

# **SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny**

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 2003



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# **SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny**

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Etext by Dagny

To Dan Woloshen who gave  
The most stunning portrayal of Shylock I've ever seen

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**CHARACTERS:**

**THE DOGE OF VENICE**

**ANTONIO, Venetian Merchant**

**BASSANIO, his friend, lover of Portia**

**GRATIANO, lover of Nerissa**

**LORENZO, lover of Jessica**

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**SHYLOCK, Jew**

**TUBAL, another Jew, friend of Shylock**

**AN OFFICER**

**PORTIA, rich heiress**

**NERISSA, servant of Portia**

**JESSICA, daughter of Shylock**

**SENATORS**

**OFFICERS**

**A GAOLER**

**VALETS**

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**ACT I**

The stage represents the Rialto. To the left the home of the Jew Shylock.

Antonio is seated on a bench. Lorenzo and Bassanio are standing to his right and left, at the front of the stage to the right.

**ANTONIO:** I am sad today without knowing the cause of it.  
Gentlemen, don't ask me what brings about  
This puerile chagrin—it's only too certain  
That it always pursues me, especially this morning.

**BASSANIO:** It's because your mind is strolling on the Ocean  
With all your ships, following them and bringing them back,  
And sees them dominating with their proud colors,  
Merchant ships, which, following their wake,  
Are coming to salute you by lowering their sails.

**LORENZO:** If I had, between the water of the seas and the stars,  
As much money and as much gold, I would never sleep over it.  
I would walk doubled over, seeking at each step  
Which way the wind was making the grass lean  
To see in it the fate of my proud ships.  
I couldn't breathe over a very hot plate  
Without thinking that the wind was ruining me as it blows,  
Nor look on the high clock and wall of a church  
Without thinking of obstacles wherein my great masts were breaking.  
Now that, I am sure of it, is what is making you pensive?

**ANTONIO:** No, I thank God for it, that's not the motive.  
I haven't wagered all on a single chance.  
So, each day, I have more than one hope.

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**BASSANIO:** Could you be amorous?

**ANTONIO:** Fie!

**LORENZO:** You disdain  
These childish weaknesses?

**BASSANIO:** Friend, you pity us,  
And you are right. You are indeed more wise  
Than us two.

(Enter Gratiano.)

**GRATIANO:** What, the three of us!— Put on a better face,  
My cousin! Your aunt is suffering visibly.  
Riches are tiresome for you and a black torment.  
I find you changed.

**ANTONIO:** The world is a stage  
Wherein each plays a role; and it's really a vain thing,  
Gratiano, to want to leave one's job.  
Mine is to be sad.

**GRATIANO:** Well, as for me, my role  
Will be that of madman. Age and its wrinkles  
Will surprise me one day amongst twenty empty flasks.  
Why then will a young man, enflamed by love  
Be as cold as an embalmed ancestor?  
And why, if fate is unjust to us  
Be forced to suffer by having jaundice?  
Heavens, my friend, I want to give you some advice,  
There are certain folks, enraptured with themselves,  
Who stroll around masked by a pretended gravity;  
The profundity of their mind painted on their face;  
Their look says "I'm going to tell you, but first  
Quiet down the uproar of the wind and the mosquitoes!"  
And because no one hesitates to avoid them,

ACT I

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The vulgar take them for thinkers by their silence!  
This melancholy is a deceitful trap  
Which makes an honest man a fool to be feared;  
And that frowning air, the aspect of which alone irritates me,  
So seldom agrees with true merit.  
Don't go to use it yourself!

**ANTONIO:** Would you have me be loquacious?

**GRATIANO:** My sermon tonight! At present it's late.  
They're expecting me at Belmont.  
(low to Lorenzo) Well, your beautiful Jewess,  
Lorenzo?

**LORENZO:** The moment of rendez-vous is coming.  
(pointing to the window of the Jew)  
And there's her window.

**GRATIANO:** Ah! tell me about this.

(They leave.)

**ANTONIO:** (smiling) Young talkers of nothing!

**BASSANIO:** I don't know anyone here who does it more.  
He talks more than he did in two years

**ANTONIO:** (gravely) Fine!

**BASSANIO:** Knows the abodes of women.

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**ANTONIO:** That's very fine! But let's know, my friend,  
That story that yesterday you half told  
About that young woman and that pilgrim.

**BASSANIO:** (sitting beside Antonio)  
Here it is.— You know that on my last voyage,  
To make a good appearance and to shine for a moment,  
I placed my patrimony in great ruin.  
It doesn't afflict me to have little fortune,  
But the debts I have listed importune me.  
You, Antonio, are my greatest creditor,  
And yet I don't know in whom to confide,  
If not you.

**ANTONIO:** Eh! Let me know  
Your debt, Bassanio, and what it may be.  
If, as I am sure, there's nothing against honor,  
It willingly subsides at all undertakings  
With my purse, my wealth, my life and my sword.

**BASSANIO:** I don't want to enjoy a usurped esteem.  
Heavens! when I was still a school boy,  
And forgetting myself at a game of archery,  
I lost my arrow in some wild wood.  
I launched another, and, seeing further,  
I followed it in the air by the same route  
And I found the two of them under my hand.  
To speak to you in all frankness, that's my situation.  
All that I owe you is lost. To make it good,  
You must risk what it cost you,  
A new arrow and of the same sort.

**ANTONIO:** (pulling his ear affectionately)  
Don't give yourself so much trouble with me.  
For us, euphemism is idle and boring.  
My dear chap, you are doing me wrong by hesitating,  
More than by the perils of an important contract.  
Say what you must and I will consent right away.

**BASSANIO:** Near here, on the shore, in a palace dwells  
A rich heiress. She is beautiful and her eyes

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Speak to me in a mute and fractious discourse.  
Her sweet name is Portia— On her, this name shines  
No less than the fine name of that illustrious girl  
That Cato granted to Brutus as a spouse  
And whose virtues the universe admired.  
To see her, so perfect in everything and so pretty  
All the princes of Europe are charging into Italy;  
Even from Africa, yesterday, came two.  
On this point I want to compete with them  
But I am exhausted by this arduous battle;  
Tonight my creditors are consummating my fall  
And my romance may end in prison.  
If you can support me for a day, and I have some reason  
To hope. For everything presages my success.

**ANTONIO:** My fortune is at sea, still I'll engage myself  
To give it to you in gold; all that you wish.  
My credit will suffice you, and you will exhaust it.  
Go, inform yourself, contract that sum,  
And I will sign everything when you have your man.

**BASSANIO:** Thanks.

**ANTONIO:** Enough of that word; I'm going on the bridge  
For a short while. Goodbye.

(Exit Antonio.)

**BASSANIO:** (alone) My word! since he is answering  
For my new debt, I must assure myself  
Of Shylock, the old Jew, past master in usury.

(He raps on the door; the Jew looks through the window suspiciously  
through a grill, and then opens the door for him. After a moment they  
come out again together.)

**SHYLOCK:** Three thousand ducats? Fine.

ACT I

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**BASSANIO:** For three days.

**SHYLOCK:** Three days? Fine.

**BASSANIO:** For my name Antonio will substitute his.

**SHYLOCK:** Antonio? Fine.

**BASSANIO:** And can I be sure of it?

**SHYLOCK:** Three thousand!  
For three days! (aside) Antonio's engaging himself; he's clever!

**BASSANIO:** Your word?

**SHYLOCK** Is he good?

**BASSANIO:** Were you ever told the contrary?

**SHYLOCK:** Oh! no, no, no I tell you! no! but,  
In saying he's good, I mean for you to understand  
That he suffices, that he's secure. Still, at all events  
His means are only there in substitution.  
I see he has a ship for every nation.  
One to the Indies, and another to Mexico, a third  
In England: they speak too, of a fourth  
In Tripoli; at least on the Rialto, it's pretended  
That his fortunate commerce extends on all sides.  
But with their fine masts, with their white sails,  
With their masts, your vessels are only planks

ACT I

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And your sailors are men in boats.  
There are rats on the land, and you have rats at sea,  
And robbers on the ocean, as there are robbers on land;  
Pirates to whom the waters are always in tribute;  
Then the currents, the winds, the rocks—but still  
The man is sufficient. Yes, I will give, in cash,  
Three thousand ducats—I think that I can take  
His obligation.

**BASSANIO:** Yes.

**SHYLOCK:** But I intend to hear him,  
To see him himself—and then to consider, the whole day  
To calculate his credit, the chances of return,  
All in the end! Shall I see him?

**BASSANIO:** You must see him at dinner  
And dine with us?

**SHYLOCK:** Yes! Detestable plan!  
Yes! to eat pork! yes! the impure animal  
Wherein the Nazarene, with his fatal power,  
Has locked in the devil. Ah! I really want to hear  
With each of you to buy or sell,  
To change gold or silver—to give or receive,  
But pray with you, or indeed eat or drink!  
No! What do they say here that can possibly be believed  
On the Rialto?

**BASSANIO:** Nothing. But Antonio is coming toward us.

**SHYLOCK:** (aside) Hypocritical and treacherous stockbroker! you see  
With what a peaceful and wise air he gilds himself!  
I hate this man as a Christian and yet more  
Of his baseness and simplicity  
That make him loan money gratis! Truly,  
He's causing the rate of usury to lower in Venice.  
If I could contrive some clever surprise,  
I would satiate on him my old aversion.

ACT I

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He detests the holy nation of Jews.  
Everywhere the merchants hold their meetings,  
My business is troubled by him every day.  
He blames my tricks and my secret contracts.  
My legitimate gains he calls interest.  
May my tribe be cursed if Shylock pardons him!

**BASSANIO:** Shylock. (no response)  
Do you hear?

**SHYLOCK:** Ah! It's that I was cogitating.  
And I was counting to myself, almost  
How many gold ducats I can hold in readiness.  
If I myself can't make up this sum,  
I would fetch for you the coffer of another man!  
Tubal, a rich Hebrew of my tribe.  
(bowing deeply, to Antonio) Lord  
God keep you joyful, in fortune, in comfort.  
We we're speaking of you.

