

VIOLA. Only you could have conceived such a thing.

WILL. I think it lacks something in the middle.

VIOLA. Not another word. It's perfect.

NURSE. (*offstage*) Madam.

VIOLA. I must go.

WILL. No. But I am a poor poet. I have not had payment.

VIOLA. Such sublime eloquence is God's own recompense.

WILL.

Yet to receive the prayers of those two pilgrims – thy  
lips...

MARLOWE. Too far.

VIOLA. I could not sully thy lips gilded with such golden  
words.

WILL. Lady, you will burnish them to brighter eloquence.

(*to MARLOWE*) Help me up, Kit.

(*WILL gets on MARLOWE's shoulders.*)

VIOLA. Good sir, do not use yourself all up.

WILL.

With love's light wings, did I o'er perch these walls...

MARLOWE. God, you're heavy!

WILL.

For stony limbits cannot hold love out,  
And what love can do, that dares love attempt.

Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me.

MARLOWE. Very good.

WILL. Thank you.

(*WILL struggles with MARLOWE's help to get up  
onto the balcony.*)

NURSE. Lady Viola!

VIOLA. Oh, go away!

NURSE. Your father comes.

END