

The Play's the Thing LRP - Starting Player Character Guide

Messina

Benedick:

- **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 gender roles.
- **Status/class** - upper middle/aristocratic.
 - High-ranking soldier from Padua, good friends with Princes and nobility (who outrank him).
- **Character traits:**
 - Proud peacock, ever the centre of attention and life of the party. Thinks himself to be incredibly clever and funny (and it is important to him that others agree). The enabler on every stag do.
 - Has sworn he will never fall in love or get married, but underneath this harbours strong feelings for Beatrice; there may be a more vulnerable, soft and romantic side beneath the surface, and the performance as "the funny one" is at least in part to hide/compensate for this.
 - It is also possible that as events unfold on the island, his love interest(s) may change or his attention may be diverted elsewhere, but his excessive protests that he is not interested in marriage are still a core attribute, whether he concedes or not.
 - Honourable and loyal, with a sense of justice. If he believes someone to have wronged someone he cares about, he will likely challenge said villain to a duel - even if his opponent would be someone he had considered to be a close friend until that moment.
- **You may wish to play Benedick if** you want to play a snarky/sarcastic, witty extrovert with the "Gift of the Gab" archetype, if you have an interest in romantic plotlines, or if you want your character to be especially passionate with whichever emotions they feel deeply.
- **You may not wish to play Benedick if** you would like to play a quiet/reserved/mysterious character, if you do not want romance (or avoidance of romance) to be a key plotline to engage with, or if you want a low-maintenance, conflict-avoidant role.
- **Key quote:** *"When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married."*

Beatrice:

- **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, although there is a lot to be explored re: the importance of their relationship to gender and gender roles.
- **Status/class** - aristocratic/nobility/lower royalty.
 - Her father is the Duke of Milan, although she was raised by and lives with her uncle, who is a nobleman of Messina.
- **Character traits:**
 - Proud peacock, ever the centre of attention and life of the party. Thinks herself to be incredibly clever and funny and doesn't much care about what others think about her. The wildcard on every hen do.
 - Refuses to marry until she can find someone she considers her equal in wit. She seeks excitement, humour and fun, and will not settle for anyone who may bore her, attempt to control her, or insist she act more genteel/ladylike. Unapologetically clever, loud and passionate.
 - To date, her closest match has been Benedick, and their "merry war" of wit has been as intensely flirtatious as it has been scornful. However, as events unfold on the island, it is possible that this will not blossom into a loving, romantic relationship - however, her insistence that any potential partner would need to be her intellectual equal in banter, and that she will not have her independence suppressed are still fundamental, mandatory requirements for any potential suitor she may consider.
 - Honourable and loyal, with a sense of justice. If she believes someone to have wronged someone she cares about, she will rain curses down on her enemies, with fury and rage. She may issue a challenge to a duel, or incite others to violence until her hunger for vengeance is satisfied. She is fiercely protective of those of a gentler disposition, such as her cousin Hero.
- **You may wish to play Beatrice if** you want to play a snarky/sarcastic, witty extrovert with the "Gift of the Gab" archetype, if you have an interest in romantic plotlines, or if you want your character to be especially passionate with whichever emotions they feel deeply.
- **You may not wish to play Beatrice if** you would like to play a quiet/reserved/mysterious character, if you do not want romance (or avoidance of romance) to be a key plotline to engage with, or if you want a low-maintenance, conflict-avoidant role.
- **Key quote:** *"Yes, faith; it is my cousin's duty to make curtsy and say 'Father, as it please you.' But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy and say 'Father, as it please me.'"*

Claudio:

- **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.
- **Status/class** - middle.
 - A soldier from Florence who has recently won great acclaim and the favour/patronage of a prince, albeit not necessarily having any real rank or status of his own.
- Character traits:
 - Optimistic, naïve, idealistic and a hopeless romantic, albeit very fickle with these romantic ideals.
 - Overly trusting to a fault. Easily persuaded/swayed by the words of others, insecure in his own convictions, and easily led or tricked, with minimal evidence required or critical examination/skepticism on Claudio's part.
 - He has also demonstrated an inability to learn from past mistakes; after defeating Don John in battle, having fought alongside Don Pedro (who has always treated him kindly), he instantly believes Don John's suggestion that Don Pedro is attempting to woo Hero for himself, rather than set her up with Claudio as he'd said, without questioning the enemy he had just subdued on the battlefield (and who famously has a grudge against Don Pedro, Claudio and their friends). After this slander is immediately proven false, and Claudio and Don Pedro have reconciled, he is *still* willing to listen to the next lie that Don John spins him and burn all his bridges without a second thought under his persuasion. It may take unexpected experiences on the island for him to change his ways, to learn to second-guess or doubt others' intentions, or else his gullible nature could prove fatal.
 - Has a cruel streak - on a rash impulse, if he is led to believe that he has been betrayed by someone he loves, rather than talking to that person quietly to hear their side of the story, he is liable to publicly cause a scene, humiliate others (and himself) and be callous and spiteful at the slightest provocation.
- **You may wish to play Claudio if** you want to play a naïve ingenue with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you enjoy going with the flow and seeing where an impulsive "yes, and" approach may take you, or if you are keen to play a soldier and/or engage with romantic plotlines.
- **You may not wish to play Claudio if** you want to play a cunning/crafty character, if you do not want a romance/marriage plotline to feature, or if you wish to play a character who is always thoughtful, kind and considerate.
- **Key quote:** *"If I see any thing to-night why I should not marry her to-morrow in the congregation, where I should wed, there will I shame her."*

Hero:

- **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, although there is a lot to be explored re: the importance of their relationship to gender and gender roles.
- **Status/class** - aristocratic/nobility, the Governor's daughter.
 - Her father is a nobleman and her uncle Antonio is Duke of Milan.
- **Character traits:**
 - Sweet, shy, inexperienced romantic. At times, she is lost for words, and more extroverted characters like her cousin Beatrice interject on her behalf.
 - Virtuous - to the extent that if she is falsely accused of impropriety, she swoons.
 - She also appears to be far more tolerant and forgiving than perhaps is warranted, although she suffers terribly at others' mistreatment of her. Even if her own father cruelly dismisses her, believing her misled fiancé over her own protestations of innocence, there is no suggestion that she has any less love for her tormentors when presented with the opportunity to reconcile and absolve them of their wrongdoing. This may largely be to her sheltered upbringing until now - unexpectedly meeting others on the island may affect her outlook or prompt her to hold others to account more, especially if she were to witness other people who refuse to excuse such disrespect, or who would never treat a loved one in this way in the first place.
 - Playful and capable of mischief; she is the showrunner of the ruse to convince Beatrice that Benedick is in love with her, and is prepared to fake her own death, waiting for the right moment to dramatically reveal this Plot Twist. However, although she willingly engages in these schemes, each stunt she pulls is well-intentioned rather than malicious.
- **You may wish to play Hero if** you want to play a naïve ingenue with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you would prefer to play a shy/more introverted character, or if you want to explore themes of love - both romantic and familial - within your plotline.
- **You may not wish to play Hero if** you want to play a more outspoken/extroverted character, if you want to play a more morally-grey, sinful or destructive character, or if you want to play a more flirtatious or promiscuous character.
- **Key Quote:** *"I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my cousin to a good husband."*

Don Pedro:

- **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** - royalty.
 - Don Pedro (also referred to as the Prince of Aragon) is the highest-ranking character in the socio-political hierarchy from the Messina script.
- **Character traits:**
 - Powerful and confident about it. What he says goes, and when faced with any challenge to this (such as the recent fighting with his brother), he comes out on top.
 - Eccentric and mischievous; rather than simply talking to Hero and Leonato about Claudio's proposal, he instead suggests an unnecessary and elaborate gambit, involving himself in the lovers' courtship and disguising himself as Claudio, seemingly just for fun and because he can. In addition to this, it is his plan to manipulate Benedick and Beatrice into confessing their love for one another; whilst this plan comes from a place of love, this chaotic and whimsical approach to any given situation is the kind of behaviour that people may simply humour because he is the Prince and is powerful.
 - His meddling with others' love lives contrasts with his own situation, remaining a singleton despite his expression of interest in finding a spouse, including a proposal that Beatrice rejected. Perhaps, meeting strangers on the island, rather than getting as involved in his friends' personal lives, he might find his own happiness, rather than merely living vicariously through others.
 - Courteous, generous and loving to his friends, but too quick to believe evil of others and hasty to enact revenge. A great ally to have and a dangerous enemy if you are not in his good books.
- **You may wish to play Don Pedro if** you want to play a leader/high-status character with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you want to sow an element of chaos through well-meaning shenanigans, or if you want more of a "blank slate" to write your own story from.
- **You may not wish to play Don Pedro if** you are not comfortable in positions of power/would prefer to play a low-status character, if you want a character that begins with an extant love interest in play, or if you are looking for something specific, such as a supernatural character from another callsheet.
- **Key Quote:** *"And, as I wooed for thee to obtain her, I will join with thee to disgrace her."*

Friar Francis:

- **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** - middle.
 - Respected clergy, educated but not nobility or royalty.
- **Character traits:**
 - Perceptive; when more gullible people believe the lies, rumours and false accusations seeded by villains seeking to divide loved ones and sow discord, Friar Francis is one of the only people to see past the deception and clearly identify the truth of the matter.
 - Mischievous; although a holy man, who you may expect to be firmly against any kind of lying, he is not above hatching a plan to fake someone's death, deliberately misinforming and tormenting those he deems to be sinners until they have shown appropriate contrition and repentance for the wrongdoing.
 - His religion is still his primary calling, but he plays fast and loose with the rules, happily exploiting any perceived loopholes he can in order to control the actions and feelings of others and the events that follow. He is absolutely certain that he is correct in all of his convictions, with his faith not only in his God but that as a vessel of said god, he cannot be mistaken. As the events on the island unfold, it is possible this faith may be shaken, if given reason to doubt *himself*, if not his religious vocation.
 - Thoughtful, temperate and calm - whilst others' tempers and passions fly, he waits quietly to say his piece, but when he does speak, it is with purpose and gravitas. His seemingly mild-mannered nature does not mean that he is in any way a pushover or a doormat - quite the opposite is true, and people heed his words as wise and good.
- **You may wish to play Friar Francis if** you are especially keen to engage in the Alchemy elements of the game, with the "Mystic Knowledge" archetype, if you want to engage with themes of religion/fate/destiny and its associated magicks, or if you want to play a more reserved, yet quietly competent character.
- **You may not wish to play Friar Francis if** you would rather be getting married than performing the ceremony, if you want to avoid playing an overtly religious figure, or if you would like to play a more hot-headed or aggressive character.
- **Key Quote:** *"Pause awhile, and let my counsel sway you in this case. Your daughter here the princes left for dead: let her awhile be secretly kept in, and publish it that she is dead indeed;"*

