



## Be not afraid of greatness

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**Malvolio:**

"Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em."

[Twelfth Night \(II, v, 156-159\)](#)

In this scene, the comic plot (as opposed to the romantic plot) unfolds when Malvolio, Countess Olivia's priggish steward, comes upon a letter that the merrymakers in the play have left for him to find. One night as Sir Toby, Andrew, Maria and Feste are carousing, Malvolio bursts in to scold them for their behavior. His egotism and condescending manner so offends them that they decide to play a practical joke by arranging for him to find a love letter that he will believe is from Olivia to himself. The writer of this anonymous letter suggests that he can become "great" by doing certain things, each of which is more absurd than the next. Malvolio, in his ambitious and pretentious egotism, never questions the validity of the letter, nor the author, whom he firmly believes is Olivia. Later, as he carries out the ridiculous instructions in the letter, Olivia thinks her steward has gone mad and has him locked up.

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