

The Merchant of Venice abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 1

Acceptance

Situation: With Shylock craving “the law, the penalty, and forfeit of my bond,” Portia as Balthazar examines the terms of the bond and argues that “the Jew may claim a pound of flesh.” Meanwhile, most inadvertently, Bassanio and Gratiano make side comments they wouldn’t have made had they known their wives were present.

PORTIA: Why, then, this it is: you must prepare your bosom for his knife---

SHYLOCK: O noble judge! O excellent young man! How much more elder art thou than thy looks!

PORTIA TO ANTONIO: Therefore lay bare your bosom---

SHYLOCK: Ay, his breast! So says the bond, doth it not, noble judge? “Nearest his heart.” Those are the very words.

PORTIA: It is so. You, merchant, have you anything to say?

Antonio to Bassanio

**I’m well prepared, Bassanio, believe
Me. Give me your hand and fare you well. Grieve
Not that I have fallen to this for you,
For with this, Fortune shows herself more kind
Than is her custom. Off’ her use is to
Let the wretched man end in a packed bind,
Outliving his wealth, viewing with hollow
Eye and wrinkled brow the hopeless shallow
End of poverty, and from such ling’ring
Penance of suff’ring doth she take my breath.
Tell your wife of the process that did bring
Me to this end, and speak me fair in death.
If the Jew cut the vulnerable part,
I’ll pay it instantly with all my heart.**

BASSANIO: 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 esteemed above thy life.

PORTIA: Your wife would give you little thanks for that if she were by to hear you make the offer.

GRATIANO: I have a wife who I protest I love. I would she were in heaven, so she could entreat some power to change the currish Jew.

NERISSA: ‘Tis well you offer it behind her back. The wish would make else an unquiet house.