Margaret Ursula:

- **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:**
 - Playful, cheeky and impish. In addition to eagerly playing a role in the ruse to convince Beatrice that Benedick is in love with her, she has a sharp, quick wit and is not afraid to engage in bawdy humour, saucy euphemism and teasing her companions (such as with the faux-innocent offer of "Benedictus" as a "cure" for Beatrice's feigned illness, to provoke a reaction from the lady due to the drug name's similarity to "Benedick").
 - Fiercely independent and unashamedly suggestive; her lower-class status does not give her social power, but does allow her more freedom as she is not held to the same standards of decorum as the aristocracy. She can evade the pressures of propriety that the gentry are scrutinised for, can openly flirt and even have lovers, despite being unmarried, without particularly devastating social consequences.
 - However, there is a longing for upward social mobility; whilst she seems comfortable joking, teasing and playing with the ladies, Conrade Baracchio's planned deception requires her agreeing to roleplay as Hero when sneaking her paramour in through her window for an amorous tryst. Her companion seems confident she will happily consent to this without questioning, suggesting this scenario appeals to her own desires in some way. Conrade Baracchio and Don John are relying on her easygoing/relaxed attitude to manipulate her as an unwitting pawn in their scheme to tarnish Hero's reputation, but if she were to find someone else she is more interested in on the island, or if she were to discover her lover's intended betrayal, she may not be as easy to exploit as they seem to assume she will be. She is a force to be reckoned with and not to be underestimated.
 - Candid and outspoken, with no verbal filter - often to the shock and/or delight of any audience of "polite company" assembled.
- **You may wish to play Margaret Ursula if** you want to play a cheeky, flirtatious character with the "Entertainer" archetype, if you enjoy banter and witty riposte, or if you want a relatively "blank slate" to write your own story from.
- **You may not wish to play Margaret Ursula if** you want to play a high-status character, if you are looking for something specific, such as a supernatural character from another callsheet, or if you are not comfortable playing a bawdy/promiscuous role.

Key Quote: *"To have no man come over me! why, shall I always keep below stairs?"*

Dogberry:

- **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:**
 - Preposterous, foolish and absurd. Dogberry is unintentionally funny, not due to any great wit of his own, but because he sincerely attempts to convey self-importance without any foundation for this pomposity.
 - Overly keen to be recognised as an authority figure, but due to his general incompetence as a constable, he may struggle to be taken seriously, even if on occasion he actually does have valuable information to contribute.
 - This poses several challenges for Dogberry and his team of watchmen: first, to successfully identify any villainy that they may encounter, then to apprehend the wrongdoers, for said criminals to recognise their authority and comply with the arrest, but in addition it may be difficult to get those with power to listen to their report and any crucial details, without being dismissed as blundering imbeciles.
 - He frequently misinterprets what others say, is oblivious to subtext or when others are mocking him and unknowingly entertains others - usually by saying the wrong thing without realising it. In addition to his peculiar manner of speech (by attempting to sound more sophisticated than he is), he typically follows trains of thought to illogical or impractical conclusions, such as declaring that non-compliant individuals should be released and officers should "thank God [they] are rid of a knave" if anyone will not follow the watch's orders.
- **You may wish to play Dogberry if** you are especially interested in the Masques mechanic, with the "Entertainer" archetype, if you enjoy playing with puns, malapropisms and funny turns of phrase, if you are comfortable being the centre of attention and having people laugh at you as much as they laugh with you.
- **You may not wish to play Dogberry if** you want to play an intelligent, analytical, or manipulative character, or a higher-status character, if you want to pursue particular themes such as romance, otherworldly magic and mysticism, or if you would prefer to play a more reserved/quiet/shy character.

Key Quote: *"Marry, sir, they have committed false report; moreover, they have spoken untruths; secondarily, they are slanders; sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady; thirdly, they have verified unjust things; and, to conclude, they are lying knaves."*

Verona

Romeo Montague:

- **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.
- **Status/class** - upper-middle/aristocratic.
 - From a noble household, although it is his parents who are Lord and Lady; Romeo does not hold a noble title of his own.
- **Character traits:**
 - Fearless and unafraid of death - he is willing to risk his life to woo the daughter of his enemies in secret, and if he believes the object of his affections to have died, he is likely to immediately join them in the afterlife without hesitation.
 - Impulsive and hot-tempered; whether it is how quickly he might fall in or out of love, make plans for a marriage, or to kill someone who provokes him, even if until that moment he'd been reluctant to fight at all. He is especially stirred to violence out of loyalty to his friends and loved ones, prompted to defence and revenge rather than fighting for fighting's sake.
 - Romeo has frequently attempted to refrain from any fighting and play the peacemaker, but if someone pushes his buttons in the right way, he can throw this pacifism aside and see red, with hot-blooded passion driving him despite his better instincts. It may be that events on the island might affect him in some way - but whether this is him learning to calm himself or to become even more beholden to his emotions and initial instincts is difficult to say.
 - In love with the idea of being in love - until this moment, he had been sullenly writing poetry for Rosaline and bemoaning how devastatingly in love with her, although she had not requited his affections. At the time the Plothole opens, Romeo and Juliet have only just met, with their newfound mutual infatuation completely fresh, new and exciting; it is possible that if Juliet did not return his attention with the same fervor, or if someone else were to show an interest in him, it is entirely possible that he may be more fickle, and his impossibly deep and sudden love for Juliet may change just as abruptly as it did when she became his new muse and he lost interest in Rosaline.
- **You may wish to play Romeo Montague if** you are keen to play a flirtatious character with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you enjoy going with the flow and seeing where an impulsive "yes, and" approach may take you, and if you want to begin the game playing a young adult with an established romantic love interest.
- **You may not wish to play Romeo Montague if** you do not want to engage with any romance plotlines, if you want to play a character who is careful and wise, or if you want to avoid suicide as a plot theme.
- **Key Quote:** *"Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night."*

Juliet Capulet:

- **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, although there is a lot to be explored re: the importance of their relationship to gender and gender roles.
- **Status/class** - upper-middle/aristocratic.
 - From a noble household, although it is her parents who are Lord and Lady; Juliet does not hold a noble title of her own.
- **Character traits:**
 - Fearless and unafraid of death - she is willing to risk both her own and her lover's lives, talking with her enemies' son in secret. If she believes the object of her affections to have died, or that she may be forced to marry someone else, she is likely to immediately end her own life without hesitation.
 - Independent and stubborn. Although she is a young adult, with a sheltered upbringing, she makes her own plans and contingencies and will not be persuaded otherwise once her mind is set.
 - Her sheltered upbringing also gives her some naïvety - Romeo is the first man she has been courted by, and whilst she is proactive in immediately arranging a secret wedding and honeymoon, she is more than willing to die to avoid marrying Paris (or anyone other than Romeo). She is even prepared to fake her own death to escape her parents' household, but it is still possible that once exposed to new experiences and strange people she would not otherwise have met on the island, her conviction that the *only* options she could consider are eloping with Romeo or dying may be shaken as she encounters others, with much broader horizons now available to her outside of the Capulet manor.
 - A romantic - she does not want an arranged marriage of convenience or for the sake of wealth, rank and title. She has just been swept off her feet by a handsome stranger at a ball, and immediately thrown away all of her previous dutiful obedience to her parents in order to pursue this newfound love.
- **You may wish to play Juliet Capulet if** you are keen to play a passionate character with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you enjoy going with the flow and seeing where an impulsive "yes, and" approach may take you, and if you want to begin the game playing a young adult with an established romantic love interest.
- **You may not wish to play Juliet Capulet if** you do not want to engage with any romance plotlines, if you want to play a character who is careful and wise, or if you want to avoid suicide as a plot theme.
- **Key Quote:** *"I will kiss thy lips; Haply some poison yet doth hang on them, to make die with a restorative."*

Mercutio Escalus:

- **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 Mercutio is often played as potentially more gender-fluid and/or flamboyant than other male characters.
- **Status/class** - aristocratic/nobility/lower royalty.
 - His cousin is the Prince of Verona and he is a wealthy Count.
- **Character traits:**
 - A hedonist, who is gregarious and promiscuous, but swears he has no interest in romantic love, marriage or "settling down". The wilddcard on every stag do and an eternal bachelor.
 - Witty and clever, with lightning-fast snark and sarcasm, always inserting humour into any given situation, whether he's flirting, provoking someone to fight him, or teasing his friends with good-natured quips.
 - However, he does not know when to stop talking and is prone to escalating absolutely everything he can, which, if he's not careful, could have fatal consequences. It is of course possible that events on the island may change him in some way, but if he continues to be as brazen as this, loving the sound of his own Monologues above all else, it is highly likely that he might talk either himself or someone else into serious trouble. The "life of the party" may well die with him if he continues his shameless and inflammatory mocking and wisecracking around armed antagonists.
 - A master swordsman and proud of his prowess, never backing down from a challenge or any opportunity to show off his skills, with his blade as sharp as his wits - always ready to use both.
- **You may wish to play Mercutio Escalus if** you want to play a snarky/sarcastic, witty extrovert with the "Gift of the Gab" archetype, if you're keen to engage in the [Duelling](#) mechanic (whether through physical combat or otherwise), or if you want to play a sassy, flirtatious and mischievous character.
- **You may not wish to play Mercutio Escalus if** you are uncomfortable as the centre of attention, if you would like to play a quiet/reserved/mysterious character, or if you want a low-maintenance, modest/shy/unprovocative, conflict-avoidant role.
- **Key Quote:** *"Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze; I will not budge for no man's pleasure, I."*

