

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

by William Shakespeare



Classical Poets Student Edition

Adapted to retain the meaning of each line
within the original blank verse and rhyming poetry



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*Dedicated to Falun Dafa practitioners
who face persecution today in communist China.*

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Characters

PORTIA: an heiress of the Mediterranean city of Belmont
 NERISSA: Portia's handmaiden
 BALTHAZAR: servant to Portia
 STEPHANO: servant to Portia
 Prince of MOROCCO: suitor to Portia
 Prince of ARRAGON: suitor to Portia
 ANTONIO: a merchant of Venice
 BASSANIO: a Venetian gentleman, suitor to Portia
 SOLANIO, SALARINO, and GRATIANO: friends of Antonio and Bassanio
 LORENZO: man in love with Jessica
 LEONARDO: servant to Bassanio
 SHYLOCK: a Jewish moneylender in Venice
 JESSICA: Shylock's daughter
 TUBAL: a Jewish moneylender in Venice
 LANCELET GOBBO: servant to Shylock and later to Bassanio
 OLD GOBBO: Lancelet's father
 SALERIO, a messenger from Venice

 Jailer
 Duke of Venice
 Nobles of Venice
 Servants
 Attendants and followers
 Messenger
 Musicians

Key Words and Concepts

Rialto: Business district of Venice where trading occurs.

Signior: “Mister” in Italian.

Bond: A legal agreement by which two groups are bound. A contract.

Pray you: Ask you very sincerely and respectfully, beg you.

Love: At this time in history, love was a relatively purer word implying primarily feelings of devotion, respect, and friendship.

Fair: Good, beautiful, light-skinned.

Ducats: Gold piece.

Adieu: French for “goodbye.” Pronounced “aDO.” The word literally means “To God,” a shortening of “I commend you to God,” which means “I leave you to God’s protection.”

Prodigal: a word meaning wasteful and reckless, and can be a noun or verb.

Prodigal Son Parable: The word “Prodigal” also suggests the Bible story of the “Prodigal Son.” This son asked his father to let him have his inheritance so he could go out into the world. His father did this and the son recklessly spent all the money his father gave him and returned poor, realizing how terrible what he did was. His father compassionately held a celebration for his son’s return and said to his other son, who was jealous, “Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!”

Interest: Interest is the percent of a loan that a borrower must pay back in addition to paying back the original amount of the loan. For example, John may borrow \$1,000 from Joe with 2% weekly interest. In five weeks, John owes Joe \$1,100, which is the original loan amount plus the interest accrued.

Historical Context of Interest: At the time and place that *Merchant of Venice* takes place, it was common for Jews, like the character Shylock, to charge high interest rates, while some Christians, like the character Antonio, charged little or none, disrupting Jews’ loan business. From the Christian perspective, charging interest was an unfriendly way to make money and loaning involves so little work that it didn’t seem to show good character. From the Jewish perspective, Jews at the time in Venice were not allowed to own land, so charging interest was a convenient way for Jews to make money and become wealthy. Today, charging interest is a common practice used by banks and credit card companies.

ACT 1. SCENE 1.

The docks in Venice, Italy, where ships with valuable cargo come and go. A rich merchant of Venice, Antonio, looks sad and his friends do not know why.



“Harbor at Sunset” by Lorrain

Enter Antonio, Salarino, and Solanio

ANTONIO

[*Sighing*] In truth, 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 it's made of, from where is it born,
And why it holds me so, I've yet to learn;
And such a dimwit sadness makes of me,
That I feel troubled not to know myself.

SALARINO

Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There, [*Pointing at the sea*] where your merchant ships with flowing sails,

Like nobles and rich citizens on the waves,
Or, as it were, parades upon the sea,
Do stand above the petty trading ships,
That bow to your ships, showing reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

SOLANIO

Believe me, sir, had I your business ventures,
The better part of my attention would
Be with my hopes abroad. Each day I'd pluck
And toss the grass, to see where blows the wind,
Peering in maps for ports and piers and roads;
And every object that might make me fear
Misfortune to my ventures. This kind of doubt
Would make me sad.

SALARINO

My blows to cool my soup
Would blow me fever's shivers, when I thought
What harm a wind too great at sea might do.
And when I saw the sandy hour-glass run,
I'd start to think of shallows and of flats,
And see my wealthy Andrew docked in sand,
Lowering her high sails lower than her sides
To kiss her burial.¹ Should I go to church
And see the holy building made of stone,
And not think right away of dangerous rocks,
Which with slight touch, my gentle vessel's side
Would scatter all her spices on the sea,
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,
And, in a word, my cargo worth so much,
The next worth nothing? Shall I have the thought
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought
That such a thing once done would make me sad?
No need to tell me so; I know, Antonio
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

¹ Salarino here imagines that his ship, called the Andrew, would run into shallow ground, which is a disaster for a ship.

ANTONIO

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

SALARINO

Why, then you are in love.

ANTONIO

No, no!

SALARINO

Not in love either? Then let us say you are sad,
 Because you are not happy; and it's as easy
 For you to laugh and leap and say you are happy,
 Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed Janus,¹
 Nature has formed strange fellows in her time:
 Some that will always be there squinting eyes
 And laughing like parrots at a bag-piper,
 And others of such vinegar attitude
 That they'll not show their teeth when they are smiling,
 Though even old men swear the joke is funny.



Two-headed Janus

¹ Janus is the ancient Roman god of beginnings and transitions and his image was often placed on passages, doors, and gates. He has two faces looking in opposite directions, one to the past and the other to the future. (see image)

Enter Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano

SOLANIO

Here comes Bassanio, your most noble friend,
 Gratiano and Lorenzo. Farewell to you:
 We leave you now with better company.

SALARINO

I would have stayed till I had made you happy,
 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 bye then, my good lords.

BASSANIO

Good gentlemen, when shall we laugh? Say when?
 You are like strangers now; must it be so?

SALARINO

When we find leisure time we will find yours.

Salarino and Solanio exit

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 unwell, Signior¹ Antonio;
 You place too high a value on the world:
 They lose it that do buy it with much care:
 Believe me, you are most disturbingly changed.

ANTONIO

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

GRATIANO

Let me play the fool:
 With joy and laughter let old wrinkles come,
 And let my liver rather heat with wine
 Than my heart cool with most embarrassing groans.
 Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
 Sit like his grandpa chiseled there in stone?
 Asleep when awake and end up with jaundice
 From being angry? I tell you what, Antonio—
 I love you, and it is my love that speaks—
 There are a sort of men whose facial features
 Do thicken like a murky standing pond,
 And do a willful stillness emulate,
 Their purpose is to dress in the appearance
 Of wisdom, gravity, profound reflection,
 As one who says "I am Sir Oracle²,
 And when I open my lips let no dog bark!"
 O my Antonio, I do know such people
 That therefore only are considered 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 you more of this another time:
 But fish not, with this melancholy bait,

¹ Signior: Italian word for "Mister." Pronounced "Sin-your."

² Oracle: An ancient Greek prophet who could see the future and had clairvoyance.

For this foolish bite of looking wise.
 Come, good Lorenzo. [*To Antonio*] Farewell for now:
 I'll finish with my lecture after dinner.

LORENZO

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

GRATIANO

Well, keep me company but two years more,
 You will not know the sound of your own tongue.

ANTONIO

Farewell. I'll grow a talker from your seeds.

GRATIANO

Thanks, truly, for silence is only commendable
 In an ox's tongue dried¹ and a maid not weddable.

Gratiano and Lorenzo exit

ANTONIO

Now what to make of that?

BASSANIO

Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are like two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day before 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 today promised to tell me of?

¹ ox's tongue dried: something people would eat at the time.



Bassanio

BASSANIO

It's not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have used up all my estate,
By spending more than what I really have
Than my weak wealth could give continued support:
Nor do I now complain to be deprived
Of such a rich man's life; but my chief care
Is to pay fairly off all the great debts;
For in my life something too prodigal
Has left me bankrupt. To you, Antonio,
I owe the most, in money and in love,
And from your love I have a guarantee
To unload all my plots and purposes
Of how to clear myself of 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 honor, be assured,

My purse, my person, my every ounce of power,
Lie all unlocked to all that you may need.

BASSANIO

In my school days, when I had lost one arrow,
I shot his brother arrow on the same flight,
Exact same way with more attentive watch
To find the other, and by risking both
I would find both. I give this childhood proof,
Because what follows is pure innocence.
I owe you much, and, like a willful youth,
That which I owe is lost; but if you will
Please shoot another arrow that same way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,
As I will watch the aim, I will find both
And bring your latter arrow back again
And thankfully pay off my former debt.

ANTONIO

You know me well, and though you spend your time
To speak about my love with so much detail;
Yet in your doubt you do me now more wrong
By questioning my strength of character
Than if you had destroyed all I have.
So do but say to me what I should do
That in your knowledge may by me be done,
And I'll be pressed into 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 soundless messages.
Her name is Portia, nothing less in value
Than Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia¹:
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,

¹ Portia: The daughter of the great Roman statesman Cato, and the faithful wife of Brutus, who led in the overthrow of Julius Caesar in 44 BC.

For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors, and her sunny hair
Hangs on her temples like a golden fleece;¹
Which makes her seat at Belmont's Colchis' shore,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.
O my Antonio, had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind foretelling me success—
Without a question I'll be fortunate!

ANTONIO

You know that all my fortunes are at sea;
Neither have I money nor commodity
To give you any funds: therefore go forth;
Try what my credit can in Venice do:
That shall be stretched, even to the utmost
To pay your trip to Belmont, to fair Portia.
Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
Where money is, I say, make no mistake,
We'll have it on my word or for my sake.

All exit

¹ In ancient Greece, Jason was the rightful heir to his father's throne but was deprived of his rights by his uncle. To settle the matter, Jason and his uncle made an agreement: if Jason could bring back the golden fleece from Colchis (which all believed was an impossible task) then Jason would be restored to his throne and gain back his kingdom. So Jason and the Argonauts traveled to the shores of Colchis to retrieve the golden fleece.

ACT 1. SCENE 2.

A room in Portia's house in Belmont.

Enter Nerissa and Portia



PORTIA

[*Sighing*] By my word, Nerissa, my little body is weary 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 all I see, those that indulge with too much are as sick as those that starve with nothing. It is no average happiness therefore, to be seated among the average: having riches sooner grows white hairs, while moderation lives much longer.

PORTIA

Good advice and well delivered.

NERISSA

They would be better, if well followed.

PORTIA

If “to do” were as easy as “to know what would be good to do,” chapels¹ would be churches and poor men’s cottages princes’ palaces. It is a good divine² that follows his own instructions. I can more easily teach twenty what would be good to do, than be one of the twenty to follow my own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps over a cold rule: such a hare is the madness of youth that skips over the traps of good counsel. But this reasoning is not of any use in choosing myself a husband. O my, the word “choose”! I may neither choose whom I would like nor refuse whom I dislike; so is the choice of a living daughter curbed by the choice 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 deaths have good intentions. Therefore we have the lottery that he has devised with these three caskets, gold, silver, and lead, in which whoever chooses your father’s meaning chooses you. The right one will, no doubt, never be chosen by anyone but the one who shall rightly love you. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors who have already come?

PORTIA

I pray you, name them again; and as you name them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, the level of my affection.

NERISSA

First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

PORTIA

Right, he’s a colt³ indeed, for he does nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great compliment to his own good parts, that he can put horseshoes on him himself. I am much afraid my lady his mother played wrongly with a blacksmith.

¹ chapels: a small area used for Christian ceremonies; here it is contrasted with churches, which are larger areas of Christian ceremonies.

² divine: priest or religious leader

³ colt: double meaning: a young male horse / an unruly young man

NERISSA

Then there is the Count Palatine.

PORTIA

He does nothing but frown, as if to say “If you will not have me, choose someone else.” He hears happy tales and smiles not. I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so full of impolite sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a skull with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two!

NERISSA

What do you say of 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 has 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 sparrow sings, he right away starts prancing around; he would fence with his own shadow. If I married him, I would have married twenty husbands. If he despised me I could forgive him, for if he loved me to madness, I could never return his love.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

You know I say nothing to him, for he understands me not, nor I him: he knows neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the court and swear that I am worthless in my English. He is a proper man’s picture, but, alas, who can converse with a dumb show?¹ How oddly he is dressed! I think he bought his jacket in Italy, his stockings in France, his round hat in Germany, and his manners everywhere.

NERISSA

What do you think of the Scottish lord, his neighbor?

¹ dumb show: show without words: pantomime.

PORTIA

That he shows himself as a charitable neighbor; for he borrowed a punch in the ear from the Englishman, and swore that he would pay him back when he was able. I think the Frenchman secured the debt, saying he would punch the Englishman on behalf of the Scot if the Scot were unable to do so himself.

NERISSA

How do you like 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.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray you, set a deep glass of white wine on the wrong casket, for if the devil be inside and that temptation outside, I know he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa, before I'll be married to a sponge¹.

NERISSA

You need not fear, lady, of having any of these lords: they have informed me with their determinations; which is, indeed, to return to their homes and to trouble you no more, unless you may be won by some other way than your father's caskets.

PORTIA

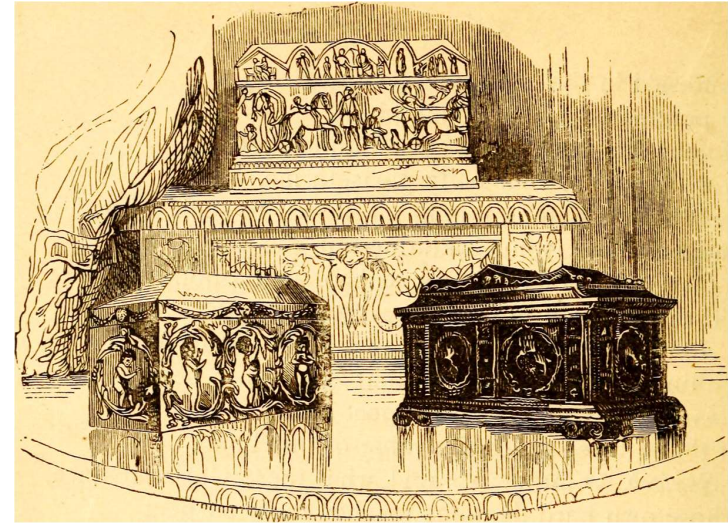
If I live to be as old as Sibylla², I will die as chaste as Diana³, unless I am obtained by the instructions of my father's will. I am glad this pack

¹ sponge: a drunk; someone who consistently drinks too much alcohol.

