

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

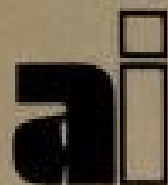
The Merchant of Venice



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The Merchant of Venice

William Shakespeare



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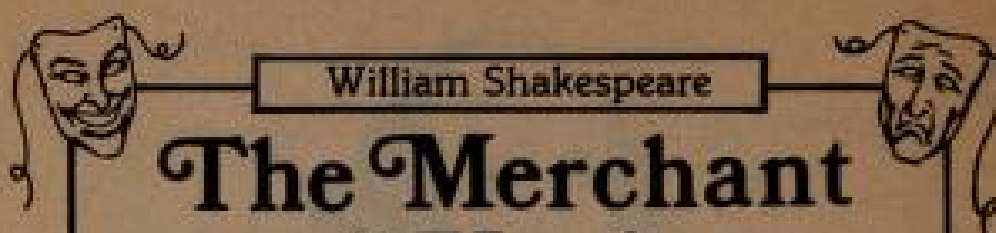


about the author

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564, in Stratford-on-Avon, England, the third child of John Shakespeare, a well-to-do merchant, and Mary Arden, his wife. Young William probably attended the Stratford grammar school, where he learned English, Greek, and a great deal of Latin.

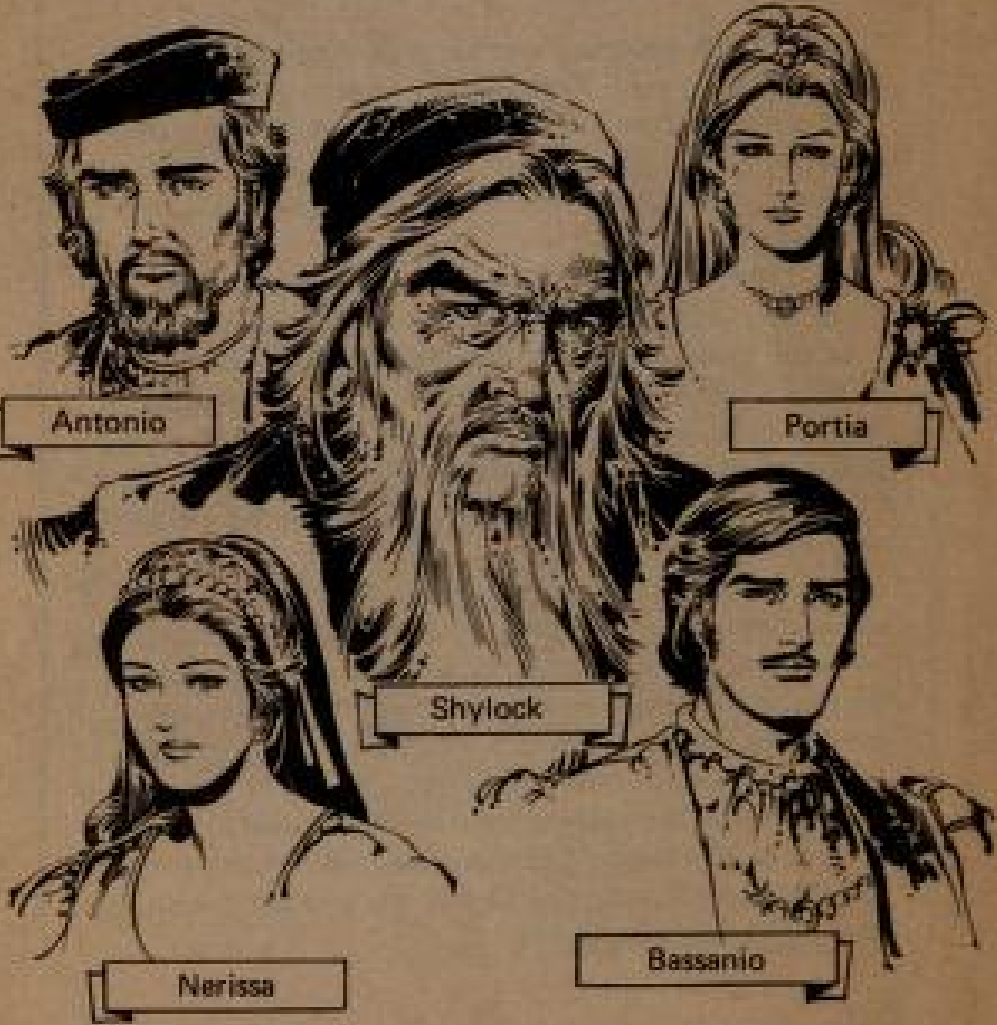
In 1582 Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. By 1583 the couple had a daughter, Susanna, and two years later the twins, Hamnet and Judith. Somewhere between 1585 and 1592 Shakespeare went to London, where he became first an actor and then a playwright. His acting company, The King's Men, appeared most often in the Globe theatre, a part of which Shakespeare himself owned.

In all, Shakespeare is believed to have written thirty-seven plays, several nondramatic poems, and a number of sonnets. In 1611 when he left the active life of the theatre, he returned to Stratford and became a country gentleman, living in the second-largest house in town. For five years he lived a quiet life. Then, on April 23, 1616, William Shakespeare died and was buried in Trinity Church in Stratford. From his own time to the present, Shakespeare is considered one of the greatest writers of the English-speaking world.



William Shakespeare

The Merchant of Venice



Antonio

Portia

Shylock

Nerissa

Bassanio

The Merchant of Venice

Men came from everywhere to try to marry the beautiful Portia—rich men from France, England, and Germany. But she could accept only the man who passed her father's test.



Perhaps the prince of Morocco would win her. Or perhaps it would be a handsome young man from Venice.

POCKET CLASSICS

The story begins many years ago on a street in Venice where three young men walked together. They were Antonio, a wealthy merchant, and his friends, Salerio and Solanio.

I don't know why I am so sad. It's a strange feeling, and it makes me very tired.

Your mind is on the ocean where your ships are tossing on the waves.



If I had so many ships at sea with such rich cargoes, I'd always be wondering where the wind was blowing them!



Every time I saw a stone church I'd wonder what dangerous rocks my ships might hit.



The Merchant of Venice

No, no! My fortune is spread out on many ships in many places. Not all of them could be lost at once!



Believe me, I am not sad because of worrying about my ships and my fortune.



Why, then you are in love!

No, that's not it either.



Then you are sad just because you aren't happy!



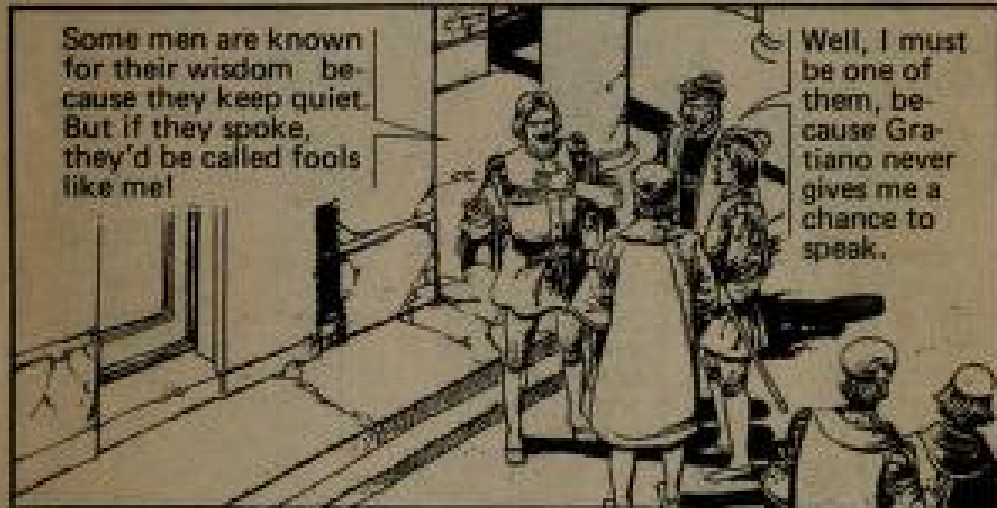
POCKET CLASSICS



The Merchant of Venice



Then I'll play the part of a fool. Let my wrinkles come from laughing and talking instead of being sad!



