*{Antonio*

*…or for my sake.}*

**Act 1 Scene 2**

*Enter* ***Portia*** *with her waiting-woman* ***Nerissa***

**Portia**

By my troth[[1]](#footnote-1), Nerissa, my little[[2]](#footnote-2) body is aweary of

this great world.

*{Nerissa*

*…but competency lives longer.}*

**Portia**

Good sentences[[3]](#footnote-3), and well pronounced[[4]](#footnote-4).

*{Nerissa*

*…better if well followed.}*

**Portia**

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do,

chapels[[5]](#footnote-5) had been[[6]](#footnote-6) churches, and poor men’s cottages

princes’ palaces. It is a good divine[[7]](#footnote-7) that follows his own

instructions[[8]](#footnote-8): I can easier teach twenty what were good to

be done than to be one of the twenty to follow mine own

teaching. The brain may devise[[9]](#footnote-9) laws for the blood[[10]](#footnote-10),

but a hot temper leaps o’er a cold decree[[11]](#footnote-11); such a hare is

madness[[12]](#footnote-12) the youth, to skip[[13]](#footnote-13) o’er the meshes[[14]](#footnote-14) of good

counsel[[15]](#footnote-15) the cripple. But this reasoning[[16]](#footnote-16) is not in the fashion

to choose me a husband. O me, the word ‘choose’! I may

neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike, so

is the will[[17]](#footnote-17) of a living daughter curbed[[18]](#footnote-18) by the will[[19]](#footnote-19) of a

dead father. Is it not hard[[20]](#footnote-20), Nerissa, that I cannot choose

one, nor refuse none?

*{Nerissa*

*…that are already come?}*

**Portia**

I pray thee over-name[[21]](#footnote-21) them and, as thou namest them,

I will describe them, and according to my description level

at[[22]](#footnote-22) my affection.

*{Nerissa*

*…is the Neapolitan prince.}*

**Portia**

Ay, that’s a colt[[23]](#footnote-23) indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of

his horse, and he makes it a great appropriation[[24]](#footnote-24) to his own

good parts[[25]](#footnote-25) that he can shoe him himself. I am much

afeard my lady his mother played false with a smith[[26]](#footnote-26).

*{Nerissa*

*…there the County Palatine.}*

**Portia**

He doth nothing but frown, as who should say[[27]](#footnote-27), and

you will not have me, choose. He hears merry tales and

smiles not; I fear he will prove the weeping[[28]](#footnote-28) philosopher

when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly[[29]](#footnote-29) sadness in

his youth. I had rather be married to a death’s head[[30]](#footnote-30) with

a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend[[31]](#footnote-31)

me from these two.

*{Nerissa*

*…lord, Monsieur Le Bon?}*

**Portia**

God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man.

In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker, but he! Why, he hath

a horse better than the Neapolitan’s, a better bad habit of

frowning than the Count Palatine. He is every man in no

man: if a throstle[[32]](#footnote-32) sing, he falls straight a-capering[[33]](#footnote-33). He

will fence with his own shadow. If I should marry him, I

should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise me I

would forgive him, for if he love me to madness I shall

never requite[[34]](#footnote-34) him.

*{Nerissa*

*…young baron of England?}*

**Portia**

You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not

me, nor I him. He hath[[35]](#footnote-35) neither Latin, French nor Italian,

and you will come into the court[[36]](#footnote-36) and swear that I have a

poor pennyworth in the English[[37]](#footnote-37). He is a proper man’s

picture[[38]](#footnote-38), but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show?

How oddly he is suited[[39]](#footnote-39)! I think he bought his doublet[[40]](#footnote-40) in

Italy, his round hose[[41]](#footnote-41) in France, his bonnet[[42]](#footnote-42) in Germany

and his behaviour everywhere.

*{Nerissa*

*…Scottish lord, his neighbour?}*

**Portia**

That he hath a neighbourly charity in him, for he

borrowed a box of the ear of[[43]](#footnote-43) the Englishman and swore

he would pay him again when he was able. I think the

Frenchman became his surety[[44]](#footnote-44) and sealed[[45]](#footnote-45) under for

another.

*{Nerissa*

*…Duke of Saxony’s nephew?}*

**Portia**

Very viley[[46]](#footnote-46) in the morning, when he is sober, and most

viley in the afternoon, when he is drunk. When he is best, he

is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst he is little

better than a beast. An the worst fall[[47]](#footnote-47) that ever fell[[48]](#footnote-48), I hope

I shall make shift[[49]](#footnote-49) to go without him.

*{Nerissa*

*…refuse to accept him.}*

**Portia**

Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee set a deep[[50]](#footnote-50)

glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary[[51]](#footnote-51) casket, for if the

devil be within, and that temptation without, I know

he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa, ere I will be

married to a sponge[[52]](#footnote-52).

*{Nerissa*

*…depending on the caskets.}*

**Portia**

If I live to be as old as Sibylla[[53]](#footnote-53), I will die as chaste as

Diana[[54]](#footnote-54), unless I be obtained[[55]](#footnote-55) by the manner of my father’s

will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable[[56]](#footnote-56), for

there is not one among them but I dote on[[57]](#footnote-57) his very

absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

*{Nerissa*

*…the Marquis of Montferrat?}*

**Portia**

Yes, yes, it was Bassanio, as I think, so was he called.

*{Nerissa*

*…deserving a fair lady.}*

**Portia**

I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of

thy praise.

*[Enter a* **Servingman***]*

How now, what news?

*{Servingman*

*…will be here tonight.}*

**Portia**

If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart

as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his

approach. If he have the condition[[58]](#footnote-58) of a saint and the

complexion[[59]](#footnote-59) of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me[[60]](#footnote-60)

than wive me. Come, Nerissa. — Sirrah[[61]](#footnote-61), go before[[62]](#footnote-62).

*[Exit* **Servingman***]*

Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer, another

knocks at the door.

*[Exit* **Portia** *and* **Nerissa***]*

1. In faith; an oath [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Small or short [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Opinions or wisdom [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Proclaimed or delivered [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Small private rooms for worship [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Would be [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Clergyman [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Teaching [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Invent or think out [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Emotions or passions [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Law or judgement [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Folly [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Who leaps [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Nets, used to catch hares [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Advice or direction [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Logic [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Wish [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Controlled or restrained [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Last will and testament [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Troublesome or difficult [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Name one after the other [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. “level at”(focus on or take aim) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Awkward young person [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Special attribute [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Qualities or talents [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Committed adultery with a blacksmith [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. “as who should say”(as if to say) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Melancholy [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Rude or discourteous [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “death’s head”(skull) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Protect [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Thrush [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Dancing or leaping [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Return his love [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Speaks or understands [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Court of law [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “poor pennyworth in the English”(mere scrap of English) [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Likeness [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Dressed [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Jacket like body garment with or without sleeves [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Breeches like garment, covering legs, and padded to round it out [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Cap for head [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. “box of the ear of”(hit/strike on the head) [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Security or protector [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ratified [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Awful or disgusting [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Happening or occurrence [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Happens [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. “make shift”(find a way) [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Full or large [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Wrong [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Drunk or someone who soaks up alcohol [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The most famous oracle/prophetess, at Cumae, said to have lived a thousand years [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Roman moon goddess and protector of women [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Won [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Rational or sensible [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. “dote on”(infatuated with) [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. State of being or moral nature [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Nature or character [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. “strive me”(hear my confession) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Addressing for a male of low status [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. “go before”(ahead of us) [↑](#footnote-ref-62)