

# The Merchant of Venice

## 1.1

*Enter Antonio, Salerio, and Solanio*

**ANTONIO**

In sooth, 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 stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn; 5  
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me  
That I have much ado to know myself.

**SALERIO**

Your mind is tossing on the ocean,  
There where your argosies with portly sail,  
Like signors and rich burghers on the flood±± 10  
Or as it were the pageants of the sea±±  
Do overpeer the petty traffickers  
That curtsy to them, do them reverence,  
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

**SOLANIO** *(to Antonio)*

Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth 15  
The better part of my affections would  
Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still  
Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind,  
Peering in maps for ports and piers and roads,  
And every object that might make me fear 20  
Misfortune to my ventures out of doubt  
Would make me sad.

**SALERIO**

My wind cooling my broth  
Would blow me to an ague when I thought  
What harm a wind too great might do at sea.  
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run 25  
But I should think of shallows and of flats,  
And see my wealthy Andrew, decks in sand,  
Vailing her hightop lower than her ribs  
To kiss her burial. Should I go to church  
And see the holy edifice of stone 30  
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks

Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,  
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,  
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,  
And, in a word, but even now worth this, 35  
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought  
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought  
That such a thing bechanced would make me sad?  
But tell not me. I know Antonio  
Is sad to think upon his merchandise. 40

**ANTONIO**

Believe me, no. I thank my fortune for it,  
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,  
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate  
Upon the fortune of this present year.  
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad. 45

**SOLANIO**

Why then, you are in love.

**ANTONIO**

Fie, fie.

**SOLANIO**

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. Now, by two-headed Janus, 50  
Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time:  
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes  
And laugh like parrots at a bagpiper,  
And other of such vinegar aspect  
That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile 55  
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

*Enter Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Graziano*

Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,  
Graziano, and Lorenzo. Fare ye well.  
We leave you now with better company.

**SALERIO**

I would have stayed till I had made you merry 60  
If worthier friends had not prevented me.

**ANTONIO**

Your worth is very dear in my regard.  
I take it your own business calls on you,  
And you embrace th'occasion to depart.

**SALERIO** Good morrow, my good lords. 65

**BASSANIO**  
 Good signors both, when shall we laugh? Say, when?  
 You grow exceeding strange. Must it be so?

**SALERIO**  
 We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.  
*Exeunt Salerio and Solanio*

**LORENZO**  
 My lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio,  
 We two will leave you; but at dinner-time 70  
 I pray you have in mind where we must meet.

**BASSANIO** I will not fail you.

**GRAZIANO**  
 You look not well, Signor Antonio.  
 You have too much respect upon the world.  
 They lose it that do buy it with much care. 75  
 Believe me, you are marvellously changed.

**ANTONIO**  
 I hold the world but as the world, Graziano±±  
 A stage where every man must play a part,  
 And mine a sad one.

**GRAZIANO** Let me play the fool.  
 With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come, 80  
 And let my liver rather heat with wine  
 Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.  
 Why should a man whose blood is warm within  
 Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster,  
 Sleep when he wakes, and creep into the jaundice 85  
 By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio±±  
 I love thee, and 'tis my love that speaks±±  
 There are a sort of men whose visages  
 Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,  
 And do a wilful stillness entertain 90  
 With purpose to be dressed in an opinion  
 Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,  
 As who should say 'I am Sir Oracle,  
 And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark.'  
 O my Antonio, I do know of these 95  
 That therefore only are reputed wise  
 For saying nothing, when I am very sure,

If they should speak, would almost damn those ears  
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.  
I'll tell thee more of this another time. 100  
But fish not with this melancholy bait  
For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.±±  
Come, good Lorenzo.±±Fare ye well a while.  
I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

**LORENZO** *(to Antonio and Bassanio)*

Well, we will leave you then till dinner-time. 105  
I must be one of these same dumb wise men,  
For Graziano never lets me speak.

**GRAZIANO**

Well, keep me company but two years more  
Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

**ANTONIO**

Fare you well. I'll grow a talker for this gear. 110

**GRAZIANO**

Thanks, i'faith, for silence is only commendable  
In a neat's tongue dried and a maid not vendible.

*Exeunt Graziano and Lorenzo*

**ANTONIO** Yet is that anything now?

**BASSANIO** Graziano speaks an infinite deal of nothing,  
more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as 115  
two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you  
shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you  
have them they are not worth the search.

**ANTONIO**

Well, tell me now what lady is the same  
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage, 120  
That you today promised to tell me of.

**BASSANIO**

'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,  
How much I have disabled mine estate  
By something showing a more swelling port  
Than my faint means would grant continuance, 125  
Nor do I now make moan to be abridged  
From such a noble rate; but my chief care  
Is to come fairly off from the great debts  
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  
To unburden all my plots and purposes  
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

**ANTONIO**

I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it, 135  
And if it stand as you yourself still do,  
Within the eye of honour, be assured  
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  
The selfsame way, with more adviseÁd watch,  
To find the other forth; and by adventuring both,  
I oft found both. I urge this childhood proof  
Because what follows is pure innocence. 145  
I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,  
That which I owe is lost; but if you please  
To shoot another arrow that self way  
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,  
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

**ANTONIO**

You know me well, and herein spend but time  
To wind about my love with circumstance;  
And out of doubt you do me now more wrong 155  
In making question of my uttermost  
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 pressed unto it. Therefore speak. 160

**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, nothing undervalued 165  
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia;

Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,  
For the four winds blow in from every coast  
RenowneÁd suitors, and her sunny locks  
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece, 170  
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchis' strand,  
And many Jasons come in quest of her.  
O 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  
To raise a present sum. Therefore go forth±±  
Try what my credit can in Venice do; 180  
That shall be racked even to the uttermost  
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.  
Go presently enquire, and so will I,  
Where money is; and I no question make  
To have it of my trust or for my sake. 185

*Exeunt [severally]*