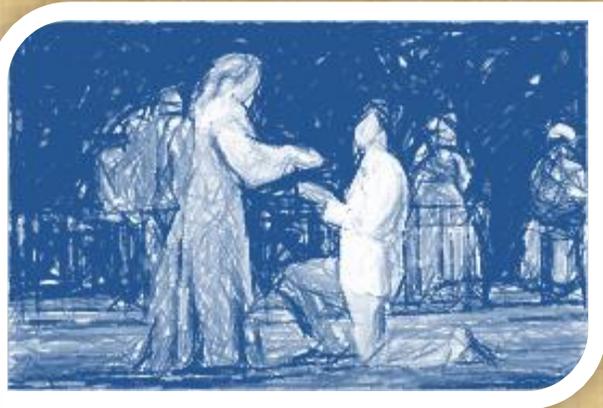


William Shakespeare's

Merchant of Venice



Lecture by

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Merchant of Venice

- One of the Shakespeare's romantic comedy in five Acts
- written between 1596 and 1599

Background information

- Queen Elizabeth was the only woman as a longest serving queen had to sacrifice many a female thing a lot. Not married and have kids.
- Sufferings of Jews as they were not Catholics
- Since Jews were in money lending business, created an impression upon Christian that they are earning by wrong means, resulted into unjustified laws against them.
- Powerful patriarchy. Portia was restricted by her father's will, if she marries her property will go to her husband. Portia & Nerissa were restricted in Belmont, she had to appear in disguise when she came to Belmont. Jessica was also restricted by Shylock in Venice.

Some Interesting Facts:

- ❑ Many of Shakespeare's dramas for its plots takes stories from the British, Roman or Italian history. He then works upon the characters and scenes suitable to English audience. Sometimes two different stories combined in one drama.
- ❑ Merchant of Venice sailing in such a boat having two different stories from two different sources combined in one. The first, the Casket story found in old Latin stories called "Gesta Romanorum." the story of bond with its "pound of Flesh" which leads story to the trial scene found in Italian collection "Il Pecorone" written by Sir Giovanni in 1558.
- ❑ While writing drama Shakespeare had to consider making parts suits to the actors who were employed in the company. The character of Lancelot was created to suit a popular comedian who was happened to be in the company.
- ❑ Also some popular dramas of Shakespeare The merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night, As You Like It, and Much ado About Nothing has two female characters commonly like Portia-Nerrisa, Rosalind-Celia, Olivia-Viola, Hero-Beatrice which were written in the light of two clever boy actors playing female roles. The taller for serious role and shorter for witty role.

Brief Synopsis:

Antonio and Bassanio were true friends. To marry Portia (A rich young lady of Belmont), Bassanio require some money from Antonio, since Antonio's ships were yet to reach the city, on his advice they borrowed money from Shylock. Shylock and Antonio were rival in business and with intention Shylock put up a bond of "pound of flesh" from Antonio (Guarantor) if Bassanio unable to pay the amount on the due date.

Bassanio won the casket choice to marry Portia as per the condition, but meanwhile the due date to return money to Shylock expires. On the other hand Jessica the daughter of Shylock elopes with Lorenzo, and the couple joins Bassanio to the Belmont. Infuriated Shylock against the Christian in particular decides to take revenge from Antonio.

Antonio was arrested on the plea of Shylock and produced before the duke where Shylock demanded pound of flesh. Bassanio offers double the sum he borrowed, but Shylock rejected the possibilities. The young counsel Balthasar, i.e. Portia in disguise of a lawyer pleaded the case along with her clerk (Nerissa).

Trough the loopholes in the bond Portia won the case and Antonio becomes free and as per the law of Venice, for conspiring against the Christian, half of the property was attached to the state and half of the property was given to the Christian (Antonio).

The drama ends with a comic episode of ring between wives and Husbands.

Characters:



Shylock:

A Jewish money lender and antagonist in the play. He agreed to give loan to Bassanio when Antonio entered into agreement as a guarantor. But Shylock was business rival to Antonio and he was searching for an opportunity to trap the Antonio. From the play we get an idea that Shylock received mistreatments from Christian of Venice since he was the Jew. When his daughter eloped with Lorenzo and emptied his life treasure he becomes angered and decided to take revenge from the Christian people. Therefore, when he got an opportunity through the bond which was expired without payment from Bassanio he demanded a pound of flesh from Antonio. Portia came to the rescue of Antonio in disguise of a lawyer. Through the law of Venice finally we learned that Shylock was made to divide his property between the state and to his daughter's husband.

