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## **I- Plot: Four Separate but Intertwined Stories**

There are four different stories going on in this play. First there is the most serious one, that of Antonio, Bassanio, and Shylock's connection with the borrowed money and the bond. This story gives the play its tragic structure. The scenes involved in this story are tense because of the anti-Semitism that is portrayed and because of the threat to Antonio's loss of money and the threat to his life, as well as Shylock's losses. Many critics view this as the major plot of the drama. The next story of importance is that of the three caskets. This story has a little tension but it is light-hearted and often quite humorous, especially when the extravagant suitors, Arragon and Morocco, try to decipher the messages and choose the correct casket. This story reflects some of the elements in the bond story in that it involves the glitter of gold and the weight of making decisions. A third story is that of Lorenzo and Jessica's love, deception, and elopement. This story is used to compare the two daughter's relationships with their fathers: Jessica and Shylock; and Portia and her deceased father. By Jessica leaving and taking her father's money, this story adds tension and depth to Shylock's losses at the trial in the bond story. Finally, this story demonstrates a reconciliation between Jews and Christians that is lacking in the bond story. Finally, as if tacked on to the end of the play to lighten the tension of the courtroom scene there is the story of the rings. Portia and Nerissa trick their husbands, testing their husbands' loyalty by asking for their

rings (while disguised as young male lawyers). Bassanio and Gratiano, indebted to the young lawyers for saving Antonio's lives, give the rings away. In the final scene, the husbands are shamed and ask forgiveness. They are given a second chance, thus ending the play on a happy note, rather than ending with the trial scene, which would make this play resonate with tragedy.

## **II- Jews in England**

One of the first documented statements of Jews in England was recorded in 1075 in Oxford. At this time, and for another hundred years or so, Jews, unlike their counterparts in other European countries, were not forced to live in a ghetto— especially designated sections of a town or city. Jewish people in England were banned from certain professions, though, with most taking up jobs peddling wares and moneylending. They also could not own land. In the twelfth century, sentiments against Jews were on the rise. The Christian Crusades were in full force and heretics were being burned to death in nearby Spain. Christians called Jews heretics because Jews did not believe that Jesus was the true Messiah. During the twelfth century, Jews suffered through two massive massacres in England, one in 1189 and another in the following year. Things did not improve in the next century. Laws were passed stating that Jewish people could no longer make a living lending money; Jewish families also



suffered through having to pay unusually heavy taxes. Then in 1290, King Edward I decreed that

Jewish people were a threat to England and banished them from the country. In the sixteenth century, in Shakespeare's time, most English people would have been familiar with Jewish people not from acquaintance but from the stories told about them, most of which would have been prejudicial. Some of these stories included such false statements as Jewish people were spreading the dreaded Bubonic Plague. Other false beliefs included that Jewish people worshipped the devil and had been granted magical powers because of a pact they made with Satan. Jews were also accused of stealing Christian children at Easter time and using them in bloody rituals. In Elizabethan times, although still banished, some Jews lived in England. If they practiced Judaism, they did so secretly. Outwardly, they tried to conform to Christian ways, even professing conversion to the Christian faith. Even so, Jews were still restricted to two main professions: usury and peddling. **Jewish Ghetto** Although there were no Jewish ghettos in England in Shakespeare's time, there were ghettos in Venice. The absence of ghettos in England were a result of Jewish people having been technically banned from England. Those Jews who did live there were supposedly assimilated into the Christian faith and lived as Christians, scattered throughout the cities' neighborhoods. Ironically, it is from the Venetians, from a city that was at that time known for its tolerance of different religions, that the

word ghetto is derived. Venice was not the first city to create a ghetto for

Jews. It was, however, the city that first devised the term ghetto, in 1516, when it established a special section in the northern part of the city. This was not the most pleasant part of the city. It was a place of industry, in particular iron foundries were located there with their polluting exhausts and smells. This was also an isolated part of the city, cut off by water from the main section of Venice. In order to gain access to the city proper, people had to cross one of two bridges. At night, these bridges were barred, forcing the Jewish people who lived in the ghettos to remain at home until the gates were re-opened. The land area in the Venetian Ghetto was not large enough to house the Jewish population, so homes built in that area tended to have five or more stories, unlike the typical houses in other parts of the cities. As the population continued to expand, additional lands were dedicated to the ghettos. In 1630, there were about 4000 Jewish people living in the Venetian Ghetto, in what would amount today to about two and a half city squares. When Napoleon took control of Venice in the eighteenth century, he ordered the gates on the bridges to the city to be torn down. Jewish people gained some rights after this but not the right to citizenry.

### **III- Reformation and Usury**

Charging interest on loans was for a long time prohibited by many different religions and declaimed as a poor practice by many philosophers in ancient times. Religions that preached against usury included the Moslem faith and the Christian faith. There was even a precept in Judaism that forbade usury; but it was limited. Jewish people could not charge interest on loans to other Jews. However, they could collect interest from non-Jews. There are passages in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Qur'an that speak out against usury.

### **IV- Italian Renaissance**

The Italian Renaissance was a period of time roughly between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries (although there are arguments for even earlier and later Renaissance movements in other parts of the world) when scholars, philosophers, and other students of history and culture examined the past, evaluated it, took the knowledge they collected, and slowly began to create a new The Reformation, led by Martin Luther, sweeps across Europe. Queen Elizabeth I demands a unified England, outlawing all religions except for Protestantism, under the Church of England. Venetians make fortunes as their city is the greatest shipping port in Europe. Typical cargo ships improved over the Middle Age models and now have as many as four masts

with two sails each. society based on new scientific and artistic ideas. Often, the Renaissance is used to mark the end of

the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern age in Europe, although the changes happened gradually and the dates of one era beginning and another one ending are rather arbitrary. In Italy, however, approximately during this time span, scientific and artistic discoveries enjoyed new, exciting, and dramatic changes. Some of the earliest of the Renaissance writers in Italy were the poet Dante (1265–1321, known for his poem *The Divine Comedy*, written somewhere between 1310 and 1314) and the poet Petrarch (1304–1374, known for his series of love poems, written about a woman called Laura, begun somewhere around 1327). Both of these writers' works would seriously affect authors in other parts of Europe, especially in England, as the changes of the Renaissance swept through Europe. The Elizabethan Age in England is said to represent the height of the Renaissance in England. Authors such as dramatists William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593, who wrote *The Jew of Malta*), as well as poet John Milton (1608–74, who is known for his poem “*Paradise Lost*”), and many others wrote enduring works which are still studied today.

**Venetian Economy in the Renaissance**

The city of Venice is built on marshy islands, with many so-called streets actually comprised of water canals. Boats and ships were a part of most every Venetian's life because water was everywhere in the city. Because of its strategic position on the Adriatic Sea, Venice became a major shipping port, controlling most

of the trade between Europe and the Far East up until the end of the Renaissance. Shipping was a very important part of the city's economy, and money flowed into the hands of the many families involved in the trade. In past ages, the money had been controlled by the nobility, whose wealth was invested in the land. With the large shipping industry in Venice, though, the power of money moved into the merchant class. People in the banking industry also gained wealth, as aristocrats began a trend of borrowing money for frivolous things, such as gambling and partying, and then failed to repay their loans. Bankers often took portions of the nobility's landholdings in payment, thus increasing the bankers' profits. The business class of merchants grew drastically during the Renaissance. Many merchants invested large amounts of money into the building of great mansions and churches during this time. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of the Venetian Renaissance are considered the golden age of Venetian wealth.

#### **v - Shakespeare's genius:**

Shakespeare's decision to name *The Merchant of Venice* after a minor character serves to increase attention on the true hero of the play, Portia. Throughout the play, Portia proves herself to be more knowledgeable and clever than any of the male characters. Given how Portia dominates the action of the play, Crow contends, "Shakespeare must surely have intended the title of the play to be ironic." In *The*

Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare has woven together two stories. One is a revenge drama, set in Venice and based on the tensions between two business practices. Antonio represents the Christian merchants, who make their living trading with other nations, running risks posed by storms and pirates. Shylock represents the Jews, a marginalised group, locked into the 'ghetto' at night, who, because of restrictions imposed by the ruling Christians, can only make a living by lending money at fixed rates of interest. Antonio's contempt for Shylock is not just because he is a 'misbeliever' (I.iii.103), but also because he is a 'cut-throat dog', taking no risks and making profit out of the merchants. The other story is a romantic comedy, set in the fictional world of Belmont, and based on the fairy tale device of a wealthy woman bound by her father's will to marry the first man to choose the correct casket from gold, silver and lead.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, designed to appeal to both courtier and citizen, has wide ranging variety presented with original and experimental dramatic devices. It combines an enchanted princess episode at Belmont with a folk-tale bond plot set in commercial Venice; it contains a trial, an elopement, a teasing trick over rings, and woman disguised as men. Its experiments and original methods are bold and imaginative. The Principal lovers are married in Act III instead of at the end of the play. Into the midst of romantic story and comic clownery Shakespeare has thrust a tragic villain, Shylock, an experiment that is unique in his comedies. Those natural enemies in Elizabethan eyes, love and friendship are shown on the contrary as

fulfilling each other in harmony. The denouement of the bond plot with the departure of Shylock in Act IV again is unusual. The use of music as a background for Lorenzo's speech, with musicians brought actually on to the stage or on to stage level (V. I) is almost a forerunner of recitative, and together with the musical 'composition' of the earlier conversation between Lorenzo and Jessica it is an unparalleled attempt to create a mood of peace, serenity and universal harmony.

Shakespeare further emphasizes this by placing side by side sharply contrasting themes and characters; it is one of his favorite dramatic techniques, and he uses it boldly in this play. Portia and Antonio are both contrasted with Shylock, the New Law with the Old Law, the marriage bond with the flesh bond, love with hatred, deceptive appearances with inner truth, generosity with miserliness.

For good measure, he adds discussions or comments on friendship, usury, melancholy, music, national characteristics, and that perennial, light-hearted topic, the oddity of a young Englishman's clothes. There is a song, there is instrumental music, and there is a brilliant display of pageantry at Belmont and in Venice, perhaps the most colourful in any of Shakespeare's comedies.

Such a mixture was not devised for idle amusement only, or to allow the spectators to escape into world of romance and comic interludes; it sets up values and judgements of good and evil, the proclaimed purpose of Elizabethan literature in general. The Merchant of Venice

contains themes of deep moral and social concern presented morality tale in action, or in discussion or in a soliloquy – the relationship of justice and mercy, sacrifice, the reconciliation of love and friendship, the Old Testament doctrine and the New Testament teaching, Christian charity in practice. Some scholars consider that each of Shakespeare's plays has one theme or governing moral idea which pervades and controls the play and to which all other themes contribute. The theme of love and friendship has been suggested for *The Merchant of Venice*. The opposition of justice and mercy in the trial scene, viewed in the light of the allegory of the Four Daughters of God, has also been proposed. This judgment theme is shown to permeate the whole play. The falsity of appearances beside the truth of reality which is openly stated. Bassanio's soliloquy over the caskets and implicit in the discussion over usury (I. ii) and in Shylock's pretence of friendship (I. ii) is another possibility. Love's wealth or the prosperity and happiness of mind that spring from giving rather than from taking have also been suggested. A further suggestion is that love and friendship, above the false show of material things, is prepared to make an entire sacrifice, and in so doing is shown to be a reflection in human terms of the Christian Redemption. The characters serving different dramatic purposes are variously presented. Shylock is revealed in soliloquy and in dialogue; Portia and Antonio are revealed by the descriptions of others as well as in dialogue; Bassanio reveals himself almost entirely in dialogue. Generally in a comedy the lesser characters 'speak for themselves'.



However they reveal themselves, Shakespeare's genius gives them vivid human touches; the figures of Shylock and Antonio engage our thought so deeply that we are often deceived into thinking of them as they had life outside a the play. The tradition of the stage produced a number of stock characters who invariably behave like puppets in the same limited way. When Shakespeare uses one of them, Launcelot Gobbo, for example, he invests the character with a fresh, life-like appearance. A minor character such as Launcelot, Nerissa, Salerio, Solanio and Gratiano are not only Antonio's friends, they act as a chorus in making the kind of comment on affairs expected from an observer. Occasionally characters represent a quality or state. In *The Merchant of Venice* the dukes of Morocco and Arragon are allegorical figures personifying fleshly desire and pride. A number of characters in Shakespeare's tragedies, while they are not personifications in this way, are clearly involved in moral qualities, states or ideas; this is also true of some characters in his comedies. At times their human qualities are uppermost; at other times they speak as if they were mouthpieces of some quality.

Shakespeare characteristically says more than one thing at a time, sometimes his characters play as it were more than one part, and his plots tell more than one story. This makes interpretation of a play such as *The Merchant of Venice* very difficult. Because of Shakespeare's methods and the changes in intellectual opinion and social custom, much in his plays is likely to be meaningless or imperfect to our minds unless some attempt is made to recover even a

little of the Elizabethan attitude of mind and scope of their knowledge.

## **VI- Love and Money**

The thriving merchant city of Venice was a prototype for London in the 1590s. Through trade, the English capital was becoming increasingly wealthy. The cultured circles of its population were self-consciously aware of the wide-ranging effects of prosperity. On the one hand, riches could be regarded as a social blessing, bringing colour and the joy and release festivity. On the other, increasing capital caused a growing unease about the power of money to corrupt, deprave and shatter social relations. The Merchant of Venice vividly portrays wealth in its conflicting roles, compares and contrasts it with the currency of love, and in the process articulates the need for an enlightened, liberal and, above all, social approach to money. The play's opening immediately makes the association between riches and a decorous feeling for manners and colourful, civilized, structured society. For Salerio, Antonio's argosies (I,i):

*Like signors and rich burghers on the flood,*

*Or as it were the pageants of the sea-*

*Do overpeer the petty traffickers*

*That curtsy to them...*

Wealth is thus a gorgeous spectacle, a source of pleasure and the basis for graceful social relationships. Antonio has lent Bassanio large sums to support his opulent, gregarious lifestyle. In this way, money can be used for the sake of friendship, and Bassanio's latest venture provides the perfect opportunity for it to serve in affairs of the heart: one more loan will secure his friend's happiness by enabling him to win the hand of the woman he loves. It will also ensure that he is able to indulge his extravagant, festive temperament, for Portia has almost unlimited means. Hence money may be used to nurture love and contentment, to enrich the quality of life. Generosity, that ability to give for love without thought of personal profits, is the ideal of the play. Portia also conforms to it well, joyfully giving herself and everything she owns to Bassanio, and declaring her willingness to pay his debt 'twenty times over' (III, ii)

The love versus friendship theme was felt and closely debated in the Renaissance. It appeared in differing story forms; in some of which one of the friends was killed, but the version which Shakespeare adopted in *The Merchant of Venice* placed the claims of friendship above those of love between man and woman. There are three love affairs in *The Merchant of Venice*, each having its own peculiar quality. There is the love of Bassanio and Portia, there is the Jessica-Lorenzo love affair, and there is also the love affair of Nerissa and Gratiano. The love affair of Bassanio and Portia is the most outstanding in the play.

The friendship between Antonio and Bassanio is of compound nature. Antonio is the more important figure. He is a wealthy merchant in the city of Venice. He is a leading citizen, commanding great respect. Bassanio had once taken a loan from Antonio, but had not paid back. He asks Antonio for another loan. Antonio had no cash in hand just now, but he is willing to help Bassanio. He bids Bassanio to approach any money-lender in the city of Venice and take a loan on Antonio's behalf.

Bassanio approaches Shylock who is a Jew and a professional money-lender, and asks for a loan of three thousand ducats in Antonio's name. Antonio then signs, regardless of the danger which it implies. There is in it a clause according to which Shylock would be entitled to cut off a pound of Antonio's flesh from nearest his heart in case Antonio fails to repay the loan within a period of three months. Antonio willingly signs this bond to meet

the needs of his friend (Bassanio). He is willing to risk his life for the sake of his friend.

Another major trait of Antonio's nature is his capacity for friendship, and his profound affections for Bassanio. Their friendship has been idealized and glorified by Shakespeare. Antonio, unhesitatingly shares his wealth with Bassanio in spite of the latter's confession of his shortcomings. In this he enhances his own character by behaving in correct Christian and as the complete friend.

Antonio's attitude towards Shylock is partly dictated by the accepted belief that usury and friendship were enemies, the former destructive of the latter. To an audience unaware of the plot Antonio's sadness and Shylock's declared hatred may well raise fears after the bond has been sealed that Antonio may have to sacrifice his life. His offer is the greater since, according to a medieval belief, he put himself like Christ into the power of Jewry. In their conversation Antonio declares the opposition between usury and friendship, and Shylock, seizing his chance baits with an offer of friendship. Antonio, who represents friendship, is unable in his melancholy state to see the deception of an offer made in the name of friendship.

*Hie thee gentle Jew,*

*The Hebrew will turn Christian,*

*He grows kind. Act 1, iii*

When the news of Antonio's misfortune reaches Belmont, Bassanio with fine integrity confesses the debt he owes to Antonio, because of the honourable course expected of him as a friend, may well destroy his new happiness. His divided loyalties are reconciled by the wisdom of Portia who perceives that true love is achieved only by preserving friendship, urges him to save his friend's life: '*O love, dispatch all business and be gone*'.

