

Egeon; Duke of Ephesus

EGEON

At length another ship had seized on us,
And, knowing whom it was their hap to save,
Gave healthful welcome to their shipwrecked 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 severed from my bliss,
That by misfortunes was my life prolonged
To tell sad stories of my own mishaps.

DUKE

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

EGEON

My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
At eighteen years became inquisitive
After his brother, and importuned me
That his attendant, so his case was like,
Reft of his brother, but retained 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 loved.
Five summers have I spent in farthest Greece,
And, coasting homeward, came to Ephesus,
Hopeless to find, yet loath to leave unsought
Or that or any place that harbours men.

DUKE

Merchant of Syracuse, plead no more:
I am not partial to infringe our laws.
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 Syracusan marts and fairs;
Again, if any Syracusan born
Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies,
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 condemned to die.