

The Merchant of Venice abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 1

Revenge

Situation: Balthasar has told Shylock that “This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood.” Shylock quickly thinks through the implications. He decides to accept Bassanio’s earlier offer of twice the bond, but Portia as Balthasar tells Shylock “Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture.”

Shylock begins to exit.

PORTIA: Tarry. The law hath yet another hold on you.

Portia to Shylock, No. 2

**The current laws in Venice have been so
Enacted that if they do prove to go
‘Gainst one denied citizenship and who
Has sought the life of a legal person,
The party so aggrieved hath the right to
Seize one half his goods, and the state may dun
The offender for the other half. The
Guilty party’s life lies in the mercy
Of the Duke only. Since you have been bent
On justice o’er mercy as you did try
Throughout to take life from the defendant,
And you have incurred here the danger by
Me rehearsed, the court now doth you rebuke
And suggests you beg mercy of the Duke.**

DUKE: I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it. For half thy wealth, it is Antonio’s; the other half comes to the general state.

SHYLOCK: Nay, take my life and all. You take my house when you do take the prop that doth sustain my house; you take my life when you do take the means whereby I live.

PORTIA: What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

ANTONIO: So please my lord the Duke and all the court to quit the fine for one half of his goods, I am content, so he will let me have the other half in use, to render it upon his death unto the gentleman that lately stole his daughter.

DUKE: He shall do this.