

### Act 3 Bad News

#### Scene 1 A street in Venice

[*Solanio and Salerio enter.*]

SOLANIO: Now what news?

SALERIO: There are reports that Antonio *has* lost a ship between England and France.

SOLANIO [*worried*]: Let's hope the reports are wrong.

SALERIO: Or if not, let's hope that he loses no more.

SOLANIO: Let our wishes reach heaven before the Devil hears them.  
[*Shylock arrives.*] [*whispering to Salerio*] Here comes the Devil in the mask of a Jew. [*to Shylock*] How are you, Shylock? What news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK [*angrily*]: You know very well that my daughter has flown away.

SALERIO: Of course we do. I know the man who made her wings.

SOLANIO: And Shylock knew that the young bird was ready to fly. It is only natural for young birds to leave their home.

SHYLOCK: She can go to hell.

SALERIO: She will, if the Devil is her judge.

SHYLOCK: My own flesh and blood!

SALERIO: There is more difference between your flesh and hers than there is between ink and snow. But tell us, have you heard whether Antonio has lost a ship at sea?

SHYLOCK: That is another bad piece of business for me! A man with no money, a beggar who used to walk so proudly on the square! Let him remember his guarantee. He thought I was just a greedy money-lender. And he is a Christian who never charges or pays interest on loans. Let him remember his guarantee.

SALERIO [*shocked*]: You wouldn't take his flesh, would you? How would you profit from that?

SHYLOCK: If it feeds nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He has insulted me a million times. He has laughed at me when I lost money, made fun of my religion, ruined my business, criticised me to my friends and made friends with my enemies. And why? Because I am a Jew. Does a Jew not have eyes? Does a Jew not have feelings? Is he not hurt when he is hit? Does he not suffer from the same diseases? Is he not warned and cooled by the same summer and winter as a Christian is? If you cut us, do we not bleed? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you harm us, shall we not take revenge? If we are like you in everything else, we must be the same as you in this. If a Jew harms a Christian, what is his punishment? Revenge. If a Christian harms a Jew, what should *his* punishment be – according to Christian example? Of course, revenge! I will practise what I have been taught, but I will do it better than my teachers.

[*A messenger from Antonio arrives.*]

MESSENGER [*to Salerio and Solanio*]: Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house and desires to speak to you both.

SALERIO: We have been looking for him everywhere.

[*Salerio and Solanio leave with the messenger. Tubal arrives.*]

SHYLOCK: Tubal, what news from Genoa? Have you found my daughter?

TUBAL: I have tried, but without success.

SHYLOCK [*angrily*]: One jewel cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfurt! And there are other precious stones. Why can't my daughter be dead at my feet with the jewels in her ear? No news of them? Why not? And I don't know how much I have spent on this search. The thief has escaped with so much, but it costs so much to find the thief! If there is no satisfaction, there is no revenge! All the bad luck is on *my* shoulders, all the tears are in *my* eyes!

TUBAL: But other men have bad luck, too. I heard in Genoa that Antonio ...



SHYLOCK [*interrupting excitedly*]: What? Bad luck?

TUBAL: ... has lost a ship sailing from Tripoli.

SHYLOCK [*happily*]: Thank God! Is it true?

TUBAL: I spoke to some of the sailors who escaped.

SHYLOCK [*laughing*]: Thank you, good Tubal. Good news, good news! Ha, ha!

TUBAL [*seriously*]: I have also heard news of your daughter. In one night in Genoa, she spent eighty ducats.

SHYLOCK [*staring at Tubal with shock and disbelief*]: That is like a knife to my heart. I shall never see my gold again. [*crying*] Eighty ducats in one night? [*shouting*] Eighty ducats!

TUBAL: I came to Venice with other men who have lent Antonio money. They all believe that he will be unable to pay his debts.

SHYLOCK [*smiling cruelly*]: I am glad. I shall punish him. I shall make him suffer.

TUBAL: One man showed me a ring that your daughter had given him for a monkey.

SHYLOCK [*angrily*]: To hell with her! You are making me suffer, Tubal. My wife, Leah, gave me that ring before I was married. It is more precious to me than a million monkeys!

