

# Shylock's Lament

An Experimental Follow-up Scene to William  
Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice"

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SHYLOCK

How could this ordeal have come unto me?  
No later than yesternight did I lay  
Onto feathers purchas'd by my earnings  
And soften'd by the safety of my faith.  
When sufficient people call the sky green  
Or legions do decree horses can fly  
Doth fiction pass into accepted fact  
Even in the face of the blinding truth.  
Such then do I truly become a cur  
When masses do repeat and rehearse it,  
Often enough as to tempt cruel fate  
To lay unto my lap this monstrous doom.  
Broken, ruined and forsaken do I  
Now scour the streets, lost and destitute,  
Forc'd to worship a symbol of torture  
A crossed reminder of pain and death;  
No longer led by my celestial guide.  
David, darker are nights without thy light.  
Irony, mistress of derisive scorn,  
How thou spurreth me with both of thine heels:  
Would that ten lifetimes I be forc'd to bear  
That most segregationist yellow coif  
Than be rid of it and along with it  
The ancient traditions of my people.  
But think Shylock, think. All thy life have thou  
Been rul'd by logic and pragmatism.  
Remember how thou broke these foolish youths,  
Nay, the Duke himself and his arguments!  
How like the towers of Pompeii they  
Crumbled and lay ruined! Like French battles

At Agincourt did they lay arms and fold!  
Shylock, you fox, thou can outsmart vilest  
Among these rude and most jealous Christians!  
Why then, do I find myself here, bankrupt?  
Shylock, you fox, sur'ly a hunter was  
On the prowl in that accursed courtroom.  
Do I dare revisit my memory  
For the explanation that must lay there?  
What comfort doth gleaning the error of  
His way bring foolish Icarus as he  
Plunges down to Earth? Doth the ground soften  
Any from the painful newfound insight?  
Nay, let the minotaur catch Icarus;  
Mine own example shall I here follow.  
They've taken ev'rything from thee, Shylock,  
But not thy mettle to bear the hard truth.  
Wherefore, then, lay mine own waxed mistake?  
How might I have reach'd solar salvation?  
Now let my mind be taken back to the  
Theater of my plight. I see it now.  
'This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood,'  
They say. 'No drop of Christian blood,' they claim.  
I hear them well, turning logic on me.  
But nay! Here be thy answer, sly devils:  
Not a moment ago were you prepar'd  
To give the sum of six thousand ducats.  
This bond doth give me here no jot of purse,  
Yet there it lay, dropp'd at my very feet!  
The gold within as well as cloth without.  
Yet none recanted this purse be offer'd  
Despite its clear absence on this here bond.  
Thou all shall then stand amaz'd and learned,  
That bonds, though legal be, indeed assume  
A certain margin of collaterals.  
The law, mighty indeed as it may be,  
Supersedes not the human virtue of  
Common sense, nor the clear laws of physics.  
Force me to shed no blood? Then give no purse.  
If purse thou offereth with thine ducats,  
Then blood shall thou accept with my bond's flesh.  
Why, Shylock, that's it! The answer you sought!

Take thy most pale logic, unruly crowd,  
Let it grovel under thine humbled tongues  
And shamed ears as my rhetoric rules!  
By my soul, would that I had said these words,  
That safely held my fortunes would now be!  
This sound reason, not the Duke nor his train  
Could have outdone if they tried seven years.  
Why then doth this solution come too late?  
What manner of mental blockage arose  
At the most crucial of any moment,  
Only to abate now the hour's past?  
Ah! Cursed be me, I have the answer.  
The Daniel, this Daniel! 'Tis him, 'tis him!  
This most deceitful and coy of judges,  
Call'd Balthasar from old Bellario,  
With him lies all the source of my downfall!  
Shylock, when will thou learn from thy weakness  
Fac'd with a young and most beautiful man?  
Fell I to the wiles of a first gentile  
In the form of fair and sharp Antonio,  
Only to succumb yet to another?  
Small wonder that my wits bereft my soul  
When this doe-fac'd cherub came forth in court.  
Mine own foolish words still ring in my ears,  
Complimenting him on his youngish looks,  
Even as he coiled his ensnaring claws  
'Round my unguarded and besotted mood.  
Ah, how well deserved my lot is, then  
That I incurred its wrath through shameful sin.

Enter LAUNCELOT and OLD GOBBO

LAUNCELOT

Marry, would mine two eyes deceive me so  
To bear the Jew my old and vile master?  
Surely no Jew but former Jew indeed  
Yet behold the shape of the very man!  
Nary, mine eyes, thou art surely faulty  
But here, what now? My nose agrees with them!  
There can be no mistake of this old smell!  
'Tis a veritable conspiracy

Of my senses to behold old Shylock.

SHYLOCK

Alas, the sly doctor from court be not  
The sole ghost to torture me here, but now  
I find myself plagued by visions of my  
Former and lazy servant Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT

What's this, mine ears? Speak louder that mayest  
Hear thyself more clearly. Be this the voice  
Of my old master that you here relay?  
Senses, you win! I hereby surrender!  
Better that I now believe the presence  
Of my old master than hold out and wait  
Until I've sampled the remaining two.

SHYLOCK

No ghost at all, but flesh and blood art thee!  
Be gone from hence and leave me to my woes.

LAUNCELOT

Hear I you make mention of the doctor  
From Padua and old Bellario?  
Be you interested, I'm sure, to know  
That he bore no more manly qualities  
Than the elephant doth have wings to fly.  
Balthasar by ruse but Portia by name.

SHYLOCK

Tary, he's not a man? He's not a man?  
He's not a man! Not a man! Not a man!

LAUNCELOT

Now fellow Christian, do join us, as my  
Father, though old man, poor man, hath prepar'd  
A meal worthy of ridding us of it.

OLD GOBBO

Herein this basket, my finest pork dish!

Exeunt