From the dialogue and the circumstances around the shylock the character becomes memorable one in Shakespearean drama.

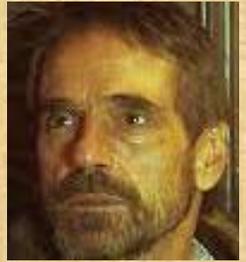
Portia:

A wealthy heiress from Belmont, Portia is portrait as the most beautiful and an intelligent lady suits as the real heroin of the drama. In the play she was bound with the will of her father that she should marry a man who will win the casket contest. Coincidentally she is able to get married to the man she love i.e. Bassanio. Her intelligence could be traced from her interactions with the suiter who came to win her through the casket contest. Her wisdom matching her intelligence reflected from the trial scene when she rescued Antonio from the trap of Shylock.



Antonio:

Antonio is a merchant of Venice and the friend of Bassanio who he love as his child. His love for his friend Bassanio made him enter in the agreement with the Shylock. Since he was confident that his ships would return soon from the sea he would be able to return the money to Shylock. He agreed to the clause of pound of flesh from his body even when Bassanio was reluctant. Unfortunately he received a bad news from the sea and coincidentally Bassanio failed in payment in due date. He was dragged to the court by Shylock and pleaded for the pound of flesh from his body. Antonio was rescued by Portia in disguise as he was dear to her husband.





Bassanio:

Bassanio is a gentleman in Venice and also a fast friend of Antonio. He falls in love with Portia and to win her in casket contest and to get married to her he needed some money. He borrowed money from Shylock and Antonio becomes his guarantor. He succeeded in the casket contest through his intelligence but unfortunately he failed to repay the money to Shylock in due date. Therefore, as per the agreement Shylock got an opportunity to trap the Antonio who was his business rival. Bassanio got support from his new wife and he offered double sum of borrowed amount to Shylock which was denied by the later. It was Portia who rescued Antonio by her intelligence. Comically Bassanio failed to recognize his wife led him to yet another trouble when he lost his ring to the lady (Portia) as a token of her help. Towards the end of the drama Bassanio learned that it was Portia who in disguise of Lawyer won the case and trapped him in ring episode.

Jessica:

She is the daughter of Shylock but from her dialogue she revealed that she hates to be called as his daughter. She eloped with Lorenzo who was also the friend to Bassanio. This was the reason Shylock becomes infuriated. He saw this act as the conspiracy of Christians against him. Jessica took with him the jewelry and money from her fathers home. Since Shylock was money minded he becomes frustrated with his lost treasure at the hand of his own daughter. In a rage he disown his daughter. With Lorenzo Jessica later joins Bassanio in Belmont where Portia entrusted to the couple to look after her property in her absence. Through the trial in court Antonio was acquitted and the half of the property of Shylock was attached to the state and half was given to Antonio. But Antonio asked Shylock to give that to his daughter Jessica.



Lorenzo:

A friend of Bassanio and Antonio, Lorenzo is in love with Shylock's daughter, Jessica. He help Jessica escape from her father's house and reached Belmont. There we learned that the couple was entrusted by Portia for handing over them her property in her absence. The couple got the half of Shylock's property since he lost case to the Christians.



Nerissa:

Yet another intelligent lady and assistant to Portia. She seems to be a companion to her and she also assisted her by becoming her clerk in the court trial. Jessica towards the end declared her love for Gratiano which was approved by Portia happily.



Gratiano

Gratiano is a friend of Bassanio's, a coarse and garrulous young man. While Bassanio courts Portia, Gratiano falls in love with Nerissa.



Launcelot Gobbo

Bassanio's servant. A comical, clownish figure who is especially adept at making puns, Launcelot leaves Shylock's service in order to work for Bassanio.



The prince of Morocco

A Moorish prince who seeks Portia's hand in marriage. The prince of Morocco asks Portia to ignore his dark countenance. He proves to be incorrect in the casket contest.



The prince of Arragon

An arrogant Spanish nobleman who also attempts to win Portia's hand by picking a casket. He fails equally like Prince of Morocco.



Solanio

A Venetian gentleman, and frequent counterpart to Salarino.



The duke of Venice

The ruler of Venice.



Old Gobbo

Launcelot's father, also a servant in Venice.



