

*Dear Friend and Dear Lover: Reconciling Relationships in
The Merchant of Venice*

Our Cast of Characters

Antonio: A member of the Venetian circle of friends; especially close to Bassanio, for whose sake he seeks a loan from Shylock

Bassanio: Another Venetian friend; in love with Portia

Gratiano: Yet another of the Venetian friends; accompanies Bassanio to Belmont, where he falls in love with Nerissa

Jessica: Shylock's daughter; friend of Lancelot; in love with Lorenzo, with whom she runs away

Lancelot: A servant, first of Shylock, later of Bassanio; befriends Jessica

Lorenzo: One of the Venetian circle; in love with Jessica

Nerissa: Portia's friend and lady-in-waiting; in love with Gratiano

Portia: Rich heiress; friend of Nerissa; in love with Bassanio

Shylock: A Jewish moneylender; father of Jessica; enemy of Antonio

Tubal: A Jew; friend of Shylock

Enter Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salerio, and Solanio.

LORENZO
Nay, we will slink away in suppertime, 1
Disguise us at my lodging, and return
All in an hour.

GRATIANO
We have not made good preparation.

SALERIO
We have not spoke us yet of torchbearers. 5

SOLANIO
'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly ordered, 6
And better in my mind not undertook.

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

Enter Lancelot [with a letter].

Friend Lancelot, what's the news?
LANCELOT An it shall please you to break up this, it 10
shall seem to signify. [*Giving the letter.*]

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

GRATIANO Love news, in faith.

LANCELOT By your leave, sir. [*He starts to leave.*]

LORENZO Whither goest thou?

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

LORENZO
Hold here, take this. [*He gives money.*] Tell gentle
Jessica
I will not fail her. Speak it privately.
Exit clown [Lancelot].

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

SALERIO
Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight. 24

SOLANIO
And so will I.

LORENZO Meet me and Gratiano.
At Gratiano's lodging some hour hence. 26

SALERIO 'Tis good we do so. *Exit [with Solanio].*

GRATIANO
Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

LORENZO
I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed 29
How I shall take her from her father's house,
What gold and jewels she is furnished with,
What page's suit she hath in readiness.
If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven,
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake; 34
And never dare misfortune cross her foot, 35
Unless she do it under this excuse, 36
That she is issue to a faithless Jew. 37
Come, go with me. Peruse this as thou goest.
[He gives Gratiano the letter.]
Fair Jessica shall be my torchbearer. *Exeunt.*



PORTIA If to do were as easy as to know what were
good to do, chapels had been churches and poor 14
men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that
follows his own instructions. I can easier teach twenty
what were good to be done than to be one of the
twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may
devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er 18
a cold decree; such a hare is madness, the youth, to
skip o'er the meshes of good counsel, the cripple. But
this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a 20
husband. Oh, me, the word "choose"! I may neither 21
choose who I would nor refuse who I dislike; so is the 22
will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead
father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one
nor refuse none?

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

PORTIA I pray thee, overname them, and as thou nam-
est them I will describe them; and according to my
description level at my affection.

NERISSA First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

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

... some lines cut ...

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

PORTIA Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober,
and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk.
When he is best he is a little worse than a man, and
when he is worst he is little better than a beast. An 87
the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to 88
go without him.

NERISSA If he should offer to choose, and choose the 90
right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's
will if you should refuse to accept him.

PORTIA Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set
a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary casket, 94
for if the devil be within and that temptation without, 95
I know he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa, 96
ere I will be married to a sponge.

NERISSA You need not fear, lady, the having any of
these lords. They have acquainted me with their de-
terminations, which is indeed to return to their home
and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may
be won by some other sort than your father's imposi-
tion depending on the caskets. 102

PORTIA If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste 104
as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my
father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so rea-
sonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on 106
his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair
departure.

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

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

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

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

[1.1]

ANTONIO

Well, tell me now what lady is the same 119
 To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage,
 That you today promised to tell me of.

BASSANIO

'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
 How much I have disabled mine estate 124
 By something showing a more swelling port 125
 Than my faint means would grant continuance. 126
 Nor do I now make moan to be abridged 127
 From such a noble rate; but my chief care 128
 Is to come fairly off from the great debts 129
 Wherein my time, something too prodigal,
 Hath left me gaged. To you, Antonio, 130
 I owe the most, in money and in love,
 And from your love I have a warranty 132
 To unburden all my plots and purposes 133
 How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

ANTONIO

I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;
 And if it stand, as you yourself still do, 136
 Within the eye of honor, be assured 137
 My purse, my person, my extremest means
 Lie all unlocked to your occasions.

BASSANIO

In my schooldays, when I had lost one shaft, 140
 I shot his fellow of the selfsame flight 141
 The selfsame way with more advised watch 142
 To find the other forth, and by adventuring both 143
 I oft found both. I urge this childhood proof
 Because what follows is pure innocence. 145
 I owe you much, and, like a willful youth,
 That which I owe is lost; but if you please
 To shoot another arrow that self way 148
 Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,
 As I will watch the aim, or to find both 150
 Or bring your latter hazard back again 151
 And thankfully rest debtor for the first. 152

ANTONIO

You know me well, and herein spend but time 153
 To wind about my love with circumstance; 154
 And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
 In making question of my uttermost 156
 Than if you had made waste of all I have.
 Then do but say to me what I should do
 That in your knowledge may by me be done,
 And I am prest unto it. Therefore speak. 160

BASSANIO

In Belmont is a lady richly left; 161
 And she is fair and, fairer than that word,
 Of wondrous virtues. Sometimes from her eyes 163
 I did receive fair speechless messages.
 Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued 165
 To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia. 166
 Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
 For the four winds blow in from every coast
 Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
 Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchis' strand, 171
 And many Jasons come in quest of her.
 Oh, my Antonio, had I but the means
 To hold a rival place with one of them.
 I have a mind presages me such thrift 175
 That I should questionless be fortunate.

