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Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
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Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
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The Comedy of Errors

William Shakespeare

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THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

by

William Shakespeare

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SOLINUS, Duke of Ephesus

AEGEON, a merchant of Syracuse

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHEBUS twin brothers and sons to

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE Aegion and Aemelia

ROMIO OF EPHEBUS twin brothers, and attendants on

ROMIO OF SYRACUSE the two Antipholuses

BALTHAZAR, a merchant

ANGELO, a goldsmith

FIRST MERCHANT, friend to Antipholus of Syracuse

SECOND MERCHANT, to whom Angelo is a debtor

PINCH, a schoolmaster

AEMILIA, wife to AEGeon; an abbess at Ephesus

ADRIANA, wife to Antipholus of Ephesus

LUCIANA, her sister

LUCE, servant to Adriana

A COURTEZAN

Gaoler, Officers, Attendants

SCENE: Ephesus

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

ACT I. SCENE 1

A hall in the DUKE'S palace

Enter the DUKE OF EPHEBUS, AEGEON, the Merchant of Syracuse, GAOLER, OFFICERS, and other ATTENDANTS

AEGEON. Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,

And by the doom of death end woes and all.

DUKE. 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 threat'ning 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 condemn'd to die.
AEGEON. Yet this my comfort: when your words are done,
My woes end likewise with the evening sun.
DUKE. Well, Syracusian, say in brief the cause
Why thou departed'st from thy native home,
And for what cause thou cam'st to Ephesus.
AEGEON. A heavier task could not have been impos'd
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 sorrow gives 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 liv'd in joy; our wealth increas'd
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 arriv'd 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 disdnguish'd but by names.
That very hour, and in the self-same inn,
A mean 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

Before the always-wind-obeying deep
 Gave any tragic instance of our harm:
 But longer did we not retain much hope,
 For what obscured light the heavens did grant
 Did but convey unto our fearful minds
 A doubtful warrant of immediate death;
 Which though myself would gladly have embrac'd,
 Yet the incessant weepings of my wife,
 Weeping before for what she saw must come,
 And piteous plainings of the pretty babes,
 That mourn'd for fashion, ignorant what to fear,
 Forc'd me to seek delays for them and me.
 And this it was, for other means was none:
 The sailors sought for safety by our boat,
 And left the ship, then sinking-ripe, to us;
 My wife, more careful for the latter-born,
 Had fast'ned him unto a small spare mast,
 Such as sea-faring men provide for storms;
 To him one of the other twins was bound,
 Whilst I had been like heedful of the other.
 The children thus dispos'd, my wife and I,
 Fixing our eyes on whom our care was fix'd,
 Fast'ned ourselves at either end the mast,
 And, floating straight, obedient to the stream,
 Was carried towards Corinth, as we thought.
 At length the sun, gazing upon the earth,
 Dispers'd those vapours that offended us;
 And, by the benefit of his wished light,
 The seas wax'd calm, and we discovered
 Two ships from far making amain to us-
 Of Corinth that, of Epidaurus this.
 But ere they came-O, let me say no more!
 Gather the sequel by that went before.

DUKE. Nay, forward, old man, do not break off so;
 For we may pity, though not pardon thee.

AEGEON. O, had the gods done so, I had not now
 Worthily term'd them merciless to us!
 For, ere the ships could meet by twice five leagues,
 We were encount'red by a mighty rock,

Which being violently borne upon,
 Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst;
 So that, in this unjust divorce of us,
 Fortune had left to both of us alike
 What to delight in, what to sorrow for.
 Her part, poor soul, seeming as burdened
 With lesser weight, but not with lesser woe,
 Was carried with more speed before the wind;
 And in our sight they three were taken up
 By fishermen of Corinth, as we thought.
 At length another ship had seiz'd on us;
 And, knowing whom it was their hap to save,
 Gave healthful welcome to their ship-wreck'd guests,
 And would have reft the fishers of their prey,
 Had not their bark been very slow of sail;
 And therefore homeward did they bend their course.
 Thus have you heard me sever'd from my bliss,
 That by misfortunes was my life prolong'd,
 To tell sad stories of my own mishaps.

DUKE. And, for the sake of them thou sorrowest for,
 Do me the favour to dilate at full
 What have befall'n of them and thee till now.