Tubal

A Jew in Venice, and one of Shylock's friends.



Doctor Bellario

A wealthy Paduan lawyer and Portia's cousin. Doctor Bellario never appears in the play

Balthasar

Portia's servant, whom she dispatches to get the appropriate materials from Doctor Bellario.

**Act wise summary and Analysis of
The Merchant of Venice**

Act I Scene I

Merchant of Venice Antonio complains to his friends, Salarino and Solanio. He is unable to explain his anxieties.

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 and Solanio Suggests his anxieties might be from his business especially from the sea. But Antonio dismissed the fact that merely with a ship his business wont be in trouble. Salanio then asked him if he is in love with somebody, to which Antonio rejected this possibility too.

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.

Antonio's friend Bassanio walked in with two friends named Lorenzo and Gratiano.
Gratiano too pointed out the worries of Antonio

Antonio responds

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

Gratiano warns Antonio against becoming the type of man who affects a solemn
demeanor in order to gain a wise reputation

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?.....

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 jokes that Gratiano has terribly little to say
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 asks Bassanio about his love.

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.

Later Bassanio here reveals his love for Portia and about his purpose to come to
Antonio

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 replies that he cannot give Bassanio another loan, as all his money is tied up in his present business ventures, but offers to guarantee any loan Bassanio can round up.

Act I Scene II

At Belmont, **Portia** complains to her lady-in-waiting, Nerissa, that she is weary of the world because, as her dead father's will stipulates, she cannot decide for herself whether to take a husband.

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 intelligently replies:

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's various suitors must choose between three chests, one of gold, one of silver, and one of lead, in the hopes of selecting the one that contains her portrait.

A Comic and interesting discussion between Portia and Nerrsa upon the arrival of suitors and their appearances counted by portia.

About Neapoloitan Prince she says

: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.

About the Count Palatine She opined:

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.

Upon the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon she expresses her views:

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

On the young baron of England she says:

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!

Each of these suitors has left without even attempting a guess for fear of the penalty for guessing wrong. This fact relieves Portia

Portia maintains upon such a waiting:

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 reminds her of Bassanio, who has visited once before, as the suitor most deserving and worthy of praise.

A servant enters to tell Portia that the prince of Morocco will arrive soon which saddens portia.

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

Bassanio reached Shylock

Shylock agrees to loan Bassanio three thousand ducats for a term of three months.

Upon Antonio as the Guarantor, Shylock is doubtful

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

Shylock decides that Antonio's guarantee of the loan will be sufficient
assurance, and asks to speak with him

For the meeting Bassanio put forward an invitation for a meal, but the way Shylock rejected it shows his hatred towards Christians.

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.

When Antonio arrives, Shylock, in an **aside**, confesses his hatred for Antonio:

[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!

Antonio makes it clear to Shylock that he is not in the habit of borrowing or lending money, but has decided to make an exception on behalf of his friend Bassanio.

As he calculates the interest on Bassanio's loan, Shylock remembers the many times that Antonio has cursed him

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 responds that he is likely to do so again,

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.

Assuring Antonio that he means to be friends, Shylock offers to make the loan without interest. But he tricks here with unusual...

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.

Bassanio warns Antonio against entering such an agreement, but Antonio assures him that he will have no trouble repaying the debt, as his ships will soon bring him wealth that far exceeds the value of the loan.

Shylock attempts to dismiss Bassanio's suspicions, asking what profit he stands to make by procuring a pound of Antonio's flesh.

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!

As Shylock heads off to the notary's office to sign the bond, Antonio remarks on Shylock's newfound generosity

The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

But Bassanio was doubtful about the nature of Shylock:

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

At last Antonio signed the bond against the wish of Bassanio.

In fact Bassanio never wanted his friend to put his life in risk for his sake.

Antonio signed the bond, thinking it really was (as the Jew said) merely in sport.

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

The prince of Morocco arrives to win Portia's hand in marriage by choosing a casket. He clears his point that Portia shouldn't mind his colour.

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 in reply clears her stand that she is abided with her fathers will:

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

But prince of Morrocco indulged in a lengthy proclamation of his own bravery and heroism, but Portia reminds him that if he made a wrong choice he would not be able to marry any lady in his life. She also informs him that many suitors have left without making any choice upon such condition. But Prince of Morrocco remains firm.

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

Act II SCENE II. Venice. A street.

