

Merchant of Venice

ACT I

SCENE I. Venice. A street.

Enter ANTONIO, SALARINO, and SALANIO

ANTONIO

In truth, I know not why I am so sad:
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What it's made of, I am yet to learn;
And such a dolt this sadness makes of me,
That I can hardly recognize myself.

SALARINO

Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
Thinking always of your ships at sea,
So laden with the richness of the east
That petty cargo ships all bow to them
Like peasants bowing to a passing lord.

SALANIO

My dear old friend Antonio, if I
Had half of such a fleet, or half the half,
The better part of my attention would
Be always with my ships till they come home.

SALARINO

I'd check the wind's direction every hour.

SALANIO

I'd peer at maps to study ports and road.

SALARINO

Imagining the nasty tricks that fate —

SALANIO

Or pirates —

SALARINO

Shoals and storms —

SALANIO

Or lack of wind! —

SALARINO

Might play on me.

SALANIO

And *that* would make me sad.

SALARINO

I go to church, an edifice of stone,
And straightway I would think of dangerous rocks,
Which touching but my gentle vessel's side,

Would scatter all her spices on the stream —

SALANIO

Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks —

SALARINO

Imagining such things, I know our friend
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

ANTONIO

Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,
But if one ship fails to come to port,
Or two, the others will, and even one
Arrival is enough to make me whole.
'Tis not my merchandise that makes me sad.

SALARINO

Why, then you are in love.

ANTONIO

Who? Me?

I never had the taste for it, my friends.
Dilute my house and fortune with a wife?
Have children who can't wait for me to die
So they'll inherit everything I earned?
My solitary state brings only joy.

SALARINO

Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad,
Because you are not merry: and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry,
Because you are not sad.

SALANIO

Being sad saddens him.

SALARINO

No!

This melancholy pleases him, and so
It makes him glad inside to be so sad.

SALANIO

And when he notices that he is glad,
He's disappointed to discover it,
Which makes him sad again, and on and on.

ANTONIO

With friends like you, the saddest man must laugh.

Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO

SALANIO

Here comes Bassanio, your noble kinsman.

SALARINO

Gratiano and Lorenzo, too.

SALANIO

Farewell, Antonio, my jolly friend.
We leave you now with better company.

SALARINO

I would have stay'd till I had made you merry,
But lordly friends like these take precedence.

ANTONIO

Lords and commons, we are Christians all.
I take it your own business calls on you
And you embrace the occasion to depart.

SALANIO

Good morrow, my good lords.

BASSANIO

Good widows both, I've missed your wit, and now
You take your leave as soon as I arrive!

SALARINO

We spent our wits on grim Antonio.

Exeunt Salarino and Salanio

LORENZO

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

BASSANIO

I will not fail you.

GRATIANO

You *do* look grim, Signior Antonio;
And yet you prosper, and you have your health.
I think he's traded faces with a beggar boy,
Who soon will starve, since no one gives a coin
To smiles, even when they dress in rags,
While *this* face makes me open up my purse.

BASSANIO

He sorrows from compassion for the world.

ANTONIO

The world is but the world, Bassanio,
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.

GRATIANO

I would play the fool:
Let mirth and laughter stretch my face so oft
That when I'm old, such wrinkles will be etched
That I'll look cheery at my funeral.
Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?
I love thee, and it is my love that speaks--
There are a sort of men whose visages
Are like a standing pond, without a ripple,
Ever silent, so they'll be esteemed
As solemn, grave, and wise, as if to say,
"I know the secret — I am Sir Oracle,
And when I finally speak let no dog bark!"
But I believe they keep a face like stone

Because their brains are gravel in their heads.
 While you, Antonio, I know you're wise,
 And being generous, you ought to share,
 For silent thoughts have just as much effect
 As none at all. Your stony face inspires
 A wish to chisel some inscription here:
 "Good fortune follows industry," perhaps,
 Or, "Never choose a trollop with the pox."
 We'd have a single thought from you, at least.

BASSANIO
 Afflict the man no more, Gratiano! Go!

GRATIANO
 Come, Lorenzo. We have bored Bassanio.

LORENZO
 I must be one of these silent wise men,
 For Gratiano never lets me speak.

GRATIANO
 Keep me company but two more years,
 And you'll forget the sound of your own voice.

ANTONIO
 Farewell. You see? I do know how to speak.

GRATIANO
 I'm so relieved. For silence is only commendable
 In a cow's tongue boiled and a maid not vendible.

Exeunt GRATIANO and LORENZO

ANTONIO
 Did that make any sense to you at all?

BASSANIO
 Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing,
 More than any man in all of Venice.
 His sensible thoughts are like two grains of wheat
 That someone hid in a silo full of chaff:
 You're bound to seek all day before you find them,
 And when you have them, they're not worth the search.

ANTONIO
 Bassanio, you promised you would tell,
 As soon as we might be alone together,
 Who the lady is to whom you swore
 A secret pilgrimage? Begin with her name.

BASSANIO
 I must begin with myself, Antonio.
 You cautioned me before I came of age
 To borrow nothing, pay my debts, and live
 So frugally that my estate would grow.
 But I, a fool, ignored your good advice
 And made a show with clothes and carriages,
 And now I have disabled my estate.
 I'm slowly paying back my creditors,
 Dressing like a monk, walking afoot,

Gaming no games, eating plain food
 At home, except when Gratiano pays,
 And my estate will heal itself in two —
 In four years' time. Your wise advice
 Is all the wiser now, Antonio.

ANTONIO
 You learned your lesson young, and nothing lost.

BASSANIO
 One loss, my friend, for which I can't atone
 If I have lost the chance for happiness.

ANTONIO
 And so we come at last to thy lady love.

BASSANIO
 In Belmont is a lady richly left;
 And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
 Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes
 I did receive fair speechless messages:
 Her name is Portia, and she owns my heart.
 Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
 For the four winds blow in from every coast
 Renowned suitors, for her sunny locks
 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
 And many Jasons come in quest of her —
 Great lords, with rich and lustrous gifts,
 And here I am with nothing but myself —
 Less! — myself minus all my debt.
 O my Antonio, had I but the means
 To hold a rival place with one of them,
 Then I believe she favors me enough
 To sweep the rest away, and give me joy.

ANTONIO
 And yet, without thy debt, thine own estate
 Is bountiful enough that it would serve.

BASSANIO
 Here's my hope, that, seeing how I'm changed,
 You'll lend enough for me to pay my debts.
 You'll have it back when Portia marries me,
 Or if she loves me not, then year by year.

ANTONIO
 Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
 Neither have I money nor commodity
 To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;
 Try what my credit can in Venice do:
 We'll wring it dry to furnish you for Portia.
 Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
 Where money is, and what I borrow now,
 I trust I can repay when my ships come in,
 And you I trust to pay me next in turn.

Exeunt

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

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA

PORTIA
 How many visitors will come today?
 The whole world seems to seek my hand,
 The bones and hair and face attached to it,
 And all my father's lands and goods.
 And I must let them court me one by one.
 My little body is aweary of the world.

NERISSA
 You would be weary indeed, sweet madam, if your miseries
 were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are.
 And yet, for all I can see, people who eat too much sustain
 as much hurt as those who starve with nothing. How
 pleasing would it be if no one sought your hand? It is no
 middling happiness therefore, to be seated in the middle.
 Having too much sends you gray hairs sooner, while
 having just enough never wears you out.

PORTIA
 Good sentences and well pronounced.

NERISSA
 They would be better, if you followed them.

PORTIA
 If to do were as easy as to know what's good to do, chapels
 would be churches and poor men's hovels would be
 princes' palaces. I can easier teach
 twenty what's good to be done, than be one of the
 twenty and follow my own teaching.

NERISSA
 But mistress, once you choose a husband —

PORTIA
 How is it "choosing" when I may neither accept whom I
 will nor refuse whom I dislike? Thus the desires of a living
 daughter are 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.

PORTIA
 Oh, yes, bestow your beloved daughter by lottery!

NERISSA
 It's not by chance or fate that you're bestowed.
 Your suitors *choose* among these chests of gold,
 Of silver, and of lead, for one of them
 Bestows your hand, as your loving father ordered.

PORTIA

One chest contains my hope of happiness,
Ruined if the wrong man chooses it.

NERISSA

Your father promised you no man would choose
Rightly, saving him who will rightly love.
Of all the princely suitors who have come,
Has any stirred some warmth in your affection?

PORTIA

List their names, and I'll describe each one.
You'll know from my description, my affection.

NERISSA

First, the Neapolitan prince.

PORTIA

Oh, he's a stallion, isn't he! All he talks about is horses,
and keeps comparing himself to his noble steed until I'm
surprised he doesn't shoe himself! I much suspect his
lady mother played false with a smith.

NERISSA

Then we have the Count Palatine.

PORTIA

He does nothing but frown, disapproving of everything and
everybody. He hears merry tales and
smiles not: I fear he will turn out to be a weeping
philosopher when he grows old, being so full of
unmannerly sadness in his youth.

NERISSA

I take it neither stirs your warm affection?

PORTIA

I'd rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in its
mouth than to either of these.

NERISSA

What think you of the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon?

PORTIA

God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In
truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker, but, he! Whatever
any other man claims, then he claims more. He has a
horse better than the Neapolitan's, a better bad habit of
frowning than the Count Palatine; if a bird sings, he falls
straight to dancing; he will fence with his own shadow. He
is every man at once, so if I married him, I should marry
twenty husbands. And twenty is too many for me to make
happy.

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 has neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and if I were accused in court of speaking English, you could testify that I'm completely innocent. He is the picture of a proper man, but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? And how oddly he is dressed! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behavior everywhere.

NERISSA

What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbour?

PORTIA

He seems to be a man with nothing of his own, for when he needed a box in the ear, he borrowed it from the Englishman, and swore that he'd repay him when he was able, and then he asked the Frenchman to guarantee the loan.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk. When he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast. No matter if I yearned most desperately for a husband, and him the last unmarried man on earth, I'd make shift to do without him.

NERISSA

You mean that if he should choose the right casket, you would refuse to perform your father's will? Oh, Portia, you gave your promise to obey his will in this.

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

You need not fear, lady, having any of these lords, for they have told me their determination; which is, to return to their home and trouble you no more with their wooing ... unless you may be won by some other means than this game of caskets?

PORTIA

If I live to be as old as rock, I will die as single as the moon unless my hand is won according to my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable as to go home without attempting the test, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence. God speed them on their way!

NERISSA

Do you not remember, lady, when your father was still alive, there was a young Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, who came here in company with the Marquis of Montferrat?

PORTIA

Yes, yes, Bassanio! ... I think that was his name.

NERISSA

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

PORTIA

I remember him well, and he was worthy of such praise. But with these rich lords and princelings cluttering my porch, I fear that such a man of great worth and small title will never find my door.

Enter a servant.

How now! what news?

SERVANT

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

PORTIA

If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good a heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach.

NERISSA

But he's as dark of skin as a funeral costume.

PORTIA

Then he should treat me like a corpse and bury me rather than marry me.

NERISSA

No, treat you like a cow and drive you rather than wive you.

PORTIA

No, treat me like a baker and bread me rather than wed me!

NERISSA

Treat you as a horse treats an unwelcome rider —

PORTIA

Come, Nerissa. Sirrah, go before. While we shut the gates upon one wooer, another knocks at the door.

Exeunt

SCENE III. Venice. A public place.

Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK

SHYLOCK
Three thousand ducats; well.

BASSANIO
Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK
For three months; well.

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

SHYLOCK
Antonio shall become bound; well.

BASSANIO
Will you lend the money? Shall I know your answer?

SHYLOCK
Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound.

BASSANIO
Your answer to that.

SHYLOCK
Antonio is a good man.

BASSANIO
Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

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

BASSANIO
Be assured you may.

SHYLOCK
So that I may be assured, may I speak with Antonio?

BASSANIO
If it please you to dine with us.

SHYLOCK

Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarene conjured the devil into. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, lend to you, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, or pray with you. What news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here?

