

## THE MERCHANT OF VENICE Act IV(i)

### Simplified version

- Duke** Where is the lawyer sent to us by the esteemed Bellario?
- Portia** Here, my lord.
- Duke** Are you fully acquainted with this legal conflict?
- Portia** I have been thoroughly informed. Which one is the merchant, and which the Jew?
- Duke** Antonio and Shylock, please step forward.
- Portia** Is your name Shylock?
- Shylock** Shylock is my name.
- Portia** You are pursuing a very strange case. Yet there is nothing under the law that can stop you from proceeding. *(to Antonio)* You are at his mercy, aren't you?
- Antonio** Yes I am.
- Portia** Do you confess that you have broken the legal agreement between you?
- Antonio** I do.
- Portia** *(to Shylock)* Then you must be merciful.
- Shylock** What must I? Tell me why?
- Portia** Mercy is not something that one is forced to practice. It falls like gentle rain from heaven. It is a double blessing: It blesses the one showing mercy as well as the one receiving it. Mercy is a godly quality. It is more powerful in a King even than his crown because mercy is in a king's heart. And earthly power is like God's power when justice goes hand-in-hand with mercy. Therefore, Jew, although you seek justice, consider this: we all pray to God for mercy so we ourselves should show mercy to others.
- Shylock** My decisions are my responsibility. I want my penalty of a pound of flesh.
- Portia** Can he not pay back the money?
- Bassanio** Yes! Here! And if that's not enough I will pay ten times the money owed. *[to the Duke]* I beg you, bend the law a little to do the right thing and stop this cruel devil from getting what he wants. Make him accept this money!
- Portia** He cannot do that. Nobody can alter a legal document. It would set a bad precedent and many errors in the law would follow. This cannot happen. *[to Shylock]* Please, let me look at the agreement.
- Shylock** *[hands her the bond]* Here it is, most honourable lawyer, here it is.
- Portia** Shylock, you are being offered three times the money you are owed.
- Shylock** I want the forfeit of our agreement! Otherwise, this court will commit perjury.

**Portia** Well, then the Jew may lawfully claim a pound of flesh to be cut from the merchant. Be merciful, Shylock, take three times the money and we can tear up this agreement.

**Shylock** You can tear it up after the penalty is paid. I demand that you obey the law. I swear that nothing you say will make me change my mind.

**Antonio** Please, I beg you, just announce the judgement.

**Portia** Then this is it: you must prepare for his knife. The intent and purpose of the law relates to the penalty which has been agreed in the contract.

**Shylock** You are an excellent lawyer.

**Portia** [*to Antonio*] Therefore, get ready to die. [*to the court*] Do we have scales here to weigh the flesh?

**Shylock** I have it ready.

**Portia** Shylock, please allow for a doctor to be on standby, to stop Antonio from bleeding to death.

**Shylock** Is a doctor mentioned in the contract?

**Portia** It is not said explicitly but so what? Won't you allow it out of compassion?

**Shylock** It is not mentioned in the contract.

**Portia** You, merchant, do you have anything to say?

**Antonio** Just a few words. Hold my hand, Bassanio, and goodbye! Don't grieve because I am in this disaster because of you. Speak well of me to your lovely wife and tell her that I loved you too. There should be no regrets because I do not regret paying your debt with my life. I do so with all my heart.

**Bassanio** Antonio, I am married to a wife who is as dear to me as my life, but I would sacrifice her if I could rescue you from this devil.

**Portia** Your wife wouldn't be too happy if she were around to hear you make that offer.

**Gratiano** I have a wife whom I love. I wish she were dead and in heaven so that she could beg God to change this beastly Jew's mind.

**Nerissa** It's a good thing you're making this wish behind her back.

**Shylock** We're wasting time. Please, let us hear the court's sentence.

**Portia** Very well. A pound of the merchant's flesh is yours. The court awards it and the law gives it to you.

**Shylock** You are a most worthy lawyer.

**Portia** And you must cut the flesh from off his breast. The law allows it and the court awards this to you.

**Shylock** A Daniel! A second Daniel! (*to Antonio*) Come, get ready.

**Portia** Wait a moment. There's something else. This agreement doesn't mention blood. The literal words are "a pound of flesh". So, take what is yours – take your pound of flesh. But if while cutting it you shed one drop of Christian blood, your money and all your goods will be confiscated by the state of Venice.

**Gratiano** What a worthy lawyer! Listen to him, Jew.

**Shylock** Is that the law?

**Portia** You can see for yourself (*hands him the legal Act*). Just as you demand absolute justice, be assured that is exactly what you will get.

**Gratiano** Listen to him, Jew, such a wise lawyer!

**Shylock** Then I'll take three times the money offered and let this Christian go.

**Bassanio** Here is the money!

**Portia** Wait! The Jew will have nothing but the penalty he asked for.

**Gratiano** Oh Jew! This is a wise lawyer indeed!

**Portia** So, get ready to cut off the flesh. Don't shed any blood nor cut any more or less than exactly one pound of flesh. If you take more or less – even by a hair's breath – you'll be sentenced to death and all your goods confiscated.

**Gratiano** A second Daniel. Thank you, Jew, for teaching me that phrase.

**Portia** Why is the Jew waiting? Take what's owed you.

**Shylock** Give me my original 3000 which I loaned him and let me go.

**Bassanio** I have it ready for you – here it is.

**Portia** He already refused the money in open court. He can only have the penalty owed.

**Shylock** Will I not be given back even the original amount I lent?

**Portia** You will have nothing but the penalty which you can take at your own risk.

**Shylock** Well then, to hell with this court. I will not stay here any longer to argue.

**Portia** Wait, Jew. According to the laws of Venice if it is proved that a foreigner attempted to kill a citizen, the sentence is death unless the Duke shows mercy. This law now applies to you. Therefore, get down on your knees and beg for the Duke's mercy.

**Duke** I pardon your life even before you ask, Shylock, so that you understand how different my spirit is from yours. Half of your wealth now belongs to Antonio. The other half goes to the state of Venice.

**Shylock** No! By taking the means by which I live, you are taking my life!

**Portia** What mercy can you show him, Antonio?

**Gratiano** No mercy, for God's sake!

**Antonio** If it please the court, I am content to give it up on two conditions. Firstly, he must write a Will and leave everything to Lorenzo who recently eloped with his daughter. And finally: he must convert to Christianity.

**Portia** Do you accept, Jew?

**Shylock** I accept.

**Portia** [*to Nerissa*] Clerk, draw up a legal Will for him to sign.

**Shylock** Please, permit me to leave. I am not well. Send it after me and I will sign it.

**Duke** Go, but see that it is signed. **[EXIT SHYLOCK]**

Antonio, thank this gentleman [*pointing to Portia*] for I think you own him a lot.

**[EXIT DUKE]**

**Bassanio** [*to Portia*] Most worthy gentleman, my friend and I have escaped tragedy because of you. In return, we gladly offer you the 3000 we were going to pay the Jew.

**Portia** The right outcome is the best reward. And justice has been served so I feel rewarded enough. Please, recognize me when meet again. In the meantime, I wish you well and now I must leave.

**[Final Curtain]**