Her sacrifice is considerable. As man and wife, she and Bassanio are 'one flesh', but as friends Bassanio and Antonio are 'one soul in

bodies twain', and she accepts the superiority of that claim as her conversation with Lorenzo (III. Iv) makes clear.

Bassanio offer of his life in the trial scene is seriously meant, and not the ' manifest lie ' which one critic, mistaking the stage for reality, has suggested. Similarly, his offer to renounce his wife to save his friend is a serious offer although Shakespeare quickly turns it to jest with Portia's comment.

It has been suggested that Antonio's voluntary sharing of his wealth Bassanio is precisely balanced-to the delight of an Elizabethan audience-by the retribution that befalls Shylock. He, the pretended friend, is ordered to share his wealth with Antonio, his bond-brother, and so carry out the accepted doctrine that friends should share their goods.

The ring episode is another bond pledge. Bassanio allows the request of his friend to overrule his wife's wishes, that is he places friendship above love. Again Bassanio confesses what happened, and this time Antonio makes a deeper sacrifice, he offers to acknowledge Portia's claim to Bassanio and offers her that which he shares with Bassanio, ' one soul in bodies twain'. The resolving of love and friendship in harmony symbolized by the music of Act V is complete.

Against all this is set the coldly calculating character of Shylock. The usurer lends money for profit not for love. The character of Shylock had received different critical opinions. One eminent critic regards

Shylock as essentially a tragic character, while another eminent one conceives him in a different light. He is undoubtedly a villain. In fact, he is one of the most notorious characters in the entire range of Shakespearean drama. Shylock is a usurer, a fanatical Jew, a heartless man, a miserly employer, and a narrow-minded and tyrannical father. Indeed, he strikes us a kind of monster whom we detest and abhor.

### **VII- The attitude of the Elizabethan audience towards Shylock:**

A very important aspect of the play is the antagonism which existed in those days between the Jews and the Christians. The Christians of the time harboured many prejudices against the Jews who, in their opinion, were not only great misers but also merciless usurers. One other point of conflict between the two religious communities was the fact that the Jews did not and still do not eat pork, while pork was and continues to be, the staple and favorite meal, and a delicacy for the Christians. In those days, the Jews in general were not only held in contempt by the Christians but also treated as outcasts and as worse than dogs.

### **The manifestation of Shylock for anti-Semitic purposes:**

Recently, during the World War 11, Hitler sustained that same persecution against the Jews, expelled them from his country, and confiscated their properties and wealth. Hence, he offered them an

everlasting opportunity to manipulate, and repudiate their suffering in the German Holocausts. It was the Moslems, in general and the Palestinians in particular, who had to, and still do, pay the fees. It is their own lot to tolerate and defy the Jews' attempt to rehabilitate, to secure themselves a second home in Palestine. Paradoxically, while the leading nations stood still, and handicapped in front of Hitler's illegitimate assaults against the Jews, they do not react to the Jews conflict with the Arabs in the same way. The Israel lobby plays a very powerful role in the politics and economy of the United States of America. Consequently, the State of Israel used to get, and still gets the utmost financial and spiritual aid from America. In the Elizabethan times, of course, Shylock stands out as a representative of his race; a wholly evil person, and as a veritable devil. In most of the scenes of the play, he struck the audience as a hateful person and in a few of the scenes he evoked their ridicule.

One of the ways in which Shakespeare makes Shylock a figure of fun is by exploiting the comic potential of the traditional stage Jew. An Elizabethan audience would often have seen Jews comically caricatured as greedy misers and moneylenders. The association of Jews with devils was a standing joke, and in Act III Scene i, when Salanio sees Shylock, he says that the devil is coming 'in the likeness of a Jew'. We have already noted, in act III scene i, amidst his grief for his daughter's elopement, and the loss of his fortune, Shylock's remark that Antonio 'will feed my revenge', an extension of the grotesque belief that Jews did eat human flesh. He wears the



traditional garb-a 'Jewish gabardine'. (I, iii)- and has the standard comic obsession of a miser. For example, he is anxious, in Act II Scene V, because he has been dreaming of moneybags. Launcelot Gobbo, the clown, complains that he is 'famished' in Shylock's service, but the latter considers himself to have been excessively generous, for when Launcelot declares his intention to serve Bassanio, Shylock says that he will not be able to 'gormandize' as he has done in the past.

Paradoxically, he gives a prolonged moralizing lecture over the value of forgiveness, wondering: 'why revenge'. Moreover, he invests the occasion to his own good, begins a series of complaints of persecution:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?

Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions,

senses, affections, passions? Fed with the

*same food, hurt with the same weapons,*

*subject to the same diseases, healed*

*by the same means. Act III, i*

Upon hearing the news of Antonio bankruptcy, Shylock rejoices it, forgetting his entire past epigram, and threatens: 'I will have the heart of him if he forfeit'

When Shylock enters the court, he is fully determined to demand the pound of flesh to which he is entitled because of Antonio's failure to have repaid to him the loan. Shylock, then, is an outsider not only because he is a Jew, but because of his selfishness and the way he talks and behaves. During our reading of the play, we realize that the fact that he is a Jew is only one of the many things which separates and alienates him from the prevailing mood and atmosphere. His isolation is at least partly of his own choosing, and he outrages the gregariousness, or social and community spirit, of his environment. His entry in act I Scene iii puts a stop to the colourful, playful and gracious talk which we have enjoyed in the first scene. The Duke calls him, with justification 'a stony adversary' (IV, i) For all these reasons, Shylock should not win any of our sympathy too. Even his fate at the end of the play provoked only mirth and laughter.

### **The Theme of Loneliness**

The central conflict in the play is not between the keen, calculating business world of Shylock and the romantic world of love and marriage symbolized by Belmont. Shylock and Antonio are the two focal points of the play, both of them are studies of loneliness and isolation. There are marked similarities and contrasts between the two men. Being a Jew, Shylock is an alien and outcast in Christian Venice

and Antonio is also an alien to the Venetian and Belmont worlds of love and marriage.

About Shylock the important thing to note is that he is a Jew in a Christian society. He is tolerated but not accepted. His being a Jew is not important in itself; what is important is what being a Jew has done in his personality. He is a stranger, proud of his race and its traditions, strict in his religion. Around him is the society of Venice, a world of golden youth, richly dressed, accustomed to luxury, to feasting, to masking, of a comparatively easy virtue.

The first time Antonio is introduced into the play, he seems to be in a melancholic temperament. His friends inquire him about the reason behind his seeming depressed mood, and wonder if it is because all his ships are at the sea, jeopardized by its storms and rocks. Antonio replies that his melancholic mood is congenital, and that ‘my merchandise makes me not sad’. He also tells them that he perceives the world as “A stage where every man must play a part, and mine a sad one”.

### **VIII- The choice of the Caskets**

On the surface, no doubt, the choice of a casket to determine a candidate’s suitability as a husband for Portia looks absurd. It would seem that a suitor’s choice of the right casket in *The Merchant of Venice* would be purely a matter of chance, and not an indication of

the good qualities which he might be possessing. In other words, it seems to have been a sheer whim or caprice on the part of Portia's late father to have devised this strange method for the selection of a husband for Portia. And Portia therefore seems to be a stupid woman who blindly believes in the method laid down by her late father. The choice of a casket as a test of a character therefore seems to be one of the many absurdities in this play which has sometimes been compared to a fairy tale.

The choice has to be made from amongst three caskets which are made of gold, silver, and lead respectively. Each casket bears an inscription as a sort of clue to guide the suitor. The inscription on the gold casket is: "Who chooseth me, shall gain what many men desire." The inscription on the silver casket reads thus: "Who chooseth me, shall get as much as he deserves." And the inscription on the leaden casket is: "Who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath." Apparently, there is no good reason for preferring one of the caskets to the other two. There is an equal balancing of the alternatives. Portia's portrait could have been placed in any of these caskets; and the successful chooser could then have been described as the wisest or the most suitable man to marry the lady. After all, the arguments given by the prince of Morocco are very strong, and so are the arguments given by the Prince of Arragon.

Hence, we are dealing with an intentional puzzle, the key to the fate of a suitor is not to be found in the reasoning which he goes through.

The prince of Morocco looks at the inscriptions which the three caskets bear and asks himself by what means he can choose the right casket. He prays to god to direct his judgment. He then reads the inscriptions once again. The leaden casket requires the chooser to give and hazard all he has. The Prince of Morocco thinks these words to be a threat, and says that men, who hazard all, do so in the hope of getting a fair return. A golden mind, he further says, does not stoop to anything that is worthless such as lead, and so the Prince of Morocco decides not to give or hazard anything for the sake of lead. He possesses a regal pride and, he therefore, thinks himself to be half-divine. He dislikes lead because of his exalted view of himself; and he rejects silver because of a touch of modesty in his pride. He doubts whether he really deserves Portia; and so he chooses the gold casket. The Prince of Arragon possesses the pride of family and, having a high opinion of his merit and ability, thinks that he fully deserves Portia. Accordingly, he chooses the silver casket. Bassanio possesses the pride of a soldier who is not discouraged by any threat or danger; and so he chooses the leaden casket. Besides, he is a lover who will hazard everything for the sake of love. And so he chooses a casket which threatens rather than promises anything. And thus the strange puzzle, conceived by the holy father who was divinely inspired while dying, has actually proved to be the true test for the inmost character of each suitor.

Our initial impression of Bassanio is that he is a dowry-seeker or a fortune hunter, and that he is an irresponsible man living above his

means and borrowing money from his rich friend whenever he is in need of it. If we think of Bassanio in these terms, we cannot believe that he could have chosen the right casket. And so one comes back to the point from the very beginning. It is really difficult to decide over the reliability of that test of the casket as a proof of good intentions and true love.

The first time Bassanio's name is mentioned is amidst a conversation between Portia and her maid Nerissa. Nerissa is reminding Portia of him as 'a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in company of the Marquis of Montferrat?' Nerissa gives him the credit of being 'the best deserving a fair lady'. Portia seems to approve on Nerissa's exaggerated praise of Bassanio. This contradicts her apparent discouraging attitude towards the other forerunners.

When Bassanio comes to make his choice of a casket, Portia urges him to stay at her house for a day or two before he actually proceeds to make his choice. She says that if he chooses the wrong casket, he would have to leave her house immediately, and that she would then be in no position to enjoy his company. Then she tells him that some inner voice is telling her that she would not lose him. She seems to be

When Bassanio has chosen the leaden casket, Portia in an aside says that before Bassanio had made his choice, she was astounded by feelings of suspense, apprehension, doubt, and despair. His success transforms her emotions into intense joy.

Bassanio, on his part, when he opens Portia's portrait, he becomes totally obsessed by her beauty. But it is not only in his love and gregariousness that he seems to have, as Launcelot says, 'that grace of God' (II, ii). He is sensitive and perceptive, and has the ability to see beneath the surface of things, an essential capacity in an imperfect world. So unlike Antonio, Bassanio is instinctively suspicious of Shylock's pretence of kindness and generosity in the wording of the bond: 'I like not terms and a villain's mind (I, iii). It is exactly this awareness that things may not be as they seem which enables him Portia: he rejects the golden casket because 'ornament', a beautiful exterior, may be 'The seeming truth which cunning times put on. To entrap the wisest' (III, ii). We know that Bassanio is careless of money, and he passes over the silver, which symbolizes it, with barely a glance. By choosing the lead casket he shows himself as one who scorns to judge by superficialities, identifying his love for Portia as something far deeper and more noble than mere physical attraction.

In spite of all this, there is a certain irony in Bassanio's choice. He rejects the temptation of money and ornament symbolized by the silver and gold caskets, but he feels that in order to woo Portia he must have sufficient means to enhance and embellish his suit. Moreover, he is impressed by the inscription which threatens rather than promises: 'who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath'; but after all it is neither his wealth nor his life which is at stake.

So, although we enjoy and admire Bassanio's carefree liberality, there are times in the play when his purely idealistic and emotional approach might have very unpleasant consequences for those around him. As Antonio stands in peril of his life, Bassanio's extravagant instincts lead him to make an extraordinary declaration: to save his friend, he would sacrifice his own life, all the world, and Portia too (IV, i). He may be partially excused for such rashness: the offer is made as Bassanio is suffering almost unbearable feelings of pain and guilt. Nevertheless, were it not for the comic appeal of the situation (unknown to him, Portia has heard every word), this would simply shock and outrage.

Here Bassanio is preserved from moral condemnation because our first instinct is to laugh, in the play as a whole Shakespeare makes it clear that only the contrivances of comedy prevent his actions from resulting in disaster. It takes all Shakespeare's artfulness to save Antonio. Bassanio acts from the best of motives, but, with all the good will in the world, difficulties and conflicts of interests arise. For instance, in the ring episode it seems that whatever he does will damage his honour. If he gives it to the 'young doctor', he is being unfaithful; if he keeps it, he could be accused of ingratitude.



## **IX- The Merchant of Venice as a romantic comedy**

Fortunately, comedy licenses extravagance and impulsiveness, and resolves conflict: without knowing it, Bassanio returns the ring to his wife. His fortune is prodigal's dream come true: the carefree spendthrift is rewarded for his love and liberality, and protected from the complications and dire consequences which might arise in real life, by the devices of an artificial world.

The ancient Greeks believed that the aim of comedy should be to ridicule the vices and follies of society. So they displayed on the stage types rather than individuals, and dealt mainly with stock types of character which would be readily recognised by the audiences. Shakespeare did not follow this tradition. His characters are individual and real human beings and never become types. Englishmen in Shakespeare's days were distinctly romantic in their tastes, and not classical. We may explain this in the broadest possible manner by saying that they preferred free exercise of the imagination of the dramatist, who would supply them with plays of thrilling incident, exciting adventure, the

supernatural and mysterious, and many other features which were directly in contrast to every-day life. The classical comedy, in the hands of Jonson, became a series of character sketches in extreme types of character, known as "humours" and tended to show forth eccentric and peculiar individual types. While his handling is always romantic, Shakespeare was not altogether unaffected by the prevailing

taste for the depiction of "humours". His character of Jaques in *As You Like It* is a study in a strange and unusual type of reflective melancholy; in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare has set forth a character of such unusual melancholy and morbid introspection that the critics have not yet been able to agree about his real nature. But Shakespeare's comedies were never studies in humours; they were free and universal in the picture of life which they presented.

*The Merchant of Venice* is a comedy of romantic incident, full of thrills because the events presented are far removed from the ordinary dull course of everyday life. In his first attempts to write plays for the public, Shakespeare tried to show humorous events on the stage and to give amusing dialogues. Out of this, he gradually evolved a definite Shakespeare wrote to scheme. It must be stressed that he did not write suit the actors in his company from pure love of literary creation, but also to provide employment for himself and his company of actors. The box-office, or its equivalent, was an important feature. If a play succeeded, Shakespeare would follow with another on the same lines, a course that is widely followed by modern playwrights and novelists. Moreover he had actors in regular employment in his company, so that the character parts in any drama had to fit in with their abilities and their limitations. In plays appearing about the same time as The Merchant, particularly Twelfth Night, *As You Like II*, and *Much Ado*, we find a striking resemblance. In all these plays, there are two female characters associated together as are Portia and Nerissa. Then are Olivia and Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Rosalind and Celia in *As You*

Like *It*, and Hero and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Shakespeare seems to have been writing for a Company which had two clever boy actors, one taller than the other, and suitable for serious parts, while the shorter was definitely a wit. In every play there is a male character corresponding to Bassanio, nominally the chief male character, but by no means the "hero", and of less appeal than the female characters. Perhaps, Shakespeare had not at that time any male actor capable of a great and heroic part. Afterwards when the great character actor, Richard Burbage, joined the Company, Shakespeare may have been influenced thereby when he produced plays like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, which were plays around the fate of one great and central character.

All the comedies have a humorous element, and in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* we have a full-time Clown or jester. There is no such character in *The Merchant* but Launcelot is a comic character whose ridiculous errors in speech were designed to make the groundlings laugh. Even in tragic plays Shakespeare sometimes brought in a grim element of jest to relieve the tension of tragedy.

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is danger and suspense, both in the Caskets Scene and the Trial Scene, before the problems are solved.

This is what we know as plot, and is an advance on the early plays of the Comedy of Errors style, in which a series of amusing incidents takes the place of a central problem. In plays contemporary with The Merchant of Venice, the ending is happy, though in Much Ado there are grave happenings before all is resolved satisfactorily.

All the comedies have a marked humorous element, and almost all the tragedies, though the tradition from the days of the Greeks had been against the combination of tragic and comic elements. Shakespeare did not feel tied down by a strong tragedy with comedy by this. Even in a deeply tragic drama like King Lear, there is a Fool who jests even in the most tragic scenes. In Macbeth, immediately after the murder of King Duncan, knocking is heard at the door and a porter comes on the stage and delivers a soliloquy of humorous and topical interest. Perhaps Shakespeare felt it necessary to let his audiences have what they wanted, even at the sacrifice of his own ideas on art. Equally he may have believed that a mingling of grave and gay, of tears and laughter, is true to life, and that introduction of humour will give relief from tragic tension, and at the same time render tragedy more intense by contrast.