² Sibylla: an ancient Greek prophetess who the sun god Apollo granted life for as many years as the grains of sand she could hold in her hand.

³ Diana: virgin Roman goddess of the moon

of suitors are so reasonable, for there is not one among them who I don't truly delight in his absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.



The three caskets

NERISSA

Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came here in the 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 most deserving a fair lady.

PORTIA

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

Enter a servant

How now! What's new?

Servant

The four strangers seek you, madam, for permission to leave. And there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word that the prince his master will be here tonight.

PORTIA

If I could tell the fifth welcome with so good a heart as I can tell the other four farewell, I would be glad at his approach. If he has the character of a saint and the complexion of a devil¹, I had rather he should shrive me² than wive me. Come, Nerissa.

Servant, go ahead.

While we shut the gates upon one more,
another knocks upon the door.

All exit

¹ complexion of a devil: dark-skinned / black

² shrive me: hear me confess my sins and absolve me; the Christian ceremony known as Confession.

ACT 1. SCENE 3.

A public place in Venice.

Enter Bassanio and Shylock

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats; well.

BASSANIO

Yes, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK

For three months; well.

BASSANIO

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

SHYLOCK

Antonio shall become bound; well.

BASSANIO

Will you cover me? Will you meet my needs? May I have 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 accusation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK

Oh, no, no, no, no. My meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand that to me he is sufficient. Yet his resources are

uncertain: he has a large ship bound for Tripolis, another for the Indies; I understand moreover, from the Rialto¹, he has a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he has, scattered abroad. But ships are just boards, sailors just 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.²

BASSANIO

You can be certain.

SHYLOCK

I'm certain that I can be; and I can certainly think about it. May I speak with Antonio?

BASSANIO

If it pleases you to dine with us.

SHYLOCK

Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the beast which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into.³ I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so on, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto? Who is he who comes here?

Enter Antonio

BASSANIO

This is Signior Antonio.

SHYLOCK

[*Aside*] How like a pathetic tax collector he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian,

¹ Rialto: business district of Venice where trading occurs.

² Bond: a legal agreement by which two groups are bound.

³ your prophet... devil into: This refers to stories of Jesus Christ, who came from Nazareth, in which Jesus transferred evil spirits from people into pigs.

But more than that his low simplicity
He lends out money gratis¹ and brings down
The rate of interest here for us in Venice.
If I can catch him when his guard is down,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation,² and he rails,
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
At me, my bargains and my well-won profit,
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,
If I forgive him!

BASSANIO

Shylock, do you hear me?

SHYLOCK

I am debating on my present means,
And, by the near guess of my memory,
I cannot instantly raise up the sum
Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?
Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
Will furnish me. But wait! how many months
Do you desire? [*To Antonio*] Rest now 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 interest,
Yet, to supply the ripe needs of my friend,
I'll break a custom. [*To Bassanio*] He already knows
How much you need?

SHYLOCK

Yes, yes, three thousand ducats.

¹ Gratis: free.

² Sacred nation: Referring to the Jewish people, who come from Israel, but are at this time scattered all over Europe.



Shylock, Bassanio, and Antonio

ANTONIO

And for three months.

SHYLOCK

I had forgot; three months; you told me so.
Well then, your bond, and let me see; but listen:
I thought you said you neither lend nor borrow
With any interest.

ANTONIO

I do never use it.

SHYLOCK

When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep—

This Jacob from our holy Abram¹ was,
As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,
The third in line; yes, 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: see what Jacob did:
He first agreed with Laban, that all sheep
found marked or spotted, Jacob, for his earnings
Could keep. Whatever a ewe² sees when mating
That's what her newborn will come to resemble.
Once Autumn came, the rams would start their breeding.
So Jacob peeled the bark off some sticks
And when the work of generations was
Between these woolly breeders in the act
He put the sticks in front of healthy ewes
Who then conceiving later in springtime
Had multi-colored lambs and those were Jacob's.
This was the way he thrived, and he was blessed;
And gain not gained from stealing is a blessing.

ANTONIO

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

¹ This is a story found in both the Jewish and Christian holybooks. Abram, also known as Abraham, is regarded as the father of the Jewish religion and Jacob is one of his grandsons. Jacob was third in line to being leader of the Jews.

² ewe: female sheep (pronounced: "you") | rams: male sheep

SHYLOCK

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

ANTONIO

Look at this, Bassanio,
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
Good-looking apple rotten at the heart:
O, what good-looking outside falsehood has!

SHYLOCK

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

ANTONIO

Well, Shylock, shall we be indebted to you?

SHYLOCK

Signior Antonio, many a time and often
In the Rialto you've berated me
About my money and my high interest:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
For suffering is the mark of all our tribe.
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine¹,
And all for use of that which is my own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:
Go on, then; you come to me, and you say
"Shylock, we need some money," you say so;
You, that did empty your spit upon my beard
And kick me as you would a worthless dog
Over your threshold. Money is your goal.
What should I say to you? Should I not say
"A dog has money? is it possible
A dog can lend three thousand ducats?" Or

¹ Gaberdine: a long, loose outer robe often worn by Jews at the time.

Shall I bend low and like a slave in tone,
With bated breath and whispering humbleness,
Say this:
"Fair sir, you spit on me last week on Wednesday;
You spurned me on such day; another time
You called me dog; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you this much money"?

ANTONIO

It's likely I will call you so again,
To spit on you again, to spurn you too.
If you will lend this money, lend it not
As to your friends; for when did friendship take
The child of barren metal from his friend?
But lend it rather to your enemy,
Who, if he fails, you may with painless face
Demand the penalty.

SHYLOCK

Why, look at you, how you storm!
I would be friends with you and have your love,
Forget the shames that you have stained me with,
Supply your present wants and take no drop
Of interest for my money, and you'll not hear me:
This is kind what I offer.

BASSANIO

This would be kindness.

SHYLOCK

This kindness will I show.
Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond; and, in a happy sport,
If you repay me not on such a day,
In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Expressed in the agreement, let the fee
Be designated as an equal pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleases me.

ANTONIO

Sounds good, in truth. 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'd rather live without the funds I need.

ANTONIO

Why, fear not, man; I will not fail to pay:
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 dealing teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this;
If he should fail to pay, what would I gain
By the demanding of the penalty?
A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
Is not so valuable, profitable neither,
As flesh of mutton, beef, or goat. I say,
To buy his favor, I extend this friendship:
If he will take it, fine; if not, adieu¹;
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

ANTONIO

Yes Shylock, I will seal upon this bond.

SHYLOCK

Then meet me with speed at the notary's;
Give him the details of this happy bond,
And right away I'll go collect the ducats,
Check on my house, left in the frightful guard
Of an unworthy fool, and soon thereafter

¹ Adieu: French for "goodbye." Pronounced "adoo."

I will be with you.

ANTONIO

Go quick, gentle Jew.

Exit Shylock

The Hebrew¹ 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.

All exit

¹ Hebrew is the language of the Jewish people and as well as another names for Jews.

ACT 2. SCENE 1.

A room at Portia's house in Belmont.

Flourish of cornets. Enter the Prince of Morocco and his entourage. Portia, Nerissa, and others are there.



The Prince of Morocco Chooses

MOROCCO

Dislike me not for my complexion;
It's shadowed clothing of the burning sun,
To whom I am a neighbor and near bred.
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
Where Phoebus¹ fire scarce thaws the icicles,
And let us cut flesh open for your love,
To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.
I tell you, lady, that this trait of mine
Has scared the valiant. By my love I swear
The best-regarded virgins of our region
Have loved it too: I would not change this hue,
Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

¹ Phoebus: Apollo, the ancient God of the Sun.

PORTIA

In terms of choice I am not solely led
By the attraction of a maiden's eyes;
Besides, the lottery of my destiny
Bars me the right of voluntary choosing.
But if my father had not shorted me
And bound me by his will, to yield myself
To he who wins me by that means I told you,
Yourself, renowned prince, thus stand as fair
As any comer I have looked 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 scimitar¹
That slew a monarch and a Persian prince
That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,²
I would outstare the sternest eyes that looked,
Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,
Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
Yes, mock the lion when he roars for prey,
To win you, lady. But, O, not quite yet!
If Hercules and Lichas³ play at dice
Which is the better man? The greater throw
May roll, by fortune, out from the weaker hand.
So was Hercules beaten by his servant;
And so may I—blind fortune leading me—
Miss that which one unworthier may attain
And then I die of grief.

PORTIA

You must take your chance,
And either not attempt to choose at all

¹ scimitar: a curved sword used among Arabs and Turks.

² Sultan Solyman: Turkish ruler.

³ Lichas: Hercules's servant. Lichas was thrown into the sea by Hercules after Lichas accidentally brought Hercules a poisoned shirt which killed Hercules.

Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong
Never to speak to ladies afterward
Of thoughts of marriage. Therefore be advised.

MOROCCO

And I will not. Come, bring me to my choices.

PORTIA

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

MOROCCO

Good fortune then!
To make me blessed or cursed among all men.

ACT 2. SCENE 2.

A street in Venice.

Enter Lancelot Gobbo

LANCELET

[*Aside*] Certainly my conscience should support my running from this Jew my master. The demon is at my elbow and tempts me saying to me "Gobbo, Lancelot Gobbo, good Lancelot," or "good Gobbo," or "good Lancelot Gobbo," use your legs, get started, run away. My conscience says, "No, take heed, honest Lancelot"; "take heed, honest Gobbo," or, as I've said, "honest Lancelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with your heels." Well, the most courageous demon tells me pack. "Go!" says the demon; "Get out of here!" says the demon; "for heavens sake, rouse up a brave mind," says the demon, "and run." Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me, "My honest friend Lancelot, being an honest man's son," or rather an honest woman's son, for, indeed, my father did have something lewd and distasteful about him. Well, my conscience says "Lancelot, budge not." "Budge," says the demon. "Budge not," says my conscience. "Conscience," I say, "you give good advice;" "Demon," I say, "you give good advice." To be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God forgive me for saying, is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the demon, who, with all due respect, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnate; and, as for my conscience, my conscience is just a kind of hard conscience, to advise me to stay with the Jew. The demon gives the more friendly advice. I will run, demon; my heels are at your command; I will run.

Enter Lancelot's father, "Gobbo," with a basket

GOBBO

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

LANCELET

[*Aside*] O heavens, this is my true blood father! Who, being more than

sand blind and is high gravel blind¹, knows me not: I will try to confuse him.

GOBBO

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

LANCELET

Take a right hand turn at the next turning, but, at the next turn, take a left-hand turn. Truly, at the very next turn, take a no-handed turn, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house.

GOBBO

By God's saints, that'll be a hard way to go. Can you tell me whether one Lancelet, that lives with him, still lives with him or not?

LANCELET

You talk of young Master Lancelet?

[*Aside*] Watch me now; I'll water the earth with some tears.

Ah, so you talk of young Master Lancelet?

GOBBO

No master, sir, just a poor man's son. His father, though I say it, is an honest and exceedingly poor man and, God be thanked, living well.

LANCELET

Well, let his father be what he will, let's talk of young Master Lancelet.

GOBBO

Your worship's friend is Lancelet, sir?

LANCELET

But I pray you, therefore, old man, therefore, I beg you, you talk of young Master Lancelet?

¹ Sand blind and high gravel blind: This refers to degrees of blindness used at the time: sand blind is someone partially blind; stone blind is total blindness; and gravel blind is somewhere in between.

GOBBO

Of Lancelet, if it please your mastership.

LANCELET

Therefore, Master Lancelet. Talk not of Master Lancelet, sir; for the young gentleman, according to Fates and Destinies and such odd sayings, the Three Sisters¹ and such subjects of learning, is indeed deceased, or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to heaven.

GOBBO

Mary, God forbid! the boy was the very crutch of my old age, my very prop.

LANCELET

Do I look like a stick or a corner post, a staff or a prop? Do you know me, father?

GOBBO

Terrible day, I know you not, young gentleman. But, I pray you, tell me, is my boy, God rest his soul, alive or dead?

LANCELET

Do you not know me, father?

GOBBO

O no, sir, I am sand blind. I know you not.

LANCELET

No, indeed, even if you had your eyes, you might still fail in 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 length the truth will come out.

¹ Three Sisters: This refers to the three Fates (also known as the three Destinies) who in Greek mythology that measured out threads that determined people's lifespans.

GOBBO

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

LANCELET

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

GOBBO

I cannot think you are my son.

LANCELET

I know not what I shall think of that: but I am Lancelet, 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 you be Lancelet, you are my own flesh and blood. [*Feels for Lancelet's face, but Lancelet gives him the top of his head*] Thank you, Lord!¹ What a beard you've got! You've got more hair on your chin than Dobbin my cart horse has on his tail.

LANCELET

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

GOBBO

Lord, how you've changed! How do you and your master get along? I have brought him a present. How is it going now?

LANCELET

Well, well, just for my own part, as I have taken my chances to run away, so I will not rest till I have run some ground. My master's a real Jew. Give him a present? Give him a noose! I am starved in his service. [*pressing his father's hand to his chest*] You may count every one of my ribs with your fingers. Father, I am glad you have come. Give your present to one Master Bassanio, who, indeed, gives fine new uniforms. If I don't serve him, I will run as far as God has ground. O rare fortune!

¹ Lord: God.

here comes the man. To him, father; for I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer.

Enter Bassanio talking with Leonardo and other followers



Lancelet, Gobbo, and Bassanio

BASSANIO

You may do so; but you must be quick so that dinner is ready at the latest by five o'clock. See these letters delivered; order the uniforms to be made, and ask Gratiano to come soon to my lodging.

Exit a Servant

LANCELET

To him, father.

GOBBO

God bless your worship!

BASSANIO

Great thanks! What do you want from me?