Benvolio Montague:

- **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** - middle, bordering on upper-middle/aristocratic.
 - His uncle is a Lord, but he does not have any noble titles of his own, nor is he due to inherit one (unlike his cousin Romeo).
- **Character traits:**
 - Good-natured, affable and easygoing. As long as there is no ongoing physical conflict/bloodshed, Benvolio is generally quite laid-back and mild-tempered, happily joining Mercutio for witty banter, consoling Romeo about his unrequited love for Rosaline and being the first to convince his friends to crash the Capulet Ball to party, have a good time and distract the lovesick Romeo. He's up for festivity, dancing and meeting other eligible young people of Verona that it might be fun to carouse and revel with.
 - The peacekeeper; seemingly the only person in Verona except the Prince who tries to be the voice of reason and de-escalate the hot-blooded tensions of gang warfare and violence in the streets. Benvolio physically intervenes but refuses to fight.
 - His attempts to broker peace between the warring parties have not been successful to date. Mercutio also suggests that Benvolio himself has previously been known to have a hot temper and fight in the same way as the others, although it is unclear how true this assessment may be; the fuse may be long, and Benvolio may appear to be composed on the surface, that it's possible that unforeseen events on the island could push him to breaking point, as his constant attempts to mediate have so far been futile.
 - Emotionally mature and thoughtful - where others are quick to anger, passion, love, grief or anything else, Benvolio is often calm, thoughtful and sensible. Whilst he is not without emotion himself, he is often the problem-solver in times of crisis or difficulty, retaining composure whilst reacting to events as they unfold. He'll speak honestly and fairly, but is neither as narcissistic nor as outgoing as his companions, and may come across as much more reserved in contrast.
- **You may wish to play Benvolio Montague if** you want to play a compassionate character with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you prefer solving logic puzzles to physical combat, or if you want more freedom of a "blank slate" compared with some bolder characters.
- **You may not wish to play Benvolio Montague if** you want to play a physically aggressive character, if you want to begin with an existing romantic relationship, or if you are especially keen for Magicks such as Alchemy or supernatural characters from another callsheet.
- **Key Quote:** *"I do but keep the peace: put up thy sword, or manage it to part these men with me."*

Angelica, Juliet's Nurse:

- Traditionally gendered as a she/her woman.
 - It may be challenging to rewrite her from being played as AFAB at a minimum (although any physrep could play the part), having canonically been Juliet's wetnurse. The relevance of her own relationship to gender can, to some extent, be as important or unimportant as the player wishes it to be, although there could be a lot to explore there if desired.
- Status/class - lower/working class.
- Character traits:
 - A bawdy motormouth, who is either unaware or does not care if her talkative nature and lewd anecdotes are bothersome to others, including her noble employers (and total strangers)!
 - Deeply loving, especially where Juliet is concerned, as a surrogate mother figure to her after her own child, Susan, had died young. She offers warmth, counsel and sympathy where her employers (Lord and Lady Capulet) fail to, and will go out of her way (risking her job security and reputation) to assist Juliet wherever she can, secretly conspiring with Romeo, Juliet and Friar Lawrence to facilitate the young lovers' courtship, marriage and honeymoon behind Lord and Lady Capulet's back. Even if she has reason to hate Romeo, she will still hide their clandestine meetings and actively aid them both in this deception. Despite her tendency to overshare, her care for Juliet overrides any instinct to give anything vital away.
 - However, whilst she cares deeply for Juliet, she does not fully understand her. Her comfort with the lovers' misconduct also extends to a level of impropriety that others may consider immoral: she would be willing to suborn bigamy, encouraging Juliet to marry Paris whilst knowing full well that she has just consummated her marriage to Romeo. This inclination towards sinful and more morally grey shenanigans could get her into trouble on the island.
 - Playful, cheeky and mischievous. She deliberately toys with Juliet, who is desperate for the message that the Nurse has from Romeo, comedically delaying and deflecting in good-natured fun before sharing the joyful news with her surrogate daughter.
- **You may wish to play Angelica, Juliet's Nurse if** you want to play a talkative, bawdy character with the "Entertainer" archetype, if you want to play a working-class/low-status character, or if you are keen to explore themes of Family.
- **You may not wish to play Angelica, Juliet's Nurse if** you want to play a military/combat-focused character, if you would like to play a quiet/reserved/mysterious character, or if you are looking for something specific such as your own romance at the centre of your plot, or a supernatural character from another callsheet.
- **Key Quote:** *"I am the drudge and toil in your delight, but you shall bear the burden soon at night."*

Friar Lawrence:

- **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** - middle.
 - Respected clergy, educated but not nobility or royalty.
- **Character traits:**
 - Level-headed, even when others are having an emotional breakdown. He calmly offers guidance and advice that others respect as wise, and even when admonishing others, he does so both firmly and gently, as sympathetic as he is stern.
 - Manipulative; although a holy man, who you may expect to be firmly against any kind of lying, he is not above hatching a plan to fake someone's death, being prepared with mystical potions for just such an occasion, immediately ready for this grim ruse and not letting parents and loved ones' grief sway him to revealing the truth of his own clandestine machinations.
 - His religion is still his primary calling, but he plays fast and loose with the rules, over-confident in his own plans and self-righteousness, over-eager to meddle (via his own obsession with Alchemy). As the events on the island unfold, his faith may be shaken, if given reason to doubt *himself*, if not his religious vocation. Alternatively, he may be humbled if any of his ideas do not go according to plan, and he may no longer be quite as confident "playing God" and tempting fate by playing with life and death so casually. If, however, his mischievous scheming works out for the best, then he may become even more arrogant and adventurous, flying ever closer to the Sun before he burns.
 - Supportive and a problem-solver. As well as being something of a surrogate father-figure for Romeo, the Friar offers practical help and plans, as well as blessing the union between the young lovers with a secret wedding rite that he performs, hoping to utilise this illicit ceremony to later facilitate a truce between the two warring households. Whilst his complex plan for Juliet to elope to Mantua with Romeo might not pan out, he is one to proffer workable solutions, rather than merely praying that the situation will resolve itself somehow without his intervention.
- **You may wish to play Friar Lawrence if** you are especially keen to engage in the Alchemy elements of the game, with the "Mystic Knowledge" archetype, if you want to engage with themes of religion/fate/destiny and its associated magicks, or if you want to play a manipulative, scheming character (however well-intentioned).
- **You may not wish to play Friar Lawrence if** you would rather be getting married than performing the ceremony, if you want to avoid playing an overtly religious figure, or if you would like to play a more hot-headed or aggressive character.
- **Key Quote:** *"Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast."*

Athens

Puck (or Robin Goodfellow) :

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him faerie.
 - Faeries are often presented as more genderfluid than human characters; it would be possible to play Puck with any gender expression, and as important/unimportant as the player prefers.
- **Status/class** - upper-middle faerie; outside of human hierarchies.
 - Puck is lieutenant to Oberon, King of the Faeries (who outranks him, along with Titania, Queen of the Faeries), but his status as a faerie means he isn't subject to the rule of Theseus and Hippolyta (King and Queen of Athens); he doesn't out-rank them per se so much as exist within a different sphere. He does outrank most other faeries/spirits, other than the Monarchs.
- **Character traits:**
 - Mischievous - given any opportunity to prank mortals, Puck takes great delight in doing so, recently transforming an unsuspecting Nick Bottom to have an ass's head, for no reason other than that Puck relishes chaos and pandemonium above all else.
 - Impulsive and impatient, to a degree that his rashness may well have unintended but severe consequences, often for others more than himself. He is currently tasked with brewing a powerful alchemical love potion to intervene in the mortal lovers' quadrangle, but he does not know (nor particularly care) which Athenian is the mortal that Oberon's scheme involves.
 - It appears that Puck's unpredictable and capricious tendencies are only curbed by Oberon's strict authority. Out of his familiar surroundings, on the island, encountering unknown spirits as well as mortals from strange, far-off lands, if Puck is given a longer leash, operating outside of King Oberon's domain, his recklessness could go unchecked, which has potential for more catastrophic (or even fatal) results than usual..
 - Wild, uninhibited and witty. As well as being Oberon's jester, always prepared for entertainment, Puck prides himself on his swift, sharp repartee, his impish humour and his infamous reputation amongst the other goblins, pixies and fae spirits.
- **You may wish to play Puck if** you want to play a whimsical faerie with the "Unnatural Ability" archetype, if you want to play a more morally grey character, or if you want to play an outgoing mischief-maker.
- **You may not wish to play Puck if** you want to play a more temperate or reserved character, if you want to begin with a paired love interest, or if you are more interested in other elements of the game, such as the Alchemy mechanic.
- **Key Quote:** *"Then will two at once woo one; That must needs be sport alone; And those things do best please me That befall preposterously."*

Nick Bottom, the Weaver:

- **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.
 - A weaver by trade, but also an aspiring/amateur actor.
- **Character traits:**
 - Confident, proud and self-assured; Bottom is enthusiastic to take on any (and all) roles to perform in a Masque before Theseus and Hippolyta, and has no doubts in his own abilities to perform as the greatest actor of all time, warranted or no.
 - Able to roll with any given situation, no matter how bizarre, taking things in his stride; unfazed and able to improvise.
 - Bottom rarely questions anything - a faerie Queen could court him as a paramour, and he would casually accept this without necessarily considering it to be peculiar or extraordinary. Faced with confusing and unexpected occurrences on the island - even whilst transformed to have equine features - he may be more surefooted than more easily spooked companions. That being said, this unfaltering attitude can be dangerous, and without a careful, shrewd eye for tricks and traps, he could easily stumble into mortal peril here without realising.
 - A problem-solver - albeit not necessarily competently so. Bottom will scour a situation for obstacles (such as their Masque requiring moonshine and a wall per their script) and will devise "solutions" (in this case, actors portraying these elements of scenery) - whilst this has potential to overcomplicate circumstances that did not require intervention, the eagerness to find practical solutions might actually help on occasion.
- **You may wish to play Nick Bottom if** you want to play a brash, reckless character with the "Entertainer" archetype (especially if you are particularly interested in the Masque mechanic), if you want to play a low-status character, or if you would enjoy starting the game under magical transfiguration effects (an ass's head).
- **You may not wish to play Nick Bottom if** you are not comfortable being the centre of attention, if you want to play a more thoughtful or reserved character, or if you are more interested in other areas of the game, such as military leadership, Alchemy, or marriage.
- **Key Quote:** *"Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'"*

