

SIDE #7 START HERE (Arragon, Portia, Nerissa)

[2.9] Enter NERISSA and a Servitor

NERISSA Quick, quick, I pray thee, draw the curtain straight.
The Prince of Arragon hath tane his oath,
And comes to his election presently.

[A flourish of cornets.] Enter [the Prince of] ARRAGON, his train,
and PORTIA

PORTIA Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince.
If you choose that wherein I am contained,
Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemnised;
But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,
You must be gone from hence immediately.

ARRAGON I am enjoined by oath to observe three things:
First, never to unfold to anyone
Which casket 'twas I chose; next, if I fail
Of the right casket, never in my life
To woo a maid in way of marriage; lastly,
If I do fail in fortune of my choice,
Immediately to leave you and be gone.

PORTIA To these injunctions everyone doth swear
That comes to hazard for my worthless self.

ARRAGON And so have I addressed me. Fortune now
To my heart's hope! Gold, silver, and base lead.
'Who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath.'
You shall look fairer ere I give or hazard.
What says the golden chest? Ha, let me see:
'Who chooseth me, shall gain what many men desire.'
What many men desire: that 'many' may be meant
By the fool multitude that choose by show,
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach,
Which pries not to th'interior, but like the martlet

Act 2, Scene 9 2.9] Capell subst.; not in Q1-2, F; Scene V | Rowe 3 SD A flourish of cornets] As Capell subst.; not in Q1-2; Flor.Cornets | follows names, F 3 SD the Prince of] Capell; not in Q1-2, F 13-14] As Capell; ...marriage: | Lastly,...Q1-2, F; Lastly as separate line, Cam.

Act 2, Scene 9

o SD Servitor Probably identical with the
Servingman of 1.2.

1 draw pull back.

1 straight immediately (as in 6).

3 to his election to make his choice.

18 addressed me prepared myself (i.e. by
swearing to the three conditions).

18 Fortune Good luck.

24-5 meant By A common Elizabethan construction equivalent to our 'meant for', which replaces it in F4.

26 fond foolish.

27 martlet Another name for the swift, but probably Shakespeare meant the house martin. A martin is also the slang term for a dupe, and

Builds in the weather on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty.
I will not choose what many men desire,
Because I will not jump with common spirits,
And rank me with the barbarous multitudes.
Why then, to thee, thou silver treasure house:
Tell me once more what title thou dost bear.
'Who chooseth me, shall get as much as he deserves.'
And well said too, for who shall go about
To cozen Fortune and be honourable
Without the stamp of merit? Let none presume
To wear an undeservèd dignity.
O, that estates, degrees, and offices
Were not derived corruptly, and that clear honour
Were purchased by the merit of the wearer!
How many then should cover that stand bare!
How many be commanded that command!
How much low peasantry would then be gleaned
From the true seed of honour, and how much honour
Picked from the chaff and ruin of the times
To be new varnished! Well, but to my choice.
'Who chooseth me, shall get as much as he deserves.'
I will assume desert. Give me a key for this,
And instantly unlock my fortunes here.

[Arragon unlocks the silver casket]

PORTIA Too long a pause for that which you find there.

47 chaff] Q2, F; chaff Q1 51 SD] As Delius' subst.; not in Q1-2, F; before 53, Rowe

martlets are referred to again in *Mac.* 1.6.4 in a scene that makes much of deceptively fair appearances. See Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery*, 1935, pp. 187-90.

28 in the weather exposed to the weather.

29 force...casualty i.e. in the power and the path of destruction. Possibly a translation of the Latin phrase *in vi et via* (George Allen, quoted by Furness).

31 jump make one, ally myself.

36-7 go about To cozen try to cheat.

38 Without...merit Without the entitlement of his desert. A document, such as letters patent conferring a title, is authenticated when it is stamped.

40 estates, degrees, and offices These terms move from general to particular forms of distinction: estates of the realm (e.g. nobility), ranks within

those estates (e.g. earls), and official posts (e.g. the Chancellorship).

43 cover keep their hats on (instead of doffing them in reverence to holders of spurious rank).

45 gleaned i.e. picked out and rejected in the process of sorting seed corn.

46 true seed the image suggests progeny and succession, as well as being an echo of the parable of the good seed (Matt. 13.25).

48 varnished This blends the meanings 'polished', as shiny grains are when cleared of chaff, and 'newly painted', as a coat-of-arms might be.

50 assume The ceremonial sense of putting on insignia (NS) reverberates later in the image of a fool 'silvered o'er' (68).

51 unlock Either imperative, because the proud prince expects a menial to open the casket for him, or optative: 'let my destiny be revealed'.

ARRAGON What's here? The portrait of a blinking idiot
Presenting me a schedule! I will read it.
How much unlike art thou to Portia!
How much unlike my hopes and my deservings.
'Who chooseth me, shall have as much as he deserves.'
Did I deserve no more than a fool's head?
Is that my prize? Are my deserts no better?