GOBBO

Here's my son, sir, a poor boy—

LANCELET

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

GOBBO

He has a great interest, sir, as one would say, to serve—

LANCELET

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, excepting your worship's reverence, are scarcely on good terms—

LANCELET

To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, having done me wrong, does cause me, as my father, being, I hope, an old man, shall frutify¹ to you—

GOBBO

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

LANCELET

In very brief, the purpose is impertinent² to myself, as your worship

¹ frutify: he means “certify” but is accidentally using the wrong word.

² impertinent: he means “pertinent” (which means relevant or important) but has accidentally used the wrong word and said the opposite.

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 do you want?

LANCELET

To serve you, sir.

GOBBO

That is the very heart of the matter, sir.

BASSANIO

I know you well. You have obtained your goal.
Shylock your master spoke with me today,
And has praised you, if it be praiseworthy
To leave a rich Jew's service, to become
The follower of so poor a gentleman.

LANCELET

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

BASSANIO

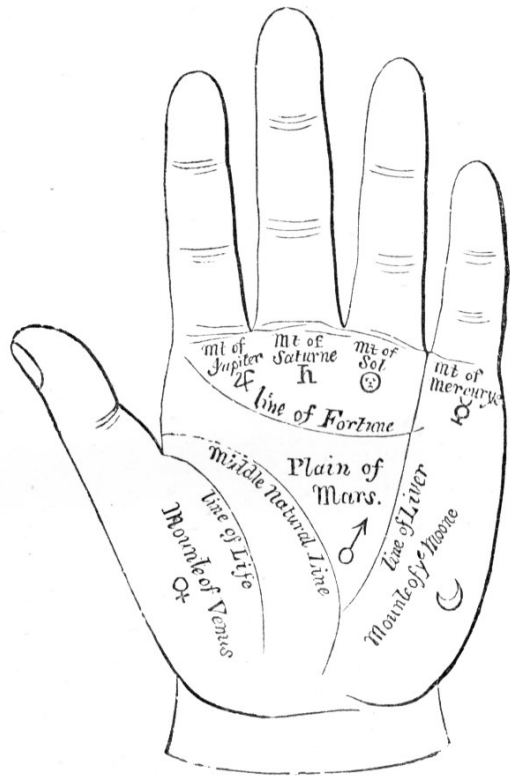
You say it well. Go, father, with your son.
Take leave of your old master and ask around
To find my lodging. Give him a uniform
More finer than the others. See it done.

LANCELET

Father, go inside. I cannot get a job myself, no. I never seem to have a quick enough tongue. Well, at least no man in Italy has a fairer palm for swearing an oath on a book than I. Look at the future on his palm¹, here's a “simple” line of life; perhaps a small trifle of wives: indeed,

¹ Fairer palm: In this and the following sentences, Lancelet is talking about reading the fortunes of his life based on the palm of his hand. A line on his palm indicates that his life will be “simple”; however he reinterprets the word “simple.”

fifteen wives is nothing! Eleven widows and nine maids is a “simple” accumulation for one man. And then to escape drowning thrice, and to be in danger of my life from sleeping in the wrong bed; these are “simple” escapes. Well, if Fortune be a woman, she’s a good wench for giving me this palm. Father, come. I’ll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye.



Lancelet and Old Gobbo exit

BASSANIO

I pray you, good Leonardo, think on this:
These things once bought and neatly stowed aboard,
Return in haste, for I do feast tonight with
My most-esteemed acquaintance. Hurry, go.

LEONARDO

My greatest efforts shall be put to use.

Enter Gratiano

GRATIANO

Where is your master?

LEONARDO

Out there, sir, he walks.

Exit

GRATIANO

Signior Bassanio!

BASSANIO

Gratiano!

GRATIANO

I need a meeting with you.

BASSANIO

You have obtained it.

GRATIANO

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

BASSANIO

Why then you must. But listen, Gratiano:
You are too wild, too rude and bold when speaking.
These traits suit you quite happily enough
And in our eyes do not appear as faults;
But where you are not known, why, there they show
Something too liberal. Pray you, take pain
To ease with some cold drops of modesty
Your skipping spirit, or else your wild behavior

Might 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 manner,
Talk with respect and swear just now and then,
Keep prayer books in my pocket, look demurely—
And more: while saying grace¹, I'll hide my eyes
Like this with my hat, sigh and say "Amen,"
Use all appearances of civility,
Like one well studied in a sad expression
To please his grandma—if not, trust me more.

BASSANIO

We'll see how you behave.

GRATIANO

No, but I drink tonight. You shall not judge me
By what we do tonight.

BASSANIO

No, that'd be a pity:
I would encourage you instead to put on
Your boldest suit of joy, for we have friends
That need some happiness. But fare you well;
I have some business.

GRATIANO

And I must see Lorenzo and the rest,
But we will visit you at dinner time.

All exit

¹ Grace: this refers to the daily prayer said before meals, which ends in "Amen."

ACT 2. SCENE 3.

A room in Shylock's house.

Enter Jessica and Lancelot

JESSICA

I am sorry you will leave my father so:
Our house is hell, and you, a happy devil,
Did rob it of some taste of tediousness.
But fare you well, here is a ducat for you:
And, Lancelot, soon at dinner shall you see
Lorenzo, who is your new master's guest.
Give him this letter; do it secretly.
And so farewell. I do not want my father
To see me talk with you.

LANCELET

Adieu! Tears tell you what my tongue does not. Most beautiful pagan,
most sweet Jew! If the mother who had you wasn't Christian, I am
much deceived. But, adieu. These foolish drops do somewhat drown
my manly spirit. Adieu.

JESSICA

Farewell, good Lancelot.

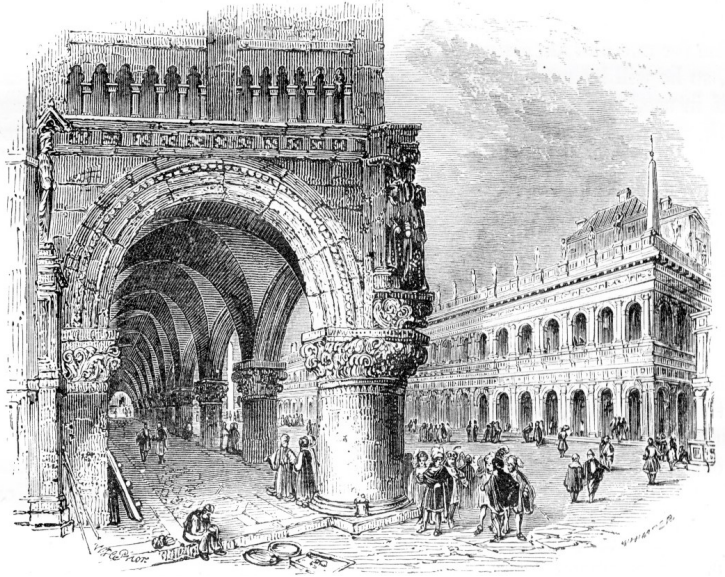
Exit Lancelot

O no, what horrid 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 you will keep your word, I'll end this strife,
Become a Christian and your loving wife.

Exit

ACT 2. SCENE 4.

A street in Venice.



Enter Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salarino, and Solanio

LORENZO

No, we will slink away at dinner time,
Disguise us at my lodging and return,
All in an hour.

GRATIANO

We have not made good preparation.

SALARINO

We have not hired any torchbearers.

SOLANIO

It's doomed unless there is a careful plan,
And better in my mind not undertaken.

LORENZO

It's now just four o'clock. We have two hours
To get things ready.

Enter Lancelet, with a letter

Friend Lancelet, what's the news?

LANCELET

It will please you to break its seal, and see it for yourself.

LORENZO

I know the hand. In truth, it's a fair hand;
And whiter than the paper it wrote on
Is the fair hand that wrote.

GRATIANO

Love news, in truth.

LANCELET

May I leave, sir.

LORENZO

Where are you going?

LANCELET

Well, sir, to ask my old master the Jew to dine tonight with my new
master the Christian.

LORENZO

Hold on, take this. [*gives him a tip*] Tell gentle Jessica
I will not fail her; tell her privately.
Go.

Exit Lancelet

Gentlemen,
Will you prepare for this masque¹ tonight?
I am providing a torch-bearer.

SALARINO

By Mary, I'll go straight there.

SOLANIO

And so will I.

LORENZO

Meet me and Gratiano
At Gratiano's lodging in a bit.

SALARINO

Sounds good we'll do so.

Salarino and Solanio exit

GRATIANO

Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

LORENZO

I need to tell you all. She has instructed
How I shall take her from her father's house,
What gold and jewels she is carrying,
What servant clothes disguise she has prepared.
If ever the Jew her father goes to heaven,
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake.
And may Misfortune never cross her path,
Unless she do it under this excuse,
That she was born to a faithless Jew.
Come, go with me; peruse this as you go:
Fair Jessica shall be my torch bearer.

All exit

¹ masque: masquerade: a costume party

ACT 2. SCENE 5.

In front of Shylock's home.

Enter Shylock talking to Lancelet

SHYLOCK

Well, you shall see, your eyes shall be your judge,
The difference of old Shylock and Bassanio:
—Hey, Jessica! [*calling to her*]—You shall not over eat,
As you have done with me:—Hey, Jessica!—
And sleep and snore, and wear out all your clothes
—Hey, Jessica, I say!

LANCELET

Hello, Jessica!

SHYLOCK

Who tells you call? I do not tell you call.

LANCELET

Your worship often told me that I did nothing without being told.

Enter Jessica

JESSICA

You called? what is your will?

SHYLOCK

I am now called to dinner, Jessica.
There are my keys. But why is it I go?
I am not called for love; they flatter me;
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon
The prodigal Christian. Jessica, my girl,
Keep watch over my house. I loathe to go:
There is some ill a-brewing in my direction,

For I did dream of moneybags last night.¹

LANCELET

I beg you, sir, go. My young master does expect your reproach.²

SHYLOCK

So do I his.

LANCELET

And 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 started bleeding on Black Monday last year at six o'clock in the morning, which also happened on Ash Wednesday four years ago, in the afternoon.³

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 bent-necked fifers,⁴
Don't hurry for a look from windows then,
Nor thrust your head into the public street
To gaze on Christian fools with colored faces,
But plug my house's ears, I mean my windows.
Let not the sound of shallow foolery enter
My sober house. By Jacob's staff⁵, I swear,
I've no desire for feasting out tonight,
But I will go. Go on ahead of me,
Servant; say I am coming.

¹ dream of moneybags last night: at Shakespeare's time, it was common to interpret dreams as having the opposite meaning.

² reproach: scold or blame. Lancelet has accidentally used the wrong word here. He meant to use "approach," but Shylock, probably realizing Lancelet's error, has responded based on the word "reproach."

³ Here it may be that Lancelet is trying to cover up the possibility of being blamed for giving away the secret by instead suggesting that he determined it through reading signs in nature that foretell the future; although the signs he mentions sound ridiculous since he is just making it up.

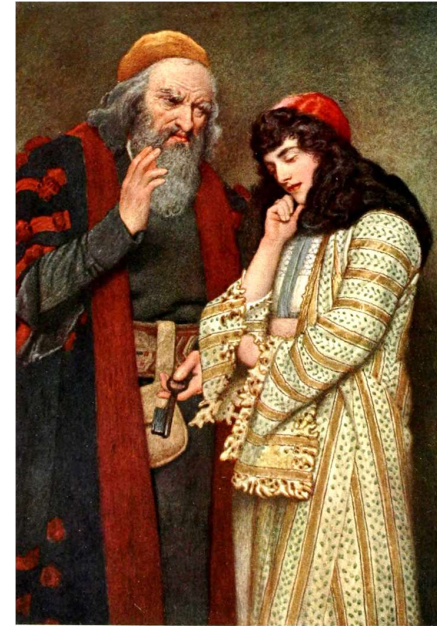
⁴ fife: a kind of musical instrument like a flute. fifer: fife player

⁵ Jacob's staff: A tool for measuring and navigation.

LANCELET

I will go before, sir. [*To Jessica*]
Mistress, look out the window, during all this,
For soon a Christian will come by
Who will be worth a Jewess's eye.

Exit



Shylock and Jessica

SHYLOCK

What says that fool of Hagar's offspring¹, huh?

JESSICA

His words were "Farewell mistress"; nothing else.

¹ Hagar's offspring: In both Christian and Jewish traditions, the father of the Jews was Abraham who had a son with his concubine Hagar and later a son with his official wife Sarah. Shylock is referring to the idea that non-Jews descended from Hagar and Jews descended from the official line of Abraham via Sarah.

SHYLOCK

The fool is kind enough, but a huge eater;
 Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day
 More than the wild cat. Drones¹ hive not with me;
 Therefore I part with him, and part with him
 To someone who will have him help to waste
 His borrowed cash. Well, Jessica, go in.
 Perhaps I will return immediately.
 Do as I ask you; shut doors behind you.
 Fast bind, fast find:
 A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.

Exit

JESSICA

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

Exit

¹ Drones: This refers to a male honey bee who do not collect honey and seem much less active than the female worker bee.

ACT 2. SCENE 6.

A street in Venice outside Shylock's home.

Enter Gratiano and Salarino, disguised in masks.

GRATIANO

This is the balcony beneath which Lorenzo
 Desired us to stand.

SALARINO

His time has almost past.

GRATIANO

It is a marvel that he's running late,
 For lovers always run before the clock.

SALARINO

O, ten times faster than Venus's¹ pigeons fly
 To seal love's new-made bonds, they are, more so
 Than keep a promise made and trust unbroken!

GRATIANO

That's always true: who rises from a feast
 With that keen appetite that he first had?
 Where is the horse that gallops 'round again
 Another lap with the unbated fire
 That he did run it first? All things that are,
 Are with more spirit chased than they're enjoyed.
 How like a young man or a prodigal
 The brilliant ship leaves from her native bay,
 Hugged and embraced by enticing wind!
 How like the prodigal does she return,
 With weather-beaten hull and ragged sails,
 Lean, torn and bankrupt by enticing wind!

¹ Venus: Roman goddess of beauty and love.

