

The Comedy of Errors

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ACT I

SCENE I. A hall in DUKE SOLINUS'S palace.

Enter DUKE SOLINUS, AEGEON, Gaoler, Officers, and other Attendants

AEGEON

Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall
And by the doom of death end woes and all.

DUKE SOLINUS

Merchant of Syracuse, plead no more;
I am not partial to infringe our laws:
The enmity and discord which of late
Sprung from the rancorous outrage of your duke
To merchants, our well-dealing countrymen,
Who wanting guilders to redeem their lives
Have seal'd his rigorous statutes with their bloods,
Excludes all pity from our threatening looks.
For, since the mortal and intestine jars
'Twixt thy seditious countrymen and us,
It hath in solemn synods been decreed
Both by the Syracusians and ourselves,
To admit no traffic to our adverse towns Nay, more,
If any born at Ephesus be seen
At any Syracusian marts and fairs;
Again: if any Syracusian born
Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies,
His goods conform to the duke's dispose,
Unless a thousand marks be levied,
To quit the prison and to ransom him.
Thy substance sold at the highest rate,
Cannot amount to hundred marks;
Therefore by our law art condemned to die.

AEGEON

Yet this my comfort when your words are done,
My woes end here with the evening sun.

DUKE SOLINUS

Well, Syracusian, say in brief the cause
Why thou departest from thy native home
And for what purpose thou camest to Ephesus.

AEGEON

A heavier task had not have been imposed
Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable:
Yet, that the world may witness that my end
Was wretched by nature, not by vile offence,
I'll tell what my sorrows give me leave.
In Syracuse was I born, and wed
Unto a maid, happy but for me,
And by me, had not our hap been bad.
With her I lived in joy; our wealth increased
By prosperous voyages I often made
To Epidamnus; till my factor's death
And the great care of goods at random left
Drew me from kind embracements of my spouse: