



THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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**THE
COMEDY OF ERRORS**

**BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

1589 - 1595

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CONTENTS

ACT 1

Scene 1

Scene 2

ACT 2

Scene 1

Scene 2

ACT 3

Scene 1

Scene 2

ACT 4

Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 4

ACT 5

Scene 1

ACT 5

SCENE 1**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 EPHESUS; 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 EPHESUS; 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 EPHESUS; 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 EPHESUS; 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 EPHESUS; 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 EPHESUS; Sir, he dined with her there, at the Porpentine.

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

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS; '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, Syracusan, what thou wilt.

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

DROMIO OF EPHESUS; 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 EPHESUS; 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 OF EPHESUS; 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 EPHESUS; Neither.

AEGEON; Dromio, nor thou?

DROMIO OF EPHESUS; No, trust me, sir, nor I.

AEGEON; I am sure thou dost.

Exeunt

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