

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 gente 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

mouth. Some go mad at the sight of a cat. Others feel ill when they hear the sound of musical pipes. Desire is the master of our emotions. Our feelings are governed by what we like or hate. So here is your answer: there is no good reason for hating a pig's head, a harmless cat or the sound of musical pipes, but we have no choice. We are forced to offend when we are offended. Similarly, I can give no reason for my actions except that I hate Antonio. Therefore, although I am making no profit from our agreement, I want him to honour it fully. Does *that* answer satisfy you?

BASSANIO [*angrily*]: This answer doesn't excuse your cruel behaviour, you unfeeling man.

SHYLOCK [*coldly*]: I do not have to please you with my answers.

BASSANIO: Do all men kill the things they do not love?

SHYLOCK: Does any man hate the thing he would not kill?

BASSANIO: We don't hate everything that offends us.

SHYLOCK: What? Would you let a rat bite you twice?

ANTONIO [*to Bassanio*]: You're wasting your time arguing with him.

Why don't you stand on a beach instead and ask the sea to go back? Or ask a wild dog why it kills young sheep? Or tell mountain trees to stop whispering in the wind? You have more chance of success with these things than with trying to soften his Jewish heart. So please stop all this arguing. Let me be judged quickly, and let Shylock have his wish.

BASSANIO [*producing a bag of money*] [*to Shylock*]: For your three thousand ducats, here are six.

SHYLOCK: If you offered me sixty thousand ducats, I would not accept it. The agreement must be honoured.

DUKE: How can you hope for forgiveness if you offer none?

SHYLOCK: But what do I have to fear if I have done nothing wrong?

You have among you many unpaid workers. You give them the same hard treatment that you give your dogs and horses. Shall I say to you, 'Let them be free! Let them marry your children?' You will answer, 'The workers are ours.' Similarly, therefore, I

will answer you. [*pointing to Antonio*] This man's pound of flesh, which I demand, is dearly bought. It is mine, and I will have it. If you deny it, nobody will trust the laws of Venice again. I expect justice. Shall I have it?

DUKE: I have sent for Bellario, a wise doctor, to listen to these arguments. If he does not come today, I have the power to close this court.

SALERIO: My lord, a messenger has arrived with letters from the doctor, who has just arrived from Padua.

DUKE: Bring us the letters. Call the messenger.

BASSANIO [*to Antonio*]: Be brave, Antonio! Shylock will have *my* flesh, blood and bones before he puts a finger on you.

ANTONIO [*smiling sadly*]: The weakest kind of fruit falls soonest to the ground. Let me do the same. You're more useful alive, Bassanio, so you can remember me after my death.

[*Nerissa enters, dressed as a man.*]

DUKE [*to Nerissa*]: Do you come from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA [*in a deep voice*]: From both, my lord. Bellario sends his greetings.

[*While Nerissa gives the Duke a letter, Shylock has secretly taken out his knife and is inspecting its edge.*]

BASSANIO [*noticing the knife, to Shylock*]: Why are you sharpening your knife so enthusiastically?

SHYLOCK [*pointing to Antonio*]: To cut the payment from that beggar there.

GRATIANO [*to Shylock*]: Your knife is sharp, but not as sharp as your cruel behaviour. Can no words touch your heart?

SHYLOCK: No, none that you are clever enough to say.

GRATIANO [*angrily*]: To hell with you! Your existence poisons the name of justice.

SHYLOCK [*smiling coldly*]: You cannot destroy my agreement with your angry words. You waste your breath by speaking so loud. Think before you speak, or your brain will go soft. The law is on *my* side.

DUKE: In this letter, Bellario says that he has sent a young but wise

doctor to our court. [*to Nerissa*] Where is he?

NERISSA: He is waiting for your permission to enter, my lord.

DUKE: I give it with pleasure. [*to his servants*] Go and give him a warm welcome, then bring him here. [*Three servants leave.*] Now the court will hear Bellario's letter. [*reading*] 'Unfortunately, I am very ill and am unable to come. But when your messenger arrived, I had a young Roman doctor with me, whose name is Balthasar. I told him about the problem between Shylock, the money-lender, and Antonio, the merchant, and he understands the situation perfectly. With your permission, my lord, he will come to the court instead of me. Please pay no attention to his age. I have never known such a wise head on such young shoulders.' [*Portia enters dressed as Balthasar, a Doctor of Law*] You have heard the words of wise Bellario, and now here comes the young doctor. [*to Portia*] Give me your hand. Did old Bellario send you?

PORTIA [*in a deep voice*]: He did, my lord.

DUKE: You are welcome. Are you familiar with the details of this problem?

PORTIA: I have studied them carefully. [*looking around the court*] Which is the merchant here, and which is the money-lender?

