

## Illyria

### **Viola (disguised as Cesario); shipwrecked Princess of Naples:**

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman as "Viola", disguised as a he/him man as "Cesario".
  - 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** - secretly royalty, but in disguise as a servant.
- **Character traits:**
  - Viola loves deeply: her loyalty to her friends, her grief over losing her twin Sebastian in the tempest, and, of course, the romantic love she harbours for Duke Orsino, are often the primary motivation for her actions - even doing her best to match-make Orsino and Olivia, against her own self-interests.
  - Often torn, trying to establish her own identity: as a twin missing her double; as a princess playing the part of a page; being royal in Naples, but a stranger in Illyria; a youth exploring her newfound independence as an adult; in love, but unable to confess this; as the unexpected object of a Countess' affection; as a woman, as a man, or perhaps both, or neither...
    - In addition, the frequent cases of mistaken identity (as unbeknownst to her, Sebastian has survived) serve to further complicate matters, as she tries to make sense of who exactly Viola - and/or Cesario - is as an individual. As the plothole opens and she finds herself once again thrust onto unknown shores, surrounded by strangers, her time on the island could drastically change who she is, who she wants to be, who she wants to be with, and, if she is able to find a way to leave the island, where on Earth she would like to set sail for and call "home"...
  - Pragmatic, but sheltered and inexperienced; if she is to duel Sir Andrew Aguecheek to maintain her outward appearance as "Cesario", she may find that her life is endangered, not having been taught the same swordsmanship skills as Sebastian.
- **You may wish to play Viola if** you want to play a character caught in a convoluted web of romantic love triangles, with the "Lover's Heart" archetype; if you want to explore gender roles (and subversions), with genderbending and disguises, or if you want to play a character with complex and potentially contradictory relationships to their own identity, including class, gender, orientation and familial ties.
- **You may not wish to play Viola if** you do not want to balance multiple identities and disguises; if you prefer more of a "blank slate", or if you want to play, e.g. a violent/aggressive soldier, an alchemist/priest or a supernatural character from another callsheet.
- **Key Quote:** *"my master loves her dearly; and I, poor monster, fond as much on him; and she, mistaken, seems to dote on me. What will become of this? As I am man, my state is desperate for my master's love; as I am woman,--now alas the day!--"*

## Countess Olivia:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
  - The character's relationship with gender (and, by extension, orientation) is a key element - whilst it would be possible to do something *different*, this role is not suited for anyone uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender.
- **Status/class** - Countess of Illyria (nobility/aristocracy).
- **Character traits:**
  - Melodramatic; she claims to be locking herself away from the world to mourn the death of her brother, but her actions suggest this is perhaps more about maintaining a gothic aesthetic (and rebuffing unwelcome advances from various suitors) - especially as she swiftly drops all airs and graces to pursue "Cesario" - although this new obsession could just as quickly be transferred to Cesario's twin, should he be available and interested..
  - Powerful, imposing, and aware of it - both through her high status/noble rank (and associated wealth), and the effect that she seems to have on almost everyone who meets her, as they instantly fall in love with her. It is unclear if "Cesario"'s feminine looks or apparent immunity to her charms first caught her attention, but she is used to getting what she wants, and she becomes far more excited than ever before when faced with the first person not to fawn and flatter her beauty and power.
    - Her disinterest in the numerous male suitors (Orsino, Sir Andrew, Malvolio) could simply be about *those men*, but it is entirely up to the player as to why it is that "Cesario" is the only exception (*Note: whilst she may be obsessive, [this should not be an aggressive advance](#)*) - as her attempts to seduce and beguile are fruitless for the first time. As the Plothole opens and she meets unexpected strangers, away from her seat of power in Illyria, her authority may be further challenged, and who can tell whether these new experiences will awaken something new in her, and whether being faced with powerlessness will make or break her...
  - Shallow, but steadfast and not easily swayed by others; whilst she may fall for "Cesario"/Sebastian instantaneously, and may be perfectly happy to exchange one twin for another, she knows what she wants and refuses to be badgered by Orsino or anyone else.
- **You may wish to play Olivia if** you want to play a high-status character with the "Noble Might" archetype; if you want to be entangled in a complex web of love triangles, or if you want to explore Sapphic attraction and/or gender roles and femininity.
- **You may not wish to play Olivia if** you are uncomfortable flirting or with unrequited love; if you're more interested in e.g. warfare or violence, or if you want to start without existing IC connections.
- **Key Quote:** *"I have sent after him: he says he'll come; How shall I feast him? What bestow of him? For youth is bought more oft than begg'd or borrow'd. I speak too loud. Where is Malvolio? He is sad and civil, and suits well for a servant with my fortunes".*

