

The Comedy of Errors

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SCENE I. A street before a Priory.

Enter Second Merchant and ANGELO

ANGELO

I am sorry, sir, that I have hinder'd you;
But, I protest, he had the chain of me,
Though most dishonestly he doth deny it.

Second Merchant

How is the man esteemed here in the city?

ANGELO

Of very reverend reputation, sir,
Of credit infinite, highly beloved,
Second to none that lives here in the city:
His word might bear my wealth at any time.

Second Merchant

Speak softly; yonder, as I think, he walks.

Enter ANTIPHOLUS of Syracuse and DROMIO of Syracuse

ANGELO

'Tis so; and that self chain about his neck
Which he forswore most monstrously to have.
Good sir, draw near to me, I'll speak to him.
Signior Antipholus, I wonder much
That you would put me to this shame and trouble;
And, not without some scandal to yourself,
With circumstance and oaths so to deny
This chain which now you wear so openly:
Beside the charge, the shame, imprisonment,
You have done wrong to this my honest friend,
Who, but for staying on our controversy,
Had hoisted sail and put to sea to-day:
This chain you had of me; can you deny it?
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

I think I had; I never did deny it.

Second Merchant

Yes, that you did, sir, and forswore it too.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

Who heard me to deny it or forswear it?

Second Merchant

These ears of mine, thou know'st did hear thee.
Fie on thee, wretch! 'tis pity that thou livest
To walk where any honest man resort.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

Thou art a villain to impeach me thus:
I'll prove mine honour and mine honesty
Against thee presently, if thou darest stand.

Second Merchant

I dare, and do defy thee for a villain.

They draw

Enter ADRIANA, LUCIANA, the Courtezan, and others

ADRIANA

Hold, hurt him not, for God's sake! he is mad.
Some get within him, take his sword away:
Bind Dromio too, and bear them to my house.

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

Run, master, run; for God's sake, take a house!
This is some priory. In, or we are spoil'd!

Exeunt Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse to the Priory

Enter the Lady Abbess, AEMILIA

AEMELIA

Be quiet, people. Wherefore throng you hither?

ADRIANA

To fetch my poor distracted husband hence.
Let us come in, that we may bind him fast

And bear him home for his recovery.

ANGELO

I knew he was not in his perfect wits.

Second Merchant

I am sorry now that I did draw on him.

AEMELIA

How long hath this possession held the man?

ADRIANA

This week he hath been heavy, sour, sad,
And much different from the man he was;
But till this afternoon his passion
Ne'er brake into extremity of rage.

AEMELIA

Hath he not lost much wealth by wreck of sea?
Buried some dear friend? Hath not else his eye
Stray'd his affection in unlawful love?
A sin prevailing much in youthful men,
Who give their eyes the liberty of gazing.
Which of these sorrows is he subject to?

ADRIANA

To none of these, except it be the last;
Namely, some love that drew him oft from home.

AEMELIA

You should for that have reprehended him.

ADRIANA

Why, so I did.

AEMELIA

Ay, but not rough enough.

ADRIANA

As roughly as my modesty would let me.

AEMELIA

Haply, in private.

ADRIANA

And in assemblies too.

AEMELIA

Ay, but not enough.

ADRIANA

It was the copy of our conference:
In bed he slept not for my urging it;
At board he fed not for my urging it;
Alone, it was the subject of my theme;
In company I often glanced it;
Still did I tell him it was vile and bad.

AEMELIA

And thereof came it that the man was mad.
The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.
It seems his sleeps were hinder'd by thy railing,
And therefore comes it that his head is light.
Thou say'st his meat was sauced with thy upbraidings:
Unquiet meals make ill digestions;
Thereof the raging fire of fever bred;
And what's a fever but a fit of madness?
Thou say'st his sports were hinderd by thy brawls:
Sweet recreation barr'd, what doth ensue
But moody and dull melancholy,
Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair,
And at her heels a huge infectious troop
Of pale distemperatures and foes to life?
In food, in sport and life-preserving rest
To be disturb'd, would mad or man or beast:
The consequence is then thy jealous fits
Have scared thy husband from the use of wits.

