Salt Waves Fresh: An Adaptation of Twelfth Night By Gretchen E. Minton

Prologue

Setting: The sea-coast (Strand or nearby).

Enter LOCAL, on the beach, sorting through various books that have washed up on shore.

LOCAL

[to audience] They always wash up on the shore—survivors of cyclones, of shipwrecks, of the tides of history. Each time I ask myself: is it worth saving this story, or that one? I keep listening to these words, trying out different languages, hoping that someone has the wisdom to help us through yet another storm. [Picking up a book] People once came here to exploit this place's resources, to lay claim to its land. Now they're coming from the islands out there because there is no more land. [picking up another book]. Another cyclone, another flood. There are islands of life today in Townsville though—people gathering together, cut off from the outside world while they wait for the waters to recede. Is it a holiday, or the end of days? [one more book] Maybe there is a story that can be recycled for a time such as this. Or for the many times.

Scene 1

Setting: The sea-coast (Strand or nearby). A cyclone has hit, causing high winds, torrential rain, and flooding.

Enter TOWNSPEOPLE, crying out in fear, moving debris, scrambling for higher ground as they exclaim in horror that there are animal carcasses floating in the water. General chaos.

They Exit.

LOCAL comes forward looking out at the ocean, toward a shipwreck.

LOCAL

O, I have suffered With those that I saw suffer. A brave vessel, Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her, Dashed all to pieces. O, the cry did knock Against my very heart! Poor souls, did they perish? [He spots VIOLA and rescues her.]

VIOLA

What country, friend, is this?

LOCAL

This is a land called...Illyria? No, that's not quite right. We're much further south than that. [picking up some books and leafing through them] Sometimes people call it this [pointing] or this, and once it was called this [pointing again]. It could be any of these names, or none of them. There's a great deal to consider when naming this place.

VIOLA

And what should I do on this shore? My brother, he is in the other world. Perchance he is not drowned. --What think you, sir?

LOCAL

It is perchance that you yourself were saved.

VIOLA

O my poor brother! And so perchance may he be.

LOCAL

Assure yourself: after your ship did split, I saw one man who clung unto the boat, Most provident in peril, bind himself To a strong mast that lived upon the sea, Where, like Boomali on the dolphin's back, I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves So long as I could see.

VIOLA For saying so, dear thanks. Mine own escape unfoldeth to my hope, Whereto thy speech serves for authority, The like of him. Know'st thou this country?

LOCAL

Ay, madam, well, for I was bred and born Not three hours' travel from this very place.

VIOLA [pointing to nearby house] Who lives here?

LOCAL A man of strength, in nature as in rank.

VIOLA What is his name?

LOCAL Major Orsino.

VIOLA Orsino...

LOCAL [pointing to another house] And yonder lives the "fair" Olivia.

VIOLA What's she?

LOCAL

A virtuous maid, the daughter of the mayor Who died in last year's flood, and then her brother, Who rescued her from certain jaws of death Was also lost in fathoms yet undredged; For whose dear love, they say, she hath refused To show her face unto the outside world.

VIOLA

Oh, that I could shelter with that lady And might not be delivered to the world Till I had found a place to call my home, A way to find my brother.

LOCAL That were hard to compass, Because she will admit no kind of suit, Not even Orsino's.

VIOLA So then I'll stay with him. I prithee, sir, provide me with some clothes For such disguise as haply may assist My safety in this time.

[Local rifles through his backpack and hands her military fatigues. She registers a moment of shock, for they look like what Sebastian had been wearing. She resolves to put them on, thus she looks much like a male soldier.]

I'll to Orsino--Present me as a shipwrecked soldier to him. What else may hap to time I will commit, Only shape thou thy silence to my wit.

LOCAL

Be you his guest, "cadet", I will not tell. But hurry on, the rains do come again.

Exit Local.

[to audience] I had a name before, when I lived elsewhere, among my own people. But when the ship split off the Queensland coast, I lost everything—my family, my clothes, my name. I floated and floated alongside turtles, until strong hands tried to pull me into a canoe. They couldn't hold me though. Am I a spirit? Displaced, then transplanted, now I will be called [looking at the books on the beach and choosing a name seemingly at random] Giom. I inhabit the between-lands.

Exit.