AEGEON. My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
 At eighteen years became inquisitive
 After his brother, and importun'd me
 That his attendant-so his case was like,
 Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name-
 Might bear him company in the quest of him;
 Whom whilst I laboured of a love to see,
 I hazarded the loss of whom I lov'd.
 Five summers have I spent in farthest Greece,
 Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia,
 And, coasting homeward, came to Ephesus;
 Hopeless to find, yet loath to leave unsought
 Or that or any place that harbours men.
 But here must end the story of my life;
 And happy were I in my timely death,
 Could all my travels warrant me they live.

DUKE. Hapless, Aegeon, whom the fates have mark'd

To bear the extremity of dire mishap!
Now, trust me, were it not against our laws,
Against my crown, my oath, my dignity,
Which princes, would they, may not disannul,
My soul should sue as advocate for thee.
But though thou art adjudged to the death,
And passed sentence may not be recall'd
But to our honour's great disparagement,
Yet will I favour thee in what I can.
Therefore, merchant, I'll limit thee this day
To seek thy help by beneficial hap.
Try all the friends thou hast in Ephesus;
Beg thou, or borrow, to make up the sum,
And live; if no, then thou art doom'd to die.
Gaoler, take him to thy custody.
GAOLER. I will, my lord.
AEGEON. Hopeless and helpless doth Aegeon wend,
But to procrastinate his lifeless end.
<Exeunt

SCENE 2

The mart

Enter ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE, DROMIO OF SYRACUSE,
and FIRST
MERCHANT

FIRST MERCHANT. Therefore, give out you are of Epidamnum,
Lest that your goods too soon be confiscate.
This very day a Syracusan merchant
Is apprehended for arrival here;
And, not being able to buy out his life,
According to the statute of the town,
Dies ere the weary sun set in the west.
There is your money that I had to keep.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. Go bear it to the Centaur, where we
host.

And stay there, Dromio, till I come to thee.
Within this hour it will be dinner-time;
Till that, I'll view the manners of the town,
Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings,
And then return and sleep within mine inn;
For with long travel I am stiff and weary.
Get thee away.

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE. Many a man would take you at your word,

And go indeed, having so good a mean.

<Exit

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. A trusty villain, sir, that very oft,
When I am dull with care and melancholy,
Lightens my humour with his merry jests.
What, will you walk with me about the town,
And then go to my inn and dine with me?

FIRST MERCHANT. I am invited, sir, to certain merchants,
Of whom I hope to make much benefit;
I crave your pardon. Soon at five o'clock,
Please you, I'll meet with you upon the mart,
And afterward consort you till bed time.
My present business calls me from you now.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. Farewell till then. I will go lose myself,

And wander up and down to view the city.

FIRST MERCHANT. Sir, I commend you to your own content.

<Exit FIRST MERCHANT

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. He that commends me to mine own content

Commends me to the thing I cannot get.

I to the world am like a drop of water

That in the ocean seeks another drop,

Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,

Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.

So I, to find a mother and a brother,

In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself.

Enter DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

Here comes the almanac of my true date.

What now? How chance thou art return'd so soon?

DRAMIO OF EPHEBUS. Return'd so soon! rather approach'd too late.

The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit;

The clock hath stricken twelve upon the bell-

My mistress made it one upon my cheek;

She is so hot because the meat is cold,

The meat is cold because you come not home,

You come not home because you have no stomach,

You have no stomach, having broke your fast;

But we, that know what 'tis to fast and pray,

Are penitent for your default to-day.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. Stop in your wind, sir; tell me this, I pray:

Where have you left the money that I gave you?

DRAMIO OF EPHEBUS. O-Sixpence that I had a Wednesday last

To pay the saddler for my mistress' crupper?

The saddler had it, sir; I kept it not.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. I am not in a sportive humour now;

Tell me, and dally not, where is the money?

We being strangers here, how dar'st thou trust

So great a charge from thine own custody?

DRAMIO OF EPHEBUS. I pray you jest, sir, as you sit at dinner.

I from my mistress come to you in post;

If I return, I shall be post indeed,

For she will score your fault upon my pate.

Methinks your maw, like mine, should be your clock,

And strike you home without a messenger.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. Come, Dromio, come, these jests are out

of season;

Reserve them till a merrier hour than this.

Where is the gold I gave in charge to thee?

DRAMIO OF EPHEBUS. To me, sir? Why, you gave no gold to me.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. Come on, sir knave, have done your

foolishness,

And tell me how thou hast dispos'd thy charge.