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which are all dialogue. In Measure for Measure, there is so much action that it might be called a tale; whereas Midsummer Night's Dream is a comedy of pure imagination. Though such differences exist, the characters of all these plays are true to Nature, and give an air of reality to the action such as was not previously attained by the shadowy characters of the old tales which Shakespeare so successfully transformed. Even the minor characters, often lightly sketched, have human interest and dramatic probability.

This play is a love story which ends happily in marriage. There is also an interest of friendship, or we might express this by saying that the theme shows the love of man for man and of The idea of love and woman for man. The central story is the wooing that of friendship of Portia, (where disinterested love appears on forms the theme of her part, rather than on that of Bassanio) broadened by the love of Antonio for Bassanio. It strikes at their note of friendship when it shows Antonio as sad, the probable explanation being that Bassanio's love for him has been challenged by the freshly arisen desire for Portia. This sadness of Antonio is a result of the first stage of Bassanio's wooing of Portia, though it serves to hint at graver causes of sadness in the future. The next step in the play is to bring in the beautiful heroine and to acquaint the audience with the ordeal of choosing the right casket. Thus the difficulty which lies in the path of Bassanio's wooing is revealed; and interest is correspondingly increased.

It is noteworthy that the love of Bassanio and Portia pursues a normal course, and follows the natural trend to a great extent. The lottery of the caskets is not an essential part of their love, but a romantic addition for dramatic and dramatic irony stage effect. In Shakespeare, the course and the choice of true love are, as a rule, free. We learn in this play that Bassanio and Portia have met before, and it is only necessary to read between the lines in order to see that they are already in love with each other. Before he makes his choice between the caskets, their love has become overwhelming. The episode of the caskets is solely an expedient to show that the love of Bassanio is of the right kind, and that he alone, of all the suitors, is prepared "to give and hazard all the hath." It serves also to impart a strong element of dramatic irony to the play, for the audience has had the previous experience gained by the failures of Morocco and Arragon. All the audience know, while Bassanio is choosing, that the leaden casket is the right one. This supplies just the situation that the Elizabethans loved, namely, that they should be in possession of knowledge which some characters on the stage did not possess. It is possible that Shakespeare foresaw the strong stage appeal of such a striking situation of dramatic irony, and so selected the caskets story as likely to delight Elizabethan audiences.

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irony. It is evident that in every case this leads to situations which are full of irony, because the disguised women may deceive other actors on the stage, but they can never deceive the audience, who always know their true identity. To be in the secret is to be correspondingly delighted, so Shakespeare obliged by supplying such situations in plenty.

Another motive is possible for this. There were no women actors on the Elizabethan stage, and the parts of Portia and Nerissa would be The stage considera played by boys. This may have been a weakness in practice, for even the most talented of prompted this male boy actors is bound to be a little unconvincing masquerade in the rendering of a female part. Shakespeare may have felt it advisable to allow his boy actors to revert for a time to their own proper sex upon the stage, for the sake of naturalness and ease in acting. The boy who played the part of Portia would be allowed to speak and act as a man all through the difficult trial scene, where he would thus be more natural and convincing. But the problem was not altogether so simple as this, for if the audience had been allowed to see only two men in the doctor of laws and his assistant, the effect would have been lost and the desired irony not attained. Hence the audience must ever be reminded that the characters are two women playing the parts of men.

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## **X- Shylock and Antonio**

Shylock, the Jew, lived at Venice; he made himself very rich by lending money at great interest to Christian merchants. Shylock, being a hard-hearted man, forced men to pay the money he lent with such cruelty, that he was much hated by all good men, and particularly by Antonio, a young merchant of Venice. And Shylock as much hated Antonio, because he used to lend money to people in trouble, and would never take any interest for the money he lent; therefore there was great hatred between the Jew and the kind merchant Antonio. Whenever Antonio met Shylock he used to attack him for hard dealings; and this the Jew would bear with seeming patience, while he secretly planned to hurt him.

Antonio was the kindest man that lived. He was greatly beloved by all his fellow-citizens; but the friend who was nearest and dearest to his heart was Bassanio, a noble Venetian, who, having only a small property, and wasted it by living in too costly a manner (as young men of high rank with small fortunes often do). Whenever Bassanio wanted money, Antonio helped him ; and it seemed as if they had but one heart and one purse between them.

One day Bassanio came to Antonio, and told him that he wished to make a wealthy marriage with a lady whom he dearly loved. Her father, who was lately dead, had left her a large property. In her father's lifetime (he said) he used to visit her at her house, and sometimes he thought this lady had sent him messages with her eyes; but not having money to make himself appear the lover of so rich a lady, he begged Antonio to lend him three thousand pounds.

Antonio had no money by him at the time to lend his friend; but expecting soon to have some ships come home with goods for sale, he said he would go to Shylock, the rich money-lender, and borrow the money.

Antonio and Bassanio went together to Shylock, and Antonio asked the Jew to lend him three thousand pounds upon any interest he wished, to be paid out of the goods in his ships at sea.

On this, Shylock thought within himself, "If I can once catch him, I will feed the hatred that I bear him; he hates our Jewish nation; he lends out money without interest; and among the merchants he curses me and my goods business. May my tribe be cursed if I forgive him!".

Antonio, seeing he was thinking and did not answer, and being anxious to get the money, said, "Shylock, do you hear? Will you lend the money?" .

To this question the Jew replied, "Signor Antonio, many a time you have cursed me, and I have borne it quietly; and then you have called me unbeliever, cut-throat dog, and spat on my Jewish garments, and kicked at me with your foot, as if I was a dog. Well, then, it now appears you need my help; and you come to me, and say, Shylock, lend me money. Has a dog money? Is it possible a dog should lend three thousand pounds? Shall I bend low and say, "Fair sir, you spat upon me on Wednesday last; another time you called me dog; and for these kind deeds I am to lend you money". Antonio replied, "I am as likely to call you so again, to spit on

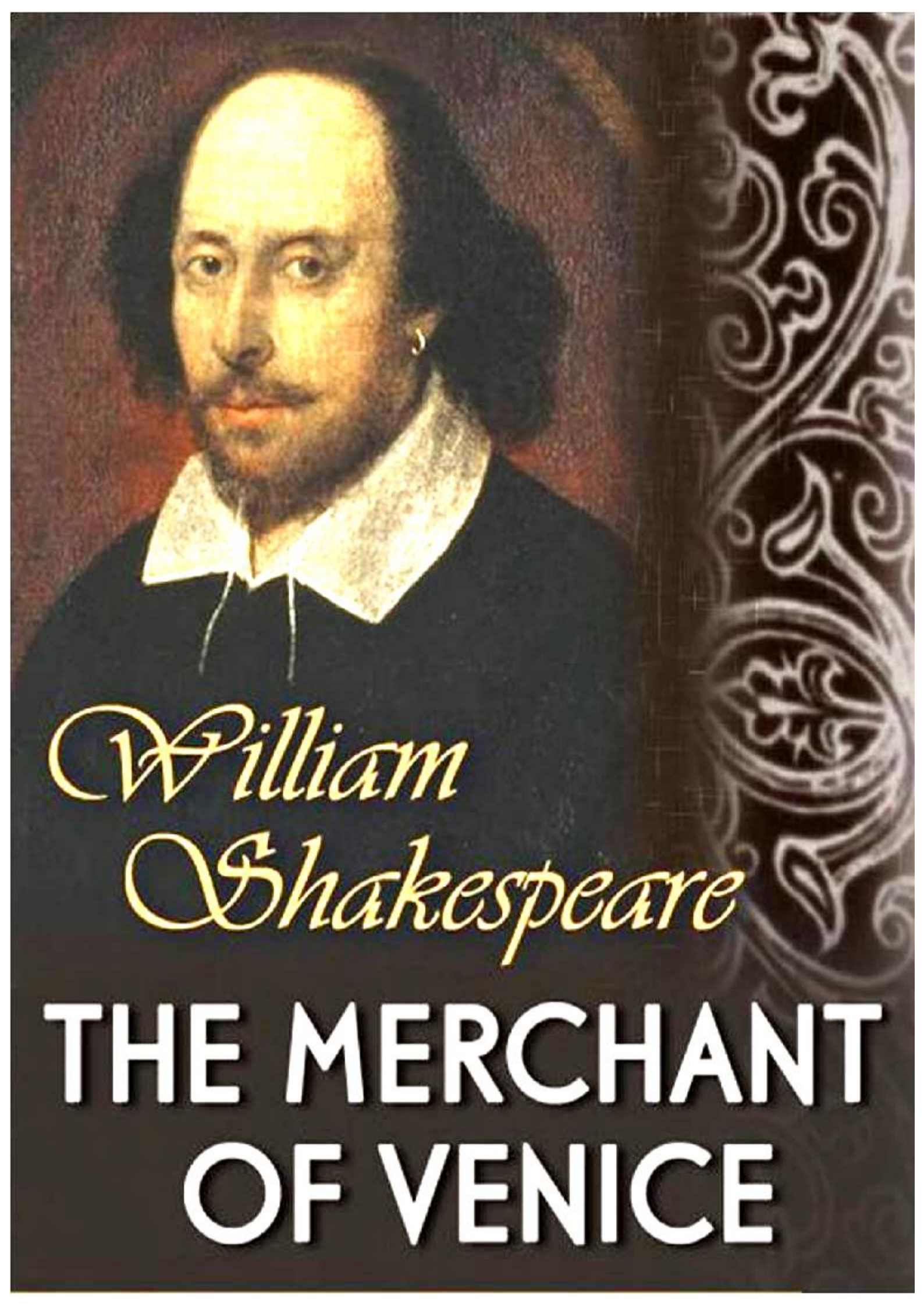
you again, and kick at you too. If you will lend me this money, lend it not as to a friend, but rather lend it as to an enemy, that, if I cannot pay again, you may with better face punish me”. “Why, look you, “said Shylock,” how you storm! I would be friends with you, and have your love. I will forget the shame you have upon me. I will supply your wants, and take no interest for my money .” This offer greatly surprised Antonio; and then

Shylock, still pretending kindness, again said he would lend him three thousand pounds, and take no interest for his money; only Antonio should go with him to a lawyer, and sign in merry sport a bond, that if he did not repay the money by a certain day, he would lose a pound of flesh, to be cut off from any part of his body that Shylock pleased.

“Content, “said Antonio,” I will sign this bond, and say there is much kindness in the Jew.” Bassanio said Antonio should not sign such a bond for him; but still Antonio said that he would sign it, for before the day of payment came, his ships would come back with many times the value of the money.

Shylock, hearing this talk, carried out, “ O father Abraham, what evil these Christians think! Their own hard dealings teach them to think evil. I pray you tell me this, Bassanio; if he should break his bond, what should I gain. A pound of man’s flesh, taken from a man, is not worth so much as the flesh of mutton or of beef.

.....



*William  
Shakespeare*

**THE MERCHANT  
OF VENICE**

# **The Merchant of Venice**

THE TEXT

## ACT I

### SCENE I. Venice. A street.

*Enter ANTONIO, SALARINO, and SALANIO*

#### ANTONIO

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad: It wearies me; you say it wearies you; But how I caught it, found it, or came by it, What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born, I am to learn; And such a want-wit sadness makes of me, That I have much ado to know myself.

#### SALARINO

Your mind is tossing on the ocean; There, where your argosies with portly sail, Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood, Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea, Do overpeer the petty traffickers, That curtsy to them, do them reverence, As they fly by them with their woven wings.

#### SALANIO

Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth, The better part of my affections would Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind, Peering in maps for ports and piers and roads; And every object that might make me fear Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt Would make me sad.

## **SALARINO**

My wind cooling my broth Would blow me to an ague, when I thought What harm a wind too great at sea might do. I should not see the sandy hour-glass run, But I should think of shallows and of flats, And see my wealthy Andrew dock'd in sand, Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs To kiss her burial. Should I go to church And see the holy edifice of stone, And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks, Which touching but my gentle vessel's side, Would scatter all her spices on the stream, Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks, And, in a word, but even now worth this, And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought To think on this, and shall I lack the thought That such a thing bechanced would make me sad? But tell not me; I know, Antonio Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

## **ANTONIO**

Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it, My ventures are not in one bottom trusted, Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate Upon the fortune of this present year: Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

## **SALARINO**

Why, then you are in love.

## **ANTONIO**

Fie, fie!



## **SALARINO**

Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad, Because you are not merry: and 'twere as easy For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry, Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed Janus, Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time: Some that will evermore peep through their eyes And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper, And other of such vinegar aspect That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile,

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Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

*Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO*

## **SALANIO**

Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman, Gratiano and Lorenzo. Fare ye well: We leave you now with better company.

## **SALARINO**

I would have stay'd till I had made you merry, If worthier friends had not prevented me.

## **ANTONIO**

Your worth is very dear in my regard. I take it, your own business calls on you And you embrace the occasion to depart.

**SALARINO**

Good morrow, my good lords.

**BASSANIO**

Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? say, when? You grow exceeding strange: must it be so?

**SALARINO**

We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.

*Exeunt Salarino and Salanio*

**LORENZO**

My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio, We two will leave you: but at dinner-time, I pray you, have in mind where we must meet.

**BASSANIO**

I will not fail you.

**GRATIANO**

You look not well, Signior Antonio; You have too much respect upon the world: They lose it that do buy it with much care: Believe me, you are marvellously changed.

## **ANTONIO**

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano; A stage where every man must play a part, And mine a sad one.

## **GRATIANO**

Let me play the fool: With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come, And let my liver rather heat with wine Than my heart cool with mortifying groans. Why should a man, whose blood is warm within, Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster? Sleep when he wakes and creep into the jaundice By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio-- I love thee, and it is my love that speaks-- There are a sort of men whose visages Do cream and mantle like a standing pond, And do a wilful stillness entertain, With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit, As who should say 'I am Sir Oracle, And when I ope my lips let no dog bark!' O my Antonio, I do know of these That therefore only are reputed wise For saying nothing; when, I am very sure, If they should speak, would almost damn those ears, Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools. I'll tell thee more of this another time: But fish not, with this melancholy bait, For this fool gudgeon, this opinion. Come, good Lorenzo. Fare ye well awhile: I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

## **LORENZO**

Well, we will leave you then till dinner-time: I must be one of these same dumb wise men, For Gratiano never lets me speak.

## **GRATIANO**

Well, keep me company but two years moe, Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

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## **ANTONIO**

Farewell: I'll grow a talker for this gear.

## **GRATIANO**

Thanks, i' faith, for silence is only commendable In a neat's tongue dried and a maid not vendible.

*Exeunt GRATIANO and LORENZO*

## **ANTONIO**

Is that any thing now?

## **BASSANIO**

Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search.

**ANTONIO**

Well, tell me now what lady is the same To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage, That you to-day promised to tell me of?

**BASSANIO**

'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio, How much I have disabled mine estate, By something showing a more swelling port Than my faint means would grant continuance: Nor do I now make moan to be abridged From such a noble rate; but my chief care Is to come fairly off from the great debts Wherein my time something too prodigal Hath left me gaged. To you, Antonio, I owe the most, in money and in love, And from your love I have a warranty To unburden all my plots and purposes How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

**ANTONIO**

I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it; And if it stand, as you yourself still do, Within the eye of honour, be assured, My purse, my person, my extremest means, Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.

**BASSANIO**

In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft, I shot his fellow of the self-same flight The self-same way with more advised watch, To find the other forth, and by adventuring both I oft found both: I urge this childhood proof, Because what follows is pure innocence. I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth, That which I owe is lost; but if you

please To shoot another arrow that self way Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt, As I will watch the aim, or to find both Or bring your latter hazard back again And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

### **ANTONIO**

You know me well, and herein spend but time To wind about my love with circumstance; And out of doubt you do me now more wrong In making question of my uttermost Than if you had made waste of all I have: Then do but say to me what I should do That in your knowledge may by me be done, And I am prest unto it: therefore, speak.

### **BASSANIO**

In Belmont is a lady richly left; And she is fair, and, fairer than that word, Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes I did receive fair speechless messages: Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia: Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth, For the four winds blow in from every coast Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks Hang on her temples like a golden fleece; Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand, And many Jasons come in quest of her. O my Antonio, had I but the means

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To hold a rival place with one of them, I have a mind presages me such thrift, That I should questionless be fortunate!

## **ANTONIO**

Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea; Neither have I money nor commodity To raise a present sum: therefore go forth; Try what my credit can in Venice do: That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost, To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia. Go, presently inquire, and so will I, Where money is, and I no question make To have it of my trust or for my sake.

*Exeunt*

## **SCENE II: Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.**

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA*

## **PORTIA**

By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.

## **NERISSA**

You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are: and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness therefore, to be seated in the mean: superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

**PORTIA**

Good sentences and well pronounced.

**NERISSA**

They would be better, if well followed.

**PORTIA**

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband. O me, the word 'choose!' I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one nor refuse none?

**NERISSA**

Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their death have good inspirations: therefore the lottery, that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one



who shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

**PORTIA**

I pray thee, over-name them; and as thou namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, level at my affection.

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**NERISSA**

First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

**PORTIA**

Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself. I am much afeard my lady his mother played false with a smith.

**NERISSA**

Then there is the County Palatine.

**PORTIA**

He doth nothing but frown, as who should say 'If you will not have me, choose:' he hears merry tales and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a death's-

head with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two!

**NERISSA**

How say you by the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon?

**PORTIA**

God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker: but, he! why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan's, a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine; he is every man in no man; if a throstle sing, he falls straight a capering: he will fence with his own shadow: if I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise me I would forgive him, for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him.