Some men are known for their wisdom because they keep quiet. But if they spoke, they'd be called fools like me!

Well, I must be one of them, because Gratiano never gives me a chance to speak.



But we must leave you. Come, Lorenzo.

Goodbye, friend.

Gratiano speaks more and says less than any other man in Venice!

POCKET CLASSICS

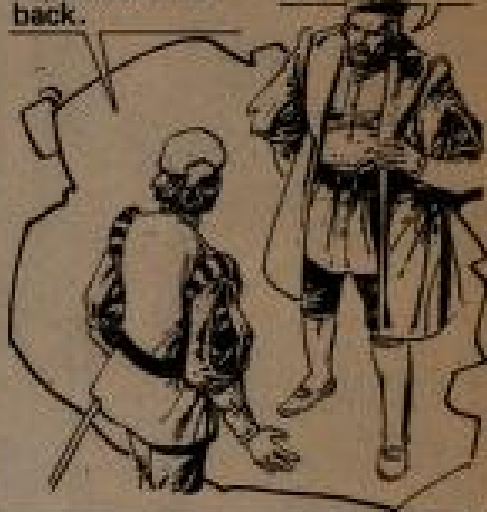
Now, tell me about this lady you spoke of—and this secret trip you want to make to see her.



Well, you know that I've enjoyed myself and spent more than I have.

I owe a lot of money, and most of it to you! But I have a plan for paying everything back.

Tell me about it, Bassanio. I will do everything I can to help you.



There is a rich young lady in Belmont named Portia. She's beautiful, too, and good!



The word about her has spread, and men sail in every day to try and win her.



I met her once . . . and I could see in her eyes that she liked me.



The Merchant of Venice

Now, Antonio, if I had the money to go to Belmont and try my luck, I think I could win her love.

You know that all my money is tied up in my ships and their cargoes—but my credit is good.



Use it to borrow as much money as you need, and I will soon repay it!

Thank you, Antonio!



Meanwhile, in Belmont, the heiress Portia talked with her maid, Nerissa.

Nerissa, I'm bored with everything in the world!

I suppose people with too much money can be as sick of it as those who have nothing.



POCKET CLASSICS

But is it fair that a living daughter should be controlled by the will of a dead father?



I'm not allowed to refuse a husband I don't like, or to choose one I do like!

But your father was a wise and holy man.



When he ordered your suitors to choose among these three chests . . . one gold, one silver, and one lead . . . he must have known how to pick the right husband for you.



Before he died, Portia's father had set up the plan using the three chests. Inside one of them Portia's picture was hidden. To marry her, a suitor had to choose the right chest.

The Merchant of Venice

How do you feel about the men who have already come to court you?

Well, first there's the prince from Naples.



He talks of nothing but his horse and how he can shoe him himself.



How about the Count Palatine?

He does nothing but frown! I'd sooner marry a skull with a bone in its mouth!



What about the Frenchman? Or the young Englishman? Or the man from Scotland?

I don't like any of them.



POCKET CLASSICS

Well, how do you like the young German duke?



Not at all in the morning when he is sober. . . and even less in the afternoon when he is drunk!

Well, don't worry. All of them are giving up and going home.



I'm glad of that.

Do you remember, in your father's time, a young man from Venice who came here?



Yes, I think his name was Bassanio.

He seemed to be the best of all of them!

I remember him well, and I agree!



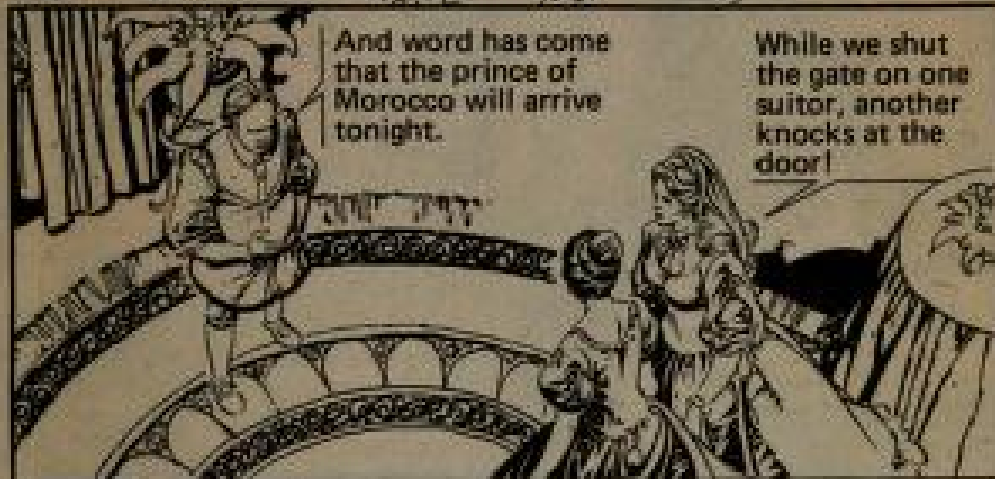
The Merchant of Venice



Just then a servant entered.

Well, what is it?

The last four men who came to win you wish to say goodbye.



And word has come that the prince of Morocco will arrive tonight.

While we shut the gate on one suitor, another knocks at the door!

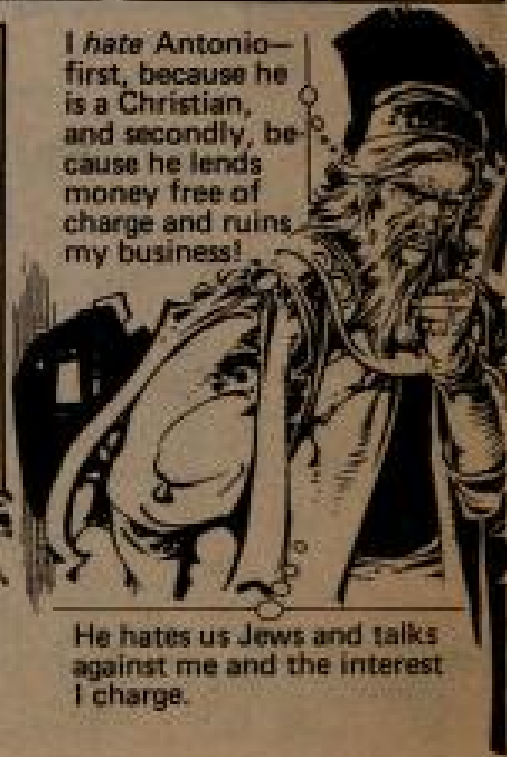


Meanwhile, in Venice, Bassanio talked with a money-lender. Shylock was a Jew whose business was lending money and charging interest for its use.

Three thousand ducats? Well, now...

Yes, sir, for three months.

POCKET CLASSICS



The Merchant of Venice



POCKET CLASSICS

Signior Antonio, many times you have called me names in public for the money I lend and the interest I charge.



You've done this just because I choose to use my wealth this way.



