

That most lively band of players

*The English Class in Performance*

does after much toil and suffering present

the very thought-provoking comedy of

# The Merchant of Venice

penned by that incomparable playwright

*Master William Shakespeare*

and edited by that incorrigible rogue

*Shawn Peters.*

## Dramatis Personae

**Antonio:** the Merchant of Venice; a charitable and giving man who is nonetheless very depressed.

**Bassanio:** Antonio's young, passionate friend; in love with Portia.

**Solanio:** friend to Antonio and Bassanio.

**Salarino:** friend to Antonio and Bassanio.

**Gratiano:** Bassanio's friend; in love with Nerissa.

**Lorenzo:** Bassanio's friend; in love with Jessica. (Props: letter to give to Launcelot)

**Salerio:** a messenger (in some productions, is played by Solanio, and may be the same character. Props: letter)

**Shylock:** an old Jew; an usurer (money-lender. Props: the bond, a Jewish gaberdine/coat or something bearing the star of David, a knife and whetstone or leather to sharpen it on).

**Jessica:** his daughter; in love with Lorenzo. (Props: money bags, letter to give to Launcelot)

**Launcelot Gobbo:** Jaded servant to Shylock.

**Old Gobbo:** Launcelot's father.

**Tubal:** Shylock's friend and a fellow Jew. (Props: also needs Jewish accoutrements)

**Portia:** a wealthy and strong-willed young heiress. (Props: ring, lawyer's clothes for the courtroom scene)

**Nerissa:** her waiting-maid and friend. (Props: a ring, page's clothes for the courtroom scene)

**Servant:** in Portia's house. (Props: three caskets)

**Prince of Morocco:** African prince; suitor to Portia.

**Prince of Arragon:** Spanish prince; suitor to Portia.

**Duke of Venice:** ruler of Venice and supreme authority of law.

**Gaoler:** responsible for detaining criminals in Venice. (Props: shackles to put on Antonio)

(Other props: The three caskets of lead, silver and gold. The gold one has a skull inside with a note; the silver, a picture of a fool or clown with a note; and the lead, a picture of Portia with a note)

**Staging:** Simplest staging is to have a line of boxes just upstage of centre. These could serve as benches to sit on during Venice street scenes, a place to put Porita's caskets, Jessica's balcony and a judge's bench for the Duke. You may also wish to indicate the change from Belmont to Venice with changes in lighting.

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## ACT I

### SCENE I. Venice. A street.

*Enter ANTONIO, SALARINO, and SOLANIO.  
Antonio is very depressed and sighs deeply. The others are trying to cheer him up.*

**ANTONIO:** In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.

**SALARINO:** Your mind is tossing on the ocean, where your argosies sail.

**SOLANIO:** Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth, the better part of my affections would be with my hopes abroad.

**SALARINO:** I should not see the sandy hour-glass run, but I should think of shallows and of flats.

**ANTONIO:** Believe me, no. My ventures are not in one bottom trusted, nor to one place.

**SALARINO:** Why, then you are in love.

**ANTONIO:** *(dismissing the idea)* Fie, fie!

**SALARINO:** Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad because you are not merry!

**SOLANIO:** Here comes Bassanio. We leave you now with better company.

**ANTONIO:** Your worth is very dear in my regard.

*Exit SALARINO and SOLANIO. Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO.*

**GRATIANO:** You look not well, Signior Antonio: you have too much respect upon the world.

**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:** *(trying to cheer Antonio up)* With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come, and let my liver rather heat with wine than my heart cool with mortifying groans. Fish not with this melancholy bait.

**LORENZO:** *(trying to stop Gratiano from talking too much)* We will leave you till dinner-time. I must be one of these dumb wise men, for Gratiano never lets me speak.

**GRATIANO:** Well, keep me company but two years moe, thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

**ANTONIO:** Farewell.

*Exit Gratiano and Lorenzo*

**BASSANIO:** Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing.

**ANTONIO:** *(cheering up a bit)* Well, tell me now what lady is the same to whom you swore a secret pilgrimage.

**BASSANIO:** 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio, how much I have disabled mine estate. To you, Antonio, I have a warranty

to unburden all my plots and purposes how to get clear of all the debts I owe.

**ANTONIO:** I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it; and if it stand within the eye of honour, my purse and my person lie all unlock'd to your occasions.

**BASSANIO:** In Belmont is a lady richly left. Her name is Portia. *(passionately)* O my Antonio, had I but the means to hold a rival place with one of her suitors, I should questionless be fortunate!

