

Arden

Rosalind (disguised as Ganymede):

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman as "Rosalind", disguised as a he/him man as "Ganymede".
 - This character's relationship with gender is a key aspect of the role - whilst there are many different ways one could approach this, this character is reserved for those who are *actively keen* to explore themes of gender (and genderbending) in their plot.
- **Status/class** - a noble lady, disguised as a (working-class) shepherd.
- **Character traits:**
 - Intelligent, witty and cynical; even though she is smitten with Orlando, she criticises, questions and deconstructs the poetic pedestal that others place romantic love upon, keen to ground any lovesick praise in reality instead of unattainable ideals.
 - Forever balancing complex plurality, hypotheticals and infinite possibilities; besides the obvious ways in which she plays with the fluidity of gender, expression and expectation, as well as sexual and romantic orientation/attraction and class/status, she refuses to define *anything* in absolute terms - whether lecturing with "if"s and "then"s, always entertaining other possibilities, or how, whilst in disguise as "Ganymede", she still dares to be feminine and "pretend" to be a lady, as a young "shepherd boy".
 - These layers come with a degree of calculating, and whilst her alter-ego may offer her more freedom when interacting with her paramour, ultimately, this is not a relationship beginning in total honesty and trust. It is *possible* that Orlando will be overjoyed to learn that the boy he has been "pretending to woo" is, in fact, the lady he claims to love - but he may well be heartbroken if this information is withheld from him longer than necessary. She also relies on Phoebe to lose interest should she no longer present as "Ganymede", having retained this persona long after finding safety in the forest. If she finds a way off this strange island, who can say which life she would wish to return to - or perhaps, what other lives could be explored instead?
 - In tune with nature - with an affinity for the pastoral, yet connected to more mystical knowledge. If she were to marry, it may well be blessed by spirits; if she seeks answers in alchemy, even unfamiliar island plant-life may bend to her incantations.
- **You may wish to play Rosalind if** you want to play an emotionally complex character with the "Mystic Knowledge" archetype; if you want to explore themes of gender expectations (and subversions), or if you want romance (likely with some flavour of queerness) in your plot.
- **You may not wish to play Rosalind if** you are not interested in the Alchemy mechanic; if you prefer more of a "blank slate", or if you are seeking a "simple" character or "straightforward" role.
- **Key Quote:** *"I would love you, if I could. To-morrow meet me all together. I will marry you, if ever I marry woman, and I'll be married to-morrow: I will satisfy you, if ever I satisfied man."*

Celia (disguised as Aliena):

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman, disguised or not.
 - It would be possible to play the character's gendering as *either* relevant or irrelevant according to the player's preferences.
- **Status/class:** noble lady, disguised as a (working-class) shepherdess.
- **Character traits:**
 - Brave and outspoken, unafraid to challenge others, including her family, her closest companions, and figures of authority. Whilst Rosalind may have a reputation for making bolder choices, Celia is no doormat, and whether defending Ros and following her into exile, or questioning her and holding her accountable when she needs to be cautioned; Celia is strong-willed and fierce.
 - Intensely loyal, to a fault. Her co-dependence on Rosalind is both her greatest strength and her greatest weakness, and her devotion and love for Rosalind is an unparalleled bond.
 - *(Note: if players wish to add a romantic undertone to this relationship, we suggest that a "Plot Twist" is used to reveal the two are not related, to avoid incestuous RP.)* Arriving on the island, faced with unknown characters and unforeseen events, Celia may be forced to question this loyalty, or to figure out how to stand on her own, if for any reason her dear companion is no longer by her side...
 - Loving, kind and forgiving; as the Plothole opens, Celia has newly found a softer side to Oliver Charles, who had previously been a cruel, brutish villain. Not knowing her identity, and showing remorse for his past behaviour, a budding romance is blossoming, but whether or not Celia is willing to absolve him entirely (embracing him despite the great deal of harm he has caused) is yet to be determined. Still, she finds herself wrestling with the confusion of this sudden attraction: charmed, and tempted to overlook her new suitor's (many) flaws, for love.
- **You may wish to play Celia if** you want to play a headstrong character with the "Noble Might" archetype; if you want to play with disguises and multiple identities - particularly around themes of class - or if you want to begin the game with several pre-existing relationship dynamics to explore, including deep and loyal devotion to another PC.
- **You may not wish to play Celia if** you do not wish to explore themes of family, class, or (potential) romance; if you do not want your own plotline to be intricately connected to another player's, or if you are simply seeking some other specific role, such as a supernatural character, a priest, a soldier, a leader, or an Entertainer.
- **Key Quote:** *"But now I know her: if she be a traitor, why so am I; we still have slept together, rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together, and wheresoever we went, like Juno's swans, still we went coupled and inseparable[...] I cannot live out of her company."*