Now you need my help. You ask me for money. What should I say?



I'm not asking as a friend. This is business, and I will pay you for its use!



Don't be angry! I will lend you the money without interest!

That is kind!



The Merchant of Venice

Of course it is. Come with me to a notary and we'll make it legal.



And as a joke, if you don't repay me on the agreed day, you'll give me a pound of your flesh to be cut from whatever part of your body I wish.



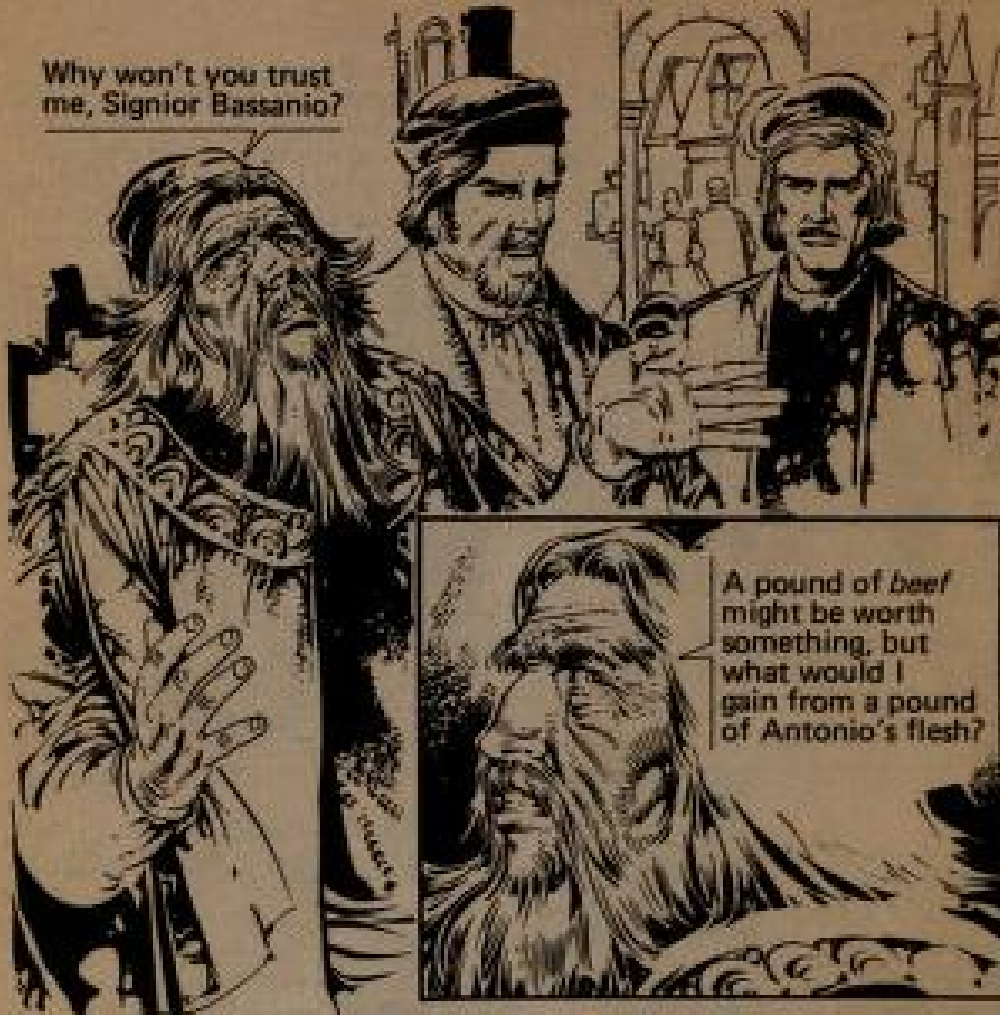
I'll agree to that. My ships will be in a month before the money is due!

No, no! I won't hear of it.



POCKET CLASSICS

Why won't you trust me, Signior Bassanio?



A pound of *beef* might be worth something, but what would I gain from a pound of Antonio's flesh?

It's all right, Bassanio. Perhaps the Jew will grow kind enough to become a Christian!

I will meet you at the notary's office.

I still don't like it!



The Merchant of Venice

While these things were happening, the prince of Morocco arrived at Portia's house.

I hope you won't dislike me for my dark skin. I come from a land that is close to the sun.

I don't judge by my eyes. Whoever wins me by my father's test is fair enough to me.

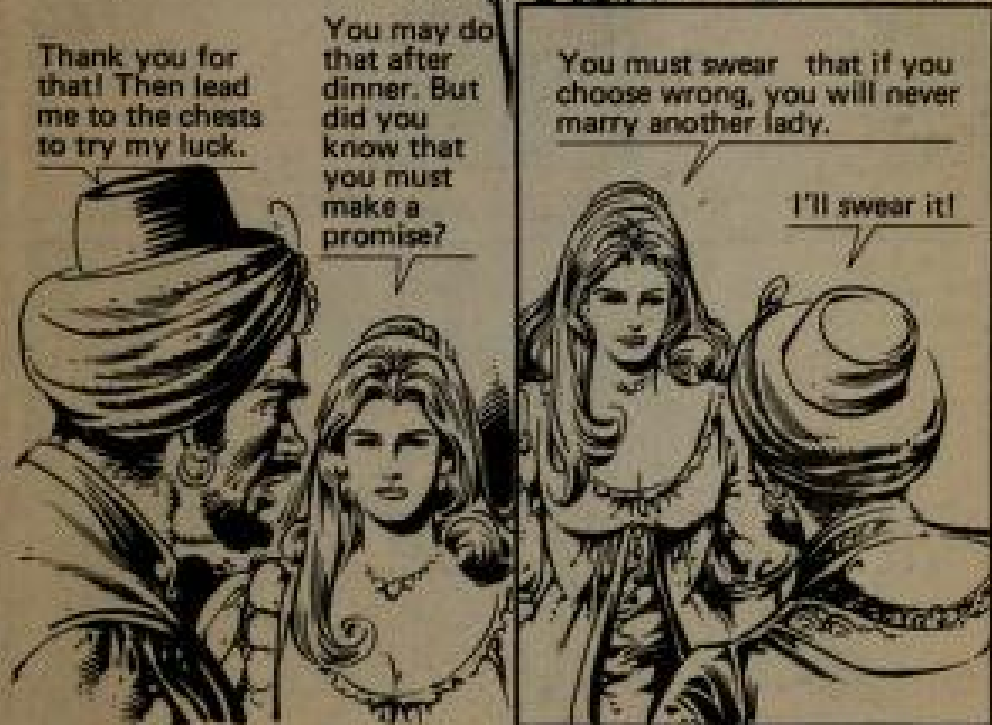


Thank you for that! Then lead me to the chests to try my luck.

You may do that after dinner. But did you know that you must make a promise?

You must swear that if you choose wrong, you will never marry another lady.

I'll swear it!



POCKET CLASSICS

At the same time in Venice, a servant of Shylock's named Launcelot Gobbo was trying to make up his mind.

Should I run away?
The devil tells me
to go.



But my conscience
tells me to stay
with my master,
the Jew.



I like the devil's
advice better.
I'll run!



Young man, please
tell me which is
the way to Master
Jew's.



It's my old blind
father! I'll play a
joke on him!

The Merchant of Venice



Take the next right, then the next left, then don't take any turns at all.



Can you tell me if there's a Launcelot that lives there?

Do you mean young Master Launcelot?



No master, sir, but a poor man's son. His father's poor, but very honest.

That Launcelot's dead and gone to heaven.