**ANTONIO:** *(thinking)* Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea. Neither have I money nor commodity to raise a present sum. Go, inquire where money is, and I no question make to have it of my trust or for my sake.

*Exeunt*

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

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA*

**PORTIA:** *(sighing)* By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world. 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.

**NERISSA:** Your father was ever virtuous, therefore the lottery that he hath devised will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one who shall rightly love.

**PORTIA:** I pray thee, over-name these princely suitors.

**NERISSA:** *(counting on her fingers)* First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

**PORTIA:** *(disgusted)* Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse.

**NERISSA:** Then there is the County Palatine.

**PORTIA:** He doth nothing but frown.

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

**PORTIA:** Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and *most* vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk! *(sighs)* 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

**NERISSA:** Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier?

**PORTIA:** *(smiling)* Yes, yes, it was Bassanio. I remember him well.

*Enter a servant.*

**Servant:** Madam, there is a forerunner come from the Prince of Morocco, who will be here to-night.

**PORTIA:** *(sighs again)* Come, Nerissa. *(to the servant)* Sirrah, go before. Whiles we shut the gates upon one wooer, another knocks at the door.

*Exeunt, following the servant.*

### SCENE III. Venice. A public place.

*Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK*

**SHYLOCK:** Three thousand ducats! Well...

**BASSANIO:** Ay, sir, for three months.

**SHYLOCK:** For three months! Well...

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

**SHYLOCK:** Antonio is a good man.

**BASSANIO:** *(offended)* Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

**SHYLOCK:** *(appologetic)* Oh, 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. *(thinks about it)* Three thousand ducats. I think I may take his bond. May I speak with Antonio?

**BASSANIO:** If it please you to dine with us.

**SHYLOCK:** *(disgusted at the thought)* Yes, to smell pork. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, but I will not eat with you, nor pray with you.

*Enter ANTONIO*

**BASSANIO:** This is Signior Antonio.

*Shylock recognized Bassanio as someone who has caused him hardship in business.*

**SHYLOCK:** *(aside)* He lends out money gratis and brings down the rate of usance here with us in Venice!

**ANTONIO:** Is he yet possess'd how much ye would?

**SHYLOCK:** Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

**ANTONIO:** And for three months.

**SHYLOCK:** Three months. Well then, your bond... Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow upon advantage.

**ANTONIO:** I do never use it.

**SHYLOCK:** *(doing some calculations in his head)*  
Three months from twelve; then, let me see; the rate...

**ANTONIO:** Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

**SHYLOCK:** *(enjoying that Antonio now needs his help)*  
Signior Antonio, many a time and oft in the Rialto, you call me cut-throat dog, and spit upon my Jewish gaberdine. What should I say to you? Should I not say 'Hath a dog money?' Or shall I bend low and say this: *(sarcastic)* 'Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last, you call'd me dog, and for these courtesies I'll lend you thus much moneys'?

**ANTONIO:** *(angry at this treatment)* I am as like to to spit on thee again!

**SHYLOCK:** *(in mock surprise)* Why, look you, how you storm! I would be friends with you.

*Shylock, having long suffered Christian persecution, is interested to see how far Antonio will put himself in the power of a Jew.*

**SHYLOCK:** *(To Antonio)* Go with me to a notary. Seal me there your single bond, and, in a merry sport, if you repay me not such sum or sums as are express'd in the condition, let the forfeit be nominated for an equal pound of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken in what part of your body pleaseth me.

**BASSANIO:** *(in alarm, to Antonio)* You shall not seal to such a bond for me!

**ANTONIO:** *(to Bassanio)* Why, fear not, man. Within these two months, I do expect return of thrice three times the value of this bond. *(to Shylock)* Yes Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

**SHYLOCK:** Then meet me forthwith at the notary's.

**ANTONIO:** Hie thee, gentle Jew.

*Exit, BASSANIO and ANTONIO one side, SHYLOCK the other.*

## ACT II

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

*Enter the PRINCE OF MOROCCO, PORTIA,  
NERISSA.*

**MOROCCO:** Mislike me not for my complexion, the shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun. Bring me the fairest creature northward born, and let us make incision for your love, to prove whose blood is reddest. I would not change this hue, except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

**PORTIA:** The lottery of my destiny bars me the right of voluntary choosing. Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair as any comer I have look'd on yet for my affection.

**MOROCCO:** *(very pleased)* Even for that I thank you. Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets to try my fortune. I would outstare the sternest eyes that look, outbrave the heart most daring on the earth, to win thee, lady.

**PORTIA:** You must take your chance, and either not attempt to choose at all or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong, never to speak to lady afterward in way of marriage.

