***Act II Scene VI***

***Analysis***

***Synopsis:***

As planned, Gratiano and Salarino meet in front of Shylock’s house. They are especially anxious because Lorenzo is late, and they think that lovers tend always to be early. The garrulous Gratiano expounds on Salarino’s theory that love is at its best when the lover chases the object of his affection, and that once the lover captures his lady and consummates the relationship, he tends to tire and lose interest. Lorenzo joins them, apologizes for his tardiness, and calls up to Jessica, who appears on the balcony dressed as a page. Jessica tosses him a casket of gold and jewels. Jessica descends and exits with Lorenzo and Salarino. Just then, Antonio enters to report that Bassanio is sailing for Belmont immediately. Gratiano is obliged to leave the festivities and join Bassanio at once. Gratiano and Salarino are waiting for Lorenzo who is late. The men wonder at the situation, as often lovers enjoy the chase, but then the love wanes once the relationship is consummated. Lorenzo arrives, apologizing for being late. Lorenzo calls for Jessica, who arrives on the balcony dressed as a page. Jessica tosses down a box of treasures, and laments her having to dress as a boy in front of her love. Jessica is scared to be Lorenzo's torchbearer, as she worries what people would think of her. Jessica returns to the house to lock up the house. Gratiano tells Lorenzo that Jessica cannot be a Jew, for she is too nice. When Jessica returns, she, Lorenzo, and Salarino leave for the masquerade. Antonio arrives telling Gratiano that the winds are right and Bassanio is setting sail immediately. Gratiano leaves to join Bassanio. The audience sees how the men regard Jessica as a virtuous figure for leaving her father. Yet they regard her as virtuous while she is running away from a father who never mistreated her and is stealing his belongings. The men hold her above contempt despite her race, which again proves that the contempt for Shylock is not one from any direct action of Shylock's but just the fact that he is a Jew. The audience also sees Jessica, despite her contempt of her heritage, acting in a way befitting the stereotype by grabbing a number of treasures to bring with her.

***Summary:***

* Graziano and Salerio wait outside Shylock's house for Lorenzo to show up. Graziano notes that he should be early, since he is moved by love, which makes time run fast.
* Graziano, ever a cynic, compares love to a banquet: you're famished when you first sit down at the table, but you're never hungry when you get up. In other words, once lovers have had their "fill" of each other, their desire isn't as strong as it once was.
* Graziano then quips that young men newly in love are like rich ships embarking on a new and exciting sea journey, but whose sails soon become ragged when they're tossed around the ocean by violent winds. (Translation: Love is rough and things between Jessica and Lorenzo will probably end badly.)
* Lorenzo shows up just then, claiming it was his business that made him late. Then Lorenzo channels Romeo and calls up to his girl.
* Lorenzo and Jessica exchange a few sweet (if a little sappy) words.
* Jessica passes down a chest of money and says she's ashamed of being dressed like a boy.
* Lorenzo says she looks hot in her disguise and tells her to come down and hold the lamp since she's supposed to pretend she's a hired torchbearer.
* Jessica says, "Hang on. Let me lock the door real quick and stuff some more of my dad's gold in my shirt."
* Lorenzo takes her stalling as an opportunity to detail what he loves about her, namely her wisdom, beauty, and honesty. Jessica finally comes downstairs and leaves with Lorenzo and Salerio.

***Critical Analysis:***

Gratiano and Salarino, masked and costumed for Bassanio's party, wait for Lorenzo under the overhanging roof (the "penthouse") of Shylock's house. Gratiano is puzzled that Lorenzo is late for his rendezvous with Jessica; he knows that lovers usually "run before the dock." Lorenzo's delay is certainly uncharacteristic of most young lovers.

Suddenly, Lorenzo rushes onstage, apologizes for his lateness, and calls to Jessica. She appears above, dressed as a boy, and tosses down a casket of money and jewels to Lorenzo. Shyly, she says that she is ashamed to be eloping with her beloved while she is so unbecomingly dressed as a boy. "Cupid himself," she tells Lorenzo, "would blush." Lorenzo tells her that she must play her part well; not only must she successfully be convincing as a boy, but she must also be his torchbearer at Bassanio's party — a fact that unnerves her. The idea of "hold[ing] a candle to [her] shames" is frightening. She is certain that what Lorenzo is asking of her will lead to discovery, and she feels that she "should be obscured." Lorenzo is finally able to reassure her, however, and Jessica turns back to do two last things before they elope. She wants to "make fast the doors" (as her father instructed her to do), and she wants to get "some more ducats."

Gratiano praises her, and Lorenzo reaffirms that he will love her in his "constant soul," for she is "wise, fair, and true." Jessica then enters below, and the lovers and Salarino exit.

Antonio enters and, finding Gratiano, tells him that there will be "no masque tonight." The wind has changed, and Bassanio and his men must sail for Belmont. Gratiano admits that he is relieved that there will be no feasting and no masque. He is anxious to be "under sail and gone tonight."

There is no real break between this scene and the preceding one. As Shylock exits, and Jessica exits only moments later, Gratiano and Salarino enter, costumed for the masque and carrying torches. Gratiano, as we might expect, does most of the talking as the two chaps wait beneath the overhanging roof of Shylock's house.

When Lorenzo arrives onstage and Jessica appears above him, a modern audience would almost certainly think of the lovers Romeo and Juliet. Thus the romantic mood is immediately set — except that this romantic heroine is dressed in "the lovely garnish of a boy." This was a popular and recurrent Elizabethan stage convention, and a very convenient one, since all the girls' roles were played by boys. Shakespeare uses this disguise convention later in this same play with Portia and Nerissa disguised as a lawyer and his clerk.