**ANTONIO:** Listen— My custom,  
I say to you again, Shylock, without bitterness,  
Is to refuse dangerous contracts  
Which result from your tricks in onerous interest.  
But, for my young friend, this time, I'm renouncing it.  
(to Bassanio)  
You asked for the sum? Let him decide!

**SHYLOCK:** Yes, three thousand ducats.

**ANTONIO:** For three days?

**SHYLOCK:** Three days? yes!  
Make your bill, from today, lord,  
And we will see. Yet, if I thought I understood  
You seem to hate usury and you forbid  
Loaning on interest?

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**ANTONIO:** I've never subscribed to it.

**SHYLOCK:** You have reasons that I don't know; but  
Where Jacob once was pasturing for Laban  
The sheep of his uncle, and chose him for master,  
Now, this Jacob was the third possessor.  
(removing his hat and bowing)  
The possessions of our holy Abraham from his sister.  
Yes, he was the third—

**ANTONIO:** Eh! What do you make of it.  
Was it usurious?

**SHYLOCK:** No— Here's his case.  
Laban wanted him: the motley sheep  
Which were being born doubly colored  
Were to belong to Jacob. Nature  
Couldn't vary their complexion at his taste.  
He painted them with red and earned, yes, on honor!  
An honest profit is always blessed by the Lord.

**ANTONIO:** Do you think the Bible wrote this story  
To justify you and to make us believe  
That you must by your actions have an enormous interest  
Attached unjustly to the liberties of the loan?  
Your ducats are not herds that increase—

**SHYLOCK:** So quickly, at least, Shylock multiplies them.

**ANTONIO:** (To Bassanio) See how the devil uses the lips of saints  
And knows how to use their texts for his bad designs.  
(to Shylock)  
Well! In the end what do you want for your trouble?

**SHYLOCK:** Me? Lord Antonio, quite often your hate  
Came to injure me in my humble profits.

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The response that I always made to insults was  
To bend my shoulder in patience.  
Which from a Jew is always the first learning.  
Now, it seems that you need my help.  
That's fine. You address me, you change your tone.  
You say: Good Shylock I would like this sum!  
You who've always put me as less than a man,  
You who've driven me from the room and the highway,  
Who've repulsed me by foot and by hand  
Like a strange dog come to your door.  
You want some money? Must I bring it  
And say: good lord, let me humiliate myself again?  
Here! strike my cheek and take my treasure?

**ANTONIO:** Yes, I am ready still to treat you the same way.  
Lend me this money; not because I love you,  
For holy friendship doesn't serve by half,  
And doesn't work gold from the hands of a friend;  
But because I am the enemy of your race.  
You could, if I fail, have better grace  
Pursuing your rights and my punishment.

**SHYLOCK:** Calm down! I pretend to your affection  
And want to oblige you.

**ANTONIO:** Why? I dispense you of it;  
No service.

**SHYLOCK:** (aside) Ah! ah! That's my reward?  
(aloud) I would like to forget your insults.

**ANTONIO:** And as for me  
I want to remember my scorn for you.

**SHYLOCK:** (aside, gnawing his lips) Ah! ah!  
(aloud) But, if the Jew delivers to you the ducats,  
Without interest, can he henceforth live with you  
Like a friend?

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**ANTONIO:** No, never! Guard your treasure carefully,  
For my foot will kick you from my home yet again.

**SHYLOCK:** Still I am putting myself in form to serve you,  
And I won't take a single ducat in usury.

**ANTONIO:** (astonished) Truly?

**SHYLOCK:** You will come with me to a notary.  
And (to divert us) you will write  
That if on such a day the sum agreed between us  
I shall take, at the date arrived  
(It's a joke because Shylock is not an assassin)  
A pound of flesh from around your breast.

**ANTONIO:** On my word, I subscribe to the jest,  
And know your pleasure by it.

**BASSANIO:** My friend, I beg you,  
Don't sign this dangerous note for me.

**ANTONIO:** Bah! That engagement is not very onerous.  
For, tonight, I am to receive ten times more than he's giving.

**SHYLOCK:** Father Abraham! Hear their talk and forgive!  
What are these Christians? How harshly  
They seek out perils in our probity!  
(to Bassanio) If he doesn't pay me, where would be the advantage  
To have chosen his flesh and his blood for hostage?  
What would I do with it, and why this bizarre trick  
If my heart wasn't touched by your embarrassment?  
It's wrong to interpret a very praiseworthy offer.  
(to Antonio) Sign this note, if it's agreeable to you,  
Or let's leave each other.

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**ANTONIO:** No, no, I am signing.

**SHYLOCK:** In that case,  
I will go to supper and go bring you your ducats.

**ANTONIO:** Go, very likable Jew!

**BASSANIO:** I fear that promise.

**ANTONIO:** (laughing) No, he's a saint; soon he'll be hearing the Mass.

(The two of them leave together. Night falls.)

**SHYLOCK:** (calling his daughter in the house)  
Hey! Jessica, are you sleeping! Come down! You won't have  
Two women following your heels like you do here all your life.  
You won't spend forever singing in the evening,  
Like yesterday, tearing a golden dress,  
A very expensive thing! Come on!

**JESSICA:** Well, you are calling me?  
What do you want?

**SHYLOCK:** I'm going out, Jessica. Take my keys.  
They've invited me to supper.  
(aside) Should I stay? Shall I go?  
He flatters me and he hates me. Each holds out a trap to me.  
I will go to squeeze a prodigal Christian.  
(aloud) Jessica, my child, watch here over my wealth  
And my house. I am saddened by this absence.  
He's hatching a plot against me; because, now I think about it,  
I dreamed last night of sacks full of money.  
Listen carefully—I'm leaving, but it's very important

ACT I

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That you lock all my doors tonight;  
That, my daughter, under no pretext shall you go out;  
And as soon as from outside the drum is heard  
Announcing, escorted by fifes with twisted necks,  
To Christians their impure masquerades,  
By your order let our servant make sure  
That all is well shut up in my strict house,  
And that the sound of their orgy cannot be heard.  
Especially, don't go lean out the window  
To see them. I cannot forbid it to you enough.  
By Jacob, many Jews find themselves punished  
For having seen these fools with lacquered faces.  
Go in and lock the door.

**JESSICA:** (aside) And that will, I hope,  
Be to reopen it soon.

**SHYLOCK:** Good evening.

**JESSICA:** Goodbye, father.

(Shylock leaves by the left. Lorenzo and Gratiano return from the right; after a moment Jessica reenters, then remains in the half-opened doorway with a man's hat on her head and a cloak. Night has come.)

**LORENZO:** My Jewish father-in-law has decamped— Follow me.  
I promise, Gratiano, to do as much for you  
If an elopement takes your fancy.  
And for the one that your heart has chosen  
I shall be look-out as much as you like,  
Short ladder, ambush and whatever it takes.

**GRATIANO:** I shan't be slow to put you to the test.  
It's not a novel thing for a Venetian,  
For a woman to adventure dressed as a dandy,  
And close to the house. I am going to keep a lookout.

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(Gratiano moves away a few steps while Lorenzo approaches the window.)

**LORENZO:** Is it you?

**JESSICA:** (behind the door) Is it you?

**LORENZO:** It's me.

**JESSICA:** It's me.

**LORENZO:** Who, you?

**JESSICA:** The Jewess  
Who always loves you.

**LORENZO:** Well, let her follow me.  
I am her beloved.

**JESSICA:** What proves it, lord  
And who are your witnesses?

**LORENZO:** Heaven alone and your heart.

**JESSICA:** (she gives him her hand which he covers with kisses)  
Yes, it's you for who else would know the mystery?  
Who else would know that I love one man on earth  
And that I'm coming here to put myself in his power?  
Lucky that it's night and that none can see  
With what disguise I'm covering myself in the shadow!  
But Love is blind and heaven quite dark.

ACT I

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Alone, I would blush for having been able to forget myself,  
To the point of wearing the clothes of a cavalier for you.  
Watch this box, it's worth the trouble.

**LORENZO:** (passing it to Gratiano) What's it matter! come! let's leave!

**JESSICA:** No, It isn't full.  
And I want to add a diamond to it.

**LORENZO:** No, Jessica, come.

**JESSICA:** Wait a moment.

(Jessica goes back in.)

**GRATIANO:** Eh! by my chaperon! that charming girl  
Is Jewish if you like, as for me, I say she is genteel!

**LORENZO:** Friend, I believe her good, and see she's beautiful.  
I'm testing her sincerity and adore her three times as much.  
(to Jessica who returns)  
Ah! there you are! Let's leave quick.

**JESSICA:** I am trembling!

**GRATIANO:** (shouting) The maskers are coming, you have only a moment.

**LORENZO:** Come! The street's deserted and the gondola is waiting.

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(They climb into the gondola and it leaves. Venetian fest. Dances are performed on the bridge. The masquerade passes as soon as they have gone.)

**CURTAIN**

## ACT II

The gallery of Portia's castle with Italian colonnades giving on beautiful gardens.

**PORTIA:** Yes, I detest a world where everything goes amiss.  
My little being is weary of this great universe.

**NERISSA:** Where's this boredom come from in such abodes  
That a dozing lover doesn't see more beauty in 'em  
When he is dreaming of treasures in an enchanted palace?  
With so much riches, with so much beauty.  
Boredom! sighs! What would you do, madam  
If you had, like many an honest woman,  
To endure all the indignities of an obscure  
Condition which comes with base extraction?

**PORTIA:** My God! how easy it is to tell me in a sentence  
And to raise oneself by self important airs,  
To tire people with false pity  
Or to make them gay by saying: Laugh!  
When one cannot change the depth of a character  
One would do much better, Nerissa, to keep quiet  
Than to speak at chance or go too far  
Over afflictions about which one is often ignorant.