Enter ANTONIO

BASSANIO

This is Signior Antonio.

SHYLOCK

[Aside] How like a fawning publican he looks!
I hate him, as I hate all Christian blood,
But more particularly him, because
He lends out money gratis and brings down
The rate of interest here with us in Venice.
If I can catch his toe and make him trip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
On me, my bargains and my well-won thrift,
Which he calls usury! Cursed be my tribe,
If I forgive him!

BASSANIO

Shylock, do you hear?

SHYLOCK

I am debating of my present store,
And, by the near guess of my memory,
I cannot instantly raise up the gross
Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?
Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
Will furnish me. But soft! how many months
Do you desire? *[To Antonio]* Rest you fair, good signior;
It was your worship we were speaking of.

ANTONIO

Shylock, although I neither lend nor borrow
By taking nor by giving interest,
Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,
I'll break my custom. Has he told you yet
How much he needs?

SHYLOCK

Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO

And for three months.

SHYLOCK

I had forgot; three months; you told me so.
Well then, your bond; and let me see; but hear you;
Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow
With a charge of interest.

ANTONIO
 Charity
 Forbids to profit from another's need.

SHYLOCK
 When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep —

ANTONIO
 What of him? Did he take interest?

SHYLOCK
 No, not take interest, not, as you would say,
 Directly interest: mark what Jacob did.
 He promised Laban he would tend his flocks.
 The payment Laban granted Jacob was
 That every year, when the newborn lambs were weaned,
 The dappled, spotted, striped and pied were his.
 Laban thought the number would be few,
 But in the season when the rams and ewes
 Were at the making of the next year's lambs,
 Before their gaze young Jacob put up sticks
 That he had carven into stripes and spots.
 The ewes conceived so many dappled lambs
 That Jacob had, in seven years, a herd
 To rival Laban's own. Yet it was won
 By strict adherence to the terms agreed.
 This was a way to thrive, and he was blest:
 And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.

ANTONIO
 Jacob labored hard, the sheep conceived
 By law of nature, and the hand of heaven
 Chose how many dappled lambs should be —
 The opposite of sinful usury,
 By which a lender takes what he did not earn.
 Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

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

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

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

ANTONIO
 Well, Shylock, will you give the loan or not?

SHYLOCK
 Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
 In the Rialto you have lectured me
 About my lendings and my usury.

Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
 For patience is the badge of all our tribe.
 You call me unbeliever, cut-throat dog,
 And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
 And all because I charge, as landlords do,
 For others to make use of what is mine.
 Well then, it now appears you need my help:
 “Shylock, we would have moneys” — this you say,
 You, that did spit your mucus on my beard,
 And foot me as you spurn a mangy stray
 Over your threshold — moneys is your suit.
 What should I say to you? Should I not say
 “Has a dog money? Is it possible
 A cur can lend three thousand ducats?” Or
 Shall I bend low, and in a servants’ whine,
 With bated breath and whispering humbleness,
 Say, “Sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;
 You spurn’d me Thursday; Saturday
 You call’d me dog; and for these courtesies
 I’ll lend you all the coin you say you want.

ANTONIO

I am as like to call you so again,
 To spit on you again, to spurn you too.
 If you will lend this money, lend it not
 As to your friends; for when did friendship charge
 A fee for barren metal from his friend?
 But lend it rather to your enemy,
 And if he break the terms, you can with joy
 And no regrets exact the penalty.

SHYLOCK

Why, look you, Christian, how you fret and storm!
 I would be friends with you and have your love,
 Forget the shames that you have stain’d me with,
 Supply your present wants and take no drop
 Of interest for my moneys — and you won’t hear me!
 Am I not kind?

BASSANIO

Indeed! And generous!

SHYLOCK

Go with me to a notary, seal me there
 Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,
 If you repay me not on such a day,
 In such a place, such sum or sums as are
 Express’d in the note, then let the forfeit be ...
 An equal pound of your body’s gentle flesh,
 To be cut off and by me taken from ...
 Whatever part of your body I may please.

ANTONIO

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’d rather do without, and face my loss.

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

BASSANIO
 His "merry penalty" is not a jest.

SHYLOCK
 O father Abram, what these Christians are,
 Whose own hard dealings teach them to suspect
 The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this;
 If he should break his day, what should I gain
 By the exaction of the forfeiture?
 A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
 Is not so useful, profitable neither,
 As flesh of mutton, beef, or goat. I say,
 To buy his favor, I extend this friendship.
 If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;
 But never say that I refused to lend!

ANTONIO
 Yes, Shylock, I will sign and seal this bond.

SHYLOCK
 Then meet me forthwith at the notary's;
 Give him direction for this merry bond,
 And I will go and purse the ducats straight.
 Then to my house, which I left in the wretched care
 Of a worthless ninny, and within the hour
 I will be with you.

ANTONIO
 We'll be there, gentle Jew.

Exit Shylock

The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

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

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

Exeunt

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

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

MOROCCO

Mislike me not for my complexion.
 My people, dwelling neighbors to the sun,
 Are given shadowed skin for our relief.
 Now, seeing thee, so wondrous fair, I wish
 To be the cloth of black or sable fur
 On which the jeweler sets his fairest stone,
 The better to display its dazzlement.

PORTIA

I have no fear of unfamiliar hues.
 A woman's heart will sooner judge the face
 By graces only seen in words and deeds.
 Besides, the lottery of my destiny
 Bars me the right of voluntary choosing:
 By matching wits against my father you,
 Not I, will choose what face my husband wears.

MOROCCO

But thou art not indifferent to the choice?

PORTIA

In sober truth I tell you, sir, that I
 Am pleased no less by you than any other
 Of the wooers who have come to call on me.

MOROCCO

For that I thank you, lady. Now, I pray,
 Lead me to the caskets, to the test
 That will decide my future happiness.

PORTIA

Lesser men have left without attempting it,
 For there's a penalty to choosing wrong.

MOROCCO

I've faced down death upon the battlefield,
 I've plucked young sucking cubs from the mother bear,
 I've mocked the lion when he roars for prey!
 Am I a man to fear a choice of boxes?

PORTIA

Then swear, before you choose, if you choose wrong,
 You'll never speak of marriage to any lady.

MOROCCO

No lady but yourself will do. I swear.
 And after dinner, when the choice is made,
 I'll be most blest or most accursed of men.

Cornets, and exeunt

SCENE II. Venice. A street.*Enter GUINEVERE*

GUINEVERE

My conscience ought to be a Christian, like myself.
 But here I am, employed as servant to a Jew,
 And does my conscience tell me that I ought to run away?
 Oh, no. A fiend is at my elbow tempting me
 By saying, "Guinevere, good Christian Guinevere,
 By all your work, for which you're scandalously paid,
 You help maintain the household of a miser Jew,
 And thereby make the world worse and yourself no richer."
 My conscience at my other elbow answers him,
 "Obey the law. Remain a servant. Work until you die."
 The fiend says, "Why did God bestow on you two legs,
 If not for running? Why is night so very dark
 If not to cover your escape? Pick up and go!"
 But inconvenient conscience says — in a screechy voice
 That sounds a little like my mother, with a cold —
 "No Gobbo ever ran away from work!"
 Which isn't even true — my conscience is a liar:
 Father Gobbo ran away from work, and wife,
 And baby daughter, too — which was my darling self.
 So now I say to my nagging conscience, "Where were you
 When Father left us so impoverished that I
 Was forced to sell my labor to a Jew who pays
 As little as he can, while squeezing out of me
 All the sweat my body manufactures in a day?"
 But conscience is a talker, not a listener,
 And I, who have all kinds of excellent things to say,
 Must listen to them all, both fiend and conscience,
 And master Shylock most of all, the fiend of fiends.
 But wait. If Shylock is the devil, which he is,
 And the devil says to run away, then I am bound
 To do what the devil says, because he is my master!
 Go, legs! Run! Scamper off like bunnies!
 It's no use. My conscience seems to own my legs.

Enter Old Widow GOBBO, with a basket

GOBBO

Missy! Girl! Tell me the way to the house of the Jew!

GUINEVERE

[Aside] O heavens, this is my half-blind mother herself.
 Since she has to push her face halfway into the soup
 To see if it's boiling or not, of course she doesn't know me.
 It's all her fault, you know, that I'm a servant here.
 If she hadn't married my father, worthless Arthur Gobbo,
 Famous runner-away, abandoner of babies,
 I would have been not-born, not-poor, and therefore not-
 here.

GOBBO

Wench, open your mouth, tell me the way to the Jew's!

GUINEVERE

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

Even if I had a pair of goodly eyes
I couldn't follow such directions. Listen, girl,
Have you ever heard of my daughter, Guinevere Gobbo?

GUINEVERE

Talk you of the fair and gentle Lady Guinevere?
[*Aside*] I tell her only what I ought to be, by nature.

GOBBO

No lady. A poor man's daughter, a servant girl, like you,
Though I hope she's smarter, and better at giving
directions.

GUINEVERE

Guinevere Gobbo, and you say her father's poor?

GOBBO

In truth I cannot say. I know her mother's poor,
Poor but honest — *and* made sure that she is too.

GUINEVERE

[*Aside*] That cuts me deep, to praise her daughter's
honesty
As I stand here lying to her. I know! I'll cease to stand,
And thereby show myself to be in truth a lie-er.

GOBBO

You must be the laziest wench who ever lived.
Get up and tell me where to find my Guinevere.

GUINEVERE

If you seek the gracious, charming, educated
Lady Guinevere de Gobbo, do not look
Among the sweat-soaked kitchen wenches, Madam.

GOBBO

I tell you, she's no lady, she's a Gobbo, without a "de."

GUINEVERE

Spell the lady's name with "dee" or "gee" or "zed,"
It hardly matters, since the beauteous lady's dead.

GOBBO

God forbid! The girl was my very staff of life,
The only thing on earth I ever cared about!

GUINEVERE

You lean on me like a staff right now, and know me not.

GOBBO

Alack the day! My daughter Guinevere! Gone!
At least she died an honest girl, and a good worker.

GUINEVERE

Oh, there's an epitaph that's well worth dying for.
Mother, don't you know me? Look closer. See?

GOBBO

I know you. You're the lazy wench who gave me bad
Directions, lay in the street, and said my daughter's dead.

GUINEVERE

Well, if you don't believe your eyes, then trust your ears.
Isn't this the voice of your daughter, Guinevere?

GOBBO

It's a poor joke to lie to a blind old woman.

GUINEVERE

[Aside] Now do you hear it? That's the voice in which my
conscience speaks.

[to Gobbo] Mother, I'm done with jests, I'm telling you the
truth,

I'm your Guinevere, and not a lady after all.
For proof of what I say, take hold of my hair.

GOBBO

It never did any good to put a comb in this,
You'd never get it out again with all its teeth,
Or else you'd tear a clump of hair and scalp away.
My Guinevere!

GUINEVERE

Mother!

GOBBO

How's it going with the Jew?
I brought a present. He'll like you better, when he sees it.

GUINEVERE

You bring a dish of doves to him, and none for me?

GOBBO

I bought it with all the money you send home to me.

GUINEVERE

He cuts my wages every time I break a pot.

GOBBO

That's justice for you. You're clumsy, and I starve.

GUINEVERE

Oh, Mother, I didn't miss you a bit.

GOBBO

And you're the disappointment you've always been.

They embrace.

GUINEVERE

Mother, take me away from here. Take me home!

GOBBO

The Jew paid off our debts in trade for your indenture.
I can't take you home without the Jew's consent.

GUINEVERE

Another day of his railing at me, beating me,
Paying less than nothing, and working me too hard,
And I'll be a Jew myself, for all the Christian parts
Will have worn away.

GOBBO

The only hope that I can see
Is if I found a better master to buy your contract.

GUINEVERE

Here comes one now! Look how fat his servants are!

GOBBO

You know that I can't see that far.

Enter Bassanio, with servants.

GUINEVERE

Then take my word,
They're fat and well rested and richly dressed and all of
them smiling.

