

**THE COMEDY OF
ERRORS: A COMEDY
IN FIVE ACTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649265510

The Comedy of Errors: A comedy in five acts by William Shakespeare

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Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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ERRORS: A COMEDY
IN FIVE ACTS**

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The Comedy of Errors

A Comedy in Five Acts

By
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
Arranged for School Performance

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
1912

Harvard College Library
F. B. Chase
20 Dec. 1912

The Comedy of Errors

CHARACTERS

THE DUKE OF EPHEBUS.

ÆGEON, *a merchant of Syracuse.*

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHEBUS, } *twin brothers and sons to Ægeon.*
ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE, }

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS, } *twin brothers and attendants on the two*
DROMIO OF SYRACUSE, } *Antipholuses.*

BALTHAZAR, *a merchant.*

ANGELO, *a goldsmith.*

DR. PINCH, *a schoolmaster.*

FIRST MERCHANT, *friend to Antipholus of Syracuse.*

SECOND MERCHANT, *to whom Angelo is a debtor.*

A MONK.

A SERVANT.

ADRIANA, *wife to Antipholus of Ephesus.*

LUCIANA, *her sister.*

LUCE, *servant to Adriana; voice only; does not appear.*

LESBIA.

NOTE

This play may be presented successfully without scenery, but should be appropriately costumed. Since this will require the services of a theatrical costumer, descriptions are superfluous.



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The Comedy of Errors

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A Hall in THE DUKE'S Palace at Ephesus.*

(THE DUKE of Ephesus, ÆGEON, LORDS, OFFICERS, and GUARDS discovered.)

ÆGEON. Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,
And, by the doom of death, end woes and all.

DUKE. Merchant of Syracuse, plead no more.
It hath in solemn synods been decreed,
Both by the Syracusans and ourselves,
To admit no traffic to our adverse towns:
Nay, more; if any, born at Ephesus, be seen
At any Syracusan marts and fairs,
Again, if any Syracusan 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.

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

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

ÆGEON. A heavier task could not have been impos'd;—
In Syracuse was I born, and wed
Unto a woman.
With her I liv'd in joy; our wealth increas'd,
By prosperous voyages I often made
To Epidamnum. There 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 selfsame inn,
 A poor 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.
 The sailors sought for safety by our boat,
 And left the ship, then sinking-ripe, to us.
 My wife, most careful for the latter born,
 Had fasten'd him unto a small spare mast ;
 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,
 Fasten'd ourselves at either end the mast.
 At length the seas wax'd calm, and we discovered
 Two ships from far, making amain to us ;
 But ere they came,
 Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst.
 Her part 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 the shipwreck'd guests ;
 Thus was my life prolonged,
 To tell sad stories of my own mishaps.

DUKE. And, for the sake of them thou sorrowest for,
 Do me the favor to dilate at full

What hath befall'n of them, and thee, till now.

ÆGEON. My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
 At eighteen years became inquisitive
 After his brother ; and importun'd me,

That his attendant
Might bear him company in the quest of him.
Whom whilst I labor'd of a love to see,
I hazarded the loss of whom I lov'd.
Five summers have I spent in furthest Greece,
Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia,
And, coasting homeward, came to Ephesus.
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 (*rising*). Hapless Ægeon, were it not against our laws,
My soul should sue as advocate for thee.
But, though thou art adjudged to the death,
And passed sentence may not be recall'd,
Yet will I favor thee in what I can:
Therefore, merchant, I'll limit thee this day
To seek thy hope by beneficial help:
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.

[*Exeunt DUKE and LORDS, L. I E.*]

ÆGEON. Hopeless, and helpless, doth Ægeon wend,
But to procrastinate his liveless end.

[*Exeunt ÆGEON, GUARDS, etc., R. I E.*]

SCENE II.—*A Public Place.*

*Enter ANTIPHOLUS of Syracuse, DROMIO of Syracuse, and a
MERCHANT, L.*

MERCH. 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,
Dies ere the weary sun set in the west.
There is your money that I had to keep.

(*Gives a bag of money to A. OF S.*)

A. OF S. Go bear it to the Centaur, where we host,
And stay there, Dromio, till I come to thee.

(*Gives the bag to D. OF S.*)

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.

D. OF S. Many a man would take you at your word,
And go indeed, having so good a mean. [*Exit, R.*]

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

MERCH. 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 bedtime ;
My present business calls me from you now.

A. OF S. Farewell till then. I will go lose myself,
And wander up and down to view the city.

MERCH. Sir, I commend you to your own content. [*Exit, L.*]

A. OF S. 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, failing 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 Ephesus, R.

What now ? How chance thou art return'd so soon ?
D. OF E. Return'd so soon !—rather approach'd too late.
The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit ;
The clock hath strucken 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.

- A. OF S. Stop in your wind, sir ; tell me this, I pray :
 Where have you left the money that I gave you ?
- D. OF E. Oh, sixpence that I had o' Wednesday last
 To pay the saddler for my mistress' crupper ;
 The saddler had it, sir, I kept it not.
- A. OF S. I am not in a sportive humor 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 ?
- D. OF E. 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.
- A. OF S. 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 ?
- D. OF E. To me, sir ? Why, you gave no gold to me !
- A. OF S. Come on, sir knave, have done your foolishness
 And tell me how thou hast dispos'd thy charge ?
- D. OF E. My charge was but to fetch you from the mart
 Home to your house, the Phoenix, sir, to dinner ;
 My mistress and her sister stay for you.
- A. OF S. 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 undisposed.
 Where is the thousand marks thou hadst of me ?
- D. OF E. 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.
- A. OF S. Thy mistress' marks ! what mistress, slave, hast
 thou ?
- D. OF E. 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.