**NERISSA:** But—

**PORTIA:** (getting animated) I could thus preach to twenty persons  
And argue in the manner that you are reasoning,  
Indeed, more easily than I would accomplish  
A fourth of the good advice that I was supplying.  
A good preacher goes further for the appearance,  
Listens to his sermon himself and conforms to it.  
If the one you are making suffices all ills,  
Tell it to yourself alone and profit by it.

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**NERISSA:** But I am not pretending that my voice would succeed  
In moderating the terror of so great a sacrifice  
As yours. It's a question of seeking at leisure  
From twenty charming husbands the one you wish to choose.

**PORTIA:** To choose! alas! what word are you saying, cruel one?  
It adds a new pain to my pain.  
I can neither choose the one who pleases me  
Nor refuse the hand that revolts me.  
Am I situated to be joyful?

**NERISSA:** Eh! That lottery  
Wasn't a joke, Madam?  
I almost took your insistent custom for a wager,  
A choice in these boxes of gold, lead and silver.

**PORTIA:** This choice is serious. My father on his death bed  
Who, without having known him, I still revere,  
And this bizarre vow that I observe today  
And that I would curse but for my respect for him.  
This palace, all my wealth, my treasures and my lands,  
Even my diamonds, hereditary jewels,  
All belongs to strangers tomorrow.  
If I, by my own choice, dispose of my hand,  
This sad and fantastic vow confides me at hazard  
And on one blow saves me or indeed sacrifices me.  
Judge if the players are interesting to me  
And if I ought to tremble over their threatening wagers.

**NERISSA:** Which of the three boxes gives you life?

**PORTIA:** None has touched it; my soul is ravished by it.  
On the two others alone their choice is exercised.  
Seeing them hesitate, I've paled many times,  
But now I know that the remaining box  
Contains my portrait, the act and the funereal law.

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**NERISSA:** When they draw their fate, madam, does your heart  
Still beat for fear of a conqueror?

**PORTIA:** Alas! I always tremble and I never hope  
So long as it's a question of obeying my father.  
For of these pretenders named therein, if you please  
One alone might be suitable as a valet.

**NERISSA:** That's too severe, too. The one who's ruining himself,  
The Count Palatine, doesn't he have a nice appearance?

**PORTIA:** No. He has a haughty, contrary, sulky air  
Without gayety, without any pleasure, even in laughing.

**NERISSA:** And the English Falconbridge?

**PORTIA:** He doesn't know how to live.  
Mornings he's bored, and evenings, he's drunk.  
He influences me before, not after his meals,  
For he always bores me and never intoxicates me.

**NERISSA:** And Don Pedro?

**PORTIA:** Ah! I hate that dark face,  
Dark cloaked, these airs of a moonlight lover.  
These dark conversations: and I find him flat,  
More than his guitar and his brown chocolate.

**NERISSA:** And the French Marquis, madam, named Estrada?

**PORTIA:** God made him: let him pass for a man.  
I consent to it. But I think when he came to Belmont,

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That in gathering at my home I had received twenty of 'em,  
So that he multiplied, acted, and assembled  
All the traits of each in a bizarre ensemble.  
He fights with a shadow, he weeps, he sings, he laughs,  
Changing like clothes, tunes, body and spirit.

**NERISSA:** But the one who often, to see you, disguises himself  
As a gondolier on the water, as a monk in church,  
And purchases from Page Luigi, attracted by his gold,  
Your torn glove for five ducats,  
That handsome Venetian, what do you think of him, madam?

**PORTIA:** Impartially, my soul for a long while  
Reflected, compared, hesitated over the others.  
On this one I'm afraid of not being able to think.

**NERISSA:** He's going to draw his lot.

**PORTIA:** Already!

**NERISSA:** You, astonished?  
The precise hour that you appointed  
Strikes, and it's Bassanio who's going to take his chance.

**PORTIA:** For the first time, I'd like to delay.

(Bassanio, Gratiano and some pages in their suite enter and Three  
Women dressed in white who each hold in their hand a box, one of gold,  
one of silver, one of lead. A large number of Italian gentlemen and  
women relatives of Portia. They deliver a golden ring to Portia.)

**BASSANIO:** (coming forward and bowing to Portia while Gratiano greets  
Nerissa who goes to speak to him with an air of understanding)  
Madam, at last I am going to try my fortune  
And to submit myself to this common law for you.

ACT II

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Ah! how much I would prefer, disdainng chance,  
To win you by sword or even by dagger!  
At this wager, against all, my hand would be bold  
And worthy of yours: in place of corruption,  
Without guide for my heart, your eyes are going to disturb it.  
(Portia veils herself)  
I feel it's without strength and it's going to tremble.

**PORTIA:** (offering him the ring without looking at him)  
Delay one day more; something saddens me today.

**BASSANIO:** That you will add to the list  
The name of a stranger that you will see no more  
And wasn't chosen by your irresolute eyes?  
Let's not delay.

**PORTIA:** My eyes that you might curse  
May hear all, but cannot say anything.  
If I chose for myself, you know, lord,  
It doesn't remain for me to give my heart.

**BASSANIO:** Please God!

**PORTIA:** Such passion would choke it.

**BASSANIO:** To know—

**PORTIA:** All this is happening like a fairy dream  
No treasure, consequently, no love.

**BASSANIO:** Try.  
You're afraid.

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**PORTIA:** For the two of us.

**GRATIANO:** The two of us!

**PORTIA:** You terrify me.  
They are listening to you. Go choose prudently.  
As for me, I must wait and pray in silence.

(She gives him the ring and remains apart, veiled and silent.)

**BASSANIO:** (holding the gold ring in his hand)  
Gold, silver or lead, choose! In the choice of a metal  
Find a future blissful or fatal!  
Deadman's caprice, you are going to regulate my life!  
Chance, come reign in that case! Let your law be followed.  
Come like a rough flight, come, I won't be  
The first whose steps your wing has saved.  
(going to examine the boxes)

**GRATIANO:** If he wins, I win.

**NERISSA:** Yes.

**GRATIANO:** I have your promise,  
Your hand?

**NERISSA:** We shall see.

**GRATIANO:** When will I have it?

**NERISSA:** At their mass.

ACT II

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**BASSANIO:** (somerberly returning and striding up and down)

By Saint Paul! Not a sign, not a word was graven therein  
Which guides the vainly tested mind.  
Rise up, my heart, and break this shackle  
Thinking of it, I find it deep and serious,  
And that which is in it passes my wit.  
I don't know if before me anyone said it,  
When reason lacks a flame to guide us,  
When blind senses are impotent, when the soul  
Receives neither aid nor inspiration  
From the law, nor support from religion,  
If man descends in his heart and listens and hears there  
A secret motion which urges him on his path,  
Conscience or desire, mysterious instinct,  
He finds what the heavens have put in us, perhaps.  
Yes, I believe in my heart, its inclination, its caprice,  
The first movement from which it shivers  
Which separates it or attracts it, and I will stop myself  
On this emotion which I am experiencing.  
Let's see, gold? I hate it. Its aspect repulses me  
Like that of a traitor with a sweet face,  
Disguised, and I hate it not less than this silver  
Pale and vulgar agent that dupes a cheat  
Without their fatal custom and their ignoble exchange  
I wouldn't submit to this strange torture  
To see half sad and joyous by half  
The pure face of a friend humiliate himself for me.  
To you then poor lead, you of vulgar aspect  
Simple and disdainful lead, how like my fortune,  
Sad and weighty! O black metal! which melts  
Like my heart in fire with its profound amours  
Then to you my destiny, blessed or funereal,  
From this moment, the die is cast. For the rest  
This dagger suffices. If on one side my hand  
Wanders, it will go straight in the other way.  
For I will not live longer deprived of my mistress  
And charge my friends with the weight of my distress.  
(he touches the box with his ring, then he looks inside)  
I have chosen!  
(he puts his hand over his eyes, Portia runs, looks at the box, takes  
off her veil and goes to take his hand)  
What portrait? Yours! Did I dream?

**PORTIA:** You are happy and my veil is lifted;  
Also raise your eyes and you will see me such  
As I am. Till now, I wished myself more beautiful,

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More rich, more perfect, and I would have  
To offer it to you, grandeur, rank, family and power.  
But I've only got myself alone with my inheritance;  
They are both yours and without share in it.  
You will have to guide a woman without art  
Who, despite this dazzle that she must risk  
A bit weary of the world, loving solitude  
Is not even at times incapable of study  
Will love with your life, and sure of happiness  
Already recognizes you for prince and lord.

**BASSANIO:** Oh! you have taken the power to reply from me.  
The test and success all have just confounded me.  
Moved by your voice, all my senses and my heart  
Have only one shout of happiness that they utter at once  
And that no human word can express.

**PORTIA:** I intend to impose only one pain on you,  
That's to wear my ring. You will know  
That if the moment comes in which you must leave it  
You will lose your wife with it at the same time.

**BASSANIO:** If ever I lose it, I will have lost my soul.

**PORTIA:** Come and for the afternoon—nap, afterwards, let's separate;  
I perhaps need to rest more than you.

(They move away with their followers under the galleries, and remain  
strolling there during the following scene. Portia and Bassanio leave  
the stage for a moment then return with Lorenzo.)

**NERISSA:** At my knees!

**GRATIANO:** I'm there.

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**NERISSA:** Look!

