***The Merchant of Venice***

***Act 2 Scene 5***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Summary:***

* Lancelot is a clown and a servant. Like all Shakespearean clown figures, Lancelot's job is to fool around, make smart-alecky comments, and bag on all the other characters in the play.
* Shylock says Lancelot will soon see the difference between being in his service and being in Bassanio's. He then roughly calls in Jessica and tells her he's been invited to dinner. He says this isn't a friendly dinner invite but mere flattery. He's committed to feed upon his hatred of the Christians.
* Shylock tells Jessica that she'll have to look after the house. He says he fears something bad is about to happen, since he dreamed about money bags, supposedly a bad omen. Lancelot teases Shylock about his superstition, making up some silly omens of his own, but Shylock ignores him and warns Jessica of some revels that will fill the street that night. She's not to put her head outside the window or otherwise let any foolish merriment seep into his house. Shylock especially doesn't want any sounds of music coming through the windows, which you can read more about in the ["Symbolism, Imagery, Allegory"](https://www.shmoop.com/merchant-of-venice/symbolism-imagery.html) section.
* [Shylock then heads off to dinner, though he says he'd rather not. As he leaves with Lancelot, the clown delivers a seemingly harmless little rhyme to Jessica, telling her that a Christian (Lorenzo) will be worth looking out her window for later tonight.  Shylock wonders what he said, but Jessica quickly deflects his inquiry, leaving her father to wax on about how Lancelot's departure is no great loss, as he was lazy and slept too much anyway.](https://www.shmoop.com/merchant-of-venice/symbolism-imagery.html)
* [If anything, Shylock is grateful that Lancelot will assist Bassanio in wasting his borrowed cash. Again reminding Jessica to lock up the doors and stay inside, Shylock exits.](https://www.shmoop.com/merchant-of-venice/symbolism-imagery.html)
* [Alone at Shylock's house, Jessica declares she will soon have a new father and hers will be rid of a daughter.](https://www.shmoop.com/merchant-of-venice/symbolism-imagery.html)

***Brief Summary:***

Shylock is lecturing Launcelot on how he will not receive the good treatment he has been accustomed to in his own home, now that Launcelot is working for Bassanio. Shylock calls for Jessica, and tells her that he is going to dine with Bassanio to spite him. When he learns from Launcelot that there will be a masquerade, he tells her to lock up the doors and windows and not to look out the windows at the partygoers. Launcelot exits, whispering to Jessica that a Christian is coming worth her looking out at him. Shylock reminds Jessica to lock things up so nothing gets stolen and he leaves to dine with Bassanio. Jessica bids him farewell, thinking that, if she is lucky, she will lose a father and he will lose a daughter.

Shylock warns Launcelot that Bassanio will not be as lenient a master as Shylock himself has been, and that Launcelot will no longer be at liberty to overeat and oversleep. Shylock calls for Jessica and tells her that he has been summoned for dinner. Worried by a premonition that trouble is brewing, Shylock asks Jessica to keep the doors locked and not look out at the revelry taking place in the streets. Launcelot whispers to Jessica that she must disobey her father and look out the window for the Christian who “will be worth a Jewës eye” (II.v.41). Shylock asks Jessica about her furtive conversation with Launcelot, and says that, though Launcelot is kind, he eats and sleeps too much to be an efficient, worthwhile servant. After Shylock has left to see Bassanio, Jessica bids him farewell, thinking that, if nothing goes wrong, Shylock will soon have lost a daughter, and she, a father.

***Brief Analysis:***

Shylock is portrayed in this scene, not as an evil character, but as one that lives strictly by the Law and rules of his religion. Shylock seems almost Puritanical in his care to not revel in the masquerade. Shylock also determines that he will join Bassanio for dinner in order to spite him, which again shows his own contempt for the Christians who make him an outcast. Yet, we also see a concern for both his daughter and his possessions, as he tells Jessica not to watch the revelers in order to protect her purity to lock the doors to protect his possessions.

