

[*Aside to Por.*] I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,

Which I did make him swear to keep for ever.

Por. [*Aside to Ner.*] Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall have old swearing

That they did give the rings away to men; But we 'll outface them, and outswear them too.

[*Aloud*] Away! make haste: thou know'st where I will tarry.

Ner. Come, good sir, will you show me to this house? [*Exeunt.*]

ACT V

SCENE I—*Belmont. Avenue to PORTIA'S house*

Enter LORENZO and JESSICA

Lor. The moon shines bright: in such a night as this,

When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise, in such a night
Troilus methinks mounted the Troyan walls
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.

Jes. In such a night
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
And ran dismay'd away.

Lor. In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea banks, and waft her love
To come again to Carthage.

Jes. In such a night
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Æson.

Lor. In such a night
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew
And with an unthrift love did run from Venice
As far as Belmont.

Jes. In such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith
And ne'er a true one.

Lor. In such a night
Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.

Jes. I would out-night you, did no body come;
But, hark, I hear the footing of a man.

Enter STEPHANO

Lor. Who comes so fast in silence of the night?

Steph. A friend.

Lor. A friend! what friend? your name, I pray
you, friend?

Steph. Stephano is my name; and I bring word
My mistress will before the break of day
Be here at Belmont: she doth stray about
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays
For happy wedlock hours.

Lor. Who comes with her?

Steph. None but a holy hermit and her maid.

I pray you, is my master yet return'd?

Lor. He is not, nor we have not heard from
him.

But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,
And ceremoniously let us prepare
Some welcome for the mistress of the house.

Enter LAUNCELOT

Laun. Sola, sola! wo ha, ho! sola, sola!

Lor. Who calls?

Laun. Sola! did you see Master Lorenzo?
Master Lorenzo, sola, sola!

Lor. Leave hollaing, man: here.

Laun. Sola! where? where?

Lor. Here.

Laun. Tell him there's a post come from my
master, with his horn full of good news: my master
will be here ere morning. *[Exit.*

Lor. Sweet soul, let's in, and there expect their
coming.

And yet no matter: why should we go in?
My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,
Within the house, your mistress is at hand;
And bring your music forth into the air.

[Exit Stephano.]

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;

But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close us in, we cannot hear it.

Enter Musicians

Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear
And draw her home with music. *[Music.*

Jes. I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

Lor. The reason is, your spirits are attentive: 70
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
Which is the hot condition of their blood;
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
Or any air of music touch their ears,
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze
By the sweet power of music: therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones and
floods; 80

Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA

Por. That light we see is burning in my hall.
How far that little candle throws his beams! 90
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

Ner. When the moon shone, we did not see the candle.

Por. So doth the greater glory dim the less :
A substitute shines brightly as a king
Until a king be by, and then his state
Empties itself, as doth an inland brook
Into the main of waters. Music ! hark !

Ner. It is your music, madam, of the house.

Por. Nothing is good, I see, without respect :
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day. 100

Ner. Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

Por. The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark
When neither is attended, and I think
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the wren.

(How many things by season season'd are *learn*
To their right praise and true perfection !
Peace, ho ! the moon sleeps with Endymion
And would not be awaked. [Music ceases.]

Lor. That is the voice, 11
Or I am much deceived, of Portia.

Por. He knows me as the blind man knows the
cuckoo,

By the bad voice.

Lor. Dear lady, welcome home.

Por. We have been praying for our husbands'
healths,

Which speed, we hope, the better for our words.
Are they return'd ?

Lor. Madam, they are not yet ;
But there is come a messenger before,

To signify their coming.

Por. Go in, Nerissa ;
Give order to my servants that they take
No note at all of our being absent hence ; 120
Nor you, Lorenzo ; Jessica, nor you.

[A tucket sounds.]

Lor. Your husband is at hand ; I hear his
trumpet :

We are no tell-tales, madam ; fear you not.

Por. This night methinks is but the daylight
sick ;
It looks a little paler : 't is a day,
Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

*Enter BASSANTIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, and their
followers*

Bass. We should hold day with the Antipodes,
If you would walk in absence of the sun.

Por. Let me give light, but let me not be light ;
For a light wife doth make a heavy husband, 130
And never be Bassanio so for me :
But God sort all ! You are welcome home, my
lord.

Bass. I thank you, madam. Give welcome
to my friend.
This is the man, this is Antonio,
To whom I am so infinitely bound.

Por. You should in all sense be much bound
to him,
For, as I hear, he was much bound for you.

Ant. No more than I am well acquitted of.

Por. Sir, you are very welcome to our house :

It must appear in other ways than words, 140
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.

Gra. [To *Ner.*] By yonder moon I swear you do
me wrong;

In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk.

Por. A quarrel, ho, already! what's the matter?

Gra. About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring
That she did give me, whose posy was
For all the world like cutler's poetry

Upon a knife, "Love me, and leave me not." 150

Ner. What talk you of the posy or the value?
You swore to me, when I did give it you,
That you would wear it till your hour of death
And that it should lie with you in your grave:
Though not for me, yet for your vehement oaths,
You should have been respective and have kept it.
Gave it a judge's clerk! no, God's my judge,
The clerk will ne'er wear hair on 's face that had it.

Gra. He will, an if he live to be a man.

Ner. Ay, if a woman live to be a man. 160

Gra. Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,
A kind of boy, a little scrubbed boy,
No higher than thyself, the judge's clerk,
A prating boy, that begg'd it as a fee:
I could not for my heart deny it him.