**GRATIANO:** I'm looking.

**NERISSA:** What's this?

**GRATIANO:** Your ring.

**NERISSA:** Well?

**GRATIANO:** What?

**NERISSA:** If you pretend not to want it,  
I know well enough what baseness someone would commit to have it.

**GRATIANO:** To find my conversation like his, I'm applying myself.

**NERISSA:** You don't have as melancholy a love,  
Nasty character! Still, as I promised it—  
Here.  
(she gives him the ring)

**GRATIANO:** I have it.

**NERISSA:** Be submissive.

**GRATIANO:** I am submissive.

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**NERISSA:** On the condition you just heard,  
If you give the ring, you can expect  
That my hand—

**GRATIANO:** (kissing her hand) So beautiful and—

**NERISSA:** That my fingers—

**GRATIANO:** (kissing her fingers) Will  
Graciously sign the contract?

**NERISSA:** Will scratch your eyes out.

(Portia, Lorenzo, Bassanio and the pages return after having been  
stopped in the gallery. The swift arrival of Lorenzo seen at the back  
of the stage causes everyone to return to the stage.)

**GRATIANO:** Thanks! But, God protect us, things are disturbed, agitated,  
Down there! I want to die if I take one step to leave you,  
For if the new lovers are squabbling,  
I think you will be woman enough to get upset like them.

**PORTIA:** (to Lorenzo)  
In the name of heaven, sir, tell me the news  
You are bringing.

**LORENZO:** (gives a letter to Bassanio)  
Why—

**PORTIA::** The letter, what's it say?  
It's the death of someone, if not, certainly  
He wouldn't become so pale in a moment.

ACT II

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Bassanio, what's wrong with you? You tell those you love!  
Am I not now half of yourself?

**BASSANIO:** (shaking her hand)  
O my beautiful Portia! very sad indeed,  
Very sad is the tale tossed on this paper.  
I told you frankly that nothing  
Of my fortune remains to me: of my lands, nothing;  
What I have, to serve you and your glory, finished;  
The little gold that I had from birth, gone;  
That the only treasure that remains to me is a sum  
In my veins, and it's the blood of a gentleman.  
But I didn't say everything, and I must add  
That against my rivals, when struggle was necessary  
I engaged from a friend fortune and life  
Between the hands of a Jew whose implacable envy  
Profits from a misfortune. Read then, in reading,  
I thought I was seeing each word written with blood.  
"My dear Bassanio, my ships have all perished. It's  
Still only a vague rumor in Venice, but my creditors have  
Already become cruel. I am reduced to nothing.  
My bill on the Jew is going to expire in a few hours;  
The three days of delay are going to expire and there will  
Be no time to pay him; he no longer wants to accept money but to  
Demand the accomplishment of the note. Since by fulfilling his  
Conditions it's impossible for me to live, all debts will be quits  
Between you and me, and I can see you only by my death.  
Still, do what you please. If your friendship  
Doesn't engage you to come, my letter won't."  
The dearest of friends, the most Roman soul  
That remains in Italy and in the human species,  
To this nameless trial is submitting himself for me!

**PORTIA:** How much does he owe to the Jew?

**BASSANIO:** Three thousand ducats.

**PORTIA:** What!  
Nothing more! Give him six, give him twelve thousand!  
Triple it if necessary, and leave for town  
Immediately. Doubtless your friend will follow you.

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**NERISSA:** (to Gratiano) Go.

**GRATIANO:** He's my cousin!

**PORTIA:** All that you need  
Of servants and gold, I will give. Go quick.  
Who can calculate the consequences of a moment lost?  
A most perfect happiness is awaiting your return.

**BASSANIO:** I am leaving, for I would be unworthy to hesitate.

(He kisses her hand and leaves with Gratiano, who with comic affectation kisses the hand of Nerissa.)

**PORTIA:** You, Lord Lorenzo, remain.

**LORENZO:** My presence  
Has just saddened you; But I think, madame,  
You would have liked me better if you had known  
This virtuous friend for whom I've come.

**PORTIA:** I know quite well what obliges him; In Venice, they fame  
Lord Antonio for a very gallant man.  
Friend of my husband, I think, as well, that he must  
Resemble him, and be like him, without any defect;  
And I would have risked anything to save him from a trap  
That this sacrilegious pagan made him fall into.  
I hope that by expressing myself loudly against this Jew  
Not to afflict you. I know by what motive  
You have hastily abandoned Venice.  
It's one soul the more that Love is giving to the church,  
Right? For I think that Rachel or Sarah  
Is today a Christian or will be tomorrow.

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**LORENZO:** Since you know everything, it's Jessica, madame,  
That my wife is called.

**PORTIA:** You must also speak of her beauty.  
And, as for me, I intend to test her bounty.  
Tell her, on my behalf, sir, that I beg her  
To remain here. When one gets married,  
It's necessary to prepare for this great change  
With a little prayer and reflection.  
I am going to withdraw to a nearby monastery  
For two days. If you would like to stay here  
You would be doing me a favor. They will all obey you  
at Belmont as they do us; everything will belong to you.

**LORENZO:** I accept this gracious offer with a good heart;  
Its delicate shape is precious to me.  
I am doubly touched by it, madam, and from tonight  
Jessica is going to appear at this brilliant manor.

(He bows and leaves.)

**PORTIA:** Nerissa, come here. I'm plotting something.  
Are you brave? You must be for what I propose.

**NERISSA:** I have courage enough to climb the stairs  
In the dark, and that's all.

**PORTIA:** The dress of a cavalier,  
Would you be greatly afraid of wearing it?

**NERISSA:** Not at all.

**PORTIA** **Be prompt,**  
**And let's leave.** No need for false modesty  
When to do good one risks a little for oneself.

ACT II

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You are going to embark for Venice with me.  
I intend to know the results of Antonio's danger.  
If the Jew is plotting his pursuits near the Doge  
I can protect him without apparent effort  
Through old Senator Bellario, my relative.  
Our husbands will soon see us without recognizing us.  
I intend to take on the fashion of a little barrister.  
I shall put on cloak, dagger, and spurs.  
I will talk of battle with youthful swaggering.  
I will tell the amours of Venetian women  
Who slip letters into my hands in church.  
I wager he'll speak to me and won't know me.

**NERISSA:** (walking) I'll have lots of trouble taking long steps.

**PORTIA:** You'll get used to this masquerade,  
You always make a show of your bold plans.  
Well, we are going to see, under the clothes of a man,  
Which of the two of us, my darling, has a better manner.

**CURTAIN**

**SCENE II**

Venice and the Rialto as in Act I.

**SHYLOCK:** (throwing himself before Tubal)  
What news, Tubal? Did you find my daughter  
In Genoa?

**TUBAL:** The Christian escaped to somewhere;  
But they speak of her and him in the town.

**SHYLOCK:** Ah! ah! my diamond which cost me two thousand  
Four hundred ducats in Frankfurt has gone!  
(he pulls his beard and his hair)  
The curse I felt coming  
On our nation has fallen more than ever.  
(with fury)  
I want to see my daughter at my feet, in her tomb,  
With my diamonds on her neck, my ducats  
At my feet, in her bier. Ah! I lost my step,  
So much money sought! Alas! loss after loss.  
(counting on his fingers)  
So much taken by the thief; so much for the discovery,  
And to lose it! and no vengeance! Ah! I seek  
A sack of ashes to hide this affront!  
There are not tortures other than my alarms  
Of other ills than my ills, of tears except my tears.  
(weeping with rage)

**TUBAL:** Other merchants are not having much better fate.  
Antonio they tell me—

**SHYLOCK:** (revealing the most passionate curiosity)  
A misfortune? a misfortune?  
What? What?

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**TUBAL:** His vessels, in a bad location,  
Have almost simultaneously perished by shipwreck.

**SHYLOCK:** Thanks to God! Thanks to God! But is this certain?

**TUBAL:** I learned it this morning from a sailor who escaped.

**SHYLOCK:** (transported with joy)  
Ah! Thanks, good Tubal, thanks! Fine news!  
Ah! Ah!

**TUBAL** **What a weak mind your daughter has!**  
They told me that in one evening she spent  
Eighty ducats!

**SHYLOCK:** (profoundly sad) Oh! oh! you've thrust a dagger  
Into my heart. Oh! my ducats, my purse!  
Will I see you again?

**TUBAL:** (continuing) In my last course  
I saw some of Antonio's creditors who told me  
That he would be bankrupted, and had no more credit.

**SHYLOCK:** (slipping into excessive joy, rubbing his hands)  
That's good! He will suffer, my soul's ravished by it!  
I will torture him; I will snatch away his life.

**TUBAL:** (continuing)  
And one of them again, all triumphant, was showing me  
The ring he had from your child for a monkey.

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**SHYLOCK:** (desolated)

For a monkey, ah! to give my turquoise! It's the one,  
I am sure of it. It had such a beautiful color!  
I had it from Leah, formerly, being a young lad, still  
It was worth three times, a hundred times, the worth of gold,  
A desert full of monkeys.

**TUBAL:** (continuing) And Antonio's ruin  
Seems certain.

**SHYLOCK:** (with joy, hearing his watch ring and looking at his note)  
It's certain! Oh! yes, certain,  
The hour has struck! Come see the commissioner! We must  
Warn them in advance, he's really in breach,  
I will have his heart! You see, all usury is permitted,  
All negotiation is permitted, if I purge Venice  
Of this malevolent and mocking Nazarene!  
Come to the commissioner, oh, I will have his heart.

(He runs off stage dragging Tubal.)

**BASSANIO:** (entering from a different direction than that of Shylock  
and meeting Gratiano)  
I haven't found him.

**GRATIANO:** Nor I.

**BASSANIO:** Not in town  
Nor in the Rialto.

**GRATIANO:** As for me, in my useless zeal  
I spent three quarters of an hour, seeking and calling  
Our royal merchant on the Saint Mark square.

