

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

*Enter ANTONIO, SALERIO, and SOLANIO***ANTONIO**

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

SALERIO

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

SOLANIO

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

SALERIO

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

ANTONIO

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

SOLANIO

Why then, you are in love.

Shakescleare Translation

*ANTONIO, SALERIO, and SOLANIO enter.***ANTONIO**

To tell the truth, I don't know why I am so sad. I'm tired of being sad, and you say you're tired of it, too. But I don't know how I caught, found, or came by this sadness; what it's about; or where it came from. And since I don't know anything about this sadness, I clearly have a ways to go in understanding myself.

SALERIO

Your mind is focused on the ocean where your merchant ships are sailing like rich, important men parading on the sea. They tower over the little trade boats that they pass by, sailing along, and it's as if the little boats **bow** ¹ before the greatness of your ships.

¹ This word, as well as the original, "curtsy," calls to mind the image of smaller ships bobbing up and down in the waves.

SOLANIO

Believe me, sir, if I were involved in a trade venture like yours, most of my mental energy would be with my ships, as well. I'd be pulling up shoots of grass to use them to check the wind, and looking at maps of ports and piers and roads. And any little thing that might make me worry that something bad would happen to my ships would make me sad, without a doubt.

SALERIO

I'd get upset blowing on my hot soup, because it would make me think of what a strong wind at sea could do to my ships. If I saw the sands run in an hourglass, I would think of flat shallows where my ship, "The Andrew ²," run aground with all its riches and flipped over, completely done for. If I went to church and saw its stone construction, I couldn't help but think of dangerous rocks that could break the sides of my ships and scatter valuable spices all over the water, causing my silks to fall out and drape on the waves. They are worth so much, and would all of a sudden be lost and worth nothing to me. How could I think of such things and not get sad? But you don't need to tell me. I know that Antonio is sad because he's worrying about his merchandise.

² "The Andrew" was the name of one of the two large Spanish galleons captured by the English in 1596. News of the event was cause for excitement in England at the time. (1974 Riverside Ed.)

ANTONIO

Believe me, you're wrong. Thank goodness, not all my merchandise is in one ship or any one place, and I haven't risked all my riches on this year's venture. Therefore, it's not my merchandise that is making me sad.

SOLANIO

Well, then, you must be in love.

ANTONIO

Fie, fie!

SOLANIO

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

Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO

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

SALERIO

I would have stayed till I had made you merry
 If worthier friends had not prevented me.

ANTONIO

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

SALERIO

[to BASSANIO, LORENZO, GRATIANO]
 Good morrow, my good lords.

BASSANIO

[to SALERIO and SOLANIO]
 70 Good signors both, when shall we laugh? Say, when?
 You grow exceeding strange. Must it be so?

SALERIO

We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.

Exeunt SALERIO and SOLANIO

LORENZO

My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio,
 We two will leave you. But at dinnertime
 75 I pray you have in mind where we must meet.

BASSANIO

I will not fail you.

GRATIANO

You look not well, Signor Antonio.
 You have too much respect upon the world.
 They lose it that do buy it with much care.
 80 Believe me, you are marvelously changed.

ANTONIO

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

GRATIANO

Let me play the fool.
 85 With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come.
 And let my liver rather heat with wine
 Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
 Why should a man whose blood is warm within
 Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster,
 90

ANTONIO

Oh please!

SOLANIO

You're not in love either? Then let's just say you are sad
 because you are not happy. It would be just as easy for you
 to laugh and jump around and just say you are happy
 because you are not sad. I swear, by two-headed Janus ³,
 nature has made all kinds of different people. Some people
 are always happy and could even laugh at a funeral, while
 others are so sour they don't even crack a smile at
 anything, not even at a joke that Nestor ⁴ called the
 funniest.

BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO enter.

Here comes Bassanio, your most noble relative, along with
 Gratiano and Lorenzo. Goodbye. We'll leave you to these
 better friends.

SALERIO

If it weren't for these better friends coming along, I would
 have stayed until I made you smile.

ANTONIO

I see you as very worthy. I gather you have business to take
 care of and are just taking this opportunity to leave.

SALERIO

[To BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO] Good day, my
 good lords.

BASSANIO

[To SALERIO and SOLANIO] Both of you are good men;
 when are we going to have fun times together? Tell me,
 when? You're practically strangers now. Does it have to be
 that way?

SALERIO

The next time we get a chance, we'll spend some time
 together.

SALERIO and SOLANIO exit.

LORENZO

My Lord Bassanio, since you've found Antonio, the two of us
 will leave you two alone. But please remember where we're
 meeting for dinner.

BASSANIO

Don't worry.

GRATIANO

You don't look good, Sir Antonio. You care too much about
 worldly things. Those who care too much about things end
 up losing them. Believe me, you really don't look yourself.

ANTONIO

I value the world for what it is, Gratiano: a stage where
 every man must play a role ⁵. And my role is a sad one.

GRATIANO

Well let me play the fool ⁶, then. I don't care if laughter
 causes wrinkles. I'd rather destroy my liver with wine than
 waste away with sad groans. Why should a warm-blooded
 man be as cold and stoic as a statue of his dead
 grandfather? Why should he be so inactive that he is
 practically asleep while awake, and start to get jaundice ⁷

³ A Roman god with two faces, one on the front and one the back of his head.

⁴ Nestor was the oldest and most serious of all of the Greek heroes.

⁵ This notion would later be echoed and expanded upon in Jacques's "All the world's a stage" speech in *As You Like It*.

⁶ The Fool was a role held in many Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas by the same comedian of a troupe. We might call it a "clown" today.

⁷ A sickness then thought to be caused by too much of cholera, one of the four humors, similar to how

Sleep when he wakes, and creep into the jaundice
 By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio—
 I love thee, and 'tis my love that speaks—
 There are a sort of men whose visages
 Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
 95 And do a willful stillness entertain
 With purpose to be dressed in an opinion
 Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,
 As who should say, "I am Sir Oracle,
 And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark!"
 100 O my Antonio, I do know of these
 That therefore only are reputed wise
 For saying nothing, when I am very sure
 If they should speak, would almost damn those ears
 Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.
 105 I'll tell thee more of this another time.
 But fish not with this melancholy bait
 For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.—
 Come, good Lorenzo.—Fare ye well awhile.
 I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

LORENZO

110 Well, we will leave you then till dinnertime.
 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,
 Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

ANTONIO

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

GRATIANO

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

Exeunt GRATIANO and LORENZO

ANTONIO

Is that any thing now?

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

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

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

140 I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it.
 And if it stand, as you yourself still do,

from being cranky so much? I tell you what, Antonio—I love you, and I'm speaking out of love—there are some people whose faces are so unmoving that they grow scum like a still pond, and they try hard to maintain a still expression so that they can seem to be wise, serious, and profound, like someone who could say, "I am Sir Oracle, and when I open my lips to speak, let no dog bark!" Oh my Antonio, these kind of men only have the reputation of wisdom because they say nothing, and I'm sure that if they should speak, everyone listening would realize they are fools. I'll tell you more about this another time. But stop trying to get people to think you're serious and wise by acting all melancholy. Come with me now, good Lorenzo. Goodbye for now, Antonio. I'll finish the rest of my encouraging speech after dinner.

melancholy or depression was thought to be caused by too much of another, black bile. (1974 Riverside Ed.)

LORENZO

Well, we'll leave you until dinnertime, then. I must be one of these dumb but wise-seeming men he talks about, because Gratiano never lets me speak.

GRATIANO

Well, stick around with me for two more years and you'll forget what your voice even sounds like.

ANTONIO

Goodbye. I'll start to talk more, now.

GRATIANO

Thanks, because in fact the only tongues that should keep quiet are beef tongues on the dinner plate, and those of uncooperative maids.

GRATIANO and LORENZO exit.

ANTONIO

What do you think of all that?

BASSANIO

Gratiano speaks an endless stream of nonsense, more than any man in all of Venice. Trying to find the point of what he's talking about is like looking for two grains of wheat hidden in bushels of hay. You could look all day before you find them, and once you do it's not even worth the effort you put into it.

ANTONIO

Well, then tell me know who the lady is that you made an agreement with to go on a secret trip? You promised to tell me today.

BASSANIO

Antonio, you know how I've been using up my wealth, living a more lavish life than I can afford. Now, I'm not complaining about having to be more frugal, but I do care about fairly paying off the debts that I incurred while I was living beyond my means. I owe the most to you, Antonio, both in money and in love. And because we are good friends, I know I can tell you all my plans and plots for paying back all the debts I owe.

ANTONIO

Please do tell me, good Bassanio. And if your plan is as honorable as you still are, rest assured that I will help you

Within the eye of honor, be assured
My purse, my person, my extremest means
Lie all unlocked to your occasions.

BASSANIO

145 In my school days, when I had lost one shaft,
I shot his fellow of the selfsame flight
The selfsame way with more advisèd watch
To find the other forth— and by adventuring both,
I oft found both. I urge this childhood proof
150 Because what follows is pure innocence.
I owe you much, and, like a willful youth,
That which I owe is lost. But if you please
To shoot another arrow that self way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,
155 As I will watch the aim, or to find both
Or bring your latter hazard back again
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

ANTONIO

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

BASSANIO

In Belmont is a lady richly left,
And she is fair and—fairer than that word—
Of wondrous virtues. Sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages.
170 Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia.
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
175 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.
O my Antonio, had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
180 I have a mind presages me such thrift
That I should questionless be fortunate!

ANTONIO

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

Exeunt

with my money, myself, and whatever other ways I can.

BASSANIO

Back during my school days, I was shooting arrows once
and lost one. So, I shot another arrow the same exact way
and paid better attention to it so that I could follow its
course, and it led me to the first arrow. With this example
from my childhood in mind, listen to my plan, which is
completely innocent ⁸. I owe you a lot, and like a rash
young man I have lost the money I owe you. But if you
shoot another arrow the same way you shot the first, by
lending me money again, I have no doubt that I will bring
both arrows back to you, because I'll watch the second one
more carefully. Or at least I'll bring back the first, and
remain in your debt for the second.

ANTONIO

You know me well, and are wasting your time complicating
my affection for you with explanation and reasoning. You
do me more wrong in doubting that I love you enough to
lend you more money than if you had wasted all of my
money. Simply tell me what you would like me to do, and I
will do it. Tell me.

BASSANIO

There's a lady in Belmont who has inherited some riches
and is both beautiful—more beautiful than can be
described—and virtuous. We've occasionally exchanged
some knowing glances. Her name is Portia, and she lives up
to her namesake, Cato's daughter and the wife of Brutus ⁹.
Her worthiness as a wife is well-known, and suitors come
to her from all four corners of the world. Her blonde hair
hangs over her temples like the Golden Fleece ¹⁰, and it
makes many a Jason want to come on a quest for her.
Antonio, if I only had the means to stand as a rival with
these suitors, I know without a doubt that I would be
successful in wooing her!

ANTONIO

You know that all my money has been put into my ships. I
have neither money nor any goods to sell in order raise
some funds for you. So go forth and see how far my credit ¹¹
will get you in Venice, all of which I will use to get you to
Belmont and to beautiful Portia. Go ask around to find
somewhere you can borrow some money, and so will I. I am
certain that people will lend me the money, either for my
own sake or for the sake of my business.

ANTONIO and BASSANIO exit.

⁸ It is unclear whether this might mean childlike innocence or childlike stupidity. Perhaps the ambiguity is intentional, at Bassanio's expense.

⁹ A famous ancient Roman leader who was partially responsible for assassinating Julius Caesar.

¹⁰ In classical mythology, the golden fleece was the fleece of a magical ram, and the hero Jason went on a long quest to retrieve it.

¹¹ Antonio is suggesting that Bassanio borrow money on Antonio's good name, so that Antonio would have to pay the debts back at a future time.

Act 1, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA

PORTIA

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

Shakescleare Translation

PORTIA and NERISSA enter.

PORTIA

I swear, Nerissa, my little body is tired of this great big
world.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

Good sentences, and well pronounced.

NERISSA

They would be better if well followed.

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

Your father was ever virtuous, and holy men at their death have good inspirations. Therefore the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will no doubt never be chosen by any rightly but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

PORTIA

I pray thee, overname them. And as thou namest them, I will describe them. And according to my description, level at my affection.

NERISSA

First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

Then there is the County Palatine.

PORTIA

He doth nothing but frown, as who should say, "An you will not have me, choose." He hears merry tales and smiles not. I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two!

NERISSA

If your troubles were as great as your good fortune, then you would be tired of the world. But as I see it, it seems that those who live in excess are as unhappy as those who starve with nothing. One should be happy, then, to find oneself somewhere in the middle. Having too much brings on gray hairs, while having enough to get by gives you a longer life.

PORTIA

Well spoken. Those are good sayings.

NERISSA

They'd be better if people followed them.

PORTIA

If doing the right thing were as easy as knowing the right thing to do, people would be better off, little chapels would be big churches, and poor men's cottages would be princes' palaces. It is a good priest who can follow what he tells others to do. I could more easily teach twenty people what the right thing to do is than actually be one of those twenty and have to follow my own teaching. Your mind may exercise control over your passions, but a hot temper trumps cold reason. Young people are like mad rabbits: they hop over the fences of good advice. But this kind of reasoning is not going to help me choose a husband. Oh my, that I used the word "choose!" I can neither choose to marry the one I want nor refuse the ones I don't. The will of my dead father overpowers my own wishes. Isn't it unfortunate, Nerissa, that I can't pick which husband to choose or refuse?

NERISSA

Your father was always virtuous, and holy men have good ideas when they are dying. He has set up a lottery where your suitors will have to choose between chests of gold, silver, and lead, and whoever chooses the right one will win you as a wife. And I am sure whoever chooses correctly will be a man who will love you well. But what are your feelings toward the princely suitors who have already paid you visits?

PORTIA

Please, name them one by one. As you name them, I will describe them and say how much affection I have for them.

NERISSA

First, there is the prince from Naples.

PORTIA


Yes, that one's a stallion indeed. He does nothing but talk about his horse, and thinks that it speaks well of him that he can put the horseshoes on it all by himself. I'm worried his mother had an affair with a blacksmith.


NERISSA

Then there is the Count Palatine.

PORTIA

He does nothing but frown, as if he's saying, "If you will not have me as your husband, choose someone else." He doesn't smile when he hears funny stories. I worry that when he grows old he'll turn into a weeping philosopher, since he's so full of impolite sadness as a young man. I'd rather be married to a skull with a bone in its mouth than to either of these men. God defend me from these two!

 This is likely a reference to the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, whose dark ideas about the unconsciousness of men led him to be labeled, "The Weeping Philosopher."

 Likely referring to the skull and crossbones often engraved on tombstones.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbor?

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most
80 vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk. When he is best he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst he is little better than a beast. And the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

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

NERISSA

What do you have to say about the French lord, Monsieur le Bon?


PORTIA


God created him, so I guess he counts as a man. I know it is a sin to mock someone like this, but he deserves it! He has a horse better than the prince from Naples' and frowns more than the Count Palatine. He imitates qualities of every other man, so that he seems to have no personality himself. If a bird sings, he starts dancing right away. He will show off his fencing moves against his own shadow. If I were to marry him, I'd have twenty husbands. I wouldn't mind if he despised me, because if he madly loves me I will never return his affection.

NERISSA

What do you have to say about Falconbridge, then, the young baron from England?

PORTIA


You know that I say nothing to him, because he can't understand me and I can't understand him. He knows neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you could swear in a court of law that I have practically no English. He looks like a proper man, but who can talk with a someone who can't talk back?  And how strange his clothes are! I think he bought his jacket in Italy, his socks in France, his hat in Germany, and his behavior everywhere.


 A dumb show was a stage convention in which certain events were presented without dialogue, with silence from the actors.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

I think he has a neighborly sense of charity, because he received a slap from the Englishman and only threatened to hit him back later, when he could. I think the Frenchman promised to join with him to pay the Englishman back, and added another slap. 

 This points to the promises from France to back Scotland in its disputes with England.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

I dislike him in the morning, when he's sober, and I really hate him in the afternoon, when he's drunk. At his best, he is not quite a man, and at his worst he is barely better than a beast. Even if worst comes to worst, I hope I won't have to marry him.

NERISSA

If he chooses the right casket and you refuse to marry him, you'd be refusing to follow your father's will.

PORTIA

Well then, for fear that might happen, please place a glass of wine on the wrong casket, because I know he will choose that one. I will do anything, Nerissa, to make sure I don't have to marry to a sponge.

NERISSA

You don't have to worry about any of these lords, my lady. They have told me their intentions, and they are all planning on returning home and not bothering you anymore, unless they can win your favor by some other way than your father's plan with the caskets.

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

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

Enter a SERVINGMAN

How now, what news?

SERVINGMAN

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

PORTIA

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

125

Exeunt

PORTIA

If I live to be as old as the Cumaean Sibyl ⁵ ⁶, I'll still be as chaste as Diana ⁷ unless I am married by my father's plan. I am glad this bunch of suitors have too much sense to play the game, because there is not one among them whose presence I actually enjoy. And I pray that God may grant them a smooth trip home.

NERISSA

Do you remember, lady, from your father's time in Venice, a scholar and soldier who came here along with the Marquess of Montferrat?

PORTIA

Yes, yes, it was Bassanio—I think that was his name.

NERISSA

That's right, madam. Of any man my foolish eyes have ever seen, he was the one most deserving of a beautiful lady.

PORTIA

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

A SERVANT enters.

How are things? What news is there?

SERVINGMAN

The four ⁸ foreigners want to speak with you to say goodbye, madam. And ahead of them comes a fifth person, sent by the Prince of Morocco, who brings word that his master the prince will be here tonight.

PORTIA

If I could welcome the fifth person as happily as I will say goodbye to the first four, then I would really be ecstatic to see him. If he is as good as a saint but as dark as the devil ⁹, I'd rather he listen to my confession than make me his wife. Come with me, Nerissa.

[To the SERVANT] You ¹⁰, go ahead of us. While we shut the gates on one suitor, another one comes knocking at the door.

PORTIA, NERISSA, and the SERVANT exit.

⁵ Sibyls were ancient female oracles who lived to old age. Specifically, Apollo promised the Cumaean Sibyl, or "Sibylla," that her years would reach the number of grains of sand she held in her hand.

⁶ An ancient female oracle who lived to extreme old age.

⁷ The ancient Roman goddess of virginity.

⁸ It is odd: Nerissa has named six. This is likely the sign that some editing was done on the play to add more suitors, and this sentence was never fixed to suit the greater number.

⁹ Devils were represented as black in Shakespeare's time. Portia is basically remarking that, no matter how good he might be inside, she would not like to marry him because of his complexion.

¹⁰ The word this replaces, "Sirrah," was a form of address often used towards inferiors.

Act 1, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats, well.

BASSANIO

Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK

For three months, well.

Shakescleare Translation

BASSANIO and SHYLOCK enter.

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats ¹, eh?

BASSANIO

Yes, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK

For three months, eh?

¹ A ducat was a kind of coin.

BASSANIO

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

SHYLOCK

5 Antonio shall become bound, well.

BASSANIO

May you stead me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your answer?

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound.

BASSANIO

10 Your answer to that?

SHYLOCK

Antonio is a good man.

BASSANIO

Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK

15 Ho, no, no, no, no. My meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition. He hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies. I understand moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but
20 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.

BASSANIO

Be assured you may.

SHYLOCK

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

BASSANIO

If it please you to dine with us.

SHYLOCK

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

Enter ANTONIO

BASSANIO

This is Signor Antonio.

SHYLOCK

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

BASSANIO

And, as I told you, Antonio will be the guarantor of the loan.

SHYLOCK

Antonio will, eh?

BASSANIO

Can you help me out? Will you agree to the loan? Can I hear your answer?

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio will be bound to guarantee the loan.

BASSANIO

What's your answer to that offer?

SHYLOCK

Antonio is a good man.

BASSANIO

Have you heard anyone say otherwise about him?

SHYLOCK

Oh no, no, no, no I haven't. I just meant to suggest that is a sufficient guarantor for the loan. But, his wealth isn't certain at the moment. He has one ship bound for Tripoli and another for the Indies. Moreover, the word around the Rialto ² is that he has a third ship in Mexico, a fourth bound for England, and other ventures he has invested his money in abroad. Ships are just wood, and sailors are just men. There are rats on land and sea, and thieves on land and sea, including pirates. And then there is also the matter of dangerous waters, winds, and rocks. But in spite of all these risks, he is still a sufficient guarantor.

BASSANIO

You can be sure of that.

SHYLOCK

I will be sure, and I will figure out how I can be completely sure. May I speak with Antonio?

BASSANIO

Would you like to have dinner with Antonio and me?

SHYLOCK

Oh yes, I'd love to eat pork ³ with you, the animal into which your Jesus exorcised the devil. I will buy and sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so forth, but I will neither eat, nor drink, nor pray with you. What's the news on the Rialto? Who is the man coming here?

ANTONIO enters.

BASSANIO

This is Mr. Antonio.

SHYLOCK

[To himself] He looks like someone who wants to take my money but then ask me for a favor! I hate him because he is a Christian, but I hate him even more because he lends out money without charging interest ⁴, which forces me to lower the interest rates that I loan at. If I get the better of him just once, I will satisfy my old grudge against him. He hates us Jews, and he speaks badly of me, my bargains, and my hard-won money in the company of other merchants, talking about "interest." May my Jewish tribe be cursed if I forgive him!

² A central area for business and commerce in the city of Venice.

³ As a Jew, Shylock cannot eat pork.

⁴ Money-lending was thought of as a profession relegated to Jews, who were derided for making this a means of living.

BASSANIO

Shylock, do you hear?

SHYLOCK

I am debating of my present store,
And by the near guess of my memory
50 I cannot instantly raise up the gross
Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?
Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
Will furnish me. But soft! How many months
Do you desire?