Hermia:

- **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, although there is a lot to be explored re: the importance of their relationship to gender and gender roles.
- **Status/class** - upper-middle/noble/aristocratic.
 - From a noble household, interacts with royalty (with deference).
- **Character traits:**
 - Fiercely independent - she boldly tells Duke Theseus and her father Egeus that she would rather die or become a nun than acquiesce to the arranged marriage to Demetrius, and fearlessly elopes through the faerie woodlands to pursue her own desires.
 - Loving and trusting - she confides in Helena, her best friend, with all of the details of her and Lysander's secret plans, and has complete faith in both herself and Lysander to ensure their safe passage through the dangers of the Athenian woodlands.
 - However, if she perceives one of her companions to have betrayed this love and trust, she has a vicious temper and knows exactly which words will be the most cutting to wound her friends or loved ones should she have need. With unforeseen events unfolding on the island, and/or faerie interference, it is possible that she may do irreparable damage to one or more of her relationships if she indulges this cruel streak, unless she learns a more moderate way to vent her frustrations without burning her bridges.
 - Principled, proper and posh - she urges Lysander to keep a respectable distance from her when bedding down for the night in the forest, and does not stray from the decorum expected of nobility even when away from the pressures and scrutiny of any witnesses or prying eyes, despite Lysander's charms.
- **You may wish to play Hermia if** you want to play a principled, high-status character with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you want romantic love to be a key theme of your personal plotline, or if you want to play a fierce, rebellious character, driven by a strong sense of her own autonomy and independent decision-making.
- **You may not wish to play Hermia if** you want to play a more timid or weak-willed character, if you do not want your personal plot to be too entangled with others', or if you want more engagement with supernatural or magical elements of the game, including any affinity or special proficiency with Monologues, Alchemy or Masques.
- **Key Quote:** *"So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord, ere I will my virgin patent up unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke my soul consents not to give sovereignty."*

Lysander:

- **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 gender roles.
- **Status/class** - upper-middle/noble/aristocratic.
 - From a noble household, interacts with royalty (with deference).
- **Character traits:**
 - Gallant, chivalrous and valiant - Lysander is prepared to leave everything he knows behind and face unknown dangers in the faerie woodlands to seek out a new life with his love.
 - A passionate romantic at heart - he feels his love deeply, with burning intensity, and should his emotions be interfered with via any magical means, he will feel any enchanted love or hatred with the same heightened magnitude and zeal.
 - It can be dangerous to be led so boldly by one's heart and affections. Lysander's fervor can be both his greatest strength and his greatest weakness, and if he is given a push - perhaps a supernatural one - this same focus moved onto another track could be devastating. His tendency towards a singular focus and black-and-white thinking means his sympathies usually lie at one extreme or another, and with unexpected events occurring on the island, this relentless focus is just as likely to lead to heartbreak and bloodshed as it is to a happily-ever-after.
 - A dry, sarcastic sense of humour - whether teasing his romantic rival or offering heckling comments from the audience when watching a Masque, Lysander enjoys an element of snark, sass and banter, and is just as likely to engage in a battle of wits as a sword-fighting duel, with an element of showmanship.
- **You may wish to play Lysander if** you want to play a romantic with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you want romantic love to be a key theme of your personal plotline, or if you want to play a relatively uncomplicated character, led by powerful emotion.
- **You may not wish to play Lysander if** you want to play a careful, thoughtful character, if you do not want your personal plot to be too entangled with others', or if you want more engagement with supernatural or magical elements of the game, including any affinity or special proficiency with Monologues, Alchemy or Masques.
- **Key Quote:** *"You have her father's love, Demetrius; Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him."*

Helena:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
 - Her relationship with gender is often a key theme for the role; whilst it would be possible to do something different with it or de-emphasise it, there is a lot to be explored here.
- **Status/class** - upper-middle/noble/aristocratic.
 - From a noble household, interacts with royalty (with deference).
- **Character traits:**
 - A hopeless romantic, compelled by a self-destructive and lovesick obsession with her ex, Demetrius. *Note: whilst she may be desperate, this should not be an aggressive advance.* Although her dreams that this love will once again be requited may be futile, Helena is not delusional: she has spent a lot of time considering the nature of love, and even if her instincts to fawn over Demetrius may be ill-advised, she fully knows and understands that her actions are illogical, even if she still cannot help but fall into the same toxic patterns regardless.
 - Hesitant, cynical and self-critical - even if Demetrius were suddenly to declare his love renewed for her again, as she dreams of, her first instinct would be disbelief or fear that she was being mocked. This doubt is potentially a life-saving trait, though, as although she may lack self-assurance, this second-guessing means she is not easily tricked or manipulated.
 - Helena's confidence has been knocked by Demetrius abandoning her to pursue her best friend, Hermia, who has no interest in him. Although she is currently fruitlessly pursuing someone who has treated her cruelly, perhaps encountering others on the island may prompt her to value herself more, or to hold others accountable; especially if she were to meet people who refuse to excuse such disrespect, or who would never treat a loved one this way.
 - Melodramatic - a greeting from her best friend might be met with thirteen lines of self-pity, and her determined pursuit of Demetrius (whilst bemoaning that she isn't being wooed) is often peppered with declarations that his rejection is killing her. She claims not to be adept at physical combat, but it is possible she merely wishes for others to fight on her behalf.
- **You may wish to play Helena if** you want to play a romantic with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you want to explore themes of unrequited love, or if you want to play a more cynical character.
- **You may not wish to play Helena if** you don't want to RP romantic rejection, if you do not want your personal plot to be too entangled with others', or if you want more engagement with supernatural or magical elements of the game, including any affinity or special proficiency with Monologues, Alchemy or Masques.
- **Key Quote:** *"Fie, Demetrius! Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex: We cannot fight for love, as men may do; We should be wooed and were not made to woo. I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell, to die upon the hand I love so well."*

Demetrius:

- **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 gender roles.
- **Status/class** - upper-middle/noble/aristocratic.
 - From a noble household, interacts with royalty (with deference).
- **Character traits:**
 - Confident and self-assured, to the point of being entitled. The moment that the wealthy nobleman Egeus expressed a desire for him to marry his daughter, Hermia, Demetrius not only abandoned his own paramour, Helena, but simply expected that Hermia would obey her father and that her own partner, Lysander, would stand aside so that he could claim her hand without resistance.
 - Blunt, forthright and honest. Although he may be callous and cruel at times, Demetrius is extremely direct and wears his heart on his sleeve - whether he is wooing, rejecting someone, or challenging a rival to a duel, there is no duplicity to his bearing, even if he may come across as insensitive with this.
 - This candid sincerity and inability to bluff or be tactful could get him into trouble. Whilst it would probably take some kind of magical interference to distract him from his current (unsuccessful) mission to convince Hermia to wed him, perhaps unexpected encounters on the island may teach him the art of prudence and subtlety, or else his brusque manner could prove fatal in the wrong circumstances...
 - Distinguished, reputable and posh - an esteemed gentleman with sufficient social sway to impress Egeus, who insists that his daughter marry Demetrius. Even if he is openly lecherous or roguish at times, his status allows him to continue unchecked.
- **You may wish to play Demetrius if** you want to play an aristocrat with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you are comfortable exploring themes of unrequited romantic love, or if you want to play a straightforward character who is always outspoken and (painfully) truthful.
- **You may not wish to play Demetrius if** you want to play someone who is always thoughtful, kind and considerate, if you do not want your personal plot to be too entangled with others', or if you want more engagement with supernatural or magical elements of the game, including any affinity or special proficiency with Monologues, Alchemy or Masques.
- **Key Quote:** *"Do I entice you? do I speak you fair? Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?"*

Dunsinane

Laird Macbeth (potential first name "Finlay" for TPTTLRP):

- **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.
- **Status/class** - Most highly ranked Thane; second only to King Duncan.
 - Thane of Glamis and Cawdor, prophesied to be King of Scotland.
- **Character traits:**
 - A capable, respected and proud warrior. Before the Plothole opened, he was celebrating victory on the battlefield, hosting a lavish feast. Newly honoured with the additional title of Thane of Cawdor for his prowess, his home is trusted as the safest castle in Scotland to be graced with the presence of the King.
 - Hesitant, uncertain and self-doubting. Macbeth is constantly torn between his own ambition and curiosity about the Witches' prophecy that he should soon be King, conflicting with his own allegiance, morals and fears. As he considers whether or not to give in to his desires and bloody his hands for the Crown, he is primarily driven by the counsel of his wife, to whom he is utterly devoted, with many of his actions driven by her influence and suggestion, and her certainty where he has doubts.
 - Of course, this conflicted nature may be tested as events unfold on the island - with new faces, new threats, new friends and foes, removed from his known territory. As he wrestles with his guilty thoughts, if his wife is not always by his side at crucial moments, or if he is given reason to curb his ambitions and sheath his blade, he may become surer of his own decisions, and these may be less bloodthirsty than initially considered conspiracies...
 - Obsessive. Upon hearing the Witches' prophecy, it is all he can think about, relentlessly pursuing this Mystic Knowledge. Likewise, if he were to kill Duncan, the grief and guilt would likely completely occupy his mind. If he gains the Crown through bloody deeds, he will likely be paranoid about any perceived threats to his position - especially any from prophecies.
- **You may wish to play Macbeth if** you want to play someone obsessed with supernatural prophecies, with the "Mystic Knowledge" archetype, if you want to begin the game with an intense romantic relationship, or if you want to play a character battling deep emotional turmoil.
- **You may not wish to play Macbeth if** you want to play a low-status character, if you want to avoid themes of warfare or "madness", or if you want to play someone not easily manipulated by others.
- **Key Quote:** *"He's here in double trust; first, as I am his kinsman and his subject, strong both against the deed; then, as his host, who should against his murderer shut the door, not bear the knife myself [...] I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition"*