**BASSANIO:** Poor Antonio! What rumor is spreading on the square?

SCENE II

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**GRATIANO:** That the Jew won't give him mercy.  
And that all his ships were lost at the same time.  
Shylock, uttering shouts of fury, heard  
From one end of the port to the other. He knew that his daughter  
In agreement with Lorenzo forced the gate.  
And never was uttered such confused,  
Such fickle howling. "My daughter has taken my money!!  
My ducats! O my daughter, a Christian has carried them off!  
O my Christian ducats! They broke open my door!  
Justice! Laws! My daughter and two hidden sacks,  
Two big sacs of ducats! of diamonds  
Mounted all in gold! rare jewels! my only daughter!"  
And little boys on the public square  
Follow him making a horrible uproar.  
They are shouting, "His jewels, his daughter, and his ducats!"

**BASSANIO:** I fear that all this will only increase yet more his hate  
Against my poor friend.

**GRATIANO:** We won't have the bother  
Of long seeking the old Jew: Here he is,  
Coming from that way, all gesticulating.

**GRATIANO:** (to Shylock who enters)  
Well, what's new on the square?

**SHYLOCK:** (who running, stops suddenly and remains leaning on his cane  
to observe Gratiano) No one  
Knows better than you. May Abraham pardon me!  
You know the secret of my daughter, and how,  
And in what way the Nazarene accomplished the elopement?

**GRATIANO:** True God! friend I know he was in the costume  
Of birds to fly as soon as they have wings.

**SHYLOCK:** She will be damned.

SCENE II

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**GRATIANO:** Yes, if it's the demon  
Who is judging.

**SHYLOCK:** Oh! Jessica! my flesh and my blood!

**GRATIANO:** No.  
Your blood is not so pure, your skin not so beautiful.

**BASSANIO:** (low) Speak to him of Antonio.

**SHYLOCK:** (continuing) She's a rebellious child.

**GRATIANO:** Have you heard tell in the port that the ships  
Of the merchant Antonio perished at sea?

**SHYLOCK:** That's yet another bad affair on my hands,  
What this bankrupt is thinking that he's going to do!  
He's a prodigal. He hardly dares to show himself  
Now at the Rialto, he who they like to admire!  
Let him watch his note. He was accustomed  
To call me usurer. The scorn, the bitterness  
Of his joyful remarks at my expense shine.  
He even loaned gratis. Let him watch his note.

**BASSANIO:** But are you pursuing him? And if by some chance,  
He lost his vessel, his wealth, was without hope,  
What would you do with his flesh?

**SHYLOCK:** Hooks  
Are used perhaps to take fish.  
If nothing is nourished by this human flesh,  
It will serve me fine to nourish my hate.

SCENE II

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(crossing his two hands and looking fixedly at Bassanio)  
He covered me with mud and scorn  
And more than half a million was taken from me  
By the wrong that was done me.  
He laughed at my profits, my offers, made  
To crush me; he knew how to freeze  
My friends, warm up, embolden, animate  
My enemies, to bow down our holy nation.  
(slowly and in a tone of great sadness)  
And for what reason so much wormwood and bitterness?  
Because I am Jewish! Doesn't a Jew  
Have eyes to see, feet to walk with,  
Organs, senses, passions and troubles?  
The blood flowing in our veins is not red?  
Doesn't it heat up in summer, freeze  
In winter like yours? The one of you that outrages a Jew  
Revenge himself! and you give examples of rage  
To cause shivering! Us, alike in every respect  
If you outrage us, won't we revenge ourselves to the same degree?  
Ah! doctors in insult, in perfidious manipulations,  
I am going to put your Christian lessons to work  
And I shall be unfortunate if my masters suddenly  
Are not much surpassed by their pupil.

**BASSANIO:** I am bringing you here the whole sum  
That Antonio owes you.

**SHYLOCK:** Nothing on this topic.  
He alone must pay, for he alone is known to me.  
Besides, it's too late, and the time is come  
To exact my note.

**BASSANIO:** I am paying for him.

**SHYLOCK** (looking at the town clock) Never mind!  
You arrive an hour too late.

**BASSANIO:** But I am bringing  
The ducats.

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**SHYLOCK:** I ought to have received them sooner.

**BASSANIO:** I am coming for Antonio, who I haven't been able to see.

**SHYLOCK:** Bad sign. So much the worse!

**BASSANIO:** In truth, I admire  
How cruelty quibbles.

**A VALET:** I am coming to say  
That milord Antonio is awaiting you at the palace.

**BASSANIO:** Is he here? Let's run to see him! The Jew hears it;  
I wanted to pay him.

**SHYLOCK:** Yes, yes, but after the hour;  
The three days expired, I locked up my residence.

(Going into his house and watching them as he laughs.)

**GRATIANO:** See his cruel glance!

**BASSANIO:** See his mocking laughter!  
Alas! we've arrived too late!

**SHYLOCK:** (locking his door) I will have his heart.

**CURTAIN**

**ACT III**

The Rialto, same as the first Act.

Antonio, and Bassanio are passing in the street with a jailer; Shylock grabs the arm of the jailer leading Antonio.

**SHYLOCK:** Jailer! watch him! don't let him speak to me  
Of pity. Watch him carefully, follow him step by step.  
The crowd's big and escape is easy.  
Hold him by the arm. Now there's this imbecile  
Who loaned money gratis! Watch him,  
Jailer!

**ANTONIO:** Yet one word, good Shylock, I have the support  
Of a man—

**SHYLOCK:** I intend that my note be satisfied.  
It's necessary to execute it, at least not efface it.  
Don't speak to me in contradiction of a note. I made it  
On the book, an oath that it would have its effect.  
Before that to irritate you nothing would have given you cause.  
You called me a dog before the whole town.  
Since I am a dog, beware of my fangs.  
I will have justice.  
(to the jailer)  
And you, bad watchman of swindlers,  
I am really astonished that they allow this debtor  
To go about town with such leniency.

**ANTONIO:** Let me speak to you.

**SHYLOCK:** He failed his note.  
(he performs his favorite gesture counting with his finger on his left

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thumb)

To satisfy in three days. As for me, I could, if it pleased me  
Have him executed. I no longer wish to listen to you.  
Do you think to make some tender hearted idiot of me  
With eyes moist with tears, giving in with a contrite air  
To your Christian prayers! My note is written  
I want it to be performed; I am going to reclaim my share  
Goodbye, I don't wish to speak to you any further.

(Shylock leaves.)

**BASSANIO:** Now there's the hardest rogue that ever  
Lived amongst us.

**ANTONIO:** Let's leave him alone henceforth,  
For to beg him would be a useless thing.  
He intends to have my life, and I really know the cause of it.  
From this persecutor I've often snatched  
Many a poor debtor that I've kept hidden  
And for whom I paid. From that comes his hate for me.

**BASSANIO:** Does the Doge want this unworthy chain—?

**ANTONIO:** The Doge, my friend, must respect the law.  
And to allow it to run its course is his most fine work.  
The whole state would suffer if our mores were unequal,  
Denying to foreigners their legal security.  
Its commerce is founded on the easy access  
Of each nation in our vast port.  
(laughing bitterly)  
Thus then, in prison. My disasters, my troubles,  
Until this evening I thought would hardly leave me,  
This pound of flesh that my creditor wants.  
I am annihilated. Come, jailer, let's leave.

**CURTAIN**

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**SCENE II**

The Scene changes and represents the Venetian Court.

(Bassanio shakes Antonio's hand and falls into his arms; Antonio embraces him and firmly supports him. They remain beside each other.)

**THE DOGE:** (calling) Antonio!

**ANTONIO:** Here I am! What does Your Highness order?

**THE DOGE:** Antonio, I feel very sad  
To see an implacable, inhuman adversary  
Persist in pursuing you and your action under hand.

**ANTONIO:** (bowing) I knew that Your Highness took great trouble  
To appease this man and moderate his hate.  
But, since he is so hard, and that by no means  
Can the law protect a Christian from a Jew,  
I must oppose my fortitude to his fury.  
And I will not have need of any other assistance  
Except that of a friend; I have courage.

**THE DOGE:** Go!  
Make the Jew come before us. Call!

**AN OFFICER:** He was by the door; he's entering.

**DOGE:** Make way!

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(Shylock enters from the left and remains standing at the front of the stage.)

**THE DOGE:** Shylock, we all are thinking that, despite your threats  
You won't carry to the last extremity  
Your invention to a horrifying conclusion;  
I think then, you will show a clemency  
That will astonish us less than the act of dementia  
Committed in writing in terms of commerce.  
You will pardon him and I will be touched by it.  
Not only do I believe it, Shylock, and wish it,  
That you will do for him as I've just said  
And renounce at last at this price, much too dear  
Which consists of taking from him a pound of flesh  
But I further wish that your bounty remit  
Half his debt to honest Antonio.  
Cast on his misfortunes an interested glance,  
The number of them is so great, Jew, that this merchant-king  
Will be crushed by them, but for us who ask mercy for him.  
If you don't consent to it, your harshness surpasses  
That of cruel Turks, who never have known  
What urbanity the world has achieved.  
Reply to me, Jew; I am now awaiting your promise.

**SHYLOCK:** I spoke my will yesterday to Your Highness.  
By the Sabbath, holy day of our nation,  
I swore to exact his obligation.  
If you refuse me what this debt requires  
May your government forever pay the consequences!  
If you refuse me, let this crime  
Fall as much on your city as on his freedom!  
You, you will ask me how one  
Pound of flesh from a dead body will help me to live;  
You will ask me if I am making more of the case  
Of his flesh than three thousand ducats in gold:  
I will not give up a case decided:  
I will answer only to that which was my idea.  
Isn't that the response? Eh! suppose that a rat  
Coming into my house causes a great damage;  
Can't I spend twelve thousand ducats  
To have it poisoned? That's the way I am reasoning.  
Let's pursue it, Many folks dislike seeing  
A pig, others a cat, still others a black bird  
A monkey, a butterfly: others faint  
At the sound of a bagpipe; and others go pale

SCENE II

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

When a dog howls; it's their character  
That creates in each an indisposition  
But they are all forced to defend themselves  
And to return the animal offense for offense.  
The same way, I cannot explain this trial  
All to my detriment, if it's not by the excess  
Of a secret hate, intimate, inexplicable  
That I have for Antonio.— Worthy sir, I rate  
That you are satisfied with my response.