TUBAL: But Antonio has certainly lost everything.

SHYLOCK [*calming down*]: Yes, that is true. That is very true. And if he cannot repay his loan on time, I will have his heart. [*excitedly*] Go, Tubal, fetch me a legal clerk. Then meet me at my house.

[*Shylock and Tubal leave quickly.*]

*Scene 2 Belmont – the room in Portia's house with the three boxes*

[*Bassanio, Portia, Gratiano, Nerissa and servants enter.*]

PORTIA [*to Bassanio*]: Wait a day or two before making your choice. If you choose the wrong box, you'll have to leave, and I don't want to lose your company. If you stayed here for a month or

two, I could teach you how to choose correctly. [*sadly*] But I'm not allowed to, and you might choose the wrong box. [*annoyed at Bassanio, who looks confused*] Don't look at me like that! My heart is yours, but I'm not free to follow what my heart desires. So, although I'm yours, I'm *not* yours. [*urgently*] Prove destiny wrong. Let destiny go to hell, not me. [*sadly*] But I've been talking too much. I only do it to keep you here longer, to delay the sad moment of choice.

BASSANIO [*bravely*]: Let me go and meet my destiny.

PORTIA [*nervously*]: Go then. I'm locked in one of the boxes. If you love me, you'll choose the right one. [*to Nerissa and the servants*] Stand back. Let music play while he makes his choice. If he loses, the music will allow him a beautiful exit. If he wins, it will celebrate his success.

[*Music plays. Nerissa opens the curtain and Bassanio studies the three boxes.*]

BASSANIO [*thoughtfully*]: Appearances are often false, but the world still believes the tricks they play. In law, the worst lies are masked by clever argument. In religion, the worst mistakes are excused by words in a church. All bad things can look good on the outside. A coward can make himself look brave with a thick beard and a serious face. An ugly woman can buy a beautiful face from a bottle. An attractive shore can hide a dangerous sea. A pretty mask can trick even the wisest man. Therefore, gold and silver, I will not touch you. [*resting his hand on the box of lead*] But you, ordinary lead, your paleness touches my heart. I will choose you, and let happiness be my reward!

PORTIA [*quietly excited*]: How all my other feelings – doubt, fear and jealousy – fly away! Oh love, be gentle with me. Don't fill me with your happiness too quickly ...

BASSANIO [*opening the box of lead*]: What do I find here? A picture of beautiful Portia! [*looking at the picture*] What living thing has come

so near to perfection? Are her eyes moving, or is it my imagination? Her soft lips are brushed with sugar breath, and in her hair the painter has made a golden cloud to catch the hearts of men. But even this fine painting is just a shadow of the real thing. [*Putting down the picture and picking up a written message*] Here's the message – my future and my destiny. [*reading*] 'You are brave and very wise  
Not to trust your foolish eyes.  
As this fortune falls to you,  
Be happy – look for nothing new.  
If you are well pleased with this,  
Turn to where your lady is  
And win her with a loving kiss.'  
[*to Portia*] A gentle message. Dear lady, I am shaking with happiness. But I won't believe that this is true until you say that it is.

PORTIA: Lord Bassanio, if I were a thousand times richer and more beautiful, I'd still be glad to be yours. Although I may seem to have everything, I'm just a simple girl at heart. I've studied little and have experienced even less, but I'm not too old to learn. I was the mistress of this great house and of my servants; but now this house and these servants belong to you, as I do, my lord. [*giving Bassanio a ring*] I give them with this ring. If you ever lose it or give it away, it will mean the end of our love.

BASSANIO: Madam, I am lost for words. But if this ring ever leaves my finger, then all life will leave my body.

NERISSA: My lord and lady, it is now time for others to speak, to congratulate you both on your happiness.

GRATIANO: My lord Bassanio, and my gentle lady, I wish you all the happiness in the world. And on the day of your wedding, please allow me to be married, too.

BASSANIO [*surprised*]: Of course! But have you found a wife?