Launcelot Gobbo, (A Clown) a servant of Shylock's, struggles to decide whether or not he should run away from his master. This very monologue reflects upon the character of Jew.

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, "Lancelot, good Christian Lancelot,

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."

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.

Lancelot continues...

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.

Just when Launcelot determines to run away, his father, Old Gobbo, enters. The old man is blind, and he asks how to get to Shylock's house, where he hopes to find young Launcelot. Because his father does not recognize him, Launcelot decides to play a prank on him

but soon reveal his identity to his father and confesses to his father that he is leaving Shylock's employment in the hopes of serving Bassanio.

Bassanio enters and the two plead with him to accept Launcelot as his servant. Bassanio accepts the offer.

Bassanio then meets Gratiano, who asks to accompany him to Belmont, and agrees on the condition that Gratiano tame his characteristically wild behavior. Gratiano promises to stay up to his expectation.

Act II, scene III

Shylock's daughter Jessica bids good-bye to Launcelot and gave him a task:

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, Lancelot, 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.

Jessica, left alone, confesses that although she feels guilty for being ashamed of her father

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.

Act II, scene IV

On a street in Venice, Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salarino, and Solanio discuss the plan to unite Lorenzo with Jessica. Gratiano frets that they are not well prepared, but Lorenzo assures the men that they have enough time to gather the necessary disguises and torchbearers. As they talk, Launcelot enters bearing Jessica's letter.

Lorenzo bids Launcelot to return to Shylock's house in order to assure Jessica, secretly, that Lorenzo will not let her down.

Launcelot departs, and Lorenzo orders his friends to prepare for the night's festivities.

Salarino and Solanio leave, and Lorenzo relates to Gratiano that Jessica will escape from Shylock's house by disguising herself as Lorenzo's torchbearer.

Act II Scene V

Upon knowing that Lancelot is shifting his loyalty to Bassanio, Shylock warns him that Bassanio will not be as lenient a master as Shylock himself has been:

You'll see the difference soon enough.

Perhaps you thought my wages were too little?

At least I pay them weekly, and in full.....

.....Did I work you hard? Compared to him,

I ask for little, since my needs are few,

But he'll demand a thousand luxuries.

Meanwhile, we learned from the previous scene that Shylock was invited for supper by Bassanio, though he hates them, he decided to join them. But he was worried for something wrong happen to his house in his back, so he makes his daughter Jessica conscious about it.

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.

Launcelot whispers to Jessica that she must disobey her father and look out the window for the Christian

Upon leaving his father to the supper with Bassanio, she reflected on her fathers character:

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.

Act II, scene VI:

Gratiano and Salarino reached in front of Shylock's house as decided.

Since Lorenzo was late they seem to be anxious.

Lorenzo then signals for the Jessica who came to the balcony and confirms if her beloved came there.

Jessica tosses him a casket of gold and jewels. Jessica descends and exits with Lorenzo and Salarino.

Antonio enters to report that Bassanio is sailing for Belmont immediately. Gratiano is obliged to leave the festivities and join Bassanio at once.

Act II, scene VII

Back in Belmont, Portia shows the prince of Morocco to the caskets, where he will attempt to win her hand by guessing which chest contains her portrait. He came near the three caskets and utters:

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.”

And next moment he further gave his thought before choosing the golden casket:

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!

But unfortunately he made a wrong choice and exit from the place in frustration.

And Portia feels a relief upon protected from such a prince.

Act II, scene VIII

Salanio and Salarino are in discussion over the elopement of Jessica with Lorenzo and Shylock's reaction over this betrayal.

Salanio informs his friend about the condition of Shylock:

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.”

Solanio hopes that Antonio is able to pay his debt, but Salarino reminds him of rumors that the long-awaited ships have capsized in the English Channel.

Yet they are hopeful for better situation as Bassanio and Antonio has good understanding. They are also hoping that the borrowed amount of three thousand ducats will be paid off to Shylock by Bassanio in time.

Act II SCENE IX. (Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.)

The prince of Arragon is trying his luck at winning Portia's hand in marriage.

May God bestow good fortune now to me
And my heart's hope! Gold; silver; and base lead.....

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.

And even the prince of Arragon made a wrong choice. Inside the silver casket, he finds a portrait of a blinking idiot, and a poem that condemns him as a fool. He departs.

Here shortly Portia learns about the arrival of a promising young Venetian, who seems like the perfect suitor, thinking him as Bassanio with an excitement Portia and Nerrisa went out to greet the guest.