BASSANIO

Tell Cook that supper's to be ready by five o'clock.
See these letters are delivered; and invite
Gratiano to come to my lodging to eat tonight.
Now that my debts are paid, I can afford
To take my honest turn as host again.

Exit a Servant

GUINEVERE

To him, Mother. He's paid his debts. He can afford me.

GOBBO

God bless your worship!

BASSANIO

Why thank you, old mother. Do I know you?

GOBBO

Here's my daughter, sir, a poor girl —

GUINEVERE

Not just any poor girl, sir, but the rich Jew's maid,
That keeps his house with hardly any servants else.

BASSANIO

Oh yes, I think I might have heard him speak of you.

GUINEVERE

And as my mother is about to specify —

GOBBO

She has
A great infection, sir, as one would say, to serve —

GUINEVERE

Indeed, the short and the long of it is, I serve the Jew,
And have a desire, as my mother shall specify —

GOBBO

Her master and she, poor girl, saving your worship's
reverence,
Do ill together — not that my girl does ill, but the Jew —

GUINEVERE

To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew my master,
Having done me wrong, as my mother shall frutify —

GOBBO

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

GUINEVERE

In very brief, the suit is impertinent to myself,
As your worship shall know by the word of this honest old
woman,
Who being poor but honest, and also old, and poor —

BASSANIO

One speak for both. What do you want?

GUINEVERE

To serve you, sir.

GOBBO

That is the very defect of the matter, sir.

BASSANIO

I know thee well; thou hast obtain'd thy suit:
Shylock thy master spoke with me this day,
And from what he said, I think he'd part with thee,
And the cost of your indenture can't be much.
To leave a rich man's service and come to me
Is not the best of trades, I fear you'll find,
For I am not a wealthy gentleman.

GUINEVERE

You have the grace of God, sir, and he has money,
But never parts with none of it to me!

BASSANIO

Thou speakest well. Go, mother, with thy daughter.
Take leave of thy old master and inquire
My lodging out; I'll make it right with Shylock.

GUINEVERE

Oh Mother! Happy day when you come to visit me!
You talked him into my petition and I'm free!

GOBBO

It was you, my talkety girl, I barely spoke a word.

GUINEVERE

Well, Fortune must be a woman, and a bonny wench,
For she has served me well. Come along, Mother,
I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye.

Exeunt Guinevere and Old Gobbo

BASSANIO

[to a servant] Shylock lent to meet my need, and now
I take from him a servant he despises.
If he treated servants well, he'd have
Their better service and their loyalty.
Go home in haste and find a place for her.

SERVANT

We'll make her welcome, sir, if she likes to work.

Enter GRATIANO

GRATIANO

Where is your master?

SERVANT

Yonder, sir, he walks.

Exit Servant

GRATIANO

Signior Bassanio!

BASSANIO

Gratiano!

GRATIANO

I have a favor to ask.

BASSANIO

I grant it, friend.

GRATIANO

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

BASSANIO

Why then you must. But hear me, Gratiano;
You are too wild, too rude and bold of voice;
I like those things about you, for myself,
And in my eyes they don't appear as faults;
But those who do not know you, take them ill.
So please, take pain to put a tether on
Your skipping spirit, lest through wild behavior
I be misconstrued by my lady love,
And lose my hopes.

GRATIANO

Signior Bassanio, hear me:
If I do not put on a sober habit,
Talk with respect and swear but now and then,
Wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely,
Nay more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes
Thus with my hat, and sigh and say "amen,"
Use all the observance of civility,
As if my grandmother were watching me —
Look at my knuckles, where they bear the scars
Of all the times she disapproved of me —
Then you can call me names and kick my dog.

BASSANIO

Well, I shall watch how you behave, my friend.

GRATIANO

Nay, but I don't include tonight in the vow.
You shall not judge me by what we do to-night.

BASSANIO

No, tonight I would entreat you to put on
Your boldest suit of mirth, for we have friends
who come for merriment. But fare you well:
I have some things to do before we dine.

GRATIANO

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

Exeunt

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

Enter JESSICA and GUINEVERE

JESSICA

I am sorry you will leave my father so:
Our house is hell, and you, a merry devil,
Did rob it of some taste of tediousness.
But fare you well, here is a ducat for you:
And, Guinevere, soon at supper you will see
Lorenzo, who is your new master's guest:
Give him this letter; do it secretly;
And so farewell: I would not have my father
See me talking with you — you know his wrath.

GUINEVERE

Adieu! Tears exhibit my tongue.
Most beautiful pagan, and sweetest Jew, beware!
I fear some Christian man might play the knave,
Thinking promises he makes to Jews don't count.

JESSICA

He did not make a promise to a Jew,
Nor to the daughter of a money-lender.
What he might have said, he would have said to *me*,
And I'm not quick to trust in any man.

GUINEVERE

You treated me, a servant, like a friend.
I'm now a friend who gladly serves you still.
Adieu: I fear that I might drown in tears.

JESSICA

Farewell, good Guinevere.

Exit Guinevere

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,
Keep your promise, and I'll end this strife,
Become a Christian and thy loving wife.

Exit

SCENE IV. The same. A street.

*Enter GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALARINO, and
SALANIO*

SALARINO
But you're not dressed for dinner yet, I think.

GRATIANO
True, for I am only thinly clad,
And since we eat Bassanio's food at last,
I need to hide myself in thicker clothes.

SALANIO
Meaning that he means to glut himself.

GRATIANO
Nay, but to disguise myself as one who eats.

LORENZO
I'll take this narrow person home with me,
Disguise him in some vastly wider clothes,
And meet you at Bassanio's welcoming door.

SALARINO
We have not spoke us yet of torchbearers.

SALANIO
Because, you know, it will be dark by then.

GRATIANO
You know, that happened yesterday as well.

LORENZO
'Tis now but four. We have two hours to change.

Enter GUINEVERE, with a letter

Friend Guinevere, what's brings you here?

GRATIANO
A rhyme!

GUINEVERE
A scrap I found that has a name upon it.

GRATIANO
But not mine. It's never mine, Lorenzo.

LORENZO
I know the hand: in faith, 'tis a fair hand.

GRATIANO
Do you compliment the writing or the writer?
I think this hand has brought him news of love.

GUINEVERE
By your leave, sir.

LORENZO

Whither goest thou?

GUINEVERE

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

LORENZO

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

GUINEVERE

More privately than you have spoken here.

Exit Guinevere

LORENZO

Ladies, fear not — I'll bring torchbearers.
We'll meet and walk together to the feast.

SALARINO

Then like the younger ladies of the town,
We'll hope for young Lorenzo at our doors.

Exeunt SALARINO and SALANIO

GRATIANO

Was that letter from fair Jessica?

LORENZO

I hardly need to tell, if you guess it all.
Her letter has laid out the plans for me,
How I shall take her from her father's house,
What gold and jewels she is furnished with,
What page's suit she has in readiness.

GRATIANO

Is this an honest wedding, or a tryst?

LORENZO

Would I defile an angel? She will wed —
And be baptized before, on the very day.
If ever the Jew her father come to heaven,
It will be because his daughter pled for him.
Mortals see her beauty, angels her virtue —

GRATIANO

While you, you devil, you see both at once.

LORENZO

Come, go with me; peruse this as we walk.
Fair Jessica shall be my torch-bearer.

Exeunt

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

Enter SHYLOCK and GUINEVERE

SHYLOCK

You're trading masters, then — Bassanio
For Shylock. You'll see the difference soon enough.
Perhaps you thought my wages were too little?
At least I pay them weekly, and in full.
Perhaps you thought the food I serve too plain?
Bassanio serves too much, runs out, then nothing.
Did I work you hard? Compared to him,
I ask for little, since my needs are few,
But he'll demand a thousand luxuries.
Where's Jessica? — she's hiding, have no doubt.
Jessica! — You'll find Bassanio
Won't let you sleep and snore, and when you tear
Your clothes or break a pot — Jessica! —
You'll have a taste of Christian patience then!
Why, Jessica, I say!

GUINEVERE

Why, Jessica!

SHYLOCK

Who asked you to call for her? Who asked you to screech
My daughter's name in such a raucous voice —
As if she were the servant of a kitchen wench?

GUINEVERE

Your worship always railed at me because
I never did a thing until you asked.

Enter Jessica

JESSICA

Did you call me, father? What's your will?

SHYLOCK

I'm invited to a supper, Jessica:
Here are my keys. I don't know why I'm going.
They don't love my company, I know;
My money's what they love; they flatter me.
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon
The prodigal Christian. Jessica, my girl,
Look to my house. For all I know, they plot
To send some thief to rob me while I'm gone.

JESSICA

I'll guard your treasure like my own, Father.

GUINEVERE

I beg you, sir, to come with me at once;
My youthful master waits for your reproach.

SHYLOCK

I'm sure he does — I've had enough of his.

GUINEVERE

And if my master and his friends conspire,
It's not to plan a burglary, unless
They stand outside your house and serenade
Your money till it climbs out by itself.

SHYLOCK

So there *is* a plot against me, do you say?

GUINEVERE

These tenors never break the glass to get inside,
They woo at windows, singing of their love.
Why steal what maidens freely give — their hearts!

JESSICA

Beware of burglars singing baritone.

SHYLOCK

Why Jessica, you do me proud, to show
That you're as clever as a kitchen slut.
Between your witticisms, hear me well:
Lock up my doors; and if some imbecile
Should come to serenade, I give consent
For you to pour a chamber pot upon his head.
Otherwise keep the windows tightly shut;
Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house. By Aaron's rod I swear
I'm in no mood for a foolish Christian feast.
But go ahead, disloyal wench, and say
That Shylock's coming quickly, with a smile.

GUINEVERE

I'll fly ahead and give your message, sir.
Look out your window, Mistress, when it's dark:
You'll see a Christian tenor by and by,
Who looks to sing duets with a lady Jew.

Exit

SHYLOCK

What did that lazy smartmouth lackwit say?

JESSICA

She said farewell for the last time ever, Father.

SHYLOCK

Bassanio's welcome to her — yes, she's kind,
But a huge feeder, snail-slow on errands,
A sleeper whenever she finds some level ground.
This hive of mine is not a home for drones,
Therefore I part with her — and part with her
To one who wasted his own estate, and now
Will waste a borrowed one, with her to help.
Well, Jessica, go inside and wait —
Perhaps not long; I may return at once.
Do as I bid you; shut doors after you:
"Strong lock, no talk."

JESSICA

"Fast bind, fast find."

SHYLOCK
“Trust never, keep ever.”
Proverbs never stale in a thrifty mind.

Exit

JESSICA
Now at the end of all, you make me sad
With the fatherly game that once I took for love.
But I will not deceive myself about
Your heart: you gave it long ago to gold.
A warmer treasure will be mine tonight.
By morning, if my fortune be not crost,
I'll have a father, you a daughter, lost.

Exit

SCENE VI. The same.

Enter GRATIANO and SALARINO, masked

GRATIANO

This is the window where Lorenzo said
We were to stand, disguised in masks, and sing.

SALARINO

He's late, I think. And he didn't say to sing.

GRATIANO

Lorenzo's love is like a corpse: both late.
We have to sing — why else do we wear these masks?

SALARINO

I can sing without a mask.

GRATIANO

But *with* a mask,
No one can tell which singer has which voice.

SALARINO

I see. You want to steal my reputation.

[Sings]

The poet writes of love,
The singer sings of love,
While lovers love to love:
Love always rhymes with love.

GRATIANO

Whoever wrote that miserable verse
Should wear the mask. But I will claim the voice.

SALARINO

No one will think you sing so high and sweet.

GRATIANO

But I'll tell everyone you sing like this:

[Sings]

I'll give you a mighty wallop
If you say my love's a trollop.

SALARINO

No one will believe I sang such agony.

GRATIANO

But I rhymed *different* words. That's the challenge —
Finding a rhyme for the Roman goddess of love.
Help me, fair Salarino! My mind's a blank!

SALARINO

Here comes Lorenzo: I'll have to slap you later.