GRATIANO [*looking at Nerissa*]: Thank you, my lord – *you* have found



'Dear Lady, I am shaking with happiness.'



me one. My eyes, my lord, can see as clearly as yours. You saw the lady, and I saw her servant. You loved, I loved. Your destiny was in those boxes, and mine was, too. With words of love, I won this promise: I would win her love if you won the love of her lady.

PORTIA [*to Nerissa*]: Is this true, Nerissa?

NERISSA [*shyly*]: It is, madam.

BASSANIO [*to Gratiano*]: Gratiano, this isn't a joke, is it?

GRATIANO [*seriously*]: It is not, my lord.

BASSANIO [*smiling*]: Then we shall be glad to share our wedding day with you. [*Lorenzo enters with Jessica and Salerio*] Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome [*suddenly uncertain*] – if welcome is in my power to give. [*to Portia*] With your permission, I'd like to welcome my friends and countrymen.

PORTIA [*smiling*]: They are very welcome.

LORENZO [*to Portia*]: Thank you. [*to Bassanio*] I hadn't intended to visit you here, but I met Salerio and he asked me urgently to come with him.

SALERIO: That's true, my lord, and there was a reason for it. Antonio wants to see you.

[*Salerio gives Bassanio a letter.*]

BASSANIO: Before I open it, tell me how my good friend is.

SALERIO: His letter will tell you.

[*Bassanio opens the letter.*]

GRATIANO [*to Nerissa*]: Greet Jessica warmly; make her welcome. [*shaking Salerio's hand*] What news from Venice? How's Antonio? I know he'll be glad about our success. We've won our prize.

SALERIO [*sadly*]: But he has lost his.

PORTIA: Something in the letter has stolen the colour from Bassanio's face. It must be about a dear, dead friend. What else could turn such a strong man pale? [*to Bassanio*] What? Something worse? Bassanio, I'm half of you. I must freely have half of whatever this paper brings you.

BASSANIO: Oh, sweet Portia, these are the most unpleasant words that were ever written on paper! Gentle lady, when I first showed my love to you, I freely told you I had nothing. But it was worse than that. I'd asked a dear friend to help me. He borrowed money from his enemy to help me. This letter is the body of my friend, and every word is bleeding with his blood. [*to Salerio*] Is it true, Salerio? Have all his business adventures failed? Didn't even one ship escape the awful touch of those merchant-murdering rocks?

SALERIO: Not one, my lord. In addition to that, even if he had the money to repay the Jew, Shylock would not accept it. I've never known a man who is greedier for revenge. Twenty merchants, the Duke himself, and all the lords of Venice have tried to argue with him. But he refuses to change his mind about his cruel demand for punishment and justice.

JESSICA: I've heard him say to Tubal, his friend, that he'd rather have a pound of Antonio's flesh than twenty times the money that he owes him.

PORTIA [*to Bassanio*]: This man seems to be in a lot of trouble. Is he a good friend of yours?

BASSANIO: My dearest friend, the kindest man on earth.

PORTIA: How much does he owe the Jew?

BASSANIO: Because of me, three thousand ducats.

PORTIA: Is that all? Pay him six thousand and destroy the agreement.

I'd double it before a friend as good as this lost a hair for helping you. Come to church with me and marry me. Then go to Venice with your friend. I'll give you gold to pay this debt twenty times.

But first, let me hear your friend's letter.

BASSANIO [*reading*]: 'Sweet Bassanio, I've lost all my ships and people are becoming cruel. I must honour my agreement with the Jew, which means I'll lose my life. All debts between you and I will be forgotten if I can see you at my death. But I leave the choice with you. If your love for me can't make you come, don't let this letter change your mind.'

PORTIA: Oh, love, leave your business here and go without delay.

BASSANIO: As I have your permission to leave, I'll go immediately. But I'll hurry back to you as soon as I can.

[*Bassanio, Portia, Nerissa, Gratiano, Lorenzo, Jessica and Salerio leave.*]

Scene 3 A street in Venice

[*Shylock, Solanio and Antonio enter with a prison guard.*]

SHYLOCK [*to the prison guard*]: Take care of the prisoner. Don't talk to me about forgiveness. This is the fool who lent money without profit.