LUCIANA

She never reprehended him but mildly,
When he demean'd himself rough, rude and wildly.
Why bear you these rebukes and answer not?

ADRIANA

She did betray me to my own reproof.
Good people enter and lay hold on him.

AEMELIA

No, not a creature enters in my house.

ADRIANA

Then let your servants bring my husband forth.

AEMELIA

Neither: he took this place for sanctuary,
And it shall privilege him from your hands
Till I have brought him to his wits again,
Or lose my labour in assaying it.

ADRIANA

I will attend my husband, be his nurse,
Diet his sickness, for it is my office,
And will have no attorney but myself;
And therefore let me have him home with me.

AEMELIA

Be patient; for I will not let him stir
Till I have used the approved means I have,
With wholesome syrups, drugs and holy prayers,
To make of him a formal man again:
It is a branch and parcel of mine oath,
A charitable duty of my order.
Therefore depart and leave him here with me.

ADRIANA

I will not hence and leave my husband here:
And ill it doth beseem your holiness
To separate the husband and the wife.

AEMELIA

Be quiet and depart: thou shalt not have him.

Exit

LUCIANA

Complain unto the duke of this indignity.

ADRIANA

Come, go: I will fall prostrate at his feet
And never rise until my tears and prayers
Have won his grace to come in person hither
And take perforce my husband from the abbess.

Second Merchant

By this, I think, the dial points at five:
Anon, I'm sure, the duke himself in person
Comes this way to the melancholy vale,
The place of death and sorry execution,
Behind the ditches of the abbey here.

ANGELO

Upon what cause?

Second Merchant

To see a reverend Syracusian merchant,
Who put unluckily into this bay
Against the laws and statutes of this town,
Beheaded publicly for his offence.

ANGELO

See where they come: we will behold his death.

LUCIANA

Kneel to the duke before he pass the abbey.

Enter DUKE SOLINUS, attended; AEGEON bareheaded; with the Headsman and other Officers

DUKE SOLINUS

Yet once again proclaim it publicly,
If any friend will pay the sum for him,
He shall not die; so much we tender him.

ADRIANA

Justice, most sacred duke, against the abbess!

DUKE SOLINUS

She is a virtuous and a reverend lady:
It cannot be that she hath done thee wrong.

ADRIANA

May it please your grace, Antipholus, my husband,
Whom I made lord of me and all I had,
At your important letters,--this ill day
A most outrageous fit of madness took him;
That desperately he hurried through the street,
With him his bondman, all as mad as he--
Doing displeasure to the citizens

By rushing in their houses, bearing thence
Rings, jewels, any thing his rage did like.
Once did I get him bound and sent him home,
Whilst to take order for the wrongs I went,
That here and there his fury had committed.
Anon, I wot not by what strong escape,
He broke from those that had the guard of him;
And with his mad attendant and himself,
Each one with ireful passion, with drawn swords,
Met us again and madly bent on us,
Chased us away; till, raising of more aid,
We came again to bind them. Then they fled
Into this abbey, whither we pursued them:
And here the abbess shuts the gates on us
And will not suffer us to fetch him out,
Nor send him forth that we may bear him hence.
Therefore, most gracious duke, with thy command
Let him be brought forth and borne hence for help.

DUKE SOLINUS

Long since thy husband served me in my wars,
And I to thee engaged a prince's word,
When thou didst make him master of thy bed,
To do him all the grace and good I could.
Go, some of you, knock at the abbey-gate
And bid the lady abbess come to me.
I will determine this before I stir.

