



# **THE COMEDY OF ERRORS**

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

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**BY  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

## ACT 1

## SCENE 1

**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 confiscate to the duke's dispose,  
Unless a thousand marks be levied,  
To quit the penalty and to ransom him.  
Thy substance, valued at the highest rate,  
Cannot amount unto a hundred marks;  
Therefore by law thou art condemned to die.

**AEGEON;** Yet this my comfort: when your words are done,  
My woes end likewise with the evening sun.

**DUKE SOLINUS;** Well, Syracusan, say in brief the cause  
 Why thou departed'st from thy native home  
 And for what cause thou camest to Ephesus.

**AEGEON;** A heavier task could not have been imposed  
 Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable:  
 Yet, that the world may witness that my end  
 Was wrought by nature, not by vile offence,  
 I'll utter what my sorrows give me leave.  
 In Syracuse was I born, and wed  
 Unto a woman, 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 Epidamnum; till my factor's death  
 And the great care of goods at random left  
 Drew me from kind embracements of my spouse:  
 From whom my absence was not six months old  
 Before herself, almost at fainting under  
 The pleasing punishment that women bear,  
 Had made provision for her following me  
 And soon and safe arrived where I was.  
 There had she not been long, but she became  
 A joyful mother of two goodly sons;  
 And, which was strange, the one so like the other,  
 As could not be distinguish'd but by names.  
 That very hour, and in the self-same inn,  
 A meaner woman was delivered  
 Of such a burden, male twins, both alike:  
 Those,--for their parents were exceeding poor,--  
 I bought and brought up to attend my sons.  
 My wife, not meanly proud of two such boys,  
 Made daily motions for our home return:  
 Unwilling I agreed. Alas! too soon,  
 We came aboard.  
 A league from Epidamnum had we sail'd,