

David Henry Wilson

SHYLOCK'S REVENGE

FOREWORD

Shylock's Revenge is a direct sequel to *The Merchant of Venice*, and the two plays received a full production by the University Players in Hamburg in 1989. The New End Theatre in Hampstead, London, mounted a staged reading of *Shylock's Revenge* to accompany their production of *Merchant* in 1993, and The Royal Shakespeare Company once held a private reading to which, disappointingly, I was not invited.

Iago, The Villain of Venice is a sequel both to *Othello* and to *Shylock's Revenge*, bringing together the surviving characters from both plays as Iago outwits his captors and characteristically launches a ruthless bid for power.

In June 2015, Michael Friend Productions mounted a fully staged script-in-hand performance of both plays at the Attic Theatre in Stratford upon Avon, to coincide with the RSC's productions of *Merchant* and *Othello*. No representatives came from the RSC. A recording of both productions can be downloaded free of charge on this website.

If any theatre company decided to mount this Venetian tetralogy, I would propose a different set of titles: *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Jew of Venice*, *The Moor of Venice*, *The Villain of Venice*. In terms of cast size, my plays are no more extravagant than Shakespeare's (*Iago*, for instance, could be reduced to a cast of 16), but this will scarcely compensate for the presumptuousness of my enterprise. How dare any playwright ask to be bracketed with Shakespeare? In my defence, I would point out that the Bard left the stories unfinished, and my hope is simply that these attempted sequels will provide a degree of pleasure to anyone willing to read them.

dhw

INFOLDED WORMS The textual basis of *Shylock's Revenge*

Many of Shakespeare's plays revolve round the gap between appearance and reality. The canon is brimful of disguises actual and metaphorical, with gilded tombs infolding busy worms. But in *The Merchant of Venice*, I believe Shakespeare has put on one mask more than in any other play. Elsewhere he takes pains to ensure that the disguises are apparent to the audience: we know that Iago and Edmund are villains, that Rosalind and Viola are girls, that poor Tom is Edgar, and the friar is Duke Vincentio. In *The Merchant of Venice*, however, the disguise is all-embracing, and comprises the play itself. The audience will be unaware of it at the time, and will probably remain so even afterwards. *Shylock's Revenge* is an attempt to burrow down below the surface of Shakespeare's play, and to bring out and build on its deeper implications, following them through to their logical conclusions.

I should say right from the start that I make no claim to any startlingly original discoveries. All that I aim to do here is set forth the interpretation of Shakespeare's text that underlies my own continuation of it. In studying that text, and in living so to speak among its characters, I found myself being constantly astounded by the ingenuity and the sheer effrontery of its creator. It was as if he had said to himself: I'm going to hoodwink them all – and proceeded to do just that by a series of devices that no other dramatist would have dared to employ. This play is a great con trick, and even while we laugh at it (apart from wriggling uncomfortably, perhaps, at Shylock's downfall), it seems to me that Shakespeare is laughing at us because we have failed to grasp the full significance of what he is doing.

Let us begin at the beginning. Here we have the mystery of Antonio's sadness, which he claims to be beyond his own comprehension:

In sooth I know not why I am so sad.

The mystery is not hard to solve. Almost his first words to Bassanio when they are left alone offer the solution:

*Well, tell me now what lady is the same
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage
That you today promis'd to tell me of?*

We know from Gratiano that Antonio is 'marvellously chang'd', and it becomes clearer and clearer throughout the play that Antonio lives only for Bassanio. I think we may safely assume, then, that the sadness is caused by the prospect of his losing Bassanio. This, however, raises the question of why he should pretend that he doesn't know the reason for his own melancholy. At Solanio's suggestion that he is in love, Antonio responds 'Fie, fie!' as if he were put out by the very idea. Herein, I think, lies the key to the man's character: he *is* in love; he is obsessed and besotted, and the strength of his passion goes far, far beyond the bounds of 'friendship' so lauded by Lorenzo in III,4.

Before we examine the implications of this passion, we need to collect the evidence from the text.

I,1: *My purse, my person, my extremest means
Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.*

I, 1: *You know me well, and herein spend but time
To wind about my love with circumstance,
And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
In making question of my uttermost
Than if you had made waste of all I have.*

In both cases, one must ask why Antonio's 'person' and his 'uttermost' should lie unquestioningly at the disposal of a man who has already proved to be a waster.

II, 8: SALERIO: *I saw Bassanio and Antonio part.
Bassanio told him he would make some speed
Of his return: he answer'd: 'Do not so,
Slubber not business for my sake Bassanio,
But stay the very riping of the time...'*

Why should he assume that Bassanio's courtship is solely a matter of business? But we shall return to these lines when we switch our attention to Bassanio. Salerio's speech continues:

*'And for the Jew's bond which he hath of me –
Let it not enter in your mind of love:
Be merry and employ your chiefest thoughts
To courtship, and such fair ostents of love
As shall conveniently become you there.'*

In other words, Bassanio should act the part of the man in love as far as is necessary.

*And even there (his eye being big with tears),
Turning his face, he put out his hand behind him,
And with affection wondrous sensible
He wrung Bassanio's hand, and so they parted.*

SOLANIO: *I think he only loves the world for him.*

I think so too. The man is clearly suffering, but the pain of this love turns almost to desperation when the bond becomes due and he writes to Bassanio – 'Sweet Bassanio', as he calls him:

*All debts are clear'd between you and I, if I might but see you at my
death: notwithstanding, use your pleasure. – If your love do not
persuade you to come, let not my letter.*

The emotional implications (and blackmail) are clear. This is a bribe pure and simple – if you come, you won't owe me anything. But at the same time, Antonio prepares his own reassurance, because if Bassanio accepts the bribe, Antonio can interpret it as a sign of love. I'll pay you – but don't come unless you love me. He knows his man (of whom more anon), but again we can sense the insecurity of one who has to stoop to such a device in order to prove that he is loved.

III, 3: ANTONIO: *.....pray God Bassanio come
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not.*

His debt. Now Antonio assumes martyr-like proportions, happy to die for the sake of the man he loves.

In III,4, Lorenzo tells Portia 'how dear a lover' Antonio is of Bassanio, and Portia talks of him being 'the bosom lover of my lord'. In the trial, Antonio refers to himself as a 'tainted wether of the flock'. It's true that this might refer to the loss of all his wealth, but why 'wether'? A castrated ram seems an odd choice of animal for a healthy man. In the same scene:

*You cannot better be employ'd Bassanio,
Than to live still and write mine epitaph.*

Even allowing for the extremity of his situation, there remains something painfully morbid in his anxiety to have Bassanio think and write about him after his death. Indeed he never ceases to remind Bassanio of his devotion:

Grieve not that I am fall'n to this for you.

And in his great farewell speech, he even throws down a challenge, explicitly setting his love against Portia's:

*Commend me to your honourable wife,
Tell her the process of Antonio's end,
Say how I lov'd you, speak me fair in death:
And when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love...*

It seems to me absurd that editors (e.g. of the Arden and Alexander editions) should go on insisting that 'love' and 'lover' mean 'friend', when over and over again we are confronted by the obsessive nature of Antonio's passion. The fact that he himself uses the word 'friend' in the very next line seems to me to enhance the connotations of friendship rather than reduce those of love:

*Repent but you that you shall lose your friend
And he repents not that he pays your debt.*

Even after he has been saved from a grisly martyrdom, Antonio continues to make little love tests. Bassanio refuses to part with the ring Portia gave him.

ANTONIO: *My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring,
Let his deservings and my love withal
Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment.*

And finally, at the reunion in Belmont, he again stresses the totality of his devotion in order to support Bassanio's plea for forgiveness:

*I once did lend my body for his wealth...
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will never more break faith advisedly.*

As we shall see, Bassanio's story is one long list of faith-breakages, but love is blind, says Jessica, and 'lovers cannot see / the pretty follies that themselves commit.'

Throughout the play Antonio is motivated, strengthened and obsessed by this love, constantly assuring Bassanio of his devotion and just as constantly seeking signs that it is reciprocated. Whether it *is* reciprocated is another question which we shall discuss when we turn our attention to Bassanio. For the moment, our concern is with the nature of Antonio himself. The passages that I have quoted above are, of course, spread thinly over the whole play, so that individually their implications will be far from evident for the spectator or reader. But when collected together, they seem to me to present a clear picture of an older man infatuated with a younger one, just as Shakespeare himself was infatuated with Mr W.H. Admittedly there is no textual evidence that Antonio is older,

but there is a degree of respect paid to him by his fellow Christians which, when added to his established position as a successful merchant and the impression he gives of being set in his ways, certainly suggests that he is of another generation. In Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone*, Ansaldo is Giannetto's godfather, but apart from Solanio's reference to 'your most noble kinsman', there is never the slightest hint of any relationship other than that of friends and/or lovers.

Antonio's infatuation makes him as much of an outsider as Shylock. He has no power over the man he loves, allows himself to be shamelessly exploited by him, repeatedly tests him, masochistically submits to his fate in terms of martyrdom, and then lets himself be taken off to Belmont, where he can have no conceivable role to play. Of course, he will only want to be near his beloved, but since the latter now has a wife, and since his other acquaintances (Gratiano and Lorenzo) are also paired off, one is left at the end of the play with the intriguing picture of all the characters leaving the stage in pairs apart from Antonio. His future will clearly depend on the attitude Bassanio will take.

In this brief character study, I have so far made no mention of the viciousness that typifies the tougher side of Antonio. Shylock gives a graphic description of his behaviour – name-calling, spitting and kicking – and Antonio confirms this account:

*I am as like to call thee so again,
To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too.*

His slavish devotion to Bassanio is countered by the harshness with which he treats his enemy, and the 'mercy' he renders to Shylock in the trial scene is shockingly brutal. He will use half of Shylock's money for his own purposes, but give it to Lorenzo when Shylock dies; the rest must go to Lorenzo and Jessica on Shylock's death, and the Jew must also renounce his religion.

For my play, these terms are crucial to later developments. So too is Antonio's implacable hatred of Shylock. But what fascinates me most is his impossible position in Belmont and the subsequent course of his relationship with Bassanio. If I am to justify my treatment of that, I must now examine the other half of the duo. Before I do, let me also justify the emphasis I have laid on Antonio's character by pointing out that Shakespeare himself thought him important enough to give him the title role. Could he indeed be an image of the lovesick poet who wrote the Sonnets?

If Antonio's complexities are liable to escape the spectator's attention, leaving him with a somewhat shadowy or, at best, ambivalent impression of the character, I think we can safely say that Bassanio will create a much firmer, more rounded image: he is the romantic hero *par excellence* – charming, handsome, just a little naughty (but that's not a bad thing, is it?), intelligent... a 'scholar and a soldier' apparently. He seems like a stereotype, and as such pretty uninteresting – the sort of part any aspiring young actor might well dread having to pour himself into. The spectator needn't spend much time analysing him, because it's apparent right from the start. Look at him, and you know him.

But it's not true. I'll grant that he talks like a gentleman but, looks and charm apart, he seems to me to lack all the qualities of the romantic hero. We need only consider his alternative responses to Antonio's infatuation to gauge what a con artist he is. If he reciprocates Antonio's passion, then he can only be out to exploit Portia's love. And if he does not reciprocate Antonio's love, then that too can only be a target of exploitation. Either way, he takes advantage of someone who loves him. It may well be possible that he actually deceives himself as well as them (or at least one of them), as he certainly

seems to believe his own propaganda – but that too may be a cover. Some of his deceit is conscious, in which case perhaps all of it is.

When left alone with Antonio in I,1 and asked for details about the ‘secret pilgrimage’ (why secret, and why pilgrimage?), he confesses in fine-sounding words that he has behaved disgracefully and spent all the money he has borrowed. He has a plan to pay off all his debts, but before he divulges this, he offers Antonio his image of the arrow. When he was a schoolboy and lost an arrow, he would fire another in the same direction in the hope of finding both. This is why Antonio should lend him more money – so that Bassanio may ‘find both / Or bring your latter hazard back again, / and thankfully rest debtor for the first.’ He calls this reasoning ‘pure innocence’. It is not. Bassanio knows full well that he intends to spend the second lot of money on equipping an expedition to Belmont, bearing rich gifts for Portia and surrounding himself with servants in ‘rare new liveries’. If he fails to win Portia, how can he bring back the ‘latter hazard’? Sell the liveries, ask the servants to give back their wages, take his presents back from Portia? He can hardly be stupid enough to believe his own propaganda here, in which case one can only surmise that he is deliberately trying to con Antonio. There is no need to do so, of course, because Antonio is too much in love to care.

‘In Belmont is a lady richly left...’ he tells Antonio. At no time does he suggest any emotional or physical attraction to this lady. She may love him (‘Sometimes from her eyes / I did receive fair speechless messages’), but as far as he is concerned, the enterprise is commercial (‘I have a mind presages me such thrift’). The approach is cleverly calculated not to offend the man who loves him, and doubtless this approach explains Salerio’s report quoted above:

Slubber not business for my sake Bassanio...

If it *is* purely business, Bassanio is deceiving Portia, and if it is not, he is deceiving Antonio.

One of the reasons it is so difficult to pin down Bassanio’s brand of dishonesty is that he has a great talent for saying precisely the right thing at the right moment, and for seeming as though he means it. The fact that these utterances lead nowhere or are patently hypocritical cannot undo the impression they create when he makes them: other characters are deceived, and so are we. We accept them at face value. This is what I mean by contrasting *The Merchant of Venice* with other plays in which we know the reality behind the mask. With Bassanio (and others) we see only the mask. Let me illustrate this thesis again:

I, 3: *You shall not seal to such a bond for me,
I’ll rather dwell in my necessity.*

But not another word does he speak to dissuade Antonio. In II, 2, when Gratiano asks to accompany him to Belmont, he insists that his friend should cover up his normal ‘wild’ and ‘rude’ character, in case ‘I be misconster’d in the place I go to’. It’s all right for Gratiano to be his usual wild, rude self at the party tonight, however (a party which, incidentally, he must be paying for with the money he has borrowed – so much for the reformed character). He does not want Portia to know the kind of company he normally keeps.

We have already mentioned Salerio’s speech in II,8. Why should Bassanio have promised Antonio that he ‘would make some speed of his return’? To reassure his loving

benefactor that there is nothing emotional in the quest? Contrast this promise with that made to Portia at the end of III,2:

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

Contrast this again with instructions at the end of IV,1 that Gratiano should bring the lawyer to Antonio's house if he can. Meanwhile, he and Antonio '...will thither presently, / And in the morning early will we both / Fly toward Belmont.' Perhaps in all these instances he means what he says, but if a man means what he says and then doesn't do it, he surely remains as untrustworthy as a man who does not mean what he says.

*Good cheer Antonio! What man, courage yet!
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones and all,
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood. (IV, 1)*

But cometh the hour, cometh not the man. His only move is to offer more and more of Portia's ducats to Shylock.

*Antonio, I am married to a wife
Which is as dear to me as life itself,
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life.
I would lose all, ay sacrifice them all
Here to this devil, to deliver you.*

Music to Antonio's ears, no doubt, and a good cue for a joke by Portia, but this speech typifies the hollowness of all Bassanio's protestations (he does nothing, and sacrifices nothing) as well as the ambivalence of all his relationships (just how much *does* he love Portia and/or Antonio?). At least now there is a new development in that he admits to Antonio that his wife is dear to him, but since he is willing to sacrifice her – or *says* he is – and would no doubt tell her something similar if the situation were reversed, we still don't know where his heart really lies. Perhaps his heart is not capable of lying anywhere. Perhaps he is too superficial or too self-centred to form any deep attachment to anyone.

I would like to quote just one more example of Bassanio's 'method'. In III,2 he receives Antonio's letter and 'comes clean' to Portia. It appears that he has already told her that 'All the wealth I had / Ran in my veins'. In other words, when he learned that Portia's hand depended on the lottery of the caskets and not on the social and financial position of the wooer, he must have confessed that he had nothing. No doubt, though, he would have given her the impression that at least he had paid for the rich gifts with which he had showered her. He certainly had not mentioned the fact that he had borrowed money to pay for them:

*...when I told you
My state was nothing, I should then have told you
That I was worse than nothing; for indeed
I have engag'd myself to a dear friend,
Engag'd my friend to his mere enemy
To feed my means.*

(Friend, notice, not lover.) The choice of words is deliberately vague: ‘engag’d’, ‘feed my means’. The prosaic fact, of course, is that he had borrowed money from his friend, who had in turn borrowed it from his enemy, so that he could deceive Portia into thinking he was a rich man. But the gloss of the language hides the dross of the content, and herein lies the secret of Bassanio’s success. He always chooses the right words, and so everybody – including the audience – trusts him, forgives him his little fault of past extravagance, and holds him for the romantic hero that he is not.

Whether he and Antonio were active lovers we shall never know, and it doesn’t really matter. What does matter is the older man’s devotion and the younger man’s exploitation of it. If we bear in mind Bassanio’s past and continued wastefulness, his hypocrisy and superficiality, and his inability to match word with deed, we are left with a series of questions:

- How will Antonio fit in at Belmont?
- How will his love for Bassanio express itself there?
- How will Bassanio respond to that love?
- How will Bassanio respond to the availability of unlimited wealth?
- How will Portia respond to the Antonio-Bassanio relationship?
- How will Portia respond to Bassanio’s profligacy?

In *Shylock’s Revenge* I attempt to answer these questions. The list is, of course, lengthily extended when we turn to the minor characters, and they too in varying degrees manage to hide their true natures from us, the audience. The general comic exuberance of the ring episode, for instance, will certainly cover up the nastier implications of Gratiano’s behaviour, but we need only trace the line of his statements through the play to gauge the prospects of his marriage.

