

The Merchant of Venice abbreviated

Act 5, Scene 1

Tease

Situation: Pleased with the outcome of his trial, Antonio convinces Bassanio to give Balthasar his ring, Balthasar having asked for it. Nerissa, still disguised, vows to Portia that she'll somehow get Gratiano to give her his ring. Both young women then return to Belmont. Bassanio, Antonio and Gratiano arrive in Belmont a little later. The subject of the missing rings surfaces.

PORTIA: A quarrel ho, already! What's the matter?

GRATIANO: About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring that she did give me.

NERISSA: What talk you of the value? You swore to me when I did give it you that you would wear it till your hour of death. You should have been respective and have kept it. Gave it a judge's clerk!

GRATIANO: Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth, a kind of boy, a little scrubbed boy, a prating boy that begged it as a fee.

Portia to Gratiano

I must be plain with you. Your were to blame
To part with your wife's first gift, when she came
With her oaths and stuck it on your finger,
Riveting her faith unto your flesh. I
Gave my love a ring and he swore never
To part with it, never to let it fly
From his finger. If you'd known the virtue
Of the ring or the lady who gave you
The ring, or your own honor to contain
The ring, you'd not parted with it. What kind
Of reasonable man would not so retain
It with zeal, so no one would ever find
It? There's a message Nerissa doth bring.
I'll bet my life some woman hath the ring.

BASSANIO ASIDE: Why, I were best to cut my left hand off and swear I lost the ring defending it.

PORTIA: What ring gave you, my lord?

BASSANIO: If I could add a lie unto a fault, I would deny it, but you see my finger hath not the ring upon it. It is gone.

PORTIA: Even so void is your false heart of truth. By heaven, I will ne'er come in your bed until I see the ring!

NERISSA TO GRATIANO: Nor I in yours till I again see mine!