**NERISSA**

What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

**PORTIA**

You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany and his behavior every where.

**NERISSA**

What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbour?

**PORTIA**

That he hath a neighbourly charity in him, for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman and swore he would pay him again when he was able: I think the Frenchman became his surety and sealed under for another.

**NERISSA**

How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?

**PORTIA**

Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk: when he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast: and the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I

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shall make shift to go without him.

**NERISSA**

If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him.

## **PORTIA**

Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of rhenish wine on the contrary casket, for if the devil be within and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do any thing, Nerissa, ere I'll be married to a sponge.

## **NERISSA**

You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords: they have acquainted me with their determinations; which is, indeed, to return to their home and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition depending on the caskets.

## **PORTIA**

If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

## **NERISSA**

Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in company of the Marquis of Montferrat?

**PORTIA**

Yes, yes, it was Bassanio; as I think, he was so called.

**NERISSA**

True, madam: he, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a fair lady.

**PORTIA**

I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

*Enter a Serving-man*

How now! what news?

**Servant**

The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave: and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the prince his master will be here to-night.

**PORTIA**

If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good a heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach: if he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me. Come, Nerissa. Sirrah, go before. Whiles we shut the gates upon one wooer, another knocks at the door.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. Venice. A public place.**

*Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK*

**SHYLOCK**

Three thousand ducats; well.

**BASSANIO**

Ay, sir, for three months.

**SHYLOCK**

For three months; well.

**BASSANIO**

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For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

**SHYLOCK**

Antonio shall become bound; well.

**BASSANIO**

May you stead me? will you pleasure me? shall I know your answer?

**SHYLOCK**

Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

**BASSANIO**

Your answer to that.

**SHYLOCK**

Antonio is a good man.

**BASSANIO**

Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

**SHYLOCK**

Oh, no, no, no, no: my meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I understand moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men: there be land-rats and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves, I mean pirates, and then there is the peril of waters, winds and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand ducats; I think I may take his bond.

**BASSANIO**

Be assured you may.

**SHYLOCK**

I will be assured I may; and, that I may be assured, I will bethink me.  
May I speak with Antonio?

**BASSANIO**

If it please you to dine with us.

**SHYLOCK**

Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here?

*Enter ANTONIO*

**BASSANIO**

This is Signior Antonio.

**SHYLOCK**

[Aside] How like a fawning publican he looks! I hate him for he is a Christian, But more for that in low simplicity He lends out money gratis and brings down The rate of usance here with us in Venice. If I can catch him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him. He hates our sacred nation, and he rails, Even there where merchants most do congregate, On me, my bargains and my well-won thrift, Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe, If I forgive him!

**BASSANIO**

Shylock, do you hear?



**SHYLOCK**

I am debating of my present store, And, by the near guess of my memory, I cannot instantly raise up the gross Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?

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Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe, Will furnish me. But soft! how many months Do you desire?

*To ANTONIO*

Rest you fair, good signior; Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

**ANTONIO**

Shylock, although I neither lend nor borrow By taking nor by giving of excess, Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend, I'll break a custom. Is he yet possess'd How much ye would?

**SHYLOCK**

Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

**ANTONIO**

And for three months.

**SHYLOCK**

I had forgot; three months; you told me so. Well then, your bond; and let me see; but hear you; Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow Upon advantage.

**ANTONIO**

I do never use it.

**SHYLOCK**

When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep-- This Jacob from our holy Abram was, As his wise mother wrought in his behalf, The third possessor; ay, he was the third--

**ANTONIO**

And what of him? did he take interest?

**SHYLOCK**

No, not take interest, not, as you would say, Directly interest: mark what Jacob did. When Laban and himself were compromised That all the eanlings which were streak'd and pied Should fall as Jacob's hire, the ewes, being rank, In the end of autumn turned to the rams, And, when the work of generation was Between these woolly breeders in the act, The skilful shepherd peel'd me certain wands, And, in the doing of the deed of kind, He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes, Who then conceiving did in eaning time Fall parti-colour'd lambs, and those were Jacob's. This was a way to thrive, and he was blest: And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.

**ANTONIO**

This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for; A thing not in his power to bring to pass, But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven. Was this inserted to make interest good? Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

**SHYLOCK**

I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast: But note me, signior.

**ANTONIO**

Mark you this, Bassanio, The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. An evil soul producing holy witness Is like a villain with a smiling cheek, A goodly apple rotten at the heart: O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

**SHYLOCK**

Three thousand ducats; 'tis a good round sum. Three months from twelve; then, let me see; the rate--

**ANTONIO**

Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

## **SHYLOCK**

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft In the Rialto you have rated me  
About my moneys and my usances: Still have I borne it with a patient  
shrug, For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.

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You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, And spit upon my Jewish  
gaberdine, And all for use of that which is mine own. Well then, it  
now appears you need my help: Go to, then; you come to me, and you  
say 'Shylock, we would have moneys:' you say so; You, that did void  
your rheum upon my beard And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur  
Over your threshold: moneys is your suit What should I say to you?  
Should I not say 'Hath a dog money? is it possible A cur can lend  
three thousand ducats?' Or Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key,  
With bated breath and whispering humbleness, Say this; 'Fair sir, you  
spit on me on Wednesday last; You spurn'd me such a day; another  
time You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies I'll lend you thus  
much moneys'?

## **ANTONIO**

I am as like to call thee so again, To spit on thee again, to spurn thee  
too. If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not As to thy friends; for  
when did friendship take A breed for barren metal of his friend? But  
lend it rather to thine enemy, Who, if he break, thou mayst with better  
face Exact the penalty.

## **SHYLOCK**

Why, look you, how you storm! I would be friends with you and have your love, Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with, Supply your present wants and take no doit Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me: This is kind I offer.

## **BASSANIO**

This were kindness.

## **SHYLOCK**

This kindness will I show. Go with me to a notary, seal me there Your single bond; and, in a merry sport, If you repay me not on such a day, In such a place, such sum or sums as are Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit Be nominated for an equal pound Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken In what part of your body pleaseth me.

## **ANTONIO**

Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

## **BASSANIO**

You shall not seal to such a bond for me: I'll rather dwell in my necessity.

**ANTONIO**

Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it: Within these two months,  
that's a month before This bond expires, I do expect return  
Of thrice  
three times the value of this bond.

**SHYLOCK**

O father Abram, what these Christians are, Whose own hard dealings  
teaches them suspect The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this; If  
he should break his day, what should I gain By the exaction of the  
forfeiture? A pound of man's flesh taken from a man Is not so  
estimable, profitable neither, As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I  
say, To buy his favour, I extend this friendship: If he will take it, so; if  
not, adieu; And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

**ANTONIO**

Yes Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

**SHYLOCK**

Then meet me forthwith at the notary's; Give him direction for this  
merry bond, And I will go and purse the ducats

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straight, See to my house, left in the fearful guard Of an unthrifty  
knave, and presently I will be with you.

**ANTONIO**

Hie thee, gentle Jew.

*Exit Shylock*

The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

**BASSANIO**

I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

**ANTONIO**

Come on: in this there can be no dismay; My ships come home a month before the day.

*Exeunt*

## ACT II

### SCENE I. Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.

*Flourish of cornets. Enter the PRINCE OF MOROCCO and his train; PORTIA, NERISSA, and others attending*

#### MOROCCO

Mislike me not for my complexion, The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun, To whom I am a neighbour and near bred. Bring me the fairest creature northward born, Where Phoebus' fire scarce thaws the icicles, And let us make incision for your love, To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine. I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine Hath fear'd the valiant: by my love I swear The best-regarded virgins of our clime Have loved it too: I would not change this hue, Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

#### PORTIA

In terms of choice I am not solely led By nice direction of a maiden's eyes; Besides, the lottery of my destiny Bars me the right of voluntary choosing: But if my father had not scanted me And hedged me by his wit, to yield myself His wife who wins me by that means I told you, Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair As any comer I have look'd on yet For my affection.



## **MOROCCO**

Even for that I thank you: Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the  
caskets To try my fortune. By this scimitar That slew the Sophy and a  
Persian prince That won three fields of Sultan Solyman, I would  
outstare the sternest eyes that look, Outbrave the heart most daring on  
the earth, Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear, Yea, mock  
the lion when he roars for prey, To win thee, lady. But, alas the while!  
If Hercules and Lichas play at dice Which is the better man, the  
greater throw May turn by fortune from the weaker hand: So is  
Alcides beaten by his page; And so may I, blind fortune leading me,  
Miss that which one unworthier may attain, And die with grieving.

## **PORTIA**

You must take your chance, And either not attempt to choose at all Or  
swear before you choose, if you choose wrong Never to speak to lady  
afterward In way of marriage: therefore be advised.

## **MOROCCO**

Nor will not. Come, bring me unto my chance.

## **PORTIA**

First, forward to the temple: after dinner Your hazard shall be made.

## **MOROCCO**

Good fortune then! To make me blest or cursed'st among men.

*Cornets, and exeunt*

## **SCENE II. Venice. A street.**

*Enter LAUNCELOT*

### **LAUNCELOT**

Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts me saying to me 'Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot,' or 'good Gobbo,' or good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away. My conscience says 'No; take heed,' honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo, or, as aforesaid, 'honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels.' Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: 'Via!' says the fiend; 'away!' says the fiend; 'for the heavens, rouse up a brave mind,' says the fiend, 'and run.' Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me 'My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man's son,' or rather an honest woman's son; for, indeed, my father did something smack, something grow to, he had a kind of taste; well, my conscience says 'Launcelot, budge not.' 'Budge,' says the fiend. 'Budge not,' says my conscience. 'Conscience,' say I, 'you counsel well;' 'Fiend,' say I, 'you

counsel well:' to be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark, is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnal; and, in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel: I will run, fiend; my heels are at your command; I will run.

*Enter Old GOBBO, with a basket*

**GOBBO**

Master young man, you, I pray you, which is the way to master Jew's?

**LAUNCELOT**

[Aside] O heavens, this is my true-begotten father! who, being more than sand-blind, high-gravel blind, knows me not: I will try confusions with him.

**GOBBO**

Master young gentleman, I pray you, which is the way to master Jew's?

**LAUNCELOT**

Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but, at the next turning of all, on your left; marry, at the very next turning, turn of no hand, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house.

**GOBBO**

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By God's sonties, 'twill be a hard way to hit. Can you tell me whether one Launcelot, that dwells with him, dwell with him or no?

**LAUNCELOT**

Talk you of young Master Launcelot?

*Aside*

Mark me now; now will I raise the waters. Talk you of young Master Launcelot?

**GOBBO**

No master, sir, but a poor man's son: his father, though I say it, is an honest exceeding poor man and, God be thanked, well to live.

**LAUNCELOT**

Well, let his father be what a' will, we talk of young Master Launcelot.

**GOBBO**

Your worship's friend and Launcelot, sir.

**LAUNCELOT**

But I pray you, ergo, old man, ergo, I beseech you, talk you of young Master Launcelot?

**GOBBO**

Of Launcelot, an't please your mastership.

**LAUNCELOT**

Ergo, Master Launcelot. Talk not of Master Launcelot, father; for the young gentleman, according to Fates and Destinies and such odd sayings, the Sisters Three and such branches of learning, is indeed deceased, or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to heaven.

**GOBBO**

Marry, God forbid! the boy was the very staff of my age, my very prop.

**LAUNCELOT**

Do I look like a cudgel or a hovel-post, a staff or a prop? Do you know me, father?

**GOBBO**

Alack the day, I know you not, young gentleman: but, I pray you, tell me, is my boy, God rest his soul, alive or dead?

**LAUNCELOT**

Do you not know me, father?

**GOBBO**

Alack, sir, I am sand-blind; I know you not.

**LAUNCELOT**

Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me: it is a wise father that knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son: give me your blessing: truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man's son may, but at the length truth will out.

**GOBBO**

Pray you, sir, stand up: I am sure you are not Launcelot, my boy.

**LAUNCELOT**

Pray you, let's have no more fooling about it, but give me your blessing: I am Launcelot, your boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall be.

**GOBBO**

I cannot think you are my son.

**LAUNCELOT**

I know not what I shall think of that: but I am Launcelot, the Jew's man, and I am sure Margery your wife is my mother.

**GOBBO**

Her name is Margery, indeed: I'll be sworn, if thou be Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh

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and blood. Lord worshipped might he be! what a beard hast thou got! thou hast got more hair on thy chin than Dobbin my fill-horse has on his tail.

**LAUNCELOT**

It should seem, then, that Dobbin's tail grows backward: I am sure he had more hair of his tail than I have of my face when I last saw him.

**GOBBO**

Lord, how art thou changed! How dost thou and thy master agree? I have brought him a present. How 'gree you now?

## **LAUNCELOT**

Well, well: but, for mine own part, as I have set up my rest to run away, so I will not rest till I have run some ground. My master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter: I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come: give me your present to one Master Bassanio, who, indeed, gives rare new liveries: if I serve not him, I will run as far as God has any ground. O rare fortune! here comes the man: to him, father; for I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer.

*Enter BASSANIO, with LEONARDO and other followers*

## **BASSANIO**

You may do so; but let it be so hasted that supper be ready at the farthest by five of the clock. See these letters delivered; put the liveries to making, and desire Gratiano to come anon to my lodging.

*Exit a Servant*

## **LAUNCELOT**

To him, father.

## **GOBBO**

God bless your worship!



**BASSANIO**

Gramercy! wouldst thou aught with me?

**GOBBO**

Here's my son, sir, a poor boy,--

**LAUNCELOT**

Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's man; that would, sir, as my father shall specify--

**GOBBO**

He hath a great infection, sir, as one would say, to serve--

**LAUNCELOT**

Indeed, the short and the long is, I serve the Jew, and have a desire, as my father shall specify--

**GOBBO**

His master and he, saving your worship's reverence, are scarce cater-cousins--

**LAUNCELOT**

To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, having done me wrong, doth cause me, as my father, being, I hope, an old man, shall frutify unto you--

**GOBBO**

I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow upon your worship,  
and my suit is--

**LAUNCELOT**

In very brief, the suit is impertinent to myself, as your worship shall  
know by this honest old man; and, though I say it, though old man,  
yet poor man, my father.

**BASSANIO**

One speak for both. What would you?

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**LAUNCELOT**

Serve you, sir.

**GOBBO**

That is the very defect of the matter, sir.

**BASSANIO**

I know thee well; thou hast obtain'd thy suit: Shylock thy master  
spoke with me this day, And hath preferr'd thee, if it be preferment  
To leave a rich Jew's service, to become The follower of so poor a  
gentleman.

## **LAUNCELOT**

The old proverb is very well parted between my master Shylock and you, sir: you have the grace of God, sir, and he hath enough.

## **BASSANIO**

Thou speak'st it well. Go, father, with thy son. Take leave of thy old master and inquire My lodging out. Give him a livery More guarded than his fellows': see it done.

## **LAUNCELOT**

Father, in. I cannot get a service, no; I have ne'er a tongue in my head. Well, if any man in Italy have a fairer table which doth offer to swear upon a book, I shall have good fortune. Go to, here's a simple line of life: here's a small trifle of wives: alas, fifteen wives is nothing! eleven widows and nine maids is a simple coming-in for one man: and then to 'scape drowning thrice, and to be in peril of my life with the edge of a feather-bed; here are simple scapes. Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this gear. Father, come; I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye.

*Exeunt Launcelot and Old Gobbo*

## **BASSANIO**

I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this: These things being bought and orderly bestow'd, Return in haste, for I do feast to-night My best-esteem'd acquaintance: hie thee, go.

**LEONARDO**

My best endeavours shall be done herein.

*Enter GRATIANO*

**GRATIANO**

Where is your master?

**LEONARDO**

Yonder, sir, he walks.

*Exit*

**GRATIANO**

Signior Bassanio!

**BASSANIO**

Gratiano!

**GRATIANO**

I have a suit to you.

**BASSANIO**

You have obtain'd it.

**GRATIANO**

You must not deny me: I must go with you to Belmont.

**BASSANIO**

Why then you must. But hear thee, Gratiano; Thou art too wild, too rude and bold of voice; Parts that become thee happily enough And in such eyes as ours appear not faults; But where thou art not known, why, there they show Something too liberal. Pray thee, take pain To allay with some cold drops of modesty Thy skipping spirit, lest through thy wild

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behavior I be misconstrued in the place I go to, And lose my hopes.

**GRATIANO**

Signior Bassanio, hear me: If I do not put on a sober habit, Talk with respect and swear but now and then, Wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely, Nay more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes Thus with my hat, and sigh and say 'amen,' Use all the observance of civility, Like one well studied in a sad ostent To please his grandam, never trust me more.

**BASSANIO**

Well, we shall see your bearing.

**GRATIANO**

Nay, but I bar to-night: you shall not gauge me By what we do to-night.

**BASSANIO**

No, that were pity: I would entreat you rather to put on Your boldest suit of mirth, for we have friends That purpose merriment. But fare you well: I have some business.

**GRATIANO**

And I must to Lorenzo and the rest: But we will visit you at supper-time.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. The same. A room in SHYLOCK'S house.**

*Enter JESSICA and LAUNCELOT*

**JESSICA**

I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so: Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil, Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness. But fare thee well, there is a ducat for thee: And, Launcelot, soon at supper shalt thou see Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest: Give him this letter; do it secretly; And so farewell: I would not have my father See me in talk with thee.