DUKE: Antonio and old Shylock, step forwards.

PORTIA [*to Shylock*]: Is your name Shylock?

SHYLOCK: It is.

PORTIA: Although your demand is strange, it is supported by the law of Venice. [*to Antonio*] You are in debt to this man, are you not?

ANTONIO: I am.

PORTIA: Is it true that you signed this agreement with him?

ANTONIO: It is.

PORTIA: Then Shylock must show forgiveness.

SHYLOCK [*angrily*]: Why must I? Tell me that.

PORTIA: The quality of forgiveness is the most important quality of all. It falls like gentle rain from heaven. It is precious to the one who gives it and to the one who receives it. It makes a man a



'The quality of forgiveness is the most important quality of all.'

king more than a golden palace does. Earthly power becomes more heavenly when a king's justice is guided by forgiveness. Therefore, Shylock, although justice is on your side, think about this: although justice will be done, none of us will be rewarded. If we ask for forgiveness, we must learn to give forgiveness, too. If you make this merchant honour his agreement, according to this court of Venice he must lose his life.

SHYLOCK: To hell with forgiveness! I want justice. The agreement must be completely honoured.

PORTIA [*to the court*]: Is he not able to repay the money?

BASSANIO: Yes. I can offer the court twice the amount of his debt. If that is not enough, I can pay ten times the amount. If even this is not enough, it would seem that revenge is more important than justice. [*emotionally*] This court has the power to change the law on this occasion. If you want to do a great right, it is necessary to do a little wrong. [*pointing to Shylock*] Deny this cruel devil his revenge.

PORTIA [*calmly*]: That is impossible. No power in Venice can change a traditional law. It would be a bad example, and other, similar requests would follow. It cannot happen.

SHYLOCK [*enthusiastically*]: Oh, wise young judge, how I admire you!

PORTIA: Please let me see the agreement.

SHYLOCK [*giving Portia the agreement*]: Here it is, good doctor.

PORTIA [*taking the agreement*]: Shylock, you have been offered three times the amount of the loan.

SHYLOCK: A promise has already been made by me to heaven! Shall I break such a promise? No, not for Venice!

PORTIA [*after reading the agreement*]: It is true that the debt has not been paid, and lawfully you can ask for a pound of flesh from near the merchant's heart. Show kindness. Accept three times your money, and let me destroy this document.

SHYLOCK: You can destroy it, but only when the debt is paid according to the guarantee. You seem to be a wise judge. You

know the law, and you have shown a good understanding of the situation. Make your judgment according to the law, of which you are a well-deserving supporter. No power in the tongues of men will make me change my mind. The agreement must be honoured.

ANTONIO: I ask this court with all my heart to give its judgment now.

PORTIA [*to Antonio*]: Justice must be done. Prepare your chest for his knife.

SHYLOCK [*excitedly*]: Oh, wise judge! Oh, excellent young man!

PORTIA: The purpose of the law is to obey every word of this agreement.

SHYLOCK: That is very true. Oh, honest judge! You are so much more experienced than you look!

PORTIA [*to Antonio*]: Open the front of your shirt.

SHYLOCK: Yes, show me your chest. It is in the agreement, is it not, good judge? 'Nearest his heart' – those are the exact words.

PORTIA: That is true. Do you have scales to weigh the flesh?

SHYLOCK [*producing them from under his seal*]: I have them ready.

PORTIA: Have your doctor ready, Shylock, to stop him bleeding to death.

SHYLOCK [*suddenly confused*]: Does it say that in the agreement?

PORTIA: Not exactly, but what does that matter? It would be good of you to show some kindness.

SHYLOCK [*taking the agreement from Portia, reading it and shaking his head*]: I cannot find it; it is not in the agreement.

PORTIA [*to Antonio*]: You, merchant, have you anything to say?

ANTONIO: Only a little. I am ready and well-prepared. [*to Bassanio*] Give me your hand, Bassanio, and God be with you. You must not feel guilty or unhappy about this. Destiny is behaving more kindly than usual. She usually lets men live longer than their happiness, but she has saved me from suffering a sad old age. Remember me to your wife and tell her about Antonio's end. Say how I loved you

and speak well of me after my death. Be sorry, but only for losing a friend. I am not sorry for paying your debt. If the Jew cuts deeply enough, I will pay your debt immediately with all my heart.

BASSANIO: Antonio, I am going to be married to a wife who is as dear to me as life itself. But life itself, my wife and all the world are not more precious to me than your life. I would lose them all to save you.

PORTIA [*coldly*]: Your wife would give you little thanks for that if she were here to hear you make the offer.

GRATIANO: I have a wife who I love dearly. But it would be better if she were in heaven. Then she could ask the heavenly powers to change this crazy Jew's mind.