What? I need him in my old age!

Don't you know me, Father? I am your son!

POCKET CLASSICS

I can't believe it! Are you sure?



Yes, I am Launcelot, the Jew's servant, the son of your wife Margery!

Then you are my son. Well, I've brought your master a present. Do you get along well?

No, I'm running away. Give it to Signior Bassanio. I want to work for him.



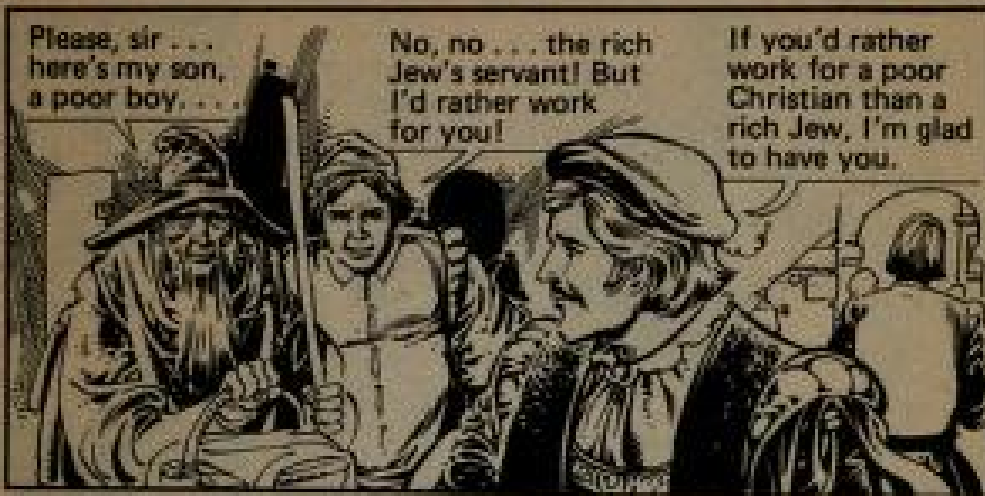
Just then Bassanio and Leonardo came by.

See that supper's ready at five o'clock. And ask Gratiano to come to my house later.

What luck! Here's Bassanio now. Tell him, Father.



The Merchant of Venice



As Bassanio sent Launcelot off to Shylock's to give notice, Gratiano arrived.



POCKET CLASSICS

When Launcelot went back to Shylock's house, he told Shylock's daughter Jessica that he was leaving his job.

I am sorry you are going. Your funny ways have made this sad house better.



Here is a ducat for you. Tonight at supper, you will see Lorenzo, your new master's guest. . . .



Please give him this letter. Do it secretly.

You are such a beautiful, sweet Jew. I am sure a Christian will marry you someday.



The Merchant of Venice

When he left and Jessica was alone. . . .

I am ashamed to be my father's child. But his ways are not my ways.



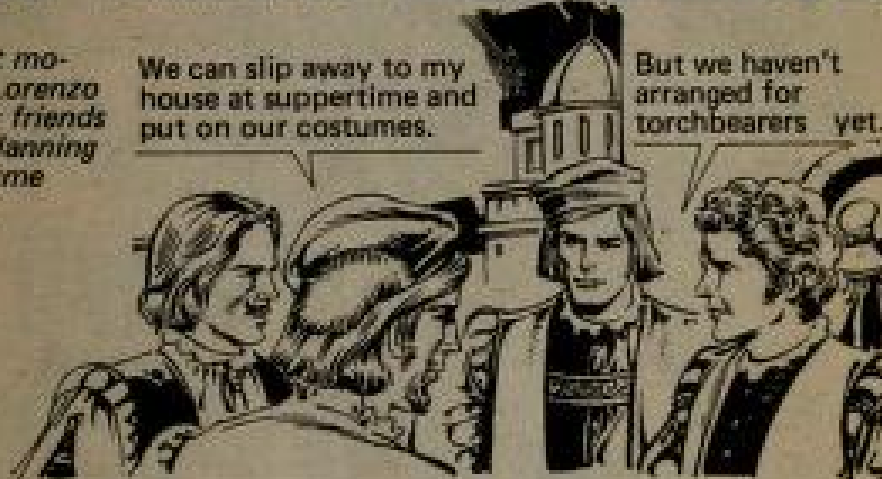
If Lorenzo keeps his promise, I'll leave all this. Then I'll become a Christian—and his loving wife!



At that moment Lorenzo and his friends were planning a costume party.

We can slip away to my house at suppertime and put on our costumes.

But we haven't arranged for torchbearers yet.



Just then Launcelot came in and gave Jessica's letter to Lorenzo.

Good news! I have just found a torchbearer for tonight.

How could you? Isn't that letter from the lovely Jessica?



POCKET CLASSICS

Yes, it is. She is running away, and we will be married tonight. Here, Launcelot—tell Jessica that I'll be there!



Thank you, sir. Now I must go and ask my old master the Jew to dine tonight with my new master Bassanio.



Soon Launcelot reached Shylock's house.

Jessica, I'm invited to supper with the Christians. I don't want to go, but I must!



Go inside. Lock up the doors and windows tight! I have a feeling that something awful is going to happen!

XIV VARRA ZORTE
PITTA
XA DAKFA

VARRA ZORTE
VUX
LOE

THE PL
QUEST
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

The Merchant of Venice



Shylock left for supper. Later that night, outside Shylock's house, Lorenzo met his friends.

I'm sorry I made you wait, but Jessica is coming with us.

Take this, my love. It's full of gold and jewels.



Dear Lorenzo, I am ashamed to be seen dressed this way!

Don't worry, my sweet. You must be my torchbearer. No one will know you in that outfit!



As the young men left for Bassanio's feast, Antonio hurried toward them.

Quick, Gratiano! The wind has changed, and you must sail for Belmont tonight.

Fine. The party will go along without me.

THE
QUEST

POCKET CLASSICS

Meanwhile, at Portia's house in Belmont, the prince of Morocco was taking his chance to win Portia as his wife.

Here are the chests, noble prince.

I will read the writing on each one.



The first, of gold, says: "Who chooses me shall gain what many men desire."



The silver promises: "Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves."



And this dull lead chest? It warns: "Who chooses me must give and risk all he has."



The Merchant of Venice

How do I know if I've chosen the right one?

One of them holds my picture. If you choose that one, I am yours!

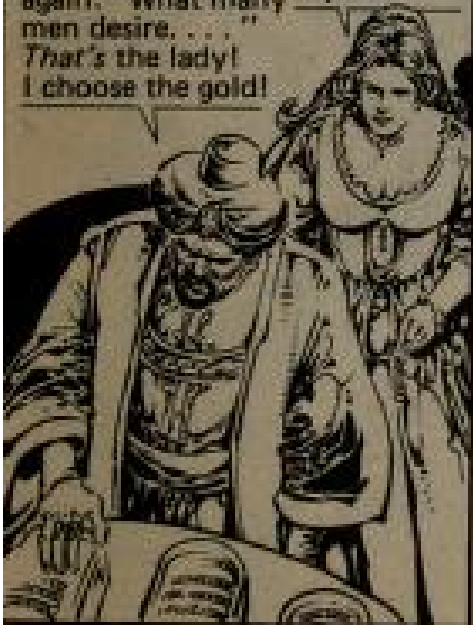


Risk all I have for lead? Never! The silver . . . as much as I deserve? That's the lady!



Let's read the gold again: "What many men desire. . . ." That's the lady! I choose the gold!

Here's the key, Prince. Open it.



The prince opened the chest and found a skull inside. He read the scroll that was with it.

