

TILNEY. Your Majesty. The Lady Viola de Lesseps.

VIOLA. Your Majesty.

QUEEN. Stand up straight, girl. (*examines VIOLA*) I have seen you. You are the one who comes to all the plays... at Whitehall, at Richmond.

VIOLA. Your Majesty.

QUEEN. What do you love so much?

VIOLA. Your Majesty...?

QUEEN. Speak out! I know who I am. Do you love stories of kings and queens? Feats of arms? Or is it courtly love?

VIOLA. I love theatre. To have stories acted for me by a company of fellows is indeed—

QUEEN. They are not acted for you, they are acted for me.

(*Obsequious laughter from the COURT.*)

And...?

VIOLA. I love poetry above all.

QUEEN. Above Lord Wessex? My Lord, when you cannot find your wife you had better look for her at the playhouse.

TILNEY. Hardly a place for a young lady of breeding, Your Majesty.

QUEEN. Oh, I am all for the theatre, Mister Tilney. But playwrights teach nothing about love; they make it pretty, they make it comical, or they make it lust. They cannot make it true.

VIOLA. Oh, but they can!

(*A gasp from the COURT.*)

TILNEY. Her Majesty is not in the habit of being contradicted.

VIOLA. I mean...Your Majesty, they do not, they have not, but I believe there is one who can.

(*Horried, WESSEX rushes to intervene.*)