**MOROCCO:** *(laughs)* Come, bring me unto my chance.

*Exeunt*

SCENE II. Venice. A street.

*Enter LAUNCELOT*

**LAUNCELOT:** Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master. *(looking to one side)* The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts me saying to me 'good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, run away.' *(looking to the other)* My conscience says 'honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run.' *(thinks for a moment)* The fiend gives the more friendly counsel: I will run, fiend. My heels are at your command.

*Enter Old GOBBO.*

**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! I will try confusions with him.

*Goes to his father and takes him by the hand.*

**LAUNCELOT:** *(being as confusing as possible)* 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!

**LAUNCELOT:** *(laughing)* Do you not know me, father?

**GOBBO:** Alack, sir, I am sand-blind. I know you not.

**LAUNCELOT:** I am Launcelot, your boy that was.

**GOBBO:** *(touches Launcelot's face)* Lord, how art thou changed! How dost thou and thy master agree?

**LAUNCELOT:** I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer.

*Enter BASSANIO*

**GOBBO:** God bless your worship!

**BASSANIO:** Gramercy! wouldst thou aught with me?

**GOBBO:** Here's my son, sir, a poor boy,--

**LAUNCELOT:** *(interrupting)* Not a poor boy, sir, but--

**GOBBO:** *(interrupting)* He hath a great infection to serve--

**LAUNCELOT:** Indeed, the short and the long is--

**GOBBO:** His master and he are scarce cater-cousins--

**LAUNCELOT:** To be brief--

**BASSANIO:** *(motioning for quiet)* One speak for both! What would you?

**LAUNCELOT:** Serve you, sir.

**GOBBO:** That is the very defect of the matter, sir.

**BASSANIO:** Thou speak'st it well. Go, father, with thy son. Take leave of thy old master and inquire my lodging out.

**LAUNCELOT:** Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this gear.

*Exeunt Launcelot and Old Gobbo. Enter GRATIANO.*

**GRATIANO:** Signior Bassanio! I must go with you to Belmont.

**BASSANIO:** Why then you must. Pray thee, take pain to allay with some cold drops of modesty thy skipping spirit, lest I be misconstrued in the place I go to, and lose my hopes.

**GRATIANO:** Signior Bassanio, hear me: if I do not put on a sober habit, never trust me more.

**BASSANIO:** Well, we shall see your bearing.

*Exeunt*

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

*Enter JESSICA, with a letter, and LAUNCELOT*

**JESSICA:** I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so. Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil, didst rob it of some taste of tediousness. Soon, at supper, shalt thou see Lorenzo. Give him this letter. *(gives him the letter)* Do it secretly.

**LAUNCELOT:** Adieu! *(weeping)* These foolish drops do drown my manly spirit.

*Exit Launcelot*

**JESSICA:** O Lorenzo, if thou keep promise, I shall end this strife, become a Christian and thy loving wife.

*Exit*

SCENE IV. The same. A street.

*Enter GRATIANO, LORENZO. Enter LAUNCELOT from the opposite side, with a letter*

**LORENZO:** Friend Launcelot, what's the news?

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

*He gives Jessica's letter to Lorenzo. He opens it and reads it.*

**LORENZO:** I know the hand.

**GRATIANO:** *(looking over Lorenzo's shoulder)* Love-news, in faith.

**LAUNCELOT:** *(bows and prepares to leave)* By your leave, sir.

**LORENZO:** Hold! Here, take this. Tell gentle Jessica I will not fail her.

*Lorenzo gives Launcelot a letter. Launcelot bows and exits.*

**LORENZO:** *(to Gratiano)* She hath directed how I shall take her from her father's house. Go with me. Fair Jessica shall be my torch-bearer this night.

*Exeunt*

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

*Enter SHYLOCK*

**SHYLOCK:** What, Jessica!-- and sleep and snore-- Why, Jessica, I say!

*Enter Jessica*

**JESSICA:** Call you? What is your will?

**SHYLOCK:** I am bid forth to supper, Jessica. *(Hands her his keys)* There are my keys. I am right loath to go. There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest, for I did dream of money-bags to-night. *(lecturing her)* Hear you me, Jessica: lock up my doors; stop my house's ears. Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter my sober house.