**BASSANIO:** (advancing toward Shylock, this aside between Bassanio and Shylock must be said very rapidly)  
O Heaven!  
Does this justify your plan, cruel Jew,  
Bloody man insensitive to everything?

**SHYLOCK:** (looking at his note) At your ease.  
Was my note written so it would please you?

**BASSANIO:** Must one always kill those one doesn't love?

**SHYLOCK:** Can one hate someone without wanting his death?

**BASSANIO:** First of all, every offense doesn't engender hate.

**SHYLOCK:** Would you like for a snake to bite you twice?

**ANTONIO:** (coming forward to Bassanio and taking his arm)  
Bassanio, my friend, stop arguing  
With this Jew, who has only one motive to give.  
You might just as well supplicate the sea  
To withdraw its waves from our disordered port.  
You might just as well ask a wolf  
Why it doesn't kill with a single blow  
The lamb it gnaws and worries as it bleats  
So that the sheep follows it and their blood mixes together—  
You might— But why seek in the universe

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

A thing as harsh, as black, as perverse  
As his heart? Cease then, and I beg you,  
Begging him further is an insult to me.  
Allow me firmly, and as it suits me  
To deliver the Jew all of myself that's coming to him.  
(uncovering his breast)

**BASSANIO:** (aside to the Jew)  
For three thousand ducats I'll give you six thousand.

**SHYLOCK:** (to Bassanio)  
You can shake your purse, it's quite useless;  
Were each of your six thousand ducats broken  
And divided by the holy prophet into six parts  
And each part was a ducat, little matter to me.  
As for me, I intend to receive what my note bears.

**DOGE:** How can you hope for mercy, o you  
Who don't know how to give it?

**SHYLOCK:** And as for me, what have I to fear  
On the day of Judgement? Am I doing wrong to anyone?  
I'm not getting carried away like they are, I'm reasoning.  
Don't all of you have here, in your palace,  
Slaves treated as if they are your mules,  
Your donkeys, your horses? These unfortunate slaves  
Are employed by you in things most vile?  
If I came to say to you "Eh! why these burdens  
Breaking the backs of so many bent men?  
Give them good beds, and in your family  
They will dine in common! Let them marry your daughters!"  
You would reply to me "There men belong to us,  
We paid for them." I say as much to you.  
Deliver his flesh to me, I paid him very well for it.  
I demand that it be by you yourself granted.  
(with fury, shouts, distraction, striking his cane)  
I wish it! Shame on you! Shame on your feeble laws!  
If you refuse me I will shout from the rooftops  
That there is no more honor in the Venetian Senate.  
Shall I have justice, at last, which is promised me?  
Shall I have it?

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**THE DOGE:** (to his court) Lords, my power authorizes me  
To delay the court until a better time.  
I am waiting to judge this Jew, who is insulting us, for  
The arrival of Bellario, a wise jurist.  
I've asked him to resolve this.

**AN OFFICER:** Lord, an envoy has just come here from Padua  
Who is bringing news even of Bellario.

**DOGE:** Give them; I love to see judges so faithful  
To the promises they have made. Let him enter.

**BASSANIO:** (aside to Antonio) Hope. Come on,  
Courage in these lengthy and bloody debates  
The Jew will have my flesh, my blood, my bones and my life  
Before having a drop ravished from your veins,  
Spilled because of me from your generous breast.

**ANTONIO:** All sometimes wish that some one would die for them.  
I am the sheep marked and the scape goat.  
When the fruit is too ripe, its fall is necessary.  
Allow me then to fall. I confide myself to God.  
Live and compose my epitaph. Goodbye.

(Enter Nerissa disguised as a lawyer's clerk.)

**DOGE:** (to Nerissa) You are coming from Padua?

**NERISSA:** Yes, Lord, and I left  
Bellario. I have an order for you and I'm discharging myself of it.

(She delivers her letters and speaks low to the Doge. During this  
time, Shylock whets his knife on the sole of his shoe, putting one  
knee to the ground.)

SCENE II

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**BASSANIO:** (approaching and examining him)  
Why then so ready to sharpen your knife?

**SHYLOCK:** So as to better cut the skin of this thief.

**GRATIANO:** Jew, if you want it to open a large wound  
Pass it over your heart and not your boot  
For there's no stone harder than that.  
What entreaty could soften you today?

**SHYLOCK:** (continuing to sharpen his knife)  
Nothing. In the prayers your type invents  
You cannot find prayers fervent enough.

**GRATIANO:** (staring him into the ground)  
Be damned in hell, inexorable Jew!  
And, if you live a long while, that would be a motive  
To curse the laws that leave you life.  
I almost feel the desire to abandon my faith  
Seeing you, I think that, to change ills  
The souls of our bodies come from animals.  
Yes, yours, if a soul like this can be called one,  
Escaped from an old wolf hanged for murdering a man  
And its spirit that the rope exhibited hanging in the air  
Is in your body that escaped the gibbet.

**SHYLOCK:** (interrupting him a moment, laughs and sets to work)  
So long as at the end of the note the signature remains,  
Your lungs alone will suffer from that insult.  
If you get too carried away you will lose your wits,  
Young man! As for me, I'm waiting: it is in writing.

**DOGE:** Lords, this letter recommends to us  
A young and wise judge.

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**NERISSA:** Yes, if he needs must wait  
Much longer in Venice, he will wait.

**THE DOGE:** (to the judges) Lords,  
Let them go find him, do him the honors  
That we would have rendered Bellario himself.  
(several judges leave with Nerissa)  
While waiting for him to come, at this tense moment,  
I will read you the letter.  
“Your Highness may be informed by the reception of this letter, I  
Was very ill; but at the moment in which your messenger arrived, I was  
Receiving a friendly visit from a young Doctor from Rome, named  
Balthazar. I put him au courant of the trial between the Jew and the  
Merchant Antonio. We had leafed through many books. He is armed with  
My opinion, to which he joins his knowledge, of which he can greatly  
Boast. He's going to replace me after my solicitation, to  
Your Grandeur. May the years he is lacking not separate him from any  
Of your esteem, for I've never known a wit so ripe in a head so young.  
I beg you to greet him with kindness; you will learn his merits at the  
trial.”  
So, after this I think  
That this young savant, must be consulted  
To interpret the laws. His fame precedes him.  
If he's already here, tell him to come forward.

(Portia comes forward dressed as a lawyer.)

**THE DOGE:** Give me your hand, be welcome;  
Your rare knowledge is already known to us.  
Take a seat, and let's see, above everything else,  
The degree to which you know the case.

**PORTIA:** (sitting at the feet of the Doge)  
I know each point, each detail touching  
This fact. Which is the Jew and which is the merchant?

**DOGE:** Antonio—old Shylock, come.

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

(They place themselves to the right and left of Portia.)

**PORTIA:** They call you Shylock?

**SHYLOCK:** Yes, that's my name, Shylock.

**PORTIA:** (to the Jew) Your quarrel  
Is of a strange nature and yet it must  
Be confessed, no way can you be found in default.  
The law gives you a legitimate power over him.  
(to Antonio, with pity)  
You are going, if he wishes it, to become his victim,  
Right?

**ANTONIO:** He says it.

**PORTIA:** Do you deny before our eyes  
His note?

**ANTONIO:** No.

**PORTIA:** (nodding sadly) May he be merciful!

**SHYLOCK** Who could force me to be?

**PORTIA:** The finest characteristic  
Of chaste clemency is to be voluntary.  
Not less sweet for us than milk and honey.  
Like the rainbow it falls from the sky  
And blesses, when saying the holy name that pardons  
Both the one who gives it and the one who receives it.  
It's the most powerful right coming from the All Powerful.  
And seated on his throne, a king calculating

SCENE II

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

More than by the crown, is beautiful through his clemency.  
For he borrows an immense grandeur from it.  
Attributes of the Very—High, the powers down here  
Are nothing when it doesn't ride with them.  
There's nothing among us which is not annihilated  
Without it in the eyes of god, not even justice.  
If justice then, is your only argument,  
Jew, consider also its weakness, and how  
To all men on their knees, each day's prayer  
Says, that in demanding mercy it must also do it.  
I myself have enlarged on this subject  
In the hope of stopping your rigorous plan  
Which can force the court, according to our laws, to render  
A really cruel decree, if you don't want to listen to me.

**SHYLOCK:** (rapping his cane) Let them pile on my head and let all my actions  
Fall back on me! I demand the law!  
I confine myself to it, and I know my case  
I intend that the clauses of this note be fulfilled.

**PORTIA:** Then is Antonio indigent to the degree  
That he's in no condition to return this money?

**BASSANIO:** (to Portia)  
Before the eyes of the court, I here offer double the sum.  
I offer to pay it a dozen times to this man  
Under pain of delivering my head to his knife.  
Judge, if all this doesn't appease this executioner  
His baseness becomes manifest in every respect.  
Let your authority, the sole recourse that remains to us,  
Make the law bend, only for this day  
So that for once innocence shall have its turn!

**PORTIA:** That mustn't be and nothing authorizes me  
To change a single word in the laws of Venice.  
By this precedent each is served.  
If the state once destroyed a rule  
That wouldn't be the case.

**SHYLOCK:** A Daniel! A prophet!  
A young and wise Daniel! Ah! justice is being done me.

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

He's a Daniel!

**PORTIA:** Come then, come forward and show me  
Your note.

**SHYLOCK:** Here it is! holy doctor of the law,  
Very reverend doctor.

**PORTIA:** Be careful, they're offering you  
Thrice the ducats

**SHYLOCK:** Bad luck to whoever ventures  
An oath in heaven and lies on the book.  
Can I retract myself? I have an oath above.