55 *[to ANTONIO]*

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

ANTONIO

Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow
By taking nor by giving of excess,
60 Yet to supply the ripe wants of my friend,
I'll break a custom.

[to BASSANIO] Is he yet possessed
How much ye would?

SHYLOCK

65 Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO

And for three months.

SHYLOCK

I had forgot—three months.
[to BASSANIO] You told me so.

70 *[to ANTONIO]* Well then, your bond, and let me see—But
hear you,

75 Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow
Upon advantage.

ANTONIO

I do never use it.

SHYLOCK

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

ANTONIO

And what of him? Did he take interest?

SHYLOCK

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

ANTONIO

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

BASSANIO

Shylock, are you listening?

SHYLOCK

I am thinking about how much money I have right now, and
as best as I can remember, I can't raise the gross sum of
three thousand ducats right now. But that doesn't matter.
Tubal, a wealthy Jew of my tribe, will supply the rest of the
money. But wait! How many months do you want the
money for?

[To ANTONIO] Hello, good sir. We were just talking about
you.

ANTONIO

Shylock, I normally don't lend or borrow money with
interest, but in order to help my needy friend, I'll break my
custom.

[To BASSANIO] Does he know how much money you want
yet?

SHYLOCK

Yes, yes, three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO

And for three months.

SHYLOCK

I had forgotten—three months.

[To BASSANIO] You told me that.

[To ANTONIO] Well then, and you'll be the guarantor on
behalf of Bassanio, let's see—but listen, I thought you said
you don't lend or borrow money with interest.

ANTONIO

I never do.

SHYLOCK

In the Bible ⁵, when Jacob looked after his uncle Laban's
sheep—this is the Jacob who was descended from our holy
ancestor Abram, and his wise mother made him his father's
heir so that he was the third to possess God's promise—

ANTONIO

And what about him? Did he charge interest?

SHYLOCK

No, he didn't. He didn't exactly charge interest, as you
would say. But listen to what Jacob did do: when he and
Laban agreed that all the streaked and spotted sheep
would be his, it was the end of autumn and so the sheep
were starting to mate. And when the woolly sheep were
starting to couple off together to breed, the skillful
shepherd Jacob put some dappled sticks in front of the
ewes while they were conceiving. When they gave birth,
they produced streaked and spotted lambs, and those
became Jacob's. Jacob became very prosperous in this
way, and he was blessed. Profit is a blessing, if it is not
obtained by stealing.

ANTONIO

But that was something that wasn't in Jacob's power to
bring about; it happened through the hand of God. Did you
tell this story to imply that it is good to charge interest? Is
your gold and silver like a bunch of ewes and rams?

⁵ The story Shylock relates is from
the Old Testament of the Christian
Bible, the part shared in the Judeo-
Christian tradition and referred to as
the Torah in Judaism.

SHYLOCK

I cannot tell: I make it breed as fast.
But note me, signor—

ANTONIO

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

SHYLOCK

110 Three thousand ducats—'tis a good round sum.
Three months from twelve, then. Let me see. The rate—

ANTONIO

Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

SHYLOCK

Signor Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
115 About my moneys and my usances.
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
You call me misbeliever, cutthroat dog,
And spet upon my Jewish gaberdine—
120 And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help.
Go to, then! You come to me and you say,
"Shylock, we would have moneys." You say so!—
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard
125 And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold! Moneys is your suit.
What should I say to you? Should I not say,
"Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" Or
130 Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key
With bated breath and whispering humbleness
Say this: "Fair sir, you spet on me on Wednesday last;
You spurned me such a day; another time
You called me 'dog'—and for these courtesies
135 I'll lend you thus much moneys?"

ANTONIO

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

SHYLOCK

Why, look you how you storm!
145 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 doit
Of usance for my moneys—and you'll not hear me!
This is kind I offer.

BASSANIO


150 This were kindness.

SHYLOCK

This kindness will I show.
Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond, and—in a merry sport—
If you repay me not on such a day,
155 In such a place, such sum or sums as are

SHYLOCK

Maybe: I make the money [multiply](#) as fast as sheep. But listen, sir—

 Charging interest on a loan is literally making that money multiply by a certain fraction (over a period of time, at a risk of that loan not being paid back).

ANTONIO

Take note, Bassanio: even the devil can quote the Bible for his own purpose. An evil soul quoting holy words is like a villain who pretends to be good, a good-looking apple with a rotten core. What a good appearance falsehood can have!

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats: that's a good, round number. Three months out of the twelve that make up the year, then. Let me see. The rate—

ANTONIO

Well, Shylock, will we be in your debt?

SHYLOCK

Sir Antonio, many times you have criticized me about my money and habit of charging interest in the Rialto. I have endured it all with patience and a shrug, because we Jews are known for our ability to endure. You say I believe in the wrong religion, call me a cut-throat dog, and spit on my Jewish clothing, all because I use my own money to make profit. And now it appears that you need my help. Okay, then! You come to me and you say, "Shylock, I need money." You tell me this! You who spat on my beard and kicked me as you'd kick a stray dog away from your threshold! You ask for money. What should I say to you? Shouldn't I say, "Does a dog have money? Is it possible for a dog to lend you three thousand ducats?" Or should I get bend to my knees and with bated breath humbly whisper, "Fair sir, you spat on me last Wednesday; you spurned me then; another time you called me a dog—and for all this courtesy you've shown me, I will gladly lend you this much money?"

ANTONIO

I am likely to call you such names again, spit on you again, and spurn you, too. If you decide to lend this money, don't do it as if we are your friends. After all, when have friends ever charged each other interest? Lend me the money as your enemy and if I break my part of the agreement you can more happily punish me.

SHYLOCK

Why, look at your temper! I would be friends with you and have your affection, forget about how you have shamed me, lend you what you need and take no interest—but you won't listen to me! I'm giving you a kind offer.

BASSANIO

That would be kind.

SHYLOCK

I'll show you this kindness. Go with me to a notary and sign an agreement: if you do not repay me the agreed-upon amount of money on the agreed-upon day, in the agreed-upon place, you will forfeit to me one pound of your fair flesh, to be cut off from whatever part of your body I

Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit
Be nominated for an equal pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

ANTONIO

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

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

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

SHYLOCK

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

ANTONIO

Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

SHYLOCK

180 Then meet me forthwith at the notary's.
Give him direction for this merry bond,
And I will go and purse the ducats straight,
See to my house left in the fearful guard
Of an unthrifty knave, and presently
185 I will be with you.

ANTONIO

Hie thee, gentle Jew.

Exit SHYLOCK

The Hebrew will turn Christian. He grows kind.

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

Come on. In this there can be no dismay.
190 My ships come home a month before the day.

Exeunt

choose.

ANTONIO

Sure, why not? I'll agree to such a deal, and I'll admit there
is much kindness in Jews.

BASSANIO

I won't let you agree to such a deal on my behalf! I'd rather
deal with my poverty.

ANTONIO

Don't worry, man. I won't have to give up the pound of
flesh. I expect to make nine times the amount of this
contract within these next two months, and that's a month
before I have to pay him back.

SHYLOCK

Oh, Father Abram, what strange people these Christians
are! They suspect the worst in others because of their own
trickery. Please, tell me this: if he fails to pay me back in
time, what would I gain by taking a pound of his flesh? A
pound of flesh taken from a man is not worth very much,
and isn't as profitable as mutton, beef, or goat flesh. I'm
telling you, I'm giving him this kind offer to be friendly. If he
will accept the offer, good. If not, goodbye. And for this
kindness I show you, I ask you not to think poorly of me.

ANTONIO

Yes, Shylock, I will enter into this contract

SHYLOCK

Then meet me right away at the notary's office. Explain to
him this happy agreement, and I will go immediately to
gather up the ducats from my house, which I've left
guarded by a careless clown. Then, soon, I'll meet you.

ANTONIO

Take care, gentle Jew.

SHYLOCK exits.

This Hebrew must be turning Christian, because he's
getting kinder.

BASSANIO

I don't like fair terms when they're thought up by a villain's
mind.

ANTONIO

Come on. There's nothing bad about this. My ships will
come home with the money a month before I have to pay
him.

ANTONIO and BASSANIO exit.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Flourish cornets. Enter the Prince of MOROCCO, a tawny Moor all in white, and three or four followers accordingly, with PORTIA, NERISSA, and their train

Shakescleare Translation

Trumpets play. The Prince of MOROCCO, a dark-skinned African dressed in white, and three or four followers enter, along with PORTIA, NERISSA, and their attendants.

MOROCCO

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

PORTIA

In terms of choice I am not solely led
 By nice direction of a maiden's eyes.
 15 Besides, the lottery of my destiny
 Bars me the right of voluntary choosing.
 But if my father had not scanted me
 And hedged me by his wit to yield myself
 His wife who wins me by that means I told you,
 20 Yourself, renowned Prince, then stood 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
 25 To try my fortune. By this scimitar
 That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince
 That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,
 I would o'erstare the sternest eyes that look,
 Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,
 30 Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
 Yea, mock the lion when he roars for prey,
 To win the lady. But, alas the while!
 If Hercules and Lychas play at dice
 Which is the better man, the greater throw
 35 May turn by fortune from the weaker hand.
 So is Alcides beaten by his page,
 And so may I, blind fortune leading me,
 Miss that which one unworthier may attain
 And die with grieving.

PORTIA

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

MOROCCO

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

PORTIA

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

MOROCCO

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

Cornets

Exeunt


MOROCCO


Don't dislike me because of my skin color, the shadow-colored skin that results from the burning sun in Africa. Bring me the most beautiful person born in the north, where the light of the sun barely thaws the ice, and let's cut both him and me so you can see whose blood is reddest, his or mine. I'm telling you, my lady, this aspect of my appearance has frightened brave men. By my love, I swear the best-regarded virgins of my land love me. I wouldn't trade my dark skin color for anything, my gentle queen, except to have you think kindly of me.

PORTIA

In terms of my choosing a husband, I care about more than looks. And besides, my destiny is to be decided by a lottery, so I can't even choose for myself. But if my father hadn't robbed me of that right as I described to you, you would be as good a potential husband in my eyes, renowned Prince, as anyone else.

MOROCCO

Thank you for that compliment. Therefore, I beg you to lead me to the caskets so I can try my luck. By this sword with which I killed the leader of Persia and a Persian prince, and with which I won three battles against Sultan Solyman, I swear that I would stare down the sternest eyes in the world, be braver than the most daring man on earth, steal the bear cubs from a suckling mother bear, and even mock a lion roaring at his prey—all to win you. But alas! If Hercules  and his servant Lychas had to play a game of dice to decide the better man, the weaker man might win by luck. So the great Hercules could be beaten by his own servant, and so I might lose you to a less worthy man because of blind luck. If that happened, I would die of grief.

 The famous Greek hero was recognizable for wearing the skin of the Nemean Lion, which he killed.

PORTIA

You must try your luck. Either don't attempt it at all, or promise before you choose a casket that if you choose the wrong one you will never speak to a lady about marriage again. Be warned.

MOROCCO

I promise. Come on, bring me to the caskets.

PORTIA

First, let's go forward to the temple. After dinner, you can try your luck.

MOROCCO

May I have good luck, then! I'll either be a blessed or a cursed man.

Trumpets play.

The Prince of MOROCCO, PORTIA, NERISSA, and their attendants exit.

Act 2, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter LAUNCELOT the clown, alone

LAUNCELOT

Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew, my master. The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts me, saying to me, "Gobbo," "Launcelot Gobbo," "Good Launcelot," or "Good Gobbo," or "Good Launcelot Gobbo" —"use your legs, take the start, run away." My conscience says, "No. Take heed, honest Launcelot. Take heed, honest Gobbo," or as aforesaid, "Honest Launcelot Gobbo, do not run. Scorn running with thy heels." Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack. "Fial!" says the fiend. "Away!" says the fiend. "For the heavens, rouse up a brave mind," says the fiend, "and run." Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me, "My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man's son"—or rather an honest woman's son, for indeed my father did something smack, something grow to. He had a kind of taste.—Well, my conscience says, "Launcelot, budge not." "Budge!" says the fiend. "Budge not," says my conscience. "Conscience," say I, "you counsel well." "Fiend," say I, "you counsel well." To be ruled by my conscience I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark, is a kind of devil. And to run away from the Jew I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation. And in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel. I will run, fiend. My heels are at your command. I will run.

Enter Old GOBBO with a basket

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

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

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

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

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

Talk you of young Master Launcelot?
[aside] Mark me now. Now will I raise the waters.—Talk you of young Master Launcelot?

GOBBO

No "master," sir, but a poor man's son. His father,

Shakescleare Translation

LAUNCELOT, a clown, enters alone.

LAUNCELOT

Certainly part of me wants to run from my master, this Jew. The devil whispers in my ear, tempting me, saying to me, "Gobbo," "Launcelot Gobbo," "Good Launcelot," or "Good Gobbo," or "Good Launcelot Gobbo"—"use your legs, get going, run away." But my conscience says, "No. Wait here, honest Launcelot. Wait here, honest Gobbo." Or it says, "Honest Launcelot Gobbo, do not run away. Don't you dare run away." Well, the bold devil is encouraging me to get going. "Go!" says the devil. "Go away!" says the devil. "For heaven's sake, be brave and run," says the devil. But then my conscience pulls on my heart and says very wisely to me, "My honest friend Launcelot, since you are the son of an honest man"—or rather the son of an honest woman, for actually my father was somewhat dishonest and unfaithful. He had a kind of taste for it. Anyways, my conscience says, "Launcelot, don't budge!" "Budge!" says the devil. "Don't budge," says my conscience. "Conscience," I say, "you give good advice." "Devil," I say, "you give good advice, too." If I listen to my conscience, I'd stay here with my master the Jew, who is a kind of devil himself. And if I run away from the Jew I'd be listening to the devil, who is the devil himself. But then again, the Jew is certainly the very devil incarnate. And my conscience is being rather difficult in advising me to stay with the Jew. The devil is giving more friendly advice. I will run away, devil. My feet are at your command: I will run away.

Old GOBBO enters with a basket.

GOBBO

Excuse me, young man, where is the Jew's house?

LAUNCELOT

[To himself] Oh God, this is my father. He is as blind as a bat and doesn't recognize me. I'll play some tricks on him.

GOBBO

Young man, please, where is the Jew's house?

LAUNCELOT

At the next intersection, take a right, and then at the next take a left. And then at the next intersection keep going straight and you'll be at the Jew's house.

GOBBO

By God, it will be hard to find my way there. Do you know if someone named Launcelot, who lives with him, is there with him or not?

LAUNCELOT

Are you talking about young Master Launcelot?

[To himself] Watch this. Now I'll raise the stakes.

[To GOBBO] Are you talking about the young Master Launcelot?

GOBBO

Not a "master," sir, but a poor man's son. His father, though,

though I say 't, is an honest exceeding poor man and, God be thanked, well to live.

LAUNCELOT

50 Well, let his father be what he will, we talk of young Master Launcelot.

GOBBO

Your worship's friend and Launcelot, sir.

LAUNCELOT

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

GOBBO

55 Of Launcelot, an 't please your mastership.

LAUNCELOT

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

60

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

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

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

Do you not know me, Father?

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

Nay, indeed if you had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me. It is a wise father that knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son. Give me your blessing. Truth will come to light. Murder cannot be hid long—a man's son may, but in the end truth will out.

75

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

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

80

GOBBO

I cannot think you are my son.

LAUNCELOT

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

85

GOBBO

Her name is Margery, indeed. I'll be sworn, if thou be

is an honest, if very poor, man and—thank God—in good health.


LAUNCELOT

Well, whatever his father is like, we are talking about young Master Launcelot.

GOBBO

Yes, but just Launcelot, not "master," sir.


LAUNCELOT

But I ask you, ergo , old man, I beg you: are you talking about young Master Launcelot?

GOBBO

Master, I am speaking of someone simply called Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT

Ergo, Master Launcelot. Don't talk about Master Launcelot, father. That young gentleman, according to his fate and destiny and so forth, the Three Sisters  and so on, is deceased. Or, to say it plainly, he has gone to heaven.

GOBBO

God forbid! In my old age I relied on that boy, like a crutch!

LAUNCELOT

Do I look like a crutch or a prop? Do you recognize me, father?

GOBBO

I swear, I don't know who you are, young gentleman. But please tell me: is my son—God rest his soul—alive or dead?

LAUNCELOT

Do you not know who I am, father?

GOBBO

Alas, sir, I am completely blind. I don't know you.

LAUNCELOT

Even if you could see, you might not recognize me. It takes a wise father to recognize his own child. Well, old man, I will give you news regarding your son. Give me your blessing. The truth will come to light. Murder can't be hidden for long. A man's son can be hidden, but not the truth.

GOBBO

Please sir, stand up. I am sure you aren't my son Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT

Please, enough fooling around. Give me your blessing. I am Launcelot, who was, is, and will continue to be your son.

GOBBO


I can't believe that you are my son.


LAUNCELOT

I don't know what to think of that. But I really am Launcelot, the Jew's servant, and I am sure your wife Margery is my mother.

GOBBO

My wife's name is Margery, indeed. If you're Launcelot, I'll

 Ergo means "therefore" in Latin. Launcelot is pretending to speak Latin to seem educated, though he is using the Latin word incorrectly.

 In classical mythology, the Fates were three sisters who determined everyone's fate.

Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood.
[feels the back of LAUNCELOT's head] Lord worshipped
 90 might he be, what a beard hast thou got! Thou hast got
 more hair on thy chin than Dobbin my fill-horse has on
 his tail.

LAUNCELOT

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

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

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

Enter BASSANIO with LEONARDO and another follower or two

BASSANIO

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

Exit follower

LAUNCELOT

To him, Father.

GOBBO

[to BASSANIO] God bless your worship!

BASSANIO

115 Gramercy! Wouldst thou aught with me?

GOBBO

Here's my son, sir, a poor boy—

LAUNCELOT

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

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

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

GOBBO

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

LAUNCELOT

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

swear you are my own flesh and blood.

[He feels the back of LAUNCELOT's head] Good lord, what a
 beard you have! You have more hair on your chin than my
 horse Dobbin has on his tail.

LAUNCELOT

It would seem that Dobbin's tail is shrinking, then. I am sure
 that he had more hair on his tail the last time I saw him
 than I have on my face.

GOBBO

Lord, you have changed! How are you and your master
 getting along? I have bought him a present. Are you getting
 along with him?

LAUNCELOT

Pretty well, but I've decided to run away from him, so I
 won't rest until I've run some distance. My master is very
 much a Jew. Go ahead and give him a present; give him a
 noose. I work as his servant and he hardly feeds me. You
 can count my ribs, they protrude so much. I'm glad you've
 come, father. Give me the present so I can give it to Master
 Bassanio, who gives his servants fancy new outfits. If I don't
 end up as his servant, I will run as far away as is possible.
 Oh, just my luck! Here he comes. Let's go talk to him, father,
 for if I serve the Jew any longer, I'll be a Jew myself.

BASSANIO enters with LEONARDO and one or two other attendants.

BASSANIO

[To an attendant] You may do that, but do it quick so that
 supper is ready by five o'clock at the latest. Make sure these
 letters are delivered, get the outfits made, and tell Gratiano
 to come soon to my house.

The attendant exits.

LAUNCELOT

Go talk to him, father.

GOBBO

[To BASSANIO] God bless you!

BASSANIO

Thanks! Do you want something?

GOBBO

This here is my son, a poor boy—

LAUNCELOT

Not a poor boy, sir, but a servant of the rich Jew. And I
 would like, sir, as my father will tell you—

GOBBO

He has a great desire, sir, as they say, to serve—

LAUNCELOT


Yes, to make a long story short, I currently serve under the
 Jew and, as my father will tell you, I have a desire—

GOBBO

He and his master, your reverence, are not the closest of
 friends—

LAUNCELOT

To be brief, the truth is that the Jew, having wronged me,
 now makes it so that I, as my father, being an old man, will
 provide you with—

 Launcelot creates a syntactically confusing sentence, mistaking the word "Frutify" for "Notify" or "Certify," and thereby confuses his father into

*presenting the men with his gift.***GOBBO**

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

LAUNCELOT

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

BASSANIO

One speak for both. What would you?

LAUNCELOT

135 Serve you, sir.

GOBBO

That is the very defect of the matter, sir.

BASSANIO

I know thee well. Thou hast obtained thy suit. Shylock thy master spoke with me this day, And hath preferred thee, if it be preferment
140 To leave a rich Jew's service, to become The follower of so poor a gentleman.

LAUNCELOT

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

BASSANIO

145 Thou speak'st it well.—Go, father, with thy son.— Take leave of thy old master and inquire My lodging out.—
[to followers]
Give him a livery
150 More guarded than his fellows'. See it done.

LAUNCELOT

Father, in. I cannot get a service, no. I have ne'er a tongue in my head.

[reading his own palm] Well, if any man in Italy have a fairer table which doth offer to swear upon a book, I shall have good fortune. Go to, here's a simple line of life. Here's a small trifle of wives. Alas, fifteen wives is nothing! Eleven widows and nine maids is a simple coming-in for one man. And then to 'scape drowning thrice and to be in peril of my life with the edge of a feather-bed—here are simple 'scapes. Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this gear.—Father, come. I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling.
160

*Exit LAUNCELOT the clown with Old GOBBO***BASSANIO**

165 I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this. These things being bought and orderly bestowed, Return in haste, for I do feast tonight My best esteemed acquaintance. Hie thee, go.

LEONARDO

My best endeavours shall be done herein.

*Enter GRATIANO***GRATIANO**

170 [to LEONARDO] Where is your master?

GOBBO

I have a gift of a plate of doves here that I would give to you, and all I ask is—

LAUNCELOT

In short, the request is about me, and you will learn from this honest old man—and even though I'm his son, I tell you, even though he's old and poor, my father—

BASSANIO

One of you speak for both of you. What do you want?

LAUNCELOT

To be your servant, sir.