*Jessica nods.*

**SHYLOCK:** Well, Jessica, go in. Perhaps I will return immediately.

*Exit, sighing heavily.*

**JESSICA:** *(after he has left)* Farewell. And if my fortune be not crost, I have a father, you a daughter, lost.

*Exit opposite way.*

**SCENE VI. The same.**

*Enter GRATIANO and SALARINO.*

**GRATIANO:** This is the pent-house under which Lorenzo desired us to make stand.



**SALARINO:** His hour is almost past.

*Enter LORENZO*

**LORENZO:** Sweet friends, your patience for my long abode. Here dwells my father Jew. *(calling)* Ho! Who's within?

*Enter JESSICA, above. This may be on a balcony if one is available or on/behind a set of blocks.*

**JESSICA:** Who are you?

**LORENZO:** Lorenzo, and thy love.

**JESSICA:** Lorenzo, certain, and my love indeed. Here, catch this casket. It is worth the pains.

*She throws down a chest or a sack of money. Lorenzo catches it and passes it to Gratiano.*

**LORENZO:** Descend, for you must be my torchbearer.

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

*Exit above*

**LORENZO:** Beshrew me but I love her heartily.

*Enter JESSICA, below (or in front of the blocks) with more moneybags.*

**JESSICA:** On, gentlemen; away!

*Exeunt, laughing.*

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

*Enter PORTIA, with the PRINCE OF MOROCCO, and NERISSA, attending. Nerrissa and the Servant set up three caskets on tables or boxes at centre stage, one of gold, one of silver and one of lead.*

**PORTIA:** Go and discover the several caskets.

*The Prince walks over and examines them.*

**PORTIA:** Now make your choice.

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

**PORTIA:** The one of them contains my picture, prince.

**MOROCCO:** *(to the heavens)* Some god direct my judgment! *(examining the lead casket)* This casket threatens: men that hazard all do it in hope of fair advantages. I'll nor give nor hazard aught for lead. *(examining the silver casket)* What says the silver? 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.' As much as he deserves! Why, that's the lady. I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes. *(examining the gold casket)* Let's see once more this saying graved in gold. 'Who chooseth me

shall gain what many men desire.' Why, that's the lady also: all the world desires her. One of these three contains her heavenly picture... *(he considers in silence a moment, then points to the gold casket )* Deliver me the key!

*Nerissa gives it to him.*

**MOROCCO:** Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

*He opens the casket, reaches in and lifts out a skull with a note curled in the eye.*

**MOROCCO:** *(shocked)* O hell! What have we here? *(reading)*

All that glitters is not gold;  
Often have you heard that told:  
Many a man his life hath sold  
But my outside to behold:  
Gilded tombs do worms enfold.

**MOROCCO:** *(disappointed)* Cold, indeed; and labour lost.

*Bows to Portia and exits.*

**PORTIA:** *(relieved)* A gentle riddance.

*Exeunt opposite direction. Nerissa and the Servant take the caskets away.*

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

*Enter SALARINO and SOLANIO*

**SOLANIO:** I never heard a passion so confused, as the dog Jew did utter in the streets: *(mimicking Shylock)* "My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter! Fled with a Christian!"

**SALARINO:** Why, all the boys in Venice follow him, crying, "his daughter, and his ducats."

*They laugh.*

**Storyteller:** Then it occurs to Solanio that Shylock's troubles may mean harsher treatment for Antonio.

**SOLANIO:** Let good Antonio look he keep his day!

**SALARINO:** I reason'd with a Frenchman yesterday, who told me, in the narrow seas that part the French and English, there miscarried a vessel of our country richly fraught. I thought upon Antonio when he told me, and wish'd in silence that it were not his.

*Exeunt*

**Storyteller:** Was this one of Antonio's ships, wrecked in the English Channel?

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

*Enter PORTIA, NERISSA and the PRINCE OF ARRAGON. Once again, Nerissa and the Servant set up the caskets.*

**PORTIA:** *(pointing to the caskets)* Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince.

**ARRAGON:** *(to heaven)* Fortune now to my heart's hope!  
*(looking at the caskets)* Gold; silver; and base lead. *(looking at lead)* 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.' You shall look fairer, ere I give or hazard aught for you. *(looking at gold)* What says the golden chest? 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.' That 'many' may be meant by the fool multitude, that choose by show. *(looking at the silver)* Why, then to thee, thou silver treasure-house. 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.' And well said too, for who shall go about to cozen fortune and be honourable without the stamp of merit? *(To Nerissa)* Give me a key for this, and instantly unlock my fortunes here.

*Nerissa gives him the key and he opens the silver casket*

**ARRAGON:** What's here? *(He takes out a picture of an idiot or fool, with a note attached, and reads the note:)*

The fire seven times tried this:  
Seven times tried that judgment is,  
That did never choose amiss.  
Some there be that shadows kiss;  
Such have but a shadow's bliss:  
There be fools alive, I wis,  
Silver'd o'er; and so was this.