## **LAUNCELOT**

Adieu! tears exhibit my tongue. Most beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew! if a Christian did not play the knave and get thee, I am much deceived. But, adieu: these foolish drops do something drown my manly spirit: adieu.

## **JESSICA**

Farewell, good Launcelot.

*Exit Launcelot*

Alack, what heinous sin is it in me To be ashamed to be my father's child! But though I am a daughter to his blood, I am not to his manners. O Lorenzo, If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife, Become a Christian and thy loving wife.

*Exit*

## **SCENE IV. The same. A street.**

*Enter GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALARINO, and SALANIO*

## **LORENZO**

Nay, we will slink away in supper-time, Disguise us at my lodging and return, All in an hour.

## **GRATIANO**

We have not made good preparation.

**SALARINO**

We have not spoke us yet of torchbearers.

**SALANIO**

'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly order'd, And better in my mind not undertook.

**LORENZO**

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'Tis now but four o'clock: we have two hours To furnish us.

*Enter LAUNCELOT, with a letter*

Friend Launcelot, what's the news?

**LAUNCELOT**

An it shall please you to break up this, it shall seem to signify.

**LORENZO**

I know the hand: in faith, 'tis a fair hand; And whiter than the paper it writ on Is the fair hand that writ.

**GRATIANO**

Love-news, in faith.



**LAUNCELOT**

By your leave, sir.

**LORENZO**

Whither goest thou?

**LAUNCELOT**

Marry, sir, to bid my old master the Jew to sup to-night with my new master the Christian.

**LORENZO**

Hold here, take this: tell gentle Jessica I will not fail her; speak it privately. Go, gentlemen,

*Exit Launcelot*

Will you prepare you for this masque tonight? I am provided of a torch-bearer.

**SALANIO**

Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight.

**SALANIO**

And so will I.

**LORENZO**

Meet me and Gratiano At Gratiano's lodging some hour hence.

**SALARINO**

'Tis good we do so.

*Exeunt SALARINO and SALANIO*

**GRATIANO**

Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

**LORENZO**

I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed How I shall take her from her father's house, What gold and jewels she is furnish'd with, What page's suit she hath in readiness. If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven, It will be for his gentle daughter's sake: And never dare misfortune cross her foot, Unless she do it under this excuse, That she is issue to a faithless Jew. Come, go with me; peruse this as thou goest: Fair Jessica shall be my torch-bearer.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE V. The same. Before SHYLOCK'S house.**

*Enter SHYLOCK and LAUNCELOT*

**SHYLOCK**

Well, thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge, The difference of old Shylock and Bassanio:-- What, Jessica!--thou shalt not gormandise,

As thou hast done with me:--What, Jessica!-- And sleep and snore,  
and rend apparel out;-- Why, Jessica, I say!

**LAUNCELOT**

Why, Jessica!

**SHYLOCK**

Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.

**LAUNCELOT**

Your worship was wont to tell me that I could do nothing without  
bidding.

*Enter Jessica*

**JESSICA**

Call you? what is your will?

**SHYLOCK**

I am bid forth to supper, Jessica: There are my keys. But wherefore  
should I go?

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I am not bid for love; they flatter me: But yet I'll go in hate, to feed  
upon The prodigal Christian. Jessica, my girl, Look to my house. I am

right loath to go: There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest, For I did dream of money-bags to-night.

**LAUNCELOT**

I beseech you, sir, go: my young master doth expect your reproach.

**SHYLOCK**

So do I his.

**LAUNCELOT**

An they have conspired together, I will not say you shall see a masque; but if you do, then it was not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black-Monday last at six o'clock i' the morning, falling out that year on Ash-Wednesday was four year, in the afternoon.

**SHYLOCK**

What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica: Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum And the vile squealing of the wry-neck'd fife, Clamber not you up to the casements then, Nor thrust your head into the public street To gaze on Christian fools with varnish'd faces, But stop my house's ears, I mean my casements: Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter My sober house. By Jacob's staff, I swear, I have no mind of feasting forth to-night: But I will go. Go you before me, sirrah; Say I will come.

## **LAUNCELOT**

I will go before, sir. Mistress, look out at window, for all this, There will come a Christian boy, will be worth a Jewess' eye.

*Exit*

## **SHYLOCK**

What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha?

## **JESSICA**

His words were 'Farewell mistress;' nothing else.

## **SHYLOCK**

The patch is kind enough, but a huge feeder; Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day More than the wild-cat: drones hive not with me; Therefore I part with him, and part with him To one that would have him help to waste His borrow'd purse. Well, Jessica, go in; Perhaps I will return immediately: Do as I bid you; shut doors after you: Fast bind, fast find; A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.

*Exit*

## **JESSICA**

Farewell; and if my fortune be not crost, I have a father, you a daughter, lost.

*Exit*

**SCENE VI. The same.**

*Enter GRATIANO and SALARINO, masqued*

**GRATIANO**

This is the pent-house under which Lorenzo Desired us to make stand.

**SALARINO**

His hour is almost past.

**GRATIANO**

And it is marvel he out-dwells his hour, For lovers ever run before the clock.

**SALARINO**

O, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly To seal love's bonds new-made, than

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they are wont To keep obliged faith unforfeited!

**GRATIANO**

That ever holds: who riseth from a feast With that keen appetite that he sits down? Where is the horse that doth untread again His tedious measures with the unbated fire That he did pace them first? All things that are, Are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd. How like a younker

or a prodigal The scarfed bark puts from her native bay, Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind! How like the prodigal doth she return, With over-weather'd ribs and ragged sails, Lean, rent and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!

## **SALARINO**

Here comes Lorenzo: more of this hereafter.

*Enter LORENZO*

## **LORENZO**

Sweet friends, your patience for my long abode; Not I, but my affairs, have made you wait: When you shall please to play the thieves for wives, I'll watch as long for you then. Approach; Here dwells my father Jew. Ho! who's within?

*Enter JESSICA, above, in boy's clothes*

## **JESSICA**

Who are you? Tell me, for more certainty, Albeit I'll swear that I do know your tongue.

## **LORENZO**

Lorenzo, and thy love.

**JESSICA**

Lorenzo, certain, and my love indeed, For who love I so much? And now who knows But you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

**LORENZO**

Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.

**JESSICA**

Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains. I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me, For I am much ashamed of my exchange: But love is blind and lovers cannot see The pretty follies that themselves commit; For if they could, Cupid himself would blush To see me thus transformed to a boy.

**LORENZO**

Descend, for you must be my torchbearer.

**JESSICA**

What, must I hold a candle to my shames? They in themselves, good-  
sooth, are too too light. Why, 'tis an office of discovery, love; And I should be obscured.



**LORENZO**

So are you, sweet, Even in the lovely garnish of a boy. But come at once; For the close night doth play the runaway, And we are stay'd for at Bassanio's feast.

**JESSICA**

I will make fast the doors, and gild myself With some more ducats, and be with you straight.

*Exit above*

**GRATIANO**

Now, by my hood, a Gentile and no Jew.

**LORENZO**

Beshrew me but I love her heartily; For she is wise, if I can judge of her, And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true, And true she is, as she hath proved herself, And therefore, like herself, wise, fair and

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true, Shall she be placed in my constant soul.

*Enter JESSICA, below*

What, art thou come? On, gentlemen; away! Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.

*Exit with Jessica and Salarino*

*Enter ANTONIO*

**ANTONIO**

Who's there?

**GRATIANO**

Signior Antonio!

**ANTONIO**

Fie, fie, Gratiano! where are all the rest? 'Tis nine o'clock: our friends all stay for you. No masque to-night: the wind is come about; Bassanio presently will go aboard: I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

**GRATIANO**

I am glad on't: I desire no more delight Than to be under sail and gone to-night.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE VII. Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.**

*Flourish of cornets. Enter PORTIA, with the PRINCE OF MOROCCO, and their trains*

## **PORTIA**

Go draw aside the curtains and discover The several caskets to this noble prince. Now make your choice.

## **MOROCCO**

The first, of gold, who this inscription bears, 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire;' The second, silver, which this promise carries, 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves;' This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt, 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.' How shall I know if I do choose the right?

## **PORTIA**

The one of them contains my picture, prince: If you choose that, then I am yours withal.

## **MOROCCO**

Some god direct my judgment! Let me see; I will survey the inscriptions back again. What says this leaden casket? 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.' Must give: for what? for lead? hazard for lead? This casket threatens. Men that hazard all Do it in hope of fair advantages: A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross; I'll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead. What says the silver with her virgin hue? 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.' As much as he deserves! Pause there, Morocco, And weigh thy value

with an even hand: If thou be'st rated by thy estimation, Thou dost deserve enough; and yet enough May not extend so far as to the lady: And yet to be afraid of my deserving Were but a weak disabling of myself. As much as I deserve! Why, that's the lady: I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes, In graces and in qualities of breeding; But more than these, in love I do deserve. What if I stray'd no further, but chose here? Let's see once more this saying graved in gold 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.'

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Why, that's the lady; all the world desires her; From the four corners of the earth they come, To kiss this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint: The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds Of wide Arabia are as thoroughfares now For princes to come view fair Portia: The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar To stop the foreign spirits, but they come, As o'er a brook, to see fair Portia. One of these three contains her heavenly picture. Is't like that lead contains her? 'Twere damnation To think so base a thought: it were too gross To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave. Or shall I think in silver she's immured, Being ten times undervalued to tried gold? O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem Was set in worse than gold. They have in England A coin that bears the figure of an angel Stamped in gold, but that's insculp'd upon; But here an angel in a golden bed Lies all within. Deliver me the key: Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

## **PORTIA**

There, take it, prince; and if my form lie there, Then I am yours.

*He unlocks the golden casket*

## **MOROCCO**

O hell! what have we here? A carrion Death, within whose empty eye  
There is a written scroll! I'll read the writing.

*Reads*

All that glitters is not gold; Often have you heard that told: Many a  
man his life hath sold But my outside to behold: Gilded tombs do  
worms enfold. Had you been as wise as bold, Young in limbs, in  
judgment old, Your answer had not been inscroll'd: Fare you well;  
your suit is cold. Cold, indeed; and labour lost: Then, farewell, heat,  
and welcome, frost! Portia, adieu. I have too griev'd a heart To take a  
tedious leave: thus losers part.

*Exit with his train. Flourish of cornets*

## **PORTIA**

A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go. Let all of his complexion  
choose me so.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE VIII. Venice. A street.**

*Enter SALARINO and SALANIO*

**SALARINO**

Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail: With him is Gratiano gone along; And in their ship I am sure Lorenzo is not.

**SALANIO**

The villain Jew with outcries raised the duke, Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.

**SALARINO**

He came too late, the ship was under sail: But there the duke was given to understand That in a gondola were seen together Lorenzo and his amorous Jessica: Besides, Antonio certified the duke They were not with Bassanio in his ship.

**SALANIO**

I never heard a passion so confused, So strange, outrageous, and so variable, As the dog Jew did utter in the streets: 'My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter! Fled with a Christian! O my Christian

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ducats! Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter! A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats, Of double ducats, stolen from me by my

daughter! And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,  
Stolen by my daughter! Justice! find the girl; She hath the stones upon  
her, and the ducats.'

**SALARINO**

Why, all the boys in Venice follow him, Crying, his stones, his  
daughter, and his ducats.

**SALANIO**

Let good Antonio look he keep his day, Or he shall pay for this.

**SALARINO**

Marry, well remember'd. I reason'd with a Frenchman yesterday, Who  
told me, in the narrow seas that part The French and English, there  
miscarried A vessel of our country richly fraught: I thought upon  
Antonio when he told me; And wish'd in silence that it were not his.

**SALANIO**

You were best to tell Antonio what you hear; Yet do not suddenly, for  
it may grieve him.

**SALARINO**

A kinder gentleman treads not the earth. I saw Bassanio and Antonio  
part: Bassanio told him he would make some speed Of his return: he  
answer'd, 'Do not so; Slubber not business for my sake, Bassanio But  
stay the very riping of the time; And for the Jew's bond which he hath

of me, Let it not enter in your mind of love: Be merry, and employ your chiefest thoughts To courtship and such fair ostents of love As shall conveniently become you there:' And even there, his eye being big with tears, Turning his face, he put his hand behind him, And with affection wondrous sensible He wrung Bassanio's hand; and so they parted.

**SALANIO**

I think he only loves the world for him. I pray thee, let us go and find him out And quicken his embraced heaviness With some delight or other.

**SALARINO**

Do we so.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE IX. Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.**

*Enter NERISSA with a Servitor*

**NERISSA**

Quick, quick, I pray thee; draw the curtain straight: The Prince of Arragon hath ta'en his oath, And comes to his election presently.



*Flourish of cornets. Enter the PRINCE OF ARRAGON, PORTIA, and their trains*

**PORTIA**

Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince: If you choose that wherein I am contain'd, Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemnized: But if you fail, without more speech, my lord, You must be gone from hence immediately.

**ARRAGON**

I am enjoin'd by oath to observe three things: First, never to unfold to any one Which casket 'twas I chose; next, if I fail Of the right casket, never in my life To woo a maid in way of marriage: Lastly, If I do fail in fortune of my choice, Immediately to leave you and be gone.

**PORTIA**

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To these injunctions every one doth swear That comes to hazard for my worthless self.

**ARRAGON**

And so have I address'd me. Fortune now To my heart's hope! Gold; silver; and base lead. 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.' You shall look fairer, ere I give or hazard. What says the golden chest? ha! let me see: 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men

desire.' What many men desire! that 'many' may be meant By the fool  
multitude, that choose by show, Not learning more than the fond eye  
doth teach; Which pries not to the interior, but, like the martlet, Builds  
in the weather on the outward wall, Even in the force and road of  
casualty. I will not choose what many men desire, Because I will not  
jump with common spirits And rank me with the barbarous  
multitudes. Why, then to thee, thou silver treasure-house; Tell me  
once more what title thou dost bear: 'Who chooseth me shall get as  
much as he deserves:' And well said too; for who shall go about To  
cozen fortune and be honourable Without the stamp of merit? Let  
none presume To wear an undeserved dignity. O, that estates, degrees  
and offices Were not derived corruptly, and that clear honour Were  
purchased by the merit of the wearer! How many then should cover  
that stand bare! How many be commanded that command! How much  
low peasantry would then be glean'd From the true seed of honour!  
and how much honour Pick'd from the chaff and ruin of the times To  
be new-varnish'd! Well, but to my choice: 'Who chooseth me shall get  
as much as he deserves.' I will assume desert. Give me a key for this,  
And instantly unlock my fortunes here.

*He opens the silver casket*

**PORTIA**

Too long a pause for that which you find there.

## **ARRAGON**

What's here? the portrait of a blinking idiot, Presenting me a schedule! I will read it. How much unlike art thou to Portia! How much unlike my hopes and my deservings! 'Who chooseth me shall have as much as he deserves.' Did I deserve no more than a fool's head? Is that my prize? are my deserts no better?

## **PORTIA**

To offend, and judge, are distinct offices And of opposed natures.

## **ARRAGON**

What is here?

*Reads*

The fire seven times tried this: Seven times tried that judgment is, That did never choose amiss. Some there be that shadows kiss; Such have but a shadow's bliss: There be fools alive, I wis, Silver'd o'er; and so was this. Take what wife you will to bed, I will ever be your head: So be gone: you are sped.

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Still more fool I shall appear By the time I linger here With one fool's head I came to woo, But I go away with two. Sweet, adieu. I'll keep my oath, Patiently to bear my wrath.

*Exeunt Arragon and train*

**PORTIA**

Thus hath the candle singed the moth. O, these deliberate fools! when they do choose, They have the wisdom by their wit to lose.

**NERISSA**

The ancient saying is no heresy, Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.

**PORTIA**

Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

*Enter a Servant*

**Servant**

Where is my lady?

**PORTIA**

Here: what would my lord?

**Servant**

Madam, there is alighted at your gate A young Venetian, one that comes before To signify the approaching of his lord; From whom he bringeth sensible regrets, To wit, besides commends and courteous breath, Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen So likely an ambassador of love: A day in April never came so sweet, To show how costly summer was at hand, As this fore-spurrer comes before his lord.

**PORTIA**

No more, I pray thee: I am half afeard Thou wilt say anon he is some kin to thee, Thou spend'st such high-day wit in praising him. Come, come, Nerissa; for I long to see Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly.

**NERISSA**

Bassanio, lord Love, if thy will it be!

*Exeunt*

## ACT III

### SCENE I. Venice. A street.

*Enter SALANIO and SALARINO*

**SALANIO**

Now, what news on the Rialto?

**SALARINO**

Why, yet it lives there uncheck'd that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrecked on the narrow seas; the Goodwins, I think they call the place; a very dangerous flat and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as they say, if my gossip Report be an honest woman of her word.

**SALANIO**

I would she were as lying a gossip in that as ever knapped ginger or made her neighbours believe she wept for the death of a third husband. But it is true, without any slips of prolixity or crossing the plain highway of talk, that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio,--O that I had a title good enough to keep his name company!--

**SALARINO**

Come, the full stop.

**SALANIO**

Ha! what sayest thou? Why, the end is, he hath lost a ship.