ACT III : SCENE I. Venice. A street.

Salarino and Solanio discussing the rumors about Antonio's ships which were capsized in the sea

Shylock joins them and blames them for their roles in the elopement of Jessica to which they proudly accepts

Shylock also hears from Salerio about Antonio's bad fortune, and his grief turns to anger

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

Salarino fears about the bond if Shylock is demanding Antonio's flesh

And Shylock confirms his fears:

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.....

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.

Salarino and Solanio went to meet Antonio and Tubal the another Jew meet Shylock here.

Upon announcement of Tubal that he couldn't find her Shylock wishes her dead

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!

He also becomes infuriated when he learned that Jessica sold her mother's ring to buy a monkey.

He is now cursing Antonio and asked Tubal to get an officer to engaged in the trial case against Antonio

Act III SCENE II. Belmont. A room in Portia's house.

Bassanio arrives in Belmont to try his luck

Portia wants him to delay the choice so that she could get his company for long time

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.

She wishes she could teach him how to choose, and in fact gives him clues in her song, but will not defy the letter of the law of her father's will.

Bassanio instead expressed that he should make his choice now, to avoid prolonging the torment of living without Portia as his wife
He just examines the three caskets before making his choice:

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 damn'd 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!

Bassanio was about to make the right choice of casket and in aside Portia becomes happy and thanks her departed father:

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.

Bassanio picks the lead casket, which he opens to reveal Portia's portrait, along with a poem congratulating him on his choice and confirming that he has won Portia's hand.

Portia expresses her pleasures in such words:

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.

Portia offers him the ring of marriage vows to him:

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 accepts the ring with his love

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!

(Coincidentally this very ring becomes a topic of prank upon Bassanio by Portia in the last Act.)

Nerissa and Gratiano congratulate them and confess that they too have fallen in love with one another. They suggest a double wedding.

Both Bassanio and Portia approves the couple with pleasure

Meanwhile Jessica and Lorenzo along with Salarino also joins the company in Belmont

Salarino handed over a letter of Antonio to Bassanio when it was mentioned that his ships are lost and Shylock is planning to collect a pound of flesh from his body.

Bassanio was feeling a guilt on his part, since the loan was taken by him

Portia offers a twenty times of the sum borrowed, but Salarino and Jessica's statements turns the entire environ of rejoice into tragic one:

Salarino:

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.

Bassanio reads out loud the letter, where Antonio asks Bassanio for a brief reunion before he dies.

Portia urges her husband to rush to his friend's aid, and Bassanio leaves for Venice

Before leaving he again expresses his love for her:
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.

Act III: SCENE III. Venice. A street.

Shylock takes Antonio to prison, with Antonio pleading for mercy in vain.

Shylock:

Gaoler, look to him: tell not me of mercy;

This is the fool that lent out money gratis:

Gaoler, look to him.

Antonio:

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

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.

Solanio declares that Shylock is the worst of men, and Antonio reasons that the Jew hates him for bailing out many of Shylock's debtors.

Solanio tried to console Antonio by saying that the duke will never allow such a malicious contract to stand, but Antonio is not convinced.

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.

Salanio left weeping and Antonio hopes for Bassanio's arrival:

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

Act III: SCENE IV. Belmont. A room in PORTIA'S house.

Lorenzo informs the Portia about the friendship of Bassanio and Antonio and he appreciates Portia for her trust in her husband.

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.

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.

Portia leaves her estate in the hands of Lorenzo while pretending to stay at a monastery a few miles away during their husbands' absence.

As per her plan not concealed to anyone she sent her messenger Balthasar to her cousin in Padua to get a letter of decree.

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.

Now she turns towards Nerrssa and told her that they are going to Venice immediately, and on way only she will reveal her entire plan

Act III SCENE V. Belmont. A garden.

In a debate Launcelot tells Jessica he believes she is damned for her father's sins, but she asserts that because of her husband, she will not be:

Lancelot: 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.

Launcelot complains about the conversion of the Jews, which, since they will not be forbidden to eat pork, will raise the price of bacon.

Lorenzo enters and berates Launcelot for getting a Moorish servant pregnant.

He and Jessica discuss Portia's merits, and Lorenzo comments that he is as great a husband as Portia is a wife.

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.

ACT IV : SCENE I. Venice. A court of Justice.