***Critical Study:***

Preparing to leave for Bassanio's dinner party, to which he has accepted an invitation after all, Shylock encounters Launcelot, who has come to deliver Lorenzo's reply to Jessica. Shylock chides his former servant and says that in Launcelot's new capacity as Bassanio's attendant, Launcelot will no longer be able to "gormandize" and "sleep and snore" as he was (theoretically) able to do with Shylock. All the while that Shylock is expostulating to Launcelot, his speeches are broken with repeated calls for Jessica. When she finally appears, he gives her the keys to the house and tells her that he is going to attend Bassanio's dinner party. Grumbling, he confesses that he accepted the invitation "in hate, to feed upon / The prodigal Christian." He elaborates further and says that he is "right loath to go"; he has a foreboding that "some ill [is] a-brewing."

Launcelot urges his former master to go; he too has a premonition. He has a "feeling" (because his "nose fell a-bleeding on Black Monday last at six o'clock in the morning . . .") that Bassanio is preparing an elaborate masque as part of the evening's entertainment. Shylock is horrified at the suggestion that he may have to endure the bawdy, showy heresies of a Christian masque. He insists that if Jessica hears any sounds of the masque, she is to "stop up [his] house's ears," and she herself is to keep inside and not "gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces [painted masks]"; he vows that no "sound of shallow foppery" will enter his "sober house." Despite grave misgivings, Shylock finally decides to set out for Bassanio's dinner party — but not before repeating one final command for Jessica to stay inside: "Fast bind, fast find — / A proverb never stale in thrifty mind." Shylock exits then, not realizing that Launcelot was able to whisper a quick word of advice to Jessica before he left: She is to be on watch for "a Christian" who will be "worth a Jewess' eye" — Lorenzo.

Alone on the stage, Jessica anticipates her impending elopement and utters a prophetic couplet that closes the scene:

Farewell; and if my fortune be not crossed,

I have a father, you a daughter, lost.

(55-56)

This scene elaborates on and gives additional dimension to the character of Shylock. We know of Jessica's intended elopement, and thus we understand Shylock's sense of foreboding when he speaks of "some ill a-brewing." Indeed, ill is brewing for him, and much of the drama in this scene is derived from the fact that both Jessica and Launcelot are anxious to get Shylock on his way so that they can make final arrangements for the elopement. Their suspense at his indecision as to whether to go or stay is the key to the drama here; Shylock says, "I am bid forth . . . But wherefore should I go? . . . But yet I'll go . . . I am right loath to go." Launcelot, in his excitement and anxiety, almost gives the elopement plans away. He lets slip the phrase "They have conspired together" (22), but he immediately covers his mistake with some confused nonsense about his own prophetic dream; he predicts that there will be a masque at the party because his "nose fell a-bleeding on Black Monday." This is not only a comic parallel of Shylock's superstition concerning dreams, but also diverts the old moneylender from the suggestion that his daughter might be planning to elope.

Also central to this scene is Shylock's concern with his possessions; note, for example, his obsession with locking and guarding the house, which he entrusts to Jessica. He calls her to him and gives her his keys, then almost takes them back again: "I am loath to go," he says. The emphasis is on the protection of his wealth, and this emphasis appears again when he says, "Hear you me, Jessica: / Lock up my doors," and it occurs again in "stop my house's ears — I mean my casements"; even the idea of music entering his house is repellent to Shylock. He warns Jessica that perhaps he "will return immediately," thus producing new anxiety in her — and in the emotions of the audience. Shylock's last words — "shut doors after you. / Fast bind, fast find" — illustrate his inability to leave his possessions. Yet, even so, Shakespeare manages to suggest in his portrayal of Shylock's miserliness a kind of unspoken, grudging affection for his daughter and, in this scene, for Launcelot; he calls Jessica, affectionately, "Jessica my girl," and of Launcelot he says, "the patch [a kindly nickname for a clown] is kind enough." Still, though, both phrases are immediately followed by a return to his central fixation — his possessions. The great irony of the scene, of course, lies in our knowledge that while Shylock is concerned with his valuables, it is his daughter that he is about to lose, and it is to her that he entrusts his possessions. This is classic dramatic irony.