**SALARINO**

I would it might prove the end of his losses.

**SALANIO**

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Let me say 'amen' betimes, lest the devil cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.

*Enter SHYLOCK*

How now, Shylock! what news among the merchants?

**SHYLOCK**

You know, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight.

**SALARINO**

That's certain: I, for my part, knew the tailor that made the wings she flew withal.

**SALANIO**

And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledged; and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam.

**SHYLOCK**

She is damned for it.

**SALANIO**

That's certain, if the devil may be her judge.

**SHYLOCK**

My own flesh and blood to rebel!

**SALANIO**

Out upon it, old carrion! rebels it at these years?

**SHYLOCK**

I say, my daughter is my flesh and blood.

**SALARINO**

There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory; more between your bloods than there is between red wine and rhenish. But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?

**SHYLOCK**

There I have another bad match: a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto; a beggar, that was used to come so smug upon the mart; let him look to his bond: he was wont to call



me usurer; let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy; let him look to his bond.

### **SALARINO**

Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh: what's that good for?

### **SHYLOCK**

To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The

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villany you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

*Enter a Servant*

**Servant**

Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house and desires to speak with you both.

**SALARINO**

We have been up and down to seek him.

*Enter TUBAL*

**SALANIO**

Here comes another of the tribe: a third cannot be matched, unless the devil himself turn Jew.

*Exeunt SALANIO, SALARINO, and Servant*

**SHYLOCK**

How now, Tubal! what news from Genoa? hast thou found my daughter?

**TUBAL**

I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.

**SHYLOCK**

Why, there, there, there, there! a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I

never felt it till now: two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? Why, so: and I know not what's spent in the search: why, thou loss upon loss! the thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge: nor no in luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders; no sighs but of my breathing; no tears but of my shedding.

**TUBAL**

Yes, other men have ill luck too: Antonio, as I heard in Genoa,--

**SHYLOCK**

What, what, what? ill luck, ill luck?

**TUBAL**

Hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

**SHYLOCK**

I thank God, I thank God. Is't true, is't true?

**TUBAL**

I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wreck.

**SHYLOCK**

I thank thee, good Tubal: good news, good news! ha, ha! where? in Genoa?

**TUBAL**

Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, in one night fourscore ducats.

**SHYLOCK**

Thou stickest a dagger in me: I shall never see my gold again: fourscore ducats at a sitting! fourscore ducats!

**TUBAL**

There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my company to Venice, that swear he cannot choose but break.

**SHYLOCK**

I am very glad of it: I'll plague him; I'll torture him: I am glad of it.

**TUBAL**

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One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey.

## **SHYLOCK**

Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal: it was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor: I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.

## **TUBAL**

But Antonio is certainly undone.

## **SHYLOCK**

Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, fee me an officer; bespeak him a fortnight before. I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will. Go, go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue; go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal.

*Exeunt*

## **SCENE II. Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.**

*Enter BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA, and Attendants*

## **PORTIA**

I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two Before you hazard; for, in choosing wrong, I lose your company: therefore forbear awhile. There's something tells me, but it is not love, I would not lose you;

and you know yourself, Hate counsels not in such a quality. But lest you should not understand me well,-- And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought,-- I would detain you here some month or two Before you venture for me. I could teach you How to choose right, but I am then forsworn; So will I never be: so may you miss me; But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin, That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes, They have o'erlook'd me and divided me; One half of me is yours, the other half yours, Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then yours, And so all yours. O, these naughty times Put bars between the owners and their rights! And so, though yours, not yours. Prove it so, Let fortune go to hell for it, not I. I speak too long; but 'tis to peize the time, To eke it and to draw it out in length, To stay you from election.

**BASSANIO**

Let me choose For as I am, I live upon the rack.

**PORTIA**

Upon the rack, Bassanio! then confess What treason there is mingled with your love.

**BASSANIO**

None but that ugly treason of mistrust, Which makes me fear the enjoying of my love: There may as well be amity and life 'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love.

**PORTIA**

Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack, Where men enforced do speak anything.

**BASSANIO**

Promise me life, and I'll confess the truth.

**PORTIA**

Well then, confess and live.

**BASSANIO**

'Confess' and 'love' Had been the very sum of my confession: O happy torment, when my torturer Doth teach me answers for deliverance! But let me to my fortune and the caskets.

**PORTIA**

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Away, then! I am lock'd in one of them: If you do love me, you will find me out. Nerissa and the rest, stand all aloof. Let music sound while he doth make his choice; Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end, Fading in music: that the comparison May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream And watery death-bed for him. He may win; And what is music then? Then music is Even as the flourish when true subjects bow To a new-crowned monarch: such it is As are those dulcet sounds in break of day That creep into the dreaming

bridegroom's ear, And summon him to marriage. Now he goes, With no less presence, but with much more love, Than young Alcides, when he did redeem The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy To the sea-monster: I stand for sacrifice The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives, With bleared visages, come forth to view The issue of the exploit. Go, Hercules! Live thou, I live: with much, much more dismay I view the fight than thou that makest the fray.

*Music, whilst BASSANIO comments on the caskets to himself*

SONG. Tell me where is fancy bred, Or in the heart, or in the head? How begot, how nourished? Reply, reply. It is engender'd in the eyes, With gazing fed; and fancy dies In the cradle where it lies. Let us all ring fancy's knell I'll begin it,--Ding, dong, bell.

**ALL**

Ding, dong, bell.

**BASSANIO**

So may the outward shows be least themselves: The world is still deceived with ornament. In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt, But, being seasoned with a gracious voice, Obscures the show of evil? In religion, What damned error, but some sober brow Will bless it and approve it with a text, Hiding the grossness with fair ornament? There is no vice so simple but assumes Some mark of virtue on his outward parts: How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins The beards of Hercules and frowning



Mars; Who, inward search'd, have livers white as milk; And these assume but valour's excrement To render them redoubted! Look on beauty, And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight; Which therein works a miracle in nature, Making them lightest that wear most of it: So are those crisped snaky golden locks Which make such wanton gambols with the wind, Upon supposed fairness, often known To be the dowry of a second head, The skull that bred them in the sepulchre. Thus ornament is but the guiled shore To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word, The seeming truth which cunning times put on To entrap the wisest. Therefore, thou gaudy gold, Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee; Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge 'Tween man and man: but thou, thou meagre lead,

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Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught, Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence; And here choose I; joy be the consequence!

## **PORTIA**

[Aside] How all the other passions fleet to air, As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair, And shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy! O love, Be moderate; allay thy ecstasy, In measure rein thy joy; scant this excess. I feel too much thy blessing: make it less, For fear I surfeit.

## **BASSANIO**

What find I here?

*Opening the leaden casket*

Fair Portia's counterfeit! What demi-god Hath come so near creation?  
Move these eyes? Or whether, riding on the balls of mine, Seem they  
in motion? Here are sever'd lips, Parted with sugar breath: so sweet a  
bar Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs The painter  
plays the spider and hath woven A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of  
men, Faster than gnats in cobwebs; but her eyes,-- How could he see  
to do them? having made one, Methinks it should have power to steal  
both his And leave itself unfurnish'd. Yet look, how far The substance  
of my praise doth wrong this shadow In underprizing it, so far this  
shadow Doth limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll, The  
continent and summary of my fortune.

*Reads*

You that choose not by the view, Chance as fair and choose as true!  
Since this fortune falls to you, Be content and seek no new, If you be  
well pleased with this And hold your fortune for your bliss, Turn you  
where your lady is And claim her with a loving kiss. A gentle scroll.  
Fair lady, by your leave; I come by note, to give and to receive. Like  
one of two contending in a prize, That thinks he hath done well in  
people's eyes, Hearing applause and universal shout, Giddy in spirit,  
still gazing in a doubt Whether these pearls of praise be his or no; So,

thrice fair lady, stand I, even so; As doubtful whether what I see be true, Until confirm'd, sign'd, ratified by you.

### **PORTIA**

You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand, Such as I am: though for myself alone I would not be ambitious in my wish, To wish myself much better; yet, for you I would be trebled twenty times myself; A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich; That only to stand high in your account, I might in virtue, beauties, livings, friends, Exceed account; but the full sum of me Is sum of something, which, to term in gross, Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised; Happy in this, she is not yet so old But she may learn; happier than this, She is not bred so dull but she can learn; Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit Commits itself to yours to be directed, As from her lord, her governor, her king. Myself and what is mine to you and yours Is now converted: but now I was the lord Of this fair mansion, master of my

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servants, Queen o'er myself: and even now, but now, This house, these servants and this same myself Are yours, my lord: I give them with this ring; Which when you part from, lose, or give away, Let it presage the ruin of your love And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

### **BASSANIO**

Madam, you have bereft me of all words, Only my blood speaks to you in my veins; And there is such confusion in my powers, As after

some oration fairly spoke By a beloved prince, there doth appear  
Among the buzzing pleased multitude; Where every something, being  
blent together, Turns to a wild of nothing, save of joy, Express'd and  
not express'd. But when this ring Parts from this finger, then parts life  
from hence: O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!

### **NERISSA**

My lord and lady, it is now our time, That have stood by and seen our  
wishes prosper, To cry, good joy: good joy, my lord and lady!

### **GRATIANO**

My lord Bassanio and my gentle lady, I wish you all the joy that you  
can wish; For I am sure you can wish none from me: And when your  
honours mean to solemnize The bargain of your faith, I do beseech  
you, Even at that time I may be married too.

### **BASSANIO**

With all my heart, so thou canst get a wife.

### **GRATIANO**

I thank your lordship, you have got me one. My eyes, my lord, can  
look as swift as yours: You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid; You  
loved, I loved for intermission. No more pertains to me, my lord, than  
you. Your fortune stood upon the casket there, And so did mine too,  
as the matter falls; For wooing here until I sweat again, And sweating  
until my very roof was dry With oaths of love, at last, if promise last,

I got a promise of this fair one here To have her love, provided that  
your fortune Achieved her mistress.

**PORTIA**

Is this true, Nerissa?

**NERISSA**

Madam, it is, so you stand pleased withal.

**BASSANIO**

And do you, Gratiano, mean good faith?

**GRATIANO**

Yes, faith, my lord.

**BASSANIO**

Our feast shall be much honour'd in your marriage.

**GRATIANO**

We'll play with them the first boy for a thousand ducats.

**NERISSA**

What, and stake down?

## **GRATIANO**

No; we shall ne'er win at that sport, and stake down. But who comes here? Lorenzo and his infidel? What, and my old Venetian friend Salerio?

*Enter LORENZO, JESSICA, and SALERIO, a Messenger from Venice*

## **BASSANIO**

Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome hither; If that the youth of my new interest here Have power to bid you welcome. By your leave, I bid my very friends and countrymen, Sweet Portia, welcome.

## **PORTIA**

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So do I, my lord: They are entirely welcome.

## **LORENZO**

I thank your honour. For my part, my lord, My purpose was not to have seen you here; But meeting with Salerio by the way, He did entreat me, past all saying nay, To come with him along.

## **SALERIO**

I did, my lord; And I have reason for it. Signior Antonio Commends him to you.

*Gives Bassanio a letter*

## **BASSANIO**

Ere I ope his letter, I pray you, tell me how my good friend doth.

## **SALERIO**

Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind; Nor well, unless in mind: his letter there Will show you his estate.

## **GRATIANO**

Nerissa, cheer yon stranger; bid her welcome. Your hand, Salerio: what's the news from Venice? How doth that royal merchant, good Antonio? I know he will be glad of our success; We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece.

## **SALERIO**

I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost.

## **PORTIA**

There are some shrewd contents in yon same paper, That steals the colour from Bassanio's cheek: Some dear friend dead; else nothing in the world Could turn so much the constitution Of any constant man. What, worse and worse! With leave, Bassanio: I am half yourself, And I must freely have the half of anything That this same paper brings you.

## **BASSANIO**

O sweet Portia, Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words That ever blotted paper! Gentle lady, When I did first impart my love to you, I freely told you, all the wealth I had Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman; And then I told you true: and yet, dear lady, Rating myself at nothing, you shall see How much I was a braggart. When I told you My state was nothing, I should then have told you That I was worse than nothing; for, indeed, I have engaged myself to a dear friend, Engaged my friend to his mere enemy, To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady; The paper as the body of my friend, And every word in it a gaping wound, Issuing life-blood. But is it true, Salerio? Have all his ventures fail'd? What, not one hit? From Tripolis, from Mexico and England, From Lisbon, Barbary and India? And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch Of merchant-marring rocks?

## **SALERIO**

Not one, my lord. Besides, it should appear, that if he had The present money to discharge the Jew, He would not take it. Never did I know A creature, that did bear the shape of man, So keen and greedy to confound a man: He plies the duke at morning and at night, And doth impeach the freedom of the state, If they deny him justice: twenty merchants, The duke himself, and the magnificoes Of greatest port, have all persuaded with him; But none can drive him from the envious



plea Of forfeiture, of justice and his bond.

**JESSICA**

When I was with him I have heard him swear  
To Tubal and to Chus,  
his countrymen, That he would rather have Antonio's flesh  
Than  
twenty times the value of the sum That he did owe him: and I know,  
my lord, If law, authority and power deny not, It will go hard with  
poor Antonio.

**PORTIA**

Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble?

**BASSANIO**

The dearest friend to me, the kindest man, The best-condition'd and  
unwearied spirit In doing courtesies, and one in whom The ancient  
Roman honour more appears Than any that draws breath in Italy.

**PORTIA**

What sum owes he the Jew?

**BASSANIO**

For me three thousand ducats.

## **PORTIA**

What, no more? Pay him six thousand, and deface the bond; Double six thousand, and then treble that, Before a friend of this description Shall lose a hair through Bassanio's fault. First go with me to church and call me wife, And then away to Venice to your friend; For never shall you lie by Portia's side With an unquiet soul. You shall have gold To pay the petty debt twenty times over: When it is paid, bring your true friend along. My maid Nerissa and myself meantime Will live as maids and widows. Come, away! For you shall hence upon your wedding-day: Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer: Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear. But let me hear the letter of your friend.

## **BASSANIO**

[Reads] Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit; and since in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I, if I might but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure: if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.

## **PORTIA**

O love, dispatch all business, and be gone!

**BASSANIO**

Since I have your good leave to go away, I will make haste: but, till I come again, No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay, No rest be interposer 'twixt us twain.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. Venice. A street.**

*Enter SHYLOCK, SALARINO, ANTONIO, and Gaoler*

**SHYLOCK**

Gaoler, look to him: tell not me of mercy; This is the fool that lent out money gratis: Gaoler, look to him.

**ANTONIO**

Hear me yet, good Shylock.

**SHYLOCK**

I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond: I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond. Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause; But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs: The duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,

Thou naughty gaoler, that thou art so fond To come abroad with him  
at his request.

**ANTONIO**

I pray thee, hear me speak.

**SHYLOCK**

I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak: I'll have my bond; and  
therefore speak no more. I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool, To  
shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield To Christian intercessors.  
Follow not; I'll have no speaking: I will have my bond.

*Exit*

**SALARINO**

It is the most impenetrable cur That ever kept with men.

**ANTONIO**

Let him alone: I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers. He seeks  
my life; his reason well I know: I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures  
Many that have at times made moan to me; Therefore he hates me.

**SALARINO**

I am sure the duke Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.

## **ANTONIO**

The duke cannot deny the course of law: For the commodity that strangers have With us in Venice, if it be denied, Will much impeach the justice of his state; Since that the trade and profit of the city Consisteth of all nations. Therefore, go: These griefs and losses have so bated me, That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh To-morrow to my bloody creditor. Well, gaoler, on. Pray God, Bassanio come To see me pay his debt, and then I care not!

*Exeunt*

## **SCENE IV. Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.**

*Enter PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA, and BALTHASAR*

## **LORENZO**

Madam, although I speak it in your presence, You have a noble and a true conceit Of godlike amity; which appears most strongly In bearing thus the absence of your lord. But if you knew to whom you show this honour, How true a gentleman you send relief, How dear a lover of my lord your husband, I know you would be prouder of the work Than customary bounty can enforce you.

## **PORTIA**

I never did repent for doing good, Nor shall not now: for in companions That do converse and waste the time together, Whose souls do bear an equal yoke Of love, There must be needs a like proportion Of lineaments, of manners and of spirit; Which makes me think that this Antonio, Being the bosom lover of my lord, Must needs be like my lord. If it be so, How little is the cost I have bestow'd In purchasing the semblance of my soul From out the state of hellish misery! This comes too near the praising of myself; Therefore no more of it: hear other things. Lorenzo, I commit into your hands The husbandry and manage of my house Until my lord's return: for mine own part, I have toward heaven breathed a secret vow To live in prayer and contemplation, Only attended by Nerissa here, Until her husband and my lord's return: There is a monastery two miles off; And there will we abide. I do desire you

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Not to deny this imposition; The which my love and some necessity Now lays upon you.

## **LORENZO**

Madam, with all my heart; I shall obey you in all fair commands.

**PORTIA**

My people do already know my mind, And will acknowledge you and Jessica In place of Lord Bassanio and myself. And so farewell, till we shall meet again.

**LORENZO**

Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you!

**JESSICA**

I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

**PORTIA**

I thank you for your wish, and am well pleased To wish it back on you: fare you well Jessica.