*(*The trial scene is the longest in the play and stands as one of the most dramatic scenes in all of Shakespeare.)*

A trial against Antonio begins in the court of the Duke of the Venice.

The Duke expresses his concern for Antonio and his displeasures with Shylock:

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 replied to the duke that he has done all that he could do for him and that since nothing else can be done, Antonio will respond to Shylock's intentions.

Shylock was summoned in the court

The duke asked Shylock if this case against Antonio was to frighten him. The duke maintains that No one believes whether Shylock actually means to inflict such a horrible penalty on Antonio, who has already suffered the loss of his ships.

The Duke tries to reason with Shylock, asking him to have mercy in order to gain mercy, but Shylock counter argues:

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?

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?

Antonio when saw the Duke's continues arguments and counselling left no influence on Shylock he pleaded The Duke not to argue with Jew. Allow him to get his justice and Shylock to get his.

Meanwhile, Bassanio offered six thousand ducats, but Shylock unaccepted the sum since Antonio missed the day.

The Duke was expecting Doctor Bellerio to plead the case to get a favourable solutions.

The atmosphere of the court becomes emotional since Bassanio helplessly tries to cheer up the Antonio:

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 who nearly accepted his helplessness in the case tries to dissuade Bassanio from any further attempt in saving him:

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.

Nerissa enters, disguised as a lawyer's clerk, and gives the duke a letter from Bellario.

Shylock whets his knife, anticipating a judgment in his favor, and Gratiano accuses him of having the soul of a wolf. But Shylock expresses his determination

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.

As per the letter Doctor Bellerio was ill, expresses his inability to come to the court, therefore, he sends a young Counsel named Balthasar to plead the case in his place.

Portia in disguise of Balthasar appears before the Duke to plead the case on behalf of Doctor Bellerio, The Duke allowed him (Portia) to interrogate both the parties and called Antonio and Shylock before him.

Portia said to Antonio

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?

Portia confirms from the Antonio if the bond was correct, upon which Antonio confirms the same.

Portia acknowledges the bond and appeals to Shylock for mercy:

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.

When Shylock refuses her pleading, Portia says the law must be upheld, but asks him to reconsider mercy. Still, he demands his bond.

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

Portia enquires whether Antonio is able to pay the money, and Bassanio offers Shylock twice the sum and if need be he is willing to pay the bond ten times over, or with his own life. Bassanio appeals to the learned counsel:

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 rejected the possibility with idea that the law shall not be broken—the decrees of Venice must stand.

Upon the Doctor's stand seemed favourable to Shylock, he becomes excited:

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

Portia acknowledges the bond and when she realizes the bond favours Shylock she requested him for mercy

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.

But Shylock remain firm on his bond

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.

Dramatically Portia asked Antonio to get ready for the execution of bond

And Shylock becomes excited:

O noble judge! O excellent young man!

Portia asked Shylock if he brought any surgeon to cut the flesh, but Shylock rejected the possibility on the basis of bond.

ANTONIO speak to Bassanio as if he is speaking for the last time:

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.

Emotionally moved Bassanio expresses his willingness to offer everything to save his dear friend but when he shows his willingness to even sacrifice his wife, Portia interrogate him:

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.

In this discussion Gratiano also expresses his willingness out of his love for Antonio at this point but Nerrissa mocked at him:

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.

Portia now ask Shylock to come forward to claim his pound of flesh from Antonio:

A pound of that same merchant's flesh is yours.

The court awards it, and the law bestows it....

And you must cut this flesh from off his breast:

The law allows it, and the court awards it.

But when excitedly Shylock came forward with his sharp knife to cut the bosom of Antonio, Portia stops him and reveals the loopholes in the law:

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.

Portia cautions him for his judgement only not more than that else he is entitled to punishment according to the law of Venice:

If you exceed the bond,

Since you demanded justice, be assured

That you'll have justice, more than you desire.

Shylock becomes terrified with this sudden U-turn made by the counsellor

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

When Gratiano offers the sum, Portia stops him and directed Shylock to do his work exact or else suffer punishment, Portia provokes him:

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.

Shocked shylock becomes dumbstruck when he is realised he is trapped in law procedure, therefore, wanted to escape from the situation by leaving this case, but Portia pronounced her demand in the court reserved for Christians in Venice:

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.

As per the law of Venice The Duke pronounced his judgement:

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 stands surrendered before the duke

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.