## Duke Orsino:

- **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** - Duke of Illyria - high status noble/aristocracy.
- **Character traits:**
  - In love with being in love - his endless attempts to woo Olivia appear to be far more about poetry (not even visiting her in person) than they are about the Countess herself. He loves to hedonistically over-indulge in every pleasure, and while he may act hard done by, he is anything but, living a life of luxury.
  - Powerful and obstinate - used to getting his way, he continues to send unwelcome poems and declarations of love to Olivia, who has repeatedly denied him (*Note: whilst he may be stubborn, this should not be an aggressive advance*). Perhaps, much as "Cesario" is the first to reject Olivia, Olivia may be the only woman not easily won over by Orsino's gregarious nature, challenging his authority in a way no one ever has, rather than pining for her.
    - He shows great friendship and generosity to those in his orbit - he may command his household, but there is genuine intimacy and affection as he comments on his new pageboy's "smooth and rubious" lips and debates the nature of love, and if different genders feel it differently, with his new companion he has enthusiastically shown immediate trust in. If, on this strange island, he were to learn that his new bosom-buddy is actually a princess, his attention may well shift her way - but since he is both entitled and shallow, he may well just as likely throw her aside for whatever new and interesting challenge or conquest presents itself...
  - Laid-back, passive and lazy - much as he may wax lyrical and call for music, poetry and entertainment, he sends others to do his bidding (including his attempts to gain a wife). Whilst he may be seeking distraction from his gilded state of boredom, he tends to take all actions through proxies (primarily "Cesario").
- **You may wish to play Orsino if** you want to play a high-status character with the "Noble Might" archetype; if you want to explore themes of gender, sexuality (likely including queerness), and class, or if you want to be entangled in a complex web of love triangles.
- **You may not wish to play Orsino if** you are uncomfortable flirting or RPing unrequited love/romantic rejection, or with pre-existing IC relationships; if you want to play a more subtle, shy or secretive character, or if you want to play something specific, such as a priest/chemist, violent warrior, or supernatural character.
- **Key Quotes:** *"If music be the food of love, play on; give me excess of it, that, surfeiting, the appetite may sicken, and so die."* & bonus: *"Cesario, come; for so you shall be, while you are a man; but when in other habits you are seen, Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen."*

## **Maria:**

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
  - It would be possible to play the character's gendering as *either* relevant or irrelevant according to the player's preferences.
- **Status/class** - lower/working class.
- **Character traits:**
  - A sharp wit - clever, bold, and an enabler of mischief and fun. Whilst revelling with higher-status companions, she is unabashed exchanging quips with Sir Toby Belch, which go right over the head of the well-bred but witless Sir Andrew. In fact, as she continually teases Sir Toby, the jokes crackle with sparks of something else; it is entirely possible that her swift repartee and wisecracking could land her with a noble spouse, should things escalate further, rising above her current rank/station.
  - A creative prankster, whose mischief crosses the line toward cruelty; her mistreatment and manipulation of Malvolio, seemingly prompted only by his dull and serious nature and alleged uptight narcissism, not only toys with the man's heart and romantic vulnerability, but could lead to his imprisonment, gaslighting, and both physical and psychological torture - a disproportionate response to someone being a smug spoilsport.
    - As the plothole opens, and Maria finds herself on the island, in unexpected circumstances with unfamiliar people, it is possible that this plot to humiliate her rival will be exposed, and not everyone may find it as funny as she does. At a minimum, Malvolio himself will most certainly swear an oath of revenge at all who have wronged him, and in this strange, magical land, this fury could prove fatal.
  - Hypocritical, and unaware of it; as she seeks to tear her fellow servant down a peg or two for his audacity to love the Countess, she herself has affections for Sir Toby, a noble. Likewise, she is just as likely to berate Sir Toby and co for their boisterous partying, passing judgment on their drunkenness, as she is to join in, rudely yelling at Malvolio for the same admonishment. Whilst she is unwaveringly loyal to Olivia, and her irreverence is mostly light-hearted, if she were to use that great intellect for introspection, she may find the uncomfortable truth that not only is her "jest" overly spiteful, but the same "faults" she finds in Malvolio may well also be a projection of her own...
- **You may wish to play Maria if** you want to play a snarky/sarcastic, witty character with the "Gift of the Gab" archetype; if you want to play a working-class character, or if you want to play a more morally grey/villain-adjacent role, with more of a "blank slate" to adapt.
- **You may not wish to play Maria if** you wish to play a character who is always thoughtful, kind and considerate; if you want to play a quiet, reserved or shy role, or if you want to avoid IC "drunk" roleplay.
- **Key Quote:** *"Observe him, for the love of mockery; for I know this letter will make a contemplative idiot of him. Close, in the name of jesting! For here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling."*