GOBBO

That is the heart of the matter, sir.

BASSANIO

I know you well. You will get what you ask for. Your master Shylock spoke with me today and spoke well of you, if you really want to leave the service of a rich Jew to become a servant of such a poor gentleman.

LAUNCELOT

The old proverb says, "the grace of God is enough." It could be split up between you and my master Shylock, sir. You have the grace of God, and he has enough.

BASSANIO

Well said. Go along with your son, father. Go leave your old master and come inquire at my house.

[To his attendants] Give him a outfit [more frilled](#) ⁴ than his fellow servants. Make sure this is done.

⁴ This would not be the typical garb of a fool, even if Launcelot does become Bassanio's jester, essentially.

LAUNCELOT

Father, go. I can't get a job, no. I'm not very good at talking. ⁵

⁵ This bit is sarcastic, alluding perhaps to an argument between Launcelot and his father during which the latter had said something to the contrary.

[Reading his own palm] Well, I have as good a palm as any man in Italy to swear upon a Bible with. I will have good luck. Look, here's the life line. It predicts several wives. Fifteen wives is nothing! Eleven widows and nine young women is good for one man. It looks like I will escape drowning three times and nearly lose my life in a feather-bed. Simple escapes. If Fortune is a lady, she's a good one for all this. Come with me, father. I'll leave the Jew in the blink of an eye.

*The clown LAUNCELOT exits with Old GOBBO.***BASSANIO**

[Handing LEONARDO a list] Please, Leonardo, pay attention to this. Buy and arrange these things and then come back to me quickly, for I'm having my most respected acquaintance over for dinner tonight. Get going now.

LEONARDO

I'll give it my best effort.

*GRATIANO enters.***GRATIANO**

[To LEONARDO] Where is your master?

LEONARDO

Yonder, sir, he walks.

Exit LEONARDO

GRATIANO

Signor Bassanio!

BASSANIO

Gratiano!

GRATIANO

I have a suit to you.

BASSANIO

175 You have obtained it.

GRATIANO

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

BASSANIO

Why, then you must. But hear thee, Gratiano.

Thou art too wild, too rude and bold of voice—

Parts that become thee happily enough

180 And in such eyes as ours appear not faults.

But where thou art not known, why, there they show

Something too liberal. Pray thee, take pain

To allay with some cold drops of modesty

Thy skipping spirit, lest through thy wild behavior

185 I be misconstr'd in the place I go to,

And lose my hopes.

GRATIANO

Signor Bassanio, hear me.

If I do not put on a sober habit,

Talk with respect and swear but now and then,

190 Wear prayer books in my pocket, look demurely—

Nay more. While grace is saying, hood mine eyes

Thus with my hat, and sigh and say, "Amen"—

Use all the observance of civility

Like one well studied in a sad ostent

195 To please his grandam, never trust me more.

BASSANIO

Well, we shall see your bearing.

GRATIANO

Nay, but I bar tonight. You shall not gauge me

By what we do tonight.

BASSANIO

No, that were pity.

200 I would entreat you rather to put on

Your boldest suit of mirth, for we have friends

That purpose merriment. But fare you well.

I have some business.

GRATIANO

And I must to Lorenzo and the rest.

205 But we will visit you at supper time.

Exeunt severally

LEONARDO

Over there, sir, walking about.

LEONARDO exits.

GRATIANO

Sir Bassanio!

BASSANIO

Gratiano!

GRATIANO

I have a favor to ask of you.

BASSANIO

Your wish is my command.

GRATIANO

Please don't deny my favor. I must go with you to Belmont.

BASSANIO

Well then, you will. But listen, Gratiano. You are too wild and too rude, and you speak too boldly. These qualities suit you well and I don't mind them. But in a place where people don't know you, these qualities might seem excessive. Please, take care to moderate your hot-headed spirit with some cold drops of modesty, so that your wild behavior doesn't reflect poorly on me in Belmont, and ruin my own hopes there.

GRATIANO

Sir Bassanio, listen to me. I give you permission to never trust me again if I do not behave in a sober fashion, talk respectfully and not swear too much, carry prayer books around with me, look modestly—even more, if during grace I do not pull my hat down over my eyes, sigh, and say "Amen"—if I don't follow every guideline of good manners like someone who's studied hard to please his grandmother.

BASSANIO

Well, we will see how you behave.

GRATIANO

But tonight is an exception. Don't gauge me based on what I do tonight.

BASSANIO

No, it would be a pity to judge you based on tonight. Rather, I encourage you to put on your boldest display of merriment, for we are entertaining two friends whom I want to entertain. But I must say goodbye, because I have some business to take care of.

GRATIANO

And I must go to Lorenzo and the others. We will see you at dinner time.

BASSANIO and GRATIANO exit individually.

Act 2, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter JESSICA and LAUNCELOT the clown

Shakescleare Translation

JESSICA and LAUNCELOT the clown enter.

JESSICA

I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so.
Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.
But fare thee well, there is a ducat for thee.
5 And Launcelot, soon at supper shalt thou see
Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest.
Give him this letter.

10 *[gives LAUNCELOT a letter]*

Do it secretly.
And so farewell. I would not have my father
See me in talk with thee.

LAUNCELOT

15 Adieu! Tears exhibit my tongue. Most beautiful pagan,
most sweet Jew! If a Christian do not play the knave and
get thee, I am much deceived. But adieu. These foolish
drops do something drown my manly spirit. Adieu.

JESSICA

Farewell, good Launcelot.

Exit LAUNCELOT

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

Exit

JESSICA

I am sorry that you are leaving my father's service like this.
Our house is hell, and you, a joking little devil, made life
here a little less boring. But I wish you well. Here is a ducat
for you. And Launcelot, you will soon see a man named
Lorenzo at dinner, a guest of your new master's. Give this
letter to him.

[She gives LAUNCELOT a letter] Do it secretly. Goodbye,
now. I don't want my father to see me talking with you.

LAUNCELOT

Goodbye! I am speaking through my tears. You most
beautiful pagan, you sweet Jew! I'll bet some Christian will
figure out a way to get you. But goodbye. These silly tears
aren't very manly. Goodbye.

JESSICA

Farewell, good Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT exits.

Alas, what a heinous sin it is for me to be ashamed to be my
father's child! I am his daughter by blood, but I have not
inherited his manners. Oh, Lorenzo, if you keep your
promise I will end this pain by becoming a Christian and
your loving wife.

JESSICA exits.

Act 2, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALERIO, and SOLANIO

LORENZO

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

GRATIANO

We have not made good preparation.

SALERIO

5 We have not spoke us yet of torchbearers.

SOLANIO

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

LORENZO

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

Enter LAUNCELOT with a letter

10 Friend Launcelot, what's the news?

LAUNCELOT

[giving LORENZO the letter]
An it shall please you to break up this, it shall seem
to signify.

LORENZO

15 I know the hand. In faith, 'tis a fair hand,

Shakescleare Translation

GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALERIO, and SOLANIO enter.

LORENZO

No, we'll sneak off at dinner, disguise ourselves at my
house, and then get back here all in an hour.

GRATIANO

We haven't prepared well enough for this.

SALERIO

We haven't got ourselves torchbearers yet.

SOLANIO

Unless we plan carefully, this will turn out badly, and it will
be better not to try this.

LORENZO

It's only four o'clock now. We have two hours to get ready.

LAUNCELOT enters with a letter.


My friend Launcelot, what's the news?

LAUNCELOT

[He gives LORENZO the letter] If you would open this up, it
will tell you.

LORENZO

I know this handwriting. Truly written by a beautiful hand,

 A pun on how "fair" could mean

And whiter than the paper it writ on
Is the fair hand that writ.

GRATIANO

Love news, in faith?

LAUNCELOT

[to LORENZO] By your leave, sir.

LORENZO

Whither goest thou?

LAUNCELOT

20 Marry, sir, to bid my old master the Jew to sup tonight
with my new master the Christian.

LORENZO

[giving LAUNCELOT money]

Hold here, take this. Tell gentle Jessica
I will not fail her. Speak it privately.—

25 Go, gentlemen,

Will you prepare you for this masque tonight?
I am provided of a torchbearer.

Exit LAUNCELOT the clown

SALERIO

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

SOLANIO

And so will I.

LORENZO

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

SALERIO

'Tis good we do so.

Exeunt SALERIO and SOLANIO

GRATIANO

Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

LORENZO

I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed
35 How I shall take her from her father's house,
What gold and jewels she is furnished with,
What page's suit she hath in readiness.
If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven,
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake.

40 And never dare Misfortune cross her foot

Unless she do it under this excuse:

That she is issue to a faithless Jew.


Come, go with me.

45 *[gives GRATIANO the letter]*

Peruse this as thou goest.

Fair Jessica shall be my torchbearer.

Exeunt

one whiter than the paper it wrote on. 

"beautiful" or "light-skinned."

GRATIANO

Something about love, is it?

LAUNCELOT

[To LORENZO] May I leave, sir?

LORENZO

Where are you going?

LAUNCELOT

Sir, I am going to tell my old master the Jew to dine tonight
with my new master the Christian.

LORENZO

[Giving LAUNCELOT money] Hold on. Take this. Tell gentle
Jessica that I won't fail her. Tell her this privately. And you
gentlemen, go and prepare for this masquerade party
tonight. I have a torchbearer.

LAUNCELOT the clown exits.

SALERIO

Yes, sure thing, I'll go see to it right away.

SOLANIO

And so will I.

LORENZO

Meet Gratiano and me at Gratiano's house a few hours from
now.

SALERIO

That's a good plan.

SALERIO and SOLANIO exit.

GRATIANO

Wasn't that letter from the beautiful Jessica?

LORENZO

I must tell you everything. She has instructed me in how to
take her away from her father's house and told me what
gold and jewels she has, and that she has a servant's outfit
ready. If her father the Jew ever gets into heaven, it will be
thanks to his gentle, good daughter. And may misfortune
never befall her unless under the excuse that she is the
daughter of a faithless Jew. Come now, go with me.

[He gives GRATIANO the letter] Read this as you go.

Beautiful Jessica will be my torchbearer.

LORENZO and GRATIANO exit.

Act 2, Scene 5

Shakespeare

Enter SHYLOCK the Jew and his man LAUNCELOT that was the clown

Shakescleare Translation

*SHYLOCK the Jew and his servant LAUNCELOT, who used to
be the clown, enter.*

SHYLOCK

Well, thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge,
The difference of old Shylock and Bassanio.—
What, Jessica!— Thou shalt not gormandize
As thou hast done with me.— What, Jessica!—
5 And sleep and snore, and rend apparel out—
Why, Jessica, I say!

LAUNCELOT

Why, Jessica!

SHYLOCK

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

LAUNCELOT

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

Enter JESSICA

JESSICA

Call you? What is your will?

SHYLOCK

I am bid forth to supper, Jessica.
There are my keys.— But wherefore should I go?
I am not bid for love. They flatter me.
15 But yet I'll go in hate to feed upon
The prodigal Christian.— Jessica, my girl,
Look to my house. I am right loath to go.
There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,
For I did dream of money bags tonight.

LAUNCELOT

20 I beseech you, sir, go. My young master doth expect
your reproach.

SHYLOCK

So do I his.

LAUNCELOT

25 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 fell a-bleeding on Black Monday
last at six o'clock i' th' morning falling out that year
on Ash Wednesday was four year in th' afternoon.

SHYLOCK

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

LAUNCELOT

40 I will go before, sir.—
Mistress, look out at window, for all this.

SHYLOCK

Well, you will see for yourself. You can be the judge of the
difference between old Shylock and Bassanio.

[To JESSICA] Jessica!

*[To LAUNCELOT] You won't be able to gorge yourself on
food like you've done with me.*

[To JESSICA] Jessica!

*[To LAUNCELOT] And you won't be able to sleep and snore
and wear out clothing.*

[To Jessica] Jessica! I'm calling for you!

LAUNCELOT

Jessica!

SHYLOCK

Who told you to call for her? I didn't order you to do that.

LAUNCELOT

You did often tell me not to do anything unless you ordered
me to.

JESSICA enters.


JESSICA

You called? What do you want?

SHYLOCK

I have been invited to a dinner, Jessica. Here are my keys.
But then again, why should I go? They haven't invited me
out of friendly affection. They're just trying to flatter me.
Nonetheless, I'll go out of spite to eat that extravagant
Christian's food. Jessica, my girl, look after the house. I am
reluctant to leave it. There are bad things being stirred up
for me, for I had a dream about money bags last night.


LAUNCELOT

I beg you, sir, go to the dinner. My young master expects
your reproach .


SHYLOCK

And I expect his.

LAUNCELOT


And they've been planning together. I'm not saying you will
definitely see a masquerade party, but if you do then it
really was a true omen when my nose started bleeding 
last Black Monday at six o'clock in the morning, just like Ash
Wednesday four years ago in the afternoon.


SHYLOCK


What, is there a masquerade party planned? Listen to me,
Jessica. Lock up my doors, and when you hear the party
drum and the vile squealing of the thin flute, don't look out
of the balconies or put your head out into the street in order
to look at the foolish Christians with masked faces. Shut up
the windows and don't let the sound of their dumb
celebration enter my sober house. By Jacob's staff  I
swear that I have no intention to feast and party tonight.
But I will go to the dinner. Go ahead of me, Launcelot. Tell
them I'm coming.

LAUNCELOT

I will go ahead, sir.

 *Launcelot means to say that his
master expects Shylock's "approach,"
but misspeaks and says "reproach."
Shylock jokingly takes him literally.*

 *Nosebleeds were considered
ominous, especially on church feast
days.*

 *The Old Testament figure Jacob
left for Padan-arum a poor man with
only a staff and returned a rich man.
(Oxford's World Classics, 1993)*

There will come a Christian by
Will be worth a Jewess' eye.

Exit LAUNCELOT

SHYLOCK

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

JESSICA

45 His words were, "Farewell, mistress." Nothing else.

SHYLOCK

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

Exit SHYLOCK

JESSICA

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

Exit

[To Jessica] Mistress, despite your father's warnings, look out of a window. You'll see a Christian come by who's worth your Jewish eye.

LAUNCELOT exits.

SHYLOCK

What did that foolish Christian tell you?

JESSICA

He said, "Farewell, mistress." Nothing else.

SHYLOCK

He's a nice enough fellow, but a voracious eater. He works as slowly as a snail and sleeps more than a cat during the day. I'll have worker bees only for my hive. So I'll let him go, and send him to go use up all that man's money, which he borrowed from me. ⁴ Well, Jessica, go inside. Maybe I'll be back very soon. Do as I tell you. Shut all the doors after you. Keep safe what you want to keep, as they say. That saying is always on my thrifty mind.

⁴ This is a strange wish, considering that creditors would want their debtors to have enough money to pay them back.

SHYLOCK exits.

JESSICA

Goodbye, and if I have any good luck, soon I will have lost a father and you will have lost a daughter.

JESSICA exits.

Act 2, Scene 6

Shakespeare

Enter the masquers GRATIANO and SALERIO

GRATIANO

This is the penthouse under which Lorenzo
Desired us to make stand.

SALERIO

His hour is almost past.

GRATIANO

And it is marvel he outdells his hour,
5 For lovers ever run before the clock.

SALERIO

Oh, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
To seal love's bonds new made than they are wont
To keep obligèd faith unforfeited.

GRATIANO

That ever holds. Who riseth from a feast
10 With that keen appetite that he sits down?
Where is the horse that doth untread again
His tedious measures with the unbated fire
That he did pace them first? All things that are,
Are with more spirit chasèd than enjoyed.
15 How like a younger or a prodigal
The scarfèd bark puts from her native bay,
Hugged and embraèd by the strumpet wind!
How like the prodigal doth she return,
With overweathered ribs and ragged sails
20 Lean, rent, and beggared by the strumpet wind!

Shakescleare Translation

GRATIANO and SALERIO, dressed for masquerade, enter.

GRATIANO

This is the house Lorenzo wanted us to wait at.

SALERIO

He's nearly late.

GRATIANO

Yes, and that's surprising, because those in love are usually early.

SALERIO

The doves of Venus ¹ fly ten times faster to consummate a new relationship than to keep couples together.

¹ The ancient Roman goddess of love.

GRATIANO

That's always true. Who leaves a meal as hungry as when he sat down? What horse retraces its steps with as much eagerness as when it went forward? The chase is always the most exciting part. When a ship leaves its native bay its sails are hugged and embraced by the loving wind! But when the ship returns it has weathered sides and ragged sails, damaged and torn apart by the vicious wind!

SALERIO

Here comes Lorenzo. More of this hereafter.

Enter LORENZO

LORENZO

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

Enter JESSICA above, disguised as a boy

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

Lorenzo, and thy love.

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

Descend, for you must be my torchbearer.

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

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

Exit JESSICA above

GRATIANO

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

LORENZO

Beshrew me but I love her heartily.
55 For she is wise, if I can judge of her.
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true.
And true she is, as she hath proved herself.
And therefore, like herself—wise, fair and true—
Shall she be placèd in my constant soul.

SALERIO

Here comes Lorenzo. We can talk about this more later.

LORENZO enters.

LORENZO

My sweet friends, forgive me for being late. I didn't keep
you waiting on purpose, but had to because of my business.
When you are the ones trying and steal your wives away, I'll
wait just as patiently for you as you've waited for me. Come
here. This the house of the Jew that will be my father-in-
law. Hello! Who's there?

JESSICA enters at a window above, disguised as a boy.

JESSICA

Who are you? Tell me so I can be sure, although I swear I
recognize your voice.

LORENZO

It is Lorenzo, your love.

JESSICA

You are certainly Lorenzo, and definitely my love. Who do I
love as much as you? And who other than yourself knows
that I am yours?

LORENZO

Heaven and you yourself both know that you are mine.

JESSICA

Here, catch this box. It's worth the effort. I am glad it's dark
out so you can't see me. I'm very ashamed of how I look in
my disguise. But love is blind and lovers cannot see the
little faults in their relationships. If they could, Cupid
himself would blush at how ridiculous I look disguised as a
boy.

LORENZO

Come down. You must be my torchbearer.

JESSICA

What, I'm supposed to hold up a candle so you can see my
shameful appearance? Speaking of light, my behavior is a
little too light on morality. The torchbearer brings things to
light, my love, and I should be kept hidden in the shadows.

LORENZO

You are hidden, sweetie, in the lovely disguise of a boy. But
come here at once. The night is going by quickly, and
they're waiting for us at Bassanio's feast.

JESSICA

I'll make sure the doors are securely closed and get some
more money, and then I'll be with you right away.

JESSICA exits above.

GRATIANO

I swear, she's too gentle to be a Jew.

LORENZO

Call me crazy, but I love her with all my heart. If I'm any
judge of character, she is wise. And if my eyes are
trustworthy, she is beautiful. Moreover, she has proven
herself to be loyal. And since she is wise, beautiful, and
loyal, she will always be in my heart.

Enter JESSICA

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

Exit LORENZO with JESSICA and SALERIO

Enter ANTONIO

ANTONIO

Who's there?

GRATIANO

Signor Antonio?

ANTONIO

Fie, fie, Gratiano! Where are all the rest?
65 'Tis nine o'clock. Our friends all stay for you.
No masque tonight. The wind is come about.
Bassanio presently will go aboard.
I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

GRATIANO

I am glad on 't. I desire no more delight
70 Than to be under sail and gone tonight.

Exeunt

JESSICA enters.

Are you here now? Gentlemen, let's go! Our fellow party-goers are waiting for us at the masquerade.

LORENZO, JESSICA, and SALERIO exit.

ANTONIO enters.

ANTONIO

Who's there?

GRATIANO

Sir Antonio?

ANTONIO

Ah, Gratiano! Where is everyone else? It's nine o'clock. Our friends are all waiting for you. There's not going to be a masquerade party tonight. The wind is blowing, so Bassanio is going to get on his sailboat right away. I have sent twenty men out looking for you.

GRATIANO

I'm glad. I don't want a party. All I want is to be on our way sailing tonight.

GRATIANO and ANTONIO exit.

Act 2, Scene 7

Shakespeare

Flourish cornets. Enter PORTIA with the Prince of MOROCCO, and both their trains

PORTIA

[to servant] Go draw aside the curtains and discover
The several caskets to this noble prince.—

[A curtain is drawn showing a gold, silver, and lead
5 casket]

[to MOROCCO] Now make your choice.

MOROCCO

The first, of gold, who this inscription bears:
"Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire."

10 The second, silver, which this promise carries:
"Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves."
This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt:
"Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."
How shall I know if I do choose the right?

PORTIA

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

MOROCCO

Some god direct my judgment! Let me see.
I will survey th' inscriptions back again.
What says this leaden casket?

20 "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."
Must give—for what? For lead? Hazard for lead?
This casket threatens. Men that hazard all
Do it in hope of fair advantages.

A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross.
25 I'll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead.
What says the silver with her virgin hue?
"Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves."

Shakescleare Translation

Trumpets play. PORTIA enters with the Prince of MOROCCO and their attendants.

PORTIA

[To a servant] Go open the curtains and reveal the caskets
to this noble prince.

[The servant opens a curtain revealing three caskets: a gold
one, a silver one, and a lead one.]

[To MOROCCO] Now choose one of the caskets.

MOROCCO

The first one, made of gold, has this inscription: "He who chooses me will get what many men desire." The second one, made of silver, has this promise written on it: "He who chooses me will get as much as he deserves." The third one, made of dull lead, has this blunt warning: "He who chooses me must give up and risk all that he has." How will I know if I choose the right casket?

PORTIA

One of them has my picture inside, Prince. If you choose that one then I am yours.