"All that glitters is not gold . . . fare you well, your wish is cold!"



At that, all the prince could do was leave.

POCKET CLASSICS

Meanwhile, Bassanio had set sail for Belmont. Back in Venice, Salerio and Solanio talked about the latest news.

I saw Bassanio and Gratiano on the ship, and I'm sure that Lorenzo was not with them.

Well, Shylock thought he was! He brought the duke of Venice with him to search it.



But he was too late. The ship was already under way. Besides, Lorenzo and Jessica had been seen somewhere else in a gondola together!

And Antonio swore they were not on his ship.

"My daughter and my money," he kept shouting, "stolen by a Christian!"



Shylock was so angry—you should have heard him!

He blames Antonio. Antonio had better be careful to pay what he owes Shylock.

The Merchant of Venice

A Frenchman told me yesterday he saw an Italian ship sunk in the English channel. I hope it wasn't one of Antonio's.

You'd better tell him about it.

Meanwhile, in Belmont, the prince of Arragon was ready to make his choice for Portia.

I have promised three things. I must never tell anyone which chest I chose; remain unmarried all my life if I choose wrong; and leave at once if I fail.

Yes, everyone must swear those things.

Not the gold . . . not the lead . . . I'll choose the silver, which promises as much as I deserve!

Open it.

The picture of a fool! Do I deserve no more than a fool's head? Well, so much for my hopes.

POCKET CLASSICS

The unhappy prince of Arragon sailed away. But not long afterward, a messenger came to Portia.

My lady, a young man from Venice is arriving.

Let us go to meet him, Nerissa.

I hope it is Bassanio!

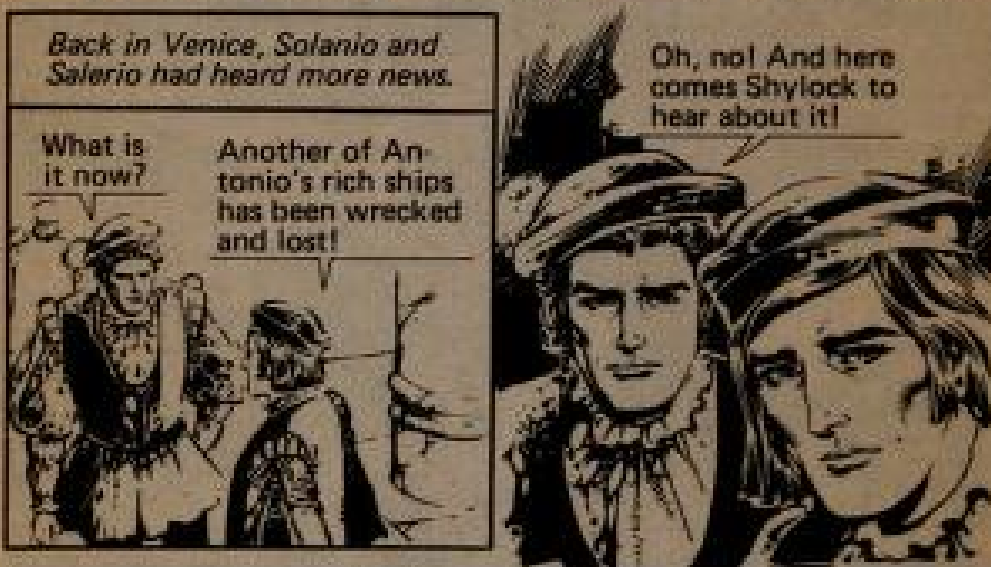


Back in Venice, Solanio and Salerio had heard more news.

What is it now?

Another of Antonio's rich ships has been wrecked and lost!

Oh, no! And here comes Shylock to hear about it!



Hello, Shylock. What news do you have?

You knew of my daughter's running away with my money and jewels!

We knew something, yes. But what do you hear of Antonio's losses at sea?



The Merchant of Venice

He will soon
be bankrupt!
Let him look
to the bond
he gave me!



But surely, if
he can't pay
you, you
won't take
his flesh?
What's that
good for?

If it's good for nothing else, it
will at least be good revenge.
He has laughed at me and made
fun of me . . . all because I am
a Jew.



Doesn't a Jew feel
the same heat and
cold and hunger as
a Christian?



If you cut us, don't
we bleed? If you
poison us, don't
we die?



And if you wrong us,
shall we not take
revenge? If we are
like you in the rest,
we are also like you
in that!



POCKET CLASSICS

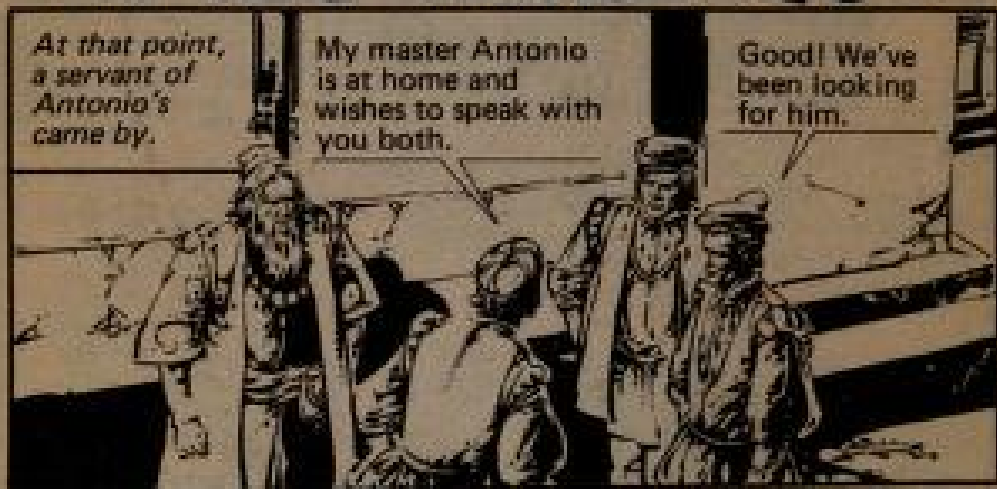
The bad things you have taught me I will carry out . . . and I will even try to out-do my teachers.



At that point, a servant of Antonio's came by.

My master Antonio is at home and wishes to speak with you both.

Good! We've been looking for him.



As Salerio and Solanio left, a friend of Shylock's drew near. He was Tubal, another Jew.

What news, Tubal? Have you found my daughter?

I have news of her from several places, but I haven't found her.



The Merchant of Venice



But other men, too, are unlucky. Another of Antonio's treasure ships was sunk!

Well, that's good. Find me an officer. I'll have Antonio's heart if he can't pay me on time!



Meanwhile, in Belmont, things were happier. Bassanio had arrived at Portia's and the two young people had fallen in love. But Bassanio still had to pass Portia's father's test.

Wait a few days, Bassanio. If you choose wrong, then I must lose you!

No, let me choose now. I can't stand the suspense of waiting.



POCKET CLASSICS

*So everything
was made
ready for
Bassanio to
choose.*

My picture is locked
in one of them. If
you love me, find it.

One must not judge by
appearance alone.
Even a coward may
have a brave beard
upon his chin.



So I won't choose the bright
gold . . . or the silver.



I choose the plain lead,
whose dull outside
promises nothing.



The Merchant of Venice

Bassanio raised the lid . . . and found Portia's picture!

Fair lady, your picture! But I won't believe I've won you until you tell me so.

This house, these servants, and myself are yours, Bassanio!



Then Portia took a ring from her finger.