In II,2, when he asks to accompany Bassanio to Belmont and is warned about his wild behaviour, he promises to ‘wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely’ etc. In II,6 he expounds his views on ‘obliged faith;’, which would clearly incorporate marriage:

*....who riseth from a feast
With that keen appetite that he sits down?
Where is the horse that doth untread again
His tedious measures with the unabated fire
That he did pace them first? – all things that are,
Are with more spirit chased than enjoy’d etc.*

In III, 2 we learn about his courtship of Nerissa:

*For wooing here until I sweat again,
And swearing till my very roof was dry
With oaths of love, at last, (if promise last)
I got a promise of this fair one here
To have her love...*

Like Portia, Nerissa gives her love a ring, and we learn in V,1 that Gratiano

*...swore to me when I did give it you,
That you would wear it till your hour of death,
And that it should lie with you in your grave...*

But true to the wild, rude cynic we got to know in I,1, II,2 and II,6, Gratiano has little regard for the ring or for the implications of his own oaths:

...a hoop of gold, a paltry ring

*That she did give me, whose posy was
For all the world like cutler's poetry
Upon a knife, "Love me, and leave me not".*

For his fellow Christians, Gratiano is no doubt a fine companion, and Bassanio wanted him to put on his 'boldest suit of mirth' at the party mentioned in II,6. We too will have viewed him as a lively companion, and in I,1 will have approved his jolly philosophy:

*With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
And let my liver rather heat with wine
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.*

But if we put the fragments together, and we take into account the vindictiveness with which he goads Shylock in the trial scene, we find that beneath the hail-fellow-well-met exterior lies a bullying cynic whose attitude towards marriage bodes ill for the future. We might also ask how this man earns his living. And since we cannot answer that question (any more than we can identify the professions of Bassanio and Lorenzo), we may well interpret his boast that 'We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece' as indicating a material rather than an emotional acquisition.

If Shakespeare conceals Gratiano's nastier side beneath a mask of jollity and crude wit, he devises a more romantic mask for Lorenzo. No sharp cynicism here. We have a nocturnal elopement in Act II, humour and gentle teasing in Act III, and heavenly poetry in Act V. Could anyone take exception to a man who knows how the angels sing to the young-ey'd cherubins? But heavenly poetry does not produce ducats, and in Lorenzo's situation I see the most fascinating dramatic potential. Here is another man with no visible means of livelihood. His married life begins with a theft from his 'father Jew', and he seems more than content that he and Jessica should run away furnished with stolen gold and jewels. In III,1 we learn more about the money and jewels (which included a diamond worth 2000 ducats and Shylock's turquoise ring given to him by his wife before their marriage), and about the way Lorenzo and Jessica are spending their loot. Since Bassanio was able to equip a full expedition, give parties and buy rich gifts for three thousand ducats, Lorenzo and Jessica must have put even his extravagance in the shade, for we learn at the end of the play that they have nothing left. Lorenzo's comment, when told of his eventual inheritance, is:

*Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way
Of starved people.*

Bearing in mind that he will not get this 'manna' till Shylock dies, we may well wonder how he intends to support his wife. Since his conscience in no way prevents him from indulging in theft – he seems to take it for granted that he can appropriate Shylock's property and spend the money as his own – the question arises as to just what else his conscience might allow. We in the audience have been lulled by the romance of the elopement and the music of the poetry, but the underlying combination of penury, unscrupulousness, and a promised inheritance suggests a less romantic continuation of this marriage. Once again, I have endeavoured to follow the logic of situation and character in working out the sequel.

There's not a great deal one can say about the indistinguishable and almost inseparable Solanio and Salerio, although their mockery of Shylock in III,1 suggests that they are less harmless and less nondescript than they appear. Launcelot Gobbo, however, does seem to have a hidden side, even if it does not actually belie the clownish exterior. There is no

doubt that he *is* a clown, as distinct from Shakespeare's fools (Lear's Fool and Feste, for instance), who are endowed with considerable intelligence. Launcelot is more fool than Fool, and he also seems to be insensitive to the feelings of others. It is this latter point that I find disturbing. The scene in which he deceives his blind father is certainly funny, but it is also cruel. We may laugh when he tells the old man that 'Master' Launcelot is dead, but it is the same hurtful humour indulged in by Gratiano, Solanio and Salerio – very much at the expense of others. The lines that really require investigation, though, are to be found in III,5. Jessica says Launcelot is accusing Lorenzo of helping to raise the price of pork.

LORENZO: *I shall answer that better to the commonwealth than you can the getting up of the negro's belly: the Moor is with child by you, Launcelot!*

LAUNCELOT: *It is much that the Moor should be more than reason: but if she be less than an honest woman, she is indeed more than I took her for.*

It seems unlikely that Portia would have employed a whore in her household, and so we may assume that Launcelot has seduced an innocent black girl and made her pregnant, but now jokes about her and contemptuously dismisses her as being worse than a whore. The episode is over far too quickly for us to ponder its implications, but they are there in full racial and sexual force, and suggest a dangerous streak of irresponsibility as well as prejudice on Launcelot's part. I doubt whether such an incident would be allowed to pass unnoticed in Portia's household, and so once again I have followed this theme through in my sequel.

May I briefly digress just to point out that this dialogue shows conclusively that Shakespeare used the words 'negro'; and 'Moor' synonymously, so that critics who argue against the negro interpretation of Othello at least cannot base their case on matters of language. My digression is not altogether off the beaten track. I have, in my sequel, dared to give Launcelot's pregnant Moor a brother.

We have now looked at all the Venetian Christians, and in focusing on the darker sides of their characters, I hope I have set forth the motivations that underlie the sequel. My basic assumption for this has been that leopards do not change their spots, and the corruption of Venice will not be purified by the clean air of Belmont. On the contrary, I would suggest that extravagant wasters, when set in the midst of opulence, will indulge in extravagant waste.

I have also assumed that Portia, faithfully emulated by Nerissa, will in due course become aware of the true natures of the men she has admitted into her household – not just the two husbands, but also Lorenzo, Antonio and Launcelot. Ironically, it seems to me that the only two characters in the play who actually don a physical disguise (discounting Jessica, whose disguise is abandoned almost before we have seen it) are, for the most part, as they appear. I do not think Shakespeare has invested them with any of the hidden dimensions of the Venetians, although this is not to say that Portia especially is not an extremely complex character. I argue only that her complexities are evident from her surface behaviour: she is lively and intelligent, a good actress, decisive, affectionate, natural, full of fun etc. Perhaps it is a little surprising that she should be taken in by Bassanio's superficial charm, but in view of her unquestioning obedience to her father's wishes, perhaps we may accept her claim that she is 'an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractis'd', and her natural gifts have not yet been moulded by the wisdom

of experience. (One might add that her father's device also suggests a degree of naivete, since any seasoned gambler would know straight away that he should plump for the least likely casket.) This rigid obedience and her conduct in the court scene indicate that she has a strong sense of honour; she is also an ingenious planner (the trial and ring episodes), capable of deceit (though probably only in a good cause), but also a stern disciplinarian (treatment of Shylock, and admonishment to Gratiano: 'Speak not so grossly'). These characteristics become paramount in my sequel.

Before we leave the Belmontians, let me briefly mention one trouble spot that has always bothered me. Portia and Nerissa did not have any right to conduct the trial. Nor did Bellario – clearly a highly respected judge – have any right to delegate such a case to a totally unqualified person. Of course we may argue that this is only one of the fairytale elements of the play and is not to be taken seriously, but the trick still leaves an uncomfortable feeling. Bellario should have known better, even if Portia didn't. I have therefore indulged in a little text interpretation to get rid of that uncomfortable feeling.

And so to Shylock. Here once again Shakespeare, with consummate mastery, offers a mask of one colour to conceal features of another. But while the Christians hide their corruption, superficiality and cynicism beneath a veneer of romantic charm and *joie de vivre*, Shylock presents a villainous exterior which for an Elizabethan audience would almost certainly have covered completely those aspects of his character which for modern audiences have become increasingly sympathetic. Indeed it seems to me that modern productions sometimes go out of their way to dispense altogether with the mask Shakespeare created, and to give Shylock a sympathetic exterior that relegates his villainy into the background. Perhaps this is partly because of sensitivity to the problem of anti-semitism – particularly acute in Germany, where most producers will not touch the play. However, I see no reason to gloss over Shylock's faults. Nor do I see any reason to attribute those faults to his Jewishness. Shakespeare drew individuals, not types, and Shylock is no more typical of the Jewish race than Othello is of negroes, Richard III of hunchbacks, or Bottom of weavers.

I am not saying that Shylock's faults are not *connected* with his Jewishness, but if you call someone a dirty bastard and he knocks you down, you cannot then claim that he knocked you down because he is a dirty bastard. Shylock as I see him lives under intense social pressures, and his behaviour is inevitably a reaction to those pressures. Being a Jew in a Christian state is one of those pressures, and anti-semitism is no doubt one of the factors that lead him to seek revenge, but he is not vengeful because he is a Jew. Jessica is Jewish but is not vengeful, and Gratiano is vengeful but is not a Jew. Our study, then, must be of the man, and the religious and racial factors must be kept in proportion.

Shylock appears in only five scenes of Shakespeare's play, and yet so powerful is his impact that it is he above all who comes to mind when we think of *The Merchant of Venice*. Once again I should like to draw on passages from the text to explain my own concept of his character. When we first meet him in I,3, he tells us that he hates Antonio because he is a Christian. This, of course, would oblige him to hate virtually everybody in Venice, but perhaps Antonio comes in for special disfavour because 'he hates our sacred nation'. Prejudice breeds prejudice. Besides, Shylock has another, more practical reason for this enmity:

But more, for that in low simplicity

*He lends out money gratis, and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.*

Jews were strictly limited in their choice of occupation, and from Shylock's point of view, money-lending was his livelihood, which Antonio was undermining. Personally, I see no ethical difference between selling goods for a profit (Antonio's profession) and selling money for a profit (Shylock's profession), and this is a theme which I have developed in *Shylock's Revenge*, but in terms of motivation I would suggest that Shylock's hatred is here made plausible. If someone is ruining your business, quite apart from insulting you, spitting on you and kicking you, a degree of animosity is scarcely surprising. Less sympathetic is the implacability with which he already intends to pursue his cause:

*If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.*

And later:

*.....cursed be my tribe
If I forgive him!*

It is clear from the outset that Shylock will be merciless, and his defenders should not argue that it is only later developments that drive him to attempted murder. Even if in many ways he is emulating 'Christian example', as he claims, and even if the nature of his cause does change and deepen, the terms of the bond and his subsequent insistence on cutting the pound of flesh can never be anything less than repugnant.

However, at this stage we should examine his character as it is unfolded to us. He has borne the Venetians' ill treatment with 'a patient shrug', and in a brief parenthesis he succinctly summarizes the relevance of his Jewishness to his story: 'for sufferance is the badge of all our tribe'. It is a line that remains as poignant as ever if we look back on Jewish history, and it may explain (though not, in my view, excuse) the intransigence of Jews other than Shylock. How many of us would have a serpent sting us twice?

As far as the money-lending is concerned, Shylock sees himself being maltreated 'all for use of that which is mine own'. I should like briefly to expand this defence. Not only is the money his own, but those who come to borrow it do so of their own free will, and are not bound to accept his terms. It is not his fault if they need money. In our modern, credit-crazy society, which bombards us with offers of loans and pay-later luxuries at rates of interest that would have turned Shylock green with envy, there is perhaps more excuse for those who fall prey. But Shylock sees no reason why he should be blamed if people want to borrow his money on his terms, and frankly nor do I.

The 'merry bond' I take to be Shylock's gamble – a chance perhaps to catch Antonio 'upon the hip'. His claim that he wants to buy Antonio's favour with it, and to be friends with him, clearly does not conform to his resolution in the earlier speech, which directly expressed his innermost thoughts. But the manner in which hatred breeds hatred is again illustrated by his hypocritical protestations:

*O father Abram, what these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others!*

Certainly he believes that their hard dealings have taught him to be hard:

Act III, 1: *If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge! If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? – why revenge! The villainy you teach me I will execute...*

My argument – far from original, I know, but I am explaining, not innovating – is that Shylock’s hatred is understandable and at least partially justified by the ill treatment he has suffered. It is the implacability that is repellent, while the deviousness (not unimportant for my sequel) is in its way as unsympathetic as Antonio’s open hostility.

Our view of Shylock is undoubtedly coloured by other characters’ descriptions of him, and the first of these comes from Launcelot. He sees Shylock as the ‘very devil incarnation’ and is ‘famish’d in his service’. And yet his conscience tells him to stay, and he only thinks of running away when he knows Bassanio is taking on new staff and is giving away ‘rare new liveries’. Shylock’s view of Launcelot is that

*The patch is kind enough, but a huge feeder,
Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day
More than the wild-cat...*

Shylock would naturally expect a full day’s work from his servant, but Launcelot certainly gives the impression that he is better at fooling around than at working. As for ‘famish’d’ versus ‘huge feeder’, it’s all a matter of perspective, and I should hate to be the judge of which version is correct.

Jessica’s view of her father is more damaging. ‘Our house is hell,’ she complains, and she is ‘ashamed to be my father’s child’. When Shylock hears that there are to be masques, his attitude seems to confirm her account. She is to lock up his doors and close his windows –

*Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house.*

Our hearts go out to the young girl imprisoned, while outside people are enjoying themselves. But here we must do some delving, even if much of it is speculative, for Shylock clearly had a problem which the play itself does not deal with. We may assume that Leah his wife is dead, and so Shylock has to look after Jessica on his own, bringing her up in a society which, as we have seen, is filled with young wastrels. He is not the first or the last father to be confronted with the difficulties of raising a child in a corrupt society. Should he allow her to go out and participate in these masques, thus exposing her to the temptations of that society?

Youth will have its way in the end, but Jessica’s flight and theft would have confirmed the worst of all Shylock’s fears. If his house was hell for her, because she had to miss all the fun, what must it have been like for him once she had shattered all *his* hopes? I shall discuss these in a moment, but first I should like to qualify my defence: while I do think Shylock loved his daughter, and hope to offer evidence in due course, what is sadly if not fatally missing is any direct expression of that love. It is a fault common to many disciplinarians. But not expressing love does not mean absence of love (think of Cordelia), and we certainly should not assume that Shylock’s sobriety stems from a lack of fatherly concern.

Now to Jessica’s elopement. Here I think Shylock’s reaction is often misunderstood, but before we examine that reaction, I should like to quote a passage from the Old Testament that Shylock knew so well. It may help us to understand the extent of the injury Jessica inflicted on her father.

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice them secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;

namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

Even today, when mixed marriages have become commonplace, there are orthodox Jews who will go into mourning for a member of the family that has left the faith. Shylock suffered a *double* blow: not only did his daughter run off with a Christian, but she also stole from him. She broke the fifth and the eighth commandments, and she broke the faith.

The first account of Shylock's grief comes from Solanio, and it is worth noting the exact components of what the mocking Venetian calls 'a passion so confus'd, / So strange, outrageous and so variable':

*"My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice, the law, my ducats and my daughter!
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter!
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,
Stol'n by my daughter!..."*

There is nothing confused, strange or outrageous about this passion. It contains four distinct causes of heartbreaking grief: he has lost his daughter, he has lost his money, his daughter has run away with a Christian, and his daughter has stolen from him. When, in III,1, he meets Solanio and Salerio, the first item that he mentions is his daughter's flight. And he adds that 'she is damn'd for it'. When Tubal enters, his first inquiry is: 'what news from Genoa? Hast thou found my daughter?' He mentions some of the items stolen, and then comes out with the lines that most of us find so repugnant:

I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear; would she were hears'd at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin.

I think the passage from *Deuteronomy* goes some way towards explaining these sentiments, and if we add the intense pressure of his grief and anger (emotions that often cause our tongues to overstate the message from our hearts), perhaps the vehemence of this wish will lose some of its bite. Certainly this scene contains one of the very rare insights that we have into Shylock's gentler emotions, and I would take it as evidence that he feels love even though he does not express it. Tubal mentions a ring which Jessica exchanged for a monkey:

SHYLOCK: *Out upon her! – thou torturest me Tubal, - it was my turquoise. I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor: I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.*

To sum up the father-daughter relationship, then, which again is to play an important part in my sequel, I would argue that there are misunderstandings and injustices on both sides, that Shylock was faced with an insoluble problem of upbringing, that Jessica's attempted solution was a shattering blow to him, and that above all he had made the major mistake of expressing his loving concern only through the raised forefinger instead of with the embracing arms.

We must turn now to the campaign of vengeance. In III, 1, he lists his complaints against Antonio:

*He hath disgrac'd me, and hinder'd me half a million, laugh'd at my losses,
mock'd at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my
friends, heated mine enemies..*

The personal enmity and resolve for vengeance had already been made clear in I,3, but now there is an added vehemence, and the passionate and famous attack on racial prejudice ('Hath not a Jew eyes' etc.) needs to be kept in its context, as a justification for the revenge he intends to take. This now takes on a far broader dimension: from the repeated first person singular of the speech in I,3 it spreads out into the first person plural of all Jews against all Christians:

*...If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you
poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? – if we are
like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that...*

His reversion to the first person singular at the end of this speech ('The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction') now turns him into a crusader rather than a personal avenger, and although commercial advantage is never far from his mind (e.g. III,3: 'This is the fool that lent out money gratis'), his campaign against Antonio seems to have taken on a binding force. Again and again he says he will have 'his bond', and in the trial scene itself, he invests his cause with religious respectability:

*And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
To have the due and forfeit of my bond...*

And later:

*An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven,-
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?
No not for Venice.*

It is true that after Portia's judgment he is perfectly willing to take the money, but by then he knows that the law forbids him to fulfil his oath, and so there is no longer any question of 'perjury'. What I am suggesting is that, although initially he hoped to trap Antonio and thereby gain revenge for the insults as well as enhance his prospects of making more money, the loss of his daughter and the theft of his money and jewels widen the range of his hatred and make Antonio into a symbol of all his sufferings. When Bassanio and Gratiano express their willingness to sacrifice their wives, Shylock reveals the breadth and the depth of his bitterness:

*These be the Christian husbands! I have a daughter –
Would any of the stock of Barrabas
Had been her husband, rather than a Christian.*

From our own analysis of the three Christian husbands, as well as the other Christian Venetians, it is hard not to sympathize with this sentiment, also bearing in mind that in Shylock's eyes Jessica would be 'damn'd' for marrying a Christian.