MOROCCO

May some god help me make my choice! Let's see. I will look over the inscriptions again. What does the lead casket say? "He who chooses me must give up and risk all that he has." Must give up for what? For some lead? Risk everything for lead? This casket's inscription doesn't bode well. If I am going to risk everything, it must be in hope of a big reward. A golden mind doesn't stoop to trash. I won't risk or give up anything for lead, then. What does the silver one, with its pure hue, say? "He who chooses me will get as much as he deserves." As much as he deserves! I need to think this over for a second, and consider how much I deserve. If I were to

“As much as he deserves!”—pause there, Morocco,
 And weigh thy value with an even hand.
 30 If thou beest rated by thy estimation,
 Thou dost deserve enough, and yet enough
 May not extend so far as to the lady,
 And yet to be afraid of my deserving
 Were but a weak disabling of myself.
 35 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?
 40 Let’s see once more this saying graved in gold,
 “Who chooseth 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 mortal breathing saint.
 45 The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds
 Of wide Arabia are as thoroughfares now
 For princes to come view fair Portia.
 The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head
 Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar
 50 To stop the foreign spirits, but they come
 As o’er a brook to see fair Portia.
 One of these three contains her heavenly picture.
 Is ’t like that lead contains her? ’Twere damnation
 To think so base a thought. It were too gross
 55 To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave.
 Or shall I think in silver she’s immured,
 Being ten times undervalued to tried gold?
 O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem
 Was set in worse than gold. They have in England
 60 A coin that bears the figure of an angel
 Stamped in gold, but that’s insculp’d upon.
 But here an angel in a golden bed
 Lies all within.— Deliver me the key.
 Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

PORTIA

65 *[giving MOROCCO a key]*
 There, take it, Prince. And if my form lie there
 Then I am yours.

MOROCCO opens the golden casket

MOROCCO

O hell, what have we here?
 A carrion death, within whose empty eye
 70 There is a written scroll. I’ll read the writing.
[reads]
 “All that glisters is not gold—
 Often have you heard that told.
 Many a man his life hath sold
 75 But my outside to behold.
 Gilded tombs do worms enfold.
 Had you been as wise as bold,
 Young in limbs, in judgment old,
 Your answer had not been inscrolled.
 80 Fare you well. Your suit is cold—
 Cold, indeed, and labor lost.”
 Then, farewell, heat, and welcome, frost!
 Portia, adieu. I have too griev’d a heart
 To take a tedious leave. Thus losers part.

Exit MOROCCO with his train

PORTIA

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

judge myself, I’d say that I deserve quite a bit, but quite a bit might not be enough to merit the lady. But I do myself a disservice in underestimating what I deserve. I deserve her by my noble birth and my wealth, by my good graces and good breeding. But even more than this, I deserve her because of my love for her. What if I didn’t consider the other caskets and chose this one? Let’s see the saying engraved on the gold one more time. “He who chooses me will get what many men desire.” Well, that’s the lady. The whole world desires her. They come from the four corners of the earth to kiss her, this living saint. The deserts of the Middle East and the vast wilds of Arabia are practically highways now for princes to come see beautiful Portia. The kingdom of the ocean, whose waves rise to touch heaven itself, cannot stop the foreign suitors from coming. They cross the sea as if it is a little stream to see beautiful Portia. One of these three caskets contains her heavenly picture. Is it likely that ugly lead would contain her? I’d be damned if I thought such a horrible thought. It would be too terrible to enclose her beauty in such a casket. Or is she in the silver one, worth ten times less than gold? What a sinful thought! Such a rich gem as she is has never been set in anything worse than gold. In England there’s a gold coin that’s stamped with the figure of an angel, but that’s just engraved on top of it. Here, an angel lies within a golden bed. Give me the key. I choose this one, and hope that my choice will bring me joy!

PORTIA

[Giving MOROCCO a key] There, take it, Prince. And if my picture is within, then I am yours.

MOROCCO opens the golden casket.

MOROCCO

Oh hell, what is this? A skull, and inside the eye socket is a scroll. I’ll read what’s written on it.

[He reads aloud] “All that glitters is not gold—you have often heard this saying. Many a man has given up his life just to see my outside. But golden tombs contain nothing but worms. If you had been as wise as you were bold, with the strength of youth in your body but the good judgment of old age in your mind, you wouldn’t have chosen this casket. Fare well. Your attempt to get Portia is unsuccessful and all wasted effort.” Now, goodbye passion and hello cold solitude. Portia, goodbye. My heart is too sad to take long in leaving. This is how losers depart.

MOROCCO and his attendants exit.

PORTIA

Good riddance. Close the curtains back up. I hope everyone of his complexion will choose that cask.

“Complexion” could also refer to a person’s more general makeup, the qualities that he or she holds, but given Portia’s proclaimed racial prejudices, there is little doubt that she is also directly remarking upon Morocco’s skin color.

*Exeunt**PORTIA and her attendants exit.*

Act 2, Scene 8

Shakespeare

*Enter SALERIO and SOLANIO***SALERIO**

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

SOLANIO

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

SALERIO

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

SOLANIO

I never heard a passion so confused,
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets .
15 "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, stol'n from me by my daughter!
20 And jewels—two stones, two rich and precious stones—
Stol'n by my daughter! Justice, find the girl!
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats."

SALERIO

Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
Crying, "His stones, his daughter, and his ducats!"

SOLANIO

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

SALERIO

Marry, well remembered.
I reasoned with a Frenchman yesterday,
Who told me, in the narrow seas that part
30 The French and English, there miscarried
A vessel of our country richly fraught.
I thought upon Antonio when he told me,
And wished in silence that it were not his.

SOLANIO

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

SALERIO

A kinder gentleman treads not the earth.
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part.
Bassanio told him he would make some speed
Of his return. He answered, "Do not so.
40 Slubber not business for my sake, Bassanio
But stay the very riping of the time.
And for the Jew's bond which he hath of me,
Let it not enter in your mind of love.
Be merry, and employ your chiefest thoughts

45

Shakescleare Translation

*SALERIO and SOLANIO enter.***SALERIO**

Man, I saw Bassanio sail away and Gratiano went along with him. And I'm sure that Lorenzo is not with them in their ship.

SOLANIO

That villainous Jew cried out for the Duke's help, and got him to search Bassanio's ship.

SALERIO

He came too late. The ship had already set sail. But it was explained to the Duke that Lorenzo and his loving Jessica were seen together in a gondola. Besides, Antonio told the Duke that those two were not with Bassanio in his ship.

SOLANIO

I have never heard a passionate outburst of rage as confused, strange, outrageous, and varied as that dog the Jew uttered in the streets. He was yelling, "My daughter! Oh, my ducats! O my daughter, she ran away with a Christian! Oh, my ducats that now belong to a Christian! Justice, and the law! My ducats and my daughter! A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats, double the ducats, stolen from me by my own daughter! And jewels—two valuable, precious stones—stolen by my own daughter! Justice, I must find the girl! She has the jewels with her, and the ducats."

SALERIO

All the boys in Venice were following him, crying out, "His jewels, his daughter, and his ducats!"

SOLANIO

Antonio had better be careful not to miss the deadline for paying Shylock back, or else he will pay for this.

SALERIO

Yes, indeed. I talked yesterday with a French person who told me that there was a shipwreck in the narrow waters that separate England and France involving a ship from our country carrying lots of riches. I thought of Antonio when he said this, and wished to myself that the ship was not his.

SOLANIO

You'd better tell Antonio what you've heard. But tell him gently; it may upset him.

SALERIO

No gentleman is as kind as Antonio is. I saw Bassanio and him leave each other. Bassanio told him he would come back quickly and Antonio replied, "Don't rush. Don't muddle your business for my sake, Bassanio, but rather stay as long as you need to. And don't worry about the agreement I have with the Jew. Be of good cheer and devote your thoughts to courtship and how you can best show your love there." And as his eyes filled with tears, he turned his face and put his hand out to shake Bassanio's

To courtship and such fair ostents of love
As shall conveniently become you there.”
And even there, his eye being big with tears,
Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,
And with affection wondrous sensible
50 He wrung Bassanio’s hand. And so they parted.

SOLANIO

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

SALERIO

55 Do we so.

Exeunt

hand with much affection. And that was how they parted.

SOLANIO

I think Bassanio means the world to Antonio. Please, let’s
go and find him and cheer him from his constant
melancholy with some good times or something.

SALERIO

Yes, let’s do that.

SALERIO and SOLANIO exit.

Act 2, Scene 9

Shakespeare

Enter NERISSA and a servitor

NERISSA

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

Flourish cornets Enter the Prince of ARRAGON, his train, and PORTIA

PORTIA

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

ARRAGON

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

PORTIA

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

ARRAGON

And so have I addressed me. Fortune now
To my heart’s hope! Gold, silver, and base lead.
20 “Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.”
You shall look fairer ere I give or hazard.
What says the golden chest? Ha, let me see.
“Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.”
“What many men desire”—that “many” may be meant
25 By the fool multitude that choose by show,
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach;
Which pries not to th’ interior, but like the martlet
Builds in the weather on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty.
30 I will not choose what many men desire
Because I will not jump with common spirits
And rank me with the barbarous multitudes.
Why then, to thee, thou silver treasure house.
Tell me once more what title thou dost bear.
35

Shakescleare Translation

NERISSA and a servant enter.

NERISSA

Hurry, hurry, please. Close up the curtain right now. The
Prince of Aragon has sworn his oath and now comes to
make his selection.

*Trumpets play. The Prince of ARRAGON, his attendants, and
PORTIA enter.*

PORTIA

Behold, there are the caskets, noble Prince. If you choose
the one that contains a picture of me, we will get married
right away. But if you make the wrong choice, you must
leave here immediately, my lord, without saying another
word.

ARRAGON

I am bound by oath to do the following three things: first, I
can never tell anyone which casket it was that I chose.
Second, if I fail to choose the right casket, I will never again
court a woman in marriage. And third, if I fail to make the
right choice, I must immediately be gone and leave you.

PORTIA

Everyone must agree to these conditions who wants to risk
it for me, as worthless as I am.

ARRAGON

I am prepared to take the risk. May fortune smile upon the
hopes in my heart! Gold, silver, and lowly lead. "He who
chooses me must give up and risk all that he has." You'd
need to look better before I give up or risk everything for
you. What does the golden chest say? Hm, let me see. "He
who chooses me will get what many men desire." What
many men desire—"many" may refer to the majority of
fools who choose things based on appearance, trusting
their eyes alone. But you can't see through to what's on the
inside. Those people are like martlet birds, who build their
nests on the outer walls, obsessed with the outside. I will
not choose that which many men desire, because I will not
join in with the common, barbarous multitudes. Well, then,
on to the silver casket. Let's see again what your inscription
says. "He who chooses me will get as much as he deserves."
I agree with this saying, because who should attain good
fortune and honor if they don't deserve it? No one should

“Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.”
 And well said too—for who shall go about
 To cozen fortune and be honorable
 Without the stamp of merit? Let none presume
 To wear an undeservèd dignity.
 40 Oh, that estates, degrees and offices
 Were not derived corruptly, and that clear honor
 Were purchased by the merit of the wearer!
 How many then should cover that stand bare!
 How many be commanded that command!
 45 How much low peasantry would then be gleaned
 From the true seed of honor! And how much honor
 Picked from the chaff and ruin of the times
 To be new varnished! Well, but to my choice.
 “Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.”
 50 I will assume desert.—Give me a key for this,
 And instantly unlock my fortunes here.

ARRAGON opens the silver casket

PORTIA

Too long a pause for that which you find there.

ARRAGON

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

PORTIA

60 To offend and judge are distinct offices
 And of opposèd natures.

ARRAGON

What is here?
[reads]
 “The fire seven times tried this,
 65 Seven times tried that judgment is,
 That did never choose amiss.
 Some there be that shadows kiss.
 Such have but a shadow's bliss.
 There be fools alive, iwis,
 70 Silvered o'er—and so was this.
 Take what wife you will to bed,
 I will ever be your head.
 So be gone. You are sped.
 Still more fool I shall appear”
 75 By the time I linger here.
 With one fool's head I came to woo,
 But I go away with two.—
 Sweet, adieu. I'll keep my oath
 Patiently to bear my wroth.”

Exeunt ARRAGON and his train

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

85 Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

Enter MESSENGER

Messenger

Where is my lady?

pretend to have more dignity than they really deserve. I wish estates, degrees, and jobs were not gotten corruptly, and that honor was given out based on merit! If that were the case, many great men would be put in their place, and many men who are in command now would be commanded by others. How many nobleman would be transformed into common peasants! And how many commoners would now shine with honor! But anyways, it's time for me to make my choice. "He who chooses me will get as much as he deserves." I know what I deserve. Give me the key for this one, and I will unlock my fortune here right away.

ARRAGON opens the silver casket.

PORTIA

You've taken too much time for what you've found inside.

ARRAGON

What's here? The portrait of an idiot holding something for me to read! I will read it. How different this picture is from one of Portia! This is so unlike what I hoped for and what I deserved! "He who chooses me will get as much as he deserves!" Did I deserve nothing but a fool's head? Is that my prize? Do I deserve no better?

PORTIA

If I were to answer you, it might offend you.

ARRAGON

What does it say here?

[He reads aloud] This silver chest was put in the fire seven times. The kind of judgment that never chooses wrongly can withstand as many tests. Some people kiss shadows, and only have a shadow of bliss. There are some foolish people covered with silver hair, and this casket had a silver covering as well. Take whatever wife you want to bed, but this fool's head will always be yours. So go away. You must leave." The more time I linger here, the more foolish I'll seem. I came to woo Portia with the head of a fool, and now I leave with two fool's heads. Goodbye, sweet lady. I'll keep my word and bear my misfortune patiently.

ARRAGON and his attendants exit.

PORTIA

And he's gone, like a moth that's flown too close to the flame. These fools think it over so much! And when they finally choose, their wits aren't enough and they lose.

NERISSA

The ancient saying is true: death and marriage are matters of destiny.

PORTIA

Come on, close the curtain, Nerissa.

A MESSENGER enters.

Messenger

Where is my lady?

PORTIA

Here. What would my lord?

MESSENGER

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

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

Bassanio, Lord Love, if thy will it be!

Exeunt

PORTIA

I am here. What do you want?

MESSENGER

Madam, a young Venetian has come to your gate. He has gone ahead of his lord to tell you that his master is approaching. He brings kind greetings and, in addition to niceties and courteous manners, valuable gifts. I haven't yet seen any ambassador of love as likely to succeed as this one. This man coming ahead of his lord is sweeter than a warm April day showing summer is near.

PORTIA

Enough, please. I'm worried next you'll tell me he's your cousin, since you praise him so much. Come on, Nerissa, I want to see this messenger of Cupid who comes with such good manners.

NERISSA

God of Love, please let it be Bassanio!

NERISSA, PORTIA, and the MESSENGER exit.

Act 3, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter SOLANIO and SALERIO

SOLANIO

Now, what news on the Rialto?

SALERIO

Why, yet it lives there unchecked that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wracked on the narrow seas. The Goodwins I think they call the place—a very dangerous
5 flat, and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as they say, if my gossip report be an honest woman of her word.

SOLANIO

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

SALERIO

15 Come, the full stop.

SOLANIO

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

SALERIO

I would it might prove the end of his losses.

SOLANIO

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

Enter SHYLOCK


Shakescleare Translation


SOLANIO and SALERIO enter.

SOLANIO

What news is there from the Rialto now?

SALERIO

Well, there's an unproven rumor around there that Antonio has lost a ship carrying many riches on the English Channel. It supposedly happened on a very dangerous, deadly sandbar I think they call The Goodwins , where the remains of many tall ships lie buried. That is, if this gossip turns out to be true.

 *The Goodwin Sands are off the mouth of the Thames.*

SOLANIO

I hope this rumor is as false as a woman who tells her neighbors she has wept over the death of her third husband. But it is true, at the risk of talking your ear off, that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio—oh, I wish I had something to call him that was good enough to be next to his name!

SALERIO

Come on, get to the point.

SOLANIO

Hm, what are you saying? Oh, the point is that he has lost a ship.

SALERIO

I hope this is the last of his losses.

SOLANIO

Let me say "amen" now, so that the devil doesn't interfere with that prayer, because here comes the devil himself, in the shape of a Jew.

SHYLOCK enters.

How now, Shylock? What news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK

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

SALERIO

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

SOLANIO

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

SHYLOCK

She is damned for it.

SOLANIO

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

SHYLOCK

My own flesh and blood to rebel!

SOLANIO

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

SHYLOCK

I say my daughter is my flesh and blood.

SALERIO

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

SHYLOCK

40 There I have another bad match!— a bankrupt, a prodigal who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto, a beggar that was used to come so smug upon the mart. Let him look to his bond. He was wont to call me usurer; let him look to his bond. He was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy; let him look to his bond.

SALERIO

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

SHYLOCK

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

50
55
60
65

How are you, Shylock? What's the news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK

You knew about my daughter's plan to run away, and no one knew better than you.

SALERIO

That's for sure. For my part, I knew the tailor who made the wings she flew away on.

SOLANIO

And as for Shylock, he knew his little birdie had wings and he knew she was likely to leave the nest.

SHYLOCK

She is damned for running away.

SOLANIO

That's certain, if you, the devil, are her judge.

SHYLOCK

I can't believe my own flesh and blood rebelled against me!

SOLANIO

No way, you old thing! You can't control your flesh even at your age?

SHYLOCK

I mean my daughter is my own flesh and blood.

SALERIO

There's a greater difference between your flesh and hers than between coal and ivory, and a greater difference between your blood and hers than between red and white wine. But tell us, have you heard whether Antonio has suffered any losses at sea or not?

SHYLOCK

With him I have more bad luck! He is a bankrupt, reckless with money, and he doesn't dare show his head in the Rialto. He is a beggar who used to be smug in the market. Let him pay attention to his obligations. He used to always insult me for charging interest; well, let him pay attention to his obligations. He used to lend money as a Christian favor; let him pay attention to his obligations.

SALERIO

Well, I'm sure that if he doesn't pay you back you won't actually take his flesh. What would that be good for?

SHYLOCK

I could use it as bait for fish. If it will feed nothing else, it will at least feed my revenge. Half a million times he has disgraced me and hindered me. He has laughed at my losses, mocked my profits, scorned my people, messed with my business deals, turned my friends against me, and encouraged my enemies. And what's his reason for all this? I am a Jew. Does a Jew not have eyes? Does a Jew not have hands, organs, senses, affections, passions? Are we not fed with the same food, hurt by the same weapons, affected by the same diseases, healed by the same medicines, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as Christians? If you stab 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, should we not take revenge? If we are like you in all the other ways, we will resemble you in terms of revenge, too. If a Jew wrongs a Christian, what does he do? He takes revenge. If a Christian wrongs a Jew, what should the Jew do, following the Christian example? Why, he should take revenge. I will follow your own villainous example, and I'll

Enter a MAN from ANTONIO

MAN

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

SALERIO

We have been up and down to seek him.

Enter TUBAL

SOLANIO

70 Here comes another of the tribe. A third cannot be matched unless the devil himself turn Jew.

Exeunt SOLANIO, SALERIO, and MAN

SHYLOCK

How now, Tubal? What news from Genoa? Hast thou found my daughter?

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

Why, there, there, there, there! A diamond gone cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfurt—the curse never fell upon our nation till now! I never felt it till now—Two thousand ducats in that, and other precious, precious
80 jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hearsed at my foot and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? Why, so. And I know not what's spent in the search. Why thou, loss upon loss! The thief gone with so much, and so much
85 to find the thief—and no satisfaction, no revenge. Nor no ill luck stirring but what lights o' my shoulders, no sighs but o' my breathing, no tears but o' my shedding.

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

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

TUBAL

Hath an argosy cast away coming from Tripolis.

SHYLOCK

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

TUBAL

95 I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wrack.

SHYLOCK

I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good news! Ha, ha, heard in Genoa.

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

100 Thou stickest a dagger in me. I shall never see my gold again. Fourscore ducats at a sitting! Fourscore ducats!

probably outdo my teachers.

A MAN sent by ANTONIO enters.

MAN

[To SOLANIO and SALERIO] Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house and wishes to speak with both of you.

SALERIO

We've been all over the place looking for him.

TUBAL enters.

SOLANIO

Here comes another Jew. There couldn't be a third to match these two unless the devil himself turned into a Jew.

SOLANIO, SALERIO, and the MAN exit.

SHYLOCK

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

TUBAL

I often found word of her, but I couldn't find her.

SHYLOCK

Well there you go! One of the diamonds she took cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfurt ². Our people are cursed but I've never felt the curse until now! Two thousand ducats lost in that diamond, plus the other precious, precious jewels. I wish my daughter were dead here at my feet, with the jewels in her ear. I wish she were dead in her coffin right here and the ducats were inside it with her! There's no news of them? All right, then. And I don't even know how much I'm spending to search for them. Loss on top of loss! The thief took so much, and now it takes even more money to find the thief. And still I have no satisfaction, and can find no revenge. No one feels bad luck, remorse, or grief as much as I do now.

TUBAL

Other men have bad luck, too. I heard in Genoa that Antonio—

SHYLOCK

What, what, what? He's had some bad luck? Bad luck?

TUBAL

Antonio has lost a ship coming from Tripoli.

SHYLOCK

I thank God, I thank God! Is it true? Is it true?

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

Thank you, good Tubal. Good news, good news! Ha ha, good news heard in Genoa.

TUBAL

As I heard, your daughter spent eighty ducats in one night in Genoa.

SHYLOCK

You stick a knife in my heart. I will never see my gold again. Eighty ducats in one sitting! Eighty ducats!

² Frankfurt, Germany was famous for its fairs at the time Shakespeare wrote the Merchant of Venice.

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

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

TUBAL

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

SHYLOCK

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

TUBAL

But Antonio is certainly undone.

SHYLOCK

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

Exeunt severally

TUBAL

Some of Antonio's creditors came with me to Venice and swore that he has no choice but to forfeit on his loan.

SHYLOCK

I'm very glad to hear that. I'll keep after him. I'll torture him. I'm glad about this.

