

The Merchant of Venice abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 1

Determination

Situation: As the trial of Antonio vs. Shylock in Venice begins, Bassanio offers Shylock 6000 ducats to settle the case. Portia had provided Bassanio with the funds, having earlier said “pay him 6000 and deface the bond.” But Shylock responds to the offer by saying “I would have my bond.”

BASSANIO: For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

SHYLOCK: I would have my bond.

DUKE: How shalt thou hope for mercy, rend’ring none?

Shylock to Duke of Venice

**What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong,
Breaking no law? You have among you long
Purchased slaves, which, like your mules and dogs, you
Use in abject labor to ease your cares,
Because you bought them. If here I were to
Say “Let them be free, and marry your heirs!
Why sweat they, so burdened? Give them a voice;
Let their palates be seasoned as your choice
Meals; let their beds be soft, as where you lie.”
You will answer, “The slaves are ours!” So do
I answer you. The pound of flesh which I
Demand of him is dearly bought, ‘tis mine. If you
Deny me, there is no law in Venice.
What’s your judgment? How do you answer this?**

DUKE: Upon my power I may dismiss this court unless Bellario, a learned doctor whom I have sent for to determine this, come here today.

ANTONIO: I am a tainted sheep of the flock, meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit drops earliest to the ground, and so let me.

Nerissa enters, disguised as a lawyer’s clerk.