In *Shylock's Revenge* I have tried to follow this more generalized line of revenge, while keeping a special place for Antonio. I have also tempered the rage in relation to Jessica for paternal reasons. As far as Shylock's character is concerned, I have endeavoured to preserve all those aspects – good and bad – with which I believe Shakespeare endowed him. I have, for instance, followed through his occasional flashes of humour and of

sentiment, his patience and perseverance, his biblical learning, his business acumen, his planning ability and grasp of current affairs, his potency in argument; but I have remained faithful to the deviousness, the grudge-harboring, and the implacability. And I have naturally preserved his Jewishness, so integral to his character, though I would stress again that I see him as Shylock and not as 'the Jew'. Whatever may be his faults, they are certainly no greater than those of his Christian adversaries, and no more representative of his religion than the Christians' are of theirs.

Having set forth the interpretation of the play on which my own is based, perhaps to conclude I should explain why I wrote *Shylock's Revenge*. The stories offer access to an amazing variety of themes: love, hate, racialism, sexism, commercialism, crime, justice...and to an equal variety of moods: dramatic, pathetic, intellectual, emotional, romantic and comic. But perhaps more than anything else the driving force was the urge to know how all those stories might end. In following Shakespeare's characters through the situations in which he had left them, I made a journey of discovery that brought me many hours of pleasure, experience, insight, and sheer fun. Whether my play will have the same effect on those who read or see it is, of course, another matter.

dhw

SHYLOCK'S REVENGE

All enquiries to elaine@hopecorner.net

SHYLOCK'S REVENGE

Characters (*in order of appearance*)

Gratiano

Lorenzo

Bassanio

Antonio

Launcelot

Portia

Nerissa

Miriam

Jessica

Stephano

Salerio

Solanio

Shylock

Tubal

P.J. Appleby

The Duke of Venice

Two constables

Attendants

Bellarion

Balthazar

Othello

Lucia

Scenes: Various locations in Venice, and Portia's house in Belmont

PROLOGUE

The characters form a tableau and remain motionless throughout the Prologue, apart from Bellario, who passes among them as he identifies them. From stage right to left: Antonio, sitting glumly on his own; Gratiano, Bassanio and Lorenzo seated at a table, playing cards; Jessica and Shylock (raising his forefinger at her); Portia and Nerissa in mid-conversation; Launcelot next to Solanio and Salerio, who are holding hands. The Duke is seated on his throne, back centre.

BELLARIO (*theatrical, a little pompous, and enjoying himself*): Good afternoon/evening to you all. I have been informed that some of you are not familiar with the events that have preceded the events you are about to witness. If this is true...shame on you. But fear not, I am here to introduce you to some of the characters and their past histories, for which purpose I have written what I believe is known in the profession as...a prologue. Ahem!

THE PROLOGUE

This man with the countenance of a dead fish
Is the Merchant of Venice, Antonio.
Why's he so glum? He's lost his great love,
The wastrel and gambler Bassanio.

(*Confidentially*: His name is actually Bassanio, but that doesn't rhyme with Antonio. I had a slight technical problem here.)

A fortune Bassanio had borrowed and spent,
And he had a plan that's quite funny:
He'd met a rich heiress, so he'd borrow some more,
To win both her hand and her money.

The dead fish was short of cash at the time,
And so he had to go
To Shylock, a money-lending Jew,
But this you need to know:

These two get on like shit and fan,
So Shylock said: "OK,
Interest-free, but if you're late,
With a pound of your flesh you'll pay."

Bassanio, with his drunken friend
Gratiano, set off to woo
The gorgeous Portia in Belmont,
But all he had to do

Was pick one casket out of three:
Gold, silver, or lead.
He needn't have borrowed a single ducat –
Just hitched a lift instead.

Of course Bassanio chose the lead,
As a gambler would do,
And married Portia. That is why
The dead fish is so blue.

Portia's companion, the lovely Nerissa,
In all this romantic whirl,
Fell for the drunken friend Gratiano,
And married him. Stupid girl.

Jessica, Shylock's daughter, eloped
With Lorenzo... Before they left,
They stole from Daddy, who was upset
By th' elopement and by the theft.

Meanwhile, Antonio failed to pay.
Imagine the scenario!
To try the case, the Duke of Venice
Sent for Dr Bellario:

The cleverest, noblest, wisest judge
In all of Italy.
For those of you who may not know:
Bellario is me.
(*He bows.*)

I was, however, indisposed,
And learned to my surprise
That I and my clerk were replaced by Portia
And Nerissa, in disguise.

Who'd take these girls for judge and clerk?
Credulity is strained.
But *why* they took it upon themselves
Will later be explained.

Antonio escaped with chest intact,
While Shylock the plaintiff was tried
For attempting to murder Antonio.
His punishment? To provide

Antonio with half his money, the rest
He could use, just as before,
But on his death his wealth would pass
To his daughter and son-in-law.

He must also agree to becoming a Christian.
These facts are the vital key
To your understanding of the events
That you are about to see.

This is Shylock's ex-servant Launcelot,
Who now serves Bassanio,
And the twins, non-identical, Solanio, Salerio,
Or Salerio and Solanio.

And that is all you need to know.
So now sit back, enjoy the show.
My role is finished as narrator,
But do not fret, you'll see me later.

(To the characters:) Go! Off! Shoo!

(They all go off, except Antonio, Gratiano, Bassanio and Lorenzo. Bellario bows to the audience, and is last to leave.)

ACT ONE

Scene One

Belmont. Bassanio, Gratiano and Lorenzo are playing cards, all of them drinking at the same time. Antonio sits apart.

GRATIANO (*the dealer*): Ace high, pair of threes, pair of twos. Your bet, Lorenzo.

LORENZO: Fifty ducats.

GRATIANO: Fifty, and fifty more.

LORENZO: Bloody hell!

GRATIANO: Let's see the colour of your gold.

BASSANIO: All that glisters is not gold.

GRATIANO: Your ace doesn't even glister.

(Raucous laughter.)

You in or out, Bassanio?

BASSANIO: In. Portia can afford it.

GRATIANO: Last card. Anyone down?

LORENZO: We're all down except you, Gratiano.

GRATIANO: Dealer's luck. Up or down?

LORENZO: Down.

BASSANIO: Up.

GRATIANO (*dealing*): Pair of eights.
 BASSANIO: Aha!
 GRATIANO: Down card for you...down card for me. My Lord Bassanio?
 BASSANIO: Pair of eights bets twenty.
 LORENZO: My pair of threes bets twenty, and fifty more.
 GRATIANO: And my pair of twos bets twenty, plus fifty, plus a hundred.
 LORENZO: What?
 BASSANIO: I'm out.
 GRATIANO (*to Lorenzo*): You staying?
 LORENZO: Jesus Christ!
 BASSANIO: Go on, see him.
 LORENZO: On Portia's behalf?
 BASSANIO: What's hers is mine, and what's mine is yours.
 LORENZO (*putting money down*): See you.
 GRATIANO: Full house.
 LORENZO: You lucky sod!
 GRATIANO: Pure skill. Play your cards right, and the kitty's yours for life. Right, Bassanio?
 BASSANIO: Right, Gratiano.
 GRATIANO: Stephano! Antonio, come and join us.
 ANTONIO: No, thank you.
 GRATIANO: Stephano! Why not? You could bet Shylock's money against Portia's!
 LORENZO: Antonio doesn't believe in betting.
 GRATIANO: Ships, cards, what's the difference?
 LORENZO: He did gamble once, remember, and nearly lost a pound of non-kosher beef.
 GRATIANO: True. Played your cards a bit too close to your chest, eh, Antonio?
 Stephano! Where the hell is he?
 BASSANIO: What do you want Stephano for?
 GRATIANO: More wine, what d'you think? I'm in danger of becoming sober. Come on, Lorenzo, let's explore Portia's cellar. (*He and Lorenzo stand up.*)
 These ducats are spoken for.
 LORENZO: And by all accounts, Lord Bassanio spoke very well for them.
 (*Gratiano and Lorenzo go out.*)
 ANTONIO: Things can't go on like this, Bassanio.
 BASSANIO: Like what, Antonio?
 (*Antonio comes to sit at the table.*)
 ANTONIO: I must return to Venice.
 BASSANIO: Why?
 ANTONIO: My affairs. I mean my business affairs. I can't live off Portia.
 BASSANIO: Go, and come back.
 ANTONIO: I want you to come with me.
 BASSANIO: But how can I? I'm a married man now.
 ANTONIO: You've won your fleece. Did Jason stay in Colchis? (*Embarrassed silence.*) Do you love her?
 BASSANIO (*ambiguously*) Love!

ANTONIO: Do you love her more than you love me?
 BASSANIO: I'll never love anyone more than you, Antonio.
 ANTONIO: Then come to Venice.
 BASSANIO: What would I live on there?
 ANTONIO: I've money for us both. I'm rich again. I've got three ships, and half of Shylock's money...
 BASSANIO: Antonio, I can't live off you for ever.
 ANTONIO: It'll all be yours, Bassanio, when I die.
 BASSANIO: But I don't want to be dependent on you.
 ANTONIO: You'd rather be dependent, then, on Portia?
 LAUNCELOT (*off*): I won't, I won't, I won't!
 (*He comes on, followed by Portia, Nerissa, Jessica and Miriam, a black maid who is pregnant.*)
 Lord Bassanio, sir, help me!
 BASSANIO: What's the matter, Launcelot?
 PORTIA: Bassanio, this knave of yours wants to be a father without having a wife.
 BASSANIO: What do you mean?
 LAUNCELOT: They want me, sir, in a manner of speaking, to husband my resources. And I won't.
 PORTIA: Miriam here is pregnant.
 BASSANIO: By you, Launcelot?
 LAUNCELOT (*studying his fingernails*): I may have accidentally fossilized her.
 BASSANIO: You are the father?
 LAUNCELOT: Well, not yet. The little bastard hasn't arrived yet.
 BASSANIO: But when it does, you'll be the father?
 LAUNCELOT: Yes, sir. The farther the better.
 PORTIA: He promised to marry her.
 BASSANIO: Did you, Launcelot?
 LAUNCELOT: Well, it was only words, sir.
 BASSANIO: Words and meanings should go together.
 LAUNCELOT: It was like you saying you'd only lose the ring when you was dead, sir. You mean it at the time, but...
 BASSANIO: That was different, Launcelot. Circumstances change.
 LAUNCELOT: Circumstances *have* changed, sir. She wasn't pregnant then.
 (*Gratiano and Lorenzo return, each with a bottle.*)
 GRATIANO (*slightly drunk*): Oh, the women are here. What's the trouble?
 PORTIA: Promises made should be promises fulfilled.
 GRATIANO: Wife, what's going on?
 NERISSA: Launcelot's got Miriam pregnant, and refuses to marry her.
 LORENZO (*also slightly drunk*): Oh, well done, Launcelot.
 LAUNCELOT (*to Bassanio*): It wasn't a real promise, sir. I had my fingers crossed.
 MIRIAM: It was a real promise! You swore it twenty times.
 LAUNCELOT: But it doesn't count with nignogs.
 (*Shocked reaction from the ladies. Miriam falls sobbing into Nerissa's arms.*)
 PORTIA: That's unforgivable.

GRATIANO: Might I say a word?
 BASSANIO: Please do, Gratiano.
 GRATIANO: There are different kinds of promises, and some promises are less promising than other promises. So you don't keep them.
 PORTIA: No, Gratiano, you don't make them.
 GRATIANO: Antonio promised Shylock a pound of flesh, and you helped him break his promise. And would you have kept your promise about the caskets if the winner had been a one-eyed hunchback from Ouagadougou?
 PORTIA: Yes.
 LORENZO: But if Launcelot kept his promise, they'd both be miserable.
 PORTIA: What about the child?
 LORENZO: Well, children need mothers more than fathers.
 BASSANIO: Gratiano's right, Portia. You didn't want to marry Morocco.
 PORTIA (*icily*): I didn't sleep with Morocco.
 LAUNCELOT: But you're a woman, madam...if you don't mind my saying so. We men are different. Aren't we, sir?
 NERISSA: If you can sleep with her, why can't you marry her?
 GRATIANO: Keep out of this, Nerissa!
 NERISSA: I won't keep out of it. Why should men have different standards from women?
 BASSANIO: Launcelot's right. Sleeping and marrying are not the same thing.
 PORTIA: Nor, it appears, are words and deeds.
 BASSANIO: I agree the promise was wrong, but mixed marriages never work anyway.
 JESSICA: Don't they?
 BASSANIO: Sorry, Jessica, I didn't mean yours.
 PORTIA: Why not hers? Why not anybody's? All marriages are mixed, Bassanio. Love's between souls, and souls do not have skin.
 BASSANIO: Antonio, give us some of your ripe wisdom. We need a clear, impartial judgement here.
 ANTONIO: Love knows no barriers. When souls come together, no colour, creed or sex can separate them.
 GRATIANO: Whose side's he on?
 LAUNCELOT: Well I don't want to be the father of a black and white baby! Supposing he comes out like a zebra!
 PORTIA: Bassanio, either Launcelot marries Miriam, or I want him far away from Belmont.
 BASSANIO: That's a bit hard.
 PORTIA: Someone needs to be hard. Look at your friend Gratiano!
 (*Gratiano, now even more drunk, is dancing obscenely in front of Miriam.*)
 GRATIANO (*singing*): Brown-skinned girl, stay home and mind baby...
 NERISSA: Gratiano, stop it!
 JESSICA: Lorenzo, stop him!
 LORENZO (*also the worse for wear*): You might as well blow away the wind.

(Portia confronts Gratiano.)

- PORTIA: That's enough!
- GRATIANO (*bowing to her*): As your Ladyship pleases.
- PORTIA: Come, Miriam. Ladies.
(The ladies go out, with Portia comforting Miriam.)
- GRATIANO: And screw you all.
- BASSANIO: Gratiano, you're drunk.
- GRATIANO: Bassanio, you're sober.
- LORENZO: He's as sober as an Antonionioni.
- LAUNCELOT: Begging your pardon, sir, but where will I go if I go?
- LORENZO (*laughing*): Try Africa!
- BASSANIO: Launcelot, are you sure you don't want to marry Miriam?
- LAUNCELOT: Yes, sir, and no, sir.
- BASSANIO: What do you mean?
- LAUNCELOT: Yes, sir, I'm sure, and no, sir, I don't want to marry her.
- BASSANIO: Well, I'll have another talk with Portia.
- GRATIANO: Signior Bassanio, women are not to be talked with. They are to be talked to. Signior Antonio, do you not find that our noble friend bears too many of Portia's thumb-prints?
- ANTONIO: He should go back to Venice with me.
- GRATIANO: Yes! Let's go back to Venice. I'm sick of Belmont. It's like being imprisoned in a flower-garden.
- BASSANIO: What about our wives?
- GRATIANO: We've got kitchens and bedrooms in Venice! What about you, Lorenzo?
- LORENZO: No money. We have to stay here.
- GRATIANO: I thought you had half Shylock's money.
- LORENZO: Not till he's dead.
- GRATIANO: What? Is that true, Antonio?
- ANTONIO: I have half, and Shylock has half, and it's all theirs when he dies.
- GRATIANO: Then let him have your half now.
- ANTONIO: It would be illegal – otherwise I'd gladly do it.
- BASSANIO: That's hard on Lorenzo.
- GRATIANO: What do they expect him to do, work for a living? Well, when your father-in-law starts eating pork, Lorenzo, maybe he'll drop dead from food poisoning.
(Raucous laughter. Stephano enters.)
- Stephano! I was looking for you. Where the hell have you been?
- STEPHANO (*to Bassanio*): My Lord, there's another suitor come for Her Ladyship. I've told him he's too late, but he won't go away.
- BASSANIO: Where's he from, Stephano?
- STEPHANO: A place called Texas, my Lord.
- BASSANIO: Texas? Have you heard of it, Antonio?
- ANTONIO: No.
- STEPHANO: He appears to be a very rich gentleman, sir. (*He holds up a bag of coins.*) He gave me these merely to inform her Ladyship of his arrival.
- GRATIANO: A rich gentleman!

LORENZO: I wonder if he's a rich card-playing gentleman.
 GRATIANO: Lorenzo, you take the very thoughts out of my head.
 BASSANIO: Shall we go and meet this rich gentleman from Texas?
 GRATIANO: And see if he'll take a hand of poker rather than a hand of Portia.
(Raucous laughter. Gratiano, Lorenzo and Stephano go out. Launcelot stops Bassanio.)
 LAUNCELOT: Begging your pardon, sir.
 BASSANIO: Yes, Launcelot?
 LAUNCELOT: You won't forget my little problem, will you, sir?
 BASSANIO: Never, Launcelot. It's been a lesson to us all.
 LAUNCELOT: Thank you, sir.
(They are about to exit when Antonio calls out from his isolated position.)
 ANTONIO: Bassanio!
 BASSANIO: Oh, Antonio! Go on, Launcelot. *(Launcelot leaves.)* I'd forgotten you.
 ANTONIO: So I noticed.
 BASSANIO: Forgive me.
(He holds out his hand. Antonio comes to him and they go out together, holding hands.)

Scene Two

Venice. Outside Shylock's house. Enter Salerio and Solanio, holding hands.

