

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Written by William Shakespeare

Adapted by Dale Ahlquist

Cast of Characters

5 Females; 13 Males; 3 Either

<u>ANTONIO:</u>	A merchant of Venice.
<u>BASSANIO:</u>	His friend.
<u>GRATIANO:</u>	Friend of Antonio and Bassanio.
<u>SOLANIO:</u>	Friend of Antonio and Bassanio.
<u>SALARINO:</u>	Friend of Antonio and Bassanio.
<u>LORENZO:</u>	Friend of Antonio and Bassanio.
<u>PORTIA:</u>	A rich heiress.
<u>NERISSA:</u>	Her waiting-maid.
<u>EDMEA:</u>	Friend of Portia.
<u>SHYLOCK:</u>	A Jewish moneylender.
<u>JESSICA:</u>	Daughter of Shylock.
<u>TUBAL:</u>	Another Jewish moneylender.
<u>LAUNCELOT GOBBO:</u>	A clown, servant to Shylock and then to Bassiano.
<u>OLD GOBBO:</u>	Father of Launcelot.
<u>PRINCE OF MOROCCO:</u>	A suitor to Portia.
<u>PRINCE OF ARAGON:</u>	A suitor to Portia.
<u>DUCHESS OF VENICE</u>	
<u>SALERIO:</u>	Officer of the Duchess.
<u>CLERK*</u>	
<u>SERVANTS*</u>	
<u>JAILER*</u>	

* denotes character that may be played by either male or female — minor editing is permitted for this purpose only

Scene Breakdown

ACT I

Scene 1 – Venice. A Street

Scene 2 – Belmont. A Room in Portia's House

Scene 3 – Venice. A Public Place

ACT II

Scene 1 – Belmont. A Room in Portia's House

Scene 2 – Venice. A Street

Scene 3 – A Room in Shylock's House

Scene 4 – Venice. A Street

Scene 5 – Before Shylock's House

Scene 6 – The Same

Scene 7 – Belmont. A Room in Portia's House

Scene 8 – Venice. A Street

Scene 9 – Belmont. A Room in Portia's House

ACT III

Scene 1 – Venice. A Street

Scene 2 – Belmont. A Room in Portia's House

Scene 3 – Venice. A Street

Scene 4 – Belmont. A Room in Portia's House

Scene 5 – A Garden

ACT IV

Scene 1 – Venice. A Court of Justice

Scene 2 – A Street

ACT V

Scene 1 – Belmont. Avenue to Portia's House

Approximate Length

120 minutes

Time

16th cent.

Place

Venice, Italy

ACT I
Scene 1

Setting: Venice. A street.

At Rise: Enter ANTONIO, SALARINO, and SOLANIO.

ANTONIO

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.
It wearies me, you say it wearies you.
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn.
and such a want-wit sadness makes of me
that I have much ado to know myself.

SALARINO

Your mind is tossing on the ocean,
Where your ships sail, like the pageants of the sea.

SOLANIO

Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth,
The better part of my affections would
Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still
Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind,
And every object that might make me fear
Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt
Would make me sad.

SALARINO

My wind cooling my broth
Would blow me to an ague, when I thought
What harm a wind too great at sea might do.
I should not see the sandy hourglass run
But I should think of shallows and of flats,
And see my wealthy *Andrew* dock'd in sand,
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs
To kiss her burial. Should I go to church
And see the holy edifice of stone
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,
And, in a word, but even now worth this
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought

That such a thing bechanced would make me sad?
But tell not me: I know Antonio
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

ANTONIO

Believe me, no. I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year:
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

SALARINO

Why, then you are in love.

ANTONIO

Fie, fie!

SALARINO

Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad,
Because you are not merry; and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry
Because you are not sad.

(Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO)

SOLANIO

Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,
Gratiano, and Lorenzo. Fare you well.
We leave you now with better company.

SALARINO

I would have stayed till I had made you merry,
If worthier friends had not prevented me.

ANTONIO

Your worth is very dear in my regard.
I take it, your own business calls on you
And you embrace th' occasion to depart.

SALARINO

Good morrow, my good lords.

BASSANIO

Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? Say, when?
You grow exceeding strange. Must it be so?

SALARINO

We'll make our leasures to attend on yours.

(Exit SALARINO and SOLANIO)

LORENZO

My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio,
We two will leave you. But at dinner time
I pray you have in mind where we must meet.

BASSANIO

I will not fail you.

GRATIANO

You look not well, Signior Antonio.
You have too much respect upon the world.
They lose it that do buy it with much care.
Believe me, you are marvelously changed.

ANTONIO

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano,
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.