**PORTIA:** I must then declare that, after reading  
The note, the Jew can, according to this writing  
Satisfy this clause by weighing and slicing  
A pound of flesh near the heart of the merchant.  
But yet, one more time, be clement and withdraw  
This condition; tell me "Yes!" and I will tear up  
Your note and three times your money will be paid to you.

**SHYLOCK:** Since by this law I find myself supported  
You who know it and apply it as a man  
Knowledgeable, judicious, grave, expert, I summon you  
To give judgement, swearing that nothing will ever  
Make me burn this note that I hold.

**ANTONIO:** (advancing) I beg that the court decide instantly.

**PORTIA:** (to Antonio) Since that's the way it is, here's our response.  
Prepare your breast for the knife of this Jew.

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**SHYLOCK:** (ravished with joy)  
Yes, his breast! the note is precise, positive.  
His breast! all around the heart!

**PORTIA:** Easy! you are hurrying  
Without having foreseen everything; you haven't your equilibrium.

**SHYLOCK:** (excitedly) I have 'em here.

**PORTIA:** But there must be some surgeon  
Who will care for his wound, and who will impose a cord  
To stop the blood?

**SHYLOCK:** Is that written  
In the note?

**PORTIA:** No, Shylock, but a creature  
Similar to you has a right to your charity.

**SHYLOCK:** As for me, I don't think so unless it's found  
In the note.

**PORTIA:** (to Antonio) Merchant, what have you to reply?

**ANTONIO:** Nothing, except that the evils that Venice has seen break  
Over me during the last two days, have disposed of me completely;  
I am prepared.  
(to Bassanio who weeps) No you didn't cause anything.  
Fortune is treating me with less bitterness  
And derision than is its custom;  
For almost every day one sees unfortunates  
Following their wealth, ghosts in their eyes,  
That it condemns to see old age numbed  
With poverty, and shameful maladies

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

Arrive sadly, replacing their good days.  
It has delivered me from this evil forever.  
You will speak of me, you, your young wife  
And her friends; I know the goodness of her soul.  
Recount to her my death, and let her judge, thereafter  
If you were loved. Don't have any regrets  
From actions like this more than I have endured.  
(with a bitter smile)  
This Jew will soon know if in my heart is found  
Some other feeling which doesn't belong to you.

**BASSANIO:** Antonio, as happy as I am as spouse  
I would give the world and my life and my wife  
So long as this traitor cannot touch her soul.  
Yes, I would consent to sacrifice her.

**PORTIA:** (low) Ah! too bad she's not here to thank you!

**GRATIANO:** Although I love mine, too, I assure you  
I would wish her in heaven so she might more surely  
Convert the Jew and his hardened heart.

**NERISSA:** (to Gratiano)  
You are quite lucky she's unaware of this!

**SHYLOCK:** (aside)  
Now those are really our Christian husbands! infidel race!  
My daughter has one of 'em! I would much prefer for her  
An impure reject of the blood of Barabas.  
(aloud)  
You are wasting your time talking down there;  
The sentence!

**PORTIA:** (after having consulted with the Doge)  
The court adjudges and the law gives  
This pound of flesh to the Jew.

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**SHYLOCK:** Just and fine law!  
Good judge!

**PORTIA:** You must cut it from his breast  
The court permits you to do it.

**SHYLOCK:** Learned judge!

**BASSANIO:** (aside) Assassin!

**SHYLOCK:** (rushing knife in hand toward Antonio)  
What a sentence! Let's go! Your breast is ready?  
Come on! prepare yourself! let's go! let's go!

**PORTIA:** (putting her hand between them) Stop!  
That's not all; reread this all powerful note:  
It doesn't grant you one drop of blood:  
A pound of flesh! Take a pound of flesh,  
That's fine: you can take it, and the law gives it to you.  
But if you cause the shedding of a little Christian blood,  
All your wealth is confiscated to the profit of Venice.

**GRATIANO:** Great judge! look at him, Jew! The fair judge!

**SHYLOCK:** (letting his scales and his knife fall)  
Is this the law?

**PORTIA:** You can see it on this table  
And read it. Ah! you insist they be just with you!  
More than you wanted us to be, trust me.

**SHYLOCK:**  
Then I accept your offer and I want them to count it out to me

SCENE II

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

At least three times the sum shown by this bill.  
Release this Christian.

**BASSANIO:** Here, take your money.

**PORTIA:** No, lord, the Jew was correct in demanding  
Justice: but he must have nothing else  
Than what is written. Thus, as he was disposed  
To cut this flesh; but in cutting it, if he exudes  
a drop of blood, one drop! he is dead,  
And his wealth confiscated.

**GRATIANO:** (laughing and mocking the Jew)  
A Daniel! a great judge!  
Jew! a second Daniel! receive then what is adjudged you,  
Infidel! Are you ready now, subtle Jew?

**PORTIA:** Well, what's Shylock doing? why's he hesitating?

**SHYLOCK:** Give me my principal, and let me be allowed  
To leave.

**BASSANIO:** Here, it is ready.

**PORTIA:** No, that's weakness,  
He refused it, thus he cannot  
Obtain his debt.

**GRATIANO:** A Daniel! ah! I want to echo  
The praise of this Jew.

**SHYLOCK:** Can I not have the sum  
Pure and simple?

SCENE II

**PORTIA:** No.

**SHYLOCK:** No? Well then, may this man  
Go find money with the devil, as for me, I am leaving.

**PORTIA:** No. Stop this Jew. Ah! you are not out of it!  
(she takes the book of the law)  
Look. It stands in the laws of Venice  
That when a foreigner shall attempt  
By some indirect means or other way  
Some plan directed against the life of a citizen,  
Half of his wealth is to be abandoned  
To this Venetian, the other given to the State.  
That's your position. Or, in alternative, the law  
Prescribes death, come forward, here, prostrate yourself,  
Come to the feet of the court to cry mercy!

**GRATIANO:** Go kneel and ask for a rope  
For you don't have anything left to buy one with.

**THE DOGE:** So as to show you what the Christian spirit is  
And how our ways surpass yours  
In accord with our ancient customs, I am free  
To grant you life, and I am doing so before  
Your prayer to the court to let you live.  
I add that you can request us  
To restrain your loss by showing amendment.

**SHYLOCK:** Well, take my life and all, for can I still  
Support my family, having lost my gold?  
And can I live still, losing what makes life?

**PORTIA:** Antonio, let your order overwhelm or deliver him.  
His wealth is all yours and by you alone to be given up.  
What will you let him have?

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**GRATIANO:** A rope, gratis,  
And nothing more!

**ANTONIO:** Lord, for myself, no exigency  
Shall retain his gold: I restrict my vengeance  
And I wish also to restrict your power  
To subtract half of his immense holdings  
To give it tomorrow to the husband of his daughter  
Under the conditions of a father of a family  
He gives it to him instantly, this portion of his wealth  
And that, this very day, he becomes a Christian.

**THE DOGE:** You will accept, or indeed I am revoking your pardon.

**PORTIA:** Shylock, are you satisfied with the  
Result which is taking place?

**SHYLOCK:** I am satisfied: yes, yes, but let me leave,  
I don't feel well, I need to leave.  
You will send to my place to sign your agreement.

**DOGE:** Get out, I really like that; but you will sign the order.

**GRATIANO:** Tomorrow, for your baptism there must be two relatives  
I won't fail for two thousand florins  
Choose me; if my hand had written the sentence  
They would have given you ten around the gallows.

(Shylock who is leaving slowly turns and looks fixedly with rage at  
the assembly, crosses his arms and with a deep sigh leaves.)

**DOGE:** (to Portia) Can you accept as thanks  
A dinner?

SCENE II

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**PORTIA:** Milord, I beg you humbly  
The refusal that my departure obliges me to make.  
They are expecting me in Padua.

**DOGE:** Go then, but I insist  
That at least Antonio can receive you.  
It will be for him as much a joy as a duty.

(The Doge and the judges leave.)

**BASSANIO:** (to Portia who is half hiding)  
You saved us from such a misfortune  
As for me, especially, who, shamed by his trifle  
I would offer you the three thousand ducats  
Owed the Jew.

**ANTONIO:** Which of us can do enough in this case  
To your rare talents and your eloquence!  
What don't I owe you for this immense blessing!

**PORTIA:** The pleasure that I experience in seeing our success  
Pays me fully for the trouble of the trial.  
I'm never more mercenary than that.

**BASSANIO:** Leave for this once your usual custom.  
Accept something.

**PORTIA:** Well, I want to give in!  
I am seeking here only what I can demand of you,  
Your gloves— I intend to wear them often in memory  
(Bassanio takes them off and gives them)  
Of our great battle and our victory.  
Also, I will take this ring. Eh, what!  
Aren't you withdrawing your hand?

SCENE II

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**BASSANIO:** No. As for me,  
I wouldn't dare offer you such a small thing  
Rather, sir, take what I propose.

**PORTIA:** I don't wish anything more, and I feel, at sight of it  
Great desire that it pass and stay in my power.

**BASSANIO:** It's worth more to me than it appears, sir!  
I will make you one today that resembles it  
In diamonds and gold, but this one here—

**PORTIA:** That's fine; we aren't staying long here.

**BASSANIO:** I must confess it, I have it from my wife  
Who—

**PORTIA:** That excuse comes from a very beautiful soul!  
But, you will really allow me, for my part  
That to this pretext I give little faith.

**BASSANIO:** She made me swear—

**PORTIA:** At least being a mad woman  
She can get upset over a bauble  
Which cannot be worth what I've done for you.  
Good bye, we're leaving here.

(She leaves with Nerissa.)

**ANTONIO:** As for me, indeed I think

SCENE II

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

That it's quite a small thing for his desires to prevail  
Over your vows.

