

The Merchant of Venice abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 2

Observation

Situation: Having dismissed Morocco and Arragon, sweetheart Portia warmly receives Bassanio, asking him to “pause a day or two before you hazard, for in choosing wrong I lose your company.” But an eager Bassanio hardly hears her, saying “but let me to my fortune and the caskets.”

PORTIA: Away, then. I am locked in one of them. If you do love me, you will find me out. Nerissa and the rest, stand all aloof.

BASSANIO: So may the outward shows be least themselves.

Bassanio to himself, No. 1.

**The world is deceived with outward luster.
Corrupt pleas are seasoned when a sober
Legal voice obscures the evil. Do not
Gracious religious brows bless and approve
Sins with a text, granting the pardons sought?
Cowards, with hearts false as stairs of sand, soothe
Their fears with beards of Hercules, and lurch
Masquered for valor's seeming, where a search
Inward would find livers white as lilies.
Counterfeit beauties made to decorate
Are but gilded shores to the dang'rous seas.
Beauty by weight works in nature to fate
Those that wear the most of it the lightest.
The brightest ornaments tempt the wisest.**

BASSANIO: Therefore, then, thou gaudy gold, hard food for Midas, I will none of thee. For none of thee, thou silver, currency, the servant to everyone. But thou, thou meager lead, thy paleness moves me more than eloquence, and here choose I. Joy be the consequence!