GRATIANO

Let me play the fool.
With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
And let my liver rather heat with wine
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
Why should a man, whose blood is warm within
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?
Fish not, with this melancholy bait, Antonio.—
Come, good Lorenzo.—Farewell awhile.
I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

LORENZO

Well, we will leave you then till dinner time.
I must be one of these same dumb wise men,
For Gratiano never lets me speak.

GRATIANO

Well, keep me company but two years more,
Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

ANTONIO

Farewell. I'll grow a talker for this gear.

(Exit GRATIANO and LORENZO)

ANTONIO

Is that anything now?

BASSANIO

Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search.

ANTONIO

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

BASSANIO

'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have disabled mine estate. My chief care
Is to come fairly off from the great debts
Wherein my time something too prodigal
Hath left me gaged. To you, Antonio,
I owe the most, in money and in love,
And from your love I have a warranty
To unburden all my plots and purposes
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

ANTONIO

I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;
And if it stand, as you yourself still do,
Within the eye of honor, be assured
My purse, my person, my extremest means,
Lie all unlocked to your occasions.

BASSANIO

I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,
That which I owe is lost. But if you please...

ANTONIO

Do but say to me what I should do
That in your knowledge may by me be done,
And I am prest unto it. Therefore speak.

BASSANIO

In Belmont is a lady richly left,

And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues. Sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages.
Her name is Portia. Nor is the wide world
Ignorant of her worth, for the four winds blow in
From every coast renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece.
And many Jasons come in quest of her.
O my Antonio, had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind presages me such thrift
That I should questionless be fortunate!

ANTONIO

Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
Neither have I money nor commodity
To raise a present sum. Therefore go forth:
Try what my credit can in Venice do;
That shall be racked even to the uttermost
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
Where money is, and I no question make
To have it of my trust, or for my sake.

(Exit ANTONIO and BASSANIO)

Scene 2

Setting: Belmont. A room in Portia's house.

At Rise: Enter PORTIA, EDMEA, and NERISSA.

PORTIA

By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.

NERISSA

You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are. And yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness therefore, to be seated in the mean. Superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

PORTIA

Good sentences, and well pronounced.

NERISSA

They would be better if well followed.

EDMEA

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions. I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow her own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband.

PORTIA

O me, Edmea, the word "choose!" I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike. So is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?

NERISSA

Your father was ever virtuous, and holy men at their death have good inspirations. Therefore the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will no doubt never be chosen by any rightly but one who you shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

PORTIA

I pray thee, overname them, and as thou namest them, I will describe them.

EDMEA

Nay, *I* will describe them, for I know as well as thee what thou'st think of them and thine affection.

PORTIA

Ah, very well.

NERISSA

First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

EDMEA

Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse, and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself. I am much afeard my lady his mother played false with a smith.

NERISSA

Then there is the County Palatine.

EDMEA

He doth nothing but frown, as who should say "If you will not have me, choose." He hears merry tales and smiles not. I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. She had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth than to either of these two!

NERISSA

How say you by the French lord, Monsieur le Bon?

EDMEA

God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker, but, he!—why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan's, a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine. He is every man in no man. If a throstle sing, he falls straight a-capering. He will fence with his own shadow. If she should marry him, she should marry twenty husbands! If he would despise her, she would forgive him, for if he love her to madness, she shall never requite him.

PORTIA

It is well said!

NERISSA

What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

EDMEA

You know she says nothing to him, for he understands not her, nor she him. He hath neither

Latin, French, nor Italian. He is a proper man's picture, but alas, who can converse with a dumb show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behavior everywhere.

NERISSA

How likes she the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?

EDMEA

Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk. When he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast.

NERISSA

(To PORTIA)

If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will if you should refuse to accept him.

PORTIA

Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee set a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary casket, for if the devil be within and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa, ere I'll be married to a sponge.

NERISSA

You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords. They have acquainted me with their determinations, which is, indeed, to return to their home and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition depending on the caskets.

EDMEA

If she live to be as old as Sibylla, she will die as chaste as Diana, unless she be obtained by the manner of her father's will.

PORTIA

I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

NERISSA

Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian—a scholar and a soldier—that came hither in company of the Marquis of Montferrat?

EDMEA

No.

PORTIA

Yes! Yes, it was Bassanio, as I think he was so called.

NERISSA

True, madam. He, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a fair lady.

PORTIA

I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

(Enter a SERVANT)

How now, what news?

SERVANT

The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave. And there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the Prince his master will be here tonight.

PORTIA

If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach. If he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me.

Come, Nerissa, Edmea, go before.

Whiles we shut the gates upon one wooer, another knocks at the door.