**BASSANIO:** Friendship will then be the strongest  
You wish it.  
(to Gratiano)  
Go, run, give him this ring.  
(Gratiano takes the ring and leaves)  
As for us, let's fly to Belmont, to excuse myself for a gift  
That I was unable, despite the voice which invites us  
To grant only to the one who saved your life.

**CURTAIN**

**SCENE III**

Belmont. Portia's palace. One sees the palace at the end of an avenue.  
Italian building. Night.

Lorenzo and Jessica enter arm in arm and come to sit on a bench on  
the lawn. Lorenzo holds a book in his hand.

**LORENZO:** See, the moon is beautiful and how pure the disc is!  
It was in such a night, with this heavenly azure  
While a light wind caressed the foliage  
Tears of the night still moistened everything  
That Troilus of Troy scaled the walls  
To come softly, by these dark paths  
To address the burning sighs of his soul  
To Cressida, the Greek, and see her in her tent.

**JESSICA:** It was on such a night, that Thisbe came  
With a light foot, ready to die at the least danger,  
And who, having noticed a big lion in the shadow,  
Escaped.

**LORENZO:** Yes, it was on a night no less somber  
That Jessica the Jewess, crossed plain and mountain  
From Venice, with me, and ran straight to Belmont.

**JESSICA:** And it was, they tell me, on a like night  
That the handsome Lorenzo slipped into her ear  
Tales of a young man and oaths good for a day.

**LORENZO:** And in a like night, slandering the love  
Of her faithful friend she was forgiven  
Although she deserved only to be abandoned.  
(he kisses her two hands)

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**JESSICA:** (pointing her finger at him)  
I am going to make you spend the night right here  
To avenge myself on you, if you loved me and if—  
But someone's coming.

(Servant enters.)

**SERVANT:** I'm running ahead by myself and rushing  
To announce that my mistress is going to come momentarily  
She's coming slowly and is stopping I think  
To pray at the foot of this cross.

**LORENZO:** Go tell the castle that musicians must  
Greet her coming in the avenue  
With what pleases her, in full tune.  
(exit servant)  
Let's await them here. See this pale and clear day  
Slumber softly on the benches of the lawn  
Seat yourself. With instruments mercy and flexibility  
Enter into our hearts through the intoxication of the senses.  
Silence and night agree with the accents  
Of voices and harmonies, doubly pure and harmonic!  
In the infinite dome see the endless crowd  
Of heavenly diamonds incrusting in the air  
With its globes following their smooth paths.  
There isn't a single one on whom the invisible wheel  
Doesn't produce a concert which mixes and rejoices  
Amongst the divine songs of blue eyed angels  
But this enchantment with its miraculous sounds  
Can only reveal itself to souls delivered  
From the body, and forever surrounded by happiness.  
(to the musicians who enter and assemble at the rear)  
Come, musicians with a joyful concert  
Lead Portia back to her deserted palace.  
(the musicians perform a soft air)

**JESSICA:** (holding Lorenzo's hands)  
How is it that music by pleasing me saddens me  
And that my emotional heart resists the gayest songs?

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**LORENZO:** (In a grave tone)

It's that your very attentive wits  
Don't have feelings for gay or plaintive songs  
Because your beautiful soul is seized powerfully  
By seeing these troupes, following their fantasy,  
Running and playing in these violet fields  
And young horses leaping nearby;  
If, by chance, in the distance the least echo repeats  
The noise of the hunting horn or indeed the trumpet  
They stop, lowering their heads and their eyes,  
Saddened, softened, subdued, silent.  
From there, these old stories that I made you read  
Of Orpheus and of toilsome miracles of the lyre  
Indicating that there is nothing, tree, flowers, rocks,  
That music one day cannot touch at last.  
The man that has no music in him, a frigid  
Soul, bitter, and resouceless, without generous passion,  
Capable of misdeeds, of vile treasons:  
You must beware of him: Let's listen to these beautiful sounds.  
Let's listen to the music.

(Enter Portia and Nerissa.)

**PORTIA:** Is it really beneath a tree  
Or in a very palace, or marble pavilion?  
This flame in the night casts a weak ray  
Like a beautiful action in an impure world.

**NERISSA:** I didn't see it when the moon was shining.

**PORTIA:** Small fortunes pale beside the great,  
Beside a glory, a celebrity.

**LORENZO:** Why, Jessica, truly, I hear speaking.  
It's Portia's voice.

**PORTIA:** What! they recognized

SCENE III

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

My voice?

**LORENZO:** Yes, be welcome to your home  
Your spouse is still travelling.

**PORTIA:** Well,  
As they are going to return, don't tell them anything  
Of our short absence. You see them on the road,  
I know it.  
(A hunting horn is heard)  
Why that horn—

**LORENZO:** Ah! that's them without doubt.

(Enter Bassanio, Antonio, Gratiano.)

**PORTIA:** So it's you, traveler?

**BASSANIO:** Myself, or rather us;  
For, my beautiful Portia, I am bringing to your knees  
My friend, Antonio, the one whose life  
Was pursued by the Jew, and for me alone,  
The one who submitted to a happy absence,  
The one who repurchased my happiness with his blood.  
Here he is!

**PORTIA:** At least your debt is acquitted  
Towards your friend.

**BASSANIO:** Yes, for I gave him you.

**PORTIA:** Truly great sacrifice!

SCENE III

SHYLOCK The Merchant of Venice By Alfred de Vigny

**BASSANIO:** More than you imagine!  
He did me justice and said—

**PORTIA:** Enough! Enough!  
This comparison is truly a blasphemy.  
You are not here in my home but in your own home,  
Sir; at least tell me about your trial.

**GRATIANO:** (quarrelling with Nerissa)  
No, the accusation is excessively unjust,  
It's to that young clerk that I gave it.

**PORTIA:** (continuing) What men  
Still trouble you in the asylum we are in?

**ANTONIO:** (kissing her hand) You are opening it to misfortune.

**JESSICA:** And even to bliss

**LORENZO:** (to Jessica)  
Thanks to you, sweet child of the harshest Hebrew—

**PORTIA:** Antonio, read me these letters, I beg you  
I received them for you just now. I bet  
They are not announcing anything that ought to afflict you.

**ANTONIO:** (opening them)  
Eh, what! madame, eh, what! do you know how to direct  
The storms, the winds, the Mediterranean?  
Regulate the seasons and hasten the year?  
Four of my vessels are returned to port.  
After the eloquent man who spared me from death  
It's to you the I owe all my gratitude.

SCENE III

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**GRATIANO:** (continuing to quarrel with Nerissa)  
O querulous woman! o uneasy madwoman,  
Petty and ridiculous reproach! tormented idiot!  
Childish argument! suspicion of Megera!

**PORTIA:** Hey, what!  
A quarrel down there?

**GRATIANO:** Yes already, yes, madam.  
Here I am quarreling with my future wife  
For a poor ring, a wretched jewel  
Not worth the quarter of an obloe or a sou,  
With a motto weaker, truly  
No sharper than knives children carry.  
It was “Think of me, remember me!”  
Two hearts burning pierced by an arrow, I don't know what  
And it's for that—

**NERISSA:** No, that's a trifle;  
But you swore unto the mortal hour  
To keep that pledge and you gave it way.

**GRATIANO:** But to whom? A beardless clerk, a new born  
A sort of child, no taller than yourself  
A little blond gossip, with an intense delicacy  
Who asked me for the ring so much that, my word—

**PORTIA:** Frankly, Gratiano. it's a lack of faith,  
A stain on the oath of conjugal love.  
I'd lose my mind for an equal offense!  
Ask the one that I love if he would  
Renounce my ring, and would give it away.

**BASSANIO:** (hiding his hand behind Portia's back as if to caress her)  
I wish now that my hand was cut off.  
That would be an excuse.

SCENE III

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**PORTIA:** (taking Bassanio's hand despite him)  
Well, am I deceived?  
Don't you have it any more?

**BASSANIO:** No. If you could know  
To what man your ring belongs, and wanted to receive  
Only the ring, and what my difficulty was  
To give him my ring, and how vain it was  
For me to struggle to keep my ring, you would see  
That it is not my fault and you would calm down.

**PORTIA:** If you knew the value of the ring  
You would feel the excuse to be vague and insufficient.  
If the ring confirmed happiness to you  
You would wear the ring and do it from honor—  
Nerissa, we shall see some woman has my ring—

**NERISSA:** That's certain.

**BASSANIO:** No, truly, on honor, on honor, madam.  
It had to be given, it's the judge who has it.

**PORTIA:** It's a judge, sir? Well, this judge,  
Do you think it's not a vain threat,  
Since he has your ring, he's going to take your place?

**NERISSA:** (turning towards Gratiano)  
His clerk will take your and that will be fine.

**GRATIANO:** If I ever see him, I will tell him his fate.

**PORTIA:** (to Bassanio) I invite him tonight to bring me my ring.

SCENE III

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**BASSANIO:** I invite him tonight to recount my horn.

**NERISSA:** (to Gratiano) I have to give him now a fashionable note.

**GRATIANO:** As for me, his back will be paper and your pen a stick.

**ANTONIO:** How wretched I am to cause quarrels!

**PORTIA:** Don't afflict yourself too gravely about them  
You who know so well to serve with caution  
Give him this ring. No more precaution  
And no more the art of judging the features of my face  
And that's to what this ring bonds you now.

**BASSANIO:** It's mine!

**ANTONIO:** Eh, what!

**PORTIA:** Yes, yours; for I was  
The judge, and Nerissa the clerk.

**BASSANIO:** (kissing her right hand) It was you, Portia?

**ANTONIO:** (kissing her left hand) Deceitful beneficence!

**JESSICA:** Happy absence!

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**GRATIANO:** Adorable presence!

**LORENZO:** Celestial ruse!

**NERISSA:** Angel saviour!

**PORTIA:** What a mess!  
Each tells his insult.— Where to flee them?

**BASSANIO:** In my arms?

(She leans on his shoulder.)

**CURTAIN**