Enter LORENZO

LORENZO

Sweet friends, forgive my keeping you so long.
I had too many things to do before

We hide aboard a ship and sail away —
 Clothing, food, and then a quiet priest
 To baptize her and make us man and wife.
 When you decide to steal a wife — or husband —
 I'll stand watch for you in turn. And now,
 This is the house of the Jew, my father-to-be,
 The maker and the keeper of my treasure.
 Ho! Within!

Enter JESSICA, above, in boy's clothes

JESSICA
 Who are you? Tell me, for more certainty,
 Although I'd swear I know your tongue.

LORENZO
 Lorenzo.

JESSICA
 Many men in Venice have that name.

LORENZO
 I'm the Lorenzo who saw you, Jessica,
 For any man who sees you, loves you,
 And if you answer love for love, my love,
 I'll be a happy exile for your sake —
 The blesseddest Lorenzo in the world.

GRATIANO
 And that's the idiotic song of love.

JESSICA
 Lorenzo, certain, and my love indeed.
 Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.
 I'm glad it's night, so you can't see me well,
 For in these boyish clothes I'm not myself,
 And you would not have loved me as I am.
 But love is blind and lovers cannot see
 The shames and follies they endure for love.

LORENZO
 Come down, for you must be my torchbearer.

JESSICA
 What, must I hold a candle to my shame?
 It is an office of discovery,
 And I should be obscured.

LORENZO
 And so you are,
 Appareled as a very pretty boy,
 And passersby will only see the light,
 And take no notice of the boy who bears it.
 But come, for night is running quickly out,
 And we're expected at Bassanio's feast.

JESSICA
 I'll lock the doors, and underneath these clothes
 Put on more ducats, and be with you straight.

Exit above

GRATIANO

She'll make a thief of you again, when you
Behold the gold she puts against her skin.

LORENZO

She is the gold that stirs my greedy heart.
For she is wise, if I can judge her fairly;
Fair she is, if eyes that love be true,
And true she is, as she has wisely shown,
And therefore, like herself, wise, fair and true,
She has entrusted all she has to me,
And all she needs and hopes for, I will be.

Enter JESSICA, below

You've finally come? These servants dally,
So a gentleman can't find a ready page.

GRATIANO

Delay is fine with me, if they wear gold.

SALARINO

You are a brave and trusting girl — no, boy.

LORENZO

Come on at once — we're late, we're late.

Exit Lorenzo with Jessica and Salarino

Enter ANTONIO

ANTONIO

Who's there?

GRATIANO

Signior Antonio!

ANTONIO

Fie, fie, Gratiano! where are all the rest?
It's nine o'clock, and now there'll be no feast,
Because the wind has come about and so
Bassanio must sail at once for Belmont,
Where his hope of love awaits him now.
Bassanio will go aboard by ten,
And if you wish to travel with him, haste!
I sent out twenty men to seek for you.

GRATIANO

I'm glad indeed — I wish no more delight
Than to be under sail and gone to-night.

Exeunt

SCENE VII. Belmont. In PORTIA'S house.

Enter PORTIA, PRINCE OF MOROCCO, and Nerissa

PORTIA

Reveal the caskets to this noble prince.
Now make your choice.

MOROCCO

The first, of gold, which this inscription bears:
"Who chooses me shall gain what many men desire";
The second, silver, which this promise carries:
"Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves";
This third, dull lead, with warning just as blunt:
"Who chooses me must give and hazard all he has."
But how will I know if I have chosen right?

PORTIA

But one of them contains my picture, prince:
If you choose that, then I am yours by right.

MOROCCO

May God direct my judgment! Let me see;
"Who chooses me must give and hazard all he has."
Must give: for lead? hazard all for lead?
This casket threatens. Men that hazard all
Do it in hope of fair advantages:
A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross;
I'll neither give nor risk a thing for lead.
What says the silver with her moonlike hue?
"Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves."
I weigh my value with an even hand:
If I am rated by my estimation,
Then I deserve enough; and yet "enough"
May not extend so far as to this lady:
And yet to be afraid of my deserving
Is but a weak disabling of myself.
I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,
In graces and in qualities of breeding —
But more, in love for her I do deserve.
What if I strayed no further, but chose here?
Let's see once more this saying carved in gold:
"Who chooses me shall gain what many men desire."
Why, that's the lady; all the world desires her;
From the four corners of the earth they come,
To kiss this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint:
Through desert, over mountains, crossing seas
With waves that spit against the heavens, these
They mount as readily as stepping stones,
Or cross as lightly as a brook, and all
To see the beauty of fair Lady Portia.
One of these three contains her heavenly picture.
Would such a portrait be encased in lead?
Nor devils would despise her beauty so.
Or shall I think in silver she's concealed,
A metal that will tarnish in a week?
Impossible — a jewel such as this
Is never set in less than purest gold.
Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

PORTIA

Here, take the key, my prince, and open it.
If there you find my form, then I am yours.

He unlocks the golden casket

MOROCCO

O hell! what have we here? The head of death,
Within whose empty eye there is a scroll!

[Reads]

All that glitters is not gold;
Often have you heard that told:
Many a man his life has sold
But my outside to behold:
Gilded tombs do worms enfold.
Had you been as wise as bold,
Young in limbs, in judgment old,
Your answer had not been inscrolled:
Fare you well; your suit is cold.

Cold, indeed; and all my labor's lost:
My word of honor's given, to my cost:
I'll never speak of marriage to a maid
And so my bed will be as cold as frost.
Portia, adieu. I have too grieved a heart
To take a tedious leave: thus losers part.

Exit with his train. Flourish of cornets.

PORTIA

Cover up the caskets; they have done
The work my father set for them to do.
I was protected from a prince I did not want.
So far, at least, my father has been kind.

Exeunt

SCENE VIII. Venice. A street.*Enter SALARINO and SALANIO*

SALARINO

I saw Bassanio when his ship set sail,
 With Gratiano by him on the deck.
 Lorenzo wasn't with them, I am sure.

SALANIO

But Shylock thought he was, and called the duke,
 Who went with men to search Bassanio's ship!

SALARINO

They came too late; Bassanio had sailed,
 But Antonio swore he was not in the plot.
 Then news arrived that in a gondola
 Were seen Lorenzo and his Jessica.

SALANIO

I never heard a passion so confused,
 So strange, outrageous, and so variable,
 As Shylock ranting through the streets,
 "My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
 Fled with a Christian! My ducats are turned Christian!
 Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter!"
 Two bags of ducats, stolen by my daughter!
 And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,
 Stolen by the man who stole my daughter!
 Justice! find the girl; find her abductor!
 They have the stones upon them, and the ducats."

SALARINO

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

SALANIO

With Shylock raging, our Antonio
 Had better pay his debt before the day.

SALARINO

Conversing with a Frenchman yesterday,
 I learned that in the stormy sea between
 The French and English, there was wrecked a ship —
 A vessel of our country, richly laden.
 I thought upon Antonio as he spoke.
 I wished in silence that it were not his.

SALANIO

You'd better tell Antonio what you heard;
 For news like this, displeasing as it is,
 A friend must tell, yet try to comfort him.

SALARINO

Antonio has no fear of loss, my friend.
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part:
Bassanio told him he would hurry back;
Antonio answered, "Do not so;
Don't rush the course of love, my friend,
But stay the very ripening of the time."
"But what about your bond to Shylock?" "Nay,
Let not the Jew distract you from your quest.
Engage your thoughts on wooing, till you've won."
His eyes were big with tears, he hugged the lad,
And wrung Bassanio's hand with so much force
I feared he'd keep the hand, or cripple it.

SALANIO

What man has been more faithful to his friend
Than dear Antonio? Let's find him now,
Tell him your news, then step aside and pray
That God be kind to such a worthy man.

Exeunt

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

Enter NERISSA with a servant

NERISSA
Quick, quick, uncover the caskets right away.
The Prince of Arragon has taken the oath,
And in a moment he'll be here to choose.

Enter PRINCE OF ARRAGON and PORTIA.

PORTIA
Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince:
Select the one wherein I am contained,
At once our wedding will be solemnized:
But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,
You must be gone from here without delay.

ARRAGON
Three oaths in one, and I will keep them all:
First, never to reveal to any one
Which casket that I chose; next, if I fail
To win your hand, then never in my life
To woo a maid in way of marriage; lastly:
If I fail, to go away at once.

PORTIA
To these injunctions every one must swear
Who comes to gamble for this worthless prize.

ARRAGON
May God bestow good fortune now to me
And my heart's hope! Gold; silver; and base lead.
"Who chooses me must give and hazard all he has."
You shall look fairer, ere I give or hazard.
"Who chooses me shall gain what many men desire."
That "many men" may be disparagement
Of the foolish multitude, who choose by show,
Not guessing the deeper value of a thing.
I will not choose what many men desire,
To rank me with the barbarous multitudes.
Why, then to thee, thou silver treasure-house:
"Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves":
Too often in this world are honors given
Where no merit shows, but only birth
Or wealth or favor, while the thoughts and deeds
Are only common selfishness, or spite,
Or envy, greed, or rage. But I have lived
With constant effort so to speak and act
That none will think my title undeserved.
O, 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 bow who now are bowed to.
How many be commanded that command!
Unknown noble hearts would be discovered
From the chaff and ruin of the times,

To be new-varnished! Well, I've made my choice:
 "Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves."
 I will assume desert. Give me a key for this,
 And instantly unlock my fortunes here.

He opens the silver casket

PORTIA
 Too long a pause; what have you found inside?

ARRAGON
 Behold, the portrait of a blinking idiot.
 How much unlike is this to Portia!
 How much unlike my hopes and my deservings!
 "Who chooses me shall have as much as he deserves."
 Did I deserve no more than a fool's head?
 Is that my prize? are my deserts no better?

PORTIA
 Since no one knew which casket you would choose,
 No insult to your merit was intended.

ARRAGON
 Then I will read the message written here.

[Reads]
 Some there be that shadows kiss;
 Such have but a shadow's bliss:
 There be fools alive, I wis,
 Silvered over; and so was this.
 Take what wife you will to bed,
 This will ever be your head:
 So be gone: you are sped.
 Still more the fool shall I appear
 By the time I linger here.
 With one fool's head I came to woo,
 But now I go away with two.

I blame you not for what another wrote.
 Sweet Portia, I will keep my oath, and leave.
 Now patiently I bear this injury,
 To show I merit more than I received.

Exit Arragon

PORTIA
 Thus has 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
 Now cover up, I pray, these wise protectors.

Enter a Servant

SERVANT

Where is my lady?

PORTIA

Here: what would my lord?

SERVANT

Madam, there is alighted at your gate
A young Venetian, namely Gratiano,
Who tells of the approaching of his friend:
From whom he brings you light and heavy greetings:
Light and airy words of admiration,
Heavy gifts of urns and statuary,
Rings and necklaces with jewels like
An avalanche of colored dazzlement.

NERISSA

Colored dazzlement? Who thought of that?

SERVANT

The messenger suggested all the words.
He is an elegant ambassador of love.

NERISSA

His words again? To thus describe himself?

SERVANT

A day in April never came so sweet,
To show how rich a summer was at hand,
As this bright peacock comes before his lord.

PORTIA

No more, I pray thee: I am half afeard
That next you'll say he is some kin to you,
Which would explain your fawning praise of him.
Nerissa, we must quickly go and see
The messenger who comes so mannerly.

NERISSA

Who cares about the herald? Let it be
Bassanio whose coming he foretells.

Exeunt

ACT III
SCENE I. Venice. A street.

Enter SALANIO and SALARINO

SALANIO
 Now, what news on the Rialto?

SALARINO
 A second vessel of Antonio's
 Is lost, or so my lady Rumor says.

SALANIO
 I do believe that Lady Rumor is
 As lying a gossip as ever made her neighbors
 Think she wept for the death of a third husband.
 Yet I fear that good and kind Antonio
 Cannot by goodness tame the ravening sea.

SALARINO
 I pray it be the last of all his losses.