Orlando:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him man.
 - His gender (and orientation) is a key theme/plotline; whilst it would be possible to do something *different* with it, this role is not suited for anyone uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender/gender roles/sexuality, even if adapted.
- **Status/class** - complex; of noble birth, but denied his inheritance and deliberately excluded from aristocratic society. Now in exile with the usurped Duke Senior, he is surrounded by ousted Lords whose estate is much like his own: without the pomp of the Court, his titles are worthless in the untamed Forest, living wild and free.
- **Character traits:**
 - Proud: whether of his physical sporting prowess as a wrestler, of his father and noble parentage, or of his sharp, dry wit. With this pride comes a layer of defensiveness, having been denied the schooling his father had intended for him, but he is not so proud as to ignore words of wisdom from others.
 - Adaptable, open-minded, and keen to listen, learn, and change whenever given the opportunity: arriving in the Forest, he is prepared for violence, but upon discovering how gentle the Lords are, he is keen to learn their philosophies and acclimatise to their way of life. As he courts Rosalind as "Ganymede", he is not only willing to play along, wooing this "boy", but eager to refine his approach to romance, poetry, and his ideals of love.
 - Thrown onto the beaches of the island, many may be unnerved in such an unfamiliar environment, but Orlando is used to being something of a fish out of water; this hunger for learning, adaptability in the face of adversity and ability to take an idea and run with it could be incredibly useful whilst seeking to find a way to leave this haunted land. However, it is also possible that Orlando is in no hurry to return to Arden, and as he meets new people and ideas (and continues to get to know "Ganymede"), there may be as many reasons to stay (or go elsewhere) as there are to return.
 - Orlando feels all of his emotions with a deep passion that cannot be hidden: love, anger, fear, hatred, curiosity, desire, contempt, pride, shame, confusion - Orlando is an open book (even if that book is filled with terrible attempts at poetry).
- **You may wish to play Orlando if** you want to play a proud fighter with the "Noble Might" archetype; if you want to explore themes of class, education, and family, or if you want a romantic plotline, especially exploring expectations of gender and (likely queer) sexuality.
- **You may not wish to play Orlando if** you want to play a sneaky or subtle character; if you want more of a "blank slate", or if you are not keen to play a more impulsive, "high-energy" role.
- **Key Quote:** *"I am the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys; he was my father, and he is thrice a villain that says such a father begot villains. Wert thou not my brother, I would not take this hand from thy throat till this other had pulled out thy tongue for saying so."*

Phoebe:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
 - Her gender (and orientation) is a key theme/plotline; whilst it would be possible to do something *different* with it, this role is not suited for anyone uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender/gender roles/sexuality, even if adapted.
- **Status/class** - lower/working class; a shepherdess
- **Character traits:**
 - A realist, frustrated by poetical and idealised notions of love and romance; Phoebe lectures Silvius (who is besotted with her) about a more authentic understanding of love, refusing to be placed upon a pedestal and disdainful of his melodrama.
 - Despite her scepticism and pragmatic reasoning when rejecting Silvius' self-pitying pursuit of her, she herself is not immune to sudden, unexpected, and all-consuming love, even if her attraction to "Ganymede" seems to be just as unrequited.
 - As the Plothole opens, Phoebe is caught in a love triangle - Silvius pines for her, whilst she is overcome with desire for "Ganymede" (note: whilst she may be infatuated, this should not be an aggressive advance); it is possible that as they land on the island, any of these would-be-lovers may encounter another potential paramour that grabs their attention. Likewise, if she discovers that "Ganymede" is not the shepherd boy she takes him for, it is not known whether or not the noble lady Rosalind may still mesmerise her just as powerfully. Phoebe may need to do some deep introspection to figure out how her proclaimed cynicism sits alongside this newfound passion, and whether Rosalind, "Ganymede", Silvius, or someone else - or perhaps no one else - may be a suitable marital prospect for her.
 - Scornful, proud, and disdainful, Phoebe is not above using Silvius' obsession with her to her own advantage; she is not sly or manipulative with this, being totally clear and truthful as she entreats Silvius to send Ganymede letters on her behalf, but nevertheless, whilst she does not lead him on, some may consider it cruel to use Silvius' infatuation to further her own attempts to seduce Ganymede, if she truly does not care for him.
- **You may wish to play Phoebe if** you want to play a snarky, sarcastic cynic with the "Gift of the Gab" archetype; if you want more of a "blank slate" to make your own, or if you want to explore potentially Sapphic attraction and/or gender roles, femininity and romance.
- **You may not wish to play Phoebe if** you are uncomfortable roleplaying unrequited romantic love and rejection (from either side); if you want to play a high-status character, or if you are more interested in e.g. warfare and violence than complex webs of love triangles.
- **Key Quote:** *"O, for shame, for shame, lie not, to say mine eyes are murderers! Now show the wound mine eye hath made in thee: scratch thee but with a pin, and there remains some scar of it; [...] but now mine eyes, which I have darted at thee, hurt thee not."*