TUBAL

One of them showed me a ring that your daughter gave him in payment for a monkey.

SHYLOCK

Damn her! You are torturing me, Tubal, by telling me this. That must have been my turquoise ring. Leah gave it to me when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it away for a whole jungle full of monkeys.

TUBAL

But Antonio is certainly ruined.

SHYLOCK

Yes, that's true, very true. Go and get a police officer for me, Tubal. Pay for his services two weeks in advance. I will take Antonio's heart if he forfeits on the loan. If he's no longer around in Venice, I can do what I want with my trading business without his competition. Go, go, Tubal, and then meet me at our synagogue. Go, good Tubal. Meet me at our synagogue, Tubal.

SHYLOCK and TUBAL exit, separately.

Act 3, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA, and all their trains, including a SINGER

PORTIA

[To BASSANIO] I pray you, tarry. Pause a day or two before you hazard, for in choosing wrong I lose your company. Therefore forbear awhile. There's something tells me—but it is not love—
5 I would not lose you, and you know yourself Hate counsels not in such a quality. But lest you should not understand me well—And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought—
10 I would detain you here some month or two before you venture for me. I could teach you How to choose right, but I am then forsworn. So will I never be. So may you miss me. But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin, That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,
15 They have o'erlooked me and divided me. One half of me is yours, the other half yours—Mine own, I would say. But if mine, then yours, And so all yours. Oh, these naughty times Put bars between the owners and their rights!
20 And so, though yours, not yours. Prove it so. Let Fortune go to hell for it, not I. I speak too long, but 'tis to peize the time, To eke it and to draw it out in length, To stay you from election.

BASSANIO

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

Shakescleare Translation

BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA, and all their servants enter along with a SINGER.

PORTIA

[To BASSANIO] Please, take your time. Wait a day or two before you take the risk, because if you choose incorrectly then you will have to leave me. So wait a while. For some reason—but not because of love—I don't think I'd. It's not hate that would make me feel this way. But just so that I'm clear, even though it's not a young woman's place to speak her thoughts, I would like to keep you here for a month or two before you make your choice. I could tell you what the right casket is, but I've sworn not to. I will never tell you the right choice, so there's a chance you will make the wrong choice. And if you do, you'll make me wish I had sinned and broken my oath not to reveal the correct casket. Darn your eyes—in looking upon me they have divided me in two. One half of me is yours, and the other half is yours—I mean mine. Well, if that half of me is mine, then it is yours, too, so all of me is yours. Oh, it's wrong that you are kept from what is yours! Although I am yours, I am not yet officially yours. Make it so I am. Let Lady Luck go to hell for this game of chance, not me. I'm talking too much, but I'm doing that just to waste time, to draw out the minutes and stretch out the seconds, keeping you from making your decision.

BASSANIO

Let me choose a casket, for as it is right now I am in torture.

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

Well then, confess and live.

BASSANIO

"Confess and love"
Had been the very sum of my confession.
O happy torment, when my torturer
40 Doth teach me answers for deliverance!
But let 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 out.—
Nerissa and the rest, stand all aloof.
45 Let music sound while he doth make his choice.
Then if he lose he makes a swanlike end,
Fading in music. That the comparison
May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream
And watery deathbed for him. He may win,
50 And what is music then? Then music is
Even as the flourish when true subjects bow
To a new-crown'd monarch. Such it is
As are those dulcet sounds in break of day
That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear
55 And summon him to marriage.
Now he goes
With no less presence but with much more love
Than young Alcides, when he did redeem
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
60 To the sea monster. I stand for sacrifice.
The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,
With bleared visages come forth to view
The issue of th' exploit.—Go, Hercules!
Live thou, I live. With much, much more dismay
65 I view the fight than thou that makest the fray.

A song, the whilst BASSANIO comments on the caskets to himself

SINGER

[sings]
Tell me where is fancy bred.
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourishèd?


ALL


70 Reply, reply.

SINGER

[sings]
It is engendered in the eyes,
With gazing fed, and fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies.
75 Let us all ring fancy's knell
I'll begin it.—Ding, dong, bell.

PORTIA

In torture, Bassanio? Then confess  what treason you
have committed out of your love.

 Portia is joking, as if Bassanio is being actually tortured to provoke a confession.

BASSANIO

I am guilty of nothing but some mistrust, which makes me
worry I may never be able to enjoy my love. Snow and fire
go better together than any treason and my love.

PORTIA

Yes, but I am worried that you are only saying this because
you are being tortured. Men say anything when forced to by
torture.

BASSANIO

Promise me my life and I'll tell you the truth.


PORTIA


Well then, confess the truth and you will live.

BASSANIO

"Confess and love," yes, that's it. What nice torture, when
my torturer tells me the right thing to say to be let go! But
now let me try my luck and go to the caskets.

PORTIA

Let's go, then. My picture is locked in one of the caskets. If
you truly love me, you will find it. Nerissa and everyone
else, stand back. Let some music play while he makes his
choice. Then if he loses, he will at least have a swanlike end,
dying with a song. To make him really like a swan, I'll cry a
river for him to swim and drown in. And if he wins, what will
be the point of the music? In that case, the music will be
like the flourish that plays when subjects bow to a newly
crowned king. The sweet sounds that wake up a dreaming
groom at dawn on his wedding day, and announce that his
wedding is here. And now he goes to the caskets looking as
noble as Hercules, but more loving, when Hercules rescued
the Trojan princess  from the sea monster. I am like that
princess, awaiting death, and these people standing by are
like the Trojan wives looking on with teary eyes. Go, my
Hercules! If you live, then I live. I am much more troubled
here watching you than you are, doing the deed.

 In classical mythology, Hercules rescued the Trojan princess Hesione from a sea monster sent by Poseidon, god of the sea.

The SINGER sings a song, while BASSANIO comments to himself about the caskets.

SINGER

[Singing]
Tell me where our desires come from:
The heart or the head?
How do they start, how do they grow?

ALL

Answer, answer.

SINGER

[Singing]
Love starts in the eyes,
And grows with gazing, and it dies
In the cradle where it lies.
Let us all sound love's death knell.
I'll start—Ding, dong, bell.

ALL

Ding, dong, bell.

BASSANIO

So may the outward shows be least themselves.
The world is still deceived with ornament.

- 80 In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt
But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
What damnèd error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text,
85 Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
There is no vice so simple but assumes
Some mark of virtue on his outward parts.
How many cowards whose hearts are all as false
As stairs of sand wear yet upon their chins
90 The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,
Who, inward searched, have livers white as milk,
And these assume but valor's excrement
To render them redoubted. Look on beauty,
And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight,
95 Which therein works a miracle in nature,
Making them lightest that wear most of it.
So are those crisped snaky golden locks
Which maketh such wanton gambols with the wind,
Upon supposed fairness, often known
100 To be the dowry of a second head,
The skull that bred them in the sepulcher.
Thus ornament is but the guilèd shore
To a most dangerous sea, the beauteous scarf
Veiling an Indian beauty—in a word,
105 The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest. Therefore then, thou gaudy gold,
Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee.
Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge
'Tween man and man. But thou, thou meagre lead,
110 Which rather threaten'st than dost promise aught,
Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence,
And here choose I. Joy be the consequence!

PORTIA

[aside] How all the other passions fleet to air,
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,
115 And shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy!
O love, be moderate. Allay thy ecstasy.
In measure rein thy joy. Scant this excess.
I feel too much thy blessing. Make it less,
For fear I surfeit.

BASSANIO

- 120 *[opening the lead casket]*
What find I here?
Fair Portia's counterfeit! What demigod
Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,
125 Seem they in motion? Here are severed lips,
Parted with sugar breath. So sweet a bar
Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs,
The painter plays the spider and hath woven
A golden mesh t' entrap the hearts of men
130 Faster than gnats in cobwebs. But her eyes—
How could he see to do them? Having made one,
Methinks it should have power to steal both his
And leave itself unfurnished. Yet look how far
The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow
135 In underprizing it, so far this shadow
Doth limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll,
The continent and summary of my fortune.
[reads]
"You that choose not by the view,
140 Chance as fair and choose as true.
Since this fortune falls to you,
Be content and seek no new.
If you be well pleased with this
And hold your fortune for your bliss,


145

ALL

Ding, dong, bell.

BASSANIO

The appearances of these may be deceiving. The whole world is tricked by fancy appearances. In the court of law, a corrupt and false plea can hide its own evil with a pleasant voice. In religion, a damned mistake can be covered over with the nice show of a blessing and some scripture to justify it. Every vice has some outward appearance of virtue. Many cowards with disloyal hearts have beards like brave Hercules and Mars, the god of war, even though they have no guts and are easily frightened. And think of beauty, which can be bought by the pound in the form of cosmetics, which work miracles on nature, making the women that wear the most of it the most beautiful. The curly golden locks that are tousled in the wind so nicely and seem beautiful often turn out to be a wig, made from a dead person's hair. Appearances are like an inviting shore that leads to a dangerous ocean, a beautiful scarf hiding an actually undesirable Indian "beauty." In short, appearances can be tricky and often deceive even the wisest. Therefore, you gold, the solid metal that Midas couldn't eat, I will have nothing to do with you. And I'll have nothing to do with silver either, that pale metal that men pass between themselves as currency. But you, humble lead, you who threaten more than you promise, your paleness moves me more than I can say, and I choose you. I hope I will be happy with my decision!

 In classical mythology, everything that the king Midas touched turned to gold. While he was initially happy with this gift, Midas soon found that he couldn't eat or drink anything, because it would turn to gold. Thus, Bassanio describes gold as Midas's food.

PORTIA

[To herself] All other emotions are flying away—doubt and rash despair, shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy! I must moderate my love and restrain my ecstasy. I must rejoice within good measure and not too much. I feel too overjoyed. I must be less joyous, for I fear that I have an excess of happiness.

BASSANIO

[Opening the lead casket] What do I find here? The picture of beautiful Portia! What godly artist has rendered the image so close to real life? Do the eyes in this picture move? Or do they just seem to as I look around? Here are her lips, parted by her sugary breath—that such sweetness should part such sweet friends. Here in her hair, the painter has been like a spider weaving a golden web to trap men's hearts faster than gnats are caught in cobwebs. But her eyes—how could the artist have painted these? Once he made one of them, I think its beauty would have distracted him so that he could not have painted the other. But my praise wrongs this image because my words fall as short of its beauty as it falls short of the real person it depicts. Here's a scroll that summarizes my fortune.

[He reads aloud] "You who choose not based on appearances have good luck and chose correct! Since you have gained this fortune, be content and don't seek anything more. If this pleases you well and you are happy with your good fortune, turn to your lady and claim her with a loving kiss." What a nice scroll. Fair lady, if you will permit it, I come to give you a kiss and thus receive you, as this note instructs me. I'm like someone who has competed for a prize and thinks that everyone's applause and shouts are for his success, but isn't quite sure because he's so

Turn you where your lady is
 And claim her with a loving kiss."
 A gentle scroll. Fair lady, by your leave,
 I come by note to give and to receive.
 Like one of two contending in a prize
 150 That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,
 Hearing applause and universal shout,
 Giddy in spirit, still gazing in a doubt
 Whether these pearls of praise be his or no—
 So, thrice fair lady, stand I even so,
 155 As doubtful whether what I see be true
 Until confirmed, signed, and 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
 160 To wish myself much better, yet for you
 I would be trebled twenty times myself—
 A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more
 rich—
 That only to stand high in your account
 165 I might in virtue, beauties, livings, friends
 Exceed account. But the full sum of me
 Is sum of something which, to term in gross,
 Is an unlesioned girl, unschooled, unpracticèd;
 Happy in this—she is not yet so old
 170 But she may learn. Happier than this—
 She is not bred so dull but she can learn.
 Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
 Commits itself to yours to be directed
 As from her lord, her governor, her king.
 175 Myself and what is mine to you and yours
 Is now converted. But now I was the lord
 Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
 Queen o'er myself. And even now, but now,
 This house, these servants, and this same myself
 180 Are yours, my lord's. I give them with this ring,
 Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
 Let it presage the ruin of your love
 And be my vantage to exclaim on you.
[gives BASSANIO a ring]

BASSANIO

Madam, you have bereft me of all words.
 Only my blood speaks to you in my veins.
 And there is such confusion in my powers
 As after some oration fairly spoke
 By a belovèd prince there doth appear
 190 Among the buzzing pleasèd multitude,
 Where every something, being blent together,
 Turns to a wild of nothing, save of joy,
 Expressed and not expressed. But when this ring
 Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence.
 195 O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!

NERISSA

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

GRATIANO

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

BASSANIO

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

GRATIANO

I thank your lordship, you have got me one.
 My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours.

stunned and isn't certain whether all this praise is for him or not. That's how I feel now, beautiful lady, but three times more intense! I can't be sure of whether what I see is true until it is confirmed, signed, and ratified by you.

PORTIA

You see me as I am, standing here, Lord Bassanio. I wish I were twenty times better than myself. I wouldn't be so ambitious as to wish that just for myself, but for you I would, and I would wish I were a thousand times more beautiful, and ten thousand times richer. I wish I could be infinitely good in virtue, beauty, wealth, and friends only so that you would think highly of me. But all you get in me is an inexperienced girl, unschooled, naive. But at least you are getting a girl who is not too old to learn, and one who is not so stupid that she cannot learn. Best of all for you, you are getting a girl whose gentle spirit is fully committed to yours and is willing to be directed by you as if by her lord, her governor, or her king. Myself and all that is mine is now yours. Just a minute ago I was in charge of this beautiful mansion, all its servants, and myself, as well. And now this house, these servants, and myself are all yours, my lord's. I give them to you along with this ring. Don't ever lose it or give it away, or else that will be the sign of the ruin of your love and will give me reason to scold you.

[She gives BASSANIO a ring.]

BASSANIO

Madam, I don't know what to say, but the very blood in my veins speaks to you. And I am as dumbfounded as a buzzing crowd after listening to a brilliant speech by a beloved prince, when everything seems to blend together in unexpressed and expressed joy. When this ring leaves this finger, then life will leave me. When you see this ring off my finger, feel free to say that Bassanio is dead!

NERISSA

My lord and lady, it is now time for those of us who have stood by here and seen our wishes come true, to cry out, "Good joy, good joy, my lord and lady!"

GRATIANO

My Lord Bassanio and my gentle lady, I wish you all the joy that I can wish you, so that there's none left for you to wish for from me. And when you have your wedding ceremony to solidify your union, I beg that I may be married at the same time.

BASSANIO

With all my heart, I say yes, if you can find a wife.

GRATIANO

I thank you, my lord, because you have found me one. My eyes are as quick as yours, my lord. While you were looking

You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid.
 You loved, I loved. For intermission
 210 No more pertains to me, my lord, than you.
 Your fortune stood upon the casket there,
 And so did mine too, as the matter falls.
 For wooing here until I sweat again,
 And swearing till my very roof was dry
 215 With oaths of love, at last—if promise last—
 I got a promise of this fair one here
 To have her love, provided that your fortune
 Achieved her mistress.

PORTIA

Is this true, Nerissa?

NERISSA

220 Madam, it is, so you stand pleased withal.

BASSANIO

And do you, Gratiano, mean good faith?

GRATIANO

Yes, faith, my lord.

BASSANIO

Our feast shall be much honored in your marriage.

GRATIANO

225 *[to NERISSA]* We'll play with them the first boy for a
 thousand ducats.

NERISSA

What, and stake down?

GRATIANO

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

Enter LORENZO, JESSICA, and SALERIO, a messenger from Venice

BASSANIO

230 Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome hither,
 If that the youth of my new interest here
 Have power to bid you welcome.

[to PORTIA]

By your leave,

235 I bid my very friends and countrymen,
 Sweet Portia, welcome.

PORTIA

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

LORENZO

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

SALERIO

245 I did, my lord.
 And I have reason for it. Signor Antonio
 Commends him to you.
[gives BASSANIO letter]

BASSANIO

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

at the mistress, I was watching her maid. You fell in love,
 and so did I. Just like you, I don't want to wait. Your fortune
 depended on the casket there, and so did mine, as it turns
 out. While we were standing here, I was wooing and
 swearing oaths of love until at last this beautiful woman
 here promised me her love, so long as your luck held out.

PORTIA

Is this true, Nerissa?

NERISSA

Madam, it is true, if you don't mind.

BASSANIO

And are you being sincere and honest, Gratiano?

GRATIANO

Yes, truly, my lord.

BASSANIO

It will be our honor to celebrate your marriage, as well, at
 our wedding feast.


GRATIANO


[To Nerissa] We can bet them a thousand ducats that we'll
 have a son before they do.

NERISSA

You want to stake down that money now?

GRATIANO

No, we'll never win the bet if I stake down . But who is
 this coming here? Lorenzo and his un-Christian friend?
 What's this, and Salerio, too, my old friend from Venice?

 *Gratiano is referring to putting
 down stakes for a bet, and is also
 making a sexual pun.*

*LORENZO, JESSICA, and SALERIO, a messenger from Venice,
 enter.*

BASSANIO

Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome, if I can welcome you here so
 soon after winning ownership of this place.

[To Portia] With your permission, I bid my friends and
 countrymen welcome, Sweet Portia.

PORTIA

And so do I, my lord. They are entirely welcome.

LORENZO

[To BASSANIO] Thank you, your honor. I didn't actually
 intend to come see you here, my lord, but I ran into Salerio
 on the way, and he begged me to come with him and I
 couldn't refuse.

SALERIO

That's true, my lord, and I have good reason for making him
 come with me. Sir Antonio sends this to you.

[He gives BASSANIO a letter]

BASSANIO

Before I open this letter, please tell me how my good friend
 Antonio is doing.

SALERIO

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

BASSANIO opens the letter and reads it.

GRATIANO

[indicating JESSICA]

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

SALERIO

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

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

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

SALERIO

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

JESSICA

305 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

SALERIO

He's not sick, my lord, unless his mind is sick, but he's not
doing well either, unless his mind is doing well. His letter
there will show you how he is faring.

BASSANIO opens the letter and reads it.

GRATIANO

[To JESSICA] Nerissa, cheer up that stranger. Welcome her
here. Salerio, let me shake your hand. What's the news from
Venice? How is good Antonio, that royal merchant, doing? I
know he'll be glad to hear about our romantic successes
here. We are like the hero Jason after retrieving the golden
fleece.

SALERIO

I wish you had won enough to replace what Antonio has
lost

PORTIA

There are some serious matters in that letter that are
making Bassanio's face go pale. Some close friend of his
must have died. Nothing else in the world could affect such
a stoic man this much. What could it be, something even
worse? If you'll allow it, Bassanio, I am half of you now, and
I must bear half of whatever this letter brings you.

BASSANIO

Sweet Portia, these are some of the most unpleasant words
that were ever written on paper. Gentle lady, when I first
told you of my love for you, I admitted that the only wealth I
had was the blood running through my veins: I was a
nobleman by birth. And I spoke truly then. And yet, even
saying that I had no money was a bit of braggery, as you will
see. When I told you that my estate was worth nothing, I
should have told you that it was worth less than nothing,
for I am in debt to a dear friend, and put him in debt to his
complete enemy in order to support me in coming here.
This letter here is like the body of my friend, and every word
on it is like a gaping wound, spilling out blood. But is this
true, Salerio? Have all of his business ventures failed? Not
one was successful? Not the one from Tripoli, or the ones
from Mexico and England, the ones from Lisbon, the African
coast, or India? Not one of his ships escaped the dreadful
rocks that ruin merchants' fortunes?

SALERIO

Not one ship, my lord. And even if Antonio had the money
to pay the Jew back, it seems he wouldn't take it. I've never
seen an animal in the shape of a man as greedy as him and
as eager to spite another man. He pleads his case to the
Duke every morning and every night, and says that if he is
denied justice it would be a disgrace to the state. Twenty
merchants, the Duke himself, and the highest-ranking
Venetian noblemen have all tried to persuade him, but no
one can change his mind about the matter of his loan, of
justice, and what Antonio must forfeit.

JESSICA

When I was with Shylock I heard him swear to his fellow
Jews Tubal and Chus that he would rather have Antonio's
flesh than twenty times the amount of money Antonio owes
him. And I am sure, my lord, that he will take the flesh of

310 That he did owe him. And I know, my lord,
If law, authority, and power deny not,
It will go hard with poor Antonio.

PORTIA

Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble?

BASSANIO

315 The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
The best conditioned and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies, and one in whom
The ancient Roman honor more appears
Than any that draws breath in Italy.

PORTIA

What sum owes he the Jew?

BASSANIO

For me, three thousand ducats.

PORTIA

320 What, no more?
Pay him six thousand and deface the bond!
Double six thousand, and then treble that,
Before a friend of this description
Shall lose a hair through Bassanio's fault.
325 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.
330 When it is paid, bring your true friend along.
My maid Nerissa and myself meantime
Will live as maids and widows. Come, away!
For you shall hence upon your wedding day.
Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer.
335 Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.
But let me hear the letter of your friend.

BASSANIO

[reads]

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

PORTIA

345 O love, dispatch all business and be gone!

BASSANIO

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

Exeunt

poor Antonio if the power and authority of the law allow
him to.

PORTIA

Is this man who is in such trouble your dear friend?

BASSANIO

He is my dearest friend, and the kindest man. He has the
best, untiring spirit of courtesy and is a better example of
ancient Roman honor than any man alive in Italy.

PORTIA

What amount of money does he owe the Jew?

BASSANIO

Three thousand ducats, on my behalf.

PORTIA

What, is that it? Pay him six thousand ducats and scrap the
agreement! Double six thousand, and triple it before
allowing such a close friend to lose even a hair on account
of Bassanio. First go with me to the church so we can
finalize our marriage, and then go to Venice to help your
friend. You will never lie by my side with a troubled soul.
You will have enough gold to pay twenty times this petty
debt. Once it is paid off, bring your true friend back with
you. My maid Nerissa and I will be as chaste as maids and
widows while you are gone. Come on, let's go! You are
going to leave me on our very wedding day. Welcome your
friends here, and show them a good time. Since it's going to
cost me a lot to have you, I will love you a lot. But first let
me hear the letter from your friend.