(Exit PORTIA, NERISSA, EDMEA, and SERVANT)

Scene 3

Setting: Venice. A public place.

At Rise: Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK.

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats, well.

BASSANIO

Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK

For three months, well.

BASSANIO

For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

SHYLOCK

Antonio shall become bound, well.

BASSANIO

Shall I know your answer?

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

BASSANIO

Your answer to that?

SHYLOCK

Antonio is a good man.

BASSANIO

Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK

Oh, no, no, no, no! My meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies. I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land-rats and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves—I mean pirates—and then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand ducats. I think I may take his bond.

BASSANIO

Be assured you may.

SHYLOCK

I will be assured I may. And that I may be assured, I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

BASSANIO

If it please you to dine with us.

SHYLOCK

Yes, to smell pork! To eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into! I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.—What news on the Rialto?—Who is he comes here?

(Enter ANTONIO)

BASSANIO

This is Signior Antonio.

SHYLOCK

(Aside)

How like a fawning publican he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian,
But more for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
On me, my bargains and my well-won thrift,
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe
If I forgive him!

BASSANIO

Shylock, do you hear?

SHYLOCK

I am debating of my present store,
And, by the near guess of my memory,
I cannot instantly raise up the gross
Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?
Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
Will furnish me. But soft, how many months
Do you desire?

(To ANTONIO)

Rest you fair, good signior!
Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

ANTONIO

Shylock, although I neither lend nor borrow
By taking nor by giving of excess,
Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,
I'll break a custom.

(To BASSANIO)

Is he yet possessed
How much you would?

SHYLOCK

Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO

And for three months.

SHYLOCK

I had forgot—three months.

(To BASSANIO)

You told me so.
Well then, your bond. And let me see—but hear you:
Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow
Upon advantage.

ANTONIO

I do never use it.

SHYLOCK

When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep—
This Jacob from our holy Abram was
(As his wise mother wrought in his behalf)
The third possessor; ay, he was the third—

ANTONIO

And what of him? did he take interest?

SHYLOCK

No, not take interest, not, as you would say,
Directly "interest." Mark what Jacob did.
When Laban and himself were compromised
That all the eanlings of the ewes and rams...

ANTONIO

This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for,
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven.
Was this inserted to make interest good?
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

SHYLOCK

I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast.
But note me, signior—

ANTONIO

(Aside to BASSANIO)

Mark you this, Bassanio,
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose!
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats. 'Tis a good round sum.
Three months from twelve, then let me see, the rate—

ANTONIO

Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

SHYLOCK

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my moneys and my usances.
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug
(For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe).
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help.
Go to, then. You come to me and you say
“Shylock, we would have moneys”—you say so,
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold. Moneys is your suit.
What should I say to you? Should I not say
“Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats?” Or
Shall I bend low, and in a bondman’s key,

With bated breath and whispering humbleness,
 Say this: "Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;
 You spurn'd me such a day; another time
 You call'd me 'dog'; and for these courtesies
 I'll lend you thus much moneys"?

ANTONIO

I am as like to call thee so again,
 To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
 If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
 As to thy friends; for when did friendship take
 A breed for barren metal of his friend?
 But lend it rather to thine enemy,
 Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face
 Exact the penalty.

SHYLOCK

Why, look you how you storm!
 I would be friends with you and have your love,
 Forget the shames that you have stained me with,
 Supply your present wants, and take no doit
 Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me!
 This is kind I offer.

BASSANIO

This were kindness!

SHYLOCK

This kindness will I show.
 Go with me to a notary, seal me there
 Your single bond; and in a merry sport,
 If you repay me not on such a day,
 In such a place, such sum or sums as are
 Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit
 Be nominated for an equal pound
 Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
 In what part of your body pleaseth me.

ANTONIO

Content, in faith. I'll seal to such a bond,
 And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

BASSANIO

You shall not seal to such a bond for me!
 I'll rather dwell in my necessity.

ANTONIO

Why, fear not, man, I will not forfeit it!
Within these two months—that's a month before
This bond expires—I do expect return
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

SHYLOCK

O father Abram, what these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this:
If he should break his day, what should I gain
By the exaction of the forfeiture?
A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I say,
To buy his favor, I extend this friendship.
If he will take it, so. If not, adieu;
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

ANTONIO

Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

SHYLOCK

Then meet me forthwith at the notary's.
Give him direction for this merry bond,
And I will go and purse the ducats straight,
See to my house, left in the fearful guard
Of an unthrifty knave, and presently
I will be with you.

ANTONIO

Hie thee, gentle Jew.

(Exit SHYLOCK)

The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

BASSANIO

I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

ANTONIO

Come on, in this there can be no dismay;
My ships come home a month before the day.

(They exit)