

# [. . . [a]ffection,](https://assignbuster.com/affection/)

. . . [A]ffection, Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood. Of what it likes or loathes. . . . So can I give no reason, nor I will not, More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing I bear Antonio, that I follow thus A losing suit against him. Are you answered? In Venice, the Court convenes for Antonio’s trial. The duke of Venice greets Antonio and expresses pity for him, calling Shylock an inhuman monster who can summon neither pity nor mercy. Antonio says he knows the duke has done all that he can to lawfully counter Shylock’s malicious intentions, and that since nothing else can be done, Antonio will respond to Shylock’s rage “ with a quietness of spirit" (IV. i. 11). The duke summons Shylock into the courtroom and addresses him, saying that he believes that Shylock means only to frighten Antonio by extending this drama to the brink of performance. No one, the duke says, believes that Shylock actually means to inflict such a horrible penalty on Antonio, who has already suffered the loss of his ships. Shylock reiterates his intentions and says that should the court deny him his right, the city’s very laws and freedoms will be forfeit. Shylock offers no explanation for his insistence other than to say that certain hatreds, like certain passions, are lodged deep within a person’s heart. Shylock hates Antonio, and for him that is reason enough. Bassanio, who has arrived from Belmont, attempts to argue with Shylock, but Antonio tells him that his efforts are for naught. Hatred and predation, Antonio suggests, come as naturally to some men as they do to the wolf. Bassanio offers Shylock six thousand ducats, twice the amount of the original loan, but Shylock turns down the offer, saying he would not forfeit his bond for six times that sum. When the duke asks Shylock how he expects to receive mercy when he offers none, Shylock replies that he has no need for mercy, as he has done nothing wrong. Just as the slave-owning Christians of Venice would refuse to set their human property free, Shylock will not relinquish the pound of flesh that belongs to him. The duke says that he has sent messages to the learned lawyer, Doctor Bellario, asking him to come and decide on the matter. News comes that a messenger has arrived from Bellario, and Salarino runs off to fetch him. Meanwhile, Bassanio tries, without much success, to cheer up the despairing Antonio. Nerissa enters, disguised as a lawyer’s clerk, and gives the duke a letter from Bellario. Shylock whets his knife, anticipating a judgment in his favor, and Gratiano accuses him of having the soul of a wolf. Shylock ignores these slurs and states resolutely, “ I stand here for law" (IV. i. 141). The duke alludes to the fact that Bellario’s letter mentions a learned young lawyer named Balthasar, and orders the disguised Nerissa to admit the young man to the court. The duke then reads the letter in its entirety. In it, Bellario writes that he is ill and cannot come to court, but that he has sent the learned young Balthasar to judge in his stead. You will answer ‘ The slaves are ours.’ So do I answer you. The pound of flesh which I demand of him Is dearly bought. ‘ Tis mine, and I will have it.