NERISSA [*coldly*]: I am glad that *your* wife cannot hear *you*. If she could, there would be trouble at home.

SHYLOCK [*annoyed*]: Christian husbands! I would prefer my daughter to marry a murdering thief than to have a Christian husband. But we are wasting time. Make your judgment now.

PORTIA [*to Shylock*]: A pound of that merchant's flesh is yours. The court has decided, and it is the law.

SHYLOCK [*smiling*]: Most honest judge!

PORTIA: You must cut this flesh from his chest. The law allows it, and it is the court's decision.

SHYLOCK [*excitedly*]: Oh, wise judge! [*waving his knife at Antonio*]
Come, prepare for your punishment!

PORTIA [*holding up her hand to interrupt*]: One minute, there is something else. This agreement allows you flesh, but not a single drop of blood. The exact words are 'a pound of flesh'. So take your payment, take your pound of flesh. But when you cut it, you must not take one drop of Christian blood. If you do, your land and money will become the property of Venice, by law.

GRATIANO [*happily*]: Oh, honest judge! Listen to him, Shylock. Oh, wise judge!

SHYLOCK [*confused*]: Is that the law?

PORTIA [*showing him a legal document*]: You can read the law yourself.

You wanted justice. I promise you, therefore, that you will have more justice than you expected.

SHYLOCK [*unhappily*]: All right. I accept the first offer. Pay me three times the amount of the debt and free the Christian.

BASSANIO [*holding up the bag of money*]: Here is the money.

PORTIA [*to Bassanio*]: Wait! The money-lender must have total justice. He is only allowed payment according to the agreement.

GRATIANO [*laughing with happiness*]: Oh, Shylock! What an honest, clever judge!

PORTIA [*to Shylock*]: Prepare, therefore, to cut off the flesh. Do not take any blood, or take more or less than exactly one pound. If the scales show even a hair's weight less or more, you will die and all your property will go to the state.

GRATIANO [*laughing more loudly*]: Now, unbeliever, you are beaten!

PORTIA [*to Shylock*]: Why are you pausing? Take your payment.

SHYLOCK [*quietly to Antonio*]: Repay the main debt and let me go.

BASSANIO [*holding up a smaller bag of money*]: I have it ready for you. Here it is.

PORTIA: He has refused it in the open court. He is only allowed justice according to the words of the guarantee.

GRATIANO [*breathless from laughing*]: Shylock, isn't this the wisest judge in the world?

SHYLOCK [*with disbelief*]: Can I not even have the loan returned to me?

PORTIA: You will only have what is owed you according to the guarantee. Take it, and accept the responsibility.

SHYLOCK [*angrily*]: Then let the Devil take him! I have nothing more to say. [*He starts to leave.*]

PORTIA: Wait! You have another law to obey. According to the law, if a foreigner tries to take the life of a citizen of Venice, half of the foreigner's property belongs to that citizen. The other half belongs to the state and the offender's life can only be saved by

the Duke. In my opinion, you are in that situation now. You have planned to take the life of this citizen [pointing to Antonio]. You have broken the law. Fall on your knees, therefore, and ask the Duke for forgiveness.

GRATIANO [to Shylock]: Ask for permission to hang yourself. But as all your property now belongs to the state, you'll have to ask the state to buy you some rope.

DUKE [to Shylock]: I want you to see the difference between our attitudes. Therefore, I am offering you your life before you ask for it. Half of your property goes to Antonio, the other half comes to the state.

SHYLOCK [tearfully]: No, take my life! Do not leave me with that! You take my house when you take everything that supports it.

You take my life when you take everything that allows me to live.

PORTIA [to Antonio]: What kindness can you show him, Antonio?

GRATIANO: A free piece of rope! Nothing else, in God's name!

ANTONIO [to the Duke]: With your permission, my lord, let him keep one half of his property. After his death, I will give the other half to the gentleman who recently stole his daughter. He must, though, do two things: he must become a Christian, and he must sign an agreement to leave everything to his daughter and Lorenzo after his death.

DUKE: He will do this, or he will be punished with death.

PORTIA [to Shylock]: Are you satisfied, Shylock? What do you say?

SHYLOCK [quietly]: I am satisfied.

PORTIA [to a court assistant]: Write the necessary document.

SHYLOCK [to the Duke]: Let me go now, please. I am not well. Send the document to me and I will sign it.

DUKE: Go, but be sure to do it.

GRATIANO [to Shylock]: If I were the judge, I would send you to the hangman's platform, not the church.

[Shylock leaves.]

DUKE [to Portia]: Sir, I would be pleased if you could come with me to dinner.

PORTIA: Forgive me, my lord, but I must return to Padua tonight. I have to leave immediately.