**ARRAGON:** *(in shame)* With one fool's head I came to woo, but I go away with two. Sweet, adieu.

*Exit Arragon*

**PORTIA:** O, these deliberate fools! When they do choose, they have the wisdom by their wit to lose.

*Enter a Servant*

**Servant:** Where is my lady?

**PORTIA:** Here.

**Servant:** Madam, there is alighted at your gate a young Venetian. He bringeth gifts of rich value. I have not seen so likely an ambassador of love.

**PORTIA:** No more, I pray thee. Come, come, Nerissa.

*Exeunt. Nerissa and the Servant take the caskets away.*

### ACT III

#### SCENE I. Venice. A street.

*Enter SOLANIO and SALARINO*

**SOLANIO:** Now, what news on the Rialto?

**SALARINO:** Why, it lives there uncheck'd that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrecked on the narrow seas.

**SOLANIO:** *(despairing)* The good Antonio! Why, the end is, he hath lost a ship.

**SALARINO:** I would it might prove the end of his losses.

*Enter SHYLOCK*

**SALARINO:** How now, Shylock?

**SHYLOCK:** *(angry and agitated. He points accusingly at the two)* You know, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight. My own flesh and blood to rebel!

**SALARINO:** *(insulting)* There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory. But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?

**SHYLOCK:** There I have another bad match: a bankrupt! He was wont to call me usurer! Let him look to his bond.

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

**SHYLOCK:** *(furious)* To bait fish withal! If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation -- and what's his reason? I am a Jew! Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, 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. The villany you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

*Enter TUBAL*

**SOLANIO:** Here comes another of the tribe.

*Not wanting to be around so many Jews, and maybe shaken a bit by Shylock's rant, SOLANIO and SALARINO exit.*

**SHYLOCK:** How now, Tubal! Hast thou found my daughter?

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

**SHYLOCK:** I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! The thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief, and no satisfaction.

**TUBAL:** Other men have ill luck too. Antonio, as I heard, hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

**SHYLOCK:** *(Finally seeing a ray of hope)* Is't true, is't true?

**TUBAL:** I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wreck.

**SHYLOCK:** I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good news!

**TUBAL:** Antonio is certainly undone.

**SHYLOCK:** *(very happy)* That's true, that's very true. I will have the heart of him, for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will.

*Exeunt*

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

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

**PORTIA:** *(to Bassanio)* I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two before you hazard; for, in choosing wrong, I lose your company.

**BASSANIO:** Let me choose, for as I am, I live upon the rack.

**PORTIA:** Away, then! I am lock'd in one of them. If you do love me, you will find me out.

**BASSANIO:** *(Examining the caskets and thinking aloud)* So may the outward shows be least themselves. The world is still deceived with ornament. How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false as stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins the beards of Hercules and Mars. *(touching the gold)* Therefore, thou gaudy gold, hard food for Midas, I will none of thee.

*(touching the silver)* Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge 'tween man and man. *(touching the lead)* But thou, thou meagre lead, thy paleness moves me more than eloquence, and here choose I. *(He holds out his hand and Nerissa gives him a key)* Joy be the consequence!

*He flings open the lead casket.*

**BASSANIO:** What find I here? *(he holds up a picture of Portia, with a note attached)* Fair Portia's counterfeit! *(Everyone cheers. Bassanio reads the note:)*

You that choose not by the view,  
Chance as fair and choose as true!  
Since this fortune falls to you,  
Be content and seek no new.

**BASSANIO:** A gentle scroll. Fair lady, by your leave.

*Kisses Portia.*

**PORTIA:** Myself and what is mine to you and yours is now converted. I give them with this ring, *(gives Bassanio a ring)* which when you part from, lose, or give away, let it presage the ruin of your love.

**BASSANIO:** Madam, you have bereft me of all words. When this ring parts from this finger, then parts life from hence. *(puts on the ring)*

**GRATIANO:** *(clears his throat to get their attention)* My lord Bassanio and my gentle lady, when your honours mean to solemnize, I do beseech you, even at that time I may be married too.

**BASSANIO:** With all my heart, so thou canst get a wife.  
*(laughs)*

**GRATIANO:** I thank your lordship, you have got me one.  
*(Takes Nerissa's hand)* You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid.

