

# The Merchant of Venice

## 3.2

*Enter Bassanio, Portia, Nerissa, Graziano, and all their trains. [The curtains are drawn aside revealing the three caskets]*

**PORTIA** (to Bassanio)

I pray you tarry. Pause a day or two  
Before you hazard, for in choosing wrong  
I lose your company. Therefore forbear a while.  
There's something tells me $\pm\pm$ but it is not love $\pm\pm$   
I would not lose you; and you know yourself 5  
Hate counsels not in such a quality.  
But lest you should not understand me well $\pm\pm$   
And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought $\pm\pm$   
I would detain you here some month or two  
Before you venture for me. I could teach you 10  
How to choose right, but then I am forsworn.  
So will I never be; so may you miss me.  
But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,  
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,  
They have o'erlooked me and divided me. 15  
One half of me is yours, the other half yours $\pm\pm$   
Mine own, I would say, but if mine, then yours,  
And so all yours. O, these naughty times  
Puts bars between the owners and their rights;  
And so, though yours, not yours. Prove it so, 20  
Let fortune go to hell for it, not I.  
I speak too long, but tis to piece the time,  
To eke it, and to draw it out in length  
To stay you from election.

**BASSANIO** Let me choose,  
For as I am, I live upon the rack. 25

**PORTIA**  
Upon the rack, Bassanio? Then confess  
What treason there is mingled with your love.

**BASSANIO**  
None but that ugly treason of mistrust  
Which makes me fear th'enjoying of my love.

There may as well be amity and life  
'Tween snow and fire as treason and my love.

# PORTIA

# BASSANIO

## PORTIA

# BASSANIO

Had been the very sum of my confession.

O happy torment, when my torturer

But let me to my fortune and the caskets.

# PORTIA

If you do love me, you will find me out.

Nerissa and the rest, stand all aloof.

Then if he lose he makes a swanlike end,

May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream

And wat'ry deathbed for him. He may win,

Even as the flourish when true subjects bow

As are those dulcet sounds in break of day

That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear

With no less presence but with much more love

## The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy

To the sea-monster. I stand for sacrifice.

With bleareÁd visages come forth to view

Live thou, I live. With much much more dismay

I view the fight than thou that mak'st the fray.

**[ONE FROM PORTIA'S TRAIN]**

Tell me where is fancy bred,  
Or in the heart, or in the head?  
How begot, how nourish'd?

65

**[ALL]**

Reply, reply.

**[ONE FROM PORTIA'S TRAIN]**

It is engendered in the eyes,  
With gazing fed; and fancy dies  
In the cradle where it lies.  
Let us all ring fancy's knell. 70  
I'll begin it: ding, dong, bell.

**ALL**

Ding, dong, bell.

**BASSANIO** (*aside*)

So may the outward shows be least themselves.  
The world is still deceived with ornament.  
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt 75  
But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,  
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,  
What damnable error but some sober brow  
Will bless it and approve it with a text,  
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament? 80  
There is no vice so simple but assumes  
Some mark of virtue on his outward parts.  
How many cowards whose hearts are all as false  
As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins  
The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars, 85  
Who, inward searched, have livers white as milk?  
And these assume but valour's excrement  
To render them redoubted. Look on beauty  
And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight,  
Which therein works a miracle in nature, 90  
Making them lightest that wear most of it.  
So are those crisped, snaky, golden locks  
Which makes such wanton gambols with the wind  
Upon suppose'd fairness, often known  
To be the dowry of a second head, 95  
The skull that bred them in the sepulchre.  
Thus ornament is but the guileful shore

To a most dangerous sea, the beauteous scarf  
Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,  
The seeming truth which cunning times put on 100  
To entrap the wisest. (*Aloud*) Therefore, thou gaudy  
gold,  
Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee.  
(*To the silver casket*) Nor none of thee, thou pale and  
common drudge  
'Tween man and man. But thou, thou meagre lead,  
Which rather threaten'st than dost promise aught, 105  
Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence,  
And here choose I. Joy be the consequence!

**PORTIA** (*aside*)

How all the other passions fleet to air,  
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,  
And shudd'ring fear, and green-eyed jealousy. 110  
O love, be moderate! Allay thy ecstasy.  
In measure rain thy joy; scant this excess.  
I feel too much thy blessing: make it less,  
For fear I surfeit.

