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The Merchant of Venice

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH DETAILED NOTES
FROM THE WORLD'S
LEADING CENTER FOR
SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

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「ACT 1」

「Scene 1」

Enter Antonio, Salarino, and Solanio.

ANTONIO

In sooth I know not why I am so sad.
It wearies me, you say it wearies you.
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn. 5
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me
That I have much ado to know myself.

SALARINO

Your mind is tossing on the ocean,
There where your argosies with portly sail
(Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood, 10
Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea)
Do overpeer the petty traffickers
That curtsy to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

SOLANIO

Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth, 15
The better part of my affections would
Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still
Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind,
Piring in maps for ports and piers and roads;
And every object that might make me fear 20

21. **out of doubt:** certainly
23. **wind:** i.e., breath
24. **blow me to an ague:** give me chills and fever
27. **flats:** shoals
28. **wealthy Andrew:** a ship with a rich cargo, like the Spanish ship *San Andres* (or *Andrew*) captured by the English at Cadiz in 1596
29. **Vailing:** lowering
32. **bethink me straight:** think immediately
36-37. **but even now . . . worth nothing:** i.e., one minute worth a lot, the next minute worth nothing
39. **thing bechanced:** possibility
43. **bottom:** ship's hull or bottom; also, ship, as in the proverb "Venture not all in one bottom"
52-53. **two-headed Janus:** the Roman god with two faces looking in opposite directions



Janus. (1.1.53)
From Andrea Alciati, *Emblemata* . . . (1583).

Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt
Would make me sad.

SALARINO My wind cooling my broth
Would blow me to an ague when I thought
What harm a wind too great might do at sea. 25
I should not see the sandy hourglass run
But I should think of shallows and of flats,
And see my wealthy *Andrew* 'docked' in sand,
Vailing her high top lower than her ribs
To kiss her burial. Should I go to church 30
And see the holy edifice of stone
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks, 35
And, in a word, but even now worth this
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought
That such a thing bechanced would make me sad?
But tell not me: I know Antonio 40
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

ANTONIO
Believe me, no. I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year. 45
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

SOLANIO
Why then you are in love.

ANTONIO Fie, fie!

SOLANIO
Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad
Because you are not merry; and 'twere as easy 50
For you to laugh and leap, and say you are merry
Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed
Janus,