

Other People's Money

by Stefanie Giebert and the students of the (Business) English Theatre Project, summer 2011
staged 7 and 8 June 2011, Reutlingen University

based on William Shakespeare's
The Merchant of Venice

Characters

Ann Tonnier

Sally (Sal) – business journalist, friend of Ann

Solange (Sol)- business journalist, friend of Ann

Baz – young man who spends too much money, Ann's best friend from old days

Grace – Baz' friend, works in advertising

Lawrence – Baz' friend

Ruth Shylock – an alternative banker

Jessica – her daughter, Lawrence's girlfriend

Lancy – Shylock's secretary

Sheila – Lancy's friend

Lisa – Jessica's friend

Katie – Jessica's friend

Mr. Jin – Applicant at Belmont Enterprises

Mrs. Wang – Mr. Jin's colleague

Portia – heiress of Belmont Enterprises

Nerissa – Portia's assistant

Mr. Cameron, the 2nd applicant at Belmont Enterprises

THE INTERVIEW The Venice, a coffeehouse.

ANN, SALLY, and SOL. Another person is setting up a camera, preparing to film them for an interview.

SALLY (*adjusting Ann's clothes, maybe applying some powder to Ann's face*)

Ok, before we start, should we do a little warm-up?

SOL (*to Ann*)

Hey, you're not looking too happy. What is it? Nerves?

SALLY

But you've been on TV before.

ANN

I don't know what it is. I just feel worn-out.

SALLY

Oh, you're feeling depressed? ... I know an excellent-

ANN

I'm not crazy! I don't need a therapist. They're all frauds anyway.

SOL

Or maybe it's burnout? The hours you're working – if I had kept up that pace since college I'd be dead by now. I wonder how you do it. Ever thought about taking a break? A sabbatical?

ANN

No, no... it's all fine. It'll pass. Just feeling a bit under the weather today. (*They sit down at a table*)

SOL

Ok, then let's just get this over with quickly. Ready? (*The camera person signals that they are filming now. Sally talks to the camera.*)

SALLY

So in this week's high potential interview we have Ann Tonnier, young, promising venture capitalist.

SOL

She has recently invested in wind engine and solar panel companies, promising that green investments will be the next high profit field.

ANN

Yes, I think they might. As long as you do it right and with an eye for money. Not like these eco-investors like Ruth Shylock who only think of saving the world and let that come between them and the profitability of their projects. I mean, she's been in the business for 20 years and made some money – but hey, who of us wants to wait 20 years? Except barefooted hippies maybe... Move in fast, move out fast, that's the only way to do it. (*Ann gets a text message on her cellphone and looks worried.*)

SALLY

Thank you Ann. We know that has always been your strategy. But you are, to be honest, looking a little worried right now – could it be this week's developments on the stock market?

(*Ann is still busy with her cell phone*)

SOL

Well, personally, I can't eat gummy bears anymore without thinking of the stock market.

SALLY

Hmm?

SOL

Gummy bears... thinking of a *bear* market...?

SALLY

Oh! I see. Yes. How about drinking some Red Bull instead? That will make you think of a bull market and it tastes like gummy bears... No? Um... So back to Ann. I guess I would be worried too if I had as many risky ventures going as she has... (*to the camera*) As you might know, she is one of the financiers behind Desert Sun and Storm Power and she's also one of the big players on the futures market.

SOL

I could understand only too well if she was worried. I mean - don't you ever sit at the breakfast table, and when you pour yourself a glass of orange juice you start worrying about your futures?

ANN (*has finally turned her attention back to the interview*)

Well, investing in commodity futures surely is a risky business – I mean, you're betting on the price of orange juice for which the oranges haven't even been plucked yet.

SALLY

And thoughts like that could obviously prevent my colleague Sol here from having a healthy breakfast. But how about you, Ann – do you start worrying about the prices on the pork belly market when you sit down to bacon and eggs?

ANN

Well, not enough to become a vegetarian at any rate. And I still drink orange juice. As I said, commodity futures are a volatile sector, but as long as you diversify you should be fine.

SALLY

Right. Having a varied portfolio is always a good idea. And Ann's portfolio contains energy projects and commodity futures. (*realises*) Which are both risky, actually! So I think this might well cause her sleepless nights.

ANN

I have a good eye for the market. Don't worry about me. It may be risky but the profits are worth it. (*Baz, Grace and Lawrence enter, ANN looks up and SOL follows her glance*)

SOL

So, your worry is not about business... Why, then you are in love?

ANN

Oh shut up!

SOL

Not in love either? Then let us say you are sad, because you are not merry. And let's hope that even sad investors can still make the stock market happy.

SALLY

So, that's it for this week's interview. Thank you for watching "Market Watch" and we hope that you'll be with us again next week. Good luck with your transactions from Sally and Sol. (*signals to the camera person to stop filming*) Sol, what the hell was that – asking if she's in love? We'll have to cut that.