When Portia asked Antonio about the opinion on the fate of Shylock, he maintained that he would return the sum to Shylock which would be given to him as per the law if Shylock give half the property to Jessica and Lorenzo (his son-in-law). But importantly there was a transformation in the character of Antonio is seen when further he reveals his mind of repentance:

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.

Shylock exit from the court after complaining his ill health.

But now Portia plays her game with her husband due to her disguise

Antonio and Bassanio offer to pay the disguised Portia and Nerissa for their help. They refuse, but Portia agrees to take Antonio's gloves, asking Bassanio for his wedding ring. When Bassanio hesitated since it was given to him by his wife as a wedding ring, Portia justifies of parting from ring wouldn't bring any wrath for him:

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.

Antonio also asked Bassanio to give the ring to the counsell as acknowledgement to her helps, therefore, Bassanio sends Gratiano to deliver the ring.

Act IV SCENE II. Venice. A street.

Portia and Nerissa deliver the deed for Shylock to sign so that Lorenzo and Jessica to get the sum assured to them from Shylock.

Gratiano catches up to deliver Bassanio's ring to them.

Nerissa decides to get Gratiano to give up his ring, and both plot to make the men sorry they ever did:

Portia:

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.

ACT V SCENE I. Belmont. Avenue to Portia's house

Lorenzo and Jessica in a romantic time comparing themselves as the lovers of mythical times. Lorenzo as if wished to live such a dream life with Jessica...

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.

The couple goes back and forth with endless declarations of love

Meanwhile Portia's servant Balthasar announced the arrival of Portia and Lancelot informs the arrival of Bassanio the next day.

Lorenzo asks for music with which to greet Portia

Lorenzo and Jessica sit on a grassy bank beneath the stars. The small discussion between the couple reveals their love for each other at the same time they are testing each other:

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.

The bonding of love between Lorenzo and Jessica seems to be beyond material pleasures

The beauty of this act lies in the conversation and beautiful thoughts of the characters:

While reaching her palace Portia notices the charm of her property and pleasures due to beautiful music :

It (music) never sounded sweeter than tonight...

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.

And immediately after their arrival in the palace, Portia warns the servants and guests:

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.

Bassanio in the company of Antonio and Gratiano reached the Belmont Palace.

Upon arrival Bassanio introduces Antonio to Portia

Immediately after exchanging greets amongst the hosts and guests, Gratiano and Nerissa started quarreling over the issue of ring.

Since audience know the truth the dialogue of Nerissa becomes comic at the same time terrible to Gratiano:

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 bear

Entering into the discussion Portia claims that Gratiano's conduct could not be acceptable and she indicated toward Bassanio and said that her husband would not do such a mistake:

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...

Upon such a confidence, Gratiano reveals that it was Bassanio who also parted with his ring as a fee to the lawyer. With this Portia shows her displeasures with her husband and declares:

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.

Portia pretendingly says that the ring was not given to the lawyer but it was given to some woman and here she threatens Bassanio that she will also become unfaithful like him:

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;
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.

Here Nerissa also threatens the Gratiano with the same intention
Finally Antonio came forwards and intervene the quarrel between these two couple:

I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels...
I pressed him further after he refused;
He sent the ring because I asked him to.

Dramatically Portia and Nerrissa gave their husbands the rings which husbands recognizes that which they had given it to the lawyer and the clerk.

Here some more shocks are left for Bassanio and Gratiano..

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.

Upon frustrating sound and lamentation of Gratiano, Portia reveals that nothing as such happened and told the husbands that she was the lawyer Balthasar and Nerrisa was her clerk She seeks forgiveness from both for teasing them severely.

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.

Happy ending of the drama after comic intertrogation of husbands by the wives...

Antonio receives news that some of his ships have miraculously arrived in port, and Lorenzo is told that he will inherit Shylock's wealth as declared in the judgement of the Duke.

Couple finally resolve to enter into the married life happily ever.

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?

Everyone retires to bed as morning comes.

Further Readings:

- ❑ William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, edited by Barbara A Mowat & Paul Werstine (Folger Shakespeare Library)
(https://shakespeare.folger.edu/downloads/pdf/the-merchant-of-venice_PDF_FolgerShakespeare.pdf)
- ❑ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Edited by A.W. Verity, Cambridge University Press (www.internetarchive.org)
- ❑ Shakespeare's *The merchant of Venice*, edited by W. Turner (S. Chand Publication)