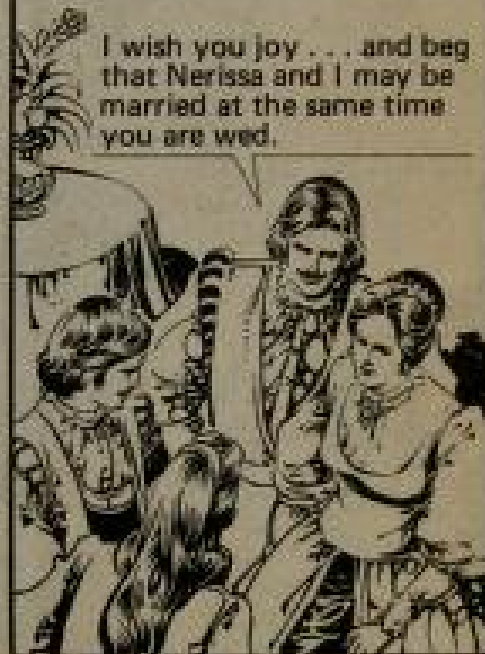
I give them to you with this ring. Never part with it as long as you love me.

It will leave my finger only if I am dead!



After this, Gratiano stepped forward.

I wish you joy . . . and beg that Nerissa and I may be married at the same time you are wed.



POCKET CLASSICS



Meanwhile, Salerio had sailed to Belmont with a letter from Antonio. Meeting Lorenzo and Jessica, the runaways, he brought them with him.



The Merchant of Venice

Only some awful news
... a dear friend dead
... could turn Bassanio
so pale!



All Antonio's ships
have been lost at sea.
His debt to Shylock
is overdue, and Shy-
lock demands his
pound of Antonio's
flesh!



You must hurry to your
friend and give him the
money he needs. I will give
it to you myself!

Alas, I've heard my
father swear he would
rather have Antonio's
flesh than twenty times
the value of his debt!



POCKET CLASSICS



Then you must sail for Venice with enough gold to save your friend.

I'll do it . . . and hurry back to you.



The weddings took place, and later Bassanio sailed away. Soon afterward, Portia had an idea.

Lorenzo, I would like you and Jessica to take charge of my house. Nerissa and I will go to a nearby monastery to pray for our husbands' safe return.



The Merchant of Venice

Then Portia sent a letter to her cousin in Padua.

Take this quickly to my cousin, Doctor Bellario.



Then bring the notes and clothes he gives you and meet me at the ferry for Venice. We'll be there before you.



Come, Nerissa! We'll see our husbands before they expect it.

Will they see us?



Yes, but they won't know us! And when we are dressed as young men, I'll bet I'll make the handsomer fellow!



POCKET CLASSICS

Soon, in a courtroom in Venice, the trial to decide Antonio's fate began.

Shylock, you have sworn to take the pound of this man's flesh to which the law entitles you. I think, in this last hour, you will show mercy.

No. I have sworn to have a pound of his flesh—and I will have it!



But here are six thousand ducats for your three thousand!

If you offered me thirty-six thousand, I would not take them!

If I told you to let your slaves go free, you wouldn't do it! I bought this pound of flesh, and I won't let it go free!



It's no use. Let him have his way.



The Merchant of Venice



All of this was Portia's plan. She and Nerissa would take Doctor Bellario's place.

Nerissa entered, dressed as a lawyer's clerk.



Doctor Bellario says he is ill. But he has talked over this case with a young lawyer who can take his place. Where is he?



POCKET CLASSICS

The duke sent for the young man. Portia entered, disguised as the lawyer Balthasar.

You are welcome. Do you know this case?

Yes, very well. Which is the merchant and which the Jew?



Antonio and Shylock were identified. Portia spoke to Shylock.

Your case is strange . . . but by law you have the right to it. You must show mercy.

And why must I? I want justice!

With only justice, none of us would ever be saved. We all pray for mercy, and that should teach us to give mercy to others!



No! I want what I am owed!

Isn't he able to pay you the money?

Yes, it's here! I'll pay it! Change the law just this once!



The Merchant of Venice

No power
can change
the law. It
cannot be.

What a wise
young lawyer!



Let me look
at the bond.

Here it is,
here it is!



This bond is overdue, and law-
fully this Jew may claim a pound
of flesh . . . to be cut off nearest
the merchant's heart.

Then let
me do it!
I am
ready!



And so
am I.

Antonio, open your
shirt. Shylock, do
you have scales here
to weigh the flesh?

I have
them
ready.



POCKET CLASSICS

Goodbye, Bassanio. Tell your good wife how I loved you. I am not sorry to pay this for you.

My wife is as dear to me as life itself. But I would give all I have to save you.

Your wife would not thank you for that offer.



So, Shylock, prepare to cut off the flesh. But you must understand one thing.

You are not allowed to shed any blood. There is nothing in the bond about blood.

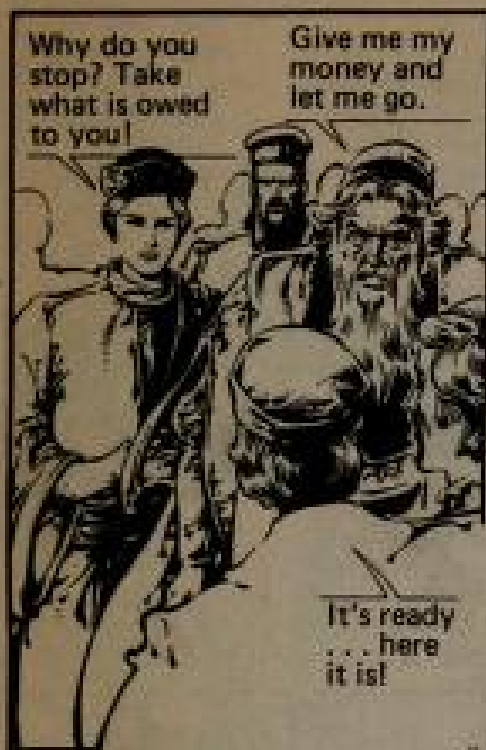
If one drop of his blood is shed, all your wealth will be taken away and you will die!



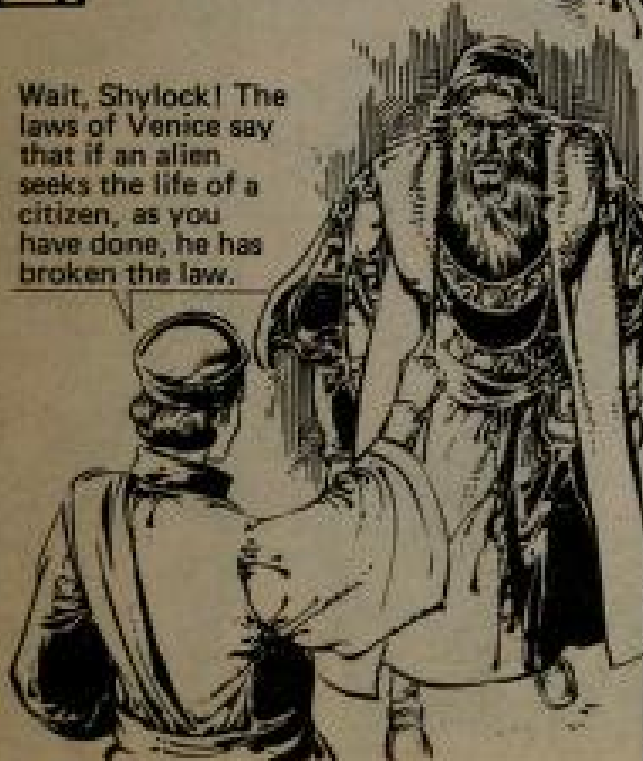
But... that's impossible!