SALERIO: Here it is, Shylock's house, all ready for the great conversion.
 SOLANIO: Shylock! Shylock! Shylock!
(Enter Shylock.)
 SHYLOCK: What do you want from me now?
 SALERIO: Your soul Shylock, so that we can save it. Tomorrow's your big day.
 Baptism in Holy Mother Church.
 SOLANIO: So let's see this nice cross of yours, shall we?
(Shylock is wearing a cross inside his shirt, and Solanio pulls it out.)
 Good.
 SALERIO: Shylock, you see this book? We thought you might like to rehearse the service with us – give you the feel of things. Just read this passage, will you?
 SHYLOCK: One day I shall be revenged on all of you.
 SOLANIO: Terrifying. Read, Shylock.
 SHYLOCK *(looking at the book)*: Oh, Father Abraham!
 SALERIO: Imagine yourself in church.
 SHYLOCK: I cannot speak these words.
 SOLANIO: Ts, ts, what did the Duke say, Salerio?
 SALERIO: If you don't become a Christian, he'll recant his pardon on your life.
 SOLANIO: So read it, you Jewish Christian dog.
 SHYLOCK *(reading)*: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy

Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried...”

SOLANIO: Who crucified him, Shylock?

SHYLOCK: The Jews crucified him.

SOLANIO: Fancy you crucifying your Saviour!

SHYLOCK: Let me ask you one question.

SOLANIO (*imitating his accent*): One question.

SALERIO (*the same*): One question.

SHYLOCK: What harm have I done you?

SALERIO: Jews are dogs, Shylock, and dogs foul the streets of Venice.

SHYLOCK: So you see me as your enemy?

SOLANIO: The dog has a brain!

SHYLOCK: But did not your Jesus command you to love your enemies, and to bless them that curse you, to do good to them that hate you? Did he not command that whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also?

SOLANIO: That's right, Shylock! We Christians will soon teach you to love us.

SALERIO: Here, Shylock. (*He slaps Shylock's right cheek.*) Now turn the other one.

SHYLOCK: My creed is an eye for an eye.

SALERIO: Not after tomorrow.

SHYLOCK: You can make me say words, but you cannot make me think thoughts.

(*Enter Tubal.*)

SOLANIO: Ouf! I smell dog. Come on, Salerio.

SALERIO: See you in church, Shylock.

(*They go out hand in hand.*)

SHYLOCK: Tubal!

TUBAL: What did the Sodomites want, Shylock?

SHYLOCK: To torture me.

TUBAL: Tomorrow is your baptism.

SHYLOCK: I dread the sunrise.

TUBAL: Perhaps it can be avoided.

SHYLOCK: How, Tubal? How?

TUBAL: By a change of circumstances.

SHYLOCK: What change, Tubal? What has changed?

TUBAL: I have found your daughter.

SHYLOCK: What? Where is she? Where are the thieves, Tubal?

TUBAL: With Bassanio and Antonio, in Belmont.

SHYLOCK: With Antonio?

TUBAL: They have spent all your ducats and live off Bassanio's wife.

SHYLOCK: I'll have the Christian arrested, thrown into prison.

TUBAL: Go to the Duke, Shylock, and inform him of this conspiracy.

SHYLOCK: Conspiracy?

TUBAL: They are harbouring thieves in Belmont.

SHYLOCK: And those that harbour thieves are accessories to the theft. I'll have them all!

TUBAL: Go to the Duke, Shylock.

SHYLOCK: I shall go, Tubal. And to Belmont, too. The Duke will grant me to be present at their arrest.
TUBAL: And he will grant postponement of your baptism.
SHYLOCK: My baptism. I had forgotten.
TUBAL: The arrest of the thieves will take precedence. Go to him now, Shylock.
SHYLOCK: I will, Tubal, I will. Thank you, Tubal. I owe you my life, Tubal.
(*They go out.*)

Scene Three

Belmont. Bassanio, Gratiano, Lorenzo and P.J. Appleby are seated at the table, playing cards. Antonio, as before, sits apart.

APPLEBY: Well dang my hide if you ain't all cleaned me right out. You I-talians sure do play a mean hand o' poker.
GRATIANO (*scooping up his winnings*): It's been a pleasure fleecing you, Signior Appleby.
APPLEBY: Call me P.J.
LORENZO: Another hand or two, P.J.?
APPLEBY: I'd kinda like a break for now. I ain't lost so much since my ma fell down an oilwell.
BASSANIO: Launcelot!
(*Enter Launcelot.*)
LAUNCELOT: Yes, sir?
BASSANIO: Bring some more wine for Signior Appleby.
LAUNCELOT: It shall be brought, sir, with all expiation. (*He goes out.*)
APPLEBY: You folks are mighty hospitable. This is my first trip to Yurrup, and I sure do like it.
BASSANIO: I'm sorry your journey was for nothing.
APPLEBY: Well, maybe, and maybe not. You see, I come here looking for a wife. Them Texan girls is all the same. Don't care who y'are, just wanner know what you got.
GRATIANO: It's the curse of the age, this obsession with money.
LORENZO: Shameful!
APPLEBY: Now if this Lady Portia's gone, I'm wondering if there ain't some other talent around.
(*Launcelot brings in the wine, and serves Appleby.*)
GRATIANO: Well, there's my wife.
APPLEBY: But I guess your wife's married.
LAUNCELOT: That she is, sir. She's married to him.
GRATIANO (*to Lorenzo*): 'Tis true 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true.
BASSANIO: But there is a lady here who, as it happens, is unmarried.
APPLEBY: There is?
BASSANIO: A maid of Portia's – a lady of grace and charm and wondrous qualities.
LORENZO: Who's that, my Lord?
BASSANIO: The Lady Miriam.
(*Launcelot spills wine all over the table.*)

LORENZO: Careful, Launcelot!
 LAUNCELOT: Begging your pardon, sir.
 GRATIANO: Indeed the Lady Miriam would be a prize for any man.
 LORENZO: Nay, a prize and a half, Gratiano.
 GRATIANO: Or a prize and a bonus prize.
 BASSANIO: But like Portia and Nerissa, she's only to be won by the man who chooses the right casket.
 APPLEBY: That's this gold, silver and lead you was telling me about?
 BASSANIO: An old Belmont custom.
 APPLEBY: If I choose the right casket, she's gotta marry me?
 BASSANIO: And you her.
 APPLEBY: So what's she like, this Miriam?
 GRATIANO: A woman of a most trusting nature. Is she not, Launcelot?
 LAUNCELOT: Very trusting, sir.
 LORENZO: And fertile...imagination.
 LAUNCELOT: Very fertile, sir.
 BASSANIO: She has that within her which only time will show.
 APPLEBY: And you say she has a position here in Belmont?
 GRATIANO: Does she have a position here, Launcelot?
 LAUNCELOT: More than one, sir.
 LORENZO: Is she good in all positions, Launcelot?
 LAUNCELOT: All those that I tried, sir.
 APPLEBY: You seem to know a lot about her, Launcelot.
 GRATIANO: Launcelot has served her many times, P.J.
 APPLEBY: So can I see this Miriam?
 BASSANIO: No, no, P.J., that's forbidden. To see is to judge by outer show, and she must be loved for herself, not for face or body. How often are men led astray by fair exteriors!
 APPLEBY: I guess that's true.
(Bassanio signals to Launcelot to give Appleby more wine.)
 GRATIANO: The world is still deceived by ornament.
 LAUNCELOT: Drink up, sir.
 APPLEBY: Why, thank you, Launcelot.
 BASSANIO: There is no vice so simple, but assumes some mark of virtue on his outward parts.
 APPLEBY: I guess you're right. If she's half the woman you say she is, I don't need to see her.
 GRATIANO: Oh she's more than half.
 APPLEBY: And I just have to choose the right casket?
 BASSANIO: First, you must swear three things. Never to tell anyone which casket you chose. If you choose wrong, to leave Belmont immediately and without a whinge. And if you choose right, to marry Miriam on the spot.
 APPLEBY: Sounds fair enough.
 BASSANIO: Then one more glass to sharpen up your judgement...*(Launcelot pours and Appleby drinks)*...then forward to the temple to swear your oaths. Launcelot, prepare the caskets for Signior Appleby.

LAUNCELOT: It shall be done, sir, with due acidity. (*He goes out.*)
 BASSANIO (*aside to Gratiano and Lorenzo*): Best keep Portia out of this.
 GRATIANO: And Nerissa.
 LORENZO: And Jessica.
 BASSANIO: Come, Signior Appleby.
 APPLEBY: I sure do hope I get the right one.
 (*Bassanio ushers them all out, and is about to leave.*)
 ANTONIO: Bassanio!
 BASSANIO: Antonio!
 ANTONIO: You'd forgotten me again.
 BASSANIO: I'm sorry, but it's sometimes difficult to remember that you're there.
 ANTONIO: I can see that I'm not wanted here.
 BASSANIO: Of course you're wanted here, Antonio, but you should try to fit in more
 with us.
 ANTONIO: How can I fit in with this way of life?
 BASSANIO: Then perhaps you *should* go back to Venice.
 ANTONIO: You want me to go back?
 BASSANIO: Only if *you* want to.
 ANTONIO: I want to be with you.
 BASSANIO (*kindly*): You *are* with me. (*He pecks him on the cheek.*) And I'm with you.
 (*They go out.*)

ACT TWO

Scene One

Venice. The Duke's Palace. The Duke and Shylock.

DUKE: Shylock, is there no end to your hatred?
 SHYLOCK: If your Grace had been robbed of a treasure, would you not seek to recover
 it?
 DUKE: Lorenzo and your daughter are now married.
 SHYLOCK: Does an unsolemnized marriage solemnize theft? They stole from
 me! Do the laws of Venice condone a theft when the thieves are married?
 DUKE: You want your daughter to be put in prison?
 SHYLOCK: Justice I want.
 DUKE: You pleaded once before for justice.
 SHYLOCK: And your Grace, I did not get it.
 DUKE: Shylock, things are better as they are. Accept your losses and accept their
 marriage.
 SHYLOCK: Your Grace, you are a man of principle. Had the young judge not
 abused the law, you would have let me take that which was mine.
 I now ask you again for what is mine. The thieves and the accessories
 must return to Venice, and must all be charged and tried. This is my right.
 Do you deny my right?
 DUKE: No, I can't.
 SHYLOCK: Then shall I have your warrant?

DUKE: Shylock, I beg you once more. Reconsider.
SHYLOCK: I am resolved.
DUKE: Very well, you'll have your warrant.
SHYLOCK: And constables to arrest the miscreants?
DUKE: You'll have them.
SHYLOCK: And a stay of my baptism?
DUKE: No. The baptism will proceed.
SHYLOCK: But why?
DUKE: To save you, Shylock. And with the grace of God to fill you with some Christian sense of charity.
SHYLOCK: What Christian charity do I find here in Venice? Your merchant friend that spits on me and kicks me, and seeks to ruin my legitimate trade? A lover that abducts my only daughter and steals my money and my jewels from me? A court that lets defendants punish plaintiffs? Wasters, tormentors, perverts, gamblers? What Christian charity should I learn, your Grace? The charity that crucifies non-Christians?
DUKE: Nevertheless, Shylock, you'll be baptized.
SHYLOCK: Give me the warrant and the constables. I'll have my rights, and you your rituals.
DUKE: I hope our faith will soften your hard heart.
SHYLOCK: No more than it has softened yours, your Grace.
(They go out.)

Scene Two

Belmont. Bassanio, Gratiano, Lorenzo and P.J. Appleby. Launcelot is behind the curtain that conceals the caskets, and Antonio watches from the side.

BASSANIO: Now draw aside the curtain, Launcelot, and show the caskets to this Texan hero.
(Launcelot opens the curtain.)
APPLEBY *(drunk)*: How'm I gonna know which casket's which?
BASSANIO: In one, P.J., lies the portrait of Portia. If you choose that, the divine Miriam is yours.
APPLEBY: Well, here's ho...hopin'.
BASSANIO: Go, Hercules!
GRATIANO: With much more dismay, I view the fight...
(He and Lorenzo collapse with laughter.)
APPLEBY *(stumbling)*: Dang me!
LAUNCELOT: Careful, sir! Over here, look!
LORENZO: My Lord Bassanio, you'll have to help him. Otherwise he'll choose the wrong casket!
APPLEBY: That must be the gold one? Is that gold?
LAUNCELOT: Well done, sir, yes, that *is* the gold casket!
APPLEBY *(reading)*: Who...soocheth...soocheth...
BASSANIO: Chooseth, P.J. "Chooseth".
APPLEBY: Whassat mean?

BASSANIO: Chooses.

APPLEBY: Who soocheth me, shall gain what many men desire. Right, I soocheth this one.

BASSANIO: No, wait, P.J., you must study the others too.

APPLEBY: What for?

BASSANIO: Those are the rules. Now come on, this is the silver one. Shall I read it to you?

APPLEBY: I can read, dammit! Who soocheth me, shall have as much as he deserves. Yep. I surely do deserve my Miriam. I'll have this one.

BASSANIO: Not yet. Come and look at the lead casket first.

APPLEBY: I want the silver.

BASSANIO: Now listen carefully, P.J. Allow yourself to be "led" by me.
(*Groans from Gratiano and Lorenzo.*)

APPLEBY: Who soocheth me, must give and...and...

BASSANIO: Hazard.

APPLEBY: What the hell's that mean?

BASSANIO: Risk, gamble.

APPLEBY: Dang it, I done enough gambling for one day. Gimme the silver.

BASSANIO: Wait! How do you know you deserve Miriam?
(*Appleby opens his mouth, but can't think of anything to say.*)
Use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?

LORENZO: Whew!
(*Bassanio bows to him.*)

APPLEBY: Nobody gonna whup me. I'll have the gold one.

BASSANIO: No, stop! Put not your trust in gold!

GRATIANO: Misquote!

LORENZO: Shocking!

BASSANIO: It's the best I can do.

APPLEBY: If it ain't the gold...and it ain't the silver...

BASSANIO: Then "hazard" a guess. "Hazard" a guess, P.J.

APPLEBY (*after a pause*): Nope. You'll have to tell me.

BASSANIO: Should you choose wrong, your heart will be heavy as...heavy as...

APPLEBY: Lead?

BASSANIO: How all the other passions fleet to air!

GRATIANO: Oh love be moderate, allay thy ecstasy!

BASSANIO: Open the casket, P.J., and find your fortune. Give him the key, Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT: Sir, I'm not sure...

BASSANIO: The key, Launcelot – and say goodbye to Miriam.
(*Launcelot gives P.J. the key, but he can't get it in the hole.*)
May I help you, P.J.? (*He does.*) And now, pull out the treasure from within.
(*Appleby pulls out a skull.*)
Oh!

APPLEBY: Is this Portia?

BASSANIO: What's happened?

LAUNCELOT: I'm sorry, your Lordship, but I gurgitated that he'd optic for the gold.

BASSANIO: Idiot!

APPLEBY: Is this Portia?

BASSANIO: It is, P.J., it is. Portia, you, Miriam – is it not a portrait of us all? Well done, P.J., you have won the beautiful Miriam!
(The others applaud, apart from Antonio. Portia enters with Nerissa and Jessica.)

PORTIA: What’s going on here?
(The celebrations stop dead.)

BASSANIO: Portia! Wonderful news! Mr P.J. Appleby from Texas will marry Miriam.

GRATIANO *(melodramatically)* He soochied the right casket! Heaven be praised!

APPLEBY: Did I hear that you was Portia, ma’am?

PORTIA: I am.

APPLEBY *(studying the skull and then Portia)*: Don’t look like you. I guess it’s modern art.

PORTIA: Bassanio, what game is this you’re playing?

BASSANIO: Our friend P.J. wants a wife, and Miriam needs a husband. It’s a perfect match.

APPLEBY: Yep, where’s my blushing bride?

PORTIA: His “blushing” bride?

APPLEBY *(to Jessica)*: You Miriam?

JESSICA: No, me Jessica.

PORTIA: Nerissa, bring Miriam here.
(Nerissa goes out.)

BASSANIO: Portia, it’s ideal.

PORTIA: Ideal for whom? Is Miriam a thing?

GRATIANO: He won her in the lottery, like us.

PORTIA: He didn’t even choose the right casket!

BASSANIO: The casket’s right. It’s just the wrong content.

GRATIANO: Bloody hell, at least she’ll have a husband

PORTIA: Speak not so grossly. You are not in Venice. Bassanio, what have you done to Belmont? This used to be a gentle-mannered house, but now it shows more like a riotous inn.
(Nerissa returns with Miriam.)
 Come here, Miriam. Meet Mr Appleby. From Texas. He wants to marry you.

BASSANIO: P.J., meet...Miriam. She’s your lovely bride.
(There is a long silence as Appleby and Miriam look at each other.)

APPLEBY: Well, I do declare, she’s pretty as a picture.
(Relieved reaction from the men.)

PORTIA: Miriam, would you marry a drunken oaf who turns words into pieces of elastic?

APPLEBY *(to Lorenzo)*: Hey, I thought she was gonna marry me!

LORENZO: That is you, P.J.
(Short pause.)

MIRIAM: Well, ma’am, he does seem nice. And I rather like his hat.

BASSANIO: So there you are!