SALANIO
 Let me say a quick "amen," before
 The devil hears your prayer and crosses it.
 For here he comes, in the likeness of a Jew.

Enter SHYLOCK

SALARINO
 How now, Shylock! what news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK
 You know, none so well, none so well
 As you two gossips, of my daughter's flight.

SALARINO
 I, for my part, knew the fairy tailor
 That made her wings so she could fly away.

SALANIO
 You knew the bird was old enough to fly;
 Could you not guess that she would leave the nest?

SHYLOCK
 The girl is surely damned for it.

SALARINO
 No doubt —
 [*Aside*] But wait; can one be damned for leaving hell?

SHYLOCK
 My own accursed flesh and blood to rebel!

SALANIO
 Fie upon your flesh and blood, old man.
 Rebels it after all these many years?

SHYLOCK

I say, my daughter is my flesh and blood.

SALARINO

Thy flesh and hers are differenter by far
Than black obsidian and ivory;
Between thy bloods there is more difference
Than between dark ale and brandywine.
But tell us, you might know the truth of it:
Has Antonio had a loss at sea or no?

SHYLOCK

There again I trusted and have lost.
A bankrupt now, who dares not show his face
Among the merchants; Antonio, a beggar
Who used to come so smug to the Rialto:
Let him look to his bond:
He was wont to call me usurer;
Let him look to his bond:
He was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy;
Let him look to his bond.

SALARINO

I'm sure that if he forfeits, you will not
Demand his flesh — what's that good for?

SHYLOCK

To bait fish with.
If it feeds nothing else, it will feed my revenge.
He has 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.
Has not a Jew eyes? Has 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 summer and winter,
As a Christian is?
If you prick us, do we not bleed?
If you tickle us, do we not laugh?
If you poison us, do we not die?
And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?
If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.
If a Jew wrongs a Christian, what does the Christian seek?
Revenge. So if a Christian wrongs 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.

Enter a Servant

SERVANT

Lady widows, my master Antonio
Is at his house and desires to speak with you.

SALARINO

We have been up and down in search of him.

Enter TUBAL

SALANIO

Here's another of the tribe: a third
 Could not be matched, unless the devil himself
 Were circumcised and turned into a Jew.

Exeunt SALANIO, SALARINO, and Servant

SHYLOCK

How now, Tubal! what news from Genoa?
 Have you found my daughter?

TUBAL

Often I came
 Where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.

SHYLOCK

Why, there, there, there, there! a diamond gone,
 Cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort!
 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!
 And I know not what's been spent in the search:
 Loss upon loss! the thief gone with so much,
 And so much more to find the thief;
 And no satisfaction, no revenge:
 No luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders;
 No sighs but of my breathing;
 No tears but of my shedding.

TUBAL

Well, other men have ill luck, too:
 Antonio, as I heard in Genoa —

SHYLOCK

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

TUBAL

An argosy cast ashore, coming from Tripoli.

SHYLOCK

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

TUBAL

I spoke with sailors who escaped the wreck.

SHYLOCK

I thank thee, good Tubal: good news, good news!
 Ha, ha! Where? In Genoa?

TUBAL

In Genoa, your daughter spent, I heard,
 Fourscore ducats in a single night.

SHYLOCK

You stick a dagger in me: I'll never see my gold again:
 Fourscore ducats at a sitting! fourscore ducats!

TUBAL
Several of Antonio's creditors
Were in my company to Venice, and
They swear he cannot choose but break.

SHYLOCK
I'll plague him; I'll torture him: I'm glad of it.

TUBAL
One of them showed me a ring your daughter gave
In trade for a monkey.

SHYLOCK
Out upon her! She already had her monkey.

TUBAL
Meaning the Christian! Meaning Lorenzo! Ha!

SHYLOCK
That ring — it was my turquoise; it was a gift
From Leah when I was a bachelor:
I wouldn't have given it for all the monkeys
In the world. I am in agony.

TUBAL
Antonio is certainly undone.

SHYLOCK
That's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, find
An officer and pay his fee; He'll hold
Antonio a fortnight before the day.
I'll have his heart, if Antonio forfeits;
He can't be allowed to travel out of Venice.
Go, go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue;
Go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal.

Exeunt

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

Enter BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA,
and Attendants

PORTIA

I pray you, pause a day or two before
You take your chance: for if your choice is wrong,
I lose your company. Something in me says —
You know it is not love — that I don't wish
To lose you yet. I don't imagine hate
Displays itself in such a wishful way.
But lest you should not understand me well:
I would detain you here some month or two
Before you venture for me. I could teach you
How to choose aright, but I would be forsworn;
And that I'll never do. So you might miss
And lose me, which would make me wish a sin:
That I had been forsworn. I blame your eyes.
They looked at me and so divided me;
One half of me is yours, the other half ...
Is yours. Mine own, I was about to say,
But still the half that's mine is also yours,
And so all yours. We live in wretched times,
With bars between true owners and their rights!
And so, though yours, not yours. Prove it so,
Let fortune go to hell for it, not I.
I talk too much, but only to delay,
To eke the time and draw it out in length,
To keep you from the choosing.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

Upon the rack, Bassanio! then confess
What treason you have mingled with your love.

BASSANIO

I'll take an oath to leave you if I lose,
But I have also sworn to never leave.
The first, my only chance of winning you;
But two in three of seeing you no more.
The second keeps you ever in my eyes,
But out of reach. Which oath shall I betray?
To leap into the fire, perhaps to burn,
Or stay here in the snow, and surely freeze?

PORTIA

These words are spoken from the rack, you said,
Where tortured men confess to anything.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

Well then, confess and live.

BASSANIO

“Confess” and “love.”

O happy torment, when my torturer
Provides 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.

BASSANIO

The outward show might well be meaningless.
The world is easily fooled with ornament.
In law, a villain’s plea may be corrupt,
But, seasoned with a lawyer’s gracious voice,
The evil is disguised, while in religion,
What damnèd error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
There is no vice so vile but it assumes
Some mark of virtue on its outward parts:
How many cowards wear a boasting face
And are esteemed courageous by the world?
How many beauties buy their grace by weight,
So that those curled and rampant golden locks
Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
Began their lives upon another head?
Therefore, gold, I have no use for thee;
Nor none of silver, which is used for coin
That passes hand to hand in common use.
Thou, simple, unassuming lead, in thee
A man will hide his treasure, knowing well
How easily it will be overlooked.
So here choose I; joy be the consequence!

PORTIA

[Aside] He chooses right — and now my heart is torn
Between two loves, two boundless ecstasies:
My absent father’s love protected me,
Then gave me to the husband of my hopes.
I thank him now, despite my old complaints.
And good Bassanio could not request
Permission from my father, face to face,
Yet still my father’s blessing he has earned.
Two men who never met conspired as one
To burst my heart with happiness. O love,
Be moderate, allay thine ecstasy,
I feel too much this blessing: make it less,
Or make me strong enough to hold it all.

BASSANIO

What find I here?

Opening the leaden casket

Fair Portia's image. Seeing such a face,
A thousand years from now, a man would weep
Because the fair original was gone,
And go unmarried, grieving, to his grave

Because no living woman could compare.
 So I am blessed compared to such a man,
 For I can turn and see her in the flesh,
 More glorious than painter can depict,
 Or poet celebrate, or singer sing.
 What words are written on the scroll?

[Reads] You that choose not by the view,
 Chance as fair and choose as true!
 Since this fortune falls to you,
 Be content and seek no new,
 If you be well pleased with this
 And hold your fortune for your bliss,
 Turn you where your lady is
 And claim her with a loving kiss.

The scroll bestows your kiss on me, my love,
 But I will not accept it for the scroll,
 Nor for the picture, nor the leaden box.
 My rightful choosing merely sweeps away
 The obstacles, so I can take your hand
 And pledge my freely given love to you,
 And ask if you will freely pledge to me.

PORTIA

You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand.
 I am the prize this contest must award,
 And yet, so worthy is the victor, I
 Can only wish that I were twenty times —
 A thousand times — more fair, ten thousand times
 More rich, to match the merit of the man.
 Instead, this is the simple sum of me:
 A girl unschooled and inexperienced,
 Happy in this, she is not yet so old
 But she may learn; happier than this,
 She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
 Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
 Commits itself to yours to be directed,
 As from her lord, her governor, her king.
 Myself and what is mine to you and yours
 Is now converted. Till now I was the lord
 Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
 Queen of my despairing self. And now
 This house, these servants and this same myself
 Are yours, my lord: I give them with this ring.
 It is my heart. Oh, hold it, guard it well!
 The day you part from, lose, or give away
 The ring, I'll know that you no longer love.

BASSANIO

This is your heart; it pumps the blood of life,
 And if my finger ever loses it,
 My blood will stop, congeal, grow cold,
 For if you see this ring without my hand,
 O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!

NERISSA

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

GRATIANO

My lord Bassanio and my gentle lady,
I wish you all the joy that you can wish;
But will you also wish some joy for me?
For on the day you solemnize your vows,
I long to make myself a husband, too.

BASSANIO

With all my heart, if you can get a wife.

GRATIANO

I thank your lordship, *you* have got me one.
My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours:
You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid;
Your fortune stood upon the casket there,
And so did mine, too, as the matter falls;
For wooing here till I was soaked in sweat,
And sweating till my very roof was dry,
I won a promise of this fair one here
To have her love, provided that your fortune
Achieved her mistress.

PORTIA

Is this true, Nerissa?

NERISSA

Madam, I confess I was distracted
By the antics of this prancing Cupid,
Who has stabbed me to the heart with laughter.
Now I can't imagine losing him.

BASSANIO

And do you, Gratiano, mean good faith?

GRATIANO

You know I never pledge my word in jest.

BASSANIO

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

GRATIANO

A thousand ducats says our boy comes first!

NERISSA

And what if we should have a little girl?

GRATIANO

I hope she looks like you. No ducats then,
But joy for first or second, boy or girl.
But who comes here? Lorenzo and his bride,
The former infidel, now Christian beauty.
Why do they travel with Salerio,
My friend from school days back in Venice!

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

BASSANIO

Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome!
Wait — there is no marriage yet. I'm not

The master here. Sweet Portia, by your leave,
I'll bid my friends and countrymen come in.

PORTIA

They are entirely welcome here, my lord.

LORENZO

I never planned to meet you here, my friend.
But meeting with Salerio by the way,
He did entreat me, past all saying nay,
To come with him along.

SALERIO

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

Gives Bassanio a letter

BASSANIO

Before I open it,
I pray you, tell me how my friend 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.

GRATIANO

Nerissa, can you find refreshment for
Fair lady Jessica?

JESSICA

My needs are few,
For I have lived these weeks on happiness.

NERISSA

A slender diet, but a filling one.

GRATIANO

And you, Salerio, can carry news
For dear Antonio when you return:
Two Jasons here have won their golden fleece!

SALERIO

I would that you had won the fleece he lost.

PORTIA

I fear what's written in that letter. See?
It steals the colour from Bassanio's cheek:
Some dear friend dead; else nothing in the world
Could turn so much the constitution
Of any healthy man. What, worse and worse!
With leave, Bassanio: I am half yourself,
And I must freely have the half of anything
That this grim paper brings you.

BASSANIO

O sweet Portia,
Here are a few of the unpleasantest words

That ever blotted paper! Gentle lady,
 When I did first impart my love to you,
 I freely told you that I was a gentleman
 By blood alone, and not by any wealth.
 I told the truth, to rate myself at nothing,
 Yet I played the braggart, for my state
 Is even less than that; my friend Antonio
 Paid my debts for me, so I could come
 To you with gifts, and wearing more than rags.
 But lacking ready cash, he borrowed, too,
 Depending on his ships to make return.
 I begged him not to make the pact he signed,
 For he has borrowed from the devil's nephew,
 And if he forfeits it will cost his life.
 This paper is the body of my friend,
 And every word in it a gaping wound,
 Issuing life-blood. But is it true, Salerio?
 Have all his ventures failed? What, not one hit?
 From Tripoli, from Mexico and England,
 From Lisbon, Barbary and India?
 Won't any of his ships return to port?