The Merchant of Venice



Wait, Shylock! The laws of Venice say that if an alien seeks the life of a citizen, as you have done, he has broken the law.



Half his property goes to the one whose life he plotted against. The other half goes to the state. And his life itself lies at the mercy of the duke.



POCKET CLASSICS

All this is true of you. Beg for mercy from the duke.

I give you your life. Half your wealth is Antonio's. The state's half may be reduced to a fine if you humble yourself here.

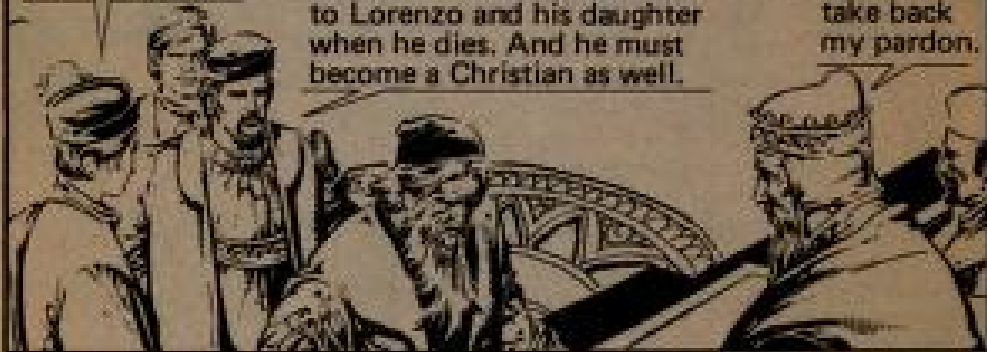
No. You take my life anyway if you take the means by which I live!



What mercy will you show him, Antonio?

I will be content to use my half only during his lifetime, if he wills it and all he owns to Lorenzo and his daughter when he dies. And he must become a Christian as well.

He shall do this, or I will take back my pardon.



What do you say, Shylock?

I agree. I beg you to let me leave. Send the deed to my house, and I will sign it.

So Shylock left the court having lost his pound of flesh, most of his fortune, and his daughter.



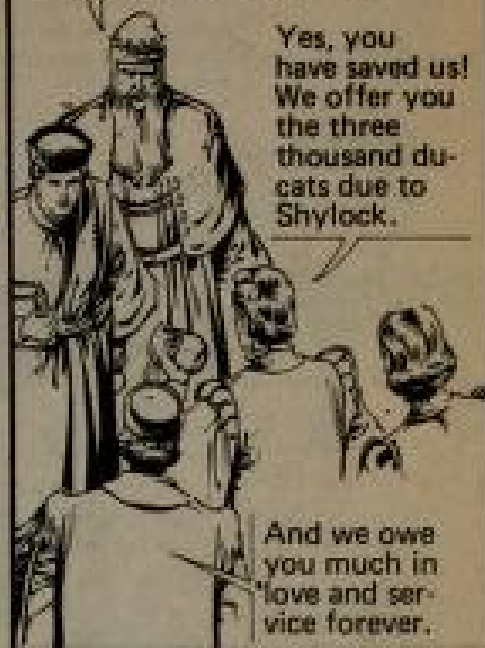
The Merchant of Venice

Sir, do come home with me to dinner.



Thank you, but I must start this very evening for Padua.

Antonio, you owe this gentleman much! Reward him.



Yes, you have saved us! We offer you the three thousand ducats due to Shylock.

And we owe you much in love and service forever.

I don't want anything. I am happy knowing I have saved you.



But please . . . take something . . . if only to remember us by.

All right. Give me your gloves. And also this ring you wear.



This ring? It's nothing! I'll get you something better . . . the best ring in Venice!

POCKET CLASSICS

You offer much . . . but when I ask, you refuse me.

Good sir, my wife gave me this ring, and I swore I'd never part with it.



Your wife would forgive you, knowing how much I deserved the ring. But never mind. Goodbye!



Please, Bassanio, he deserves so much from us . . . let him have the ring.

Yes! Take the ring and run after him, Gratiano. Hurry!



Outside, Portia and Nerissa searched for Shylock's house.

We'll have Shylock sign this deed. Then we'll hurry home before our husbands arrive.

Here comes Gratiano with your ring. I'll see if I can get my husband's ring which he swore to keep forever!



The Merchant of Venice

Meanwhile, in Belmont, the happy newlyweds were enjoying a moonlit night.

On such a night did Jessica run from Venice to Belmont with her love.

On such a night did Lorenzo swear he loved her well and stole her heart.



Then a messenger arrived.

I bring word that lady Portia will be here before daybreak. Has my master returned?

He has not. Let's go in and prepare a welcome.



Hello, hello! Here's a message from my master. He'll be here before morning.

Then why go inside? Bring the musicians out here to welcome our friends when they return.



POCKET CLASSICS

Soon Portia and Nerissa arrived.

How beautiful everything looks by moonlight!

Even the music sounds sweeter than by day.

Welcome home, dear lady.



We've been away praying for our husbands' safety. Have they returned?

Not yet, but a messenger says they are almost here.

Go in, Nerissa. Tell the servants not to say we've been away. You, too, Lorenzo and Jessica.

Don't worry; we'll keep your secret.



Just then Bassanio arrived with Antonio and Gratiano.

Welcome home!

I thank you. Please welcome my friend Antonio!



The Merchant of Venice

But in the midst of the greetings, a quarrel broke out.

I swear by the moon there . . . I gave it to the lawyer's clerk!

I don't believe it. You gave it to a pretty girl!

A quarrel already? What's the matter?



A ring she gave me . . . only a plain gold circle. . . .

You swore you'd wear it till your death! "Gave it to a lawyer's clerk!" I don't believe it.



It's true . . . a boy . . . no taller than yourself! He begged it as a fee and I couldn't refuse.

You were wrong, Gratiano! Bassanio swore he'd never part with the ring I gave him. I'd be angry if he did.

I'd best cut off my hand, and swear I lost the ring defending it!



POCKET CLASSICS

Bassanio gave his ring to the lawyer who asked for it—and deserved it, too! And his clerk, the boy, begged for mine. They'd take nothing else.



Is this true, sir?

Yes, it is.

Just as truth is gone from your heart! I'll never forgive you till I see the ring again.

Nor I, till I see mine.



Sweet Portia, if you knew to whom I gave the ring, and why, you'd not be so angry.

If you had explained the special meaning of the ring, no man would have taken it. I think like Nerissa . . . some woman has it!



No, I swear to you—no woman, but a lawyer.

The Merchant of Venice

He saved the life of my dear friend and refused all other fees. If you'd been there, you'd have given him the ring yourself.



If you'll forgive me this fault, I swear by my soul I'll never again break a vow to you.



I once risked my body for Bassanio—and would have lost it except for him who has your ring.



And now I'll risk my soul that Bassanio will never again break faith with you!

Then you shall be his guarantee. Give him this, and tell him to keep it better than the other.



POCKET CLASSICS



The Merchant of Venice

And take this letter, Antonio. It says that three of your richest ships have returned safely.

Sweet lady, you've given me life again!



And for you and Jessica, here is a special deed that gives you all of Shylock's money after his death.