Lady Macbeth (potential first name "Goneril" for TPTTLRP):

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
 - The character's relationship with gender is often a key theme for the role; whilst it would be possible to do something different with it or de-emphasise it, this role is probably not suited for anyone who is uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender and gender roles, even if adapted.
- **Status/class** - Highest ranked Lady, although may be overlooked/underestimated by the Thanes. Outranked by King Duncan.
 - Lady of Glamis and Cawdor, prophesied to be Queen Consort of Scotland. Outranks "Regan" Macduff, Lady of Fife.
- **Character traits:**
 - Shrewd, ruthless and ambitious. Lady Macbeth is strong-willed, confident and unafraid to plot murder, betrayal and regicide.
 - Persuasive, eloquent and manipulative - whether this is her compelling arguments that sway her husband's objections, the ability to hush guests concerned by any unusual behaviour with quick-witted assertions and reassurance, or the way she effortlessly lies, playing the charming hostess, acting innocent as she greets Duncan whilst planning his murder under her smile.
 - She also expresses frustration at her husband's reluctance, and her own ambitions currently rely on *his* deeds to crown her as his Queen Consort. It may be that, with unexpected events unfolding on the island, she decides to seize power more directly for herself, or that she may find others more willing to listen to her persuasion. Alternatively, she may talk herself into or out of something completely unforeseen, and the Crown of Scotland will no longer hold the same allure, if given reason to concede and back down.
 - More vulnerable than she appears; whilst she may maintain outward appearances of being unfazed and stoic, under the surface is a layer of sensitivity. Her plans rely on her husband taking violent action rather than herself, and if her house of cards begins to crumble, she may succumb to guilt and "madness".
- **You may wish to play Lady Macbeth if** you want to play an influential speaker, with the "Gift of the Gab" archetype, if you want to explore themes of subverting gendered expectations, or if you want to begin the game with an intense romantic relationship. It is up to the player as to whether the allure of her convincing words is also associated with seduction, or being a "femme fatale".
- **You may not wish to play Lady Macbeth if** you want to play an innocent, naïve or especially virtuous character, if you want to play a low-status character, or if you want to avoid themes of "madness".
- **Key Quote:** *"Hie thee hither, that I may pour my spirits in thine ear; and chastise with the valour of my tongue all that impedes thee from the golden round, which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem to have thee crown'd withal."*

First Witch (potentially named as "Hecate" for TPTTLRP):

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her non-binary witch.
 - The witches are ambiguously gendered - on first meeting, whilst noting that they "look not like the inhabitants o' the earth", Banquo does not know how to categorise them, saying that they "should be women", but is confused by the witches' "beards".
 - Players may choose to employ any gender expression and any pronouns - the "weird sisters" do not conform to mortal expectations or understandings, and gender can be as important or unimportant to the characterisation as the player chooses.
- **Status/class** - Supernatural - not bound to human class structures.
- **Character traits:**
 - Always truthful, but regularly leaving out important information or cryptically hiding knowledge they possess, often imparting just enough ominous detail to push mortals towards self-fulfilling prophecies that they would not have considered until the seed of temptation was planted in their minds. At the time the Plothole opens, they have withheld the information that Laird "Kenneth" Macduff and/or Lady "Regan" Macduff would be able to exploit a loophole in the fates they have foreseen.
 - Powerful, dangerous and mysterious. The witches' occult knowledge and prophetic abilities may terrify or drive mortals "mad" if they seek to understand their supernatural nature.
 - Their motivation, though, is harder to unravel; perhaps they intentionally toy with mortals for their own entertainment, purely for the sake of sowing chaos. On the other hand, they may believe themselves to be agents of immovable, unchanging Fate - so when falling through the Plothole to an unfamiliar land, where for the first time, events may unfold that they did not see coming, and where they may encounter unfamiliar Faeries and Spirits, no longer being the only supernatural beings in place, this understanding of the inevitable nature of Fate will likely be shaken, and as the rules change, so too may the witches...
 - Something of a blank slate, whose nature can be shaped in an endless variety of possible ways. Their enigmatic nature leaves room for almost anything to happen, and perhaps the unfathomable "midnight hags" could become much more knowable, in time.
- **You may wish to play a Witch if** you want to play an otherworldly character with the "Unnatural Ability" archetype, if you want more of a "blank slate" to build your own characterisation from, or if you are keen to explore themes of life, death, fate, ghosts and Magicks.
- **You may not wish to play a Witch if** you want an established romantic love interest, if you do not want to play a morally grey character, or if you prefer melee combat to spells and abstract [duels](#).
- **Key Quote:** *"Round about the cauldron go; in the poison'd entrails throw. Toad, that under cold stone days and nights has thirty-one"*

Second Witch (potentially named as "Moirira" for TPTTLRP):

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her non-binary witch.
 - The witches are ambiguously gendered - on first meeting, whilst noting that they "look not like the inhabitants o' the earth", Banquo does not know how to categorise them, saying that they "should be women", but is confused by the witches' "beards".
 - Players may choose to employ any gender expression and any pronouns - the "weird sisters" do not conform to mortal expectations or understandings, and gender can be as important or unimportant to the characterisation as the player chooses.
- **Status/class** - Supernatural - not bound to human class structures.
- **Character traits:**
 - Always truthful, but regularly leaving out important information or cryptically hiding knowledge they possess, often imparting just enough ominous detail to push mortals towards self-fulfilling prophecies that they would not have considered until the seed of temptation was planted in their minds. At the time the Plothole opens, they have withheld the information that Laird "Kenneth" Macduff and/or Lady "Regan" Macduff would be able to exploit a loophole in the fates they have foreseen.
 - Powerful, dangerous and mysterious. The witches' occult knowledge and prophetic abilities may terrify or drive mortals "mad" if they seek to understand their supernatural nature.
 - Their motivation, though, is harder to unravel; perhaps they intentionally toy with mortals for their own entertainment, purely for the sake of sowing chaos. On the other hand, they may believe themselves to be agents of immovable, unchanging Fate - so when falling through the Plothole to an unfamiliar land, where for the first time, events may unfold that they did not see coming, and where they may encounter unfamiliar Faeries and Spirits, no longer being the only supernatural beings in place, this understanding of the inevitable nature of Fate will likely be shaken, and as the rules change, so too may the witches...
 - Something of a blank slate, whose nature can be shaped in an endless variety of possible ways. Their enigmatic nature leaves room for almost anything to happen, and perhaps the unfathomable "midnight hags" could become much more knowable, in time.
- **You may wish to play a Witch if** you want to play an otherworldly character with the "Unnatural Ability" archetype, if you want more of a "blank slate" to build your own characterisation from, or if you are keen to explore themes of life, death, fate, ghosts and Magicks.
- **You may not wish to play a Witch if** you want an established romantic love interest, if you do not want to play a morally grey character, or if you prefer melee combat to spells and abstract [duels](#).

Key Quote: *"By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes. Open, locks, whoever knocks!"*

Third Witch (potentially named as "Parca" for TPTTLRP):

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her non-binary witch.
 - The witches are ambiguously gendered - on first meeting, whilst noting that they "look not like the inhabitants o' the earth", Banquo does not know how to categorise them, saying that they "should be women", but is confused by the witches' "beards".
 - Players may choose to employ any gender expression and any pronouns - the "weird sisters" do not conform to mortal expectations or understandings, and gender can be as important or unimportant to the characterisation as the player chooses.
- **Status/class** - Supernatural - not bound to human class structures.
- **Character traits:**
 - Always truthful, but regularly leaving out important information or cryptically hiding knowledge they possess, often imparting just enough ominous detail to push mortals towards self-fulfilling prophecies that they would not have considered until the seed of temptation was planted in their minds. At the time the Plothole opens, they have withheld the information that Laird "Kenneth" Macduff and/or Lady "Regan" Macduff would be able to exploit a loophole in the fates they have foreseen.
 - Powerful, dangerous and mysterious. The witches' occult knowledge and prophetic abilities may terrify or drive mortals "mad" if they seek to understand their supernatural nature.
 - Their motivation, though, is harder to unravel; perhaps they intentionally toy with mortals for their own entertainment, purely for the sake of sowing chaos. On the other hand, they may believe themselves to be agents of immovable, unchanging Fate - so when falling through the Plothole to an unfamiliar land, where for the first time, events may unfold that they did not see coming, and where they may encounter unfamiliar Faeries and Spirits, no longer being the only supernatural beings in place, this understanding of the inevitable nature of Fate will likely be shaken, and as the rules change, so too may the witches...
 - Something of a blank slate, whose nature can be shaped in an endless variety of possible ways. Their enigmatic nature leaves room for almost anything to happen, and perhaps the unfathomable "midnight hags" could become much more knowable, in time.
- **You may wish to play a Witch if** you want to play an otherworldly character with the "Unnatural Ability" archetype, if you want more of a "blank slate" to build your own characterisation from, or if you are keen to explore themes of life, death, fate, ghosts and Magicks.
- **You may not wish to play a Witch if** you want an established romantic love interest, if you do not want to play a morally grey character, or if you prefer melee combat to spells and abstract [duels](#).