SALARINO

Here comes Lorenzo. We will talk more later.

Enter Lorenzo

LORENZO

Thanks friends for patience at my long delay;
Not I, but my affairs, have made you wait.
When you one day will play the thieves of wives,
I'll watch as long for you then. Now come on;
Here lives my father Jew. Ho! Who is there?

Enter Jessica, above, in boy's clothes

JESSICA

Who are you? Tell me, for more certainty,
For I will swear that I do know your tongue.

LORENZO

Lorenzo, and your 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 your thoughts are witness that you are.

JESSICA

Here, catch this luggage; it is worth your pains.
I'm glad it's night, for you can't look at me,
And I am much ashamed at my disguise.
But love is blind and lovers cannot see
The petty errors they themselves commit;
For if they could, Cupid himself would blush
To see how I've transformed into a boy.

LORENZO

Descend, for you must be my torchbearer.

JESSICA

What, must I hold a candle to my shame?
It in itself, in truth, is too too light.
Why that's a job that's for exposing, love;
And I should be obscured.

LORENZO

You are, my sweet,
Even in the lovely clothing of a boy.
But come at once, before night runs away,
For we're expected at Bassanio's feast.

JESSICA

I will lock tight the doors, and load myself
With some more ducats, and be with you soon.

Exit above

GRATIANO

Now, by my word, a Christian and no Jew.

LORENZO

O, curse me but I love her heartily;
For she is wise, if I can be her judge,
And fair she is, if both my eyes be true,
And true she is, as she has proved herself,
And therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true,
Shall she be placed within my faithful soul.

Enter Jessica, below

What, here already? Now gentlemen, let's go!
Our costumed friends won't like it if we're slow.

Exit with Jessica and Salarino



Lorenzo and Jessica

Enter Antonio

ANTONIO
Who's there?

GRATIANO
Signior Antonio!

ANTONIO
O no, Gratiano! where are all the rest?
It's nine o'clock: our friends all wait for you.
No masque tonight: the wind has come about;
Bassanio currently is boarding ship.
I have sent twenty out to look for you.

GRATIANO

I'm glad for I desire no more delight
Than to be under sail and gone tonight.

All exit

ACT 2. SCENE 7.

Belmont. A room in Portia's house.

Flourish of cornets. Enter Portia, the Prince of Morocco, and their entourages

PORTIA

[To Servant]

Go draw aside the curtains and display
The several caskets to this noble prince.

[To Morocco]

Now make your choice.

MOROCCO

The first, of gold, bears this inscription on it:
"Who chooses me shall gain what many men desire";
The second, silver, promises these words:
"Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves";
This third, dull lead, has warnings just as blunt:
"Who chooses me must give and wager all he has."
How shall I know if I do choose correctly?

PORTIA

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

MOROCCO

Some god direct my judgment! Let me see;
I will survey the inscriptions once again.
What says this leaden casket?
"Who chooses me must give and wager all he has."
Must give: for what? For lead? Wager for lead?
This casket threatens. Men that wager all
Do it in hopes of winning big with little.
A golden mind stoops not to petty schemes;
I'll then not wager anything for lead.

What says the silver with her virgin hue?¹
"Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves."
As much as he deserves! Pause there, Morocco,
And weigh your value with an even hand:
If rated by your own good estimation,
You do deserve a lot; and yet a lot
May not extend so far as to the lady;
And yet to be afraid of my deserving
Would be a weak discredit to 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 strayed no further, but chose here?
Let's see once more these words engraved in gold
"Who chooses me shall gain what many men desire."
Why, that's the lady; all the world desires her;
From the four corners of the earth they come,
To kiss this shrine, this breathing mortal saint.
The Persian deserts and the wilderness
Of wide Arabia are like main roads now
For princes to come view fair Portia.
The ocean's kingdom, whose ambitious head
Spits in the face of heaven, is no block
To stop the foreign spirits, but they come,
As over a stream, to see fair Portia.
One of these three contains her heavenly picture.
Is it that lead contains her? That'd be damnation
To think so low a thought: it'd be too crude
Like cheap clothe used to wrap a commoner's corpse.
Or shall I think in silver she's enclosed,
That's ten times undervalued to pure 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 engraved upon;

¹ virgin hue: white is considered to symbolize virginity and silver is the closest to that color.

But here an angel in a golden bed
Lies all within. Deliver me the key:
Here do I choose, successful I may be!

PORTIA

There, take it, prince [*giving key*]; and if my form lies there,
Then I am yours.

He unlocks the golden casket

MOROCCO

O hell! What have we here?
The face of Death¹, 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 has sold
Just my outside to behold:
Gilded tombs do worms enfold.
Had you been as wise as bold,
Young in limbs, in judgment old,
This answer would not be enrolled.
Fare you well; your trail runs cold.

Cold, indeed; and labor lost:
Then farewell, heat, and welcome, frost!
Portia, adieu. I have too grieved a heart
To take a tedious leave. Thus losers part.

Exit with his entourage. Flourish of cornets.

PORTIA

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

All exit

¹ Death: a skull, which is known as the face of the being called Death.

ACT 2. SCENE 8.

A street in Venice.



Modern photo of a Gondola in Venice

Enter Salarino and Solanio

SALARINO

Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail:
With him has Gratiano gone along;
And I am sure Lorenzo is not with them.

SOLANIO

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

SALARINO

He came too late, the ship by then set sail;
But then the duke was told about some news:
How in a gondola were seen together

Lorenzo and his amorous Jessica.
Besides, Antonio has assured the duke
They were not with Bassanio in his ship.

SOLANIO

I never heard such ravings so confusing,
So strange, outrageous, and so incoherent,
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
"My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice! The law! My ducats, and my daughter!
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
Of double ducats, stolen by my daughter!
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,
Stolen by her! Justice! find the girl;
She has the stones upon her, and the ducats."

SALARINO

Now all the boys in Venice follow him,
And yell: "His stones, his daughter, and his ducats!"



SOLANIO

Let good Antonio make sure he isn't late,
Or he shall pay for this.

SALARINO

And that reminds me
I discussed with a Frenchman yesterday,
Who told me, in the narrow seas between

The French and English, there hit ground and wrecked
A vessel of our country with rich cargo.
I thought about Antonio when he told me,
And wished in silence that it were not his.

SOLANIO

It's best to tell Antonio what you hear;
Yet not too suddenly, for it may grieve him.

SALARINO

No kinder gentleman walks on this earth.
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part.
Bassanio told him he would use some speed
In his return. He answered, "Don't do that.
Don't rush your business for my sake, Bassanio,
But stay until the ripest moment comes;
And for the Jew's bond which he made with me,
Let it not enter in your thoughts of love:
Be happy, and employ your major thoughts
To courtship and such fair displays of love
As shall conveniently be proper there."
At just that moment, eyes both filled with tears,
Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,
And with a clear and wonderful affection
He shook Bassanio's hand; and so they parted.

SOLANIO

I think he only loves the world for him.
I pray you, let us go and find him now
And lighten up the heaviness he bears
With some delight or other.

SALARINO

Let's do so.

All exit

ACT 2. SCENE 9.

A room in Porita's house in Belmont.



Arragon Chooses

Enter Nerissa with a servant.

NERISSA

Quick, quick, I pray you; draw the curtain now.
The Prince of Arragon has made his oath,
And now is coming to select a casket.

Flourish of cornets. Enter the Prince of Arragon, Portia, and their entourages

PORTIA

Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince.
If you can choose the one where I'm contained,
Then right away our marriage vows we'll make;
But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,
You must be gone from here immediately.

ARRAGON

I am required by oath to do three things:
 First, never to reveal to anyone
 Which casket was my choice. Next, if I fail
 To choose the right one, never in my life
 Will I seek out a maid to marry. Lastly,
 If I do fail in winning with my choice,
 Immediately to leave you and be gone.

PORTIA

To these requirements every one does swear
 That comes to wager for my worthless self.

ARRAGON

And so have I warned myself. Fortune now
 Grant my heart's hope! Gold, silver, and base lead.
 "Who chooses me must give and wager all he has."
 My choice and wager needs a fairer sight than this.
 What says the golden chest? Ha! Let me see:
 "Who chooses me shall gain what many men desire."
 What many men desire! That "many" may be meaning
 The foolish multitudes who choose by show,
 Not learning more than the fond eye does teach;
 Which seeks not the interior, but, like a bird,
 Builds on the outer wall exposed to weather,
 Even though it's in the path of danger.
 I will not choose what many men desire,
 Because I will not jump with common spirits
 And rank myself with barbaric multitudes.
 Why, then to you, you silver treasure-house;
 Tell me once more what message you do bear.
 "Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves,"
 And well said too; for who shall go about
 To cheat one's fortune and be honorable
 Without the stamp of merit? Let none presume
 To wear an undeserving dignity.
 O, that one's wealth, one's rank, and one's employment,
 Were not derived corruptly, and that clear honor
 Were purchased by the merit of the wearer!

How many then should cover who stand bare!¹
 How many be commanded that command!
 How much low peasantry would be removed
 From the true seat of honor! And how much honor
 Picked from the trash and ruin of the times
 To newly shine! Well, then to my choice.
 "Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves."
 I'll take what I deserve. 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 an idiot
 Presenting me a scroll! I will read it.
 How much unlike fair Portia's face are you!
 How much unlike my hopes and my deservings!
 "Who chooses me shall have as much as he deserves."
 Did I deserve no more than a fool's face?
 Is that my prize? Is my reward no better?

PORTIA

To offend and judge are different matters
 And of opposite natures.

ARRAGON

What is here?

[*Reads*]

The fire was refining this
 Refining what its judgment is

¹ cover who stand bare: probably refers to the practice of common (lower class) people being required to remove their hats and head coverings when someone of noble blood enters.

That never once did choose amiss.
There are those that shadows kiss;
But all they have is shadows' bliss;
These fools alive I will dismiss
As silver seeming, and so was this.
Take no wife away with you
I'll always be your face they view
So be gone now and say adieu.

Still more foolish I'll appear
For the time I linger here
With one fool's face came to you,
Now I go away with two.
Miss, adieu. I'll keep my vow,
Patiently I'll bear shame now.

Arragon and entourage exit

PORTIA

Thus has the candle singed the moth.
O, these are thoughtful fools! When they go choose,
They have the wisdom to have thoughts that lose.

NERISSA

The ancient saying is no heresy:
Dying and wiving goes by destiny.

PORTIA

Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

She draws the curtain. A servant enters.

Servant

Where is my lady?

PORTIA

Here. What wants my lord?

Servant

Madam, there is arriving at your gate
A young Venetian, one that came before,
Announcing the approaching of his lord
From whom he brings to you abundant greetings,
Besides his compliments and courteous words,
Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen
So hopeful an ambassador of love:
A day in April never came so sweet,
To show how lavish summer was at hand,
As this fore-runner comes before his lord.

PORTIA

No more, I pray you: I fear your joking
You'll soon say it's a relative of yours;
You use such high ideals in praising him.
Come, come, Nerissa; for I long to see
Quick Cupid's man who comes so graciously.

NERISSA

Bassanio, lord Love, if your will it be!

All exit

ACT 3. SCENE 1.

A street in Venice.

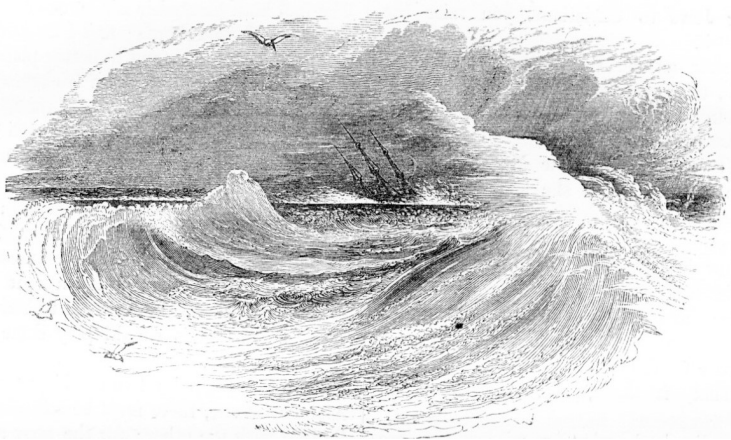
Enter Solanio and Salarino

SOLANIO

Now, what's new on the Rialto?

SALARINO

Why, it spreads all over that Antonio has a ship of rich cargo wrecked on the narrow seas, the Goodwins, I think they call the place, a very dangerous shallow place, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as they say, if my gossip source be an honest woman of her word.



The Goodwins

SOLANIO

I wish she were a lying gossip—one of those ones that nibbles on ginger cookies or makes her neighbors believe she wept for the death of a third husband. But it is true, without any slips into lecturing or steering off 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, get to the point.

SOLANIO

Ha! What do you say? Why, the point is, he has lost a ship.

SALARINO

I wish it would mean the end of his losses.

SOLANIO

Let me say "Amen" quickly, otherwise the devil my stop my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.

Enter Shylock

Hello, Shylock! What's new among the merchants?

SHYLOCK

You. No one knows as well, as 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 away with.

SOLANIO

And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was ready to fly; and that it is the nature of them all to leave the nest.

SHYLOCK

She is damned for it.

SOLANIO

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

SHYLOCK

My own flesh and blood rebelling!

SOLANIO

Your old corpse! Rebelling against you at this age?

SHYLOCK

I mean, my daughter is my flesh and blood.

SALARINO

There is more difference between your flesh and hers than between jet¹ and ivory; more between your bloods than there is between red wine and white. But tell us, have you heard whether Antonio has had any loss at sea or no?

SHYLOCK

There I have another bad partner: a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dares to scarcely show his face on the Rialto—a beggar, who used to walk the market so smugly. He better keep his bond; he wanted to call me a greedy lender. He better keep his bond; he wanted to lend money for a Christian courtesy. He better remember his bond.

¹ jet: a kind of black semi-precious stone

SALARINO

Why, I am sure, if he fails to pay, you wouldn't take his flesh. What's that good for?