**PORTIA:** Is this true, Nerissa?

**NERISSA:** *(Very happy)* Madam, it is.

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

**GRATIANO:** *(jolly)* We'll play with them the first boy for a thousand ducats!

*Enter Salerio, a messenger from Venice.*

**SALERIO:** Signior Antonio commends this to you.

*He Gives Bassanio a letter. Bassanio reads the letter and gasps in shock.*

**PORTIA:** *(to Bassanio)* Some dear friend dead?

**BASSANIO:** O sweet Portia! Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words that ever blotted paper! *(reading the letter)* "Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried. 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." *(to Portia)* When I told you my state was nothing, I should then have told you that I was worse than nothing, for I have engaged myself to a

dear friend, and engaged my friend to his mere enemy. *(to Solanio)* Have all his ventures fail'd? Not one hit?

**SALERIO:** Not one, my lord. Besides, it should appear, that if he had the present money to discharge the Jew, he would not take it.

**PORTIA:** What sum owes he the Jew?

**BASSANIO:** For me, three thousand ducats.

**PORTIA:** *(Astonished)* What, no more? Pay him six thousand, and deface the bond. Dispatch all business, and be gone!

**BASSANIO:** I will make haste.

*Exeunt with Salerio and Gratiano. Nerissa and Portia exit the opposite way.*

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

*Enter SHYLOCK, SALARINO and ANTONIO, in shackles, being led by a Gaoler (he has defaulted on his loan)*

**ANTONIO:** Hear me yet, good Shylock.

**SHYLOCK:** *(furious)* I'll have my bond. Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause. But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs. The duke shall grant me justice.

**ANTONIO:** I pray thee, hear me speak.

**SHYLOCK:** I will not hear thee speak! I will have my bond.

*Exit*

**SALARINO:** It is the most impenetrable cur that ever kept with men.

**ANTONIO:** I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures many that have at times made moan to me. Therefore he hates me.

**SALARINO:** I am sure the duke will never grant this forfeiture.

**ANOTNIO:** (*shaking his head*) The duke cannot deny the course of law, for the commodity that strangers have with us in Venice, if it be denied, will much impeach the justice of his state.

*The Gaoler drags Anotnio off one way. Salarino goes back the way he came.*

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

*Enter PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA, and the servant*

**PORTIA:** Lorenzo, I commit into your hands the husbandry and manage of my house until my lord's return.

**LORENZO:** Madam, with all my heart, I shall obey.

**JESSICA:** I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

*Exeunt JESSICA and LORENZO*

**PORTIA:** (*to the servant*) Take this same letter, and use thou all the endeavour of a man in speed to Padua: see thou render this into my cousin's hand, Doctor Bellario. And, look, what notes and garments he doth give thee, bring them, I pray thee, to the common ferry which trades to Venice.

**Servant:** Madam, I go with all convenient speed.

*Exit*

**PORTIA:** Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand that you yet know not of. I'll hold thee any wager, when we are both accoutred like young men, I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two.

**NERISSA:** Why shall we turn to men?

**PORTIA:** Come, I'll tell thee all my whole device when I am in my coach.

*Exeunt*

## ACT IV

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

*Enter the DUKE, who takes a place in the centre.  
Then enter ANTONIO, BASSANIO, GRATIANO,  
SOLANIO, who set up on the Duke's right hand,  
with Antonio in front, as the accused.*

**DUKE:** *(to Antonio)* I am sorry for thee: thou art come to answer an inhuman wretch incapable of pity.

**ANTONIO:** I am arm'd to suffer his very tyranny and rage.

**DUKE:** Call the Jew into the court.

*Enter SHYLOCK*

**DUKE:** Shylock, the world thinks that thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice to the last hour of act; and then 'tis thought thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse.

**SHYLOCK:** By our holy Sabbath have I sworn to have the due and forfeit of my bond.

**BASSANIO:** *(angry and desperate)* This is no answer, thou unfeeling man!

**SHYLOCK:** *(to Bassanio)* I am not bound to please thee with my answers!

**ANTONIO:** *(to Bassanio)* You may as well go stand upon the beach and bid the main flood bate his usual height.

**BASSANIO:** *(holding out a bag of money to Shylock)* For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

**SHYLOCK:** Were in six parts and every part a ducat, I would not draw them. I would have my bond.

**DUKE:** *(to Shylock)* How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

**SHYLOCK:** What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong? *(making his argument)* You have among you many a purchased slave. Shall I say to you, "let them be free, marry them to your heirs?" You will answer 'The slaves are ours.' So do I answer you. The pound of flesh, which I demand of him, is dearly bought. 'Tis mine and I will have it.

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

**NERISSA:** Bellario greets your grace.

*She gives a letter to the duke and he reads it over.  
Bassanio sees Shylock sharpening a knife.*

**BASSANIO:** Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

**SHYLOCK:** To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

**GRATIANO:** O, be thou damn'd, inexecrable dog! For thy life let justice be accused.

**SHYLOCK:** *(mocking)* Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond, thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud.