Key Quote: *"All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!" "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none: so all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!"*

Porter ("Porter Durwood" for TPTTLRP):

- **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.
- **Character traits:**
 - Teller of the first known example of a "knock knock" joke, the Porter adds a level of cathartic comedy against a bleak backdrop of violence, scheming and dark omens in Dunsinane. However, as he capably builds suspense and the growing sensation of horror, this Entertainer's material is firmly on the darker edge of "Black Comedy", delivered under the excuse of drunkenness.
 - Amongst the wise-cracking, it is clear that although he may act as a sort of courtly jester, he is no "Fool" - overlooked by high-status Lairds and Ladies, the Porter's ravings of treasonous equivocators at the gates of Hell show a level of insight into the secret goings-on behind the castle gates he is guarding, and buying time for his employers to cover up their bloody deeds, as he runs interference at the gates. It is possible that his intoxication may even be feigned, as a ruse for plausible deniability of the underestimated working class.
 - This shrewd insight, hiding under a facade of playing the drunken fool, allows the Porter to avoid all suspicion - dismissed as merely a carousing castle caretaker, he can hide in plain sight. His pointed "I pray you, remember the porter" suggests that of all the performers, perhaps he is the first to have noticed the fourth wall. When transported to the island, this attention to the seemingly constructed nature of these strange worlds could be vital to uncovering the secrets of his reality itself, and as the Plothes swallow each character, an expert on doors and gateways could find his moment to shine unexpectedly...
 - Audacious. When the Thane of Fife is pounding on the gate, and the Laird and Lady of Glamis and Cawdor need time to conceal their activities, despite his low social status, he has no qualms about lecturing Macduff on drink, desire and lechery. He may have no rank, title, or land, but he is bold and shameless, with witty barbs and quips testing the patience of the Thane.
- **You may wish to play Porter if** you want to play a joker with the "Entertainer" archetype, if you want more of a blank slate character to make your own, or if you want to explore themes of classism.
- **You may not wish to play Porter if** you are uncomfortable with themes of drunkenness, if you aren't interested in the Masque mechanics, or you'd prefer a more well-established or high-status starting point.
- **Key Quote:** *"Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key. Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of Beelzebub?"*

Laird Banquo, Thane of Lochaber:

- **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** - Noble (Thane of Lochaber).
 - Equal status to Laird Lennox Ross (Thane of Cromarty) and Laird "Kenneth" Macduff (Thane of Fife).
- **Character traits:**
 - Brave - having recently proved himself as a soldier and a general on the battlefield, when faced with supernatural spectres, he demands that they speak to him and give him a prophecy of his own, however terrifying they may be.
 - Appropriately wary, careful and suspicious - although Macbeth is his dear friend and close companion, if King Duncan dies under mysterious circumstances, Banquo, whilst not outwardly accusing him, will immediately presume that Macbeth has committed regicide, and will do his best to protect both himself and his son, Fleance, knowing that if Macbeth is willing to kill his friend King Duncan, he is almost certainly also willing to kill Banquo and Fleance too, to secure his crown and own ambitions.
 - Having gained the mystic knowledge of the Witches' prophecy, rather than taking matters into his own hands, Banquo appears to be content to let fate play out or not without his own intervention to bend it that way. However, as the Plothole opens and he finds himself on the unfamiliar island, it is possible that in order to maintain that self-preservation instinct, he could be pushed to a more active position, and when protecting his own life and Fleance's, the otherwise moderate and prudent Banquo may consider a strong offence to be the best form of defence...
 - Having recently encountered the Witches, and now finding himself in a strange land with Faeries, Spirits and other supernatural entities, Banquo has more experience of fantastical Magicks than most. If and when he dies, he will almost certainly cling to the mortal plane as a ghost, if he can find a way to do so.
- **You may wish to play Banquo if** you want to play an inquisitive and observant character with the "Mystic Knowledge" archetype, if you want to explore themes of familial love, or if you do not want to begin play with any romantic connections or similar
- **You may not wish to play Banquo if** you are not interested in Alchemy or themes of fate/life/death and ghosts, if you do not want to begin with a tense friendship layered with mistrust and fear, or if you want to play a more playful, mischievous or flirtatious character.
- **Key Quote:** *"to me you speak not. If you can look into the seeds of time, and say which grain will grow and which will not, speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear your favours nor your hate."*

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?"*

Elsinore

Hamlet (Jr), Prince of Denmark:

- **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** - Royal (Prince of Denmark).
 - Only outranked by King Claudius and Queen Gertrude (as well as by the late King Hamlet Sr). Outranks all other Danes.
- **Character traits:**
 - Thoughtful, philosophical, contemplative and hesitant. Hamlet is prone to questioning everything; particularly drawn to questions that cannot be answered with any certainty, and skeptical even when presented with compelling evidence/testimony of his father's murder by his uncle, King Claudius.
 - Conversely, he is also impulsive and rash - the times that Hamlet does act are when he hasn't had the opportunity to obsess over the finer details or premeditate his actions.
 - Hamlet's paranoid, erratic behaviour can be dangerous; if he is startled by an unexpected noise behind a curtain, his reflex reaction could prove fatal to whoever is hiding from him. This contradictory pull between overthinking or procrastination and his hot-blooded temper may need some unexpected influence from events unfolding on the island, as if he cannot strike the balance of moderation, his actions (and inaction) may prove catastrophic.
 - Self-involved, to a level bordering on narcissism. Even though Fortinbras, King of Norway, is imminently approaching, the prince does not seem to pay any heed to this incoming threat to Denmark's national security - his melancholy and angst are entirely rooted in his own relationships - with his mother, his friends, his paramour, his dead father, his uncle the King, with death and with himself. Even his Freudian obsession over his mother's remarriage appears to be about *his* feelings, not about others, causing considerable strain on his relationships.
- **You may wish to play Hamlet if** you want to play a brooding, analytical character with the "Mystic Knowledge" archetype, if you want to explore themes of familial relationships, or if you want to be a loose cannon, exhibiting "mad" behaviour (feigned or otherwise).
- **You may not wish to play Hamlet if** you want to avoid themes of madness, familial and/or romantic relationships, if you are not especially interested in the more contemplative Alchemy mechanic, or if you want to play a particularly empathetic character.
- **Key Quote:** *"but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived [...] I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw."*

Queen Gertrude:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
 - The character's relationship with gender is often a key theme for the role; whilst it would be possible to do something different with it or de-emphasise it, this role is probably not suited for anyone who is uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender and gender roles, even if adapted.
- **Status/class** - Royal - Queen of Denmark.
 - Could be played as equal to King Claudius, or could be played as outranked by him (as Queen Consort instead of Queen Regent).
- **Character traits:**
 - Regal and composed in grand social situations. Whether the player chooses to interpret Gertrude as fully unaware of her late husband's murder, or as complicit in the act with her new husband (or somewhere between the two), Gertrude's grace and decorum is only shaken when she is isolated from the King and her attendants, alone with her seemingly-unstable son.
 - Co-dependent, with an instinct for self-preservation. Upon her husband's death, she immediately remarried his brother, retaining her rank and station that she was accustomed to as Queen of Denmark. On the occasion that she is rattled - if Hamlet were to confront her about his uncle's part in his father's death - she is likely to run right into the King's murderous arms for comfort, rather than tolerate any conflict.
 - Unexpected events on the island may push Gertrude towards more action than she is typically comfortable with. If she is unable to rely on Claudius, Polonius or Ophelia for support, or to outsource problems to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, then she may have to get her hands dirty in a way that she appears to have always avoided until now...
 - Keen to de-escalate situations wherever possible. Whether it is entreating her husband and son to reconcile, trying to calm Laertes' fury, counselling Ophelia, or sending Hamlet's friends to reason with him, Gertrude tries to be the voice of harmony, compromise, and non-violence, surrounded by passion and rage.
- **You may wish to play Queen Gertrude if** you want to play a stately, calm and composed character, with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you want to play a particularly high-status character, or if you want to explore themes of familial and interpersonal relationships.
- **You may not wish to play Queen Gertrude if** you want to play an especially strong-willed character that is not easily led by others, if you want to play an aggressive, combative or strongly assertive character, or if you are uncomfortable discussing themes of madness, murder and quasi-incestuous marriage.
- **Key Quote:** *"Do not for ever with thy vailed lids seek for thy noble father in the dust: Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity."*

Ophelia:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
 - The character's relationship with gender is often a key theme for the role; whilst it would be possible to do something different with it or de-emphasise it, this role is probably not suited for anyone who is uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender and gender roles, even if adapted.
- **Status/class** - Noble/aristocratic; only outranked by royalty.
- **Character traits:**
 - Patient, sweet, kind and good-natured. Her tolerance for others' nonsense (whether her father Polonius' prattling, Hamlet's interjections as the Players are performing their Prologue, or her brother's patronising lecturing) is almost a saintly level of endurance. Even if she does somewhat push back against the domineering men in her life, it is with courtesy and grace.
 - Under a lot of pressure; as a young lady, courting a prince, under the watchful eyes of her father and brother and the King and Queen, each giving her contradictory advice about how she should or should not comport herself. The strain of these expectations would be stressful enough without her paramour's increasingly erratic behaviour. Having put all of her eggs into the basket of being the future Queen of Denmark, if this future were snatched away from her in any way, she just might snap...
 - Of course, events on the island may offer her some new outlet to explore, relieved a little of the expectations of courtly propriety to deal with immediate, unexpected twists and turns of fate. If she can find some other future for herself, or new, more independent ways of defining herself, rather than purely in relation to her father, brother or boyfriend, then she may not resort to the desperate measures of the only escape currently available to her.
 - She has a wild heart. Although Ophelia may outwardly conduct herself in the manner that is expected of her, under the surface is a young woman longing for the freedom to let down her hair, sing and skip amongst the flowers, unburdened by worries of what others may think of her. She has a deep yearning for the breathing room to express herself more openly than is permitted, and may subvert others' expectations of her if she throws caution to the wind and finds any way to reclaim some agency.
- **You may wish to play Ophelia if** you want to play an aristocratic character with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you want to play with themes of madness and music, or if you'd like to explore her more unpredictable, dangerous undercurrent that's waiting to break free.
- **You may not wish to play Ophelia if** you are uncomfortable exploring themes of romance or family, if you want to play a working-class character, or if you are more interested in Alchemy/Masques etc.
- **Key Quote:** *"good my brother, do not, as some ungracious pastors do, show me the steep and thorny way to heaven; whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine, himself the primrose path of dalliance treads"*