SHYLOCK

As bait for fish, of course. If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He has disgraced me, and caused me losses of half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated my enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Doesn't a Jew have eyes? Doesn't a Jew have hands, organs, substance, 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 wrongs a Christian, what does he receive? Revenge. If a Christian wrongs a Jew, what should his suffering be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it will be hard to take, but I will teach the lesson well.

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

SOLANIO

Here comes another of the tribe. You won't find a third to match these two, unless the devil himself turned Jew.

Solanio, Salarino, and Servant exit

SHYLOCK

How now, Tubal! What's the news from Genoa? Have you found my daughter?

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

[Pretending to hand out his riches] 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 wish my daughter were dead at my feet, and the jewels in her ear! If only she were buried at my feet, and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? Why not? I know not what's spent in the search.

[Taking receipt of expenses for the search from Tubal]



Tubal and Shylock

Why make loss upon loss! The thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge, nor no bad luck except what lands on my shoulders; no sighs except my breathing; no tears except my shedding.

TUBAL

Yes, other men have bad luck too. Antonio, as I heard in Genoa—

SHYLOCK

What, what, what? bad luck, bad luck?

TUBAL

Has a merchant ship wrecked, coming from Tripolis.

SHYLOCK

I thank God, I thank God. Is it true, is it true?

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

I thank you, good Tubal. Good news, good news! Ha, ha! Where? In Genoa?

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

You stick a dagger in me. I shall never see my gold again. Six dozen ducats in one sitting! Six dozen ducats!

TUBAL

Traveling with me to Venice were many of Antonio's creditors, who swear he must go bankrupt.

SHYLOCK

This makes me very glad. I'll plague him; I'll torture him. This makes me glad.

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

Enough of her! You torture me, Tubal. It was my turquoise; I was given it by Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a pack of wild monkeys.

TUBAL

At least Antonio is certainly done for.

SHYLOCK

Yes, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, hire a sheriff for me. Have him ready two weeks before. I will have the heart of Antonio, if he can't pay; for, if he's gone from Venice, I can run my business as I like. Go, go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue. Go, good Tubal, at our synagogue, Tubal.

All exit

ACT 3. SCENE 2.

A room in Portia's house in Belmont.

Enter Bassanio, Portia, Gratiano, Nerissa, and Attendants

PORTIA

I pray you, wait here. Pause a day or two
 Before you wager; for, if you choose wrong,
 I lose your company. Therefore forbear awhile.
 Now something tells me—I won't call it love—
 I do not want to lose you; you know yourself
 Hate does not give advice in such a way.
 In case you do not fully understand
 (For maidens have no words to call their own)
 I wish you would stay here a month or two
 Before you try for me. I could teach you
 How to choose right; but then I'd break my vow,
 Which I will never do, then may you lose me
 And if you do, you'll make me wish I'd sinned
 By breaking my own vow. Shame on your eyes;
 They've charmed me and divided me in two:
 One half of me is yours, the other half... yours,
 My own, I'd say; but if my own, then yours,
 So all is yours. O, these awful times
 That separate the owners and their rights!
 And so, though yours, not yours. If this is true,
 Let fortune go to hell for it, not I.
 I speak too long; but just to slow the time,
 To stretch it and to draw it out in length,
 To keep you from selecting.

BASSANIO

Let me choose
 For as I am, I live upon the rack.¹

¹rack: a medieval torture device that stretches people out painfully. It was sometimes used on people who committed treason, and was sometimes used to extract confessions from criminals. (see image)



Example of the rack

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

None but that ugly treason of my doubts,
Which make me fear enjoyment of my love
Won't last. Such treasonous doubts oppose my love
As snow and fire can share no life nor friendship.

PORTIA

Yes, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
Where men are forced to say most anything.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

Well then, confess and live.

BASSANIO

"Confess and *love*"

Has been the very sum of my confession:
O happy torment, when my torturer
Does teach me answers that can set me free!
But lead me to my fortune and the caskets.

PORTIA

Away, then! I am locked in one of them.
If you do love me, you will find me there.
Nerissa and the rest, you all stand back.
Let music sound while he does make his choice.
Then, if he loses, he'll have a swan-like end,¹
Fading in music; so 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
The trumpets' flourish when true subjects bow
To a new-crowned monarch; and similar
To all of those sweet sounds at 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 Hercules,² when once he did redeem

¹ swan-like end: It is an ancient belief that swans sing a song right before they died. Today, the term "swan song" is considered someone's last great achievement before dying.

² Hercules: Hercules rescued a virgin maiden in the ancient city of Troy from a sea monster. The Trojans were forced to sacrifice the maiden as a tribute to the monster so the monster would not attack them. Hercules slayed the monster not for her hand in marriage but for magical horses as payment from the Trojans.

The virgin tribute paid by crying Troy
 To the sea-monster. Now I'm the sacrifice
 The rest who stand around are Trojan wives,
 With vision blurred by tears. Come forth to view
 The outcome of the exploit. Go, Hercules!
 If you live, I live. With much, much more dismay
 Than you I watch, though in the crowd I stay.



Portia Looks as Bassanio Chooses

Singing, while Bassanio examines the caskets

SINGER

Tell me where are feelings bred,
 In the heart, or in the head?
 How are born and how are fed?

ALL

Tell me, tell me.

SINGER

From the workings of the eyes,
 Gazing feeds, yet feeling dies
 When each eyelid sleepy lies.
 Therefore let us wake it well
 I'll begin it—ding, dong, bell!

ALL

Ding, dong, bell!

Song ends

BASSANIO

So may the outside be unlike itself;
 The world is still deceived with ornament.
 In court, a plea so tainted and corrupt,
 But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
 Obscures the face of evil? In religion,
 When there's a damning wrong, some careful scholar
 Will bless it and approve it, citing scripture,
 Thus hiding wrong with pretty ornament?
 There is no vice so clear that does not have
 Some mark of virtue on its outer parts.
 How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false
 As stairs of sand, wear boldly on their chins
 The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars;
 Who, inward searched, have livers white as milk¹;
 And merely grow out valor's excrement
 To make themselves look tough! Look at makeup,
 You'll see it's beauty purchased by the weight;
 Such makeup works a miracle in nature
 By making lightest she who wears the most.

¹ livers white as milk: At this time, it was believed that one's fierceness and anger came from yellow bile released by the liver. One who had a white liver was someone who lacked courage in battle.

So are these flowing golden locks of hair
 Which so luxuriantly play with the wind
 And show supposed beauty, often just
 A wig and product of a second head,
 The skull from which they came still in its tomb.
 Thus ornament is just the shiny shore
 On a most dangerous sea; the pretty scarf
 Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,
 The seeming truth which cunning times put on
 To trap the wisest. Therefore, You gaudy gold,
 Hard food for Midas,¹ I'll have none of you;
 Nor none of you, you pale and common stuff
 Passed man to man: but you, you meager lead,
 Which threatens rather than does promise something.
 Your paleness moves me more than eloquence;
 And here I choose. May its result be joy!

PORTIA

[*Aside*] How all the other passions turn to air,
 Like doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,
 And shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy!
 O love, be moderate; ease your ecstasy,
 In measure rein your joy; slow this excess.
 I feel too much your blessing: make it less,
 For fear I'm overwhelmed.

BASSANIO

What do I find?

[*Opening the lead casket*]

Fair Portia's portrait! What demi-god
 Has come so near creation? Do these eyes move?
 Or whether, riding on my own eyeballs,
 They seem in motion? Here her lips are open,
 Parted with sugar breath; so sweet an air

¹ Midas: ancient Greek king who was granted by a god the ability to turn anything he touched into gold. This went well for him until he realized he couldn't eat anything since it all turned to gold.

Could only split such sweet friends. Here in her hairs
 The painter plays the spider and has woven
 A golden mesh to trap the hearts of men,
 Better than flies in cobwebs; but her eyes—
 How could he see to do them? Having made one,
 I think it'd have the power to steal both his
 And leave itself undone. Yet look, how far
 The substance of my praise does wrong this shadow
 In underpraising it, just as the shadow
 Does limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll,
 The content and the 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 none new,
 If you be well pleased with this
 And hold your fortune for your bliss,
 Turn to where your lady is,
 And claim her with a loving kiss.

A pleasant scroll. Fair lady, by your leave,
 I come by order, to give and to receive.
 Like one of two contending for a prize,
 Who thinks he has done well in people's eyes,
 Hearing applause and universal shout,
 Giddy in spirit, still gazing out in doubt
 Whether these pearls of praise be his or no;
 So, thrice-fair lady, stand I, just here like so
 In doubt of whether what I see is true,
 Until confirmed, signed, 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,
 That I were better than myself for you.
 I wish I could be twenty times myself;

A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich;
This only to stand high in your appraisal.
I might in virtue, beauty, riches, friends,
Exceed appraisal; but the full sum of me
Is sum of something, which, to total up,
Is an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpracticed.
The happy part is she is not too old
To start to learn, and happier than this
She was not born and raised too dumb to learn;
Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to you to be directed,
Just like her lord, her governor, her king.

[They gently kiss]

Myself and what is mine to you and yours
Is now converted. Just now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
Queen of myself. Yet as of now, just now,
This house, these servants and this here myself
Are yours, my lord. *[Holding out a ring]* I give them with this ring;
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Will then foretell the ruin of your love
And be my reason for denouncing you.

She puts the ring on Bassanio's finger

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 senses,
As if some moving speech had just been spoken
By a belovèd prince and there appears
Among the buzzing smiling multitude
Where every sound that's made all blends together,
A wild noise of nothing, except for joy
Expressed and not expressed. But when this ring
Parts from this finger, then parts life from here;
I'd be so 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 one can wish;
For I am sure you can wish none from me.
And when your honors mean to formalize
The bargain of your faith, I do request,
That at that time I may be married too.

BASSANIO

With all my heart, then you can 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 sitting back and waiting
No more pertains to me, my lord, than you.
Your fortune stood upon the casket there,
And so did mine too, as it all turns out;
For talking to her until I started sweating,
And sweating until even my mouth went dry
With oaths of love, until at last it came:
I got a promise from this fair one here *[Taking Nerissa's hand]*
To have her love, provided that your fortune
Achieved her mistress.

PORTIA

Is this true, Nerissa?

NERISSA

Madam, it is, if you approve of it.

BASSANIO

And do you, Gratiano, mean this for good?

GRATIANO

Yes, it's true, my lord.

BASSANIO

Our feast shall be much honored in your marriage.

GRATIANO

I'll bet a thousand ducats that we'll be first to have a son.

NERISSA

What, a sun upon our wedding?

GRATIANO

No. We could never win the bet that fast. But who comes here?
Lorenzo and his infidel? What, and my old Venetian friend Salerio?

Enter Lorenzo, Jessica, and Salerio, as a Messenger from Venice

BASSANIO

Lorenzo and also Salerio, welcome.
If my new role here, though in infancy,
Has welcoming power. [*To Portia*] Then with your permission,
I tell my truest friends and countrymen,
Sweet Portia, they are welcome.

PORTIA

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

LORENZO

I thank your honor. For my part, my lord,
My purpose was not to have seen you here;
But meeting with Salerio on my way,
He did request that I, and wouldn't take no,
Must come along with him.

SALERIO

I did, my lord;
And I have reason for it. Signior Antonio
Sends his regards to you.

Gives Bassanio a letter

BASSANIO

Before I read his letter,
I pray you, tell me how is my good friend.

SALERIO

Not sick, my lord, unless it is in mind;
Nor well, unless in mind. His letter there
Will show his situation.

Bassanio reads

GRATIANO

Nerissa, cheer that stranger [*pointing to Jessica*]; tell her welcome.
Your hand, Salerio [*shaking it*]. What's the news from Venice?
How does that noble merchant, good Antonio?
I know he will be glad at our success.
We are the Jasons; we have won the fleece.

SALERIO

I wish you'd won the fleece that he has lost.

PORTIA

There are some cursèd contents in that letter,
That steals the color from Bassanio's cheeks.
Some dear friend dead, for nothing in the world
Could change so much what constitutes the state
Of any healthy man. What, worse and worse!
O please, Bassanio: I am half yourself,
And I must freely have the half of anything
That this same paper brings you.



Bassanio Reads the Letter

BASSANIO

O sweet Portia,
 Here are a few of the unpleasantest words
 That ever marked up 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 what I told you's true. And yet, dear lady,
 When humbly saying I was nothing, you'll see
 How much I was a bragger. When I told you
 My wealth was nothing, I should then have told you
 That I was worse than nothing; for, indeed,
 I have indebted myself to a dear friend,
 Indebted my friend to his own enemy
 To raise my status. Here is a letter, lady;
 The paper is 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 failed? What, not one's good?
 From Tripolis, from Mexico and England,
 From Lisbon, Barbary, and India?

And not one ship escaped the dreadful touch
 Of merchant-mashing rocks?

SALERIO

Not one, my lord.
 Besides, it now appears, that even if
 He had the money to pay off the Jew,
 The Jew wouldn't take it. Never did I know
 A creature, that did bear the shape of man
 So keen and greedy to destroy a man.
 He works the duke at morning and at night
 With rants on loss of freedom in the state
 If they deny him justice. Twenty merchants,
 The duke himself, and the Venetian nobles
 Of greatest rank, have tried persuading him;
 But none can stop him from the envious plea
 Of unpaid loan, of justice, and the 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 and the authorities can't stop him,
 It will be bad for poor Antonio.

PORTIA

Is it your dear friend who's the one in trouble?

BASSANIO

The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
 The most well-mannered and unfailing spirit
 In doing courtesies, and one in whom
 The ancient Roman honor more appears
 Than any who draws breath in Italy.

PORTIA

He owes that Jew how much?

BASSANIO

For me three thousand ducats.

PORTIA

What, no more?

Pay him six thousand, and erase the bond;
 Double six thousand, and then triple that,
 Before a friend who matches this description
 Shall lose a hair due to 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 meanwhile
 Will live as maids and widows. Come, away!
 For you'll come back upon your wedding day.
 Tell your friends welcome, show a happy cheer
 Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear...
 —But let me hear the letter from your friend.