DROMIO OF EPHESUS. My charge was but to fetch you from the mart

Home to your house, the Phoenix, sir, to dinner.

My mistress and her sister stays for you.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. Now, as I am a Christian, answer me

In what safe place you have bestow'd my money,

Or I shall break that merry sconce of yours,

That stands on tricks when I am undispos'd.

Where is the thousand marks thou hadst of me?

DROMIO OF EPHESUS. I have some marks of yours upon my pate,

Some of my mistress' marks upon my shoulders,

But not a thousand marks between you both.

If I should pay your worship those again,

Perchance you will not bear them patiently.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. Thy mistress' marks! What mistress, slave, hast thou?

DROMIO OF EPHESUS. Your worship's wife, my mistress at the Phoenix;

She that doth fast till you come home to dinner,

And prays that you will hie you home to dinner.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. What, wilt thou flout me thus unto my

face,

Being forbid? There, take you that, sir knave.

[Beats him]

DROMIO OF EPHESUS. What mean you, sir? For God's sake hold your

hands!

Nay, an you will not, sir, I'll take my heels.

<Exit

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. Upon my life, by some device or other

The villain is o'erraught of all my money.

They say this town is full of cozenage;

As, nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,

Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,

Soul-killing witches that deform the body,

Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks,

And many such-like liberties of sin;
If it prove so, I will be gone the sooner.
I'll to the Centaur to go seek this slave.
I greatly fear my money is not safe.
<Exit

ACT II. SCENE 1

The house of ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHEBUS

Enter ADRIANA, wife to ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHEBUS, with LUCIANA, her sister

ADRIANA. Neither my husband nor the slave return'd
That in such haste I sent to seek his master!
Sure, Luciana, it is two o'clock.

LUCIANA. Perhaps some merchant hath invited him,
And from the mart he's somewhere gone to dinner;
Good sister, let us dine, and never fret.
A man is master of his liberty;
Time is their master, and when they see time,
They'll go or come. If so, be patient, sister.

ADRIANA. Why should their liberty than ours be more?

LUCIANA. Because their business still lies out o' door.

ADRIANA. Look when I serve him so, he takes it ill.

LUCIANA. O, know he is the bridle of your will.

ADRIANA. There's none but asses will be bridled so.

LUCIANA. Why, headstrong liberty is lash'd with woe.
There's nothing situate under heaven's eye
But hath his bound, in earth, in sea, in sky.
The beasts, the fishes, and the winged fowls,
Are their males' subjects, and at their controls.
Man, more divine, the master of all these,
Lord of the wide world and wild wat'ry seas,
Indu'd with intellectual sense and souls,
Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls,
Are masters to their females, and their lords;
Then let your will attend on their accords.

ADRIANA. This servitude makes you to keep unwed.

LUCIANA. Not this, but troubles of the marriage-bed.

ADRIANA. But, were you wedded, you would bear some sway.

LUCIANA. Ere I learn love, I'll practise to obey.

ADRIANA. How if your husband start some other where?

LUCIANA. Till he come home again, I would forbear.

ADRIANA. Patience unmov'd! no marvel though she pause:
They can be meek that have no other cause.

A wretched soul, bruis'd with adversity,
We bid be quiet when we hear it cry;
But were we burd'ned with like weight of pain,
As much, or more, we should ourselves complain.
So thou, that hast no unkind mate to grieve thee,
With urging helpless patience would relieve me;
But if thou live to see like right bereft,
This fool-begg'd patience in thee will be left.

LUCIANA. Well, I will marry one day, but to try.
Here comes your man, now is your husband nigh.

Enter DROMIO OF EPHEBUS

ADRIANA. Say, is your tardy master now at hand?

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS. Nay, he's at two hands with me, and that
my
two

ears can witness.

ADRIANA. Say, didst thou speak with him? Know'st thou his
mind?

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS. Ay, ay, he told his mind upon mine ear.
Beshrew his hand, I scarce could understand it.

LUCIANA. Spake he so doubtfully thou could'st not feel his
meaning?

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS. Nay, he struck so plainly I could to
well feel his blows; and withal so doubtfully that I could
scarce understand them.

ADRIANA. But say, I prithee, is he coming home?

It seems he hath great care to please his wife.

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS. Why, mistress, sure my master is horn-
mad.

ADRIANA. Horn-mad, thou villain!

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS. I mean not cuckold-mad;

But, sure, he is stark mad.

When I desir'd him to come home to dinner,