ANTONIO

Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
 Neither have I money nor commodity 178
 To raise a present sum. Therefore go forth. 179
 Try what my credit can in Venice do;
 That shall be racked even to the uttermost 181
 To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
 Go presently inquire, and so will I, 183
 Where money is, and I no question make 184
 To have it of my trust or for my sake. *Exeunt.* 185

[2.3]

Enter Jessica and [Lancelot] the clown.

JESSICA

I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so.
 Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,
 Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.
 But fare thee well. There is a ducat for thee. *[Giving money.]*

And, Lancelot, soon at supper shalt thou see
 Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest.
 Give him this letter; do it secretly. *[Giving a letter.]*
 And so farewell. I would not have my father
 See me in talk with thee.

LANCELOT Adieu! Tears exhibit my tongue. Most 10
 beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew! If a Christian did not
 play the knave and get thee, I am much deceived. But, 12
 adieu! These foolish drops do something drown my
 manly spirit. Adieu!

JESSICA Farewell, good Lancelot. *[Exit Lancelot.]*

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

[3.1]

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

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

SHYLOCK Why, there, there, there, there! A diamond
gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The 80
curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it 81
till now. Two thousand ducats in that, and other
precious, precious jewels. I would my daughter were
dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! Would she
were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! 85
No news of them? Why, so—and I know not what's
spent in the search. Why, thou loss upon loss! The
thief gone with so much, and so much to find the
thief, and no satisfaction, no revenge! Nor no ill luck
stirring but what lights o' my shoulders, no sighs but
o' my breathing, no tears but o' my shedding.

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

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

TUBAL Hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis. 95

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

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

SHYLOCK I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good
news! Ha, ha! Heard in Genoa?

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

SHYLOCK Thou stick'st a dagger in me. I shall never see
my gold again. Fourscore ducats at a sitting? Four-
score ducats?

TUBAL There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my
company to Venice that swear he cannot choose but
break. 108

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

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

SHYLOCK Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal. It
was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a 114
bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of
monkeys.

TUBAL But Antonio is certainly undone.

SHYLOCK Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal,
fee me an officer; bespeak him a fortnight before. I will 119
have the heart of him if he forfeit, for were he out of
Venice I can make what merchandise I will. Go, Tubal, 121
and meet me at our synagogue. Go, good Tubal; at our
synagogue, Tubal. *Exeunt [separately].*

SHYLOCK
 Well then, it now appears you need my help.
 Go to, then. You come to me and you say,
 "Shylock, we would have moneys"—you say so, 113
 You, that did void your rheum upon my beard 115
 And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur 116
 Over your threshold. Moneys is your suit. 117
 What should I say to you? Should I not say,
 "Hath a dog money? Is it possible
 A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" Or
 Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key, 121
 With bated breath and whispering humbleness, 122
 Say this:
 "Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last,
 You spurned me such a day, another time
 You called me dog, and for these courtesies
 I'll lend you thus much moneys"?

ANTONIO
 I am as like to call thee so again, 128
 To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
 If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
 As to thy friends, for when did friendship take
 A breed for barren metal of his friend?
 But lend it rather to thine enemy,
 Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face 134
 Exact the penalty.

SHYLOCK Why, look you how you storm!
 I would be friends with you and have your love,
 Forget the shames that you have stained me with,
 Supply your present wants, and take no doit
 Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me. 138
 This is kind I offer. 140

BASSANIO This were kindness. 141

SHYLOCK This kindness will I show.
 Go with me to a notary, seal me there
 Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,
 If you repay me not on such a day,
 In such a place, such sum or sums as are
 Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit
 Be nominated for an equal pound 148
 Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
 In what part of your body pleaseth me.

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'll rather dwell in my necessity. 154

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

SHYLOCK
 O father Abram, what these Christians are,
 Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect
 The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this:
 If he should break his day, what should I gain
 By the exaction of the forfeiture?
 A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
 Is not so estimable, profitable neither, 165
 As flesh of muttoms, beefs, or goats. I say
 To buy his favor I extend this friendship.
 If he will take it, so; if not, adieu. 168
 And for my love, I pray you, wrong me not. 169

ANTONIO
 Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

SHYLOCK
 Then meet me forthwith at the notary's.
 Give him direction for this merry bond,
 And I will go and purse the ducats straight,
 See to my house, left in the fearful guard 174
 Of an unthrifty knave, and presently
 I'll be with you. *Exit.*

ANTONIO Hie thee, gentle Jew.— 176
 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. 176
 [Exeunt.]

Enter [Lancelot the] clown and Jessica.

LANCELOT Yes, truly, for look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children; therefore, I promise you, I fear you. I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter. Therefore be o' 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?

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

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

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

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

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

Enter Lorenzo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

LANCELOT That is done, sir. They have all stomachs.

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

LANCELOT That is done too, sir, only "cover" is the word.

LORENZO Will you cover them, sir?

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

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

LANCELOT For the table, sir, it shall be served in; for the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in to