*Bassanio opens the leaden casket*

**BASSANIO** What find I here?

Fair Portia's counterfeit. What demi-god 115  
Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?  
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,  
Seem they in motion? Here are severed lips  
Parted with sugar breath. So sweet a bar  
Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs 120  
The painter plays the spider, and hath woven  
A golden mesh t'untrap the hearts of men  
Faster than gnats in cobwebs. But her eyes±±  
How could he see to do them? Having made one,  
Methinks it should have power to steal both his 125  
And leave itself unfurnished. Yet look how far  
The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow  
In underprizing it, so far this shadow  
Doth limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll,  
The continent and summary of my fortune. 130  
`You that choose not by the view  
Chance as fair and choose as true.

Since this fortune falls to you,  
 Be content, and seek no new.  
 If you be well pleased with this, 135  
 And hold your fortune for your bliss,  
 Turn you where your lady is,  
 And claim her with a loving kiss.'  
 A gentle scroll. Fair lady, by your leave,  
 I come by note to give and to receive, 140  
 Like one of two contending in a prize,  
 That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,  
 Hearing applause and universal shout,  
 Giddy in spirit, still gazing in a doubt  
 Whether those peals of praise be his or no. 145  
 So, thrice-fair lady, stand I even so,  
 As doubtful whether what I see be true  
 Until confirmed, signed, ratified by you.

**PORTIA**

You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,  
 Such as I am. Though for myself alone 150  
 I would not be ambitious in my wish  
 To wish myself much better, yet for you  
 I would be trebled twenty times myself,  
 A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more  
 rich,  
 That only to stand high in your account 155  
 I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,  
 Exceed account. But the full sum of me  
 Is sum of something which, to term in gross,  
 Is an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractiseÁd,  
 Happy in this, she is not yet so old 160  
 But she may learn; happier than this,  
 She is not bred so dull but she can learn;  
 Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit  
 Commits itself to yours to be directed  
 As from her lord, her governor, her king. 165  
 Myself and what is mine to you and yours  
 Is now converted. But now I was the lord  
 Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,  
 Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,  
 This house, these servants, and this same myself 170

Are yours, my lord's. I give them with this ring,  
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,  
Let it presage the ruin of your love,  
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

**BASSANIO**

Madam, you have bereft me of all words. 175  
Only my blood speaks to you in my veins,  
And there is such confusion in my powers  
As after some oration fairly spoke  
By a belovèd prince there doth appear  
Among the buzzing please'd multitude, 180  
Where every something being blent together  
Turns to a wild of nothing save of joy,  
Expressed and not expressed. But when this ring  
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence.  
O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead. 185

**NERISSA**

My lord and lady, it is now our time  
That have stood by and seen our wishes prosper  
To cry 'Good joy, good joy, my lord and lady!'

**GRAZIANO**

My lord Bassanio, and my gentle lady,  
I wish you all the joy that you can wish, 190  
For I am sure you can wish none from me.  
And when your honours mean to solemnize  
The bargain of your faith, I do beseech you  
Even at that time I may be married too.

**BASSANIO**

With all my heart, so thou canst get a wife. 195

**GRAZIANO**

I thank your lordship, you have got me one.  
My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours.  
You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid.  
You loved, I loved; for intermission  
No more pertains to me, my lord, than you. 200  
Your fortune stood upon the caskets there,  
And so did mine too, as the matter falls;  
For wooing here until I sweat again,  
And swearing till my very roof was dry  
With oaths of love, at last±±if promise last±± 205

I got a promise of this fair one here  
To have her love, provided that your fortune  
Achieved her mistress.

**PORTIA** Is this true, Nerissa?

**NERISSA**

Madam, it is, so you stand pleased withal.

**BASSANIO**

And do you, Graziano, mean good faith? 210

**GRAZIANO** Yes, faith, my lord.

**BASSANIO**

Our feast shall be much honoured in your marriage.

**GRAZIANO** *(to Nerissa)*

We'll play with them the first boy for a thousand  
ducats.

**NERISSA** What, and stake down?

**GRAZIANO**

No, we shall ne'er win at that sport and stake down. 215

*Enter Lorenzo, Jessica, and Salerio, a messenger  
from Venice*

But who comes here? Lorenzo and his infidel!

What, and my old Venetian friend Salerio!

**BASSANIO**

Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome hither,

If that the youth of my new int'rest here

Have power to bid you welcome. *(To Portia)* By your  
leave, 220

I bid my very friends and countrymen,

Sweet Portia, welcome.

**PORTIA**

So do I, my lord. They are entirely welcome.

