

The Merchant of Venice abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 2

Infatuation

Situation: Bassanio holds up the picture of Portia, having chosen the lead casket, the correct casket. Taking his time and in glowing terms he describes to himself the beauty he sees in the picture.

PORTIA ASIDE: O love, be moderate, allay thy ecstasy, scant this excess! I feel too much thy blessing.

Bassanio opens the lead casket.

BASSANIO: What find I here? Fair Portia's counterfeit. What artist has so nearly duplicated Portia as to seem a god?

Bassanio to himself, No. 2

Nearly replicated, she doth seem a
Goddess. Are these eyes moving, or do they
Just seem in motion? Here are severed lips
Parted with sugar breath, and here in her hair
The painter plays the spider, weaving tips
Into a golden mesh, catching men; their
Hearts trapped as gnats in cobwebs. Yet how far
The subject of my honest praise doth mar
The picture in under prizing it, so
Far this likeness limps behind the subject.
Portia, justified by this scroll in tow,
I come to give and receive. I detect
As doubtful whether what I see is true,
Until confirmed and ratified by you.