

Scene Fourteen

(*De Lesseps Hall.*)

[*MUSIC NO. 15: "INTO BEDROOM"*]

(*VIOLA is still in her costume. NURSE enters.*)

NURSE. My Lady. My Lady. My Lady. Where have you been? Lord Wessex is waiting for you. He's waiting downstairs. Quickly, you must change.

(*VIOLA runs offstage to change.*)

VIOLA. (*from offstage*) How long has he been here?

NURSE. All morning.

VIOLA. What did you tell him?

NURSE. I told him you were at prayer, My Lady.

VIOLA. For four hours?

NURSE. I said you were pious, My Lady.

VIOLA. Why is he here today?

NURSE. You know perfectly well, My Lady.

(*Enter WESSEX.*)

WESSEX. Nurse. Nurse! Where is the future Lady Wessex?

NURSE. You must have patience, sir. My Lady is still in the act of contemplation.

WESSEX. Lengthy orisons for one so young.

NURSE. She always was a pious little girl, My Lord. My mistress is the sweetest lady, My Lord, and still as pious. Lord, Lord, even when she was a prating child, sir, she would spend hours on her knees. I used to swear she'd wear them out!

WESSEX. Oh, for heaven's sake, where the devil is she?!

(*VIOLA runs back on, fully dressed.*)

NURSE. My Lady, My Lady, Lord Wessex is here...

(*Just in time, NURSE whips off VIOLA's moustache.*)

WESSEX. My Lady.

VIOLA. Lord Wessex. You have been waiting.

WESSEX. I am aware of it. It is beauty's privilege. Though four hours' prayer is less piety than self-importance. I have spoken to the Queen. Her Majesty's consent is requisite when a Wessex takes a wife, and once gained, her consent is her command.

VIOLA. Do you intend to marry, My Lord?

WESSEX. Your father should keep you better informed. He has bought me for you. He returns from his estates to see us married two weeks from Saturday. You are allowed to show your pleasure.

VIOLA. But I do not love you, My Lord.

WESSEX. How your mind hops about! Your father was a shopkeeper, your children will bear a coat of arms, and I will recover my fortune. That is the only matter under discussion today. You will like Virginia.

VIOLA. Virginia?

WESSEX. Why, yes! My fortune lies in my plantations. The tobacco weed. I need four thousand pounds to fit out a ship and put my investments to work - I fancy tobacco has a future. We will not stay there long, three or four years.

VIOLA. But why me?

WESSEX. It was your eyes. No, your lips.

(*WESSEX kisses VIOLA with more passion than ceremony. VIOLA slaps him.*)

Will you defy your father and your Queen?

VIOLA. The Queen has consented?

WESSEX. She wants to inspect you. At Greenwich, come Sunday. Be submissive, modest, grateful. And on time.

(*WESSEX leaves.*)

VIOLA. My summer's lease is all too brief. Bring me pen and ink. I must write to William Shakespeare.