*Exeunt JESSICA and LORENZO*

Now, Balthasar, As I have ever found thee honest-true, So let me find thee still. Take this same letter, And use thou all the endeavour of a man In speed to Padua: see thou render this Into my cousin's hand, Doctor Bellario; And, look, what notes and garments he doth give thee, Bring them, I pray thee, with imagined speed Unto the tranect, to the common ferry Which trades to Venice. Waste no time in words, But get thee gone: I shall be there before thee.

## **BALTHASAR**

Madam, I go with all convenient speed.

*Exit*

## **PORTIA**

Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand That you yet know not of:  
we'll see our husbands Before they think of us.

## **NERISSA**

Shall they see us?

## **PORTIA**

They shall, Nerissa; but in such a habit, That they shall think we are  
accomplished With that we lack. I'll hold thee any wager, When we  
are both accoutred like young men, I'll prove the prettier fellow of the  
two, And wear my dagger with the braver grace, And speak between  
the change of man and boy With a reed voice, and turn two mincing  
steps Into a manly stride, and speak of frays Like a fine bragging  
youth, and tell quaint lies, How honourable ladies sought my love,  
Which I denying, they fell sick and died; I could not do withal; then  
I'll repent, And wish for all that, that I had not killed them; And  
twenty of these puny lies I'll tell, That men shall swear I have  
discontinued school Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind A  
thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks, Which I will practise.



**NERISSA**

Why, shall we turn to men?

**PORTIA**

Fie, what a question's that, If thou wert near a lewd interpreter! But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device When I am in my coach, which stays for us At the park gate; and therefore haste away, For we must measure twenty miles to-day.

*Exeunt*

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**SCENE V. The same. A garden.**

*Enter LAUNCELOT and JESSICA*

**LAUNCELOT**

Yes, truly; for, look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children: therefore, I promise ye, I fear you. I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter: therefore be of good cheer, for truly I think you are damned. There is but one hope in it that can do you any good; and that is but a kind of bastard hope neither.

**JESSICA**

And what hope is that, I pray thee?

**LAUNCELOT**

Marry, you may partly hope that your father got you not, that you are not the Jew's daughter.

**JESSICA**

That were a kind of bastard hope, indeed: so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me.

**LAUNCELOT**

Truly then I fear you are damned both by father and mother: thus when I shun Scylla, your father, I fall into Charybdis, your mother: well, you are gone both ways.

**JESSICA**

I shall be saved by my husband; he hath made me a Christian.

**LAUNCELOT**

Truly, the more to blame he: we were Christians enow before; e'en as many as could well live, one by another. This making Christians will raise the price of hogs: if we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money.

*Enter LORENZO*

**JESSICA**

I'll tell my husband, Launcelot, what you say: here he comes.

**LORENZO**

I shall grow jealous of you shortly, Launcelot, if you thus get my wife into corners.

**JESSICA**

Nay, you need not fear us, Lorenzo: Launcelot and I are out. He tells me flatly, there is no mercy for me in heaven, because I am a Jew's daughter: and he says, you are no good member of the commonwealth, for in converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork.

**LORENZO**

I shall answer that better to the commonwealth than you can the getting up of the negro's belly: the Moor is with child by you, Launcelot.

**LAUNCELOT**

It is much that the Moor should be more than reason: but if she be less than an honest woman, she is indeed more than I took her for.

**LORENZO**

How every fool can play upon the word! I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into silence, and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots. Go in, sirrah; bid them prepare for dinner.

**LAUNCELOT**

That is done, sir; they have all stomachs.

**LORENZO**

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Goodly Lord, what a wit-snapper are you! then bid them prepare dinner.

**LAUNCELOT**

That is done too, sir; only 'cover' is the word.

**LORENZO**

Will you cover then, sir?

**LAUNCELOT**

Not so, sir, neither; I know my duty.

**LORENZO**

Yet more quarrelling with occasion! Wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant? I pray thee, understand a plain man in his

plain meaning: go to thy fellows; bid them cover the table, serve in the meat, and we will come in to dinner.

### **LAUNCELOT**

For the table, sir, it shall be served in; for the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in to dinner, sir, why, let it be as humours and conceits shall govern.

*Exit*

### **LORENZO**

O dear discretion, how his words are suited! The fool hath planted in his memory An army of good words; and I do know A many fools, that stand in better place, Garnish'd like him, that for a tricky word Defy the matter. How cheerest thou, Jessica? And now, good sweet, say thy opinion, How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio's wife?

### **JESSICA**

Past all expressing. It is very meet The Lord Bassanio live an upright life; For, having such a blessing in his lady, He finds the joys of heaven here on earth; And if on earth he do not mean it, then In reason he should never come to heaven Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match And on the wager lay two earthly women, And Portia one, there must be something else Pawn'd with the other, for the poor rude world Hath not her fellow.

**LORENZO**

Even such a husband Hast thou of me as she is for a wife.

**JESSICA**

Nay, but ask my opinion too of that.

**LORENZO**

I will anon: first, let us go to dinner.

**JESSICA**

Nay, let me praise you while I have a stomach.

**LORENZO**

No, pray thee, let it serve for table-talk; ' Then, howso'er thou speak'st, 'mong other things I shall digest it.

**JESSICA**

Well, I'll set you forth.

*Exeunt*

## ACT IV

### SCENE I. Venice. A court of justice.

*Enter the DUKE, the Magnificoes, ANTONIO, BASSANIO, GRATIANO, SALERIO, and others*

**DUKE**

What, is Antonio here?

**ANTONIO**

Ready, so please your grace.

**DUKE**

I am sorry for thee: thou art come to answer  
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch  
uncapable of pity, void and empty  
From any dram of mercy.

**ANTONIO**

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I have heard Your grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify  
His rigorous course; but since he stands obdurate  
And that no lawful means can carry me  
Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose  
My patience to his fury,  
and am arm'd To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,  
The very tyranny and rage of his.

**DUKE**

Go one, and call the Jew into the court.

**SALERIO**

He is ready at the door: he comes, my lord.

*Enter SHYLOCK*

**DUKE**

Make room, and let him stand before our face. Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too, That thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice To the last hour of act; and then 'tis thought Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange Than is thy strange apparent cruelty; And where thou now exact'st the penalty, Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh, Thou wilt not only loose the forfeiture, But, touch'd with human gentleness and love, Forgive a moiety of the principal; Glancing an eye of pity on his losses, That have of late so huddled on his back, Enow to press a royal merchant down And pluck commiseration of his state From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint, From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd To offices of tender courtesy. We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

**SHYLOCK**

I have possess'd your grace of what I purpose; And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn To have the due and forfeit of my bond: If you deny it, let the danger light Upon your charter and your city's



freedom. You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have A weight of  
carrion flesh than to receive Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer  
that: But, say, it is my humour: is it answer'd? What if my house be  
troubled with a rat And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats To  
have it baned? What, are you answer'd yet? Some men there are love  
not a gaping pig; Some, that are mad if they behold a cat; And others,  
when the bagpipe sings i' the nose, Cannot contain their urine: for  
affection, Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood Of what it likes or  
loathes. Now, for your answer: As there is no firm reason to be  
render'd, Why he cannot abide a gaping pig; Why he, a harmless  
necessary cat; Why he, a woollen bagpipe; but of force Must yield to  
such inevitable shame As to offend, himself being offended; So can I  
give no reason, nor I will not, More than a lodged hate and a certain  
loathing I bear Antonio, that I follow thus A losing suit against him.  
Are you answer'd?

### **BASSANIO**

This is no answer, thou unfeeling man, To excuse the current of thy  
cruelty.

### **SHYLOCK**

I am not bound to please thee with my answers.

### **BASSANIO**

Do all men kill the things they do not love?

**SHYLOCK**

Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

**BASSANIO**

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Every offence is not a hate at first.

**SHYLOCK**

What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

**ANTONIO**

I pray you, think you question with the Jew: You may as well go stand upon the beach And bid the main flood bate his usual height; You may as well use question with the wolf Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb; You may as well forbid the mountain pines To wag their high tops and to make no noise, When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven; You may as well do anything most hard, As seek to soften that--than which what's harder?-- His Jewish heart: therefore, I do beseech you, Make no more offers, use no farther means, But with all brief and plain conveniency Let me have judgment and the Jew his will.

**BASSANIO**

For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

**SHYLOCK**

What judgment shall I dread, doing Were in six parts and every part a ducat, I would not draw them; I would have my bond.

**DUKE**

How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

**SHYLOCK**

What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong? You have among you many a purchased slave, Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules, You use in abject and in slavish parts, Because you bought them: shall I say to you, Let them be free, marry them to your heirs? Why sweat they under burthens? let their beds Be made as soft as yours and let their palates Be season'd with such viands? You will answer 'The slaves are ours:.' so do I answer you: The pound of flesh, which I demand of him, Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it. If you deny me, fie upon your law! There is no force in the decrees of Venice. I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it?

**DUKE**

Upon my power I may dismiss this court, Unless Bellario, a learned doctor, Whom I have sent for to determine this, Come here to-day.

**SALERIO**

My lord, here stays without A messenger with letters from the doctor,  
New come from Padua.

**DUKE**

Bring us the letter; call the messenger.

**BASSANIO**

Good cheer, Antonio! What, man, courage yet! The Jew shall have  
my flesh, blood, bones and all, Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of  
blood.

**ANTONIO**

I am a tainted wether of the flock, Meetest for death: the weakest kind  
of fruit Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me You cannot better  
be employ'd, Bassanio, Than to live still and write mine epitaph.

*Enter NERISSA, dressed like a lawyer's clerk*

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**DUKE**

Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

**NERISSA**

From both, my lord. Bellario greets your grace.

*Presenting a letter*

**BASSANIO**

Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

**SHYLOCK**

To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

**GRATIANO**

Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew, Thou makest thy knife keen; but no metal can, No, not the hangman's axe, bear half the keenness Of thy sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce thee?

**SHYLOCK**

No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

**GRATIANO**

O, be thou damn'd, execrable dog! And for thy life let justice be accused. Thou almost makest me waver in my faith To hold opinion with Pythagoras, That souls of animals infuse themselves Into the trunks of men: thy currish spirit Govern'd a wolf, who, hang'd for human slaughter, Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet, And, whilst thou lay'st in thy unhallow'd dam, Infused itself in thee; for thy desires Are wolvis, bloody, starved and ravenous.

## **SHYLOCK**

Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond, Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud: Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.

## **DUKE**

This letter from Bellario doth commend A young and learned doctor to our court. Where is he?

## **NERISSA**

He attendeth here hard by, To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

## **DUKE**

With all my heart. Some three or four of you Go give him courteous conduct to this place. Meantime the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

## **Clerk**

[Reads] Your grace shall understand that at the receipt of your letter I am very sick: but in the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthasar. I acquainted him with the cause in controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant: we turned o'er many books together: he is furnished with my opinion; which, bettered with his own learning, the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend, comes

with him, at my importunity, to fill up your grace's request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation; for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation.

**DUKE**

You hear the learn'd Bellario, what he writes: And here, I take it, is the doctor come.

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*Enter PORTIA, dressed like a doctor of laws*

Give me your hand. Come you from old Bellario?

**PORTIA**

I did, my lord.

**DUKE**

You are welcome: take your place. Are you acquainted with the difference That holds this present question in the court?

**PORTIA**

I am informed thoroughly of the cause. Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

**DUKE**

Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

**PORTIA**

Is your name Shylock?

**SHYLOCK**

Shylock is my name.

**PORTIA**

Of a strange nature is the suit you follow; Yet in such rule that the Venetian law Cannot impugn you as you do proceed. You stand within his danger, do you not?

**ANTONIO**

Ay, so he says.

**PORTIA**

Do you confess the bond?

**ANTONIO**

I do.

**PORTIA**

Then must the Jew be merciful.



## **SHYLOCK**

On what compulsion must I? tell me that.

## **PORTIA**

The quality of mercy is not strain'd, It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest; It blesseth him that gives and him that takes: 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes The throned monarch better than his crown; His sceptre shows the force of temporal power, The attribute to awe and majesty, Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings; But mercy is above this sceptred sway; It is enthroned in the hearts of kings, It is an attribute to God himself; And earthly power doth then show likest God's When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew, Though justice be thy plea, consider this, That, in the course of justice, none of us Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy; And that same prayer doth teach us all to render The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much To mitigate the justice of thy plea; Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

## **SHYLOCK**

My deeds upon my head! I crave the law, The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

## **PORTIA**

Is he not able to discharge the money?

**BASSANIO**

Yes, here I tender it for him in the court; Yea, twice the sum: if that will not suffice, I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er, On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart: If this will not suffice, it must appear That malice bears down truth. And I beseech you, Wrest once the law to your authority: To do a great right, do a little wrong, And curb this cruel devil of his will.

**PORTIA**

It must not be; there is no power in Venice Can alter a decree established: 'Twill be recorded for a precedent, And many an error by the same example Will rush into the state: it cannot be.

**SHYLOCK**

A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a Daniel!

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O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!

**PORTIA**

I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

**SHYLOCK**

Here 'tis, most reverend doctor, here it is.

**PORTIA**

Shylock, there's thrice thy money offer'd thee.

**SHYLOCK**

An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven: Shall I lay perjury upon my soul? No, not for Venice.

**PORTIA**

Why, this bond is forfeit; And lawfully by this the Jew may claim A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off Nearest the merchant's heart. Be merciful: Take thrice thy money; bid me tear the bond.

**SHYLOCK**

When it is paid according to the tenor. It doth appear you are a worthy judge; You know the law, your exposition Hath been most sound: I charge you by the law, Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar, Proceed to judgment: by my soul I swear There is no power in the tongue of man To alter me: I stay here on my bond.

**ANTONIO**

Most heartily I do beseech the court To give the judgment.

**PORTIA**

Why then, thus it is: You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

**SHYLOCK**

O noble judge! O excellent young man!

**PORTIA**

For the intent and purpose of the law Hath full relation to the penalty,  
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

**SHYLOCK**

'Tis very true: O wise and upright judge! How much more elder art  
thou than thy looks!

**PORTIA**

Therefore lay bare your bosom.

**SHYLOCK**

Ay, his breast: So says the bond: doth it not, noble judge? 'Nearest his  
heart:' those are the very words.

**PORTIA**

It is so. Are there balance here to weigh The flesh?

**SHYLOCK**

I have them ready.

**PORTIA**

Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge, To stop his wounds,  
lest he do bleed to death.

**SHYLOCK**

Is it so nominated in the bond?

**PORTIA**

It is not so express'd: but what of that? 'Twere good you do so much for charity.

**SHYLOCK**

I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond.

**PORTIA**

You, merchant, have you any thing to say?

**ANTONIO**

But little: I am arm'd and well prepared. Give me your hand,  
Bassanio: fare you well! Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you;  
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind Than is her custom: it is  
still her use To let the wretched man outlive his wealth, To view with  
hollow eye and wrinkled brow An age of poverty; from which  
lingering penance Of such misery doth she cut me off. Commend me  
to your honourable wife: Tell her the process of Antonio's end; Say  
how I loved you, speak me fair in death; And, when the tale is told,  
bid her be judge Whether Bassanio had not once a love.

Repent but you that you shall lose your friend, And he repents not that he pays your debt; For if the Jew do cut but deep enough, I'll pay it presently with all my heart.

### **BASSANIO**

Antonio, I am married to a wife Which is as dear to me as life itself; But life itself, my wife, and all the world, Are not with me esteem'd above thy life: I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all Here to this devil, to deliver you.

### **PORTIA**

Your wife would give you little thanks for that, If she were by, to hear you make the offer.

### **GRATIANO**

I have a wife, whom, I protest, I love: I would she were in heaven, so she could Entreat some power to change this currish Jew.

### **NERISSA**

'Tis well you offer it behind her back; The wish would make else an unquiet house.

### **SHYLOCK**

These be the Christian husbands. I have a daughter; Would any of the stock of Barrabas Had been her husband rather than a Christian!

*Aside*

We trifle time: I pray thee, pursue sentence.

**PORTIA**

A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine: The court awards it, and the law doth give it.

**SHYLOCK**

Most rightful judge!

**PORTIA**

And you must cut this flesh from off his breast: The law allows it, and the court awards it.

**SHYLOCK**

Most learned judge! A sentence! Come, prepare!

**PORTIA**

Tarry a little; there is something else. This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood; The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh:' Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh; But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate Unto the state of Venice.

**GRATIANO**

O upright judge! Mark, Jew: O learned judge!

**SHYLOCK**

Is that the law?

**PORTIA**

Thyself shalt see the act: For, as thou urgest justice, be assured Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest.

**GRATIANO**

O learned judge! Mark, Jew: a learned judge!

**SHYLOCK**

I take this offer, then; pay the bond thrice And let the Christian go.

**BASSANIO**

Here is the money.

**PORTIA**

Soft! The Jew shall have all justice; soft! no haste: He shall have nothing but the penalty.

**GRATIANO**

O Jew! an upright judge, a learned judge!



## **PORTIA**

Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh. Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more But just a pound of flesh: if thou cut'st more Or less than a just pound, be it but so much As makes it light or heavy in the

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substance, Or the division of the twentieth part Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn But in the estimation of a hair, Thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate.

## **GRATIANO**

A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew! Now, infidel, I have you on the hip.