SALERIO

Not one, my lord. Besides, the Jew declares
 That even if he brought the money now,
 The Jew would not accept — the day has passed.
 I never knew a creature in the shape of man
 So keen and greedy to destroy another.
 Shylock plies the duke both day and night,
 Demanding justice. Twenty merchants, and
 The duke himself, have all entreated him;
 But none can turn him from his bloody bond.

JESSICA

I've heard him swear to Tubal many times
 That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
 Than twenty times the value of the loan.
 I know, my lord, if law, authority,
 Or power do not block his will,
 It will go hard with poor Antonio.

PORTIA

What law in Venice kills a man for debt?

SALERIO

The bond was freely signed by both, and now
 The law of Venice must exact the terms.

PORTIA

And this Antonio's your beloved friend.

BASSANIO

The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
 My guide and benefactor, one in whom
 The ancient Roman honor more appears
 Than any that draws breath in Italy.

PORTIA

How much does he owe the Jew?

BASSANIO

Three thousand ducats,
And all of it for me.

PORTIA

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

BASSANIO

[Reads] Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my
creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the
Jew is forfeit; and since in paying it, it is impossible I
should live, all debts are cleared between us. I long to see
you before I die, but if you cannot come, be sure I have no
regret, but only love for you.

PORTIA

O love, dispatch all business, and be gone!

BASSANIO

Since I have your good leave to go away,
I will make haste: but, till I come again,
I will not sleep in any bed, but take
My rest on stone, which is no rest at all.

Exeunt

SCENE III. Venice. A street.

Enter SHYLOCK, SALARINO, ANTONIO, and Gaoler

SHYLOCK

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

ANTONIO

Hear me yet, good Shylock.

SHYLOCK

I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond:
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.
You called me "dog" before you had a cause;
But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs:
The duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,
Gaoler, that you walk the streets with bankrupts.

ANTONIO

I pray thee, Shylock, let me speak a word.

SHYLOCK

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

Exit

SALARINO

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

ANTONIO

Let him alone:

I'll follow him no more with bootless pleas.
He seeks my life; his reason well I know:
I've rescued many debtors from his hands
By lending them the price they owed to him,
Preventing him from their collateral.
Therefore he hates me.

SALARINO

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

ANTONIO

The duke cannot deny the course of law:
For if a stranger noises it abroad
That Venice favors citizens, and thus
Refuses justice for a stranger's bond,
It damages the city, for our trade
Is almost all with strangers. We depend
On them to justly deal with us abroad,
And they on us, to justly deal at home.

Therefore, go, my widowed friend. You see
These griefs have so depressed my appetite
That I shall hardly *have* a pound of flesh
Tomorrow, when he tries to cut it out.

Salarino weeps and exits

Well, gaoler, on. Pray God, Bassanio come
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not!

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

Enter PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA, and BALTHASAR

LORENZO

Madam, I have watched with admiration
How you bear the absence of your lord,
I wish you knew already what I know:
How true a gentleman Antonio is,
That he deserves the rescue that you sent,
And that he loves your husband like a son.
Your generous nature gave the gift at once;
Antonio earns it, though you know him not.

PORTIA

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

LORENZO

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

PORTIA

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

LORENZO

Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you!

JESSICA

I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

PORTIA

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

Exeunt JESSICA and LORENZO

Now, Balthasar, my faithful messenger,
Take this letter straight to Padua,
And find my cousin, Doctor Bellario;
When he has read the letter, he will give you
Notes and books and garments. Speed them on
To the common ferry that trades with Venice.
I'll be there before you to receive them.
Waste no time on words — oh, Balthasar!
My husband's happiness depends on you.

BALTHASAR

I'll shame the birds I pass along the way.

Exit

PORTIA

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

NERISSA

Shall *they* see us?

PORTIA

They shall, Nerissa; but they will not know us.
They will see us as two learned men,
But young and beardless, barely out of school.
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with the braver grace,
And speak between the change of man and boy
With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps
Into a manly stride, and speak of fights
Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies,
How honorable ladies sought my love,
Which I denying, they fell sick and died;
Then I'll repent and wish I had not killed them;
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,
That men will know I'm one of them. I've seen
A thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks,
Which now I'll play myself in fair return.

NERISSA

You mean we'll get inside men's clothing?

PORTIA

Be glad your careless question wasn't heard
By any lewd interpreter, Nerissa!
Come, and I will tell you all my plans
Inside my coach, which waits at the park gate;
Now let us haste away, the road is long,
And we must measure twenty miles to-day.

SCENE V. The same. A garden.*Enter GUINEVERE and JESSICA*

GUINEVERE

My master left me behind, but that's all right with me, because he leaves me here to serve my old mistress! Since you're a new-fledged Christian, I will try to explain the doctrine to you. Look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children: therefore, I fear for you. I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter: therefore be of good cheer, for truly I think you are damned. There is but one hope in it that can do you any good; and that is but a kind of bastard hope neither.

JESSICA

And what hope is that, I pray thee?

GUINEVERE

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

JESSICA

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

GUINEVERE

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

JESSICA

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

GUINEVERE

I don't think that was a good idea. We had enough Christians before; as many as could live decently, one beside another. This making new Christians will raise the price of hogs: if we all turn to be pork-eaters, soon we won't be able to buy hot sizzling bacon for any money.

Enter LORENZO

JESSICA

Well, Guinevere, I'll tell my husband what you say — here he comes now. My lord — Guinevere is teaching Christian doctrine.

LORENZO

Who knew she ever stayed awake in church?

JESSICA

Guinevere tells me flatly, there is no mercy for me in heaven, because I am a Jew's daughter: and she says you are no good member of the commonwealth, for in converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork.

LORENZO

She uses logic so wisely you'd think she went to the university. Soon she'll have debates, and read books, and utter platitudes for clerks to copy down, and drink too much beer.

GUINEVERE

I've already got to the end of your list, my lord.

LORENZO

Go in, missy; bid them prepare for dinner.

GUINEVERE

That's already done, sir; they have stomachs.

LORENZO

What a wit-snapper are you! then bid them prepare dinner.

GUINEVERE

That was done by the cooks.

LORENZO

Yet more quarreling over words! Must you show the whole wealth of your wit in an instant? I pray you, understand a plain man in his plain meaning: go to the other servants, bid them cover the table, serve the food, and we will come in to dinner.

GUINEVERE

I guess your real meaning: *We will come in to the table, cover the food, and all of us serve you.*

Exit

LORENZO

The fool has planted in her memory
An army of good words, and marches them
Back and forth to no good purpose.
And now, good sweet, say your opinion,
How do you like our friend Bassanio's wife?

JESSICA

Past all expressing. Lord Bassanio
Had better live a perfect, upright life;
For, having such a blessing in his lady,
He finds the joys of heaven here on earth;
And if on earth he does not earn it, then
I know he'll never make it into heaven,
Having had already more than he deserves.

LORENZO

So you believe that she is adequate?

JESSICA

I say that if two gods should make a bet
On which of two women is more virtuous,
And one is Portia, put a thumb on the scale
With the other lass, for in all the poor rude world
There is no match for her.

LORENZO

Poor second-best,
I love you well enough. And lucky you —
In me you have such a husband as she is a wife.

JESSICA

Nay, but ask my opinion too of that.

LORENZO

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

JESSICA

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

LORENZO

No, let it serve for table-talk; for then,
Whatever you say, I'll swallow it with all
The other courses, and, with luck, digest it.

JESSICA

I'll serve your virtues to you on the bone,
But chew them well, for they are underdone,
And you might choke on them a little.

Exeunt

ACT IV
SCENE I. Venice. A court of justice.

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

DUKE
 What, is Antonio here?

ANTONIO
 Ready, so please your grace.

DUKE
 I am sorry for you; you are come to answer
 A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
 Incapable of pity, void and empty
 From any dram of mercy.

ANTONIO
 I have heard
 Your grace has taken great pains to moderate
 His rigorous course; but since he stands obdurate
 And that no lawful means can carry me
 Out of his envy's reach, my patience I
 Will set against his fury, and am armed
 To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,
 The noisy tyranny and rage of his.

DUKE
 Go someone, 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 you'll perform this mad display of malice
 Till the final hour, and then 'tis thought
 You'll show your mercy and reveal a soul
 More lofty than this show of cruelty;
 And where you now exact the penalty,
 Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,
 You will not only loose the forfeiture,
 But, touched with human gentleness and love,
 Forgive a portion of the principal;
 Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,
 That have of late so huddled on his back.
 We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

SHYLOCK
 I have informed your grace of what I purpose;
 And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
 To have the due and forfeit of my bond:
 If you deny it, let the danger light
 Upon your charter and your city's freedom.
 You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have

A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
 Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that:
 But say it is my fancy. Is it answered?
 What if my house be troubled with a rat
 And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats
 To have it poisoned? Are you answered yet?
 Some men are sick when beef is cooked too rare;
 Some men go mad if they behold a cat;
 And others, when the bagpipe whines its song,
 Cannot contain their urine: Reason plays
 No part in it. So can I give no reason,
 More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing
 I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
 A suit against a bankrupt. Are you answered?

BASSANIO

This is no answer, you unfeeling man,
 To excuse the madness of your cruelty.

SHYLOCK

I am not bound to please you 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

Offenses need not always lead to hate.

SHYLOCK

What, would you let a serpent sting you twice?

ANTONIO

I pray you, do not argue with the Jew:
 You may as well go stand upon the beach
 And bid the tide go out instead of in.
 Make no more offers, and, with dignity,
 Let me have judgment and the Jew his will.

BASSANIO

For your three thousand ducats, here is six.

SHYLOCK

He missed the day, and ducats will not do.

DUKE

What mercy can you hope for, showing 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 degrading work,
 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! You will answer
 "The slaves are ours:" so do I answer you:

The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,
Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it.
If you deny me, fie upon your law!
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.
I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it?

DUKE

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

SALERIO

My lord, a messenger
With letters from the doctor waits outside.

DUKE

Bring us the letter; call the messenger.

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

I am the sickling of the herd, the one
The wolves will single out and chase and harry
To the death: the weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me.
You cannot better be employed, Bassanio,
Than to live still and write my epitaph.

Enter NERISSA, dressed like a lawyer's clerk

DUKE

Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA

From both, my lord. Bellario greets your grace.

Presenting a letter

BASSANIO

Why do you whet your knife so vigorously?

SHYLOCK

To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

GRATIANO

Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew,
You make your knife more keen; but metal cannot,
Nor the hangman's axe, bear half the keenness
Of your sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce you?

SHYLOCK

No, none that you have wit enough to make.

GRATIANO

You almost make me waver in my faith,
To trust the doctrine of Pythagoras,

That souls of animals infuse themselves
 Into the trunks of men: your currish spirit
 Was once a wolf, hanged for eating men,
 Whose soul fled to your mother's womb
 And made the human baby like a wolf,
 Relentless, starving, bloody, ravenous.

SHYLOCK

Till you can rail the seal from off my bond,
 You only hurt your lungs to speak so loud:
 Repair your wit, good youth, or it will fall
 To hopeless ruin. I stand here for law.

DUKE

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

NERISSA

He awaits your grace nearby,
 To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

DUKE

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

CLERK *[Reads]*

Your grace shall understand that at the receipt of your
 letter I am very sick: but in the instant that your
 messenger came, in visitation was with me a young doctor
 of Rome; his name is Balthasar. I told him of the
 controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant:
 we turned over many books together: he is furnished with
 my opinion, bettered by his own learning, and at my
 request he comes to fill your grace's request in my stead. I
 beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment; for I
 never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave
 him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better
 publish his commendation.

DUKE

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

Enter PORTIA, dressed like a doctor of laws

Give me your hand. Come you from old Bellario?

PORTIA

I do, my lord.

DUKE

Then welcome: take your place.
 Are you acquainted with the issue here?