PORTIA To offend and judge are distinct offices,
And of opposèd natures.

ARRAGON What is here?

[*He reads*]

'The fire seven times tried this;
Seven times tried that judgement is
That did never choose amiss.
Some there be that shadows kiss;
Such have but a shadow's bliss.
There be fools alive iwis
Silvered o'er, and so was this.
Take what wife you will to bed,
I will ever be your head.
So be gone, you are sped.'

Still more fool I shall appear
By the time I linger here.
With one fool's head I came to woo,
But I go away with two.
Sweet, adieu; I'll keep my oath,
Patiently to bear my wrath.

[*Exit Arragon with his train*]

61 SD] Q2; not in Q1, F 63 judgement] Q2; judgement Q1, F 72] *As* Q2; preceded by SH Arrag. Q1, F 77 wroth] Q3; wroath Q1-2, F; wrath *Theobald*; roth *Dyce*; ruth *Sisson* 77 SD] *Capell* subst.; not in Q1-2, F

54 schedule written scroll (the original meaning of the word, *OED* sv sb 1).

60-1 To...natures i.e. it is not for me to say. Portia has been the indirect cause of offence to Arragon, so it would be improper for her to judge his case, as 'no man ought to be judge in his own cause' (Tilley M341). Portia's reply is more likely to be courteous than censorious, as it would be if she meant Arragon to be the offender; but she has already shown some skill in double entendres (see 2.1.20 n.).

62 this i.e. the silver of which the casket is made.

66 shadows illusions. Arragon is self-deceived.

67 iwis assuredly.

68 Silvered o'er In allusion to the silver

ornamentation of court officials' dress, rather than to grey hair.

70 I...head You will always be a fool.

71 sped An ambiguous slang term, like the modern 'You've had it.' At the end of *Shr.* Petruccio says to the less fortunate husbands: 'We three are married, but you two are sped' (5.2.185).

76-8 oath...wroth...moth Kökeritz argues that the short vowel of 'moth' was a mere eye-rhyme with 'oath' and 'wroth' (*Shakespeare's Pronunciation*, 1953, p. 229). An eye-rhyme, however, would be pointless in the theatre.

77 wroth This is usually taken as a spelling for 'ruth', meaning 'grief'. It could equally well be a spelling of 'wrath'; to bear wrath would be to contain it.

PORTIA Thus hath the candle singed the moth.
O, these deliberate fools! When they do choose
They have the wisdom by their wit to lose.

NERISSA The ancient saying is no heresy:
'Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.'

PORTIA Come draw the curtain, Nerissa.

Side #7 End here

Enter a MESSENGER

MESSENGER Where is my lady?

PORTIA Here. What would my lord?

MESSENGER Madam, there is alighted at your gate
A young Venetian, one that comes before
To signify th'approaching of his lord,
From whom he bringeth sensible regrets:
To wit, besides commends and courteous breath,
Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen
So likely an ambassador of love.
A day in April never came so sweet
To show how costly summer was at hand
As this forespurrer comes before his lord.

PORTIA No more I pray thee, I am half afeared
Thou wilt say anon he is some kin to thee,
Thou spend'st such highday wit in praising him.
Come, come, Nerissa, for I long to see
Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly.

NERISSA Bassanio, Lord Love, if thy will it be!

Exeunt

78 moth] Q2; moath Q1, F 100 Bassanio, Lord Love,] *Rowe* subst.; Bassanio Lord, love Q1-2, F

78 candle...moth A very common proverb (Tilley F394).

79 deliberate deliberating, reasoning. Arragon's major premiss, 'Only the meritorious deserve honour', was sound, but his minor premiss, 'I am meritorious', was unsound, so his conclusion, 'Therefore I deserve Portia', did not follow.

82 Hanging...destiny Another proverb. 'Wedding and hanging go by destiny' (Tilley w232) crops up several times in extant sixteenth-century writings.

84 my lord This kind of riposte, used by several characters in Elizabethan drama, was a verbal trick of the time. Perhaps we are to note that Portia is still thinking of a husband ('lord'), though relieved not to have one as obsessed with rank and title as Arragon was.

86 young Venetian Presumably Gratiano is making himself of service.

88 sensible regrets tangible greetings, i.e. gifts.

89 breath words.

91 likely promising (or handsome, or both).

93 costly lavish.

97 highday wit i.e. language in its Sunday best, such as Fenton uses when he 'speaks holiday' (*Wiv.* 3.2.68).

99 post messenger.

99 mannerly in such a becoming way.

100 Bassanio...be *Rowe's* punctuation, which is substantively followed here, improves upon that of Q1-2 and F: 'Bassanio Lord, love if thy will it be'.