BASSANIO

[*Reads*] Dear Bassanio, my ships have all been failures, my creditors grow cruel, my assets are very low, my bond to the Jew has been broken; and since in paying the penalty's fee, it is impossible for me to live, all debts are cleared between you and I, if I might just see you at my death. Regardless of all this, do as you please. If your love does not persuade you to come, let not my letter.

PORTIA

O love, put down all business, and be gone!

BASSANIO

Since I have your consent to go away,
 I quickly go. Till I return to you.
 No bed shall see me guilty of a stay;
 No moment's rest will come between us two.
All exit

ACT 3. SCENE 3.

A street in Venice.

Enter Shylock, Salarino, Antonio, and Jailer



Jailer, Antonio, Salarino, and Shylock

SHYLOCK

Jailer, take him and tell me not of mercy;
 This is the fool that lent out money gratis.
 Jailer, take him.

ANTONIO

Hear me yet, good Shylock.

SHYLOCK

I'll have my fee. Speak not against my bond:
 I've sworn an oath that I will have my fee.
 You called me dog before without a reason;
 But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs.

The duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,
You naughty jailer, that you are so nice
To come out here with him at his request.

ANTONIO

I pray you, hear me speak.

SHYLOCK

I'll have my fee; I will not hear you speak.
I'll have my fee; and after 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 interferers. Don't follow me;
I will not talk. I'll have my fee.

Exit

SALARINO

He is the most impenetrable dog
That ever lived with men.

ANTONIO

Leave him alone:
I'll follow him no more with useless prayers.
He seeks my life; his reason I well know:
I often paid the debts that others owed him—
Many who have at times come moaned to me.
Therefore he hates me.

SALARINO

I am sure the duke
Will never let this kind of bond be kept.

ANTONIO

The duke cannot deny the course of law:
For the commercial rights that foreigners have
With us in Venice, if it be denied,
Will much destroy the justice of his state

Because the trade and profit of the city
Involves that of all nations. Therefore, go.
These griefs and losses have so worn me down
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh
Tomorrow to my bloody creditor.
Well, jailer, go. Pray God, Bassanio comes
To see me pay his debt. That's all that matters!

All exit



Venice

ACT 3. SCENE 4.

A room in Portia's house at Belmont.

Enter Portia, Nerissa, Lorenzo, Jessica, and Balthasar

LORENZO

Madam, although I say it in your presence,
You have a noble and a true conception
Of godlike friendship, which appears most strongly
In bearing thus the absence of your lord.
But if you knew to whom you show this honor,
How true a gentleman you send relief,
How dear a lover of my lord your husband,
I know you would be prouder of your work
Than of an act of simple courtesy.

PORTIA

I never have regretted doing good,
Nor shall I now. For in all those companions
Who do converse and waste their time together,
Whose souls do bear an equal weight of love,
There must be similar proportions in
Their character, their manners and their spirit,
Which makes me think that this Antonio,
Being the bosom buddy of my lord,
Must be just like my lord. If it be so,
How little is the cost I have bestowed
In purchasing the likeness of my soul
To save it from a hellish misery!
This comes too near the praising of myself;
Therefore no more of it. Hear this instead:
Lorenzo, I commit into your hands
The care and management of my whole house
Until my lord's return. For my own part,
I have toward heaven breathed a secret vow
To live in silent prayer and contemplation,
Only attended by Nerissa here,

Until her husband and my lord's return:
There is a monastery two miles from here;
And there will we reside. I do hope you
Do not deny this sudden imposition
Which my new love and some necessity
Now lays on you.

LORENZO

Madam, with all my heart;
I shall obey all of your fair commands.

PORTIA

My people do already know my wishes,
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 I wish you both!

JESSICA

I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

PORTIA

I thank you for your wish, and am well pleased
To wish it back to you. Fare you well Jessica.

Jessica and Lorenzo exit.

Now, Balthasar,
As I have always found you true and honest,
So let me find you still. Take this my letter,
And use all of the skills a man may use
In speed to Padua. Once there deliver this
Into my cousin's hand, Doctor Bellario;
And, take what notes and clothing he does give you,
Bring them, I pray you, with incredible speed
Right to the port and to the common ferry

Which goes to Venice. Waste no time with talk,
But now get going. I'll be there before you.

BALTHASAR

Madam, I go with all the speed I can.

Exit

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

Shall they see us?

PORTIA

They shall, Nerissa, but in such a manner
That they shall think we are accomplished well
With what we lack. I'll make you any wager,
When we are both dressed up just like young men,
I'll be the handsomer fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with a bolder step,
And speak with squeaking voice that is the sign
Of adolescence, and turn two dainty steps
Into a manly stride, and speak of fights
Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies:
How honorable ladies sought my love,
Which I refused, so they fell sick and died—
I could not be so bothered. Then I'll repent,
And wish at last that I had not killed them.
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,
So men shall swear I have discontinued school
Beyond twelve months. I have within my mind
A thousand tricks to seem a man who's bragging,
Which I will practice.

NERISSA

Why, will we turn to men?

PORTIA

Quiet! What kind of question might that seem
If you were near someone with lewd intentions!
Let's go; I'll tell you my entire plan
When I am in my coach, which waits for us
At the park gate. To there we'll rush away,
For we must cover twenty miles today.

All exit

ACT 3. SCENE 5.

A garden at Portia's house in Belmont.

Enter Lancelot and Jessica

LANCELET

Yes, truly; for, listen, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children. Therefore, I swear I fear for your life. I was always straight with you, and so now I'm telling you how nervous I am for you. Be cheerful and try not to upset anyone, for truly I think you are damned. There is just one hope for you that can do you any good, and that is only a kind of bastard hope.

JESSICA

And what hope is that, I pray you?

LANCELET

Really, you may partly hope that your father isn't your father and that you are not the Jew's daughter.

JESSICA

That is a kind of bastard hope, indeed. So the sins of my mother should be laid upon me.

LANCELET

Truly then I fear you are damned both by father and mother. Thus when you shun Scylla, your father, you fall into Charybdis¹, your mother. Well, you are done for both ways.

JESSICA

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

LANCELET

Truly, the more to blame him. We had enough Christians before now,

¹ Scylla and Charybdis: Scylla was a six-headed sea monster and Charybdis was a monster that created a whirlpool. The ancient Greek hero Odysseus had to sail between the two, careful not to go too close to either.

as many as could live well anyway. This making more Christians will raise the price of pork¹. If we all become pork-eaters, pretty soon there won't be any bacon frying on the coals.

Enter Lorenzo



JESSICA

I'll tell my husband, Lancelot, what you say. Here he comes.

LORENZO

I shall grow jealous of you soon, Lancelot, if you talk so much with my wife.

JESSICA

No, you need not fear us, Lorenzo. Lancelot and I aren't friends. 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

¹ Pork: Jewish people do not eat pork.

commonwealth, for in converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork.

LORENZO

[*To Lancelet*] I shall answer for that better to the commonwealth than you can the growing of the negro's belly. The Moor¹ is with child because of you, Lancelet, isn't she?

LANCELET

There is much that the *Moor* should be, *more* than expected. But if she be less than an honest woman, she is indeed *more* than I took her for.

LORENZO

How every fool can play with words! I think the most graceful wit with words will soon be silence, and conversation will be praiseworthy only among parrots. Go in, servant, and tell them to prepare for dinner.

LANCELET

That is done, sir. They all have stomachs.

LORENZO

Good Lord, what a comedian you are! Then tell them to prepare the dinner.

LANCELET

That is done too, sir. They only need to cover the table with cloth.

LORENZO

Will you cover it then, sir?

¹ the negro... the Moor: These both are names for an African with dark skin. Here they seem to refer to a made up local lady from Africa. This lady is not mentioned elsewhere in the play and probably does not exist outside of Lorenzo's joke that Lancelet plays along with.

LANCELET

[*Pointing to his head*] No, sir. I know my manners.¹

LORENZO

Yet more quibbling! Are you now showing us the whole wealth of your mind? I pray you, understand a plain man in his plain meaning: go to your fellow servants; ask them to cover the table, serve the meat, and we will come to dinner.

LANCELET

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

Exit

LORENZO

O talented talker, with his clever words!
The fool has planted in his memory
An army of fine words; and I do know
Of many fools, who stand among high ranks,
Who're just like him, attempting clever jokes
But make no sense. How are you, Jessica?
And now, my sweet, tell me what's your opinion;
How do you like the Lord Bassanio's wife?

JESSICA

Beyond expression. It is very fitting
That 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 doesn't cherish her,
Then reasonably he should not go to heaven.
Why, if two gods should play some heavenly game
And on the wager bet two earthly women,

¹cover... manners: he has twisted the meaning to say that he will not cover his head because that would be disrespectful in front of someone of higher status.

And Portia one, there must be something else
That's wagered with the other, for this poor world
Has not her equal.



Jessica and Lorenzo

LORENZO
So too I'm such a husband
To you as she is wife for Lord Bassanio.

JESSICA
No, but ask my opinion too of that.

LORENZO
I will soon, but first let us go to dinner.

JESSICA
No, let me praise you while I feel compelled.

LORENZO

No, pray you, let it serve as table-talk.
However then you speak, about such things
I shall digest it.

JESSICA

Fine, if you insist
And then I'll set the table with my words.

All exit

ACT 4. SCENE 1.

A court of justice in Venice.

Enter the Duke, the Nobles, Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano, Salerio, and others



The Duke Entering

DUKE

So, is Antonio here?

ANTONIO

I'm here and ready, your grace.

DUKE

I am sorry for you: You've come to face
A stone-like adversary, an inhuman wretch

incapable of pity, void and empty
Of any drop of mercy.

ANTONIO

I have heard
Your grace has taken pains to rectify
His rigid course; but since he stands so stubborn
And since no lawful means can carry me
Out of his envy's reach, I do surrender
My life into his fury, and am armed
To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,
The utter tyranny and rage of his.

DUKE

Go on, and call the Jew into the court.

SALERIO

He's ready at the door. He comes, my lord.

Enter Shylock

DUKE

Make room, and let him stand before our faces.
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,
That you've just left this image of your malice
To the very last hour; and then it's thought
You'll show your mercy and remorse, surprising
Us just as you've seemed surprisingly cruel;
And where you now exact the penalty,
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,
You will not only waive this fee for him,
But, touched with human gentleness and love,
Not charge him half the principal he owes
Because your eye of pity sees his losses
That recently have gathered on his back
Enough to press a royal merchant down
And pluck a deep compassion toward his state
From charcoal chests and hearts as rough as flint,

From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never trained
To offering of tender courtesy.
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

SHYLOCK

I have informed your grace of my intent;
And by our holy Sabbath¹ have I sworn
To have what's due: the fee for breaking the bond.
If you deny it, let disaster fall
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.
You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
A pound of rotten flesh than to receive
Three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that,
But, say, it is my liking. Are you answered?
What if my house is troubled with a rat
And I would like to give ten thousand ducats
To have it poisoned? Well, are you answered yet?
There are some men who do not love roast pig;
Some, that are mad if they look at a cat;
And others, when the bagpipes play a note,
Cannot contain their urine. For affection,
Mistress of feelings, sways one to the mood
Of what one likes or hates. Now, for your answer:
As there is no firm reason to be given
Why one cannot endure a roasted pig;
Why one can't stand a harmless useful cat;
Why one is forced by wooly bagpipe songs
To give into his own inevitable shame
That leads to just himself being the victim,
So can I give no reason, nor will I,
More than a deep hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow this,
A worthless claim, against him. Are you answered?

¹ Sabbath: A day of religious observation. For Jews on Saturday, for Christians on Sunday.



BASSANIO

This is no answer, You unfeeling man,
To excuse the current of your cruelty.

SHYLOCK

I'm not required to please you with my answers.

BASSANIO

Do all men kill the things they do not love?

SHYLOCK

Does any hate the thing he would not kill?

BASSANIO

Every offense is not a hate at first.

SHYLOCK

What, would you have a serpent sting you twice?

ANTONIO

[*To Bassanio*] I pray, recall your questioning a Jew:
 You may as well go stand upon the beach
 And ask the tide to lower down its height;
 You may as well go questioning the wolf
 Why he has 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 fluttered by the gusts of heaven;
 You may as well do things too hard to do,
 As seek to soften up—what could be harder?—
 His Jewish heart. Therefore, I do beg you,
 Make no more offers, use no further means,
 But with all brief and plain convenient style
 Give me your judgment and the Jew his will.

BASSANIO

For your three thousand ducats here is six.

SHYLOCK

If every ducat in six thousand ducats
 Were in six parts and every part a ducat,
 I would not take them; I will have my fee!

DUKE

How shall you hope for mercy, giving none?

SHYLOCK

What judgment shall I dread; I do no wrong?
 You have among you many a purchased slave,
 Which, like your asses¹ and your dogs and mules,
 You use for doing low and wretched jobs
 Because you bought them. Shall I say to you,
 Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
 Why do they sweat beneath such burdens? Their beds
 Should be as soft as yours and let their palates
 Be tantalized by fine cuisine? You'll answer

¹ asses: donkeys

“The slaves are ours.” So do I answer you:
 The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,
 Was rightly bought. It's mine and I will have it.
 If you deny me, curses on your law!
 There is no force behind the law of Venice.
 I wait for justice—answer; shall I have it?

DUKE

Using my power I may dismiss this court,
 Unless Bellario, a learned doctor,
 Whom I have sent for to examine this,
 Comes here today.

SALERIO

My lord, there waits outside
 A messenger with letters from the doctor,
 Just come from Padua.

DUKE

Call in the messenger.

BASSANIO

Cheer up, Antonio! Have courage, man, there's hope!
 The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones and all,
 Before for me you'll lose one drop of blood.

Shylock takes out a knife and sharpens it on the heel of his shoe's sole.

ANTONIO

I am the weakest member of the flock,
 Most fit for death. The rottenest kind of fruit
 Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me.
 There is no better job for you Bassanio
 Than living on to write my epitaph.

Enter Nerissa, dressed like a lawyer's clerk

DUKE

Are you from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA

From both, my lord. [*Presenting a letter*] Bellario greets your grace.

BASSANIO

Why do you sharpen your knife so earnestly?

SHYLOCK

To cut the fee owed by that bankrupt man.