ANTONIO: Please listen to me, Shylock.

SHYLOCK [*angrily*]: You'll be punished for your debt! You made an agreement with me! You called me a dog for no reason. So if I'm a dog, be careful of my teeth! The Duke will give me justice.

ANTONIO: Please listen to me.

SHYLOCK: I'll have my guarantee! I refuse to listen to you, so say no more. I'm not a fool. I won't allow myself to be beaten by Christian beggars. Don't follow me – I'll have no more conversation. You'll honour your agreement! [*He leaves.*]

SOLANIO: He's the cruellest man that has ever lived!

ANTONIO [*without energy*]: Leave him alone. I won't ask him any more. He wants my life, and I know why: when people borrowed money from him, I often helped them with their debts. He hates me because of that.

SOLANIO: I'm sure the Duke will never force you to honour the agreement.

ANTONIO: The Duke can't deny the course of law. If he does, foreign businessmen will say that our laws are dishonest. Then our city will lose business from abroad. [*In a weak voice*] So go. My problems have weakened me so much that I won't even have a pound of flesh to give. [*to the prison guard*] Ask Bassanio to come and see me pay his debt. After that, I don't care what happens.

[*Antonio, Solanio and the prison guard leave.*]

Scene 4 Belmont – the same room in Portia's house as in Act 2 Scene 1

[*Portia enters with Nerissa, Lorenzo, Jessica and Balthasar, one of her servants.*]

LORENZO [*to Portia*]: Madam, Antonio is a good man and your husband's dearest friend. If you knew him, you'd be very proud of the help that you offer him.

PORTIA: If Antonio is my husband's closest friend, he must be an excellent man. Therefore he deserves the best help that I can give. But this makes me sound too proud of myself – let's talk of other things. Lorenzo, I want you to manage my business in my husband's absence. I've made a secret promise to stay alone with Nerissa until our husbands' return. There's an old house two miles away, and we are going to stay there. Please do not refuse me this request.

LORENZO: Madam, with all my heart I shall obey your commands.

PORTIA: My servants already know my plans, and will accept you and Jessica instead of Lord Bassanio and myself. So, goodbye until we meet again.

LORENZO: Goodbye and good luck.

JESSICA [*to Portia*]: I wish you every happiness.

PORTIA [*to Jessica*]: Thank you, and I wish you the same. Goodbye, Jessica. [*Lorenzo and Jessica leave.*] [*to Balthasar*] Now, Balthasar, as I have always found you honest and loyal, take this letter. [*She gives him a letter.*] Hurry to Padua and give it to my cousin, Doctor Bellario. He will give you some clothes and a letter for me. Bring them as quickly as you can to the place where the boat leaves for Venice. Be quick! I shall wait for you there. [*Balthasar leaves.*] [*to Nerissa*] Come, Nerissa. We've got work to do that I haven't told you about yet. We'll see our husbands before they think about us.

NERISSA [*confused*]: Will they see us?

PORTIA [*playfully*]: They will, Nerissa, but they won't recognize us. I promise you: when we're dressed as men, I'll be a better man than you. I'll wear my knife more bravely but with style. I'll deepen



my voice and walk in a fearless, manly way. I'll invent stories of dangerous fights and tell lies about ladies who died of broken hearts because of me. I know a thousand silly male tricks, and I'll practise them all! But come with me. I'll tell you all my plans while we're travelling. We have a twenty-mile journey to make today.

[*Portia and Nerissa leave.*]

Scene 5 A garden in Belmont

[*Launcelot and Jessica enter.*]

LAUNCELOT: Yes, it's true. The crimes of a father are passed down to his children, so I'm worried about you. I've always been honest with you, so I'm telling you my thoughts now. I really think you're going to hell. You have only one hope, although it's only a small one.

JESSICA [*amused*]: And what hope is that?

LAUNCELOT: You can hope that the Jew isn't your real father.

JESSICA: So I must hope that the crimes of my mother are passed down to me!

LAUNCELOT [*shaking his head sadly*]: Unfortunately, you've been sent along the road to hell by your father and your mother. You lose both ways.