Silvius:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him man.
 - It would be possible to play the character's gendering as *either* relevant or irrelevant according to the player's preferences, although there is a lot to be explored re: the importance of their relationship to gender and sexual/romantic orientation.
- **Status/class** - lower/working class; a shepherd.
- **Character traits:**
 - Melodramatic and self-pitying, Silvius wildly claims that he is love's only true victim and that no one has ever felt love as he does; this well-intentioned but immature would-be-lover is more in love with the idea of love than he truly is with the alleged object of his affections, as he places Phoebe on an impossible pedestal and refuses to listen to her about what she wants. (Note: whilst he may be obsessive and persistent, this should not be an aggressive advance.)
 - An idealist and hopelessly naïve ingenue, Silvius' optimism and obsession cloud his judgment. Even as he is plainly told that Phoebe is only tolerating him in the hope that he can aid her pursuit of Ganymede, he shows no signs of self-preservation.
 - As the Plothole spits him onto the island, Silvius may need a sobering reality check, as if he continues to lament that he will die of lovesickness and recklessly embraces madness in the name of "love", unforeseen encounters could well be deadly, if he cannot keep his wits about him and pay more attention to anyone or anything other than his own sighs.
 - Mild-mannered and non-violent; where others may be filled with rage, anger or jealousy, watching their beloved fall for someone else, Silvius never shows even the slightest unkindness towards his romantic rival. One might expect such passion to tempt him to violence against the hypotenuse of the love triangle, but he speaks to them the same way he speaks to his friends, and even entrusts "Ganymede" to help him win Phoebe's heart and arrange their marriage. Should Phoebe ever requite his affection (or a new prospect catch his eye), it is possible that he would be willing to share his lover, if that is what would please them.
- **You may wish to play Silvius if** you want to play a naïve, lovesick ingenue with the "Lover's Heart" archetype; if you want your primary plotline to be driven by romantic love (including unrequited love), or if you want to play an "emo", with a flair for the melodramatic.
- **You may not wish to play Silvius if** you want to play an especially thoughtful or wise character; if you don't want to enter play with existing IC relationship dynamics, or if you want to play e.g. a high-status character, or someone motivated by violence or revenge.
- **Key Quote:** *"O, thou didst then ne'er love so heartily! If thou remember'st not the slightest folly that ever love did make thee run into, thou hast not loved: or if thou hast not sat as I do now, wearying thy hearer in thy mistress' praise, thou hast not loved!"*

Touchstone:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him man.
 - Gender is largely irrelevant to the character - players may choose to do something with this or ignore it as they see fit.
- **Status/class** - lower/working class.
- **Character traits:**
 - Sharp-witted and fearless - although he plays the 'fool', he is fiercely intelligent and often sees through others' inauthentic outward personas. He relies on his skills as an Entertainer to escape the constraints of courtesy typically expected by the upper classes, and has free rein to mock, criticise and frustrate rich and poor alike, unafraid of punishment as he points out others' flaws and hypocrisy. His jolly disposition does not detract from his philosophising and wry critique.
 - Ultimately, a cynic - especially when it comes to notions of romantic love and courtship. Whilst his criticisms of Orlando's terrible poetry are valid, his inability to conceive of 'true love' at all, or see other people's perspectives (even if he has no interest in such a relationship for himself, and is possibly aromantic) does show a tendency towards stubbornness and cockiness that could prove fatal if entirely unchecked...
 - His relationships with others are complicated by this; his flirtatiousness with Jaques (despite their contrasting personalities) relies primarily on affectionate mockery and "banter", whilst he criticises the more melancholy jester's relentless moralising. It does appear that Audrey may share his ideologies, with a potential marriage of convenience to indulge in a sexual relationship within the confines of society's expectations of 'propriety' - but Jaques is positively smitten, and whilst *in court* he may taunt and tease with impunity, he may now need to consider other people's feelings, if he is to take anything 'seriously'.
 - Loyal - Celia is absolutely certain that Touchstone will run to Arden with her and Rosalind, despite his comfortable position in her father's court, and she is correct; there is no hesitation. He could have declined and could have informed Frederick of the ladies' plan to seek out Duke Senior in the forest, but he joins them as a companion, and any complaints are made in good humour.
- **You may wish to play Touchstone if** you want to play an outspoken character with the "Entertainer" archetype; if you are interested in deconstructing poetic tropes of romance (potentially as an aromantic character), or if you'd like more of a "blank slate" to begin with.
- **You may not wish to play Touchstone if** you want to play a character with high-ranking social status; if you prefer contemplative [Alchemy](#) to uninhibited [Masques](#), or if you want to play a pining romantic.
- **Key Quote:** *"I am not in the mind but I were better to be married of him than of another: for he is not like to marry me well; and not being well married, it will be a good excuse for me hereafter to leave my wife."*