BASSANIO

[Reading the letter aloud] "Sweet Bassanio, all my ships
have been wrecked. My creditors have become cruel. I don't
have much money. I cannot pay the Jew back. And since
once the Jew takes the flesh from me I will die, all your
debts to me are cleared, if only I can see you before I die.
Regardless, enjoy yourself. If your love for me is not enough
to make you come to me, then my letter should not be
either."

PORTIA

My love, forget about everything else and go!

BASSANIO

Since I have your permission to go away, I will hurry. But
until I come back, I will not sleep a wink. I won't rest at all
until we are reunited.

All exit.

Act 3, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter SHYLOCK, SOLANIO, ANTONIO, and the jailer

SHYLOCK

Jailer, look to him. Tell not me of mercy.
This is the fool that lent out money gratis.

Shakescleare Translation

SHYLOCK, SOLANIO, ANTONIO, and the jailer enter.

SHYLOCK

Jailer, keep an eye on him. Don't say anything about mercy.
That's the fool that lent out money with no interest. Keep

Jailer, look to him.

ANTONIO

Hear me yet, good Shylock.

SHYLOCK

- 5 I'll have my bond. Speak not against my bond.
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.
Thou calledst me dog before thou hadst a cause.
But since I am a dog, beware my fangs.
The duke shall grant me justice.—I do wonder,
10 Thou naughty jailer, that thou art so fond
To come abroad with him at his request.

ANTONIO

I pray thee, hear me speak.

SHYLOCK

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

Exit SHYLOCK

SOLANIO

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

ANTONIO

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

SOLANIO

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

ANTONIO

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

Exeunt

an eye on him, jailer.

ANTONIO

Just listen to me, good Shylock.

SHYLOCK

I'll have what you owe me. Don't try to reason your way out of it. I have sworn an oath that I will have what you owe me. You called me a dog without any reason. Well, if I'm a dog then look out for my bite. The Duke will grant me justice. I wonder, you naughty jailer, why you like him so much to have come outside the jail with him as he asked.

ANTONIO

I beg you, listen to what I have to say.

SHYLOCK

I'll have what you owe me. I won't listen to anything you say. I'll have what you owe me, so don't say another word to me. I won't be a lenient, dull fool and just shake my head, sigh, and give in to the Christians who plead on your behalf. Don't follow me. I won't listen to you. I will have what you owe me.

SHYLOCK exits.

SOLANIO

He is the most stubborn beast that ever kept company with men.

ANTONIO

Leave him alone. I won't follow after him anymore with my useless pleas. He wants my life. And I know why. Often I helped men who owed things to him at the last minute, when they begged me. That's why he hates me.

SOLANIO

I am sure the Duke will never allow him to take the pound of flesh.

ANTONIO

The Duke cannot deny the law. If he goes against the law, foreign merchants will lose confidence in the justice of Venice, and the city's profit relies on foreigners. So go. I've been so worried and upset that I've hardly been eating anything; I don't know if I even have a pound of flesh to spare to my bloody creditor tomorrow. Well, let's go, jailer. I pray that Bassanio will come and see me pay his debt. That's all I care about now.

ANTONIO and SOLANIO exit.

Act 3, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA, and BALTHAZAR, a man of PORTIA's

LORENZO

Madam, although I speak it in your presence,
You have a noble and a true conceit
Of godlike amity, which appears most strongly

Shakescleare Translation

PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA, and PORTIA's servant BALTHAZAR enter.

LORENZO

Madam, if I may say so in front of you, I believe you have the noble and true goodwill of a god, which is most apparent in the way you are dealing with the absence of your husband.

In bearing thus the absence of your lord.

- 5 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 the work
Than customary bounty can enforce you.

PORTIA

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

LORENZO

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

PORTIA

- 40 My people do already know my mind
And will acknowledge you and Jessica
In place of Lord Bassanio and myself.
So fare you well till we shall meet again.

LORENZO

Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you!

JESSICA

I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

PORTIA

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

Exeunt JESSICA and LORENZO

Now, Balthazar,
As I have ever found thee honest true,
So let me find thee still.

- 50 *[gives BALTHAZAR a letter]*
Take this same letter,
And use thou all th' endeavour of a man
In speed to Padua. See thou render this
Into my cousin's hands, Doctor Bellario.
55 And look what notes and garments he doth give thee,
Bring them, I pray thee, with imagined speed
Unto the trajet, to the common ferry
Which trades to Venice. Waste no time in words,
But get thee gone. I shall be there before thee.

BALTHAZAR

- 60 Madam, I go with all convenient speed.

If you knew the man whom you are helping, how honest a gentleman you are sending relief to, how close a friend of your husband he is, then I know you would be even prouder of what you are doing than you are now.

PORTIA

I have never regretted doing good, and I will not do so now. Friends who converse and spend time together a lot, who love each other equally, share similar manners and spirit, so I think that this Antonio, being so close to my husband, must be like him. If he is as good as my husband, then it is a small sum of money that I have spent in purchasing his rescue from hellish cruelty, since he resembles my soul, my husband. But I'm coming too close to praising myself. Therefore I won't say anything more. Let's talk about something else. Lorenzo, I put you in charge of managing my household until my husband returns. As for myself, I have made a secret vow to heaven to live a life of prayer and contemplation, accompanied only by Nerissa here, until both our husbands return. There is a monastery two miles away where we will stay. I ask you not to refuse the duty I've asked of you, which necessity and my love for you compels me to lay on you.

LORENZO

Madam, I will obey you with all my heart in your fair commands.

PORTIA

My servants already know my intentions and will obey you and Jessica in place of Lord Bassanio and me. Farewell until we meet again.

LORENZO

May you have pleasant thoughts and happy times!

JESSICA

I wish you contentment, my lady.

PORTIA

Thank you for your wish, and I am pleased to wish you the same. Farewell, Jessica.

JESSICA and LORENZO exit.

Now, Balthazar, be honest and true as I have always found you to be in the past.

[She gives BALTHAZAR a letter] Take this letter and go as fast as you can to Padua. Give the letter to my cousin, Doctor Bellario. Bring whatever notes and clothes he gives you and take them with you as you catch the ferry to Venice as quickly as you possibly can. Don't waste any time chitchatting; just go right away. I will be in Venice before you.

BALTHAZAR

Madam, I will go as quickly as I can.

*Exit BALTHAZAR***PORTIA**

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

NERISSA

Shall they see us?

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

Why, shall we turn to men?

PORTIA

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

*Exeunt**BALTHAZAR exits.***PORTIA**


Come on, Nerissa, I have a plan you don't know about yet.
We'll see our husbands before they even think of us.

NERISSA

Will they see us?

PORTIA

They will, Nerissa, but we will be dressed as the very thing
we currently lack: men. I'll bet you anything that when we
are disguised as men I'll be the more handsome one, and
I'll carry my **dagger** with more manly bravery. My voice
will sound high-pitched like a teenager not yet a man, and
I'll turn my womanly steps into a manly walk. I'll talk about
fights like a bragging young man and tell white lies about
how honorable ladies sought my love and practically died
when I denied them because I couldn't be bothered with
them! And then I'll repent and say that I wish I hadn't
caused their deaths. I'll tell twenty of these little lies, and
men will swear that I am just a year out of school. I have a
thousand of these little tricks and brags up my sleeve that
I'll use.

 *Obviously a phallic pun.***NERISSA**

Are we going to turn to men?

PORTIA

What a question that is! Turn to men for sex? Is your mind in
the gutter? But come with me, and I'll tell you my whole
plan when we're in the carriage waiting for us at the gate.
Hurry up, because we have twenty miles to travel today.

PORTIA and NERISSA exit.

Act 3, Scene 5

Shakespeare

*Enter LAUNCELOT the clown and JESSICA***LAUNCELOT**

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

JESSICA

And what hope is that, I pray thee?

LAUNCELOT

Marry, you may partly hope that your father got you
not, that you are not the Jew's daughter.
10

JESSICA

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

Shakescleare Translation

*The clown LAUNCELOT and JESSICA enter.***LAUNCELOT**

Yes, truly, for remember that the sins of the father fall upon
his children. Therefore I worry for you. I have always been
straightforward with you, so I will tell you what I am
troubled about. Cheer up, for I think you really are doomed.
There's one hope that can result in any good for you, but
that's only an illegitimate hope.

JESSICA

And what hope might that be?

LAUNCELOT

Well, you can hope that your father is not really your father,
and that you are not really the Jew's daughter.

JESSICA

That I'm an illegitimate child? That really is an illegitimate
hope. In that case it would be the sins of my mother falling

LAUNCELOT

15 Truly then I fear you are damned both by father and mother. Thus when I shun Scylla your father, I fall into Charybdis your mother. Well, you are gone both ways.

JESSICA

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

LAUNCELOT

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

Enter LORENZO

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

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

LAUNCELOT

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

LORENZO

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

LAUNCELOT

That is done, sir. They have all stomachs.

LORENZO

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

LAUNCELOT

That is done too, sir. Only "Cover!" is the word.

LORENZO

Will you cover then, sir?

LAUNCELOT

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

to me.

LAUNCELOT

Then I fear you are doomed because of your mother and your father. You're caught between a rock and a hard place with the two of them, and you are doomed with both of them.

JESSICA

Then I will be saved by my husband. He has made me a Christian.

LAUNCELOT

Then he is even more blameworthy. We had enough Christians already, as many as could live well together. Making you a Christian will raise the price of pigs ¹. If everyone starts to eat pork, it won't be long before we won't be able to cook some bacon for all the money in the world.

LORENZO enters.

JESSICA

Launcelot, I'll tell my husband what you are saying. Here he comes.

LORENZO

I'll be jealous of you soon, Launcelot, if you keep taking my wife alone into corners like this.

JESSICA

No, you don't need to worry about us, Lorenzo. Launcelot and I aren't getting along. He tells me flat-out that there is no mercy for me in heaven because I am a Jew's daughter, and he says you are not a good Christian because in converting Jews to Christianity you raise the price of pork.

LORENZO

I can give a reply to that better than you can reply to the charge of sleeping with an African. The Moor ² is pregnant with your child, Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT

There's more of the Moor than there should be. ³ But even if she's less than an honest woman, she's more than I thought she was.

LORENZO

Any fool can play with puns! I think keeping quiet is the best sign of true wit. Empty talk is only good for parrots. Go and tell everyone to prepare for dinner.

LAUNCELOT

They're already prepared, sir. They all have their stomachs.

LORENZO

What a sharp wit you have! Go tell them to get dinner ready.

LAUNCELOT

That's done, too, sir. The table just needs to be set.

LORENZO

Will you cover it, then

LAUNCELOT

No, sir, I won't. I know my place. ⁴

¹ Because before, when Jessica was a Jew, she would not eat pork and therefore wouldn't buy pigs.

² A term then used to refer to someone of African descent. Presumably in this case Launcelot has slept with a Moorish servant girl.

³ Launcelot puns on the homonymic relationship between "Moor" and "more."

⁴ Launcelot jokingly takes Lorenzo's instructions to cover it to refer not to the table but to Launcelot's own head with a hat, which would be a

disrespectful thing for Launcelot to do in the presence of a social superior.

LORENZO

50 Yet more quarreling with occasion! Wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant? I pray thee, understand a plain man in his plain meaning. Go to thy fellows, bid them cover the table, serve in the meat, and we will come in to dinner.

LAUNCELOT

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

Exit LAUNCELOT

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

Nay, but ask my opinion too of that!

LORENZO

80 I will anon. First let us go to dinner.

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

85 Well, I'll set you forth.

Exeunt

LORENZO

Even more annoying nonsense! Will you exhaust your store of wit anytime soon? Please, understand what I plainly mean. Go to your fellow servants, tell them to cover the table and serve the meat, and we will then come in to have dinner.

LAUNCELOT

Sir, I will serve the table and cover the [meat](#) ⁵. Come in for dinner, sir, whenever you like.

⁵ The word "meat" was often used in sexual puns, and could refer to both male and female genitalia, as well as sex itself.

LAUNCELOT exits.

LORENZO

What a way he has with words! That fool has an army of clever words at his disposal, and I don't know of any fool better at avoiding things with wordplay. How are you doing, Jessica? And tell me your opinion, sweetie: how do you like Lord Bassanio's wife?

JESSICA

I like her more than I can say. Lord Bassanio must have lived a very virtuous life, for he has found such a blessing in his wife that he seems to have found the joys of heaven here on earth. And if he doesn't deserve this happiness on earth then he doesn't deserve it in heaven. If two gods were making some heavenly bet and used two women on their wager, and one chose Portia, the other one wouldn't be able to find her equal anywhere on earth.

LORENZO

I am as good a husband to you as she is a good wife to Bassanio.

JESSICA

But ask my opinion on that matter, too!

LORENZO

I will soon. Let's go to dinner first.

JESSICA

No, let me praise you now before we eat.

LORENZO

No, please, let's talk about it at the dinner table. Then, I'll digest what you say along with everything else.

JESSICA

I won't disappoint.

JESSICA and LORENZO exit.

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Enter the DUKE, the magnificoes, ANTONIO, BASSANIO, GRATIANO,
SALERIO, and others

DUKE

What, is Antonio here?

ANTONIO

Ready, so please your grace.

DUKE

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

ANTONIO

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

DUKE

15 Go, one, and call the Jew into the court.

SALERIO

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

Enter SHYLOCK

DUKE

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

SHYLOCK

I have possessed your grace of what I purpose,
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
To have the due and forfeit of my bond.
If you deny it, let the danger light
40 Upon your charter and your city's freedom.
You'll ask me why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
Three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that
But say it is my humour. Is it answered?
45 What if my house be troubled with a rat
And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats
To have it baned? What, are you answered yet?
Some men there are love not a gaping pig,
Some that are mad if they behold a cat,
50 And others, when the bagpipe sings i' th' nose,
Cannot contain their urine. For affection,
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes or loathes. Now, for your answer:
As there is no firm reason to be rendered
55

The DUKE, the noblemen, ANTONIO, BASSANIO, GRATIANO,
SALERIO, and others enter.

DUKE

Well, is Antonio here?

ANTONIO

I'm here and ready, as you please.

DUKE

I am sorry for you. You have come here to face an adversary
as stubborn as a rock, an inhuman wretch incapable of pity,
completely empty of a single drop of mercy.

ANTONIO

I have heard that you have tried your hardest to change his
rigid mind. But since he remains stubborn and there's
nothing I can do legally to escape him, I will meet his anger
with patience and suffer his tyranny and rage quietly.

DUKE

One of you men go and tell the Jew to come to the court.

SALERIO

He is waiting outside the door. Here he comes, my lord.

SHYLOCK enters.

DUKE

Make room, so that he can stand right in front of me.
Shylock, everyone thinks—and I agree—that you're just
putting on a show of such malice until the very last minute,
and then you will at last show some mercy and remorse,
something maybe even more shocking to see from you than
your cruelty. It is widely thought that you will not only
forget about the penalty, a pound of this poor merchant's
flesh, but will even let some of the money go, touched by
human gentleness and love, out of pity for the losses that
recently have come to weigh upon Antonio, which were
enough to ruin a royal merchant, enough to make even the
stone-hearted feel bad for him, enough to make even the
stubborn Turks and Tartars, who aren't used to showing
any courtesy, take pity on him. We all expect a gentle reply
to this from you, Jew.

SHYLOCK

Your grace, I have told you what my intention is, and I have
sworn by the holy Sabbath to take what is owed to me by
our legal contract. If you deny me this rightful penalty, it
will reflect poorly upon your city and its freedom. I'm sure
you're going to ask me why I would choose to have a pound
of flesh rather than the three thousand ducats I've been
offered. I won't give you any answer other than to say I just
feel like it. Is that enough of an answer? What if I had a rat in
my house and I felt like paying ten thousand ducats to have
it killed? Is that enough of an answer for you? Some men
dislike pigs, others go crazy if they see a cat, and others
can't help but urinate when they hear the bagpipes 🎺.
People's likes and dislikes are fickle and depend on a
person's mood. Now, as for your answer: just as a man who
dislikes pigs, or who dislikes a harmless cat, or who can't
help but embarrassingly urinate at the sound of bagpipes,
has no real reason for this, so I can give no reason, and
won't give one (aside from my long-standing hate and
loathing for Antonio), for following through on our

🎺 Bagpipes were often played at
funerals.

Why he cannot abide a gaping pig;
 Why he, a harmless necessary cat;
 Why he, a woollen bagpipe, but of force
 Must yield to such inevitable shame
 As to offend, himself being offended—
 60 So can I give no reason, nor I will not
 (More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing
 I bear Antonio), that I follow thus
 A losing suit against him. Are you answered?

BASSANIO

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

SHYLOCK

I am not bound to please thee with my answers.

BASSANIO

Do all men kill the things they do not love?

SHYLOCK

Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

BASSANIO

Every offense is not a hate at first.

SHYLOCK

70 What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

ANTONIO

[to BASSANIO]

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

BASSANIO

[to SHYLOCK] For thy 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 draw them. I would have my bond.

DUKE

90 How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

SHYLOCK

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

105

agreement. Is that enough of an answer for you?

BASSANIO

This is not a sufficient answer, you unfeeling man, to excuse
 your cruelty.

SHYLOCK

I don't have to please you with answers.

BASSANIO

Do all men kill things they dislike?

SHYLOCK

Wouldn't everyone like to kill the things they hate?

BASSANIO

Not every act of wrongdoing must lead to hate.

SHYLOCK

What, would you let a snake sting you twice?

ANTONIO

[To BASSANIO] Please, are you trying to reason with the
 Jew? You might as well go stand on the beach and ask the
 tide not to come in as high as is its custom. You might as
 well ask the wolf why he makes the ewe cry by eating the
 lamb. You might as well forbid the mountain pines from
 swaying with their high tops and tell them to make no noise
 when gusts of wind blow through them. You might as well
 do anything impossible as try to soften his Jewish heart—is
 there anything harder than his heart? Therefore I ask you to
 make no more offers and use no more strategies to
 persuade him. Rather, let judgment be passed on me and
 let the Jew have his way without any more delay.

BASSANIO

[To Shylock] Here's six thousand ducats instead of the three
 thousand for you.

SHYLOCK

I wouldn't take your offer if it were six times six thousand
 ducats. I would still take what is legally owed to me.

DUKE

How can you hope for mercy if you don't show it yourself?

SHYLOCK

Why should I worry about mercy when I've done nothing
 wrong? You have among you many purchased slaves that
 you use horribly like donkeys, dogs, or mules because you
 bought them. Should I tell you to free them and marry them
 to your heirs? Why do you make them sweat doing work?
 Why not let their beds be as soft as yours and let them eat
 the same fine foods as you? If I said that, you'd tell me that
 the slaves are yours. I give you the same answer. I have
 bought the pound of flesh that I demand from him. It is
 mine and I will have it. If you deny me, your laws mean
 nothing and there's no power to legal agreements in Venice.
 What's your opinion of that? Tell me what your response is.

I stand for judgment. Answer, shall I have it?

DUKE

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

SALERIO

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

DUKE

Bring us the letter. Call the messenger.

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

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

Enter NERISSA, disguised as a clerk

DUKE

Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA

From both, my lord. Bellario greets your grace.
[gives DUKE a letter]

SHYLOCK sharpens a knife on the bottom of his shoe

BASSANIO

125 *[to SHYLOCK]* Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

SHYLOCK

To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

GRATIANO

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

SHYLOCK

No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

GRATIANO

O, be thou damned, inexecrable dog,
And for thy life let justice be accused!
Thou almost makest me waver in my faith
135 To hold opinion with Pythagoras
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men. Thy currish spirit
Governed a wolf who, hanged for human slaughter,
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
140 And whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam
Infused itself in thee, for thy desires
Are wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous.

SHYLOCK

Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,

DUKE

I have the power to dismiss this court, unless Bellario, a
learned doctor of law, comes here today. I have sent for him
to decide about this case.

SALERIO

My lord, there's a messenger standing just outside with
letters from Bellario. He's just arrived from Padua.

DUKE

Bring me the letter and call the messenger in.

BASSANIO

Cheer up, Antonio! Keep your courage, man! The Jew will
have all my flesh, blood, and bones before I let him take
one drop of blood from you on my account.

ANTONIO

I am like a diseased sheep in a flock, one who ought to die.
The weakest fruit drops earliest to the ground. Let me drop
like that fruit. The best thing you can do, Bassanio, is stay
alive and write my epitaph.

NERISSA enters, disguised as a law clerk.

DUKE

Have you come from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA

Yes, from both, my lord. Bellario sends his greetings, your
grace.

[NERISSA gives the DUKE a letter]

SHYLOCK sharpens a knife on the bottom of his shoe.

BASSANIO

[To SHYLOCK] Why are you sharpening your knife so
eagerly?

SHYLOCK

To cut what is owed to me off of that bankrupt man over
there.

GRATIANO

You should be sharpening your knife not on the sole of your
shoe, harsh Jew, but on your hardened soul. But no blade,
not even the executioner's axe, is half as sharp as your
sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce your stubborn heart?

SHYLOCK


No, at least no prayers that you are smart enough to make.

GRATIANO

Oh, damn you, you relentless dog! I hope justice comes to
you! You almost make me change my mind and agree with
Pythagoras that the souls of animals enter the bodies of
men. You have the spirit of a dog, of a wolf that was killed
for killing a human, but even as it was being killed its soul
left its body and entered you while you were in your
mother's pregnant belly. Your desires are wolfish, bloody,
starved, and ravenous.

SHYLOCK

Unless you can rip the official seal off my contract, all you're

 The ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras believed in the transmigration of souls after death, and the possibility that humans could be reincarnated as animals, and vice versa.