Enter a Servant

Servant

O mistress, mistress, shift and save yourself!
My master and his man are both broke loose,
Beaten the maids a-row and bound the doctor
Whose beard they have singed off with brands of fire;
And ever, as it blazed, they threw on him
Great pails of puddled mire to quench the hair:
My master preaches patience to him and the while
His man with scissors nicks him like a fool,
And sure, unless you send some present help,
Between them they will kill the conjurer.

ADRIANA

Peace, fool! thy master and his man are here,
And that is false thou dost report to us.

Servant

Mistress, upon my life, I tell you true;
I have not breathed almost since I did see it.

He cries for you, and vows, if he can take you,
To scorch your face and to disfigure you.

Cry within

Hark, hark! I hear him, mistress. fly, be gone!

DUKE SOLINUS

Come, stand by me; fear nothing. Guard with halberds!

ADRIANA

Ay me, it is my husband! Witness you,
That he is borne about invisible:
Even now we housed him in the abbey here;
And now he's there, past thought of human reason.

Enter ANTIPHOLUS of Ephesus and DROMIO of Ephesus

ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

Justice, most gracious duke, O, grant me justice!
Even for the service that long since I did thee,
When I bestrid thee in the wars and took
Deep scars to save thy life; even for the blood
That then I lost for thee, now grant me justice.

AEGEON

Unless the fear of death doth make me dote,
I see my son Antipholus and Dromio.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

Justice, sweet prince, against that woman there!
She whom thou gavest to me to be my wife,
That hath abused and dishonour'd me
Even in the strength and height of injury!
Beyond imagination is the wrong
That she this day hath shameless thrown on me.

DUKE SOLINUS

Discover how, and thou shalt find me just.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

This day, great duke, she shut the doors upon me,

While she with harlots feasted in my house.

DUKE SOLINUS

A grievous fault! Say, woman, didst thou so?

ADRIANA

No, my good lord: myself, he and my sister
To-day did dine together. So befall my soul
As this is false he burdens me withal!

LUCIANA

Ne'er may I look on day, nor sleep on night,
But she tells to your highness simple truth!

ANGELO

O perjured woman! They are both forsworn:
In this the madman justly chargeth them.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

My liege, I am advised what I say,
Neither disturbed with the effect of wine,
Nor heady-rash, provoked with raging ire,
Albeit my wrongs might make one wiser mad.
This woman lock'd me out this day from dinner:
That goldsmith there, were he not pack'd with her,
Could witness it, for he was with me then;
Who parted with me to go fetch a chain,
Promising to bring it to the Porpentine,
Where Balthazar and I did dine together.
Our dinner done, and he not coming thither,
I went to seek him: in the street I met him
And in his company that gentleman.
There did this perjured goldsmith swear me down
That I this day of him received the chain,
Which, God he knows, I saw not: for the which
He did arrest me with an officer.
I did obey, and sent my peasant home
For certain ducats: he with none return'd
Then fairly I bespoke the officer
To go in person with me to my house.
By the way we met
My wife, her sister, and a rabble more
Of vile confederates. Along with them
They brought one Pinch, a hungry lean-faced villain,
A mere anatomy, a mountebank,
A threadbare juggler and a fortune-teller,
A needy, hollow-eyed, sharp-looking wretch,

A dead-looking man: this pernicious slave,
Forsooth, took on him as a conjurer,
And, gazing in mine eyes, feeling my pulse,
And with no face, as 'twere, outfacing me,
Cries out, I was possess'd. Then all together
They fell upon me, bound me, bore me thence
And in a dark and dankish vault at home
There left me and my man, both bound together;
Till, gnawing with my teeth my bonds in sunder,
I gain'd my freedom, and immediately
Ran hither to your grace; whom I beseech
To give me ample satisfaction
For these deep shames and great indignities.

ANGELO

My lord, in truth, thus far I witness with him,
That he dined not at home, but was lock'd out.

DUKE SOLINUS

But had he such a chain of thee or no?

ANGELO

He had, my lord: and when he ran in here,
These people saw the chain about his neck.