PORTIA

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

DUKE
Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

PORTIA
Is your name Shylock?

SHYLOCK
Shylock is my name.

PORTIA
The suit is strange, the bond pernicious,
Yet it's written so Venetian law
Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.
You stand within his danger, do you not?

ANTONIO
Ay, so he says.

PORTIA
Do you confess the bond?

ANTONIO
I do.

PORTIA
Then must the Jew be merciful.

SHYLOCK
On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

PORTIA
The quality of mercy is not forced.
It drops as freely as the rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesses him that gives and him that takes:
It's mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The reigning monarch better than his crown;
His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
Which thus inspires the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptered sway;
It is an attribute of God himself;
And earthly power is most like to God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be your plea, consider this,
If justice had its way, then none of us
Would see salvation: we must pray for mercy;
And that same prayer will teach us all to render
Deeds of mercy. Give what you would have,
And mitigate the justice of your plea;
For if you press your suit, this court of Venice
Must be merciless against the merchant there.

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

PORTIA
Is he not able to discharge the money?

BASSANIO

Yes, here I offer it to him in the court;
 Yea, twice the sum: if that will not suffice,
 I will be bound to pay it ten times over,
 On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart:
 But this will not suffice, so it appears
 That only wicked malice drives him on,
 For he has not been harmed at all.
 O learned doctor, can't you bend the law
 A little, using your authority?
 To do a great right, do a little wrong,
 And curb this cruel devil of his will.

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

You have the offer of three times your money.

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

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

ANTONIO

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

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

O noble judge! O excellent young man!

PORTIA

For the intent and purpose of the law
Has full relation to the penalty,
Which here appears exact upon the bond.

SHYLOCK

'Tis very true: O wise and upright judge!
How much more elder are you than your looks!

PORTIA

Therefore lay bare your bosom.

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

I have it ready — honest weight.

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

Is it so nominated in the bond?

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

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

PORTIA

You, merchant, have you anything to say?

ANTONIO

But little: I am armed and well prepared.
Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you;
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind
Than is her custom: often, as a joke,
She lets a wretched man outlive his wealth,
To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
An age of poverty; from lingering penance
Of such misery she sets me free.
Commend me to your honorable wife:
Tell her the process of Antonio's end;

Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death;
 And, when the tale is told, bid her to judge
 Whether Bassanio once was truly loved.
 Regret but this: that you shall lose your friend;
 For he repents not that he pays your debt;
 For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
 I'll pay it presently with all my heart.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

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

GRATIANO

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

NERISSA

'Tis well you offer it behind her back;
 Or else the wish would make a troubled house.

SHYLOCK

[Aside] These are Christian husbands! I have a daughter;
 Any of the sons of Abraham
 Would make a better husband than a Christian!
 We trifle time: I pray you pursue sentence.

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

Most rightful judge!

PORTIA

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

SHYLOCK

Most learned judge! A sentence! Come, prepare!

PORTIA

Just a moment; there is something else.
 This contract gives you not a jot of blood;
 The words expressly are "a pound of flesh:"
 Take then your bond, receive your pound of flesh;
 But, in the cutting of it, if you shed
 One drop of Christian blood, your lands and goods
 Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscated.

GRATIANO

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

SHYLOCK
Is that the law?

PORTIA
If you exceed the bond,
Since you demanded justice, be assured
That you'll have justice, more than you desire.

GRATIANO
O learned judge! Shylock, a learned judge!

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

BASSANIO
Here is the money.

PORTIA
Stop.
The Jew refused — the time for it is passed.
He shall have nothing but the penalty.

GRATIANO
O Jew! an upright judge, a learned judge!

PORTIA
Therefore prepare yourself to cut the flesh.
Shed no blood, nor cut you less nor more,
But just a pound of flesh: if you cut more
Or less than just a pound, however slight
The difference — a bit of dust, a hair —
You die and all your goods are confiscate.

GRATIANO
A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew!

PORTIA
Why are you waiting, Shylock? take your forfeit.

SHYLOCK
Give me my principal, and let me go.

BASSANIO
I have it ready for you: here it is.

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

GRATIANO
A Daniel, still say I, a second Daniel!

SHYLOCK
Can I not choose to have my principal,
Forgiving every bit of usury?

PORTIA
You shall have nothing but the forfeiture,
Taken at your peril. Go ahead.

SHYLOCK

Why, then the devil give him good of it!
I must withdraw my suit. He owes me nothing!
See? I void the bond!

PORTIA

Tarry, Shylock.

The law has yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
If it be proved against an alien
That by direct or indirect attempts
He sought the life of any citizen,
The party he conspired against shall have
The right to half his goods; the other half
Is taken by the treasury of the state;
And the offender's life lies at the mercy
Of the duke alone, without appeal.
In which predicament, I say, you stand;
For it appears, by manifest proceeding,
That indirectly and directly, too,
You have conspired against the very life
Of the defendant. Therefore, on your knees!
Down, and beg the mercy of the duke.

GRATIANO

Beg that you may have leave to hang yourself:
And yet, your wealth being forfeit to the state,
You haven't got enough to buy a rope.
They'll have to hang you at the state's expense.

DUKE

So you can see the difference of our spirits,
I pardon you your life before you ask.
For half your wealth, it is Antonio's;
The other half comes to the general state.

SHYLOCK

Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:
You take my house when you remove the prop
That holds it up. You take my life already
When you take the means whereby I live.

PORTIA

What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

GRATIANO

A noose for free, and nothing else, except
The rent-free use of a limb to hang it from.

ANTONIO

So please my lord the duke and all the court,
I am content to give my half to him,
If he will sign a document in court,
That gives the whole of it, upon his death,
Unto Lorenzo, now his son-in-law,
And to his daughter Jessica.

DUKE

He shall do this, or else I do recant
The pardon that I gave to spare his life.

ANTONIO

And witness this for me as well, that I
Repent the malice that I showed the Jew.
I offered only hate, and he returned
The loan with usury. But Jesus said
To love my enemy, and I did not.
This doctor's words of mercy struck me hard,
Reminding me of what a Christian is.
My labor should have been to bring his heart,
By reason and example, unto Christ,
Not goad him till he sought my own.

BASSANIO

It sounds as if you want to blame yourself!

ANTONIO

I'm not absolved because another man is worse.

PORTIA

Are you contented, Jew? what do you say?

SHYLOCK

I am content.

PORTIA

Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

SHYLOCK

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

DUKE

You may go — but do it.

Exit SHYLOCK

DUKE

Young sir, come home with me to dinner.

PORTIA

I humbly do desire your grace's pardon.
I must go tonight toward Padua.

DUKE

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

Exeunt Duke and his train

BASSANIO

Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend
Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted
Of grievous penalties; in place whereof,
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew,
We offer you as thanks for all you did.

ANTONIO

And more than that — we stand in debt to you,
And pledge our love and service evermore.

PORTIA

He is well paid that is well satisfied;
And I, delivering you, am satisfied
And therein do account myself well paid:
My means are enough; I never wished for more.
I pray you, know me when we meet again:
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

BASSANIO

Dear sir, perforce I must insist you take
Some token, as a tribute, not a fee.

PORTIA

You press me far, and therefore I will yield.

To ANTONIO

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

To BASSANIO

Since you insist, I'll take this ring from you:
Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more;
And you will surely not deny me this.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

I will have nothing else but only this.

BASSANIO

There's more depends on this than on the value.
The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,
And find it out by proclamation:
Except 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

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

If you explained how well I earned the ring,
And if she's not a madwoman, she'd agree.
She wouldn't be your enemy forever,
Just because you gave the ring to me.
Well, peace be with you!

Exeunt Portia and Nerissa

ANTONIO

My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring:
It shames us both that you have told him no.
Let his deservings and my love for you
Together weigh against your wife's command.

BASSANIO

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

Exit Gratiano

Come, you and I will go and wait for them,
And in the morning early I will go
With Gratiano back to Belmont, where
I pray I will not find a weeping, angry wife.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The same. A street.*Enter PORTIA and NERISSA*

PORTIA
 Let's look for Shylock's house, give him the deed,
 And let him sign it: we'll away to-night
 And we'll be home a day before our husbands.

NERISSA
 Lorenzo will be glad to see this deed.

Enter GRATIANO

GRATIANO
 Fair sir, I'm glad I overtook you here.
 My lord Bassanio, upon advice,
 Has sent you here this ring, and he entreats
 Your company at dinner.

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

GRATIANO
 That will I do.

NERISSA
 Sir, I would speak with you. *[Aside to PORTIA]*
 I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,
 Which I did make him swear to keep forever.

PORTIA
[Aside to NERISSA]
 He'll do it, too, and then they both will swear
 That they did give the rings away to men;
 But we'll accuse them, and outswear them too.
[Aloud] Away! make haste: you know where I'll be waiting.

NERISSA
 Come, good sir, will you lead me to the house?

Exeunt

ACT V
SCENE I. Belmont. Avenue to PORTIA'S
house.

Enter LORENZO and JESSICA

LORENZO
 This is the life that we were meant to live,
 At peace in the quiet countryside,
 A lord and lady overseeing house,
 Lands, servants, farmers, flowers, bees,
 Rain, sunshine, day and night and all.

JESSICA
 I didn't know your duties reached so far.
 The bees come every morning for instruction?

LORENZO
 I buzz to them a bit, and then they go.

JESSICA
 And twice a day, the tide sends messengers?

LORENZO
 Four times a day, my love — the coming in,
 The going out again, twice each.
 I *am* surprised you never noticed them.
 They get the floors all wet, and smell like fish.

JESSICA
 I always thought that it was you.

JESSICA & LORENZO
[unison] Ah, love.

JESSICA
 What is it?

LORENZO
 Someone hiding in the garden.
 Out where I can see you! Come at once!

JESSICA
 Whoever it is, don't hurt him overmuch.

LORENZO
 I'll beat him till he thinks that he's an egg.
 What, trespass on fair Lady Portia's lands?
 A man like that deserves to have no feet!

JESSICA
 What if it's not a man, and has four feet?

LORENZO
 Now, of course, I see that it's two women.

Enter GUINEVERE and GOBBO

JESSICA
You live here, Guinevere. Why sneak and hide?

LORENZO
This servant of Bassanio's is strange.

JESSICA
She once was mine, my love, and so: not strange.

LORENZO
But then she served a Jew, so: strange again.

GUINEVERE
Good sir and mistress, here you see my mother.

GOBBO
Widow Gobbo is my name, my lord.
Or, truth to tell, it was my husband's name,
But being dead, he makes no use of it.
I offered now and then to give it up,
But found no takers, so I'm stuck with it.

LORENZO
I see that Guinevere acquired her tongue
By right of birth.

JESSICA
Improved by constant practice.

GUINEVERE
In Venice, Mother lived not far away,
And so she almost never visited.
But Belmont's halfway to the moon, she says —

GOBBO
Don't say what I say when I'm here to say it.

LORENZO
Then finish it, I pray. The moon and Belmont?

GOBBO
I cannot speak. The company's too grand.

GUINEVERE
In short, I ask if there is room —

GOBBO
A cupboard?

GUINEVERE
She'd share a bed with me.

GOBBO
Until I die.

GUINEVERE
My master pays me double Shylock's wage.
Mother can amply live on the second half —

GOBBO
I don't eat much these days, except noodles.

LORENZO
I fear it sounds impossible to me.

JESSICA
Lorenzo, why? I'm sure she'll earn her keep.

GOBBO
What work can *I* do, with these hooded eyes?

LORENZO
Work or not, she cannot stay.

JESSICA
But why?

LORENZO
She'll order Guinevere about, which is
A mother's right, but Portia is her mistress.
It would create confusion.

GOBBO
Hark you, girl!
Obey your mistress and not me!

JESSICA
Oh, fie!
Obey your mother first! It is the law!

GOBBO
Obey your mistress or we'll be cast out
And have to live by begging door to door!

JESSICA
Honor thy mother, that thy days be long!

LORENZO
Mistress and mother — it would drive her mad.