**DUKE:** *(finished reading)* This letter from Bellario doth commend a young and learned doctor to our court. Where is he?

**NERISSA:** He attendeth here.

*Enter PORTIA, dressed like a doctor of law*

**DUKE:** Come you from old Bellario?

**PORTIA:** I did, my lord.

**DUKE:** Are you acquainted with the difference that holds this present question in the court?

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

**DUKE:** *(pointing them out)* Antonio and old Shylock.

**PORTIA:** *(to Antonio)* Do you confess the bond?

**ANTONIO:** I do.

**PORTIA:** *(to Shylock)* Then must the Jew be merciful.

**SHYLOCK:** On what compulsion must I?

**PORTIA:** Earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice.

**SHYLOCK:** I crave the law, the penalty and forfeit of my bond.

**PORTIA:** *(agreeing with Shylock)* There is no power in Venice can alter a decree established. 'Twill be recorded for a precedent.

**SHYLOCK:** *(happily)* A Daniel come to judgment!

**PORTIA:** I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

**SHYLOCK:** Here 'tis, most reverend doctor.

*Gives her the bond. She looks it over.*

**PORTIA:** This bond is forfeit, and lawfully by this the Jew may claim a pound of flesh, to be by him cut off nearest the merchant's heart.

**SHYLOCK:** Proceed to judgment!

**ANTONIO:** Most heartily I do beseech the court to give the judgment.

**SHYLOCK:** O wise and upright judge! How much more elder art thou than thy looks!

**PORTIA:** Are there balance here to weigh the flesh?

**SHYLOCK:** I have them ready.

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

**SHYLOCK:** *(happily pointing to the bond)* Is it so nominated in the bond?

**PORTIA:** You, merchant, have you any thing to say?

**ANTONIO:** But little. Bassanio, fare you well. Speak me fair in death. Repent but you that you shall lose your friend, and he repents not that he pays your debt.

**BASSANIO:** Antonio, I am married to a wife which is as dear to me as life itself, but I would sacrifice all here to this devil to deliver you.

*Portia gasps.*

**PORTIA:** (*offended*) Your wife would give you little thanks for that!

**GRATIANO:** I have a wife. I would she were in heaven, so she could entreat some power to change this currish Jew.

**NERISSA:** (*gasps*) 'Tis well you offer it behind her back!

**SHYLOCK:** (*laughing at their two-facedness*) These be the Christian husbands! (*to Portia*) We trifle time.

**PORTIA:** (*to Shylock*) A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine.

**SHYLOCK:** Most rightful judge!

**PORTIA:** And you must cut this flesh from off his breast.

**SHYLOCK:** Most learned judge!

*He heads towards Antonio with the knife.*

**PORTIA:** Tarry a little. (*points to the bond*) This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood. The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh.' Take then thy pound of flesh, but, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed one drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate.

**SHYLOCK:** (*confused*) Is that the law?

**PORTIA:** As thou urgest justice, be assured thou shalt *have* justice.

**SHYLOCK:** (*lowering the knife and holding out his hand for Bassanio's money*) I take this offer, then: pay the bond thrice and let the Christian go.

**BASSANIO:** (*holding out the money again*) Here is the money.

**PORTIA:** (*stopping Bassanio from giving it*) Soft! He shall have nothing but the penalty. (*to Shylock*) Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh. Shed thou no blood and if thou cut'st more or less than a pound, thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate.

**GRATIANO:** (*mocking Shylock's earlier words*) A Daniel, Jew!

**SHYLOCK:** (*begging*) Give me my principal, and let me go.

**PORTIA:** Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture, to be so taken at thy peril, Jew.

**SHYLOCK:** (*giving up*) Why, then the devil give him good of it!

*He turns to leave.*

**PORTIA:** Tarry, Jew. It is enacted in the laws of Venice, that if it be proved against an alien that 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.

**GRATIANO:** (*laughing, to Shylock*) Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself!

**DUKE:** (*to Shylock*) I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it. For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's. The other half comes to the general state.

**SHYLOCK:** (*desperate*) You take my life when you do take the means whereby I live.

**PORTIA:** What mercy can you render *him*, Antonio?

**ANTONIO:** So please my lord the duke and all the court to quit the fine for one half of his goods, I am content, for this favour -- he presently become a Christian.

