

The Merchant of Venice

1.3

Enter Bassanio with Shylock the Jew

SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats. Well.

BASSANIO Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK For three months. Well.

BASSANIO For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound. 5

SHYLOCK Antonio shall become bound. Well.

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

SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound. 10

BASSANIO Your answer to that.

SHYLOCK Antonio is a good man.

BASSANIO Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK Ho, no, no, no, no! My meaning in saying he 15
is a good man is to have you understand me that he
is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition. He hath
an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies. I
understand moreover upon the Rialto he hath a third 20
at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he
hath 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 25
ducats. I think I may take his bond.

BASSANIO Be assured you may.

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

BASSANIO If it please you to dine with us. 30

SHYLOCK *[aside]* Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation
which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil
into! I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you,
walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat
with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. 35

Enter Antonio

[To Antonio] What news on the Rialto? *[To Bassanio]*

Who is he comes here?

BASSANIO This is Signor Antonio.

[Bassanio and Antonio speak silently to one another]

SHYLOCK *(aside)*

How like a fawning publican he looks.

I hate him for he is a Christian; 40

But more, for that in low simplicity

He lends out money gratis, and brings down

The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

If I can catch him once upon the hip

I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him. 45

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 interest. CurseÁd be my tribe

If I forgive him.

BASSANIO Shylock, do you hear? 50

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, 55

Will furnish me. But soft±±how many months

Do you desire? *[To Antonio]* Rest you fair, good signor.

Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

ANTONIO

Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow

By taking nor by giving of excess, 60

Yet to supply the ripe wants of my friend

I'll break a custom. *(To Bassanio)* Is he yet possessed

How much ye would?

SHYLOCK Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO And for three months. 65

SHYLOCK

I had forgot±±three months. *(To Bassanio)* You told me

so.±±

Well then, your bond; and let me see±±but hear you,

My thoughts you said you neither lend nor borrow
Upon advantage.

ANTONIO I do never use it.

SHYLOCK

When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep±± 70
This Jacob from our holy Abram was,
As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,
The third possessor; ay, he was the third±±

ANTONIO

And what of him? Did he take interest?

SHYLOCK

No, not take interest, not, as you would say, 75
Directly int'rest. Mark what Jacob did:
When Laban and himself were compromised
That all the eanlings which were streaked and pied
Should fall as Jacob's hire, the ewes, being rank,
In end of autumn turneÁd to the rams, 80
And when the work of generation was
Between these woolly breeders in the act,
The skilful shepherd peeled me certain wands,
And in the doing of the deed of kind
He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes 85
Who, then conceiving, did in eaning time
Fall parti-coloured lambs; and those were Jacob's.
This was a way to thrive; and he was blest;
And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.

ANTONIO

This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for±± 90
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven.
Was this inserted to make interest good,
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

SHYLOCK

I cannot tell. I make it breed as fast. 95
But note me, signor±±

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. 100

O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats. 'Tis a good round sum.

Three months from twelve~~±±~~then let me see the rate.

ANTONIO

Well, Shylock, shall we be beholden to you?

SHYLOCK

Signor Antonio, many a time and oft 105

In the Rialto you have rated me

About my moneys and my usances.

Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,

For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe.

You call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog, 110

And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,

And all for use of that which is mine own.

Well then, it now appears you need my help.

Go to, then. You come to me, and you say

`Shylock, we would have moneys'~~±±~~you say so, 115

You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,

And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur

Over your threshold. Moneys is your suit.

What should I say to you? Should I not say

`Hath a dog money? Is it possible 120

A cur can lend three thousand ducats?' Or

Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key,

With bated breath and whisp'ring humbleness

Say this: `Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last;

You spurned me such a day; another time 125

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,

To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.

If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not 130

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

Exact the penalty.

SHYLOCK

Why, look you, how you storm!

135

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

BASSANIO This were kindness.

SHYLOCK This kindness will I show.

Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond, and, in a merry sport,
If you repay me not on such a day, 145
In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit
Be nominated for an equal pound
Of your fair flesh to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me. 150

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.

ANTONIO

Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it. 155
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 160
The thoughts of others! (*To Bassanio*) 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 muttons, beeves, or goats. I say,
To buy his favour I extend this friendship.
If he will take it, so. If not, adieu,
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

ANTONIO

Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond. 170

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
Of an unthrifty knave±±and presently 175
I'll be with you.

ANTONIO Hie thee, gentle Jew.

Exit Shylock

The Hebrew will turn Christian; he grows kind.

BASSANIO

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

ANTONIO

Come on. In this there can be no dismay.
My ships come home a month before the day. 180

Exeunt