

The Merchant of Venice

2.7

*[Flourish of cornetts.] Enter Portia with Morocco
and both their trains*

PORTIA

Go, draw aside the curtains, and discover
The several caskets to this noble prince.
*The curtains are drawn aside, revealing three caskets
(To Morocco)* Now make your choice.

MOROCCO

This first of gold, who this inscription bears:
`Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.' 5
The second silver, which this promise carries:
`Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'
This third dull lead, with warning all as blunt:
`Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.'
How shall I know if I do choose the right? 10

PORTIA

The one of them contains my picture, Prince.
If you choose that, then I am yours withal.

MOROCCO

Some god direct my judgement! Let me see.
I will survey th'inscriptions back again.
What says this leaden casket? 15
`Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.'
Must give, for what? For lead? Hazard for lead?
This casket threatens. Men that hazard all
Do it in hope of fair advantages.
A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross. 20
I'll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead.
What says the silver with her virgin hue?
`Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'
`As much as he deserves': pause there, Morocco,
And weigh thy value with an even hand. 25
If thou beest rated by thy estimation
Thou dost deserve enough, and yet `enough'
May not extend so far as to the lady.
And yet to be afeard of my deserving

Were but a weak disabling of myself. 30
 As much as I deserve±±why, that's the lady!
 I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,
 In graces, and in qualities of breeding;
 But more than these, in love I do deserve.
 What if I strayed no farther, but chose here? 35
 Let's see once more this saying graved in gold:
 `Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.'
 Why, that's the lady! All the world desires her.
 From the four corners of the earth they come
 To kiss this shrine, this mortal breathing saint. 40
 The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds
 Of wide Arabia are as throughfares now
 For princes to come view fair Portia.
 The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head
 Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar 45
 To stop the foreign spirits, but they come
 As o'er a brook to see fair Portia.
 One of these three contains her heavenly picture.
 Is't like that lead contains her? 'Twere damnation
 To think so base a thought. It were too gross 50
 To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave.
 Or shall I think in silver she's immured,
 Being ten times undervalued to tried gold?
 O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem
 Was set in worse than gold. They have in England 55
 A coin that bears the figure of an angel
 Stamped in gold, but that's insculped upon;
 But here an angel in a golden bed
 Lies all within. Deliver me the key.
 Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may. 60
He is given a key

PORTIA

There, take it, Prince; and if my form lie there,
 Then I am yours.

Morocco opens the golden casket

MOROCCO

O hell! What have we here?
 A carrion death, within whose empty eye
 There is a written scroll. I'll read the writing.
 `All that glisters is not gold; 65

Often have you heard that told.
Many a man his life hath sold
But my outside to behold.
Gilded tombs do worms infold.
Had you been as wise as bold, 70
Young in limbs, in judgement old,
Your answer had not been enscrolled.
Fare you well; your suit is cold.'
Cold indeed, and labour lost.
Then farewell heat, and welcome frost. 75
Portia, adieu. I have too grieved a heart
To take a tedious leave. Thus losers part.
[Flourish of cornetts.] Exit with his train

PORTIA

A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go.
Let all of his complexion choose me so.
The curtains are drawn. Exeunt