GRATIANO: What was all the bloody fuss about?
 PORTIA: Does Mr Appleby know of Miriam's condition?
 BASSANIO: Portia, don't push our luck!
 PORTIA: Deceit as well, Bassanio? Mr Appleby, you should know your blushing bride to be is already pregnant.
 APPLEBY: But I ain't touched her!
 PORTIA: Not by you.
 APPLEBY: Aha!...(To Miriam): So who's been playing nookie with my wife?
 MIRIAM: No-one's been playing nookie with your wife. We aren't married yet.
 APPLEBY: Oh! Guess you're right.
 LAUNCELOT (to Lorenzo): Phew! I thought I was going to be texified.
 BASSANIO: You see, Portia, they're both made for each other. P.J. will have a young and lovely wife, and Miriam a rich and handsome husband, who'll take her far away from...
 APPLEBY: I ain't rich.
 BASSANIO: P.J.?
 APPLEBY: I ain't rich.
 BASSANIO: What do you mean, you ain't rich?
 APPLEBY: I mean I ain't rich.
 BASSANIO: But all that money – the tip, the poker...
 APPLEBY: You cleaned me out.
 BASSANIO: You've got no money.
 APPLEBY: Not a cent.
 BASSANIO: Then what are you doing in Belmont?
 APPLEBY: I heard about this rich Portia, and I reckoned that was a mighty fine way to solve the problem. Get yourself a rich wife, you get yourself a meal ticket.
 BASSANIO: That's downright immoral. In some respects.
 GRATIANO: He's a bloody fortune-hunter!
 PORTIA: Mr Appleby, you have feathered friends all round you. Miriam, shall we give P.J. a job?
 MIRIAM: Yes, please, madam.
 PORTIA: My servant Balthazar recently left us. You can take his place.
 APPLEBY: Well, I do thank you, ma'am.
 PORTIA: There's one condition: you must never touch a drop of alcohol. Miriam doesn't want a drunken husband.
 MIRIAM (quietly to Portia): Madam, I'll take any kind of husband.
 (Enter Stephano.)
 STEPHANO: My Lady.
 PORTIA: What is it, Stephano?
 STEPHANO: There's a gentleman at the door – a foreign gentleman. He demands to see you.
 PORTIA: Demands?
 NERISSA: Perhaps it's another suitor, madam.
 STEPHANO: He has two constables with him.
 PORTIA (to Nerissa): An arresting mode of courtship.

STEPHANO: He also has certain documents, my Lady.
PORTIA: Documents?
STEPHANO: Unpleasant documents.
PORTIA: Resolve the puzzle for us. Bring him in.
(Stephano bows and goes out.)

APPLEBY: Ma'am, I'm about to be sick.
PORTIA: Miriam, please take your fiancé to where he can do the least damage.
MIRIAM: Yes, ma'am, *(She helps Appleby out.)*
PORTIA: As for you, Launcelot.
LAUNCELOT: Yes, worshipful madam?
PORTIA: Since you do not wish to be a husband or a father, I've arranged for you to join the army.
LAUNCELOT: The army?
PORTIA: Miriam has a brother who's a captain. You will serve him.
LAUNCELOT: But saving your madam's presence, it's dangerous in the army.
PORTIA: But saving your master's presence, you are more dangerous in Belmont.

BASSANIO: Portia, I do think you might have consulted me.
LAUNCELOT: And you might have insulted me too, madam.
PORTIA: Pardon, dear Bassanio, but you were too busy playing cards to be consulted. And pardon, Launcelot, but a lady does not need to insult a servant.
(Enter Stephano.)

STEPHANO: Madam, the gentleman is here.
(Enter Shylock with two constables. Gasps from all round, then a stunned silence before Portia steps towards Shylock.)

PORTIA: You are welcome, sir, to Belmont.
BASSANIO: Portia, this is the Jew that tried to kill Antonio.
SHYLOCK: No longer, sir, a Jew. I've been baptized.
GRATIANO: Once a Jew, always a Jew.
SHYLOCK: If so, then why make me a Christian? *(To Portia):* My name's Shylock.
PORTIA: Portia is my name.
SHYLOCK: I have with me a warrant from the Duke. *(He gives it to her.)*
ANTONIO: What are you doing here in Belmont, Jew?
SHYLOCK: I am pursuing justice, fellow Christian. What are you doing here?
ANTONIO: I was invited.
SHYLOCK: Invited by your lover, or his wife? *(He turns to Jessica.)* Well, Jessica? No welcome for your father?

LORENZO: You are not welcome here in Belmont, Shylock.
SHYLOCK: Is it your place to issue a welcome here?
PORTIA: According to this document, Lorenzo stands accused of abducting Jessica, and stealing money, gold and jewels from Shylock. Bassanio, Gratiano and Antonio are said to be accessories to the crime.

SHYLOCK: I know that voice. Where have I heard that voice?
PORTIA: Lorenzo, is it true you stole from Shylock?

LORENZO: Jessica took some items from the house.
 PORTIA: Yet when you came to Belmont, you had nothing.
 (Shylock goes to Portia.)

SHYLOCK: Forgive me, have we not met before?
 (Portia flinches slightly.)

PORTIA: Met before?
 SHYLOCK: Faces I don't forget. Nor voices. Names I do confuse. For instance, though my memory may be false, it tells me that when we met in Venice, you were a doctor of law named Balthazar.

PORTIA: If I could add a lie unto a fault, I would deny it. But your memory is not false. I was the learned judge.
 (Shylock looks round. Nerissa flinches.)

SHYLOCK: So young a judge. And with so young a clerk. Then tell me, wise young judge, is there no law forbidding to impersonate a judge?

PORTIA: There may be such a law.

SHYLOCK: Answer one question. Did the Duke know you were not a judge?

PORTIA: No, Shylock.

SHYLOCK: Then I thank the Christian God for showing kindness even to a Jew.

PORTIA: What difference does it make to you, then, Shylock?

SHYLOCK: Had the Duke known, where should I find justice? Constables, arrest the miscreants.

PORTIA: There's no need for arrests. We'll go with you to Venice without your using force.

BASSANIO: Wait, Portia!
 (He takes her to one side, close to where Gratiano and Lorenzo are standing. Antonio joins them.)
 Portia, we'll all go to prison!

PORTIA: Are the charges true?

BASSANIO: Yes, most of them.

ANTONIO: Madam, you've seen yourself his vengeful nature. Don't go.

PORTIA: Well, Jessica, tell us what to do.

GRATIANO: Tie him up and throw him in the sea.

JESSICA *(who is crying)*: I don't know, madam.

LORENZO: What d'you mean you don't know? Whose side are you on?

JESSICA: I didn't think we were stealing.

BASSANIO: You're in danger, Portia, now he knows who you were...

PORTIA: Nerissa, you have always given good counsel. What shall we do?

NERISSA: Go to Venice, madam. But first perhaps send word to Padua.

PORTIA: That's good advice, Nerissa.

GRATIANO: That's goose cackle!

PORTIA: What would you have us do, then, Gratiano? Add murder to our other misdemeanours?

SHYLOCK: Forgive me if I interrupt the flow of your debate, but we have far to travel.

PORTIA: We shall be ready presently. Stephano!

STEPHANO: Madam?

PORTIA: You've witnessed all that's happened here. Go at once to Padua, to Bellario, tell him the news and bid him with all haste to go to Venice.

STEPHANO: I shall do it, madam.

PORTIA: Launcelet, while we prepare ourselves, tell the kitchen staff to feed our guests.

LAUNCELOT: It shall be done forthwith and forthwithout. *(He goes out.)*

GRATIANO: Put poisoned pork in Shylock's sandwiches.

PORTIA: Shylock, we shall shortly be with you.

SHYLOCK: I thank your Ladyship. You are most gracious.
(The ladies go out, followed by Stephano.)

GRATIANO: Shylock, never turn your back on me during this journey.

LORENZO: Nor on me, Shylock.

SHYLOCK: I put my trust in my Saviour. *(He mockingly crosses himself.)*

ANTONIO: Shylock, the law has thwarted your hatred once, and so it will again. Expect no mercy.

SHYLOCK: Such threats, Antonio, are all that's left. Thieves cannot punish victims for their theft
(They all go out.)

ACT THREE

Scene One

Venice. A court of law. Enter the Duke, Shylock, Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salerio, Solanio, Bellario, Balthazar, Portia, Nerissa, Jessica and attendants.

DUKE: In this most complicated affair, the charges appear to be as follows. *(He reads):* Lorenzo is accused of abducting Jessica. Lorenzo and Jessica are accused of stealing from Shylock. Antonio, Bassanio and Gratiano are accused of being accessories to the abduction and theft. Portia and Nerissa are accused of impersonating officers of the law. Is that correct, Shylock?

SHYLOCK: There is one further charge, your Grace.

DUKE: Indeed. I've sent for the learned Bellario to determine these cases, but the learned Bellario is himself accused of being an accessory to Portia and Nerissa's alleged impersonation of officers of the law. So frankly, I don't know where to begin. Is the learned Bellario in court?

BELLARIO: I am, your Grace. May I present my learned clerk?
(He and Balthazar have stepped forward. Bellario is somewhat theatrical.)

DUKE: You are most welcome. Bellario, where should we begin?

BELLARIO: With me, your Grace.

DUKE: Very well.

BELLARIO: The case of Shylock versus Bellario, in which Bellario is accused of aiding and abetting the impersonation of officers of the law. How do you plead, Bellario? Not guilty. Then kindly present your defence. Thank you, I will. Perhaps, your Grace, I should address my remarks to yourself rather than to myself?

DUKE: Feel free, Bellario.

BELLARIO: Thank you, your Grace. As my first witness, I call upon...his Grace, the Duke of Venice.

DUKE: What?

BELLARIO: Forgive me, your Grace. A little coup de théâtre. Do you recall that on receipt of your summons to the court I was ill and sent you a letter introducing a Doctor Balthazar?

DUKE: I do, yes.

BELLARIO: I now call upon my learned clerk to read out a copy of that letter.

BALTHAZAR (*reading*): “Your Grace shall understand that at the receipt of your letter I am very sick; but in the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthazar. I acquainted him with the cause in controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant; we turned o’er many books together; he is furnished with my opinion; which, bettered with his own learning the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend – comes with him, at my importunity, to fill up your Grace’s request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation.”

BELLARIO: Beautifully read. And, if I may say so, beautifully written. Your Grace, is this the letter that was read before the court?

DUKE: It is.

BELLARIO: Your Grace, this is Doctor Balthazar, who is now my learned clerk.

DUKE: But this is not the Balthazar who came to the court.

BELLARIO: No, your Grace. That was the Lady Portia.

DUKE: I find this difficult to follow.

BELLARIO: That, your Grace, is how we lawyers make our living. I will explain. Balthazar was then a servant to the Lady Portia. On hearing of Shylock’s suit against Antonio, she sent Balthazar to ask me to undertake the case, but to allow her and her maid to accompany me as assistants. They were to be disguised, your Grace, as young men.

DUKE: Portia, is all this true?

PORTIA: It is, your Grace.

DUKE: Go on, Bellario.

BELLARIO: When Balthazar arrived, he found me ill, and was most solicitous. (*He smiles at Balthazar.*) Now what the Lady Portia does not know is that Balthazar, despite his youth, is a most able doctor of law, qualified in Rome, who was secretly engaged by her father to supervise the lottery of the caskets. When your Grace also asked me to undertake the case, we studied it together, and in my sickness I engaged him to conduct the trial on my behalf. I therefore wrote the letter you have just heard.

DUKE: Then why did he *not* conduct the case?

BELLARIO: A shrewd question, your Grace, which I call upon Balthazar to answer.

BALTHAZAR: Her Ladyship would not entrust such a task to a servant, and made me brief her and depart the scene.

BELLARIO: Although, your Grace, he warned her Ladyship that her actions were illegal.
(The Duke looks towards Portia.)

PORTIA: Every word is true, your Grace, and I admit it with shame.

DUKE: Shylock, you have heard the learned Bellario's defence. Do you wish to proceed with this charge?

SHYLOCK: I drop the charge against Bellario.

GRATIANO: Venice one, Shylock nil.

SHYLOCK: The game has only just begun.

DUKE: Shall we go through the list, Bellario?

BELLARIO: As your Grace pleases.

DUKE *(consulting the list)*: Lorenzo is accused of abducting Jessica. How do you plead, Lorenzo?

LORENZO: Not guilty, your Grace.

DUKE: Shylock?

SHYLOCK: He took her without my consent.

LORENZO: But with *her* consent.

DUKE: Doctor Bellario?

BELLARIO: Jessica, did you accompany Lorenzo of your own free will?

JESSICA: Yes, your honour.

BELLARIO: And how old are you?

JESSICA: Twenty-one, your honour.

BELLARIO: Then age was no obstruction, though there may have been seduction, and it's therefore my deduction that there never was abduction, and so it's my instruction...that your Grace...should dismiss...the case.
(Cheers.)

SOLANIO: Well done, Lorenzo.

SALERIO: Congratulations, Lorenzo.

GRATIANO *(to Shylock)*: Venice two, Shylock nil.

SHYLOCK: Proceed, your Grace, to the next charge.

DUKE *(reading)*: Lorenzo and Jessica are accused of stealing from Shylock. How do you both plead?

LORENZO: Not guilty!

JESSICA: Not guilty, your Grace.

DUKE: Shylock?

SHYLOCK: They took money and jewels from me. If they deny it, they add perjury to theft.

DUKE: Doctor Bellario?

BELLARIO: Lorenzo and Jessica, did you take money and jewels from Shylock?

LORENZO: Your honour, Jessica is my wife. A wife is entitled to a dowry. The Jew would not have given it to her, and so she took what she was entitled to. If you take what you're entitled to, it can't be theft.

SOLANIO: Clever!

SALERIO: Brilliant!

SHYLOCK: If you uphold this reasoning, no father will be safe in Venice.

LORENZO: If you reject this reasoning, no child will have a future in Venice.

SOLANIO: He should have been a lawyer.

BELLARIO: But you do not deny taking the money and the jewels?

LORENZO: We took them, your honour, and we felt we had a right to take them.

SALERIO: Hear, hear!

DUKE: Well, Doctor Bellario, what does the law have to say?

BELLARIO: By their own admission, the acquisition was without permission, which by definition means...whatever they were feeling, they were stealing.
(*A shocked silence.*)

DUKE: Guilty?

BELLARIO: Guilty, your Grace.

LORENZO: But we had a right to a dowry!

BELLARIO: Such rights have no foundation in the law.

SHYLOCK: I thank your honour.

LORENZO: But you can't take his part against us!

BELLARIO: The law takes no-one's part. Except that of the lawyer.

SOLANIO: It's ridiculous.

SALERIO: Absurd.

GRATIANO: Bloody immoral!

SHYLOCK (*to Gratiano*): Two one.

DUKE: Lorenzo and Jessica, you have been found guilty of theft.

JESSICA: Since my father denies all rights to his daughter, then let him send his daughter to prison.

DUKE (*to Bellario*): Should sentence be passed now?

BELLARIO: As your Grace pleases.

SHYLOCK: May I beg your Grace to delay sentence until all cases have been heard?

DUKE: Very well, Shylock. The next charge...(*Reading*): Antonio, Bassanio and Gratiano are accused of being accessories to the abduction – not applicable?

BELLARIO: Well done, your Grace.

DUKE: Accessories to the theft. How do you all plead?

ANTONIO:)

BASSANIO:) Not guilty, your Grace.

GRATIANO:)

DUKE: Shylock?

SHYLOCK: They plotted to make me leave my house. Antonio and Bassanio invited me to dinner to leave it free for theft. Lorenzo and Gratiano organized a masque to help the thieves escape. And they harboured the thieves at Belmont.

DUKE: Doctor Bellario?

BELLARIO: Antonio and Bassanio, did you invite Shylock to dinner?

BASSANIO: The invitation was mine, your honour.

ANTONIO: No, Bassanio, let me share this with you.

DUKE: Antonio, this is a court of law. We only want the truth.

BELLARIO: Beautifully put, your Grace.
(The Duke holds up his hand in modest acknowledgement.)
 Bassanio, did you invite Shylock in order to aid the thieves?

BASSANIO: I did, but...

BELLARIO: Thank you. Antonio, did you know of the intended theft?

ANTONIO: No. But I'll swear that Bassanio never meant to commit a crime!

BELLARIO: That, sir, is for the court to decide. The verdict, your Grace, that's necessary, is Bassanio was an accessory. From the evidence we've got, Antonio was not.

SHYLOCK: I believe Antonio knew.

DUKE: Bassanio, on oath will you swear that Antonio did not know?

BASSANIO: I swear it, your Grace.

DUKE: Then I pronounce him innocent.

GRATIANO: Three one.

SHYLOCK: But Bassanio is guilty.
(The Duke looks at Bellario, who nods.)

DUKE: He is.

SHYLOCK: Three two. Let the charge be pursued against Gratiano.

DUKE: Doctor Bellario?

BELLARIO: Gratiano, did you help Lorenzo organize the masque?

GRATIANO *(sullenly)*: Yes.

BELLARIO: And did you know of the theft?

GRATIANO: What theft?

SHYLOCK: He was there! He knew! He helped them! Ask my daughter!

BELLARIO: Jessica, on oath, did Gratiano know of the theft?

JESSICA *(reluctantly)*: He did, my Lord.

DUKE: Then Gratiano's guilty too.

BELLARIO: He is, your Grace.

SHYLOCK: Once more I thank your honour.

GRATIANO: Guilty of sinning against the Devil.

SHYLOCK: Then may Heaven reward you. There is one more charge, your Grace.

DUKE: Oh yes. Portia and Nerissa, you're accused of impersonating officers of the law. How do you plead?

PORTIA: Guilty, your Grace, but I plead leniency for Nerissa, who merely obeyed my orders.

BELLARIO: Leniency may have its part in the sentencing, not in the judgement. Nerissa, you plead guilty too?

NERISSA: Yes, your honour.

DUKE: It would appear that all judgements are clear. There remains the sentencing.

SHYLOCK: Not quite, your Grace. There is one further issue.

DUKE: One further issue?

SHYLOCK: Since my trial was conducted by a judge who was not a judge, does it not follow that the judgements were invalid?

DUKE: Doctor Bellario?

BELLARIO: The proceedings were indeed invalid, your Grace.