GRATIANO

Not on your *sole*, but on your *soul*, harsh Jew,
You make your knife sharp; but no metal can,
No, not the hangman's axe, bear half the sharpness
Of your sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce you?

SHYLOCK

No, none that you are smart enough to make.

GRATIANO

O, you're a damned impossible stubborn dog!
Who makes a crime of justice while he lives.
You almost make me waver in my faith
And start agreeing with Pythagoras,¹
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into men's human bodies. Your dog-like spirit
Once ruled a wolf, who, hanged for human slaughter,
And from the hanging wolf, his fierce soul flew
To you while lying in a womb unholy,
Infused itself in you; for your desires
Are wolf-like, bloody, starved, and ravenous.

SHYLOCK

Till you can rip the seal from off my bond,

¹ Pythagoras (570-490 BC): An ancient Greek philosopher who believed in reincarnation.

You only harm your lungs to speak so loud.
Refine your thoughts, good youth, or they will fall
To cureless ruin. I wait here for justice.

DUKE

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

NERISSA

He is waiting nearby,
To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

DUKE

With all my heart. Some three or four of you
Go bring him here with all good courtesy.
Meanwhile the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

Clerk

[*Reads*] Your grace, I write to tell you that I am very sick. But at the moment that your messenger came, I had a friend visiting with me, a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthasar. I acquainted him with the cause of controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant. We looked through many books together. He is furnished with my opinion, which, improved with his own insight, the greatness of which I cannot recommend enough, comes with him to answer your grace's request in my place. I beg you, let his lack of years be no impediment that lessens your opinion of him; for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. If your grace accepts him, you will have a better understanding of his worth.

DUKE

You hear the wise Bellario, what he writes
And here, I take it, now the doctor comes.

Enter Portia, dressed like a doctor of laws

Give me your hand. Do you come from Bellario?

PORTIA

I did, my lord.

DUKE

You are welcome: take your place.
Are you acquainted with the situation
That grips this present trial in the court?

PORTIA

I'm thoroughly informed of what's the cause.
Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

DUKE

Antonio and old Shylock, both come forward.

PORTIA

Is your name Shylock?

SHYLOCK

Shylock is my name.

PORTIA

Of a strange nature is the claim you bring,
In such a way that the Venetian law
Cannot restrict you as you do proceed.
[*To Antonio*] You stand within his aiming, do you not?

ANTONIO

Yes, so he says.

PORTIA

Do you confess your fault?

ANTONIO

I do.

PORTIA

The Jew must then be merciful.

SHYLOCK

On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

PORTIA

The quality of mercy can't be forced;
It drops as does the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:
It blesses him that gives and him that takes.
It's mightiest in the mightiest: it fits well
The high throned monarch better than his crown.
His scepter shows the force of worldly power,
The attribute that awes with majesty,
The source of power making us fear kings;
But mercy is above this sceptered force.
It is enthroned within the hearts of kings;
It is an attribute of God himself;
And earthly power does then seem like God's
When mercy tempers justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be your plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer does teach us all to do
Good deeds of mercy. I have said all this
To mitigate the justice of your plea;
Which if you follow, this strict court of Venice
Must give a sentence against the merchant there.

SHYLOCK

My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
The penalty and fee paid for my bond.

PORTIA

Is he not able to pay you the money?

BASSANIO

Yes, here I offer for him in the court;
Here, twice the sum. If that will not suffice,
I will be bound to pay it ten times over,
The fee will be my hands, my head, my heart.

If this will not suffice, it must appear
That malice weighs down truth. And I beg you,
Take law into your hands by authority
To do a great right, do a little wrong,
And curb this cruel devil in his will.

PORTIA

It must not be; there is no power in Venice
Can alter laws once they have been established:
It'd be recorded as a precedent,
And many errors by the same example
Will rush into the state. It cannot be.

SHYLOCK

A Daniel¹ come to judgment! Yes, a Daniel!
O wise young judge, how I do honor you!

PORTIA

I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

SHYLOCK

Here, most respected doctor, here it is.

PORTIA

Shylock, there's thrice your money offered you.

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

[*Reading the bond*] Why, this bond is broken;
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off

¹ Daniel: a wise judge in the Old Testament of the Bible and the Jewish Torah.

Nearest the merchant's heart. [*To Shylock*] Be merciful:
Take thrice your money. Tell me "Tear up the bond."

SHYLOCK

Once it is paid according to the terms.
It does appear you are a worthy judge;
You know the law, for your interpretation
Has been most sound. I ask you by the law,
Of which 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 wait here for my fee.

ANTONIO

Most heartily I do beg of the court
To give the judgment.

PORTIA

Why then, thus it is:
You must prepare your chest to feel his knife.

SHYLOCK

O noble judge! O excellent young man!

PORTIA

For the intent and purpose of the law
Gives full enforcement of the penalty,
Which here it says is due when terms are broken.

SHYLOCK

It's very true, O wise and upright judge!
How much more older are you than your looks!

PORTIA

[*To Antonio*] Therefore lay bare your chest.

SHYLOCK

Yes, his chest,
 So says the bond; does it not, noble judge?
 “Nearest his heart”: those are the very words.

PORTIA

It is so. Are there scales for weighing out
 The flesh?

SHYLOCK

I have them ready.

PORTIA

Have by some surgeon, Shylock, that you’ve hired
 To stop his wounds, so he won’t bleed to death.

SHYLOCK

Is it so indicated in the bond?

PORTIA

It is not so expressed, but what of that?
 It would be good to show some decency.

SHYLOCK

I cannot find it; it’s not in the bond.

PORTIA

You, merchant, have you any thing to say?

ANTONIO

A little: I am armed and well prepared.
 Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!
 Grieve not that I am fallen here for you;
 For Lady Fortune shows herself more kind
 Than is her custom, which is frequently
 To let a wretched man outlive his wealth,
 And see with hollow eyes and wrinkled brows
 An age of poverty. From such a life
 Of lingering misery she cuts me off.

Send my regards to your most honored wife.
 Tell her the process of Antonio’s end;
 Say how I loved you and speak well of me;
 And, when the tale is told, tell her to judge
 Whether Bassanio is deserving love.
 You only must regret you’ll lose your friend,
 But he does not regret he pays your debt;
 For if the Jew does cut just deep enough,
 I’ll pay it instantly 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 esteemed above your life.
 I would lose all, yes, sacrifice them all
 Here to this devil, to deliver you.

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

I have a wife, whom, I proclaim, I love:
 I wish she were in heaven, so she could
 Enlist some power there to change this Jew.

NERISSA

It’s well you offer it behind her back;
 Or else it’d make for an unquiet house.

SHYLOCK

These be just Christian husbands. I wish my daughter;
 Had someone from the line of Barrabas¹
 To be her husband rather than a Christian!

¹ Barrabas: In the Bible, a Jew who was set to be executed for insurrection and murder. However, he was released from execution in order to make space for Jesus to be crucified.

[To Portia]

We waste our time; please give the sentence.



PORTIA

A pound of that same merchant's flesh is yours.
The court awards it, and the law gives it.

SHYLOCK

Most rightful judge!

PORTIA

And you must cut this flesh right through his chest.
The law allows it, and the court awards it.

SHYLOCK

Most learnèd judge! A sentence! Come, prepare!

PORTIA

Just wait a moment; there is something else.
This bond does give you here no drop of blood.
The words expressly are "a pound of flesh."
Take then your fee, take now your pound of flesh;
But, while you're cutting it, if you do shed
One drop of Christian blood, your lands and goods
Must, by the laws of Venice, then be seized,
Confiscated by the state of Venice.

GRATIANO

O upright judge! O learnèd judge!

SHYLOCK

Is that the law?

PORTIA

Look at the law yourself
For, as you urge for justice, be assured
You shall have justice, more than you desire.

GRATIANO

O learnèd judge! O, Jew! A learnèd judge!

SHYLOCK

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

BASSANIO

Here is the money.

PORTIA

Wait!

The Jew shall have all justice. Wait! Be still.
He shall have nothing but the penalty.

GRATIANO

O Jew! An upright judge, a learned judge!

PORTIA

Therefore prepare to cut from him the flesh.
But shed no blood, nor cut out less nor more
But just a pound of flesh. If you cut more
Or less than a just pound, be it just so much
As makes it light or heavy in the substance,
Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple, no, if the scale do turn
But in the estimation of a hair,
You die and all your goods must then be seized.

GRATIANO

A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew!
Now, infidel, I know now where you're weak.

PORTIA

Why does the Jew pause? Take your fee.

SHYLOCK

Give me my principal¹, and let me go.

BASSANIO

I have it ready for you; here it is.

PORTIA

He has refused it in the open court.
He shall have merely justice and his fee.

¹ principal: the original amount of a loan; in this case 3,000 ducats.

GRATIANO

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

SHYLOCK

Shall I not even have my principal?

PORTIA

You shall have nothing but the penalty,
To be so taken at your peril, Jew.

SHYLOCK

Why, then the devil let him keep his goods!
I'll stay no longer here.

PORTIA

But wait now, Jew.
The law has yet another hold on you.
It is so written in the laws of Venice,
If it be proved against an alien
That by direct or indirect attempts
He seeks the life of any citizen,
The party which he does contrive against
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half
Goes to the public coffers of the state;
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of our one Duke, who has the final say.
In this predicament, I say, you stand;
For it appears from all of these proceedings,
That indirectly and directly too
You have contrived against the very life
Of the defendant; and you have incurred
The punishment that I've described just now.
Bow down therefore and beg the Duke for mercy.

GRATIANO

Beg that you be allowed to hang yourself.
And yet, your wealth now taken by the state,

You couldn't afford to buy yourself a rope.
Therefore the state must pay your hanging's bill.

DUKE

So you shall see the difference of our spirits,
I pardon you your life before you ask it:
For half your wealth, it is Antonio's;
The other half comes to the general state,
And if you're humble lessened to a fine.

PORTIA

Yes, for the state, not for Antonio.

SHYLOCK

No, take my life and all; don't pardon that.
You take my house when you do take the prop
That does sustain my house; you take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.

PORTIA

What mercy can you offer him, Antonio?

GRATIANO

A noose for free, nothing else, for God's sake.

ANTONIO

I ask my lord the duke and all the court
To end the fine for one half of his goods,
I am content if he will let me have
The other half to give it, upon his death,
Right to the gentleman who stole his daughter.
And two things more provided: that, for this favor,
He presently becomes a Christian man;
The other, that he do record a gift
Here in the court, so all he has at death
Goes to his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

DUKE

He shall do this, or else I do retract
The pardon that I just had granted him.

PORTIA

Are you contented, Jew? What do you say?

SHYLOCK

I am content.

PORTIA

Clerk, make a deed of gift.

SHYLOCK

I pray you, give me permission now to leave;
I am not well. Send the deed to my home,
And I will sign it.

DUKE

Go, but make sure you sign.

GRATIANO

In christening¹ you shall have two godfathers.
Had I been judge, you would have had ten more²,
To bring you to the gallows³, not the font.

Exit Shylock

DUKE

[*To Portia*] Sir, I invite you to my home for dinner.

¹ christening: also known as baptism, is an initiation ritual into the Christian faith often done on babies at the baptismal font with water; new converts also go through this; the one who is christened or baptized is usually given two godparents who are meant to be spiritual helpers.

² ten more: a jury trying an accused criminal usually consisted of twelve people.

³ gallows: where some convicted criminals are hanged

PORTIA

I humbly ask your grace to grant his pardon:
 I must rush forth tonight to Padua,
 And it is time right now for me to leave.

DUKE

I'm sorry that you have no leisure time.
 Antonio, give thanks to this gentleman,
 For, in my mind, you owe him very much.

Duke and his entourage exit

BASSANIO

Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend
 Have by your wisdom been this day relieved
 Of grievous penalties; and thus give you
 Three thousand ducats, meant for the Jew.
 We freely praise your courteous pains with this.

ANTONIO

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

PORTIA

He is well paid who is well satisfied;
 And by relieving you, I'm satisfied
 And thus I do regard myself well paid.
 My own intentions were not mercenary.
 I pray you, thank me when we meet again.
 I wish you well, and so I leave you now.

BASSANIO

Dear sir, with must be bold and ask 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, O well, it is a trifle!
 I will not shame myself to give you this.

PORTIA

I will have nothing else but only this;
 And now I think I am quite drawn to it.

BASSANIO

Much more depends on this than on the value.
 The finest ring in Venice I will give you,
 And first I'll find it out by public notice.
 But as for this, I pray you, pardon me.

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

Good sir, this ring was given 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 old excuse is how men save their gifts.
 And if your wife is not completely mad,
 And knew how well I have deserved the ring,

She would not hold you as forever guilty
For giving it to me... Well, peace be with you!

Portia and Nerissa exit

ANTONIO

My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring:
Let his deservings and my love for you
Be valued more than is your wife's commands.

BASSANIO

Go, Gratiano, run, catch up with him.
Give him the ring, and bring him, if you can,
To see Antonio's house. Now go! Be quick.

Exit Gratiano

Come, you and I will go there presently;
And early in the morning we will both
Fly on to Belmont. Come, Antonio.

All exit

ACT 4. SCENE II.

A street in Venice.

Enter Portia and Nerissa

PORTIA

Find where the Jew's house is, give him this deed
And have him sign it. We'll sail tonight
And be at home a day before our husbands.
This deed will be received well by Lorenzo.

Enter Gratiano

GRATIANO

Fair sir, I have caught up with you at last.
My Lord Bassanio, once given more advice
Has sent you here this ring, and does request
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 servant Shylock's house.

GRATIANO

That I will do.

NERISSA

Sir, let me speak with you.

[*Aside to Portia*] I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,
Which I have made him swear to keep forever.

PORTIA

[*Aside to Nerissa*] I'm sure its yours.
They'll stand and swear to us

That they did give the rings away to men;
But we'll outstand them, and outswear them too.

[*Aloud*] Get going! Be quick. You know where I will be.

NERISSA

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

All exit

ACT 5. SCENE 1.

A pathway outside Portia's house in Belmont.



Enter Lorenzo and Jessica

LORENZO

The moon shines bright. On such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise, on such a night
Troilus¹ I think climbed up the Trojan walls
And sighed his soul out toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressida lay that night.