*Shylock falls shocked to his knees and begins to cry.*

**DUKE:** He shall do this, or else I do recant the pardon that I late pronounced here.

**PORTIA:** Art thou contented, Jew?

**SHYLOCK:** (*crying*) I am content. I pray you, give me leave to go from hence. I am not well.

**DUKE:** Get thee gone.

*Exit SHYLOCK. Exeunt the Duke, SALARINO and SOLARIO. Portia steps down and Bassano and Antonio come up to her.*

**BASSANIO:** (*to Portia*) Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend have by your wisdom been this day acquitted!

**PORTIA:** I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

**BASSANIO:** Dear sir, take some remembrance of us, as a tribute, not as a fee.

*Portia has not forgotten Bassanio's willingness to sacrifice her for Antonio.*

**PORTIA:** You press me far, and therefore I will yield. I'll take this ring from you. (*tries to take Bassanio's ring, but he draws back his hand*)

**BASSANIO:** There's more depends on this than on the value.

**PORTIA:** (*offended*) I see, sir, you are liberal in offers.

**BASSANIO:** Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife, and she made me vow that I should neither sell nor give nor lose it.

**PORTIA:** (*crosses her arms*) That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.

**ANTONIO:** My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring:

*Bassanio struggles with the decision, but at last gives over the ring.*

**PORTIA:** This ring I do accept most thankfully.

*The others exit together*

**NERISSA:** *(To Portia)* I'll see if I can get my husband's ring.

*They giggle. Nerissa exits following Gratiano, Portia the opposite way.*

## ACT V

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

*Enter LORENZO and JESSICA.*

**LORENZO:** In such a night did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew.

**JESSICA:** In such a night did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well, stealing her soul.

*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA*

**LORENZO:** Dear lady, welcome home.

**PORTIA:** We have been praying for our husbands' welfare. Take no note at all of our being absent hence.

*Enter BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO.  
Gratiano moves over to Nerissa, and the two begin a silent, angry conversation about the ring.*

**PORTIA:** You are welcome home, my lord.

**BASSANIO:** I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend. This is the man. This is Antonio.

**PORTIA:** Sir, you are very welcome to our house.

**GRATIANO:** *(loud enough for all to hear)* I swear you do me wrong! I gave it to the judge's clerk.

**NERISSA:** (*angry*) You swore to me, when I did give it you, that you would wear it till your hour of death! Gave it a judge's clerk!

**GRATIANO:** A prating boy, that begg'd it as a fee. I could not for my heart deny it him.

**PORTIA:** (*angry at Gratiano*) You were to blame, to part so slightly with your wife's first gift. I gave my love a ring and made him swear never to part with it; and here he stands.

**GRATIANO:** My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away unto the judge that begg'd it and indeed deserved it too.

**PORTIA:** (*to Bassanio*) What ring gave you my lord? Not that, I hope, which you received of me.

**BASSANIO:** You see my finger hath not the ring upon it. It is gone.

**PORTIA:** (*furious*) So void is your false heart of truth!

**BASSANIO:** Sweet Portia, if you did know to whom I gave the ring, you would abate the strength of your displeasure.

**PORTIA:** If you had known the virtue of the ring, or half her worthiness that gave the ring, you would not then have parted with the ring. I'll die for't but some *woman* had the ring.

**BASSANIO:** No, by my soul, no woman had it, but a civil doctor, which did refuse three thousand ducats of me and begg'd the ring!

**PORTIA:** Since he hath got the jewel that I loved, I'll not deny him any thing I have. I'll have that doctor for my bedfellow.

**NERISSA:** And I his clerk.

*Bassanio and Gratiano stand shocked.*

**ANTONIO:** (*Antonio comes between the warring couples*) I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels. I once did lend my body for his wealth. (*to Portia*) I dare be bound again, my soul upon the forfeit, that your lord will never more break faith.

**PORTIA:** (*relenting*) Then you shall be his surety. Give him this and bid him keep it better than the other.

*She gives Antonio the ring she took from Bassanio, and Antonio passes it to him.*

**BASSANIO:** By heaven, it is the same I gave the doctor!

*Portia and Nerissa smile smugly.*

**PORTIA:** (*satisfied*) Here is a letter. Read it at your leisure. There you shall find that Portia was the doctor, Nerissa there her clerk.

**BASSANIO:** Were you the doctor and I knew you not?

**GRATIANO:** Were you the clerk that is to make me cuckold?

**NERISSA:** (*laughing*) Ay, but the clerk that never means to do it, unless he live until he be a man.

**BASSANIO:** Sweet doctor, you shall be my bed-fellow when I am absent.

**PORTIA:** I am sure you are not satisfied of these events at full. Let us go in. We will answer all things faithfully.

**GRATIANO:** Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing so sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.

*Exeunt all together.*