SHYLOCK: The court had no right to deprive me of my property?
 BELLARIO: That is true.
 SHYLOCK: Or of my religion?
 BELLARIO: That is true also.
 SHYLOCK: Or to make me bequeathe my possessions to my daughter's husband?
 BELLARIO: Correct.
 SHYLOCK: Then I thank Yahweh for justice in Venice. When shall my property be restored?
 BELLARIO: Your property must be restored at once.
 SHYLOCK (*to Gratiano*): Oh learned judge! And I may revoke my baptismal vows?
 BELLARIO: You may.
 SHYLOCK: And I may annul my will and testament?
 BELLARIO: You may.
 SHYLOCK: Oh upright judge!
 BELLARIO: However...
 SHYLOCK: However?
 GRATIANO: However!
 BELLARIO: The due process of law once begun may not be stopped. The revoking of judgements does not entail the revoking of charges. You, Shylock, were charged with seeking the life of Antonio – a charge which still stands. The penalty for this offence, now as before, is that half your goods will pass to Antonio, and half to the State, and your life lies in the mercy of the Duke.
 GRATIANO: A Daniel still say I! Oh upright judge! Oh learned judge!
 DUKE: It would seem, Shylock, that you should leave things as they were.
 (*Long pause.*)
 SHYLOCK: I accept the due process of law. You may confiscate my goods, and Your Grace may pronounce sentence of death on me.
 DUKE: Shylock, we have no wish...
 SHYLOCK: Pardon me, your Grace. I crave due process of law.
 DUKE: What do you mean, Shylock?
 SHYLOCK: You have passed sentence on me, the plaintiff. I ask you now to pass sentence on the defendants.
 DUKE: Bellario, will you advise us on this matter?
 BELLARIO: Yes, your Grace. The penalty for impersonating officers of the law is five years' imprisonment.
 NERISSA: Five years!
 PORTIA: Hush, Nerissa. Let the Jew teach us dignity.
 NERISSA: Oh madam, I'd rather lose my dignity and stay out of prison.
 BELLARIO: Accessories to theft are to be imprisoned for three years.
 GRATIANO: What?
 BASSANIO: Three years!
 GRATIANO: For helping a friend?
 ANTONIO: Your Grace, may I plead for Bassanio? Let him go free. A dungeon's not for him. Or if needs must, I'll serve his sentence for him.
 DUKE: You've done no wrong. We cannot punish you!

ANTONIO: Bassanio, I shall visit you every day.
 SHYLOCK: What sentence is imposed upon the thieves?
 BELLARIO: Ten years' imprisonment for each of them.
(A cry from Jessica, and gasps from the others.)
 DUKE: Surely, Jew, not even you would cast your daughter into prison for ten years.
(No response from Shylock.)
 JESSICA: Your Grace, please ask my father if he wants his grandchild to be born and raised in prison.
 SHYLOCK: Grandchild?
 LORENZO: Grandchild?
 JESSICA: I am pregnant, Lorenzo.
 LORENZO *(to Bassanio and Gratiano)*: Ha! You both owe me a thousand ducats!
 GRATIANO: Damnation!
 BASSANIO: Of course he had a start on us.
(Shylock has gone across to Jessica.)
 SHYLOCK: A grandchild, Jessica?
 JESSICA: To be born in chains.
 SHYLOCK: Jessica...
(He touches her as if he wants to embrace her but cannot.)
(To the Duke): Your Grace, I drop the charge against my daughter.
(The Duke looks to Bellario.)
 BELLARIO: If he so wishes.
 LORENZO: And me?
 SHYLOCK: The charge stands.
 JESSICA: No, father, I go where my husband goes.
 LORENZO: That's right. A woman's place is by her husband.
 SHYLOCK: The charge stands.
 DUKE: Shylock, your life and goods are forfeit to the state. Bellario, cannot the law provide a compromise?
 BELLARIO: That lies at the discretion of the plaintiff, and of yourself, your Grace.
 DUKE: Shylock, for the sake of everyone, on what conditions would you drop all charges?
 SHYLOCK: Your Grace, I'd like to speak first with my daughter.
 DUKE: By all means, if it brings us a solution.
 LORENZO: Remember, there are three of us to fight for.
(Shylock takes Jessica to one side.)
 GRATIANO: I hope she'll fight for me as well, Lorenzo. Three wineless, sexless years are not for me!
 ANTONIO: Courage, Bassanio. I shall save you somehow.
(He presses Bassanio's arm reassuringly.)
 GRATIANO: If we're released, I shan't go back to Belmont.
 ANTONIO: Nor will you, I trust, Bassanio.
 BASSANIO: I'd rather not, but money is the problem.
 GRATIANO: What's Portia's yours.

BASSANIO: Maybe morally. Not legally. And now she's asking questions.
 GRATIANO: What sort of questions?
 BASSANIO: Things like how Lorenzo and you as well intend to earn a living.
 GRATIANO: Earn a living?
 BASSANIO: And how I once earned mine.
 GRATIANO: That's what comes of giving power to women.
 BASSANIO: We need to find good cause to stay in Venice.
(They continue to talk quietly.)

SHYLOCK: I want what's best for you and for the child.
 JESSICA: My child must have a father and a home.
 SHYLOCK: I'll be its father, and my home's your home.
 JESSICA: Lorenzo comes, or none of us will come.
 SHYLOCK: What, take the Christian thief into my house?
 JESSICA: He'll work for you.
 SHYLOCK: Ha! Do drones make honey?
 JESSICA (*turning away*): Then your grandchild will be born in prison.
 SHYLOCK: No, Jessica, wait! Very well, I accept your terms. The Christian can come. Perhaps I've been at fault. I never meant you harm, but I must learn the softer expressions of a father's love.
(He gives her a gentle kiss on the cheek.)

PORTIA: Father and daughter seem to have reached accord.
 NERISSA: I hope so, madam. I'd hate to go to prison.
 PORTIA: Nerissa, do you not find it strange to see the segregation in this court?
 NERISSA: What do you mean, madam?
 PORTIA: Look at our husbands. They stand with their friends, while we stand here. We're closer to the Jew than to our husbands. I don't remember my father kissing me. I do remember lectures, frowns, raised fingers.

NERISSA: Your father was a virtuous gentleman.
 PORTIA: He was indeed, but virtue seems so hard, whereas depravity is full of charm.

NERISSA: Have we been tricked, madam?
 PORTIA: I fear we have.
 DUKE: Shylock, have you now reached a decision?
 SHYLOCK: We have, your Grace.
 DUKE: Then, pray, let us hear it.
 SHYLOCK: My daughter and her husband may go free. He'll work for me. My home will be their home, and to them I'll bequeathe all my possessions.

DUKE: And in return...?
 SHYLOCK: My life, and my religion.
 DUKE: These are fair terms. We accept them, Shylock, and are much moved. Lorenzo, are you content?

LORENZO: One prison for another! (*Pause.*) I accept.
 GRATIANO: The Jew's turned Christian ere he's Jew again!
 SOLANIO: Congratulations, Lorenzo!
 SALERIO: All his possessions!
 LORENZO: All I can say is I wish him a swift death.

ANTONIO: Pray God, Bassanio, he'll show you such mercy.

DUKE: What mercy can you show the others, Shylock?

SHYLOCK: Bassanio and Gratiano may go free, but all my goods must be returned to me.

DUKE: This condition is rather more severe. But you already do have half your goods.

SHYLOCK: Antonio has the other half in use.

DUKE: It seems, Antonio, we must turn to you.

ANTONIO: Your Grace, I need the money for my business...

SHYLOCK: I'll lend it him – on favourable terms.

DUKE: But not, I trust, in exchange for a pound of flesh!
(Laughter. He is pleased with his joke.)

SHYLOCK: His flesh is his. The goods he has are mine.

GRATIANO: For God's sake, man, agree or we'll rot in prison!

ANTONIO: Bassanio, for your sake, I will agree.
(They embrace, Antonio more passionately than Bassanio.)

DUKE: What can you offer to the ladies, Shylock?

SHYLOCK: I'll drop the charges if they'll agree to pay the principal of Antonio's debt to me, three thousand ducats, in addition to the value of the goods Lorenzo stole, some seven thousand – totalling ten thousand.

DUKE : Portia?

PORTIA: I accept, your Grace. And Shylock, I thank you for your generosity.

SHYLOCK: The quality of mercy is not strained.
(She smiles and nods.)

DUKE: Then I account this a successful outcome – a triumph for good Christian charity.

SHYLOCK: Or Jewish mitzvah and Jewish saychel, your Grace.

DUKE: If you say so. Though you're still a Christian.

SHYLOCK: Once a Jew, your Grace...*(he looks at Gratiano)*...always a Jew.

DUKE: Doctor Bellario, thanks for your assistance, and I entreat you home with me to dinner.

BELLARIO: Might my learned clerk accompany me?

DUKE: He'll be most welcome,

BELLARIO: Your Grace, we are most honoured.
(The Duke nods all round, and everybody bows as he goes out, followed by Bellario, Balthazar, and the attendants.)

SHYLOCK: Come, daughter, we shall go to dinner too. Chus's wife has cooked gefillte fish.

LORENZO: What's gefillte fish?

JESSICA: Fish balls. Delicious.
(Lorenzo shrugs at Bassanio and Gratiano as Shylock goes out with Jessica.)

SOLANIO: You can always come to us for a bacon sandwich.
(Lorenzo goes out with Solanio and Salerio. Portia and Nerissa cross to Bassanio and Gratiano, while Antonio stands awkwardly on one side.)

PORTIA: Well, husband, our freedom's cheaply bought. Shall we go home?

NERISSA: Shall we go home, Gratiano?

BASSANIO: Dearest Portia, I've been thinking deeply about fair criticisms made of me. A man should not depend upon his wife.

PORTIA: Go on.

BASSANIO: A man should learn to ply a trade. To work, and earn a living for himself. Don't you agree? *(She gestures that he should continue.)* Antonio here has offered to instruct me in the import export business.

PORTIA: That's kind of you, Antonio.

BASSANIO: It would mean, of course, my staying here in Venice. But not for long. Just till I've learned the trade.

PORTIA: I see. And what will you live on here in Venice? A lord like you can't live like a pauper.

BASSANIO: My thinking was, if I had an allowance, until this tiny period is over, I'd pay back ten times more on my return.

PORTIA: And who would pay the allowance?

BASSANIO: You would, Portia!

PORTIA: Should I not stay with my husband here in Venice?

BASSANIO: Portia, nothing would give me greater pleasure. But you'd be bored in Venice. Belmont needs you. And I would be distracted from my work.

PORTIA: Then I agree, and for this "tiny period", I'll struggle on as best I can without you.

NERISSA: Gratiano, will you come to Belmont with us?

GRATIANO: I too am now resolved to learn a trade, so give me an allowance and you'll find you've bought yourself the richest of all husbands.

PORTIA: Nerissa, we are fortunate indeed to have such husbands, learning to be earning. Where will you live?

BASSANIO: I'll lodge with Antonio.

GRATIANO: My brother Brabantio has an attic for me.

NERISSA: And no doubt has a cellar for you too.

PORTIA: Dear husbands, we shall pine for you in Belmont.

BASSANIO: Believe me, Portia, neither of us shall stay a single day longer than necessary.

PORTIA: Antonio, you're too kind to my dear husband.

ANTONIO: Be assured, madam, it's a loving-kindness.

PORTIA: So I have seen. Farewell, Bassanio. *(They kiss.)*

NERISSA: Farewell, Gratiano. *(They kiss.)*

PORTIA: And loving, kind Antonio.
(She kisses him. He flinches.)

BASSANIO: Sweet Portia!
(Portia and Nerissa go out.)

GRATIANO: Free!
(He and Bassanio laugh and do a little dance together, singing "Free!")

BASSANIO: Antonio, our hero, what can I say? You've saved us from two prisons in one day!

GRATIANO: As a reward, for saving his skin and mine, we'll let you treat us to a cask of wine!

(They go out, Bassanio pulling Antonio.)

ACT FOUR

Scene One

Venice. Shylock's house. Shylock and Jessica, who is knitting.

SHYLOCK: We've always been persecuted, Jessica. Always had to fight to survive. But sometimes we fight when instead we should embrace. I've been at fault.

JESSICA: Perhaps if my mother had lived, you'd have been gentler.

SHYLOCK: My poor Leah often rebuked me for my harshness, but I saw it as my defence. A poet wrote:

“Let me still take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be taken.”

Yet one of the saints wrote:

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.”

And: “He that loveth not knoweth not God' for God is love.”

There are fine things in the Christian Bible. The Christians should read them.

(Lorenzo, Gratiano, Salerio and Solanio come on stage.)

LORENZO: You'll get your money.

GRATIANO: I'd wait, Lorenzo, if only my throat wasn't so dry.

LORENZO: Shylock! Shylock!

SHYLOCK *(to Jessica)*: Your husband.

GRATIANO: Daddy! Daddy Jew!

SOLANIO: Soon to be Granddaddy Jew.

LORENZO: Shylock!

(Shylock comes to join them.)

SHYLOCK: What is it?

LORENZO: Antonio says you should meet him at the notary's, to sign for your goods.

SHYLOCK: I had expected it. Jessica!

JESSICA *(joining them)*: What is it, father?

SALERIO: Lorenzo, your wife looks like a bagpipe!

SOLANIO: There'll be plenty of wailing when the air comes out.

SALERIO: Or heiress.

SHYLOCK: I'm to meet Antonio, to sign some papers.

JESSICA: I'll be all right here, father.

SHYLOCK *(to Gratiano, Salerio and Solanio)*: You, you, and you, I forbid you to enter my house.

GRATIANO *(throwing his hands in the air)*: I wouldn't dream of it.

SOLERIO: God forbid.

SALERIO: Couldn't stand the smell.

SHYLOCK *(to Jessica)*: I'll return as quickly as I can. *(He goes out.)*

GRATIANO: Goodbye, Daddy!
 LORENZO: Let me pass, Jessica.
 JESSICA: What do you want, Lorenzo?
 LORENZO: Never you mind.
(He pushes past her and enters the house. She follows him.)
 GRATIANO: If the prisoner walks, the ball and chain must follow.
 JESSICA: What are you doing?
(He is taking money out of a box.)
 No, Lorenzo, you promised...
 LORENZO: I need it.
(Launcelot comes on stage, dressed as a soldier.)
 LAUNCELOT: Good afternoon, gentlemen.
 SALERIO: Hello, soldier.
 JESSICA: Lorenzo, it's stealing!
 LORENZO: I'll pay it back. When he's dead.
(He pushes past her again, and rejoins the others.)
 LAUNCELOT: Good afternoon, Master Lorenzo.
 LORENZO: Good afternoon, soldier. Do I know you?
 LAUNCELOT: Does any man know any man, sir? But my consonance should not be unfamiliar to you.
 LORENZO: Launcelot! Our good old friend!
 GRATIANO: So they made a fighting man out of you, Launcelot.
 LAUNCELOT: No, sir, I serve a fighting man, and he fights well enough for the two of us.
 LORENZO: Who's that, Launcelot?
 LAUNCELOT: Miriam's brother, sir. Captain Othello. They say he'll be head of the army one day – and no-one deserves it more than the Moor
 GRATIANO: And does this fighting man know of your manoeuvres with his sister?
 LAUNCELOT: Heaven forbid, sir! If he did, I'd be less of a Launcelot than a Launcelittle.
 LORENZO: Come, friends, come, Launcelot. This calls for a celebration – which my father-in-law will kindly pay for.
 JESSICA: Lorenzo, please don't go drinking tonight.
(He waves to her as they go out laughing.)
 Have I deserved this?
(She goes out.)

Scene Two

Belmont. Portia, Nerissa, Miriam, all listening to Othello, young and uniformed.

OTHELLO: I'd tell of anters vast and deserts idle, rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven. But time's too short. Away I must to Venice.
 PORTIA: These are fascinating tales, Othello. One day I'd love to hear your whole life story.
 OTHELLO: Good madam, my life story's scarce begun. And little of this great world can I speak more than pertains to feats of broil and battle.

(Enter P.J. Appleby.)

APPLEBY: Excuse me, ma'am, I was wondering if you'd like the hedges cut straight or kinda wobbly.

MIRIAM: P.J., this is my brother Othello. Othello, this is my husband.

PORTIA: Come in, Mr Appleby.

APPLEBY: Well, I sure as dammit am glad to meet you. Miriam done told me all about you.

OTHELLO: And I'm most glad to meet my sister's husband, and father of my nephew in her womb.

MIRIAM: He's not the father, Othello.

OTHELLO: Not the father? Then he's not your husband?

MIRIAM: He is my husband. But he's not the father.

OTHELLO: Take heed, Miriam. These words would seem to smack of some dishonour.

APPLEBY: It's OK, Mr Othello. Miriam done told me all about it. Anyone can make a mistake.

OTHELLO: Give me the name of the father of the child.

MIRIAM: It doesn't matter any more, Othello.

OTHELLO: The name!

PORTIA: Othello, it's better as it is.

OTHELLO: Now by heaven, my blood begins my safer guides to rule, and passion, having my best judgement collid, assays to lead the way. Give me the name!

MIRIAM: Launcelot.

OTHELLO: Launcelot? The man you sent to serve me? Oh sister, sister, I give thanks to heaven our father and our mother are both dead, or else this shameful act would sure have killed them.

(He storms out.)

PORTIA: Go after him, Miriam, try to calm him down.

APPLEBY: I'll go too, ma'am. Come on, Miriam. *(They go out.)*

PORTIA: Now there, Nerissa, goes a man of honour.

NERISSA: Yes, madam.

PORTIA: That Moor has greater dignity, Nerissa, than all the men who walk the streets of Venice.

NERISSA: What will he do now, madam?

PORTIA: Maybe Launcelot will join the growing ranks of the unemployed.

NERISSA: You mean our husbands?

PORTIA: They're not unemployed! When they've finished drinking, gambling, whoring, they'll scarcely have a single hour for leisure.

NERISSA: Perhaps we shouldn't send them money, madam.

PORTIA: But if we don't, who knows, they might come home!

NERISSA: Can't we be rid of them?

PORTIA: Perhaps, Nerissa. A plan is forming which may free us yet from wifely burdens.