¹ Troilus... Cressida: two Trojans during the Trojan War, when the Greeks were camped outside the Trojan walls, waiting to attack; Cressida's father switched to the Greek side, taking her with him, and breaking Troilus's heart.

JESSICA

On such a night
Did careful Thisbe¹ tiptoe through the dew
And see the lion's shadow coming close
And ran away dismayed.

LORENZO

On such a night
Stood Dido² with a willow branch in hand
Upon the sea banks waving to her love
To come again to Carthage.

JESSICA

On such a night
Medea³ gathered the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Aeson.

LORENZO

On such a night
Did Jessica creep from the wealthy Jew
And with a moneyless love ran from Venice
As far as Belmont.

JESSICA

On such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,
And crept into her soul with vows of honor
But not a true one.

¹ Thisbe: in ancient Babylon, Thisbe was a young girl seeking a young man she was in love with but forbidden to see, Pyramus; she arrived early at their meeting place but was frightened away by a lion; this ultimately led to both of their deaths.

² Dido: a princess of Carthage who married the ancient Trojan warrior Aeneas, who landed in Carthage after fleeing from Troy when the Trojans lost the Trojan War; Zeus (Jupiter) commanded Aeneas to continue his journey since he was destined to go to Italy and found the city of Rome; Dido killed herself after he left her.

³ Medea... Aeson: Medea was a princess in ancient Greece rescued by Jason; she used magic herbs to cure Jason's father Aeson.

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

I would out-talk you, if no body came;
 But, wait, I hear the footsteps of a man.

Enter Stephano

LORENZO

Who comes so fast amid the silent 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 stops and wanders round
 By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays
 For happy married life.

LORENZO

Who comes with her?

STEPHANO

None but a holy hermit and her maid.
 I pray you, has my master yet returned?

LORENZO

He has not, and nor have we heard from him.
 But we'll go in, I pray you, Jessica,

And ceremoniously let us prepare
 Some welcome for the mistress of the house.

Enter Lancelot

LANCELET

Sola, sola! Wo ha, ho, sola, sola!¹

LORENZO

Who calls?

LANCELET

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

LORENZO

Stop hollering, man, I'm here.

LANCELET

Sola! Where? Where?

LORENZO

Here.

LANCELET

Tell him a messenger has come from my master, with his horn full of
 good news. My master will be here before morning.

Exit

LORENZO

My sweet let's go in, and wait for their arrival...
 Yet what's the difference: Why should we go in?
 My friend Stephano, tell them all, I pray you,

¹ Sola...: Lancelot is imitating a messenger's horn.

Within the house, your mistress is nearby.
And bring your music out 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 thickly inlaid with bright golden patterns.
Down to the smallest orb which you behold,
Each in its motion like an angel sings
In chorus to the young-eyed cherubim.
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But while this muddy clothing of decay
Does grossly close us in, we cannot hear it.

Enter Musicians



The Musicians

Come, ho! And wake Diana¹ with a hymn!
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress's ear,
And draw her home with music.

Music plays

JESSICA

I'm never happy when I hear sweet music.

LORENZO

The reason is, your spirits are attentive;
For notice how a wild and wanton herd,
Or group of youthful and unbroken colts,
Running around like mad and neighing loudly,
Which is the hot condition of their blood—
If they just hear by chance a trumpet sound,
Or any note of music touches their ears,
You will see them stand there together, still.
Their savage eyes become a modest gaze
By the sweet power of music. Therefore the poet
Claims Orpheus's² song led trees to dance
Since none's so stubborn, hard, and full of rage
That music for a time can't change his nature.
The man that has no music in himself,
Nor is moved by sweet sounds in harmony,
Is fit for crimes, scheming, cheating others.
The motions of his spirit dull as night
And his affections dark as Erebus³:
Let no such man be trusted. Hear the music.

Enter Portia and Nerissa

¹ Diana: ancient Roman goddess of the Moon.

² Orpheus: ancient Greek man who was taught music by the god of music, Apollo; his song was so powerful it could move gods and make the trees move.

³ Erebus: primordial Greek god of darkness.

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

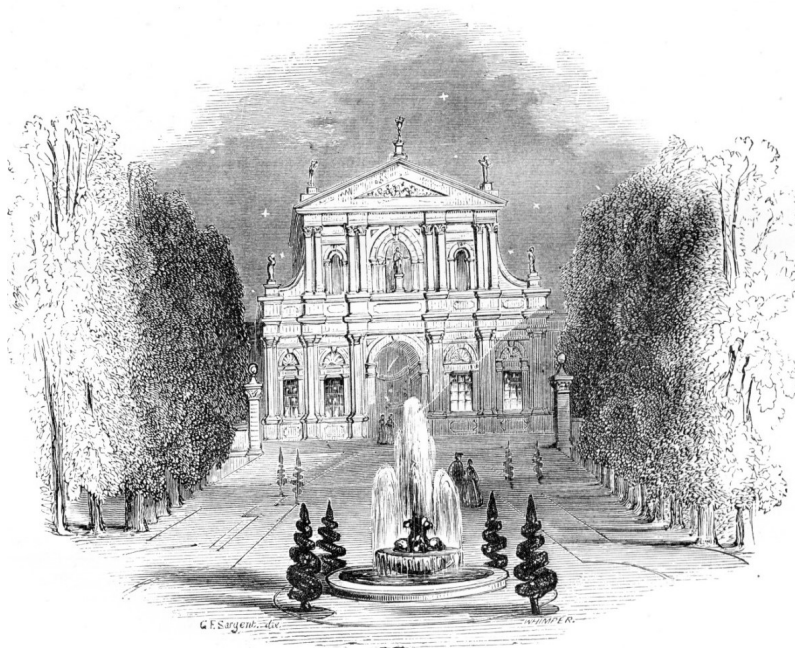
When the moon shone, we did not see the candle.

PORTIA

So does the greater glory dim the lesser:
 A substitute shines brightly as a king
 Until the king returns, and then the state
 Empties itself, as does an inland brook
 Into much larger waters. Listen! Music!

NERISSA

It is your music, madam, of the house.



Portia's House in Belmont at Night

PORTIA

Nothing is good, it seems, without good setting.
 I think it sounds much sweeter than by day.

NERISSA

Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

PORTIA

The crow does sing as sweetly as the lark,
 When no one is around them, and I think
 The nightingale, if she would sing by day,
 When every goose is cackling, would be thought
 No better a musician than the wren.
 How many things by setting are then set
 To their right praise and true perfection!
 Peace, ho! The moon sleeps with Endymion¹
 And would not be awakened.

Music ceases

LORENZO

That is the voice,
 Or I am much mistaken, 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;
 We hope our words better increased their speed.
 Are they returned?

¹ Endymion: a son of Zeus and husband of the Moon Goddess Selene.

LORENZO

Madam, they are not yet;
 But there had come just now a messenger
 To tell us of their coming.

PORTIA

Go in, Nerissa;
 Give orders to my servants that they not
 Mention at all our being absent here;
 Nor you, Lorenzo; Jessica, nor you.

A flourish of trumpets

LORENZO

Your husband is at hand; I hear his trumpet.
 We are no tattletales, do not fear.

PORTIA

This night I think is just the daylight sick;
 It looks a little paler. It's a day
 Such as the day is when the sun is hiding.

Enter Bassanio, Antonio, Gratiano, and their followers

BASSANIO

Our day will match Australia's and New Zealand's
 If you keep walking 'round without the sun.

PORTIA

Let me give light, but not make light of marriage;
 For that would make a heavy-hearted husband,
 As never shall Bassanio be for me;
 But God's will be done! Welcome home, my lord.

BASSANIO

I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend.

This is the man, this is Antonio,
 To whom I'm infinitely now indebted.

PORTIA

You should in all good sense be much indebted
 For, as I've heard, he's held much debt for you.

ANTONIO

No more than I already have paid off.

PORTIA

Sir, you are very welcome to our house.
 I'll show you this in more ways than mere words.
 Therefore, my words of courtesy are brief.

GRATIANO

[*To Nerissa*] By that moon there I swear you do me wrong;
 In truth, I gave it to the judge's clerk.
 I wish that he were neutered, for my part,
 Since you do take it, love, so much to heart.

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring
 She gave me bearing the inscription that
 For all the world like a knife-maker's poem
 Upon a knife, "Love me, and leave me not."

NERISSA

What do you mean, the wording or the value?
 You swore to me, when I gave it to 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 respectful and have kept it.
 Gave to a judge's clerk!? God as my judge,
 That clerk will never wear hair on his face.

GRATIANO

He will so, if he lives to be a man.

NERISSA

Yes, if a woman lives to be a man.

GRATIANO

Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,
A kind of boy, a little well-scrubbed boy,
No taller than yourself—the judge's clerk,
Quite chatty, begging for it as a fee.
I could not for my life deny him it.

PORTIA

You were to blame, I must be plain with you,
To part so slightly with your wife's first gift:
A thing put on with oaths upon your finger
And in good faith encircled on your flesh.
I gave my love a ring and made him swear
Never to part with it; and here he stands.
I dare to say for him he would not leave it,
Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth
In all the world. Now, in truth, Gratiano,
You treat your wife unkindly, causing grief.
If it were me, I would be mad as well.

BASSANIO

[*Aside*] Why, I had better cut my left hand off
And swear I lost the ring defending it.

GRATIANO

My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away to
The judge that begged for it, indeed
Deserved it too; and then the boy, his clerk,
That took some pains in writing, begged for mine;
And neither one accepted anything
But those two rings.

PORTIA

What ring was that my lord?
Not that, I hope, which you received from me.

BASSANIO

If I could add a lie on top an error,
I would deny it; but you see my finger
Has not the ring around it. It is gone.

PORTIA

So void of any truth is your false heart.
By heaven, I'll not ever come near you
Until I see the ring.

NERISSA

Nor I to you
Until I see my ring again.

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 imagine why I gave the ring
And how unwillingly I gave the ring,
When nothing was accepted but the ring,
You would reduce 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 honor to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.
What man is there who's so unreasonable,
Who, if you'd tried to have protected it
With any passion, lacked the decency
To take a thing so personal in value?
Nerissa's figured out what to believe:
I'd bet my life some woman got the ring.

BASSANIO

No, by my honor, madam, by my soul,
 No woman had it, but a legal doctor,
 Who did refuse from me three thousand ducats
 And begged to have the ring, which I denied him
 And made him go away displeased with me
 Even though this man saved the very life
 Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?
 I had no choice but send the ring to him
 Or else lack courtesy and then face shame;
 My honor would not let ingratitude
 So fiercely smear it. Pardon me, good lady;
 For, by these blessed candles of the night,
 Had you been there, I think you would have begged
 To have the ring to give the worthy doctor.

PORTIA

Let not that doctor ever near my house
 Since he has 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:
 Don't sleep a night away; watch me like Argus.¹
 If you do not, if I be left alone,
 Now, by my honor, which is still my own,
 I'll have that doctor for my bedfellow.

NERISSA

And I his clerk. Therefore be very careful
 When you leave me without any protection.

GRATIANO

Well, do so then, but don't let me find him;
 For if I do, I'll break the young clerk's pen.

¹ Argus: In Greek mythology, a giant who could see everywhere with 100 eyes.

ANTONIO

I'm the unhappy subject of these quarrels.

PORTIA

Sir, worry not; you're welcome all the same.

BASSANIO

Portia, forgive my unintentional wrong;
 And, with these many friends here as our witness,
 I swear to you, and by your own fair eyes,
 In which I see myself—

PORTIA

Listen to that!
 In both my eyes he sees his doubled self;
 And these fake doubles count as true to him—
 O what a truthful oath.

BASSANIO

No, just hear me:
 Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear
 I never more will break an oath with you.

ANTONIO

I once did lend my body for his wealth
 And if it weren't for him who wears your ring
 I'd now be lost. I'd lend myself again,
 My soul would be the fee, to swear my friend
 Will never break his word to you again.

PORTIA

Then you will be his penalty. [*Giving the ring to Antonio*]
 Give him this
 And tell 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

He gave it to me: pardon me, Bassanio;
For, by this ring, the doctor lay with me.

NERISSA

And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano;
For that same well-scrubbed boy, the doctor's clerk,
As pay for this last night did lie with me.

Nerissa gives Gratiano the ring

GRATIANO

Why, this is like the fixing of highways
In summer, where the way is barely fair.
What—we've been cheated on though not deserved it?

PORTIA

Speak not so crudely. You are all amazed. [*Takes out a letter*]
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 only now returned; I have not yet
Entered my house. Antonio, you are welcome; [*Gives letter to Antonio*]
And I have better news in store for you
Than you expect. Unseal this letter soon;
There you shall find three of your merchant ships
Have suddenly arrived with their rich cargo.
You'd never guess by what strange accident
I came upon this letter.

ANTONIO

I am dumb.

BASSANIO

Were you the doctor and I did not know you?

GRATIANO

Were you the clerk who led my wife to cheat?

NERISSA

Yes, but the clerk that never means to do it,
Unless he lives until he is a man.

BASSANIO

Sweet doctor, you shall be my bedfellow.
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
Have safely reached the harbor.

PORTIA

How now, Lorenzo!
My clerk has news that comforts too for you.

NERISSA

Yes, and I'll give to him without a fee. [*Gives him the will*]
This I do give to you and Jessica
From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift:
After his death, you get all that he owns.

LORENZO

Fair ladies, you drop manna¹ to the path
Of starving people.

¹ manna: a type of bread-like, honey-flavored food that rained down from the sky, sent by God to the Jewish people when they were wandering for 40 years in the desert after fleeing Egypt, according to the Bible.

PORTIA

It is almost morning,
And yet I'm sure you'd like to hear some more
About what really happened. Let us go in;
And there put to us all your questionings,
And we will answer all things truthfully.

GRATIANO

Let it be so: the first for swearing in
For questions is my wife, and I'll begin:
Is my Nerissa awake enough to stay
Or should she sleep, being two hours till day?
And if she does decide to go to bed
Who'll I find there: her or a clerk instead?
Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing
So much as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.

All exit