145 Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud.
Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall
To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.

DUKE

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

NERISSA

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

DUKE

With all my heart.—Some three or four of you
Go give him courteous conduct to this place.—
Meantime the court shall hear Bellario's letter.
155 *[reads]*
"Your grace shall understand that at the receipt of
your letter I am very sick, but in the instant that your
messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a
young doctor of Rome. His name is Balthazar. I
160 acquainted him with the cause in controversy between the
Jew and Antonio the merchant. We turned o'er many books
together. He is furnished with my opinion,
which—bettered with his own learning, the greatness
whereof I cannot enough commend—comes with him at my
165 importunity to fill up your grace's request in my stead.
I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to
let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so
young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your
gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish
170 his commendation."

Enter PORTIA for Balthazar, disguised as a doctor of law

You hear the learned Bellario, what he writes.
And here I take it is the doctor come.—
Give me your hand. Come you from old Bellario?

PORTIA

I did, my lord.

DUKE

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

PORTIA

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

DUKE

180 Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

PORTIA

Is your name Shylock?

SHYLOCK

Shylock is my name.

PORTIA

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

ANTONIO

Ay, so he says.

doing by speaking so loudly is hurting your own lungs. Take
care of your mind, young man, or it will fall apart with time.
I support the law.

DUKE

This letter from Bellario recommends a young and well-
educated doctor of law to our court. Where is this man?

NERISSA

He is waiting nearby to hear whether you'll let him into the
court.

DUKE

With all my heart, I'll let him in. Three or four of you go and
courteously bring him here. In the meantime, the court will
hear Bellario's letter.

[He reads the letter aloud] "Your grace should understand
that at the time you are reading this I am very sick, but
when your messenger came to me I happened to have a
young lawyer from Rome visiting. His name is Balthazar. I
told him about the controversial case between the Jew and
Antonio the merchant. We consulted many law books
together. He knows my opinion on the matter, which has
been enriched by his own intelligence, which I can't speak
of highly enough, and he brings my opinion to you in my
place. I beg you, don't let his young age make you
underestimate him. I have never seen a young man with so
much wisdom. I hope you will welcome him graciously, and
you will see how worthy of my recommendation he is."

PORTIA, disguised as the lawyer Balthazar, enters.

You all have heard what the educated Bellario has written.
And I assume this is the lawyer coming now.

[To PORTIA, as Balthazar] Give me your hand. Have you
come from old Bellario?

PORTIA

Yes, my lord.

DUKE

Welcome. Take your place here. Are you familiar with the
different sides of the case facing the court right now?

PORTIA

I have been thoroughly informed about the case. Which one
of these men is the merchant, and which is the Jew?

DUKE

Antonio and old Shylock, both of you come forward.

PORTIA

Is your name Shylock?

SHYLOCK

Shylock is my name.

PORTIA

You are pursuing a strange case, but there is nothing under
Venetian law that can stop you from proceeding.

[To ANTONIO] You are at his mercy, aren't you?

ANTONIO

Yes, as Shylock says.

PORTIA

Do you confess the bond?

ANTONIO

I do.

PORTIA

190 Then must the Jew be merciful.

SHYLOCK

On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

Is he not able to discharge the money?

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

A Daniel come to judgment, yea, a Daniel!—
O wise young judge, how I do honor thee!

PORTIA

235 I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

SHYLOCK

[giving PORTIA a document]
Here 'tis, most reverend doctor, here it is.

PORTIA

Do you confess that you have broken the agreement?

ANTONIO

I do.

PORTIA

Then the Jew must be merciful.

SHYLOCK

Why must I? Tell me why.

PORTIA

Mercy is not something that one is forced to practice. It falls easily like gentle rain from the sky. It is a doubly blessed thing: it blesses both the person showing mercy and the person receiving mercy. Mercy is most admirable in the mightiest men. It looks better on a king than his crown. A king's scepter is a symbol of his earthly power, a source of awe and majesty, which makes people respect and fear him. But mercy is above the power of the scepter. It dwells in the hearts of kings. It is an attribute of God himself. And earthly power resembles God's power when justice is mixed with mercy. Therefore, Jew, although you are seeking justice, consider this: if God sought justice against all of us with no mercy, we would all go to hell. We pray to God for mercy, and that same prayer should teach us all to show mercy to others. This is what I have to say against your desire to seek justice and make the strict court of Venice carry out the merchant's punishment.

SHYLOCK

My deeds are my responsibility. I want the law to be upheld, the penalty, that which he must forfeit because of the loan.

PORTIA

Can he not pay the money back?

BASSANIO


Yes, here, I have the money for him in the court, even twice the sum. If that is not enough, I will pay ten times the sum of money, or else give up my hands, my head, my heart. If none of this is enough, then Shylock's malice overwhelms his honesty.


[To the DUKE] And I beg you, bend the law to your authority. Violate the law a little to do the right thing, and stop this cruel devil from getting what he wants.

PORTIA

He must not do that. No one in Venice is powerful enough to alter an agreed-upon decree. It would set a bad precedent, and many errors would be made by following it as an example. That cannot happen.

SHYLOCK

A Daniel  is now judging, yes, a Daniel! I honor you, wise young judge.

 *In the Bible, Daniel's wisdom makes him an esteemed judge.*

PORTIA

Please, let me look at the agreement.

SHYLOCK

[He gives PORTIA a document] Here it is, most honorable lawyer, here it is.

PORTIA

Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee.

SHYLOCK

An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven.

240 Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?

No, not for Venice.

PORTIA

Why, this bond is forfeit!

And lawfully by this the Jew may claim

A pound of flesh to be by him cut off

245 Nearest the merchant's heart.— Be merciful.

Take thrice thy money. Bid me tear the bond.

SHYLOCK

When it is paid according to the tenor.

It doth appear you are a worthy judge.

You know the law. Your exposition

250 Hath been most sound. I charge you by the law,

Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar,

Proceed to judgment. By my soul I swear

There is no power in the tongue of man

To alter me. I stay here on my bond.

ANTONIO

255 Most heartily I do beseech the court

To give the judgment.

PORTIA

Why then, thus it is:

You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

SHYLOCK

O noble judge! O excellent young man!

PORTIA

260 For the intent and purpose of the law

Hath full relation to the penalty,

Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

SHYLOCK

'Tis very true. O wise and upright judge!

How much more elder art thou than thy looks!

PORTIA

265 [to ANTONIO] Therefore lay bare your bosom.

SHYLOCK

Ay, his breast.

So says the bond. Doth it not, noble judge?

"Nearest his heart"—those are the very words.

PORTIA

It is so. Are there balance here to weigh

270 The flesh?

SHYLOCK

I have them ready.

PORTIA

Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,

To stop his wounds lest he do bleed to death.

SHYLOCK

Is it so nominated in the bond?

PORTIA

275 It is not so expressed, but what of that?

'Twere good you do so much for charity.

PORTIA

Shylock, you are being offered three times the money you are owed.

SHYLOCK

An oath, an oath, I have made an oath by heaven. Should I

backtrack on my oath and make my soul guilty of perjury?

No, not even for all of Venice.

PORTIA

Well, the penalty must be paid! The Jew may lawfully claim

a pound of flesh to be cut off from near the merchant's

heart. Be merciful, Shylock. Take three times the money.

Tell me to tear up the agreement.

SHYLOCK

You can tear it up after the debt has been paid. It seems that

you are a worthy judge. You know the law. Your

interpretation has been correct. I order you by the law,

which you must obey, to go on and make judgment. By my

soul I swear that nothing anyone can say can change my

mind. I am here to get what is owed to me in the contract.

ANTONIO

With all my heart I ask the court to issue its judgment.

PORTIA

Well, then, this is it: you must prepare your chest for his

knife.

SHYLOCK

What a noble judge! What an excellent young man!

PORTIA

The intent and purpose of the law relates to the penalty,

which has been agreed upon in the contract.

SHYLOCK

That's very true. What a wise and just judge! You are wise

beyond your years!

PORTIA

[To ANTONIO] Therefore, lay bare your chest.

SHYLOCK

Yes, his breast. That's what the contract says. Doesn't it,

noble judge? "Near his heart"—those are the very words.

PORTIA

That's right. Do we have a scale here to weigh the flesh?

SHYLOCK

I have it ready.

PORTIA

Have some surgeon on call nearby, Shylock, to stop

Antonio's wound so he doesn't bleed to death.

SHYLOCK

Is this spelled out in the contract?

PORTIA

It is not said explicitly, but so what? It would be good for

you to do it out of charity.

SHYLOCK

I cannot find it. 'Tis not in the bond.

PORTIA

[*to ANTONIO*] You, merchant, have you any thing to say?

ANTONIO

280 But little. I am armed and well prepared.—
Give me your hand, Bassanio. Fare you well.
Grieve not that I am fall'n to this for you,
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind
Than is her custom. It is still her use
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
285 To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
An age of poverty— from which lingering penance
Of such misery doth she cut me off.
Commend me to your honorable wife.
Tell her the process of Antonio's end.
290 Say how I loved you. Speak me fair in death.
And when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love.
Repent but you that you shall lose your friend,
And he repents not that he pays your debt.
295 For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it presently with all my heart.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

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

NERISSA

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

SHYLOCK

310 [*aside*] These be the Christian husbands. I have a
daughter.
Would any of the stock of Barabbas
Had been her husband rather than a Christian!—
We trifle time. I pray thee, pursue sentence.

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

Most rightful judge!

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

I can't find it in the contract. It's not in the contract.

PORTIA

[*To ANTONIO*] You, merchant, do you have anything to say?

ANTONIO

Just a little. I am ready and well prepared. Give me your
hand, Bassanio. Farewell. Don't grieve because I have fallen
into this misfortune on your behalf, for even in this
situation Fortune has shown herself to be kinder than she
usually is. She usually makes a wretched man outlive his
wealth, so that when he is old and has a wrinkled brow he
looks on his own poverty. She at least cuts me off from this
lingering misery. Speak well of me to your honorable wife.
Tell her how I met my end. Tell her how I loved you. Speak
well of me after I die. And after you tell her, let her be the
judge as to whether you have ever had a loving friend. Only
regret that you are losing a friend, and know that your
friend does not regret paying your debt for you. If the Jew
cuts deeply enough, I'll gladly pay the debt with my own
heart.

BASSANIO

Antonio, I am married to a wife who is as dear to me as life
itself. But I don't think as highly of life itself, my wife, and all
the world as of your life. I would lose all of it—yes, I would
sacrifice everything to this devil standing here—to rescue
you.

PORTIA

Your wife wouldn't be too happy to hear that, if she were
around to hear you make that offer. ⁴

⁴ The irony of this comment would have been understood by the audience, and in certain performances it may very well have been spoken as an address from Portia (as Balthazar) to the audience.

GRATIANO

I have a wife, whom I swear I love. I wish she were dead and
in heaven so that she could beg some holy power to come
change this beastly Jew's mind.

NERISSA

It's a good thing you're making this wish behind her back.
Such a wish would upset her. ⁵

⁵ Another line that was likely spoken as an aside to the audience.

SHYLOCK

[*To himself*] These men are such Christian husbands. I have
a daughter and I wish a descendant of Barabbas ⁶ had
married her rather than a Christian! We're wasting time.
Please, let's hear the court's sentence.

⁶ A Jewish rebel against the Romans who, by acclamation of a crowd being addressed by Pontius Pilate, is freed, rather than Jesus. The name had also been used for the main character of Christopher Marlowe's play, *The Jew of Malta*, which concerns a Jew whose daughter similarly converts and marries a Christian.

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

You are a most honest judge!

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

320 Most learnèd judge, a sentence! Come, prepare.

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

O upright judge!—Mark, Jew.—O learnèd judge!

SHYLOCK

330 Is that the law?

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

O learnèd judge!—Mark, Jew, a learnèd judge!

SHYLOCK

335 I take this offer then: pay the bond thrice
And let the Christian go.

BASSANIO

Here is the money.

PORTIA

Soft!
The Jew shall have all justice. Soft, no haste.
340 He shall have nothing but the penalty.

GRATIANO

O Jew! An upright judge, a learnèd judge!

PORTIA

Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.
Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more
But just a pound of flesh. If thou takest more
345 Or less than a just pound, be it but so much
As makes it light or heavy in the substance
Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple— nay, if the scale do turn
But in the estimation of a hair,
350 Thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate.

GRATIANO

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

PORTIA

Why doth the Jew pause? Take thy forfeiture.

SHYLOCK

Give me my principal, and let me go.

BASSANIO

355 I have it ready for thee. Here it is.

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

A Daniel, still say I, a second Daniel!—

SHYLOCK

Such a wise judge! The right sentence! Come, get ready.

PORTIA

Hold on a second. There's something else. This agreement
doesn't give you any drop of blood. The literal words are "a
pound of flesh." So take what is yours, take your pound of
flesh, but if in cutting it off you shed one drop of Christian
blood, your lands and goods will be confiscated by the state
of Venice by the city's laws.

GRATIANO

What a just judge! Listen to her, Jew. Oh you wise judge!

SHYLOCK

Is that the law?

PORTIA

You'll see for yourself. Just as you are bent on absolute
justice, rest assured that more justice than you want would
be served for you.

GRATIANO

What a wise judge! Look, Jew, a wise judge!

SHYLOCK

I'll take this offer, then: I'll take three times the money and
let this Christian man go.

BASSANIO

Here is the money.

PORTIA

Wait! The Jew will have all his justice. Wait, don't rush this.
He will have nothing but the penalty he asked for.

GRATIANO

Oh, Jew! This is an upright judge, a wise judge!

PORTIA

So get ready to cut off the flesh. Don't shed any blood, and
don't cut any more or less than exactly one pound of flesh.
If you take more or less than a pound, even if it's just a
twentieth lighter or heavier than the tiniest measure—in
fact, if the scale is off by so much as a hair—you will be
sentenced to death and all your goods will be confiscated.

GRATIANO

This is a second Daniel! A Daniel, Jew! Now I've got you, you
unbeliever.

PORTIA

Why is the Jew waiting? Take what's owed to you.

SHYLOCK

Give me the money and let me go.

BASSANIO

I have it ready for you. Here it is.

PORTIA

He has refused the money in the open court. He will have
only justice and the penalty owed to him.

GRATIANO

I'll say it again: he's a Daniel, a second Daniel! Thank you,

I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

SHYLOCK

360 Shall I not have barely my principal?

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

365 Tarry, Jew.
The law hath yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
If it be proved against an alien
That by direct or indirect attempts
370 He seek the life of any citizen,
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
Shall seize one half his goods. The other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state,
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
375 Of the Duke only 'gainst all other voice.
In which predicament I say thou stand'st,
For it appears by manifest proceeding
That indirectly—and directly too—
Thou hast contrived against the very life
380 Of the defendant, and thou hast incurred
The danger formerly by me rehearsed.
Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke.

GRATIANO

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

DUKE

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

PORTIA

Ay, for the state, not for Antonio.

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

GRATIANO

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

ANTONIO

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

Jew, for teaching me that phrase.

SHYLOCK

Will I not be given back even the original amount I lent?

PORTIA

You will have nothing but the penalty owed to you, which
you can take at your own peril, Jew.

SHYLOCK

Well then, I hope the devil gets him for this! I won't stay
here any longer to argue.

PORTIA

Wait, Jew. The law has another requirement of you. It is
enacted in the laws of Venice that if a foreigner is proved to
have directly or indirectly attempted to kill a citizen, the
citizen against whom he plotted will take half of his goods.
The other half is confiscated by the state. And the guilty
man's life is in the hands of the Duke alone and his mercy.
And I say that this law applies to you because it seems clear
that you have contrived indirectly and directly against
Antonio's life and now must face the danger I just
elaborated on. On your knees, then, and beg for the Duke's
mercy.

GRATIANO

Beg that you can have permission to hang yourself. But
since your property is forfeited to the state, you don't even
have enough to buy a rope to hang yourself with. Therefore
you must be hanged at the state's expense.

DUKE

I pardon your life even before you ask, Shylock, so that you
can see how different my spirit is from yours. Half of your
wealth belongs to Antonio. The other half goes to the state,
and this may be reduced to a simple fine if you show
humility.

PORTIA

Yes, the money due to the state can be reduced, not the
money due to Antonio.

SHYLOCK

No, take my life and everything. Don't pardon me. If you
take the prop that holds up my house, you take my house,
too. By taking the means by which I live, you'd be taking my
life.

PORTIA

What mercy can you show him, Antonio?

GRATIANO

Give him rope for hanging, at no charge. Nothing else, for
God's sake.

ANTONIO

If it pleases my lord the Duke and the rest of the court, I am
content to give up the half of his goods owed to me, as long
as he gives me the other half of his wealth so that I can
invest it and, upon his death, give it to the gentleman that
recently eloped with his daughter. And I want two more
things: that he converts to Christianity, and that he makes a
will here in this court in which he leaves everything upon
his death to his son-in-law Lorenzo and his daughter.

Here in the court, of all he dies possessed,
Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

DUKE

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

PORTIA

Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?

SHYLOCK

I am content.

PORTIA

[to *NERISSA*] Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

SHYLOCK

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

DUKE

Get thee gone, but do it.

GRATIANO

[to *SHYLOCK*]

420 In christening shalt thou have two godfathers.
Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more—
To bring thee to the gallows, not to the font.

Exit SHYLOCK

DUKE

[to *PORTIA*] Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner.

PORTIA

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

DUKE

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

Exit DUKE and his train

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

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

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

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

DUKE

He will do this, or else I will take back the pardon that I just
pronounced here.

PORTIA

Are you content, Jew? What do you say to this?

SHYLOCK

I am content.

PORTIA

[To *NERISSA*] Clerk, draw up a will.

SHYLOCK


Please, give me permission to leave here. I am not well.
Send the will after me, and I will sign it.

DUKE

Go, but do sign it.

GRATIANO

[To *SHYLOCK*] When you are Christened, you'll have two
godfathers. If it were up to me, you'd have ten more, to
make twelve judges to send you to the gallows instead of
the baptismal fountain.

 Gratiano's joke likens a jury of
twelve to godparents at a baptism.

SHYLOCK exits.

DUKE

[To *PORTIA*] Sir, I invite you to come to my home for dinner
with me.

PORTIA

I must humbly beg your pardon, your grace. I must leave
tonight for Padua, and I really must be getting on my way
now.

DUKE

I am sorry you don't have more free time to spend here.
Antonio, thank this gentleman, for I think you owe him a
lot.

The DUKE and his attendants exit.

BASSANIO


[To *PORTIA*] Most worthy gentleman, my friend and I have
been acquitted of serious penalties because of your
wisdom. In return for this, we gladly offer you the three
thousand ducats we were going to pay to the Jew, for all
your troubles.

ANTONIO

And we stand in your debt, and are always in your loving
service.

PORTIA

Satisfaction is the best reward. And I am satisfied to have
rescued you, so I feel rewarded enough. I didn't help you
out of desire for payment. Please, recognize me when we
meet again. I wish you well, and now I must leave.

 Portia makes a joke that refers to
their inevitable meeting when she will
no longer be disguised as Balthazar.

BASSANIO

Dear sir, I must try to persuade you further. Take some
remembrance of us as a gift, not payment. Grant me two
things, please: don't refuse me, and pardon me for
insisting.

PORTIA

You press me far and therefore I will yield.

[To ANTONIO]

Give me your gloves. I'll wear them for your sake.

450 *[To BASSANIO]*

And for your love, I'll take this ring from you.

Do not draw back your hand. I'll take no more,

And you in love shall not deny me this.

BASSANIO

This ring, good sir—alas, it is a trifle.

455 I will not shame myself to give you this.

PORTIA

I will have nothing else but only this.

And now methinks I have a mind to it.

BASSANIO

There's more depends on this than on the value.

The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,

460 And find it out by proclamation.

Only for this, I pray you, pardon me.

PORTIA

I see, sir, you are liberal in offers.

You taught me first to beg, and now methinks

You teach me how a beggar should be answered.

BASSANIO

465 Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife.

And when she put it on, she made me vow

That I should neither sell nor give nor lose it.

PORTIA

That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.

An if your wife be not a madwoman,

470 And know how well I have deserved the ring,

She would not hold out enemy forever

For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you.

Exeunt PORTIA and NERISSA

ANTONIO

My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring.

Let his deservings and my love withal

475 Be valued against your wife's commandment.

BASSANIO

[giving GRATIANO the ring]

Go, Gratiano, run and overtake him.

Give him the ring and bring him, if thou canst,

Unto Antonio's house. Away, make haste.

Exit GRATIANO

480 Come, you and I will thither presently.

And in the morning early will we both

Fly toward Belmont. Come, Antonio.

Exeunt

PORTIA

You keep urging me and so I will yield.

[To ANTONIO] Give me your gloves. I'll wear them for your sake.

[To BASSANIO] And as a token of your gratitude I'll take your ring. Do not pull back your hand. I won't take anything else, and in your gratitude you shouldn't deny me this ring.

BASSANIO

This ring, good sir—oh, it's a trifle. It would be shameful to give you such a worthless little thing.

PORTIA

I want nothing else, only this. And now my mind is set on it.

BASSANIO

This ring is worth more than its monetary value. I will find out what is the best ring in all of Venice and give it to you.

But please let me keep this one.

PORTIA

I see you make generous offers. First you told me to beg for something from you, and now you show me how a beggar is answered.

BASSANIO

Good sir, this ring was given to me by my wife and when she put it on my hand she made me swear never to sell it or give it away or lose it.

PORTIA

That's what many men say as an excuse not to give gifts away. And unless your wife is a crazy person, if she knows what I have done to deserve the ring she won't be mad forever at you for giving it to me. Anyway, peace be with you.

PORTIA and NERISSA exit.

ANTONIO

My lord Bassanio, let him have the ring. Let my love and the fact that he deserves it outweigh your wife's command.