NERISSA: What plan is this, madam?

(Miriam and Appleby return.)

MIRIAM: Madam, my brother's gone.

APPLEBY: Done jumped on his horse and galloped off like he was six to four on.
PORTIA: Where's he going?
MIRIAM: To the traject, madam, to catch the ferry to Venice.
PORTIA: Truly a man of action. Come, Mr Appleby, shall we study our hedges, and see which should be straight and which should be kinda wobbly?

Scene Three

Venice. A street. Antonio, Bassanio and Shylock.

ANTONIO: Well, Shylock, you've recovered all your losses. So it would seem heaven is on your side.
SHYLOCK: It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.
ANTONIO: I'll remember that next time I spit on you.
SHYLOCK: Tubal!
(Tubal has come on stage, and Shylock goes to greet him.)
BASSANIO: Don't wait up tonight, Antonio. I'll be late home.
ANTONIO: Again, Bassanio? You're never at home. I've given up a fortune to save you and your friend from going to prison.
BASSANIO: I owe you everything, Antonio. Believe me, my love and gratitude are boundless as the air.
ANTONIO: Then stay at home!
BASSANIO: I gave my word. My friends depend on me.
ANTONIO: Am I not your friend?
BASSANIO: Antonio, you're my love! I'll stay at home tomorrow. If I can.
(He kisses him on the cheek. Antonio tries to embrace him, but he breaks free, smiles lovingly, and goes off. Antonio watches him go, then walks towards Shylock and Tubal, who are seated and deep in conversation. Antonio kicks Shylock, then spits at him before going off.)
TUBAL: Are you all right, Shylock?
SHYLOCK *(feeling his ribs)*: I have kicked him harder today than he has kicked me.
TUBAL: You did well to get back all your possessions, and to become one of us again. Chutzpah you've got, Shylock. Now, what's this place you were telling me of?
SHYLOCK: A place on the Rialto that will change the face of usury.
TUBAL: Explain.
SHYLOCK: Antonio buys goods and sells them at a profit, and is respected. We sell money at a profit, and we are hated. Why?
TUBAL: I don't know why.
SHYLOCK: Appearance, Tubal, appearance. The silks and spices hide the money. And so we shall hide the money.
TUBAL: Hide the money?
SHYLOCK: Behind the Venetian Finance Company.
TUBAL: Go on.

SHYLOCK: Your borrower enters the Venetian Finance Company. There is no Jew on the bare floor with bags of ducats, waiting to be kicked. No! There is a rich carpet, there is a desk, there is a pretty girl who listens to the customer's requirements, takes notes, smiles sweetly. Appearance, Tubal, appearance.

TUBAL: So who gives them the money?

SHYLOCK: The Company, Tubal. The mysterious "they". And bonds are signed not by Tubal or Chus or Shylock, but by the Manager, the Chairman, the President. Our customer does not look down, Tubal, he looks up, unsure of himself, respectful, grateful if we accept his application. Grateful to pay interest to such an impressive institution.

TUBAL: It might work.

SHYLOCK: The world is still deceived with ornament. We are not usurers, Tubal. We are bankers! Come, I'll show you the Venetian Finance Company.

TUBAL: This I must see.
(*They go out. Enter Lorenzo, Salerio, Solanio and Launcelot.*)

LORENZO: I can't do it myself. I'd be the first suspect.

SOLANIO: We could do it.

SALERIO: For a small fee.

SOLANIO: A large fee.

SALERIO: A large fee.

LORENZO: Or Launcelot could do it. You're a soldier, Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT: Oh no, sir. I've got the uniform, but I haven't got the heart.

LORENZO: Well, it's surer with two of you. He may be old, but he's tough. How large is a large fee?

SOLANIO: Considering how rich you'll be, Lorenzo...

SALERIO: Let's say three thousand ducats.

LORENZO: I can't pay you till after he's dead.

SOLANIO: Well...

SALERIO: Not that we don't trust you...

SOLANIO: But we'd like half in advance.

SALERIO: And the other half on...dispatch.

LORENZO: Where am I going to get three thousand ducats?

SALERIO: You'll have to borrow it.

SOLANIO: Borrow it from Shylock!
(*Raucous laughter.*)

SALERIO (*imitating Shylock*): Three thousand ducats. For what purpose?

SOLANIO: Getting rid of you, Daddy.

SALERIO (*still Shylock*): Could be a sound investment. (*More laughter.*)

LORENZO: I'll ask Antonio.

SALERIO: I hear Antonio's in trouble, since he had to return all Shylock's money to him.

SOLANIO: Well, ask around. There's plenty of money in Venice.

SALERIO: And when you come up with three thousand ducats, we'll come up with Shylock's head.
(*They go out.*)

Scene Four

Belmont. Portia and Nerissa.

PORTIA: By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.
NERISSA: And so is mine, madam.
PORTIA: For aught I see, those with husbands are as lonely as those with none.
NERISSA: At least those with none still have something to hope for, madam.
PORTIA: True, Nerissa. We were happier dreaming than we are waking.
NERISSA: Madam, you told me that you had a plan to free our leaden hearts from their gold chains.
PORTIA: I have, Nerissa. Now, do you remember, I swore an oath not to assist my suitors?
NERISSA: I swore it too.
PORTIA: Indeed. Well, I wrote a song, and it was sung while my hero read the caskets. Now listen carefully. (*She sings:*)

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourishèd?
Reply, reply.

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

NERISSA (*joining in*): Ding, dong, bell. Yes, I remember it, madam. But how will this help rid us of our husbands?
PORTIA: What is the message of the song, Nerissa?
NERISSA: Not to trust the eyes.
PORTIA: If you must choose 'twixt gold and silver and lead, but not trust the eyes...?
NERISSA: Oh madam, that was very naughty of you.
PORTIA: To absolve myself, Nerissa, from this sin, and also learn its legal implications, I've sent for my good cousin Bellario.
NERISSA: Pray heaven, madam, that he'll find you guilty.
PORTIA: And that my guilt will be your guilt as well.
NERISSA: Amen.
PORTIA: He'll be here shortly. (*Singing*): Ding, dong, bell.
(*They go out.*)

Scene Five

Venice. The Venetian Finance Company. Shylock and Lucia.

SHYLOCK: You know the questions?
LUCIA: Yes, sir.

SHYLOCK: I shall be listening. When you've asked the questions, you come to me, but you do not mention my name.

LUCIA: No, sir. I say I must consult the manager.
(Lorenzo comes on stage and knocks at the door.)

SHYLOCK: Our first customer!
(He hides, but is visible to the audience.)

LUCIA: Come in!
(Lorenzo enters.)
Good morning, sir.

LORENZO *(impressed:)* Good morning.

LUCIA: What can we do for you, sir?

LORENZO: Well, I've come about a loan.

LUCIA: Please take a seat. May I have your name and address?

LORENZO: Lorenzo, 14 Via d'Oro.

SHYLOCK: Lorenzo! Borrowing, not stealing!

LUCIA: And how much are you looking for, sir?

LORENZO: Three thousand ducats.

SHYLOCK: A good round sum.

LUCIA: And the purpose of the loan, sir?

LORENZO: It's a business investment.

LUCIA: May I ask what sort of business, sir?

SHYLOCK: If it's Lorenzo, it's fishy business.

LORENZO: I can't give you the details, but I can offer surety.

LUCIA: And what might that be, sir?

LORENZO: My father is a wealthy man.

LUCIA: Who is your father, sir?

LORENZO: His name is Shylock.

SHYLOCK: My boy, my boy, I fathered a goy!

LUCIA: You don't look Jewish.

LORENZO: Well, actually he's my father-in-law, but more like a real father, we're so close.

SHYLOCK: Closer than you think.

LUCIA: If your father is so wealthy, why doesn't he lend you the money himself?

SHYLOCK: Good question!

LORENZO: The investment's to be a surprise for him.

LUCIA: So he doesn't know about it?

LORENZO: No.

LUCIA: Then how can you be sure he'll act as guarantor?

SHYLOCK: The girl's a treasure!

LORENZO: I have his complete trust. He'll do anything I ask.

LUCIA: Thank you, Signior Lorenzo. I'll have to consult with the manager, so would you be so kind as to wait a few moments?

LORENZO: Yes, of course.
(Lucia goes to Shylock)

SHYLOCK: What a schlemiel!

LUCIA: I'll say no then.

SHYLOCK: Wait a moment, wait a moment, let him sweat for his answer.

LUCIA: What *does* he want the money for?

SHYLOCK: A Christmas present for his beloved father? No, Lucia, cards and bottles, that's Lorenzo's business.

LUCIA: So what shall I tell him?

SHYLOCK: Tell him that despite the high reputation of his father, the company must have full details of the investment.
(*Lucia returns to Lorenzo, who stands up.*)

LUCIA: Signior Lorenzo, I've talked with the manager, but I'm afraid we must have full details of the investment. It's company policy.

LORENZO: Could I speak to the manager myself?

LUCIA: Oh dear no, he's far too busy. But name the cause, and the money's yours.

LORENZO: I..I'm sworn to secrecy.

LUCIA: Then I'm so sorry, Signior Lorenzo. I wish we could have helped you.
(*She shakes hands with him and smiles sweetly as she ushers him out.*
At the same time, Antonio comes on stage.)

SHYLOCK (*emerging from his hiding place*): Beautifully done, Lucia. You sure you've got no Jewish blood in you?
(*Shylock and Lucia talk quietly together during the next dialogue.*)

LORENZO: Antonio!

ANTONIO: Lorenzo. You haven't seen Bassanio anywhere, have you?

LORENZO: Not since last night.

ANTONIO: He was with you last night, was he?

LORENZO: Well, not all night.

ANTONIO: Where did he go?

LORENZO: There was a girl...No, maybe not. I don't know, Antonio. I'm sorry.

ANTONIO: If you see him, tell him to come home. I must talk to him.

LORENZO: I'll tell him.

ANTONIO: Have you just come from the Finance Company?

LORENZO: Yes.

ANTONIO: What are they like?

LORENZO: They wouldn't grant me a loan. Are you going there?

ANTONIO: Rather them than the Jews.

LORENZO: Why do you need a loan?

ANTONIO: Because of Shylock. I returned his money to save Bassanio from going to prison. Now Shylock has it all, Bassanio's gone, and I, who did no wrong, am left with nothing.

LORENZO: Shylock has ruined you.

ANTONIO: We should have hanged him.

LORENZO: We could still hang him.

ANTONIO: How?

LORENZO: You want him dead?

ANTONIO: I'd buy the rope myself if we could hang him.

LORENZO: Antonio, I need three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO: For what, Lorenzo?

LORENZO: Just to have Shylock hanged.

ANTONIO (*staring at Lorenzo for a moment*): Of course, you'll be a rich man when he dies.

LORENZO: I'll pay you double.

ANTONIO: I'm no usurer. To have him hanged...Is it an evil deed, to hang a villain? If I can get the money, you shall have it, and pay me back the principal – no more. But we have never had this conversation. I have no knowledge of your purposes. Come to my house in an hour's time, Lorenzo.

LORENZO: I shall be waiting, good Antonio.
(*Lorenzo goes off. Antonio knocks at the door of the Finance Company. Shylock signals to Lucia, and hides again.*)

LUCIA: Come in. (*Antonio enters.*) Good morning, sir.

ANTONIO: Good morning.

LUCIA: Please, take a seat. What can we do for you?

ANTONIO: I've come for a loan.

LUCIA: Of course. May I have your name and address?

ANTONIO: Antonio, 26 via Felice.

LUCIA (*writing*): ...Felice. And how much is the loan you require?

ANTONIO: Six thousand ducats for a year.

LUCIA: The purpose of the loan?

ANTONIO: To purchase two ships and cargoes of food and textiles.

LUCIA: Do you have any surety, sir?

ANTONIO: I have three ships.

LUCIA: We shall, of course, need evidence of their value and of your ownership.

ANTONIO: I can supply evidence.

LUCIA: Very well, sir. If you'll just wait a few moments, I'll consult the manager.
(*She goes to Shylock.*)

SHYLOCK: He's my worst enemy, but a sound man. We shall grant this loan, Lucia, on security of his ships, his goods, and his house.

LUCIA: The rate of interest?

SHYLOCK: For one year? Ten per cent. And if he fails again, I take everything.
(*Lucia returns to Antonio.*)

LUCIA: I'm pleased to tell you, Signior Antonio, that the Company have granted your application. However, the surety will be your ships, your goods, and your house.

ANTONIO: My house? But the value of all those is far in excess...

LUCIA: The Company must safeguard the interests of its investors. The rate will be ten per cent, and as soon as you supply evidence of your securities, we'll advance you six thousand ducats. Shall we say four o'clock tomorrow afternoon?

ANTONIO: Yes. Thank you.

LUCIA: It's been a pleasure to do business with you, Signior Antonio. Till tomorrow then.
(*She shakes hands with him and smiles sweetly as she ushers him out. He leaves the stage, while Shylock joins Lucia.*)

SHYLOCK: Good, Lucia, good. Now let us pray that all his ships will sink. Here's a ducat for you, Lucia. Treat yourself to a cassata.

ACT FIVE

Scene One

Belmont. Portia, Nerissa, Bellario, Balthazar.

BELLARIO: Well, by the terms of your father's will, Portia, it looks bad. Read it once more, Balthazar.

BALTHAZAR (*reading*): "If it be proved that Portia doth betray by word or deed or by any other manner which of the caskets containeth her portrait the test shall be declared invalid and Portia shall on pain of losing her inheritance swear never to marry."

BELLARIO: Of course it was only meant as a deterrent.

PORTIA: But can we say the marriage is invalid?

BELLARIO: The question is: does the wording cover proof that's given retrospectively?

BALTHAZAR: The will is badly worded.

PORTIA: Who drew it up?

BELLARIO: I did. (*To Balthazar:*) No need for you to look so smug. It was your job to spot clues like the song.

PORTIA: Cousin Bellario, all I wish to know is if the marriage is or isn't valid.

BELLARIO: It does look bad. Balthazar, your view?

BALTHAZAR: I must admit, I didn't spot the clue, but clue it was, so marriage it is not.

BELLARIO: Portia, I fear you married Bananio...

PORTIA: Bassanio.

BELLARIO: ...You married Bassanio against the express terms of your father's will.

PORTIA: The marriage is invalid?

BELLARIO: I fear so.

PORTIA: Good.

BELLARIO: Good?

PORTIA: Good! That's why I sent for you.

BELLARIO: Oh, I see! You wanted an annulment!

BALTHAZAR: But Portia, now you must swear never to marry, or forfeit your estate.

PORTIA: I'll swear with pleasure.

NERISSA: Doctor Bellario, I agreed to marry Gratiano if Bassanio chose right. Could my marriage also be invalid?

BELLARIO: Do you have a witness to this agreement?

BALTHAZAR: Yes, me. I thought then what a toad she was.

NERISSA: I'm not a toad!

BALTHAZAR: Sucking up to the mistress.

NERISSA: Well rather a toad than a snake in the grass like you! You never told us you were studying law, and spying on us, taking secret notes.

PORTIA: Is Nerissa's marriage valid or not?

BELLARIO (*to Balthazar*): The same conditions?
 BALTHAZAR: Implicit in her agreement.
 BELLARIO: (*to Portia*): Nerissa's marriage must also be annulled.
 PORTIA: Splendid.
 NERISSA: I too swear never to marry.
 PORTIA: Well done, Nerissa.
 BALTHAZAR: Toad!
 PORTIA: Cousin Bellario, since I have no husband, does my non-husband have any claim on me?
 BELLARIO: None whatsoever.
 PORTIA: Then I'll end his allowance.
 NERISSA: And I'll end my allowance to Gratiano.
 PORTIA: Gentlemen, you've proved the old adage wrong. What's done can be undone. Shall we go to dinner?
 (*Portia and Nerissa go out arm in arm, followed by Bellario and Balthazar, hand in hand.*)

Scene Two

Venice. A street at night. Solanio and Salerio.

SOLANIO: You nervous, Salerio?
 SALERIO: Yes. How about you, Solanio?
 SOLANIO: Petrified.
 SALERIO: Just be careful with your knife. Make sure it's him you stab and not me.
 (*The sound of someone humming 'Chava Nagila'.*)
 Near approaches the subject of our watch.
 (*A figure enters.*)
 SALERIO: It's him!
 SOLANIO: Give the word.
 SALERIO: Now!
 (*They jump on him, and he just has time to cry "Help! Murder!" before they strike him down. He dies.*)
 SOLANIO: That's it.
 SALERIO: We've done it, Solanio!
 SOLANIO: Exit Shylock.
 SALERIO: Enter three thousand ducats.
 SOLANIO: Let's go and tell Lorenzo.
 SALERIO: Wait! It has to look like a robbery.
 (*They search the body.*)
 Damned Jews always keep their money hidden.
 SOLANIO: I've got his rings.
 SALERIO: They'll do.
 SOLANIO: Come on, then.
 (*They go out. The lights come up slowly. Launcelot enters.*)
 LAUNCELOT: Hullo, what's this? A dead corpuscle? A Jewish dead corpuscle, by the look of it. Solanio and Salerio's work. Let's see.

(He kneels beside the body, and starts to turn it over just as Othello enters.)

OTHELLO: Launcelot!

(Launcelot springs to attention and salutes.)

LAUNCELOT: Captain Othello, sir. I thought you was in Belmont.

OTHELLO: I was, but urgent business brings me here.

(He sees the body.)

Dost thou add murder to thine other crimes?

LAUNCELOT: Murder, sir? Oh no, sir, I just found this body prostrate here on the ground, sir.

OTHELLO: And yet I see there's blood upon thy hands.

LAUNCELOT: Just seeing who it is, sir.

OTHELLO: Blood on thy hands, and sin upon thy soul.

LAUNCELOT: Sin on my soul, sir?

OTHELLO: Didst not seduce my sister in Belmont?

LAUNCELOT: Your sister, sir?