Second Merchant

Besides, I will be sworn these ears of mine
Heard you confess you had the chain of him
After you first forswore it on the mart:
And thereupon I drew my sword on you;
And then you fled into this abbey here,
From whence, I think, you are come by miracle.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

I never came within these abbey-walls,
Nor ever didst thou draw thy sword on me:
I never saw the chain, so help me Heaven!
And this is false you burden me withal.

DUKE SOLINUS

Why, what an intricate impeach is this!
I think you all have drunk of Circe's cup.
If here you housed him, here he would have been;
If he were mad, he would not plead so coldly:
You say he dined at home; the goldsmith here
Denies that saying. Sirrah, what say you?

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

Sir, he dined with her there, at the Porpentine.

Courtezan

He did, and from my finger snatch'd that ring.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

'Tis true, my liege; this ring I had of her.

DUKE SOLINUS

Saw'st thou him enter at the abbey here?

Courtezan

As sure, my liege, as I do see your grace.

DUKE SOLINUS

Why, this is strange. Go call the abbess hither.
I think you are all mated or stark mad.

Exit one to Abbess

AEGEON

Most mighty duke, vouchsafe me speak a word:
Haply I see a friend will save my life
And pay the sum that may deliver me.

DUKE SOLINUS

Speak freely, Syracusian, what thou wilt.

AEGEON

Is not your name, sir, call'd Antipholus?
And is not that your bondman, Dromio?

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

Within this hour I was his bondman sir,
But he, I thank him, gnaw'd in two my cords:
Now am I Dromio and his man unbound.

AEGEON

I am sure you both of you remember me.

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

Ourselves we do remember, sir, by you;
For lately we were bound, as you are now
You are not Pinch's patient, are you, sir?

AEGEON

Why look you strange on me? you know me well.

ANTIPHOLUS

I never saw you in my life till now.

AEGEON

O, grief hath changed me since you saw me last,
And careful hours with time's deformed hand
Have written strange defeatures in my face:
But tell me yet, dost thou not know my voice?
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

Neither.

AEGEON

Dromio, nor thou?

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

No, trust me, sir, nor I.

AEGEON

I am sure thou dost.

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

Ay, sir, but I am sure I do not; and whatsoever a
man denies, you are now bound to believe him.

AEGEON

Not know my voice! O time's extremity,
Hast thou so crack'd and splitted my poor tongue
In seven short years, that here my only son
Knows not my feeble key of untuned cares?
Though now this grained face of mine be hid
In sap-consuming winter's drizzled snow,
And all the conduits of my blood froze up,
Yet hath my night of life some memory,

My wasting lamps some fading glimmer left,
My dull deaf ears a little use to hear:
All these old witnesses--I cannot err--
Tell me thou art my son Antipholus.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

I never saw my father in my life.

AEGEON

But seven years since, in Syracuse, boy,
Thou know'st we parted: but perhaps, my son,
Thou shamest to acknowledge me in misery.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

The duke and all that know me in the city
Can witness with me that it is not so
I ne'er saw Syracuse in my life.

DUKE SOLINUS

I tell thee, Syracusian, twenty years
Have I been patron to Antipholus,
During which time he ne'er saw Syracuse:
I see thy age and dangers make thee dote.

Re-enter AEMILIA, with ANTIPHOLUS of Syracuse and DROMIO of Syracuse

AEMELIA

Most mighty duke, behold a man much wrong'd.

All gather to see them

ADRIANA

I see two husbands, or mine eyes deceive me.

DUKE SOLINUS

One of these men is Genius to the other;
And so of these. Which is the natural man,
And which the spirit? who deciphers them?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

I, sir, am Dromio; command him away.

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

I, sir, am Dromio; pray, let me stay.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

AEgeon art thou not? or else his ghost?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

O, my old master! who hath bound him here?

