

## Summary of *Merchant of Venice*, Act II

Lancelot Gobbo is a servant of Shylock the Jew. He is currently debating whether or not he should run away, because he is not comfortable with having a Jewish master. Just when he makes up his mind, his father, Old Gobbo, arrives, looking for him. After Lancelot plays a trick on his father's blindness, he finally confesses that he's leaving his master Shylock with the intent of working for Bassanio. Just then, Bassanio appears, and they plead with him to take in Lancelot as his servant. After settling the confusion, Bassanio agrees. Bassanio goes on to meet Graziano, who promises to cool his wild behavior if he can accompany him to Belmont. The two decide to celebrate that very night.

Shylock's daughter Jessica says her goodbyes to Lancelot, saying that he made living with her father more bearable. She gives him a letter to give to Lorenzo. In secret, she reveals that she wants to escape Shylock, her father only by blood, marry Lorenzo, and convert to Christianity. In Venice, Graziano, Lorenzo, Salerio, and Solanio discuss a plan to help Jessica escape. Lancelot enters with Jessica's letter for Lorenzo, who asks him to return to Shylock's house again to assure Jessica Lorenzo wouldn't let her down. He reveals to Graziano that Jessica will escape by pretending to be a torchbearer.

At his house, Shylock warns Lancelot that Bassanio won't be as kind a master. Meanwhile, he calls Jessica for dinner and, having a premonition, tells Jessica to shield herself from the revelry outside. Lancelot tells her Lorenzo's promise, and takes off. Later on, Graziano, Salerio, and Lorenzo meet in front of Shylock's house. Jessica appears, tosses down a casket of valuables, and joins them, dressed as a page. Antonio appears to announce that Bassanio is taking off for Belmont at once, and that Graziano must join him. Meanwhile, Shylock is enraged to find out that Jessica has eloped.

Meanwhile, the Prince of Morocco arrives in Belmont as a suitor for Portia. Though he is dark-skinned, Portia assures him that he'll only be judged for his skill at the casket game. The prince selects the gold casket, to find the item inside a farce. The same situation happens with the prince of Aragon, who selects the silver casket and loses. The Act ends with Bassanio arriving as a young Venetian suitor.