OTHELLO: My sister, sir!

LAUNCELOT: In Belmont, sir?

OTHELLO: In Belmont, sir. What needs this iterance, man? My sister Miriam's with child by thee!

(He seizes Launcelot by the throat.)

LAUNCELOT: No, sir, it's all a mistake!

OTHELLO: The mistake was thine, and thou'lt be punished for it.

LAUNCELOT: Please, captain! This body, this body here...

OTHELLO: What of it?

LAUNCELOT: I know who it is, sir, and I know who killed him. I'll be needed in court to identify the purple traitors.

(Othello loosens his hold.)

OTHELLO: Purple traitors?

LAUNCELOT: Those who purpletraited the murder, sir.

OTHELLO: Thou knowst who did commit this murderous deed?

LAUNCELOT: I do, sir.

OTHELLO: The Duke must hear of this. Woe if thou liest! Come, go with me, and help me bear the body to a resting-place more sanctified than this.

LAUNCELOT: He's only a Jew, sir.

OTHELLO: Hath not a Jew a soul?

(They lift the body.)

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

LAUNCELOT: I understand, sir. *(To audience):* Physic?

(They carry the body out.)

Scene Three

Another street in Venice. Lorenzo, Solanio, Salerio.

LORENZO: No, I spent the night at Gratiano's. He'll witness I was with him. Well done, friends! I shall now be a rich man!

SOLANIO: And so shall we. You owe us another fifteen hundred ducats.
(Enter Antonio.)

LORENZO: Here comes Antonio with the money. Antonio, great news! Solanio and Salerio have done the deed. Shylock is dead!

ANTONIO: Would I could answer this comfort with the like. You haven't seen Bassanio anywhere, have you?

LORENZO: Not for some days. I know he wasn't well. I thought he was at home with you, Antonio.

ANTONIO: He's not been home for weeks! He leaves us all! Portia's taken steps to annul the marriage and stop his allowance.

LORENZO: What?

ANTONIO: I have to find him.

SALERIO: Ahem, before you go, Antonio, there's fifteen hundred ducats owing to us.

ANTONIO: I have your money...

(He breaks off as Shylock and Jessica come on stage. Jessica is heavily pregnant.)

SHYLOCK: Come, Jessica, slow but sure.

(Salerio screams, Solanio and Lorenzo gasp.)

Why do you look so shocked, Lorenzo? You don't recognize your wife?

LORENZO: We hadn't expected to see you...so early.

JESSICA: Where were you last night, Lorenzo?

LORENZO: At Gratiano's, dearest. We had a late business meeting.

SHYLOCK: Signior Antonio, I hear you're buying more ships to tempt the rocks.

ANTONIO: You're well informed, Shylock.

SHYLOCK: I would have lent you the money myself.

ANTONIO: The days of the usurers are numbered, Shylock. Go back to the sewers of the Grand Canal.

SHYLOCK: Well may you prosper, Signior. Come, Jessica. *(To Lorenzo):* Your wife is going to see the doctor, but like Signior Antonio, you take no interest.
(Shylock and Jessica go out.)

LORENZO: You said you'd killed him!

SOLANIO: We did kill him!

SALERIO: I stuck the blade in a dozen times!

ANTONIO: The Jew's the very devil incarnate.

(Enter Othello, Launcelot, and two constables.)

LAUNCELOT: That's them, captain.

OTHELLO *(to the constables):* Arrest these men. They're to be charged with murder.

SALERIO: Murder?

SOLANIO: Nobody's been murdered. Shylock left here just a moment ago.

LAUNCELOT: Shylock may have done. It's Tubal you murdered.

LORENZO: Tubal?

SALERIO: We killed Tubal?
SOLANIO: Sh, Salerio! We didn't kill anybody!
LORENZO: You fools, you fools, you've killed the wrong Jew!
SALERIO: These Jews all look alike!
SOLANIO: Take your hands off me!
(The constables have seized Solanio and Salerio, and Othello now takes hold of Lorenzo.)

LORENZO: What's this got to do with me?
OTHELLO: 'Twas you that hired them, you that set them on.
LORENZO: I was at Gratiano's house when it happened.
OTHELLO: Then prove your innocence before the Duke.
LORENZO: You let go of me, you black bastard!
OTHELLO: In Aleppo once I saw a turban'd Turk beat a Venetian and traduce the state. I took by the throat the circumcisèd dog and smote him thus.
(He strikes Lorenzo to the ground.)
Shall I smite thee again?
(Lorenzo, badly frightened, scrambles to his feet submissively.)
Come, Launcelot, you shall not stay behind. There are scores to settle yet 'twixt thee and me.

LAUNCELOT: I'm right behind you, captain.
OTHELLO *(indicating Antonio)*: And what of this man. Is he, too, involved?
LAUNCELOT: This is Antonio, sir, a very respectable gentleman.
OTHELLO: Men of respect should keep clear company.
(They all go out, except Antonio.)

BASSANIO *(hidden)*: Pssst! Antonio!
(Antonio looks round.)
I'm over here, Antonio.

ANTONIO: Bassanio? Where are you?
BASSANIO: Antonio, I need help!
ANTONIO: Let me see you.
BASSANIO: No.
ANTONIO: Where have you been? How can you do this to me, Bassanio, after all that I have done for you?

BASSANIO: Antonio, I'm ill.
ANTONIO: I want to see you!
BASSANIO: No, Antonio!
ANTONIO: Then I'll go.
BASSANIO: All right.
(Bassanio emerges from his hiding-place. He has lost his hair, and his mouth is covered with ulcers. Antonio looks at him in horror.)

ANTONIO: Bassanio!
BASSANIO: I can be cured, Antonio. I know a doctor practising in Florence who uses mercury, but I need money. Tell Portia she must send three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO: Portia will send you no more money.
BASSANIO: Why?

ANTONIO: She's seeking an annulment of your marriage.
BASSANIO: Annulment?
ANTONIO: She broke the terms of her father's will.
BASSANIO: No!
ANTONIO: Doctor Bellario has confirmed it.
BASSANIO: Then I must go to Belmont. There's no other way. Antonio, I beg two favours of you, and then I'll never beg from you again. Lend me the money to get me back to Belmont. And ask Gratiano if he'll accompany me.
ANTONIO: I'll do it, in the name of our past love. But I never want to see your face again.
BASSANIO: I understand. And I am justly punished.
(*They go out.*)

Scene Four

Belmont. Portia, Nerissa, Bellario and Balthazar.

PORTIA: Cousin Bellario, I shall be for ever in your debt.
NERISSA: And so shall I, Bellario.
BELLARIO: He is well paid that is well satisfied, and I delivering you am satisfied. But I confess I'm shocked by this decision.
PORTIA: I've given it much thought. So has Nerissa. And both of us are sure this is the way.
BELLARIO: A strange way. But if you change your mind...
(*Enter Stephano.*)
STEPHANO: Madam.
PORTIA: What is it, Stephano?
STEPHANO: If you please, the Lady Nerissa's husband's at the door.
NERISSA: My husband?
PORTIA: Your ex-husband.
NERISSA: This means trouble.
PORTIA: He always did mean trouble. Is he alone?
STEPHANO: No, madam. He's accompanied by a stranger.
PORTIA: Show them in, Stephano, but stay near.
(*Stephano goes out.*)
BELLARIO: Shall we stay too?
PORTIA: Yes, please. We might well need the law's authority, and four male arms.
(*Stephano returns with Gratiano and Bassanio, whose face is hidden under the cowl of his cloak.*)
GRATIANO (*waving a piece of paper*): What the hell's the meaning of this nonsense? No marriage, no allowance? You can't do it!
NERISSA: I can and have.
GRATIANO: You and I are married!
NERISSA: Were married.
PORTIA: Good afternoon, Gratiano.
GRATIANO: What?

PORTIA: So nice to see you back in Belmont, observing all the little courtesies. Won't you introduce us to your friend?

GRATIANO: My friend? Not yet. The first thing we must do is sort out this absurd annulment business.

PORTIA: Put your mind at rest. It's all been sorted. Doctor Bellario.

BELLARIO: Well, her Ladyship gave to the Lord Bassanio a clue about the caskets, thereby contravening her father's will, and so both test and marriage are made invalid.

BASSANIO: She never gave me a clue!

PORTIA: Bassanio? Why are you covered up?
(*She goes towards him. He recoils.*)

BASSANIO: Leave me alone.

PORTIA: Oh, I shall, Bassanio.

BASSANIO: Portia, it isn't true! There were no clues!

PORTIA: I have witnesses to prove there were.

BASSANIO: They're lying! Gratiano, tell him!

GRATIANO (*to Bellario*): I heard every word. I swear to you, there was no hint, or even a hint of a hint.

PORTIA (*speaking, initially fast*): Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourishèd?
Reply, reply.

(*slowly*): It is engender'd in the eyes,
With gazing fed; (*fast*): and fancy dies...
et cetera et cetera. Does it ring a ding dong bell?

GRATIANO: Was it the song?

PORTIA: Bassanio remembers. Don't you, Bassanio?

BASSANIO: I never listened. I swear, I never listened!

PORTIA: When the song ended, what were your first words? "So may the outward shows be least themselves." That was how I knew you'd got the message.

BASSANIO: I didn't hear it!

BELLARIO: Lord Bassanio, whether you heard or not is irrelevant. It is the clue that contravenes the will.

GRATIANO: Why should this mean that I'm not married?

BELLARIO: Your marriage too depended on the caskets.

PORTIA: It may console you, dear Bassanio, that I must now swear never to marry. You are my very first and final husband, and ex-husband.

NERISSA: You, my dear Gratiano, are the first and last man I shall marry, and unmarry.

PORTIA: Nerissa and myself are entering a convent, where we'll live a peaceful life of prayer and contemplation.

GRATIANO (*with a flash of hope*): A convent? Then who'll take care of Belmont?

PORTIA: Before you came, I signed a document committing the care and management of Belmont...Stephano, fetch your new master and mistress.

STEPHANO: Yes, madam. (*He goes out.*)

BASSANIO: Portia, I'm in trouble.
 PORTIA: Yes, you are.
 BASSANIO: I'm ill. I need money to go to Florence. A doctor that I know may have a cure.
 PORTIA: This is a new story.
 BASSANIO: Portia, it's true!
(Stephano returns with Appleby and Miriam, who is heavily pregnant.)
 PORTIA: Ah, the new master and mistress of Belmont.
 GRATIANO: The bloody fortune-hunter!
 APPLEBY: Well, if it ain't my old friend Graitiano!
 BASSANIO: Portia, why have you done this?
 PORTIA: Because I think it'll make me happy.
 BASSANIO: But why him?
 PORTIA: Because, Bassanio, in spite of all his faults, P.J. Appleby is a nice man. P.J. and Miriam, please take Doctor Bellario and Doctor Balthazar to the salon for tea, while Nerissa and I bid farewell to our ex-husbands.
 MIRIAM: Yes, madam.
 APPLEBY: It'll be a pleasure. Nice to've seen you again, Graitiano.
 GRATIANO: Let's have a game afterwards, P.J., like in the old days.
 APPLEBY: Oh no, sir, I don't do that kinda thing no more. No cards, no dice, no alcohol. Rules o' the house.
 MIRIAM: This way, gentlemen.
 APPLEBY: You go easy, Miriam. Here, take my arm.
(Appleby and Miriam go out with Bellario and Balthazar.)
 BASSANIO (*removing his hood*): I'm sorry I have to do this to you, Portia.
(Nerissa gasps with horror and recoils. Portia stands firm.)
 NERISSA: What is it?
 GRATIANO: It's the bloody pox, that's what it is.
 BASSANIO: I know it's my own fault. But Portia, I beg you to help me.
 PORTIA: I could hardly call myself a Christian if I didn't. Poor Bassanio.
(She goes to him and gently touches his head.)
 Doctor Bellario will draw up a deed of gift. And you'll both dine with us for one last time.
 BASSANIO (*kneeling*): Thank you, Portia.
 PORTIA: Don't kneel. It's not becoming.
(She takes his hand to raise him. He kisses it and rises to his feet.)
 Cover your head. We don't want to frighten the servants.
(They all go out.)

Scene Five

Venice. The court. The Duke, Othello, Launcelot, Lorenzo, Salerio, Solanio, Shylock, Antonio, attendants.

DUKE: Lorenzo, Salerio and Solanio, you are accused of conspiring to murder the Jew Shylock. Salerio and Solanio, you are accused of murdering the Jew Tubal. How do you plead?

(She does so.)

- DUKE: Antonio, according to this contract, six thousand ducats is the sum you borrowed.
- ANTONIO: It's true, your Grace. That was the sum I needed so I could purchase two ships and their cargoes.
- SHYLOCK: But, your Grace, I'm reliably informed Antonio has purchased just one ship. Why would he borrow twice the sum required? Why would he pay Solanio and Salerio? And pay them in the presence of Lorenzo, who was refused a loan by the Finance Company?
- DUKE: Antonio, can you explain this to us?
- ANTONIO: Your Grace, I do not have an explanation.
- DUKE: On oath, did you conspire to murder Shylock?
- ANTONIO *(after pause)*: I did, your Grace.
- SHYLOCK: I have you on the hip.
- ANTONIO: We should have hanged you.
- SHYLOCK: Your Grace, a man is dead. A good and honest man, a family man. And in his name, I ask the court for justice.
- DUKE: For murder and conspiracy to murder, the penalty for all concerned is death. Shylock, what mercy can you render them?
- SHYLOCK: I pardon them their lives before they ask it. Your Grace, I understand the warlike Turks now threaten Cyprus, and Captain Othello here has been deputed to defend the island.
- DUKE: You're very well informed, Shylock.
- SHYLOCK: Your Grace, in my line of work I have to be well informed. Lorenzo and Solanio and Salerio shall go with Captain Othello to the island to fight for Venice. And they shall continue to serve the army till they can serve no more. I also ask that Lorenzo and my daughter should be divorced at once, as she has requested.
- DUKE: This shall be done. Othello, they are yours.
- OTHELLO: Then they shall be the first to face the Turks, heading our strike, along with Launcelot.
- LAUNCELOT: Me, sir?
- OTHELLO: You, sir.
- LAUNCELOT: What, to face the Turks?
- OTHELLO: Thy face alone will make their ships turn turtle.
- DUKE: Then be it so. Shylock, what of Antonio?
- SHYLOCK: It is enacted in the laws of Venice, if it be proved against an alien that by direct or indirect attempts he seek the life of any citizen, the party 'gainst the which he doth contrive shall seize one half his goods; the other half comes to the privy coffer of the state. My life, your Grace, is worth as much to me as his to him. The law should shield us both.
- DUKE: Then half Antonio's goods must go to Shylock. The other half comes to the general state.
- SHYLOCK: I ask the state to sacrifice its claim, as I will waive my own. Let all his goods go to the family of my dear friend Tubal.
- DUKE: It shall be done.

SHYLOCK: One thing provided more: that, for this favour, he do record a gift, here in the court, of all he dies possessed, unto my daughter and her newborn son. I'd also thought he should become a Jew, but we have learned your Grace, through pain and grief, you cannot force a mind into belief.

DUKE: Are you content, Antonio?

ANTONIO (*barely audible*): I am content.
(*Enter Gratiano.*)

DUKE: Gratiano, you come at a time of sadness.

GRATIANO: Your Grace, I've heard the news. I bring more sadness. Bassanio is dead.

DUKE: Sad news indeed.

GRATIANO: When dying he begged Antonio to forgive him.
(*Antonio weeps quietly, and nods his head.*)

DUKE: The business of the day is ended now. Captain Othello, the prisoners are yours. Antonio, you must write the deed of gift.

ANTONIO: I am not well. Send the deed after me, and I will sign it.

DUKE: Get thee gone, but do it. There is no cause for joy at this sad hour. Justice should be sweet. This taste is sour.
(*He nods to the court, and everyone bows as he goes out, followed by the attendants.*)

SHYLOCK: Remind me, Lucia, to give you a bonus this month.

LUCIA: Thank you, sir.

SHYLOCK: Just a little bonus. All things within moderation.

LUCIA: Yes, sir.

SHYLOCK: Now hurry back to work. We mustn't lose custom.
(*She goes out.*)

What a treasure! (*To Othello*): I thank you for your testimony, sir. Without your help, I would have lost my case.

OTHELLO: I ever did uphold the cause of justice. Take them to the harbour, Launcelot. We shall be under sail and gone tonight.

LAUNCELOT: Fall in! Come on! One behind the other.
(*They line up.*)

Begging your pardon, sir, but could I have permission to desert?

OTHELLO: Refused.

LAUNCELOT: Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Attention! With both feet, quick march! Left, right, left right...
(*As the prisoners draw level with Shylock, Lorenzo stops. There is a moment's pause, then Lorenzo spits on him.*)

No doodling there. Left, right, left, right, left right.
(*He marches off with Lorenzo, Salerio and Solanio.*)

ANTONIO: Help me, Gratiano.

GRATIANO: Oh Antonio, if these are the rewards God has in store for all our sins, then I shall sin no more.
(*He helps Antonio. They too must pass Shylock. Antonio stops for a moment, looks at Shylock, says nothing, and goes out with Gratiano.*)

SHYLOCK: Will you sup with me tonight, Captain Othello?

OTHELLO: I thank you, but I must away at once. Besides, the newborn child will fill your house.

SHYLOCK: My first grandson. I've never felt so proud. Are you yourself married, sir?

OTHELLO: No, no, I have not those soft parts of conversation that chamberers have. A soldier like myself has no time to study the arts of courtship.

SHYLOCK: Ah, there's no joy like the joy of family.

OTHELLO: Well, may your grandson bring you happiness.

SHYLOCK: One day perhaps my grandson will be famous.

OTHELLO: Tell me his name, that I may remember him.

SHYLOCK: Yes, remember the name. He's called Iago.

(They go out. The curtain falls.)

The End