AEMELIA

Whoever bound him, I will loose his bonds
And gain a husband by his liberty.
Speak, old AEgeon, if thou be'st the man
That hadst a wife once call'd AEmilia
That bore thee at a burden two fair sons:
O, if thou be'st the same AEgeon, speak,
And speak unto the same AEmilia!

AEGEON

If I dream not, thou art AEmilia:
If thou art she, tell me where is that son
That floated with thee on the fatal raft?

AEMELIA

By men of Epidamnum he and I
And the twin Dromio all were taken up;
But by and by rude fishermen of Corinth
By force took Dromio and my son from them
And me they left with those of Epidamnum.
What then became of them I cannot tell
I to this fortune that you see me in.

DUKE SOLINUS

Why, here begins his morning story right;
These two Antipholuses, these two so like,
And these two Dromios, one in semblance,--
Besides her urging of her wreck at sea,--
These are the parents to these children,
Which accidentally are met together.
Antipholus, thou camest from Corinth first?
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

No, sir, not I; I came from Syracuse.

DUKE SOLINUS

Stay, stand apart; I know not which is which.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHESUS

I came from Corinth, my most gracious lord,--

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

And I with him.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHESUS

Brought to this town by that most famous warrior,
Duke Menaphon, your most renowned uncle.

ADRIANA

Which of you two did dine with me to-day?
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

I, gentle mistress.

ADRIANA

And are not you my husband?
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHESUS

No; I say nay to that.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

And so do I; yet did she call me so:
And this fair gentlewoman, her sister here,
Did call me brother.

To Luciana

What I told you then,
I hope I shall have leisure to make good;
If this be not a dream I see and hear.

ANGELO

That is the chain, sir, which you had of me.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

I think it be, sir; I deny it not.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

And you, sir, for this chain arrested me.

ANGELO

I think I did, sir; I deny it not.

ADRIANA

I sent you money, sir, to be your bail,
By Dromio; but I think he brought it not.

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

No, none by me.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

This purse of ducats I received from you,
And Dromio, my man, did bring them me.
I see we still did meet each other's man,
And I was ta'en for him, and he for me,
And thereupon these errors are arose.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

These ducats pawn I for my father here.

DUKE SOLINUS

It shall not need; thy father hath his life.

Courtezan

Sir, I must have that diamond from you.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

There, take it; and much thanks for my good cheer.

AEMELIA

Renowned duke, vouchsafe to take the pains

To go with us into the abbey here
And hear at large discoursed all our fortunes:
And all that are assembled in this place,
That by this sympathized one day's error
Have suffer'd wrong, go keep us company,
And we shall make full satisfaction.
Thirty-three years have I but gone in travail
Of you, my sons; and till this present hour
My heavy burden ne'er delivered.
The duke, my husband and my children both,
And you the calendars of their nativity,
Go to a gossips' feast and go with me;
After so long grief, such festivity!

DUKE SOLINUS

With all my heart, I'll gossip at this feast.

Exeunt all but Antipholus of Syracuse, Antipholus of Ephesus, Dromio of Syracuse and Dromio of Ephesus

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

Master, shall I fetch your stuff from shipboard?
ANTIPHOLUS

OF EPHEBUS

Dromio, what stuff of mine hast thou embark'd?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

Your goods that lay at host, sir, in the Centaur.
ANTIPHOLUS

OF SYRACUSE

He speaks to me. I am your master, Dromio:
Come, go with us; we'll look to that anon:
Embrace thy brother there; rejoice with him.

Exeunt Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

There is a fat friend at your master's house,
That kitchen'd me for you to-day at dinner:
She now shall be my sister, not my wife.

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

Methinks you are my glass, and not my brother:
I see by you I am a sweet-faced youth.

Will you walk in to see their gossiping?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

Not I, sir; you are my elder.

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

That's a question: how shall we try it?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

We'll draw cuts for the senior: till then lead thou first.

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

Nay, then, thus:

We came into the world like brother and brother;

And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.