DUKE: I am sorry that you are so busy. [to Antonio] Be grateful to this gentleman because, in my opinion, you owe him much. [He leaves with his servants, the other lords and court officials.]

BASSANIO [to Portia]: My dear sir, your wise actions today have saved my friend and me from serious punishment. As payment, [holding out a bag of money] please accept this money, which we were going to give to Shylock.

ANTONIO: More than this, I will be in debt to you in love and service for ever.

PORTIA [refusing the money]: By saving you I am satisfied, and therefore I am already well paid. I hope that we will meet again. I wish you well, but now I must leave.

BASSANIO: Dear sir, if you will not accept any payment, you must let us give you something as a sign of our thanks. Name two things, please. Do not refuse me this.

PORTIA: As you have forced me, I agree to your request. Give me your gloves, and I will wear them in your memory. [Bassanio takes off his gloves and gives them to Portia.] And for your love, I will take this ring from you. Do not take back your hand; I will not take anything else. As a sign of love, you cannot refuse me this.

BASSANIO [embarrassed]: This ring, sir, is of little value. I would be too ashamed to give you this.

PORTIA: I will accept nothing else. Only this.

BASSANIO: There is more to this ring than its value. I will find the most expensive ring in Venice and gladly give it to you. But please do not take this.

PORTIA [pretending to be displeased]: I see, sir, that you should be more careful with your promises. You showed me how to be a beggar, but now you show me how a beggar should be answered.



'And for your love, I will take this ring from you.'

BASSANIO: Sir, this ring was given to me by my wife. When she put it on, she made me promise not to sell, lose or give it away.

PORTIA [*coldly*]: Many men say that to excuse themselves from making gifts. If your wife were wise, she would understand how much I have deserved this ring. She would not be your enemy forever if you gave it to me. Well, peace be with you!

[*Portia and Nerissa leave.*]

ANTONIO: Bassanio, let him have the ring. Which is more important — his reward and my love, or your wife's command?

BASSANIO [*giving Gratiano the ring*]: Go, Gratiano, run after him and give him the ring. Then bring him, if possible, to Antonio's house. Hurry! [*Gratiano leaves quickly with the ring*] [*to Antonio*] Come, let's go to your house immediately. Then we'll both leave for Belmont early tomorrow morning.

[*Antonio and Bassanio leave.*]

Scene 2 A street in Venice

[*Portia and Nerissa enter, still dressed as men.*]

PORTIA [*giving Nerissa a document*]: Find the Jew's house, give him this document and let him sign it. We'll leave tonight and be home a day before our husbands. Lorenzo will be pleased with this document. He and Jessica will be rich after Shylock's death.

[*Gratiano runs in.*]

GRATIANO [*breathlessly*]: Sir, I have managed to find you. My Lord Bassanio has changed his mind. He has sent this ring to you and asks you to accept his invitation to dinner.

PORTIA [*surprised*]: I do not believe it. [*taking the ring*] Please tell him that I accept his ring most gratefully. Now, would you kindly show my assistant Old Shylock's house?

GRATIANO: With pleasure.

NERISSA [*to Portia*]: Sir, could I speak to you? [*whispering*] I'll see if I can get my husband's ring. *He* promised to keep *his* for ever, too.

PORTIA [*whispering*]: You will, I promise you. Then we'll have great fun hearing how they gave the rings away! Now, go. You know where to find me.

NERISSA [*to Gratiano*]: Come, sir, will you show me to this house?

[*Nerissa and Gratiano leave. Portia follows.*]

Act 5 The Rings

Scene 1 Belmont – a tree-lined path by moonlight, outside Portia's house.

[*Lorenzo and Jessica enter, hand in hand.*]

LORENZO [*dreamily*]: The moon is shining brightly. On nights like this, when the sweet wind gently kisses the trees without a sound, great heroes of the past dreamt of their loves. And on a night like this, Jessica ran away from her father and escaped from Venice with her love as far as Belmont.

JESSICA [*playfully*]: On a night like this, Lorenzo spoke great words of love, but none of them were true.

LORENZO [*playfully*]: And on a night like this, pretty Jessica made fun of her love, but he forgave her.

JESSICA: I'd continue this conversation if we were alone, but I can hear somebody's footsteps.

[*Stephano arrives.*]

LORENZO: Who comes so fast in the silence of the night?

STEPHANO: A friend.

LORENZO: A friend? What friend? What's your name?

STEPHANO: Stephano is my name, and I am bringing news that my mistress will be here at Belmont before sunrise. She is in no hurry. Whenever she sees a church, she stops and asks God for a happy marriage.

LORENZO: Who is with her?

STEPHANO: Only her servant. But please tell me, has my master returned yet?

LORENZO: He has not, and we have heard no news of him. [*to Jessica*] But let's go inside, Jessica, and prepare a big welcome for the mistress of the house.