Por. You were to blame, I must be plain with
you,

To part so slightly with your wife's first gift;
A thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger
And riveted with faith unto your flesh.

I gave my love a ring and made him swear
Never to part with it; and here he stands;

I dare be sworn for him he would not leave it
Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth
That the world masters. Now, in faith, Gratiano,
You give your wife too unkind a cause of grief:
An 't were to me, I should be mad at it.

Bass. [Aside] Why, I were best to cut my left
hand off

And swear I lost the ring defending it.

Gra. My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away
Unto the judge that begg'd it and indeed 180
Deserved it too; and then the boy, his clerk,
That took some pains in writing, he begg'd mine;
And neither man nor master would take aught
But the two rings.

Por. What ring gave you, my lord?
Not that, I hope, which you received of me.

Bass. If I could add a lie unto a fault,
I would deny it; but you see my finger
Hath not the ring upon it; it is gone.

Por. Even so void is your false heart of truth.

Bass. Sweet Portia, 192

If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring,
And would conceive for what I gave the ring
And how unwillingly I left the ring,
When nought would be accepted but the ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

Por. If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring, 200
Or your own honour to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.
What man is there so much unreasonable,

If you had pleased to have defended it
With any terms of zeal, wanted the modesty
To urge the thing held as a ceremony?
Nerissa teaches me what to believe:
I'll die for 't but some woman had the ring.

Bass. No, by my honour, madam, by my soul,
No woman had it, but a civil doctor, 210
Which did refuse three thousand ducats of me
And begg'd the ring; the which I did deny him
And suffer'd him to go displeas'd away;
Even he that did uphold the very life
Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet
lady?

I was enforced to send it after him;
I was beset with shame and courtesy;
My honour would not let ingratitude
So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady;
For, by these blessed candles of the night, 220
Had you been there, I think you would have begg'd
The ring of me to give the worthy doctor.

Por. Let not that doctor e'er come near my
house:
Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,
And that which you did swear to keep for me,
I will become as liberal as you;
I'll not deny him anything I have.

Ant. I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels.

Por. Sir, grieve not you; you are welcome notwithstanding.

Bass. Portia, forgive me this enforced wrong; 240
And, in the hearing of these many friends,

I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes,
Wherein I see myself —

Por. Mark you but that!
In both my eyes he doubly sees himself;
In each eye, one: swear by your double self,
And there's an oath of credit.

Bass. Nay, but hear me:
Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear
I never more will break an oath with thee.

Ant. I once did lend my body for his wealth;
Which, but for him that had your husband's ring, 250
Had quite miscarried: I dare be bound again,
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will never more break faith advisedly.

Por. Then you shall be his surety. Give him
this
And bid him keep it better than the other.

Ant. Here, Lord Bassanio; swear to keep this
ring.

Bass. By heaven, it is the same I gave the
doctor!

Por. I had it of him. You are all amaz'd:
Here is a letter; read it at your leisure;
It comes from Padua, from Bellario:
There you shall find that Portia was the doctor,
Nerissa there her clerk: Lorenzo here 270
Shall witness I set forth as soon as you
And even but now return'd; I have not yet
Enter'd my house. Antonio, you are welcome;
And I have better news in store for you
Than you expect: unseal this letter soon;
There you shall find three of your argosies

Are richly come to harbour suddenly :
You shall not know by what strange accident
I chanced on this letter.

Ant. I am dumb.

Bass. Were you the doctor and I knew you not? ²⁸³

Ant. Sweet lady, you have given me life and
living;

For here I read for certain that my ships
Are safely come to road.

Por. How now, Lorenzo!

My clerk hath some good comforts too for you.

Ner. Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee. ²⁸⁴

There do I give to you and Jessica,
From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,
After his death, of all he dies possess'd of.

Lor. Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way
Of starved people.

Por. It is almost morning,

And yet I am sure you are not satisfied
Of these events at full. Let us go in;

And charge us there upon inter'gatories,
And we will answer all things faithfully.

Gra. Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing ³⁰
So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring. [*Exeunt.*]

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbott	Abbott's <i>Shakespearean Grammar</i> , 3d edition.
F 1 or F	First Folio (1623) of Shakespeare's plays.
F 2	Second Folio (1632).
F 3	Third Folio (1663 and 1664).
F 4	Fourth Folio (1685).
Ff	The four Folios.
Cent. Dict.	<i>The Century Dictionary</i> .
New Eng. Dict.	<i>A New English Dictionary</i> , ed. Sir J. A. H. Murray and others, published by the Oxford University Press.

For the meaning of words not given in these notes, the student is referred to the Glossary at the end of the volume.

The numbering of the lines corresponds to that of the Globe Edition: this applies also to the scenes in prose.

ACT I—SCENE 1

How Bassanio, a scholar and a soldier, tells the merchant, Antonio, of his purpose to win Portia, the heiress of Belmont; and how Antonio undertakes to find the money to fit out a ship for him.

The early scenes of Shakespeare's plays serve both to introduce the foremost persons of the action, and to give a foretaste of the kind of tale that is to follow. Fine instances of his art in "overture" are the beginnings of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Here, we begin by making the acquaintance of the Merchant of Venice himself and of two of his friends, who appear to be courtiers or soldiers. Antonio is out of spirits, and his melancholy is ominous—

"By a divine instinct men's minds mistrust
Ensuing dangers" (*Richard III*, ii. 3. 42).

His anxious words, together with the description by the others of a merchant's risks, suggest the coming trouble. At the same time