## **PORTIA**

Why doth the Jew pause? take thy forfeiture.

## **SHYLOCK**

Give me my principal, and let me go.

## **BASSANIO**

I have it ready for thee; here it is.

**PORTIA**

He hath refused it in the open court: He shall have merely justice and his bond.

**GRATIANO**

A Daniel, still say I, a second Daniel! I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

**SHYLOCK**

Shall I not have barely my principal?

**PORTIA**

Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture, To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.

**SHYLOCK**

Why, then the devil give him good of it! I'll stay no longer question.

**PORTIA**

Tarry, Jew: The law hath yet another hold on you. It is enacted in the laws of Venice, If it be proved against an alien That by direct or indirect attempts He seek the life of any citizen, The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive Shall seize one half his goods; the other half Comes to the privy coffer of the state; And the offender's life lies in the mercy Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice. In which

predicament, I say, thou stand'st; For it appears, by manifest proceeding, That indirectly and directly too Thou hast contrived against the very life Of the defendant; and thou hast incurr'd The danger formerly by me rehearsed. Down therefore and beg mercy of the duke.

### **GRATIANO**

Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself: And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state, Thou hast not left the value of a cord; Therefore thou must be hang'd at the state's charge.

### **DUKE**

That thou shalt see the difference of our spirits, I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it: For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's; The other half comes to the general state, Which humbleness may drive unto a fine.

### **PORTIA**

Ay, for the state, not for Antonio.

### **SHYLOCK**

Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that: You take my house when you do take the prop That doth sustain my house; you take my life When you do take the means whereby I live.

### **PORTIA**

What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

## **GRATIANO**

A halter gratis; nothing else, for God's sake.

## **ANTONIO**

So please my lord the duke and all the court To quit the fine for one half of his goods, I am content; so he will let me have The other half in use, to render it, Upon his death, unto the gentleman That lately stole his daughter: Two things provided more, that, for this favour, He presently become a Christian;

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The other, that he do record a gift, Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd, Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

## **DUKE**

He shall do this, or else I do recant The pardon that I late pronounced here.

## **PORTIA**

Art thou contented, Jew? what dost thou say?

## **SHYLOCK**

I am content.

**PORTIA**

Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

**SHYLOCK**

I pray you, give me leave to go from hence; I am not well: send the deed after me, And I will sign it.

**DUKE**

Get thee gone, but do it.

**GRATIANO**

In christening shalt thou have two god-fathers: Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more, To bring thee to the gallows, not the font.

*Exit SHYLOCK*

**DUKE**

Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner.

**PORTIA**

I humbly do desire your grace of pardon: I must away this night toward Padua, And it is meet I presently set forth.

**DUKE**

I am sorry that your leisure serves you not. Antonio, gratify this gentleman, For, in my mind, you are much bound to him.

*Exeunt Duke and his train*

**BASSANIO**

Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted Of grievous penalties; in lieu whereof, Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew, We freely cope your courteous pains withal.

**ANTONIO**

And stand indebted, over and above, In love and service to you evermore.

**PORTIA**

He is well paid that is well satisfied; And I, delivering you, am satisfied And therein do account myself well paid: My mind was never yet more mercenary. I pray you, know me when we meet again: I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

**BASSANIO**

Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further: Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute, Not as a fee: grant me two things, I pray you, Not to deny me, and to pardon me.

**PORTIA**

You press me far, and therefore I will yield.

*To ANTONIO*

Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake;

*To BASSANIO*

And, for your love, I'll take this ring from you: Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more; And you in love shall not deny me this.

**BASSANIO**

This ring, good sir, alas, it is a trifle! I will not shame myself to give you this.

**PORTIA**

I will have nothing else but only this; And now methinks I have a mind to it.

**BASSANIO**

There's more depends on this than on the value. The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,

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And find it out by proclamation: Only for this, I pray you, pardon me.

**PORTIA**

I see, sir, you are liberal in offers You taught me first to beg; and now methinks You teach me how a beggar should be answer'd.

**BASSANIO**

Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife; And when she put it on, she made me vow That I should neither sell nor give nor lose it.

**PORTIA**

That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts. An if your wife be not a mad-woman, And know how well I have deserved the ring, She would not hold out enemy for ever, For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you!

*Exeunt Portia and Nerissa*

**ANTONIO**

My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring: Let his deservings and my love withal Be valued against your wife's commandment.

**BASSANIO**

Go, Gratiano, run and overtake him; Give him the ring, and bring him, if thou canst, Unto Antonio's house: away! make haste.

*Exit Gratiano*

Come, you and I will thither presently; And in the morning early will we both Fly toward Belmont: come, Antonio.

*Exeunt*



**SCENE II. The same. A street.**

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA*

**PORTIA**

Inquire the Jew's house out, give him this deed And let him sign it:  
we'll away to-night And be a day before our husbands home: This  
deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo.

*Enter GRATIANO*

**GRATIANO**

Fair sir, you are well o'erta'en My Lord Bassanio upon more advice  
Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat Your company at  
dinner.

**PORTIA**

That cannot be: His ring I do accept most thankfully: And so, I pray  
you, tell him: furthermore, I pray you, show my youth old Shylock's  
house.

**GRATIANO**

That will I do.

**NERISSA**

Sir, I would speak with you.

*Aside to PORTIA*

I'll see if I can get my husband's ring, Which I did make him swear to keep for ever.

**PORTIA**

[Aside to NERISSA] Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall have old swearing That they did give the rings away to men; But we'll outface them, and outswear them too.

*Aloud*

Away! make haste: thou knowist where I will tarry.

**NERISSA**

Come, good sir, will you show me to this house?

*Exeunt*

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## ACT V

### SCENE I. Belmont. Avenue to PORTIA'S house.

*Enter LORENZO and JESSICA*

#### LORENZO

The moon shines bright: in such a night as this, When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees And they did make no noise, in such a night Troilus methinks mounted the Troyan walls And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents, Where Cressid lay that night.

#### JESSICA

In such a night Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew And saw the lion's shadow ere himself And ran dismay'd away.

#### LORENZO

In such a night Stood Dido with a willow in her hand Upon the wild sea banks and waft her love To come again to Carthage.

#### JESSICA

In such a night Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs That did renew old AEson.

#### LORENZO

In such a night Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew And with an unthrift love did run from Venice As far as Belmont.

**JESSICA**

In such a night Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well, Stealing  
her soul with many vows of faith And ne'er a true one.

**LORENZO**

In such a night Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew, Slander her love,  
and he forgave it her.

**JESSICA**

I would out-night you, did no body come; But, hark, I hear the footing  
of a man.

*Enter STEPHANO*

**LORENZO**

Who comes so fast in silence of the night?

**STEPHANO**

A friend.

**LORENZO**

A friend! what friend? your name, I pray you, friend?

**STEPHANO**

Stephano is my name; and I bring word My mistress will before the  
break of day Be here at Belmont; she doth stray about By holy  
crosses, where she kneels and prays For happy wedlock hours.

**LORENZO**

Who comes with her?

**STEPHANO**

None but a holy hermit and her maid. I pray you, is my master yet  
return'd?

**LORENZO**

He is not, nor we have not heard from him. But go we in, I pray thee,  
Jessica, And ceremoniously let us prepare Some welcome for the  
mistress of the house.

*Enter LAUNCELOT*

**LAUNCELOT**

Sola, sola! wo ha, ho! sola, sola!

**LORENZO**

Who calls?

**LAUNCELOT**

Sola! did you see Master Lorenzo? Master Lorenzo, sola, sola!

**LORENZO**

Leave hollaing, man: here.

**LAUNCELOT**

Sola! where? where?

**LORENZO**

Here.

**LAUNCELOT**

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Tell him there's a post come from my master, with his horn full of good news: my master will be here ere morning.

*Exit*

**LORENZO**

Sweet soul, let's in, and there expect their coming. And yet no matter: why should we go in? My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you, Within the house, your mistress is at hand; And bring your music forth into the air.

*Exit Stephano*

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank! Here will we sit and let the sounds of music Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night Become the touches of sweet harmony. Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold: There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st But in his motion like an angel sings, Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins; Such harmony is in immortal souls; But whilst this muddy vesture of decay Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

*Enter Musicians*

Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn! With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear, And draw her home with music.

*Music*

**JESSICA**

I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

**LORENZO**

The reason is, your spirits are attentive: For do but note a wild and wanton herd, Or race of youthful and unhandled colts, Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud, Which is the hot condition of their blood; If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound, Or any air of music touch their ears, You shall perceive them make a mutual stand, Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze By the sweet power of music: therefore the poet Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones

and floods; Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage, But music for the time doth change his nature. The man that hath no music in himself, Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils; The motions of his spirit are dull as night And his affections dark as Erebus: Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA*

**PORTIA**

That light we see is burning in my hall. How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

**NERISSA**

When the moon shone, we did not see the candle.

**PORTIA**

So doth the greater glory dim the less: A substitute shines brightly as a king Unto the king be by, and then his state Empties itself, as doth an inland brook Into the main of waters. Music! hark!

**NERISSA**

It is your music, madam, of the house.



**PORTIA**

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Nothing is good, I see, without respect: Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

**NERISSA**

Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

**PORTIA**

The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark, When neither is attended,  
and I think The nightingale, if she should sing by day, When every  
goose is cackling, would be thought No better a musician than the  
wren. How many things by season season'd are To their right praise  
and true perfection! Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion And  
would not be awaked.

*Music ceases*

**LORENZO**

That is the voice, Or I am much deceived, of Portia.

**PORTIA**

He knows me as the blind man knows the cuckoo, By the bad voice.

**LORENZO**

Dear lady, welcome home.

**PORTIA**

We have been praying for our husbands' healths, Which speed, we hope, the better for our words. Are they return'd?

**LORENZO**

Madam, they are not yet; But there is come a messenger before, To signify their coming.

**PORTIA**

Go in, Nerissa; Give order to my servants that they take No note at all of our being absent hence; Nor you, Lorenzo; Jessica, nor you.

*A tucket sounds*

**LORENZO**

Your husband is at hand; I hear his trumpet: We are no tell-tales, madam; fear you not.

**PORTIA**

This night methinks is but the daylight sick; It looks a little paler: 'tis a day, Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

*Enter BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, and their followers*

**BASSANIO**

We should hold day with the Antipodes, If you would walk in absence of the sun.

**PORTIA**

Let me give light, but let me not be light; For a light wife doth make a heavy husband, And never be Bassanio so for me: But God sort all! You are welcome home, my lord.

**BASSANIO**

I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend. This is the man, this is Antonio, To whom I am so infinitely bound.

**PORTIA**

You should in all sense be much bound to him. For, as I hear, he was much bound for you.

**ANTONIO**

No more than I am well acquitted of.

**PORTIA**

Sir, you are very welcome to our house: It must appear in other ways than words, Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.

**GRATIANO**

[To NERISSA] By yonder moon I swear you do me wrong; In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk: Would he were gelt that had it, for my part, Since you do take it, love, so much at heart.

**PORTIA**

A quarrel, ho, already! what's the matter?

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**GRATIANO**

About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring That she did give me, whose posy was For all the world like cutler's poetry Upon a knife, 'Love me, and leave me not.'

**NERISSA**

What talk you of the posy or the value? You swore to me, when I did give it you, That you would wear it till your hour of death And that it should lie with you in your grave: Though not for me, yet for your vehement oaths, You should have been respective and have kept it. Gave it a judge's clerk! no, God's my judge, The clerk will ne'er wear hair on's face that had it.

**GRATIANO**

He will, an if he live to be a man.

## **NERISSA**

Ay, if a woman live to be a man.

## **GRATIANO**

Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth, A kind of boy, a little scrubbed boy, No higher than thyself; the judge's clerk, A prating boy, that begg'd it as a fee: I could not for my heart deny it him.

## **PORTIA**

You were to blame, I must be plain with you, To part so slightly with your wife's first gift: A thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger And so riveted with faith unto your flesh. I gave my love a ring and made him swear Never to part with it; and here he stands; I dare be sworn for him he would not leave it Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth That the world masters. Now, in faith, Gratiano, You give your wife too unkind a cause of grief: An 'twere to me, I should be mad at it.

## **BASSANIO**

[Aside] Why, I were best to cut my left hand off And swear I lost the ring defending it.

## **GRATIANO**

My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away Unto the judge that begg'd it and indeed Deserved it too; and then the boy, his clerk, That took

some pains in writing, he begg'd mine; And neither man nor master  
would take aught But the two rings.

**PORTIA**

What ring gave you my lord? Not that, I hope, which you received of  
me.

**BASSANIO**

If I could add a lie unto a fault, I would deny it; but you see my finger  
Hath not the ring upon it; it is gone.

**PORTIA**

Even so void is your false heart of truth. By heaven, I will ne'er come  
in your bed Until I see the ring.

**NERISSA**

Nor I in yours Till I again see mine.

**BASSANIO**

Sweet Portia, If you did know to whom I gave the ring, If you did  
know for whom I gave the ring And would conceive for what I gave  
the ring And how unwillingly I left the ring, When nought would be  
accepted but the ring, You would abate the strength of your  
displeasure.

## **PORTIA**

If you had known the virtue of the ring, Or half her worthiness that gave the ring, Or your own honour to contain the ring, You would not then have parted with the ring. What man is there so much unreasonable, If you had pleased to have defended it With any terms of zeal, wanted the

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modesty To urge the thing held as a ceremony? Nerissa teaches me what to believe: I'll die for't but some woman had the ring.

## **BASSANIO**

No, by my honour, madam, by my soul, No woman had it, but a civil doctor, Which did refuse three thousand ducats of me And begg'd the ring; the which I did deny him And suffer'd him to go displeas'd away; Even he that did uphold the very life Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady? I was enforced to send it after him; I was beset with shame and courtesy; My honour would not let ingratitude So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady; For, by these blessed candles of the night, Had you been there, I think you would have begg'd The ring of me to give the worthy doctor.

## **PORTIA**

Let not that doctor e'er come near my house: Since he hath got the jewel that I loved, And that which you did swear to keep for me, I will

become as liberal as you; I'll not deny him any thing I have, No, not my body nor my husband's bed: Know him I shall, I am well sure of it: Lie not a night from home; watch me like Argus: If you do not, if I be left alone, Now, by mine honour, which is yet mine own, I'll have that doctor for my bedfellow.

**NERISSA**

And I his clerk; therefore be well advised How you do leave me to mine own protection.

**GRATIANO**

Well, do you so; let not me take him, then; For if I do, I'll mar the young clerk's pen.

**ANTONIO**

I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels.

**PORTIA**

Sir, grieve not you; you are welcome notwithstanding.

**BASSANIO**

Portia, forgive me this enforced wrong; And, in the hearing of these many friends, I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes, Wherein I see myself--



**PORTIA**

Mark you but that! In both my eyes he doubly sees himself; In each eye, one: swear by your double self, And there's an oath of credit.

**BASSANIO**

Nay, but hear me: Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear I never more will break an oath with thee.

**ANTONIO**

I once did lend my body for his wealth; Which, but for him that had your husband's ring, Had quite miscarried: I dare be bound again, My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord Will never more break faith advisedly.

**PORTIA**

Then you shall be his surety. Give him this And bid him keep it better than the other.

**ANTONIO**

Here, Lord Bassanio; swear to keep this ring.

**BASSANIO**

By heaven, it is the same I gave the doctor!

## **PORTIA**

I had it of him: pardon me, Bassanio; For, by this ring, the doctor lay with me.

## **NERISSA**

And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano; For that same scrubbed boy, the doctor's clerk, In lieu of this last night did lie with me.

## **GRATIANO**

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Why, this is like the mending of highways In summer, where the ways are fair enough: What, are we cuckolds ere we have deserved it?

## **PORTIA**

Speak not so grossly. You are all amazed: Here is a letter; read it at your leisure; It comes from Padua, from Bellario: There you shall find that Portia was the doctor, Nerissa there her clerk: Lorenzo here Shall witness I set forth as soon as you And even but now return'd; I have not yet Enter'd my house. Antonio, you are welcome; And I have better news in store for you Than you expect: unseal this letter soon; There you shall find three of your argosies Are richly come to harbour suddenly: You shall not know by what strange accident I chanced on this letter.

**ANTONIO**

I am dumb.

**BASSANIO**

Were you the doctor and I knew you not?

**GRATIANO**

Were you the clerk that is to make me cuckold?

**NERISSA**

Ay, but the clerk that never means to do it, Unless he live until he be a man.

**BASSANIO**

Sweet doctor, you shall be my bed-fellow: When I am absent, then lie with my wife.

**ANTONIO**

Sweet lady, you have given me life and living; For here I read for certain that my ships Are safely come to road.

**PORTIA**

How now, Lorenzo! My clerk hath some good comforts too for you.

**NERISSA**

Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee. There do I give to you and Jessica, From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift, After his death, of all he dies possess'd of.

**LORENZO**

Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way Of starved people.

**PORTIA**

It is almost morning, And yet I am sure you are not satisfied Of these events at full. Let us go in; And charge us there upon inter'gatories, And we will answer all things faithfully.

**GRATIANO**

Let it be so: the first inter'gatory That my Nerissa shall be sworn on is, Whether till the next night she had rather stay, Or go to bed now, being two hours to day: But were the day come, I should wish it dark, That I were couching with the doctor's clerk. Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.

*Exeunt*

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