BASSANIO

[He gives GRATIANO the ring] Go, Gratiano, run and catch up with him. Give him the ring, and, if you can, bring him to Antonio's house. Go, hurry.

GRATIANO exits.

Come on, you and I will go to the house now. And early in the morning we will both hurry to Belmont. Come on, Antonio.

BASSANIO and ANTONIO exit.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA, both disguised

Shakescleare Translation

PORTIA and NERISSA enter, both disguised as men.

PORTIA

Inquire the Jew's house out. Give him this deed,
And let him sign it. We'll away tonight,
And be a day before our husbands home.
This deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo.

Enter GRATIANO

GRATIANO

- 5 *[giving PORTIA BASSANIO's ring]*
Fair sir, you are well o'erta'en.
My Lord Bassanio upon more advice
Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat
Your company at dinner.

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

That will I do.

NERISSA

- 15 *[to PORTIA]*
Sir, I would speak with you.
[aside to PORTIA]
I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,
Which I did make him swear to keep for ever.

PORTIA

- 20 *[aside to NERISSA]*
Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall have old swearing
That they did give the rings away to men.
But we'll outface them, and outswear them too.—
Away, make haste. Thou know'st where I will tarry.

Exit PORTIA

NERISSA

- 25 *[to GRATIANO]*
Come, good sir. Will you show me to this house?

Exeunt

PORTIA


Go to the Jew's house. Give him this contract and have him
sign it. We'll leave tonight and be home a day before our
husbands return. Lorenzo will be happy to see this contract.


GRATIANO enters.

GRATIANO

[He gives BASSANIO's ring to PORTIA] Fair sir, I'm glad I
caught up with you. After thinking it over, my Lord Bassanio
has sent this ring to you and also invites you to dinner.

PORTIA

I cannot make it to dinner , but I accept the ring
gratefully. Please relate my thanks to Bassanio. Also, can
you show my young man here to old Shylock's house?

 *The original, "That cannot be," could also have been an expression of disbelief at Bassanio's willingness to give up the ring.*

GRATIANO

I will show him.

NERISSA

[To PORTIA] Sir, may I have a word?

[Speaking so only PORTIA can hear] I'm going to see if I can
get my husband's ring, which I made him swear never to
give to anyone.

PORTIA

[Speaking so only NERISSA can hear] I'll bet you can get it.
They'll swear they gave the rings to men, but we'll outsmart
them. Go, hurry. You know where I'll be waiting for you.

PORTIA exits.

NERISSA

[To GRATIANO] Come on, good sir. Will you show me the
way to the house?

NERISSA and GRATIANO exit.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter LORENZO and JESSICA

LORENZO

- The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise, in such a night
Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls
5 And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents
Where Cressid lay that night.


JESSICA


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

Shakescleare Translation


LORENZO and JESSICA enter.


LORENZO

The moon is shining bright. On a night just like this one,
when the sweet wind was gently kissing the trees and the
branches weren't making any noise, on this kind of a night I
think Troilus  climbed the Trojan walls and sighed,
looking toward the Greek tents where Cressida was
sleeping that night.

 *A mythological character, Troilus was a Trojan prince who was in love with a Greek woman named Cressida during the Trojan war.*

JESSICA

On this kind of night, Thisbe  fearfully looked and saw
the shadow of a lion and ran away, frightened.

 *Thisbe was a figure from Greek myth, who loved a man named Pyramus despite the rivalry of their families. The two lovers agree to run away and meet one night, but Thisbe encounters a lion at their meeting place and runs off. Pyramus, believing the lion killed her, then kills himself. Thisbe then kills herself.*

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

15 In such a night
 Medea gathered the enchanted herbs
 That did renew old Aeson.

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

I would outnight you, did nobody come.
 30 But, hark, I hear the footing of a man.

Enter STEPHANO, a messenger

LORENZO

Who comes so fast in silence of the night?

STEPHANO

A friend.

LORENZO

A friend? What friend? Your name, I pray you, friend?

STEPHANO

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

LORENZO

Who comes with her?

STEPHANO

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

LORENZO

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

Enter LAUNCELOT the clown

LAUNCELOT

Sola, sola! Wo, ha, ho! Sola, sola!

LORENZO

Who calls?

LORENZO

On a night like this, Dido ³ stood on the shore by the wild
 sea with a willow branch in her hand, trying to get her lover
 to come back to Carthage.

³ Dido was the queen of Carthage who fell in love with the Trojan prince Aeneas. He eventually left her, though, and she committed suicide.

JESSICA

On a night like this, Medea ⁴ gathered the magical herbs
 that made old Aeson young again.

⁴ Medea was a witch in Greek mythology, and the lover of the hero Jason. Medea used magic to make Jason's old father, Aeson, young again.

LORENZO

And on a night like this, Jessica ran away from the wealthy
 Jew and ran from Venice as far as Belmont with her lover,
 who squanders money.

JESSICA

On a night like this, young Lorenzo swore he loved Jessica
 well, and stole her soul with many vows of his faithfulness,
 but not one vow was true.

LORENZO

On a night like this, pretty Jessica slandered her lover like a
 little shrew, and he forgave her for it.

JESSICA

I would get the better of you with this back-and-forth, if no
 one were coming. But listen, I hear the footsteps of a man.

STEPHANO, a messenger, enters.

LORENZO

Who's there, coming so quickly on this silent night?

STEPHANO

A friend.

LORENZO

A friend? What friend? Tell me your name, please, friend.

STEPHANO

My name is Stephano, and I bring word that my mistress
 will be here at Belmont before the break of day. She is
 meandering her way here, stopping at holy crosses to kneel
 and pray for a happy marriage.

LORENZO

Who comes with her?

STEPHANO

Just her maid and a holy hermit. If I may, has my master
 returned yet?

LORENZO

No, he hasn't, and we haven't heard from him. But let's go
 inside, please, Jessica, and let's prepare a formal welcome
 for the mistress of the house.

LAUNCELOT the clown enters.

LAUNCELOT

Hey, hey! Hey there! Hey, hey!

LORENZO

Who's calling?

LAUNCELOT

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

LORENZO

50 Leave holloaing, man. Here.

LAUNCELOT

Sola! Where, where?

LORENZO

Here.

LAUNCELOT

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

Exit LAUNCELOT

LORENZO

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

Exit STEPHANO

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

Enter musicians

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

Play music

JESSICA

I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

LORENZO

The reason is your spirits are attentive. For do but note a wild and wanton herd, Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
80 Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud, Which is the hot condition of their blood— If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound, Or any air of music touch their ears, You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
85 Their savage eyes turned to a modest gaze By the sweet power of music. Therefore the poet Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
90 But music for the time doth change his nature. The man that hath no music in himself, Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils. The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
95 And his affections dark as Erebus. Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

LAUNCELOT

Hey! Have you seen Master Lorenzo? Master Lorenzo, hey, hey!

LORENZO

Stop shouting, man. He's right here.

LAUNCELOT

Hey! Where, where is he?

LORENZO

Here.

LAUNCELOT

Tell him there's a letter from my master for him full of good news. My master will be here before morning.

LAUNCELOT exits.

LORENZO

Sweetie, let's go inside and wait for their arrival. Then again, what does it matter? Why should we go inside? My friend Stephano, please go into the house and announce that your mistress is on her way. And bring the musicians here outside.

STEPHANO exits.

How sweet the moonlight shines on this bank! We will sit here and let the sounds of music slip into our ears. This soft stillness and night are perfect for some sweet harmony. Sit down, Jessica. Look how the sky, which is like the floor of heaven, is inlaid with bright gold stars. All the little orbs that you see up in the sky are like angels singing to the young cherubs in a choir. That same kind of harmony is in our immortal souls, but while our souls are enclosed in our mortal, decaying bodies, we can't hear it.

Musicians enter.

Come now, and wake up the moon with your song! Pierce your mistress's ear with sweet touches and draw her home with music.

The musicians play music.

JESSICA

I am never cheerful when I hear sweet music.

LORENZO

That's because your spirit is busy paying attention to the music. Take the example of a wild, wandering herd, or a bunch of untrained young horses, running around, bellowing and neighing loudly, as they naturally do. If they happen to hear a trumpet play or any music, you would see them all stand still and their savage eyes would be turned into a modest gaze by the sweet power of music. That's why the Roman poet Ovid wrote that the musician Orpheus made trees, stones, and bodies of water follow him, because there's nothing hard or strong enough not to be changed by music. Any man who is not himself musical and is not moved by harmonious, sweet sounds is prone to commit treason, make tricky plots, and steal things. His spirit is dull and he has an affinity for things dark as hell. Don't trust a man like that. Listen to the music.

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA***PORTIA**

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

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

It is your music, madam, of the house.

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

PORTIA

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

*Music ceases***LORENZO**

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

PORTIA

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

LORENZO

Dear lady, welcome home.

PORTIA

We have been praying for our husbands' welfare,
125 Which speed, we hope, the better for our words.
Are they returned?

LORENZO

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

PORTIA

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

*A tucket sounds**PORTIA and NERISSA enter.***PORTIA**

That light we can see is coming from my hall. How far that
little candle can throw its beams of light! A good deed done
in an evil world is like such a little candle, shining in the
dark.

NERISSA

While the moon was shining, we couldn't see the candle.

PORTIA

That's like how greater glory dims lesser glory. A substitute
shines as brightly as a king until a king is nearby, and then
he's outshined. Listen, there's music.

NERISSA

It's music coming from your house, madam.

PORTIA


Nothing is good, I see now, outside of the proper context. I
think this music sounds much sweeter now than when
played during the day.

NERISSA

The silence of the night makes it better, madam.

PORTIA

The crow sings as sweetly as the lark when no one's paying
attention to them, and I think that if the nightingale sang
during the day while all the geese were cackling, people
would think it sounded no better than a wren. So many
things are made perfect and as they should be by good
timing! But quiet. Look how the moon won't be awakened.
It must be sleeping with [Endymion](#) .

 In Greek mythology, Endymion was the lover of the goddess of the moon.

*The music stops.***LORENZO**

Unless I'm wrong, that's the voice of Portia.

PORTIA

He knows me the same way a blind man knows a
cuckoo—from its bad voice.

LORENZO

Dear lady, welcome back home.

PORTIA

We have been praying for our husbands' welfare and we
hope our prayers have sped them up. Have our husbands
returned yet?

LORENZO

They haven't yet, madam, but there was just a messenger
here who told us that they are coming.

PORTIA

Go inside, Nerissa. Order my servants not to give any sign of
the fact that we have been gone. And don't you say
anything about it, Lorenzo. Or you, Jessica.

A trumpet plays.

LORENZO

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

PORTIA

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

Enter BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, and their followers

BASSANIO

[to PORTIA] We should hold day with the Antipodes,
140 If you would walk in absence of the sun.

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

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

ANTONIO

150 No more than I am well acquitted of.

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

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

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

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

NERISSA

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

GRATIANO

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

NERISSA

Ay, if a woman live to be a man.

LORENZO

Your husband is coming. I hear his trumpet. We aren't
tattletales, madam. Don't worry.

PORTIA

This night, I think, is just the daytime only sick—it looks a
little pale. It's like a day when the sun is behind some
clouds.

*BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, and their attendants
enter.*

BASSANIO

[To PORTIA] If you want to walk around when the sun's not
out, it would be as if we were having daytime at the same
time as the opposite side of the world.

PORTIA

Let me give light, but let me not be light with my morals.
That kind of a light wife makes her husband heavy with
worry. And I never want Bassanio to be like that for me. But
it's all up to God! Welcome home, my lord.

BASSANIO

Thank you, madam. Welcome my friend here. This is the
man, this is Antonio, to whom I owe so much.

PORTIA

You owe him being all tied up and arrested, since I hear he
was tied up for you.

ANTONIO

But I have been well compensated for that.

PORTIA

Sir, you are very welcome to our house. I must welcome you
in ways other than words, so I will stop speaking such
courtesies.

GRATIANO

[To NERISSA] By the moon there I swear you are doing me
wrong. Honestly, I gave it to the judge's clerk. Damn him for
that, because this is really upsetting you, my love.

PORTIA

A lovers' quarrel already? What's the matter?

GRATIANO

It's over a hoop of gold, a little ring she gave me with some
writing carved on it, the poetry of a knife-maker, saying,
"Love me and don't leave me."

NERISSA

Why are you talking about the inscription or the value of the
ring? You swore to me when I gave it to you that you would
wear it until you died, and that it would lie in your grave
with you. You should have kept it and respected at least me,
if not your strong oaths. You gave it to a judge's clerk! No,
with God as my witness, I bet whoever you gave it to had no
beard.

GRATIANO

He will have one, if he lives long enough to grow into a man.

NERISSA

Yes, if a woman can grow into a man.

GRATIANO

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

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

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

GRATIANO

My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away
Unto the judge that begged it and indeed
Deserved it too. And then the boy, his clerk,
That took some pains in writing, he begged mine.
195 And neither man nor master would take aught
But the two rings.

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

[to GRATIANO] Nor I in yours
205 Till I again see mine.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

If you had known the virtue of the ring,
215 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 so much unreasonable,
If you had pleased to have defended it
220 With any terms of zeal, wanted the modesty
To urge the thing held as a ceremony?
Nerissa teaches me what to believe.
I'll die for 't but some woman had the ring.

BASSANIO

No, by my honor, madam, by my soul,
225

GRATIANO

I swear by my hand that I gave it to a young man, a boy, a
little boy no taller than you, the judge's clerk, a talkative
boy who begged for it as payment. My heart couldn't bear
denying him the ring.

PORTIA

I have to say, you are to blame for giving up your wife's first
gift to you so easily, something stuck on your finger with
oaths and riveted onto your flesh with good faith. I gave my
husband a ring and made him swear never to lose it. And
here he stands. I daresay I'd swear on his behalf that he
would not leave it or take it off his finger for all the money
in the world. Now, really, Gratiano, you are giving your wife
cause for grief. If I were in her place, I'd be mad about it,
too.

BASSANIO

[To himself] I'd be better off cutting off my left hand and
swearing that I lost the ring while trying to defend it.

GRATIANO

My lord Bassanio gave his ring away to the judge that
begged for it and, indeed, deserved it, too. And then the
boy, the judge's clerk, who went through a lot of trouble
writing things, begged for my ring. Neither the judge nor his
clerk would take anything but the two rings.

PORTIA

What ring did you give him, my lord? I hope not the one you
got from me.

BASSANIO

If I were able to top off my mistake with a lie, I'd deny it, but
you can see that my finger doesn't have the ring on it. It is
gone.

PORTIA

Your false heart lacks truth just like your finger lacks the
ring. By heaven, I will never go to bed with you until I see
the ring.

NERISSA

[To GRATIANO] And I will never go to bed with you until I see
my ring again.

BASSANIO

Sweet Portia, if you knew to whom and for whom and for
what reason I gave the ring, and if you knew how
unwillingly I parted with it when the man accepted no gift
other than the ring, you wouldn't be so upset.

PORTIA

If you had known the virtue of the ring, or if you had
realized half the worth of the woman who gave it to you, or
if you had thought about your own honor in keeping the
ring, then you would not have given the ring away. What
kind of unreasonable man would have been so immodest
as to demand it as a gift if you had defended it with any
zeal? I will follow Nerissa's example. I'll bet my life that you
gave it to some woman.

BASSANIO

No, I swear by my honor, madam, by my soul, I didn't give it

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

PORTIA

Let not that doctor e'er come near my house!
Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,
240 And that which you did swear to keep for me,
I will become as liberal as you.
I'll not deny him anything I have,
No, not my body, nor my husband's bed.
Know him I shall, I am well sure of it.
245 Lie not a night from home. Watch me like Argus.
If you do not, if I be left alone,
Now, by mine honor—which is yet mine own—
I'll have that doctor for my bedfellow.

NERISSA

[to GRATIANO] And I his clerk. Therefore be well
250 advised
How you do leave me to mine own protection.

GRATIANO

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

ANTONIO

I am th' unhappy subject of these quarrels.

PORTIA

255 Sir, grieve not you. You are welcome notwithstanding.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

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

PORTIA

[giving ANTONIO a ring]
Then you shall be his surety. Give him this,
And bid him keep it better than the other.

ANTONIO

275 *[giving BASSANIO PORTIA's ring]*

to a woman, but rather to a doctor of law. He refused an offer of three thousand ducats and begged for the ring, which I refused to give him. I even let him go away all displeasèd. And he is the one who saved my dear friend's life. What should I say, sweet lady? I was compelled to send the ring after him. I felt compelled by shame and courtesy. My honor would not let me show such ingratitude to the man. Pardon me, good lady. I swear by these blessed stars that if you were there you yourself would have begged me to give the ring to the worthy lawyer.

PORTIA

I hope that lawyer never comes near my house! Since he got the jewel that I loved and that you swore to keep for me, I will become as generous as you. If he comes around, I won't deny him anything I have. No, not my body, not even my marriage bed. I'll know who he is, I'm sure. You'd better not spend a single night away from home. Watch me like the god Argus, with his hundred eyes. If not, if you leave me alone, I swear by my honor (which is still mine) that I'll sleep with that lawyer.

NERISSA

[To GRATIANO] And I'll sleep with his clerk. So be wary of leaving me to my own ways.

GRATIANO

Well, go ahead, but don't let me catch him. If that happens, I'll break the clerk's pen.

ANTONIO

All this unhappy quarreling is because of me.

PORTIA

Sir, don't worry. You are welcome here regardless.

BASSANIO

Portia, forgive me for this mistake that I was forced into. In front of our friends I swear to you by your own beautiful eyes in which I can see my image—

PORTIA

Listen to that! In both my eyes he sees two images of himself, one in each eye. If you swear by your double self, then that will be a serious oath!

BASSANIO

Listen to me. Pardon me for this and by my soul I swear I will never break another promise to you.

ANTONIO

Once I put my body in danger to get him money, and that arrangement would not have gone well if it wasn't for the man who now has your husband's ring. I dare to risk something again: I'll wager my soul that your husband will never again break a promise to you.

PORTIA

[She gives ANTONIO a ring] Then you will vouch for him. Give him this ring, and tell him to hold onto it better than the last one.

ANTONIO

[He gives the ring to BASSANIO] Here, Lord Bassanio. Swear

Here, Lord Bassanio. Swear to keep this ring.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

280 *[taking out a ring]*
And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano,
For that same scrubbed boy, the doctor's clerk,
In lieu of this, last night did lie with me.

GRATIANO

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

PORTIA

Speak not so grossly.—You are all amazed.
[takes out a letter]
Here is a letter. Read it at your leisure.
290 It comes from Padua, from Bellario.
There you shall find that Portia was the doctor,
Nerissa there her clerk. Lorenzo here
Shall witness I set forth as soon as you,
And even but now returned. I have not yet
295 Entered my house.—Antonio, you are welcome.
And I have better news in store for you
Than you expect.
[gives ANTONIO another letter]
Unseal this letter soon.
300 There you shall find three of your argosies
Are richly come to harbor suddenly.
You shall not know by what strange accident
I chanced on this letter.

ANTONIO

I am dumb.

BASSANIO

305 *[to PORTIA]* Were you the doctor and I knew you not?

GRATIANO

[to NERISSA] Were you the clerk that is to make me
cuckold?

NERISSA

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

BASSANIO

310 *[to PORTIA]* 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
Are safely come to road.

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee.
[gives LORENZO a document]
There do I give to you and Jessica,
320 From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,
After his death of all he dies possessed of.

that you will keep this ring.

BASSANIO

By heaven, this is the same ring I gave to the lawyer!

PORTIA

He gave it to me. Forgive me, Bassanio, because I slept with
the lawyer for the ring.

NERISSA

[She takes out a ring] And forgive me, my gentle Gratiano,
because I slept with that same young boy, the lawyer's
clerk, in return for this ring last night.

GRATIANO

This is like fixing highways in the summer when there's
nothing wrong with them! We've been cheated on before
we've even deserved it!

PORTIA

Don't speak like that. You are all shocked.

[She takes out a letter] Here is a letter. Read it when you
can. It comes from Padua, from Bellario. In the letter you
will learn that Portia was the lawyer and Nerissa was her
clerk. Lorenzo will testify that I left here when you did and
just got back now. I haven't even entered the house yet.
Antonio, you are welcome here. And I have even better
news in store for you than you expect.

[She gives Antonio another letter] Open this letter soon and
you will read that three of your ships have suddenly come
into harbor full of riches. You can't guess by what strange
coincidence I happened upon this letter.

ANTONIO

I am flabbergasted.

BASSANIO

[To PORTIA] Were you the lawyer and I didn't recognize
you?

GRATIANO

[To NERISSA] Were you the clerk that supposedly slept with
my wife?

NERISSA

Yes, but the clerk will never sleep with your wife unless he
becomes a man.

BASSANIO

[To PORTIA] Sweet lawyer, you will share my bed tonight.
And when I am gone, you sleep alongside my wife.

ANTONIO

Sweet lady, you have given me life and a living. I read here
for certain that my ships have safely returned.

PORTIA

How are you now, Lorenzo? My clerk has something good
for you, too.

NERISSA

Yes, and I'll give it to you for free.

[She gives LORENZO a document] I am giving you and
Jessica a will from the rich Jew. After he dies, all that he
owns is yours.

LORENZO

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

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

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

Exeunt

LORENZO

Fair ladies, it is as if you are giving blessed bread to starving people.

PORTIA

It is almost morning, and yet I am sure you aren't completely satisfied with the story of these events. Let's go inside and there you can ask us more questions, and we will answer them all honestly.

GRATIANO

Let's do that. The first question that my Nerissa will have to answer is whether she would rather wait until the next night or just go to bed now, since it's daylight in two hours. But if the day should come, I would wish it were dark out, so that I could be sleeping with the lawyer's clerk. Well, as long as I live I'll worry about nothing else as much as about keeping Nerissa's ring safe.

*GRATIANO, NERISSA, PORTIA, BASSANIO, and ANTONIO
exit.*

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