At this point, since Jessica is both deserting her father's house and robbing it, it is almost too easy, in one sense, to disapprove of her; Shylock hasn't really shown us a truly villainous side. One doesn't take the "pound of flesh" bond literally — yet.

***Critical Study:***

[Gratiano](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Gratiano) and Salarino meet Lorenzo outside [Shylock](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Shylock)'s house, speaking about the wonders of love to pass the time because Lorenzo is late. When Lorenzo arrives, he asks them to keep watch, and [Jessica](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Jessica) appears above disguised as a boy. They exchange greetings, then Jessica throws down a chest filled with gold and jewels. She is embarrassed by her appearance as a boy but she believes it is safer for her to travel in disguise. Lorenzo reassures her she is lovely anyway. When she goes back into the house to collect a little more money, Gratiano says she is "a gentle and no Jew!" Lorenzo describes how he loves her for her wisdom, fairness, and loyalty. Jessica returns, and she, Lorenzo, and Salarino leave while Gratiano remains behind. [Antonio](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Antonio) arrives, looking for Gratiano. [Bassanio](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Bassanio)'s masquerade has been cancelled because the winds have changed and Bassanio is ready to depart, so Gratiano is off to join the voyage.

The Christians are much more readily accepting of [Jessica](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Jessica) than they are of [Shylock](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Shylock), as [Gratiano](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Gratiano)'s declaration of Jessica's status as a gentle, or Gentile—a Biblical word commonly used to describe non-Jews—indicates. He has just met her, observed her in a window for a few minutes, and reached this conclusion. As a woman, especially a woman who intends to convert and marry a Christian man, Jessica may be subject to different standards than her father faces. Gratiano's assessment of her may also be a comment on her other positive characteristics. She is clearly brave, as she is willing to take a tremendous risk, leave her family, her society, and her culture to be with the man she loves. She generously brings as much gold as she can carry to their union, which indicates a sense of equality; she does not expect Lorenzo to provide their sole means of financial support. These traits are reflected in her choice of disguise for the escape. She dresses as a page or servant boy. She might have dressed as an old woman or something else more feminine, but she has chosen a costume that outwardly reflects a rejection of traditional femininity—obeying her father, marrying a man who will take care of her, following her culture's rules—in addition to being practical for her escape.

***Summary Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

As planned, [Gratiano](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) and [Salerio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) arrive at [Shylock's](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock) house in their costumes with the other members of Lorenzo's party—only [Lorenzo](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) is late. As they wait for Lorenzo, Gratiano crassly explains his belief that lovers are most interested when they're chasing their beloved, and tend to lose interest after the wooing has been successful and the relationship consummated.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Gratiano, the Venetian nobleman, again displays his basic vulgarity, casually commenting that he thinks this relationship between Lorenzo and Jessica may run out of steam even as Jessica prepares to forsake everything for Lorenzo's love.

***Summary Part 2:***

When [Lorenzo](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) arrives, he makes a joke about his "father Jew" (2.6.25) and calls out to Jessica. [Jessica](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) quickly passes the promised casket of gold and jewels down to Lorenzo. Then she herself descends from the same window, dressed as his torch-bearer. She is embarrassed to be "transformed to a boy." But Lorenzo assures her that she looks beautiful and urges her to hurry—they are expected at Bassanio's.

***Analysis Part 2:***

While Jessica expects to lose her father and Jewishness through marriage, Lorenzo's joke implies that escaping one's family is not so easy. Jessica lowering the money from the same window she uses to escape, makes the equation between marriage and wealth all the more explicit.

***Summary Part 3:***

As [Jessica](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters), [Lorenzo](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters), and the other "masqueing mates" head out into the street, [Antonio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/antonio) intercepts them. He scolds [Gratiano](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) for being late to [Bassanio's](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/bassanio) dinner, and says that Bassanio is preparing to leave on a boat for Belmont right away, as the wind is good. They hurry off to the ship.

***Analysis Part 3:***

The rollicking "masque" joins up with the somber Antonio, and the festivities end for the night.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

LORENZO  
Beshrew me but I love her heartily,  
For she is wise, if I can judge of her,  
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true,  
And true she is, as she hath proved herself.  
And therefore, like herself, wise, fair and true,  
Shall she be placèd in my constant soul. (2.6.54-59)

***Explanation 1:***

From the looks of this passage, Lorenzo seems to genuinely love Jessica, who is in the process of running off to marry him. Still, we can't help but notice that the marriage is a lucrative hookup for Lorenzo. When Jessica sneaks out of her dad's house, she steals a bunch of gold and says, "I will make fast the doors and gild myself / With some more ducats" (2.6.5). So even if Lorenzo doesn't just marry Jessica for her money, the play certainly makes her out to be, like Portia, a meal ticket.

***Quotation 2:***

LORENZO  
Beshrew me but I love her heartily,  
For she is wise, if I can judge of her,  
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true,  
And true she is, as she hath proved herself.  
And therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true,  
Shall she be placèd in my constant soul. (2.6.54-59)

***Explanation 2:***

Lorenzo gives us a rare mention of love here that has nothing to do with money or religion.

***Quotation 3:***

SALERIO  
O, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly  
To seal love's bonds new-made than they are wont  
To keep obligèd faith unforfeited. (2.6.6-8)

***Explanation 3:***

When Graziano notes that Lorenzo is late, the ever-cynical Salerio notes that only fresh and new love makes the heart beat fast. Once love starts to get old, it becomes a chore.