

The plot of *The Merchant of Venice* begins with Antonio, a depressed Christian merchant in Venice, unable to lend money to his friend Bassanio. When Antonio struggles to repay the loan, Bassanio and Graziano rush back to Venice with Portia and Nerissa secretly following as men. Bassanio borrows the money to court Portia in Belmont, where he successfully chooses the right casket and wins her hand in marriage.