Twelfth Night, Or what you will.

By William Shakespeare

Short Version:

There is a ship wreck, twins, mistaken identity, a love triangle, then a love square…bad behaviour by a drunk uncle and his mates… yup…sounds like a Shakespeare!

Long Version:

Following a shipwreck off the coast of Illyria, Viola and a ship’s captain are washed ashore. Viola believes her twin brother Sebastian has drowned. For safety she disguises herself as a young man, Cesario, and enters the service of the Duke Orsino.

Orsino is sick with love for the Countess Olivia. Olivia, however, is in mourning for her recently deceased father and brother, and has renounced the company and sight of men for seven years. But she falls desperately in love with Cesario, who has delivered a love-letter to her on Orsino’s behalf. Meanwhile, Viola is falling for Orsino.

Some members of Olivia’s household are enjoying the Twelfth Night festivities - Olivia’s cousin Sir Toby Belch, his friend Sir Andrew Aguecheek, her clown Feste, her lady-in-waiting Maria, and Fabian, another member of her household.

Their loud revelries wake up Olivia’s steward, Malvolio. He is a pompous man, and gives them a good telling off. To bring him down a peg or two, the revellers decide to play a trick on him. Maria writes a letter, disguising her handwriting to look like that of her mistress. She leaves it where Malvolio will find it. The plan works and he believes it to be a love letter from Olivia to him! The letter urges Malvolio to show his reciprocal love by smiling a lot and dressing in yellow stockings, cross gartered. Malvolio obeys, only for his employer to think he has gone mad. He is locked up as a lunatic.

Sebastian (Viola’s brother) has, in fact, survived the shipwreck, aided by Antonio, a sailor. He believes his sister dead and heads for Orsino’s court. Antonio is a wanted man but cares deeply for Sebastian so follows him.

Sir Toby sets up a duel Between sir Andrew and Cesario – to fight for Olivia’s affections. Neither Sir Andrew or Cesario are fighters! As the duel begins, Antonio passes by and believing Cesario to be his friend Sebastian, he intervenes. He is then arrested, and feels betrayed when Viola/Cesario denies knowing him.

Seeking to teach Cesario a lesson, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby challenge him again…except this time it IS Sebastian - who is a skilled swordsman. Olivia intervenes this time and, of course, also mistakes Sebastian for Cesario… her affections work much better on this Cesario than the other one….

As you can imagine, chaos ensues…. Olivia marries ‘Cesario’ and then Orsino turns up with the ‘real’ Cesario… things get awkward but eventually end up happily resolved. Malvolio is let out of his prison and finds out what really happened…he is not happy.