JESSICA: I'll be saved by my husband. He's made me a Christian.

LAUNCELOT: That's even worse! We already have enough Christians. This endless production of new Christians will put up the price of pigs. If everybody ate pork, soon there wouldn't be enough pork to eat.

[*Lorenzo arrives.*]

JESSICA [*to Launcelot*]: I'll tell my husband what you've said. Here he comes.  
LORENZO [*smiling at Launcelot*]: I'll soon become jealous of you, Launcelot, if you keep hiding like this in corners with my wife.

JESSICA [*playfully*]: You needn't worry, Lorenzo. Launcelot and I have had an argument. He tells me that there's no forgiveness for me in heaven because I'm a Jew's daughter. He also says that you're not a good member of society. By turning Jews into Christians, you increase the price of pork.

LORENZO [*to Launcelot*]: Only fools can play with words as well as this. Soon, only monkeys will be able to talk, and silence will be more intelligent than words. Go inside, my good man, and tell them to prepare for dinner.

LAUNCELOT: That's already done, sir. Their stomachs are all ready.

LORENZO [*impatiently*]: Then tell them to get dinner ready.

LAUNCELOT: That's been done too, sir. They only need to cover the table.

LORENZO: So will you put a cover on, sir?

LAUNCELOT [*looking at his clothes*]: I'm already covered.

LORENZO [*shaking his head with disbelief*]: You argue over every word, as usual. Why do you have to complicate everything? [*urgently*] Please, try to understand simple language. [*speaking slowly and clearly*] Go to your colleagues, tell them to cover the table with a cloth and serve the meat. Then we can come in for dinner.

LAUNCELOT: The meat will be covered, sir, and the table will be served. [*He leaves.*]

LORENZO: My God, what a fool! His memory's full of good words, and I know many fools in higher places who are exactly like him. They use clever words, but they still make no sense. [*smiling*] But how are you, Jessica? Tell me, what's your opinion of Lord Bassanio's wife?

JESSICA: She's wonderful beyond words. Lord Bassanio must repay destiny with an honest life for giving him such a lovely wife. He's found the happiness of heaven here on earth. If, on earth, he doesn't deserve it, he should never be allowed into heaven.

LORENZO: You have a husband as perfect as Bassanio's wife.

JESSICA [*laughing*]: You can ask my opinion about that!

LORENZO: I will soon. First, let's go to dinner.

JESSICA: No, let me say nice things about you while I'm in the mood.

LORENZO [*shaking his head*]: Save it for the dinner table. Then whatever you say, I'll be able to eat it with my food.

[*Jessica and Lorenzo leave, holding hands and laughing*]

## Act 4 The Judgment

Scene 1 Venice — a court of justice

[*The Duke, some Lords, Antonio, Bassanio, Salerio and Gratiano enter with the Duke's servants and court officials.*]

DUKE: Is Antonio here?

ANTONIO: I am ready.

DUKE: I am sorry for you. You have come to answer an inhuman enemy with no pity or forgiveness in his heart.

ANTONIO: I have heard, my lord, that you have tried to soften his demands. But the law is on his side and he will not change his mind. Therefore I intend to meet his anger with patience, and will suffer his violence quietly.

DUKE [*loudly*]: Call the Jew into court.

SALERIO: He is ready at the door. He is coming, my lord.

[*Shylock enters and stands in front of the Duke.*]

DUKE: Shylock, we all believe that you are not really as cruel as you seem. We believe that you are waiting until the last minute before you show some forgiveness. Instead of asking for a pound of this poor merchant's flesh, you will free him from his agreement. Looking with pity on him, you will find a little kindness in your heart. We all expect a gentle answer.

SHYLOCK: I have already informed you of my purpose, my lord: the agreement must be honoured. You ask me why I would rather have a pound of flesh than three thousand ducats. My only answer is that it is my wish. Does that answer your question? What would you think if a rat was in my house, and I paid ten thousand ducats to have it poisoned? Are you satisfied with my answer yet? Some men hate the sight of a pig's head on a table with an apple in its