**LORENZO**

I thank your honour. For my part, my lord,

My purpose was not to have seen you here, 225

But meeting with Salerio by the way

He did entreat me past all saying nay

To come with him along.

**SALERIO**

I did, my lord,

And I have reason for it. Signor Antonio

Commends him to you.

*He gives Bassanio a letter*

**BASSANIO**

Ere I ope his letter 230

I pray you tell me how my good friend doth.

**SALERIO**

Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind;  
Nor well, unless in mind. His letter there  
Will show you his estate.

*Bassanio opens the letter and reads*

**GRAZIANO**

Nerissa, (*indicating Jessica*) cheer yon stranger. Bid her  
welcome. 235

Your hand, Salerio. What's the news from Venice?  
How doth that royal merchant good Antonio?  
I know he will be glad of our success.  
We are the Jasons; we have won the fleece.

**SALERIO**

I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost. 240

**PORTIA**

There are some shrewd contents in yon same paper  
That steals the colour from Bassanio's cheek.  
Some dear friend dead, else nothing in the world  
Could turn so much the constitution  
Of any constant man. What, worse and worse? 245  
With leave, Bassanio, I am half yourself,  
And I must freely have the half of anything  
That this same paper brings you.

**BASSANIO**

O sweet Portia,

Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words  
That ever blotted paper. Gentle lady, 250  
When I did first impart my love to you  
I freely told you all the wealth I had  
Ran in my veins: I was a gentleman;  
And then I told you true; and yet, dear lady,  
Rating myself at nothing, you shall see 255  
How much I was a braggart. When I told you  
My state was nothing, I should then have told you  
That I was worse than nothing, for indeed  
I have engaged myself to a dear friend,  
Engaged my friend to his mere enemy, 260  
To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady,  
The paper as the body of my friend,  
And every word in it a gaping wound



Issuing life-blood. But is it true, Salerio?  
Hath all his ventures failed? What, not one hit? 265  
From Tripolis, from Mexico, and England,  
From Lisbon, Barbary, and India,  
And not one vessel scape the dreadful touch  
Of merchant-marring rocks?

**SALERIO** Not one, my lord.  
Besides, it should appear that if he had 270  
The present money to discharge the Jew  
He would not take it. Never did I know  
A creature that did bear the shape of man  
So keen and greedy to confound a man.  
He plies the Duke at morning and at night, 275  
And doth impeach the freedom of the state  
If they deny him justice. Twenty merchants,  
The Duke himself, and the magnificoes  
Of greatest port, have all persuaded with him,  
But none can drive him from the envious plea 280  
Of forfeiture, of justice, and his bond.

**JESSICA**  
When I was with him I have heard him swear  
To Tubal and to Cush, his countrymen,  
That he would rather have Antonio's flesh  
Than twenty times the value of the sum 285  
That he did owe him; and I know, my lord,  
If law, authority, and power deny not,  
It will go hard with poor Antonio.

**PORTIA** *(to Bassanio)*  
Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble?

**BASSANIO**  
The dearest friend to me, the kindest man, 290  
The best-conditioned and unwearied spirit  
In doing courtesies, and one in whom  
The ancient Roman honour more appears  
Than any that draws breath in Italy.

**PORTIA** What sum owes he the Jew? 295

**BASSANIO**  
For me, three thousand ducats.

**PORTIA** What, no more?  
Pay him six thousand and deface the bond.

Double six thousand, and then treble that,  
Before a friend of this description  
Shall lose a hair thorough Bassanio's fault. 300  
First go with me to church and call me wife,  
And then away to Venice to your friend;  
For never shall you lie by Portia's side  
With an unquiet soul. You shall have gold  
To pay the petty debt twenty times over. 305  
When it is paid, bring your true friend along.  
My maid Nerissa and myself meantime  
Will live as maids and widows. Come, away,  
For you shall hence upon your wedding day.  
Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer. 310  
Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.  
But let me hear the letter of your friend.

[BASSANIO] (*reads*) 'Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all  
miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very  
low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit, and since in paying 315  
it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared  
between you and I if I might but see you at my death.  
Notwithstanding, use your pleasure. If your love do  
not persuade you to come, let not my letter.'

PORTIA  
O, love! Dispatch all business, and be gone. 320

BASSANIO  
Since I have your good leave to go away  
I will make haste, but till I come again  
No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay  
Nor rest be interposer 'twixt us twain.  
*Exeunt*