Horatio:

- **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-middle.
 - Close friends with royalty, but does not have his own title.
- **Character traits:**
 - Loyal, steady and reliable. No matter how unstable his dearest companion may seem, Horatio is always by his side to support him, completely and utterly devoted to Hamlet. As such, he is also the only person Hamlet trusts with every detail and doesn't conceal anything from. Their love - whether there is any component of this that is not solely platonic friendship - is long-lasting and steadfast, whatever the weather they face.
 - Both rational and open-minded; where others dispute being able to see a ghost, the scholarly Horatio lends legitimacy to the haunting itself occurring, yet still remains skeptical of its intent and origin, fearing for Hamlet's safety in following it.
 - Whilst he may be something of the voice of reason, this open-mindedness, compounded with his love for Hamlet, means that Horatio may be more willing than is sensible to stay by Hamlet's side, even if facing immediate threats and danger. If unforeseen events on the island force him to question this unblinking loyalty, or if he needed to stand on his own without playing lancer to Hamlet, this could be unknown territory for Horatio - skeptic and believer - to explore. For better or worse, though, who can say...
 - Cautious, hesitant and concerned - where others may be reckless, Horatio is the first to remind them of potential dangers and consequences. He is intelligent, always thinking several steps ahead, although others may not necessarily heed his wise warnings. He has a shrewd understanding and should not be underestimated, although his resolve may weaken around Hamlet.
- **You may wish to play Horatio if** you want to play a trustworthy, devoted character with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you want to explore different varieties of "love" (friendship, romance or otherwise), or if you want to play a sensitive/emotional character.
- **You may not wish to play Horatio if** you do not want to start the game with your personal plot intricately linked to another player's, if you are especially keen for some other Magicks such as Masques or Alchemy, or if you would prefer to play a more eccentric character.
- **Key Quote:** *"What if it tempt you [...] into madness? think of it: the very place puts toys of desperation, without more motive, into every brain".*

Bernardo/the Player King/Clown [blended role]:

- **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:**
 - A vivid storyteller and born Entertainer, with a shrewd wit. Whilst he may be a jester of a sort, he is certainly not a Fool (in the sense of being unwise). The Sentinels are, however, highly pragmatic in their philosophies of life and death; more grounded by the graves they dig than led to existential crisis.
 - Able to deeply move others emotionally, yet also able to be glib in the face of death and the supernatural, with a morbid sense of humour. Bernardo may not have the scholarly background of some of the higher-class Danes, but he is able to sing and laugh in the face of death, inured to it through daily exposure in his work. Where others balk at the sight of corpses, he shrugs.
 - In spite of this, though, he is still deeply superstitious and troubled by the omen of the ghostly sightings. Whether experiences on the island with more spirits, faeries and witches may be taken in his stride, harnessing Magicks through his art of Masques, or if he may falter when faced with his own mortality, rather than the compartmentalised deaths of others is yet to be determined.
 - Ready for anything, prepared to improvise on a moment's notice. When approached for this most recently commissioned play, it was only on arriving at the castle that the prince detailed his requests for both what plot he wished them to perform as well as how to perform it; the Players were completely unfazed by this and prepared to perform a powerful Masque for the royals and nobles assembled - only interrupted by the Plothole opening...
- **You may wish to play the Player King if** you want to play a performing artist with the "Entertainer" archetype, if you want more of a blank slate character to make your own, or if you are especially interested in supernatural Magicks and themes of life and death.
- **You may not wish to play the Player King if** you prefer a more well-established starting point, if you aren't interested in the Masque mechanics, or if you want to play a high-status character.
- **Key Quote:** **"Sit down awhile; and let us once again assail your ears, that are so fortified against our story what we have two nights seen"**

"What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?" "The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants." "[...] when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-maker: 'the houses that he makes last till doomsday.'" ~Clowns

"this player here, but in a fiction, in a dream of passion, could force his soul so to his own conceit that from her working all his visage wann'd, tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, a broken voice, and his whole function suiting with forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!" ~Hamlet, about the Players

Marcellus (or "Marcella")/the Player Queen/Clown [blended role]:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him man, except when the Player Queen is in character as a she/her woman, although more modern performances often change this Player to be a she/her woman out of character too.
 - 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.
 - A vivid storyteller and born Entertainer, with a shrewd wit. Whilst a jester, certainly not a Fool (in the sense of being unwise), but highly pragmatic philosophies of life/death; more grounded by the graves they dig than led to existential crisis.
 - Able to deeply move others emotionally, yet also able to be glib in the face of death and the supernatural, with a morbid sense of humour. Marcellus/"Marcella" is inured to the sight of corpses, through daily exposure, and shrugs where others balk.
 - In spite of this, still deeply superstitious and troubled by the omen of the ghostly sightings. Whether experiences on the island with more spirits, faeries and witches may be taken in their stride, harnessing Magicks through the art of Masques, or if they may falter when faced with their own mortality, rather than the compartmentalised deaths of others is yet to be determined.
 - Ready for anything, prepared to improvise on a moment's notice. When approached for this most recently commissioned play, it was only on arriving at the castle that the prince detailed his requests for both what plot he wished them to perform as well as how to perform it; the Players were completely unfazed by this and prepared to perform a powerful Masque for the royals and nobles assembled - only interrupted by the Plothole opening...
- **You may wish to play the Player Queen if** you want to play a performing artist with the "Entertainer" archetype, if you want more of a blank slate character to make your own, or if you are especially interested in supernatural Magicks and themes of life and death.
- **You may not wish to play the Player Queen if** you prefer a more well-established starting point, if you aren't interested in the Masque mechanics, or if you want to play a high-status character.
- **Key Quote:** *"And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad; the nights are wholesome; then no planets strike, no fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm, so hallow'd and so gracious is the time."*

"What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?" "The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants." "[...] when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-maker: 'the houses that he makes last till doomsday.'" ~Clowns

"this player here, but in a fiction, in a dream of passion, could force his soul so to his own conceit that from her working all his visage wann'd, tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, a broken voice, and his whole function suiting with forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!" ~Hamlet, about the Players

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."*

Rome

Mark Antony (Marcus Antonius):

- **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.
- **Status/class** - High status, military general/triumvir.
 - One of three triumvirs at the top of the socio-political hierarchy in Rome, and the only one who knows that Julius Caesar (who potentially outranks the triumvirate) is still alive.
- **Character traits:**
 - Adaptable, suave and a cunning politician; whether persuading the conspirators that he is on their side, convincing Caesar to fake his death and heed his wife's warnings, or his famous oration at Caesar's funeral, deliberately using skilled rhetoric to rile the citizens up for his own influential advantage.
 - A people pleaser - especially concerning Cleopatra. While he may be capable on the battlefield, he is forever trying to compromise and find a peace between all parties. Unfortunately, many of the people he is trying to satisfy have directly contradictory desires; he is torn between too many conflicting allegiances, and it seems impossible for Julius Caesar, Calpurnia, Octavius, Octavia, Lepidus, Enobarbus and especially Cleopatra to all remain pleased with Antony and his actions - never mind the tensions with Brutus, Cassius and Pompey.
 - His love for Cleopatra may be his Achilles' heel, but his duty to Rome is almost as strong as his passion for her. The proposed marriage to Octavia is just one example of his continued devotion to Roman politics, however enchanting Cleopatra may be. However, as the Plothole opens, with the potential return of Caesar destabilising the triumvirate, as well as the introduction of several unexpected characters from strange places, it may be that Antony must choose his own path - whether this is in Rome, Egypt, or elsewhere - or his constant compromising could prove fatal.
 - A passionate hedonist and a hopeless romantic at heart. Lately, his priority has been his courtship of Cleopatra, and the threat of Pompey's rebellion has been brushed aside as he is enraptured with his lover. Should he believe her to be dead, he is just as likely to end his own life as he is to furiously avenge her.
- **You may wish to play Mark Antony if** you want to begin with an established romantic relationship and the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you want to engage in difficult diplomacy and likely social opposition to other player characters, or if you want an IC wedding.
- **You may not wish to play Mark Antony if** you want to avoid themes of warfare, romantic love or potential suicide, if you are uncomfortable with PvP conflict, or if you are keen for more supernatural Magicks.
- **Key Quote:** *"Hear me, queen: the strong necessity of time commands our services awhile; but my full heart remains in use with you."*

Cleopatra VII Thea Philopator:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
 - The character's relationship with gender is often a key theme for the role; whilst it would be possible to do something different with it or de-emphasise it, this role is probably not suited for anyone who is uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender and gender roles, even if adapted.
- **Status/class** - Queen of Ptolemaic Egypt; outside of Roman hierarchy.
- **Character traits:**
 - Hedonistic, passionate and insatiable; her appetite for drama extends beyond Masques and entertainment, and she delights in encouraging others to give in to their desires, however bloody they may be. She feels everything to excess - love, grief, anger, delicious food, sweet music, and it is easy for others to get swept up in a chaotic whirlwind of her enthusiasm.
 - Extremely intelligent and a capable and calculating politician. Where Romans dismiss and underestimate her, or consider her a witch, who first charmed Julius Caesar and has now captivated Mark Antony, she is not merely a skilled seductress; under her rule, Egypt has been stable and prosperous. She speaks nine languages, commanded an army against her brother, and the Roman generals who paint her as an exotic succubus should be wary that as hot-tempered she may be, she is a force to be reckoned with.
 - Besides having the ear of Mark Antony, she has not been consulted in the ongoing war plans, and, to add salt to the wound, her paramour is now engaged to Octavia. As the Plothole opens, it may be that she finds a new audience that pays her attention. Whether she leans into her public image as a temptress, or addresses and dispels it; anything could happen, in an unknown land filled with Magicks...
 - Proud, and unashamedly brazen. She will refuse to be taken as a trophy and humiliated in the streets if she is defeated, and would rather retain control and dignity by taking her life into her own hands. She will not tolerate any insults or disrespect, and has even been known to draw a knife upon messengers who bring her bad news. She is the last Hellenistic Pharaoh, holding the line to prevent Egypt from becoming a Roman province.
- **You may wish to play Cleopatra if** you want to play a beguiling Queen with the "Mystic Knowledge" archetype, if you want to begin with an established romantic relationship, or if you would enjoy an impulsive "yes and" approach to roleplay, embracing excess and extremes.
- **You may not wish to play Cleopatra if** you are uncomfortable examining themes of gendered expectations (and subversion), sexuality or seduction, or potential suicide; if you want to play a calm, modest, or shy character, or if you want to play a conflict-avoidant role.
- **Key Quote:** *"Sink Rome, and their tongues rot that speak against us! A charge we bear i' the war, and, as the president of my kingdom, will appear there for a man. Speak not against it: I will not stay behind."*