***Critical Analysis(Act 2 Scenes 1 to 4):***

Launcelot brings [Shylock](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Shylock) an invitation to [Bassanio](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Bassanio)'s dinner, and Shylock tells Launcelot he will be able to judge the difference between his new master and his old one. Before Shylock leaves for dinner, he warns [Jessica](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Jessica) to close and lock all the doors and windows, not to look outside, not to even allow the sounds of merriment in the streets outside into his home. Launcelot takes her aside to tell her to keep an eye out at the window for Lorenzo. Shylock asks about the exchange, but Jessica tells him Launcelot was only telling her goodbye. After Shylock leaves, she offers an unheard farewell to her father.

[Act 2, Scene 5](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/act-2-scene-5-summary/) provides some evidence to support [Jessica](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Jessica)'s hostility toward her father. He forbids her to leave the house, look outside, or even open the windows. He keeps Jessica isolated from the outside world, which shows why she is eager to leave home quickly, especially without the comical Launcelot around the house. Her isolation also raises the question of how she and Lorenzo ever saw one another enough to begin a courtship even as it explains why the courtship has been conducted entirely through letters. Launcelot's role as messenger shows how his participation has probably been essential. His departure, hence the loss of their messenger, provides another reason why their elopement must happen as soon as possible.

Although Jessica perceives her father's strict rules as "hell," [Shylock](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Shylock)'s reasons for those rules are most likely founded in his religion and his paternal love for her. As her father, he wants to protect her from the sinful behavior of the rowdy young men on the street. Jessica's perception of Judaism is probably equally tainted by her resentment of the limitations placed on her. In this way she is a typical teenager, and her desire to elope with Lorenzo and convert is just as much due to her desire to free herself of Shylock's constraints as it is to be with Lorenzo.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

On the street in front of his house, [Shylock](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock) reprimands [Launcelot](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) for deserting him, and warns Launcelot that Bassanio will be a harsher master than he has been. Then he summons [Jessica](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters). Having informed her that he is going to dinner with Bassanio in spite of himself, he instructs her to lock up and keep an eye on the house. He has had a dream that there will be trouble tonight.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Though the Christians seem to think nothing of owing loyalty to a Jew, Shylock believes differently. Just as Antonio overlooked his religious principles to make a deal with Shylock, now Shylock overlooks his religious principles and heads to dinner at Bassanio's because of business.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Launcelot](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) slyly jokes that [Shylock](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock) will in fact see a "masque" that night. Irritated and not knowing what Launcelot is talking about, Shylock brushes him off and repeats that [Jessica](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) should lock the doors and not look out onto the street. In an aside, Launcelot says that Jessica should look out the window—a Christian will come by who will be worth a Jew's eye.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Launcelot, who is in on Jessica and Lorenzo's scheme to elope, can make jokes with her that her father is unable to understand. As Christians (or, in Jessica's case, soon-to-be Christians), they're insiders while the Jewish Shylock is an outsider.

***Summary part 3:***

After Shylock and Launcelot leave, Jessica remarks that, if all goes according to her plan, she will have lost a father and he will have lost a daughter.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Jessica reflects that betrayal can sever family ties. From this perspective, family connections are a matter of relationship and legal actions rather than blood.

***Important Quotations:***

***Quotation1:***

SHYLOCK  
What, Jessica!—Thou shalt not gormandize  
As thou hast done with me—what, Jessica!—  
And sleep and snore, and rend apparel out.—  
Why, Jessica, I say! (2.5.3-6)

Shylock is not particularly loving with his daughter, is he?

SHYLOCK  
Jessica, my girl,  
Look to my house. (2.5.16-17)

***Explanation 1:***

Here Shylock seems to trust his daughter, and "my girl" seems affectionate enough (for Shylock at least). That he trusts her with his house, his wealth, and her dignity is a mark of his love for her. Of course, he's about to be betrayed big time, so this doesn't bode well for him loving and trusting again. If she's the only character in the play he can love, and she betrays him, then there's really no turning back his hatred.

***Quotation 2:***

LANCELET  
There will come a Christian by  
Will be worth a Jewess' eye. (2.5.43-44)

***Explanation 2:***

Not even love can surmount religious restrictions. Though Lorenzo and Jessica may be bound together in love, they're still defined and separated by their religious identities.