

The Merchant of Venice abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 3

Resentment

Situation: We learn that Portia (as Bassanio says) is “a lady richly left, and she is fair, and, fairer than that word, of wondrous virtues.” But Portia lives in Belmont and Bassanio doesn’t have the funds to get there; a requirement, he figures, if he is to woo her. Antonio tells Bassanio to “go forth: try what my credit can in Venice do.” Bassanio takes him up on the offer, meeting with Shylock. We learn that Shylock has in the past been poorly treated by Antonio. Shylock agrees to lend Bassanio the money he needs, but will require that Antonio, the guarantor, agree to forfeit “an equal pound of your fair flesh” if the loan is not repaid as the terms require.

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 to Antonio

Signior Antonio, you have many
Times berated me about my money,
Which I have borne with a shrug, as a sign
You need my help. You call me a cutthroat
Dog, all for the use of that which is mine
Own. You say, “we would have moneys, you dote,”
As you foot me as you spurn a strange cur
Over your threshold. You need money, sir.
Shall I bend low, and with the patient mew
Of a slave, and with bated breath, here whine
In whispered humbleness, saying: “Sir, you
Spurned me such a day, and another time
You called me ‘dog’; and for these courtesies
I’ll without rate lend you thus much moneys?”

ANTONIO: If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not as to thy friends. 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! This is kind I offer.

BASSANIO: This were kindness!

SHYLOCK: This kindness will I show. If you repay me not on such a day, let the forfeit be nominated for an equal pound of your fair flesh.