Brutus (Quintus Servilius Caepio Brutus):

- **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** - Praetor (prestigious military rank), Patrician (noble)
 - Outranked by triumvirs (Mark Antony, Lepidus and Octavius), emperor (Julius Caesar), prefect (Pompey) and consul (Enobarbus)
- **Character traits:**
 - An idealist, to a fault; where he wishes to curtail violence, he ignores Cassius' suggestion that the conspirators kill Antony at the same time as Caesar, leaving himself vulnerable. Again, in a moment of naïveté, he allows Antony to have the final word and incite the plebians against him at Caesar's funeral oration. His staunch stance against self-serving ambition leads him to betray his friend, out of absolute dedication to Republican ideals.
 - Paranoid, gullible, and easy to manipulate: once Cassius plants the seed of a coup in Brutus' mind, he becomes obsessed with the possibility of Caesar's ambition and is led to scheme against one of his closest friends. However, the plan went awry: whilst Caesar has been notably absent since the Ides of March four years prior, the suspicious nature of the charred remains before any conspirators could reach the Dictator with a blade casts a shadow of doubt over whether or not the assassination was a success - several claimed credit for the 23 stab wounds found in the corpse, but none could tell who had set him on fire first...
 - Whilst the triumvirs granted clemency to the conspirators, Brutus knows that his reputation is tainted, and that same paranoia that fuelled his conspiracy could lead to further downfall if he cannot learn from this. However, this doubt surrounding the nature of Caesar's "death" leaves room for more hesitation and questioning. Thrust into an unfamiliar land, with unexpected strangers, Brutus may need to find a balance: whether to be wary and skeptical, or trust others.
 - Out of touch; by attempting to enforce his own personal honour code on society, he inadvertently brings about the end of the Roman Republic he so reveres, with Caesar's son Octavius gaining more power each day, likely to impose a new dictatorship if he can. He does not anticipate the plebeians' outpouring of love and sympathy for Caesar, or their fury that a few aristocrats had decided to sacrifice their popular leader.
- **You may wish to play Brutus if** you want to play a military character with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you want to battle introspective emotional turmoil/angst, or if you are keen for political roleplay.
- **You may not wish to play Brutus if** you would prefer a plotline around romantic love, if you are more interested in Masques and other Magicks, or if you want to avoid PvP tension and/or conflict.
- **Key Quote:** *"Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar, I have not slept. Between the acting of a dreadful thing and the first motion all the interim is like a phantasma, or a hideous dream".*

Octavius (Gaius Julius Caesar Octavius):

- **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.
- **Status/class** - High status, military general/triumvir.
 - One of three triumvirs at the top of the socio-political hierarchy in Rome. Adopted son of "late" emperor Julius Caesar.
- **Character traits:**
 - Ambitious; with Antony distracted and Lepidus' personal and political power waning, Octavius seizes the opportunity to push for ultimate power and to surpass his father as the first official Roman Emperor. His military pursuit is relentless, and whilst his frustrations with his fellow triumvirs may be justified, his singular focus on totalitarianism consumes him.
 - Domineering; he always has to be in total control, and any opposition to that desire is extremely vexatious. His desire for Cleopatra to bend the knee and to display her as a trophy in Rome is not solely a Freudian desire for his father's former lover, but demonstrates his need to possess everything and everyone. Any time others exercise their own free will, it infuriates him, and he has no patience for those who disagree.
 - However, he has great respect for Antony's heroic exploits of the past, lamenting what he perceives to be the decline of a great Roman soldier, blaming Cleopatra for the neglect Antony now shows for his duties in Rome. Likewise, although dictating how others should behave, it is not unreasonable to be incensed if, after Antony swears an oath to be a faithful husband to Octavia, he breaks this vow. Even so, this is hypocritical; Octavius is more than prepared to cut Lepidus out of any spoils of war, despite using his resources to fight, and will withhold as many lands from Antony as he can, too, belittling him in public instead of trying to work together as a triumvirate. As the Plothole opens, suddenly met with unfamiliar faces and places, Octavius may find it increasingly difficult to retain control, and if he does not learn to bend, he may break...
 - Calculating, with potential for cruelty; his ruthless military campaign is not impersonal, and he will deliberately identify his enemies' weaknesses to exploit them. If fighting a former ally, he will fill his army's front line with his opponent's former soldiers who have defected, just to twist the knife.
- **You may wish to play Octavius if** you want to play a military leader with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you want to play a more morally grey role, or if you want political roleplay with potential for PvP.
- **You may not wish to play Octavius if** you want to play an empathetic or heroic character, if you want your plot driven by romance or similar, or if you want to play a shy or conflict-avoidant character.
- **Key Quote:** *"He calls me boy; and chides [...] let the old ruffian know I have many other ways to die; meantime laugh at his challenge."*

Cassius (Gaius Cassius Longinus):

- **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** - Patrician (noble) and Senator, but outranked by most.
- **Character traits:**
 - A skilled orator, able to manipulate others with his words. Whilst flattering Brutus when first nudging him towards conspiracy, he realises that Brutus will be most easily swayed by rhetoric around what he believes the general populace to think, and to play upon Brutus' honour and convince him that the people mistrust Caesar will be more effective than any personal misgivings Brutus may have. He is not above forging letters to further his own goals and exploit others' perceived weaknesses.
 - Jealous and malcontent, to a degree of bitterness bordering on narcissism. Where Brutus' concerns are for the state of the Republic, Cassius' motivations are far more selfish, resenting Caesar's power and influence because he envies his position. However, the plan went awry: the suspicious nature of the charred remains before any conspirators could reach the Dictator with a blade casts a shadow of doubt over the assassination - several claimed credit for the 23 stab wounds found in the corpse, but none could tell who had set him on fire first...
 - In the aftermath of the assassination, Cassius has not gained the adoration he so desperately sought, but rather has had his reputation tainted; whilst the triumvirs granted clemency to the conspirators, it is now an uphill battle for Cassius to regain the trust of the Senate, much less seize the power he coveted for himself. However, as the Plothole opens, and he finds himself in a strange land with unexpected companions, perhaps he can carve out a new destiny and find a path toward redemption and happiness.
 - Careful and cautious; he foresees the danger of letting Antony speak at Caesar's funeral where Brutus does not, he has Cinna plant the forged evidence rather than risk getting caught himself, and after allowing Casca to make the first blow, he slips away from the crowd before Antony incites the revolt. Lately, his attention has been on Calpurnia, seeking certainty around Caesar's death and whereabouts, and fearing his return to haunt him for the betrayal; whether as a man or as a ghost.
- **You may wish to play Cassius if** you want to play a manipulative meddler with the "Gift of the Gab" archetype, if you want to play a more villainous role, or if you are keen for political roleplay.
- **You may not wish to play Cassius if** you want to play a virtuous or empathetic character, if you want a romance-focused plotline, or if you are more interested in e.g. supernatural characters available.
- **Key Quote:** *"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings. Brutus and Caesar: what should be in that 'Caesar'? Why should that name be sounded more than yours?"*

Calpurnia Caesar:

- **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** - Dowager Empress; "widow" of Julius Caesar.
- **Character traits:**
 - Loving; she shows genuine concern for her husband's safety, and he is ultimately swayed by her words, as this doting tenderness is reciprocated. She is loyal, devoted and virtuous.
 - A powerful soothsayer, with supernatural, prophetic dreams. However, she has by necessity refused to use her divining powers lately, as Brutus and Cassius pressure her for oracles about whether her husband will return - either as a man or a ghost.
 - This stoic refusal to reach for any premonitions (lest her enemies gain this knowledge from her) has been bitterly heartbreaking. If she were to give in and seek answers, no portents available are auspicious: if her husband lives, and is safe and well, then she has been cruelly abandoned. If her husband lives, but has not been able to reach out to her as he is in grave danger, this too is distressing news. If he is indeed dead, as most believe him to be, although the charred body discovered was too disfigured to identify the Emperor for certain, then this, too, feels hopeless. However, as the Plothole opens and unexpected events unfold on this mystical island, it may be that she will have cause to use her Unnatural Ability once more, and even if her husband does lie dead, perhaps there is hope in necromancy...
 - Pragmatic - whether finding practical reasons for Caesar to stay home from senate, suggesting he feigns illness, or taking the initiative to deliver his will and possessions to Mark Antony, his most trusted Consul and companion. She shows no outward concern about her husband's many affairs: from seducing King Nicomedes IV of Bithynia back when he was married to Cornelia, to his affairs with the Mauretanian queen, Eunoë, and with Cleopatra, whilst he was married to Pompeia. Within their own marriage, it was public knowledge that he was having an intimate affair with Servillia, mother of Brutus and mother-in-law of Cassius - but whether these affairs privately bother her or not, she retains practical public composure and decorum regardless.
- **You may wish to play Calpurnia if** you want to play a gifted mage with the "Unnatural Ability" archetype, if you are interested in Magicks surrounding death, fate, and ghosts, or if you want to play a stoic.
- **You may not wish to play Calpurnia if** you want to play a physically aggressive character, if you want e.g. a more comedic "Entertainer", or if you want to play a more carefree/mischievous/playful role.
- **Key Quote:** *"What mean you, Caesar? think you to walk forth? You shall not stir out of your house to-day [...] dying men did groan, and ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets. O Caesar! these things are beyond all use, and I do fear them."*