GUINEVERE
When have I ever heeded either one?

LORENZO
Her point is sound. The widow here may stay,
Provided Guinevere give oath to pay
As little heed to mother as to mistress.

GOBBO
Oh, Guinevere, together once again!

GOBBO hugs JESSICA. Enter BALTHASAR at a run

BALTHASAR
My lady's almost here, she's coming home!

LORENZO
My love, our lordly life is at an end.

JESSICA
 And yet I'm happy Portia will return.
 Hers is the grace that fills this house with joy.

LORENZO
 It lacked but little, with you in her place.
 My one regret is that my fortune's small,
 And you will never have a house like this.

JESSICA
 Love is the treasury of happiness.

LORENZO
 Then all should have it. Balthasar,
 Would you like to meet fair Lady Guinevere?

BALTHASAR
 What man would not?

LORENZO
 Then here she is!

BALTHASAR
 What, her?
 I thought you meant the pretty one in songs.

GOBBO
 I'll give you songs! I'll thump your head like a drum!
 You'll tootle like a flute and twang like a broken lute
 And sit in a corner all day and suck your thumb!

JESSICA
 This is Guinevere's mother, Balthasar.

BALTHASAR
 Then old King Arthur is better off without her!

LORENZO
 Go, take your rioting inside! It's late,
 And we disturb the stillness of the night.
 Go wake the musicians, if they've gone to bed,
 And let sweet music welcome Portia home.

Exeunt Balthasar, Guinevere and Gobo

JESSICA
 Sweet music ... oh, it always makes me sad.

LORENZO
 Are those two ears of yours so opposite?
 Do barking dogs, rasping hacksaws, roosters,
 Yowling cats, stonecutters chiseling,
 Carters cursing after a collision,
 Mothers of servant girls who've been insulted,
 Squealing pigs, and crying babies cheer you up?

JESSICAS
 No, except perhaps the crying babies.

Music

LORENZO
I'll do my best to get you some, my love.

JESSICA
But now I understand myself at last!
My melancholy when I heard a song
Arose from feelings that I dared not feel,
And so I kept them hidden in my heart,
Which made me sad. But here I am with you,
And so my wistful yearnings are fulfilled,
And sweet music gladdens me at last.

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA

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

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

PORTIA
Always the greater glory dims the less:
A magistrate shines brightly as a king —
Until the king comes by, and then his state
Empties itself, the way a little brook
Will pour itself into a mighty stream.
But listen — do I hear musicians now?

NERISSA
It is your music, madam, of the house.

PORTIA
It never sounded sweeter than tonight.

NERISSA
Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

PORTIA
The crow might sing as sweetly as the lark,
When neither is heard, and so I think
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the wren.
How many things are seasoned by the season,
Lifting them to their most perfect state.

Music ceases

LORENZO
That is the voice, I think, of Portia.

PORTIA
He knows me as the blind man knows the chicken,
By the squawking.

LORENZO
Dear lady, welcome home.

PORTIA
 We come from praying for our husbands' health,
 And now return in hope their journey's done.
 Have they come home?

LORENZO
 Not yet, my lady, but
 A messenger has told us they are near.

PORTIA
 Then our husbands need not know that we were gone.
[To Nerissa] Give order to my servants that they make
 No mention of our having been away.
 Nor you, Lorenzo; Jessica, nor you.

JESSICA
 We are no tell-tales, madam; fear you not.

PORTIA
 How will they find the way, without a moon?

Enter BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO

BASSANIO
 As long as you are here to shine for me,
 I need no moon or sun to guide me home.

PORTIA
 Let me give light, but let me not be light;
 I'd hate to live upon a candlestick.
 You are welcome home, my lord.

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

PORTIA
 Sir, you are very welcome to our house.
 Your presence shows that my Bassanio's journey
 Had the happy ending that we prayed for.

GRATIANO
[To NERISSA] I swear you do me wrong; I tell the truth,
 I gave it to a man, the judge's clerk:
 I wish that I had gelded him instead,
 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
 She gave me, etched with cutler's poetry
 Like what you'd find upon a kitchen knife:
 "Love me, and leave me not," is all it said.
 I'll have it engraved on everything you own!

NERISSA
 Why talk you of the poetry or the cost?

You swore to me, when I put it in your hand,
 That you would wear it till your hour of death
 And that it should lie with you in your grave:
 Who cares how little you must care for me?
 It's your immortal soul that is at risk:
 You took such dreadful oaths that you would keep it!
 And now you gave it to a judge's clerk —
 That's a clerk, I'd bet my favorite shoes,
 Whose painted face will never sprout a beard.

GRATIANO
 Of course he will, if he lives to be a man.

NERISSA
 How old are women when they turn to men?

GRATIANO
 Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,
 A kind of boy, a little scrubby boy,
 No taller than you, my love — the judge's clerk,
 A jabbering boy, who begged it as a fee:
 And after his master had saved Antonio,
 It would have been ungrateful to refuse.

PORTIA
 You were to blame, I must be plain with you,
 To part so slightly with your wife's first gift:
 A thing so bound 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;
 On his behalf I swear he would not leave it,
 Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth
 Of all the world. Now, in faith, Gratiano,
 You give your wife too unkind a cause of grief:
 If it were me, I'd scream, tear out my hair,
 And act the lunatic, I'd feel such rage.

BASSANIO
[Aside] I think I'd better cut my left hand off
 And swear I lost the ring defending it.

GRATIANO
 My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away!

BASSANIO
[Aside] My friend confesses after very little torture.

GRATIANO
 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;
 And neither one would take a single thing
 But the two rings.

PORTIA
[To Bassanio] What ring was it you gave?
 Not that, I hope, which you received of me.

BASSANIO

If I could add a lie unto a fault,
I would deny it; but you see my finger
Has no ring upon it; it is gone.

PORTIA

Even so void is your false heart of truth.
Upon your finger scarce a dozen days —
What, did it chafe you? Make your finger itch?
Snag on your sleeve? Clash with your favorite shoes?
Remind you much too often you were married?
I swear I'll never come into your bed
Until I see the ring.

NERISSA

Nor I in yours
Till I again see mine.

BASSANIO

Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring
And would conceive for what I gave the ring
And how unwillingly I left the ring,
When nothing else would do except the ring,
You would be more forgiving of my fault.

PORTIA

If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honor to retain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.
Deserving, was he? Then he ought to have
Enough of wits to understand your oath,
And ask for something other than the ring —
If you had bothered to defend my gift
With any kind of zeal. "I want your ring," he says.
"No no," you say, and then, "Oh, here it is."
Nerissa teaches me what to believe:
Upon my life some woman has the ring.

BASSANIO

No, by my honor, madam, by my soul,
No woman got it, but a civil doctor,
Who turned away a three-thousand-ducat fee
And begged the ring; the which I did deny him
And suffered him to go displeas'd away;
The man whose wisdom saved the very life
Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?
I was enforced to send it after him;
Both shame at showing such ingratitude
And keen awareness of his worthiness
Required that I give the gift he asked.
And by these blessed candles of the night,
Had you been there, I think you would have begged
The ring from me to give the worthy doctor.

PORTIA

Then keep that doctor far away from here!
If he should ever visit in this house,

Since he has got the jewel that I loved,
 And that which you did swear to keep for me,
 I will become as liberal as you;
 I'll not deny him any thing I have,
 No, not my body nor my husband's bed:
 Know him I shall, I am well sure of it:
 Don't stay away from home a single night,
 For if I'm left alone, I swear to you,
 Upon my honor — which I have not lost —
 I'll have that doctor for my bedfellow.

NERISSA
 And I his clerk, however jabbering
 And scrubby he might be — I'll keep him warm!

GRATIANO
 Do what you want. But if I catch him here,
 I'll break in half the young clerk's pen.

ANTONIO
 I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels.

PORTIA
 Your welcome here is perfect; you are not
 Responsible for men who break their word.

ANTONIO
 I pressed him further after he refused;
 He sent the ring because I asked him to.

BASSANIO
 The choice was mine, the wrong was only mine.
 Portia, you were generous to my friend,
 And freely offered any kind of fee
 To save his life; you did not hesitate.
 A ring I never would have parted with
 I gave the doctor as a gift from *you*.

PORTIA
 A gift from me, but more than that, a token.
 Faith between a man and wife: my heart.
 And *that* I never gave or would have given,
 Not to any mortal man but you.

BASSANIO
 Then I have no excuse. I gave the ring,
 And broke an oath, and lost your trust. But still —
 There's something that I did not give the judge,
 And would not give, and cannot give, because
 It has been yours since long before we met:
 This worthless man, his soul and body both,
 Your property to do with as you wish.
 Discard him now, and I will call you just.
 But keep him all your life, and you will see
 That never more will he break faith with thee.

ANTONIO
 I swear Bassanio is true to you;
 And always will be; I would give my bond.

PORTIA

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

ANTONIO

Here, Lord Bassanio; swear to keep this ring.

BASSANIO

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

PORTIA

I got it from him: pardon me, Bassanio,
For, by this ring, the doctor lay with me.

NERISSA

And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano;
That same boy, the doctor's clerk, had this,
And so last night I let him lie with me.

GRATIANO

Two faithful husbands punished for a sin
We never did commit, while they have done
The very thing they falsely blamed us for!
The wolves accuse the sheep of eating them!

PORTIA

Nerissa, I'm afraid these men of ours
Are dolts and lackwits in the first degree.
We never slept with any man at all,
But with our selves alone, like faithful wives.
I had the ring because you gave it to me,
Slept with the judge because he is myself.
My scrubby page was beautiful Nerissa.

GRATIANO

I know, I should have said that he was pretty.

NERISSA

No, I think I like that even less.

BASSANIO

I hung upon each word of yours in court,
And now that I have seen you as a man,
The admiration you deserve, I give;
You are complete and perfect in yourself.

PORTIA

Forgive me that my teasing caused you pain.
I thought that you would rail and stamp and swear,
And I would taunt you with the ring for years.
Instead it seemed the heart I love would break.

BASSANIO

And so it did, as long as I believed
That you believed that I had played you false.

PORTIA

Your honor never was in doubt, my love.
[To Antonio] Here's a letter from Bellario,
My kinsman, vouching for the things I said.

Bellario and I together planned
 The case I made in court. We might have used
 Another strategy, for we had word
 That several of your missing ships were safe —
 Delayed by storms and brought to other ports,
 Heavy with cargo, so your fortune's made
 Anew, and greater than it was before.
 But Shylock had his bond, and would not care
 That you yourself could pay within a month.
 The letter tells it all, Antonio.

ANTONIO

So all my gratitude is owed to you.

PORTIA

Not me, but God, and your own worth.
 I brought no ships to port, and it was you
 Who showed such mercy to the hate-filled Jew.
 Be poor or rich, your lasting fortune is
 The virtue that assures your place in heaven.
 Nerissa, you have something for Lorenzo.
 Jessica, your father's life was forfeit,
 All he owned as well. His life he keeps
 By pardon from the duke, and half his wealth
 Antonio returned, upon this deed —
 That when he dies, the whole of it is yours.

LORENZO

Fair ladies, you drop manna in the path
 Of starving people.

PORTIA

It is almost morning,
 We have traveled long, and yet I think:
 While it is night, indoors and two by two
 We have much more to say and do
 Before we close our weary eyes in sleep.
 But this I say before the company:
 My father made my husband pass a test,
 And I, my father's daughter, did the same.
 He passed the hardest test of honor here:
 He told the truth to me, despite my wrath.

BASSANIO

O learned doctor of the laws,
 Who saved my friend from Shylock's claws:
 When man and wife are rightly wed
 Which law prevents them from their bed?

GRATIANO

The law of long talking! Is this a trial?
 If so, the only interrogatory
 My Nerissa shall be sworn on is,
 Whether till tomorrow night she'll stay,
 Or go to bed, two hours left till day:
 My own opinion, be it light or dark,
 Is to be couching with the doctor's clerk.
 And while I live, I'll fear no other thing
 So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.

Exeunt