## **Feste Fabian:**

- **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:**
  - Shrewd and insightful - although he plays the 'fool', he is wise 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, with endless riddles, wordplay and song, unafraid of punishment.
  - Impish and mischievous, to the extent of cruelty - whilst it is Maria's plan to plant the forged love letter to humiliate Malvolio, Feste has no hesitation, and if Malvolio were imprisoned, he would gleefully pretend to be a priest outside his cell to further gaslight and torment the already-broken man.
    - Whilst he has always been able to laugh and joke his way out of most situations, a lot of people find this mockery to be intolerable - one day, he may just strike the wrong nerve with his relentless teasing, and as he lands on this strange island, with unfamiliar faces and magical spirits, who can say whether or not he will have the last laugh...
  - A cocky show-off, who, despite his low social status, regularly waves deliberately confusing riddles, wordplay, Latin (sometimes real, sometimes fake) and alleged wisdom from people that do not exist (such as in the featured quote below) in the faces of the aristocrats he serves. Likewise, as something of a free agent, whilst he is nominally employed in Olivia's household, he spends a great deal of time singing for Orsino, or as the go-between for all of Illyria - not just the melancholy Countess' fool.
- **You may wish to play Feste Fabian if** you are especially interested in the Masques mechanic, with the "Entertainer" archetype; if you enjoy playing with puns, riddles, wordplay and singing, or if you want more of a "blank slate" character, without existing romantic connections.
- **You may not wish to play Feste Fabian if** you are uncomfortable being the centre of attention or being laughed at, or you want to play a quiet, shy or reserved character; if you want something specific such as plotline revolving around warfare, witchcraft or religion, or if you want a more well-established starting point, potentially with existing IC connections (e.g. familial, romantic, enemies/rivals)
- **Key Quote:** *"Wit, an't be thy will, put me into good fooling! Those wits, that think they have thee, do very oft prove fools; and I, that am sure I lack thee, may pass for a wise man: for what says Quinapalus? 'Better a witty fool, than a foolish wit.'"*

## Sir Toby Belch:

- **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** - Upper Class/Nobility/Aristocracy
- **Character traits:**
  - Classist. Despite his affection for Maria, who is his match in wit and practical jokes, he regularly makes it clear that he thinks himself to be ordained at birth as socially superior - whether in his fury at Malvolio's crush on his niece, his outrage that Olivia is enamoured with (who he believes to be) a pageboy, or his pomposity when interacting with Feste Fabian. Despite this, whilst he may have noble heritage, he has drunk his wealth away, and is now relying on the deep purse of Sir Andrew to fund his never-ending bacchanal; he considers this brainless bore of good breeding to be a better match for his niece than any kind, intelligent or loving suitor who has no family name, wealth or title, supporting Sir Andrew's suit.
  - A mischievous enabler; without putting himself personally at risk, he is keen to goad others to fight, egging Sir Andrew on to challenge "Cesario" to a [duel](#). He is so motivated by chaos, anarchy and tomfoolery that Maria's twisted plan to humiliate Malvolio may just be the tipping point for him to confess his attraction and propose marriage (which he considers to be the greatest prize she could win), delighted by her wicked plot.
    - Sir Toby gets away with a lot in Illyria due to his social standing; Malvolio is powerless against him, much as he detests his raucous bawdiness, Sir Andrew is too witless to notice when he is being used or mocked, Maria lets things slide due to her rose-tinted glasses and her class, Olivia feels obliged to tolerate him as he is her relative and her elder, and he can only be rescued from Sebastian's fury by Olivia's intervention. However, in a new land, filled with strangers (including several of noble or royal birth that he might respect), he may no longer be safe from the consequences of his wild drinking and boorish behaviour...
  - Rude, crude and lewd, but generally able to talk himself out of trouble as much as he talks himself into it. A hedonistic party animal, he retains a sharp wit despite his constant inebriation.
- **You may wish to play Sir Toby Belch if** you want to play a snarky/sarcastic, witty character with the "Gift of the Gab" archetype; if you want to explore themes of class, or if you want to play a boisterous, morally grey trouble-maker and enabler.
- **You may not wish to play Sir Toby Belch if** you wish to play a character who is always thoughtful, kind and considerate (including holding IC class-based prejudices); if you want to play a quiet, reserved or shy role, or if you want to avoid IC "drunk" roleplay.
- **Key Quote:** *"Art any more than a steward? Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"*