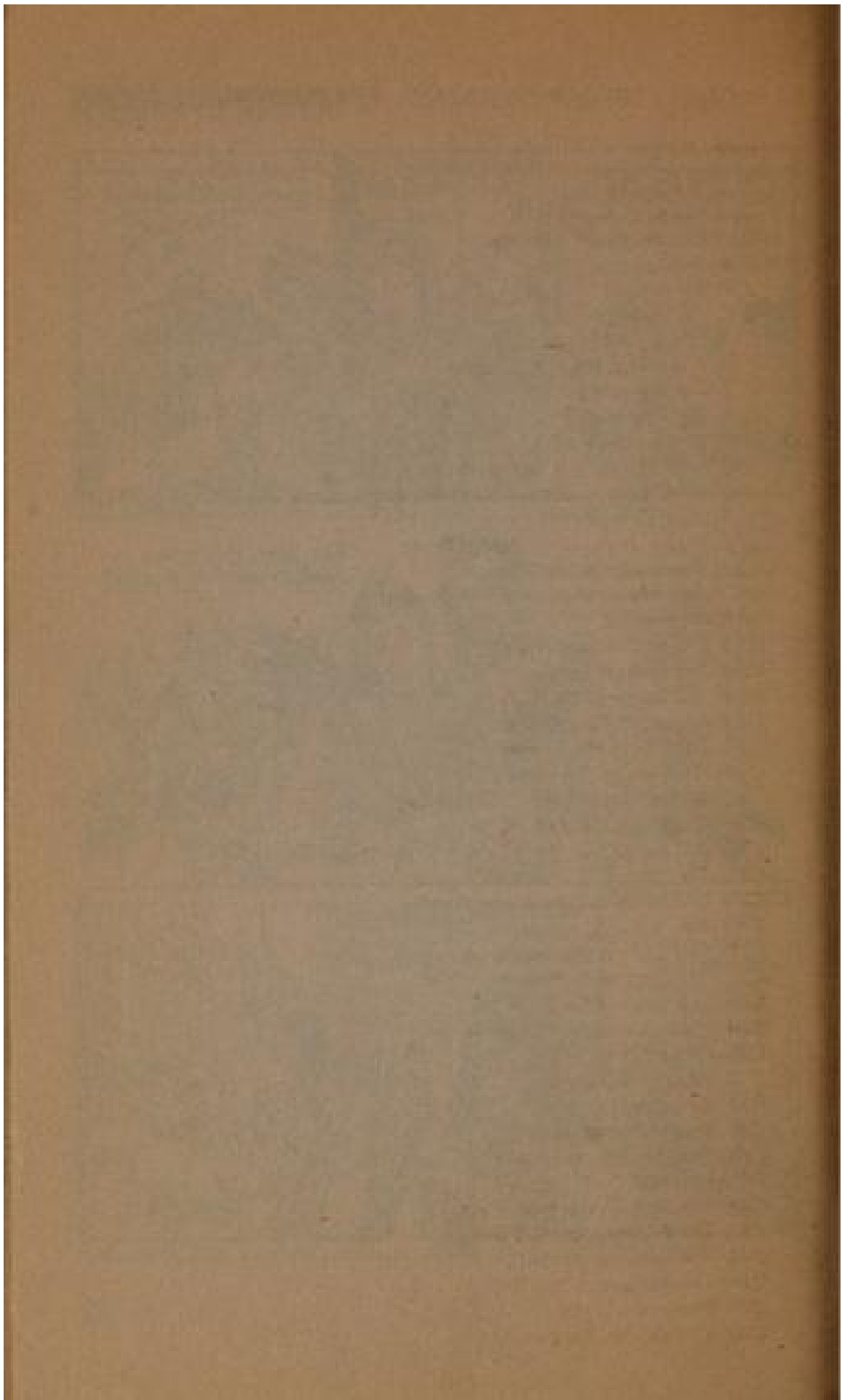
Fair lady, this is like food to starving people!



So all was explained and happily ended. Gratiano had the last word.

While I live, I'll fear no living thing
So much as keeping safe
Nerissa's ring!





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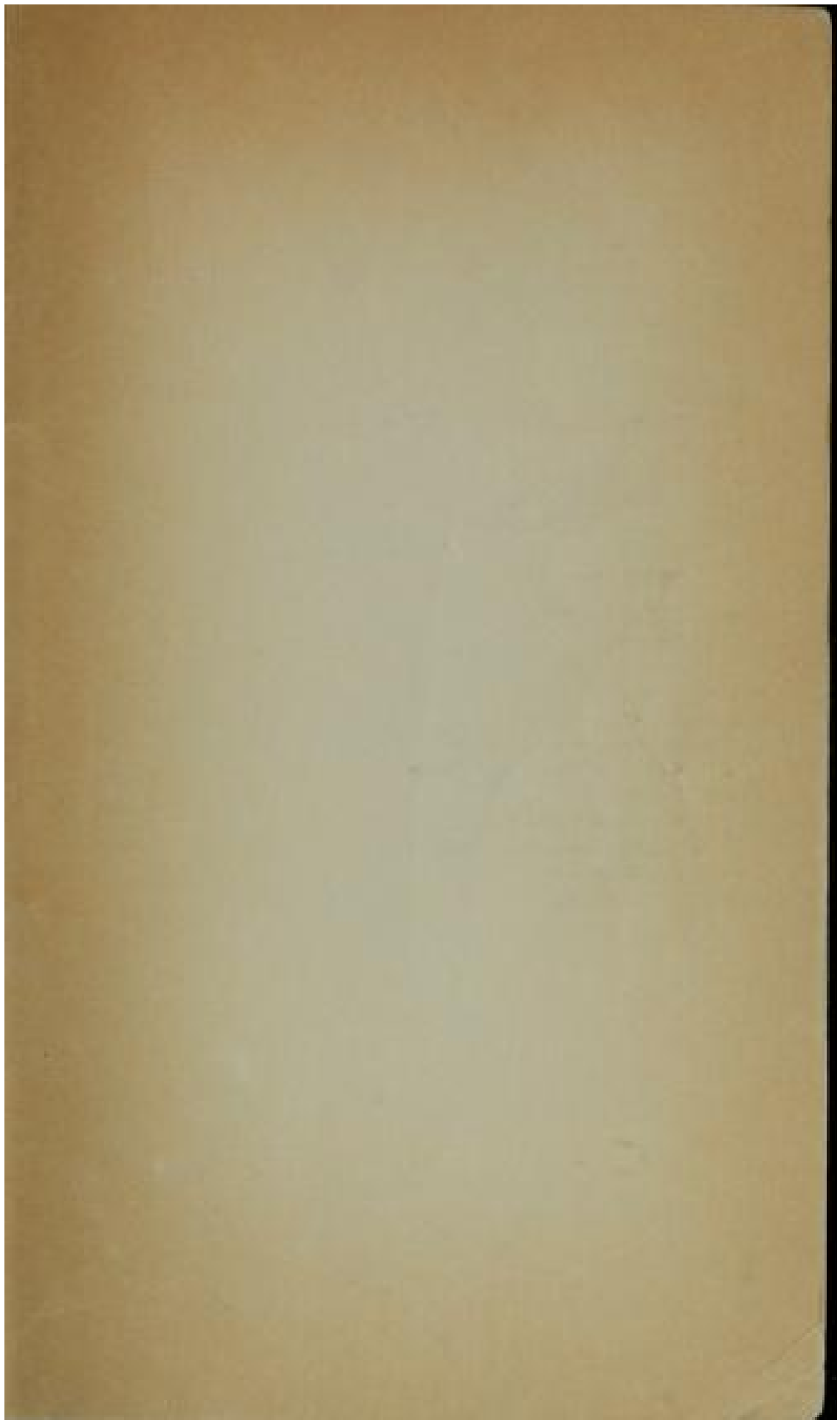
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