ANN

I hope so.

SOL

I was trying to spice it up a bit. Adding a bit of human interest! Because... Here comes Baz, our old friend... (*to Ann, theatrically*) Fare ye well... We leave you now with better company. (*to SALLY*) Come on, Sally... We'd only be in the way.

ANN

(*theatrically*) I take it your own business calls on you, and you take the occasion to depart. (*back to normal*) Nice meeting you, though, keep in touch.

SALLY

Baz, Grace, Lawrence... What a surprise!

BAZ

Sally, Sol, hey... long time, no see! Always so busy! You still owe me a clubbing day...

SALLY

Yeah, we'll check our schedules... We'll find a day, promised!

SALLY and SOL and their team pack up.

LAWRENCE (*to Baz*)

Ok, you've found her, now we'll go. See you tonight!

BAZ

I will not fail you.

GRACE

Ann, you sure look tired. You're working too much! You'll have a heart-attack one of these days if you're not careful and then what?

ANN

All's the world's a stage, Gracie, where everyone must play a part, and mine a sad one.

GRACE

Oh come on, don't be so depressed! Well, at least you've got one advantage over me - you'll never have to worry about getting laughter lines in your face! Hey, just kidding! But if you're not careful, you'll have lots of worry lines, here, around the mouth, and there, between the eyebrows, oh, not nice, not at all! What do you say? Hey, don't scowl at me, it makes you look even more worried- Oh, talking about worried, Lawrence, have I ever told you about that guy who- Oh well, but let's leave those two for the moment, I see Baz is getting to look all wrinkled too, he's surely concerned about something as well, so let's go now and I tell you on the way out. (*Grace starts to leave*)

LAWRENCE

Sure. Baz, we'll see you at dinner. Maybe I'll have a chance of actually talking to you then.

GRACE (*calling*)

Are you coming? You know, this guy I mentioned, he had this incredibly important customer and he had this.... (*Lawrence and Grace go out*)

ANN

Peace and quiet. Thank God!

BAZ

She's quite a chatterbox... good old Grace...

ANN

Okay, but you didn't come here to talk to me about her, did you?

BAZ

No. Ann... You're my best friend.

ANN

Yes.

BAZ
You know – I'm kinda broke.

ANN
Again?

BAZ
Still. Lived a bit beyond my means.

ANN
Oh yeah, designer suits, Westside apartment, the Maserati, the Harley... I know.

BAZ
Yeah, and I'm not complaining about being in debt. But now my most important goal is to get rid of my debts – and I know that I owe you most of all... and since you're my best friend, I'm sure I can trust you with this plan I have to actually get clear of all the debts I owe.

ANN
Well, what is it? Tell me! And if it is within my means to help you, I will. You know that.

BAZ
Yes. Ann... You and I...

ANN (*hopefully*)
Yes?

BAZ
Do you remember, after school, when I was practising with my bow and arrow-

ANN (*disappointed*)
Oh yeah. I was always mad at you when you wouldn't let me try them out.

BAZ
Yes, you never wanted to play squaw to my Indian warrior.

ANN
I wanted to be a warrior too!

BAZ
Anyways, you know when I shot an arrow and lost it? I usually shot another one in the same direction and then I often found both! So, what I wanted to say is, would you shoot another arrow in the same direction? Chances are good that this way you'll get back all the money you invested in me. If not, then I will at least pay back what you give me now and stay in your debt for the rest.

ANN

You know me well, so why are you making a long story out of it? Do you doubt my faith in you? If you do, then this is worse than if you'd lost all the money you borrowed.

BAZ

Okay. Good. So there is this woman. (*Ann looks disappointed.*) Portia, heiress to Belmont enterprises. This company that is active on so many markets? I mean, I normally don't notice that much, but there are Belmont products everywhere. Portia is incredibly rich. She's not quite ugly either... I met her at a party once... So, now Portia's daddy has died and she is looking for a senior managing partner for her firm.

ANN

And you think she will hire you as senior manager. You, with your great amount of management expertise...?

BAZ

Well, I said I met her before and I guess... I might stand a chance with her. On the personal level... And that's very important, too. I bet she would take me if I could only make it through the assessment center. But... I would need some money to travel there and... um... impress her.

ANN

I certainly want to help you but... You know... I'm not liquid at the moment. I have all my money invested. *Ann's cellphone rings* Yes? (*listens*) Solar Quest shares? Yes? (*loses the connection*) Sorry – I didn't get that, could you repeat? (*listens*) Oh! They're falling? Good. So it worked. Then wait until they're at 16... no, 15 and then buy. Great. Thanks. (*to Baz*) Sorry Baz.

Baz

No problem. Your solar stuff venture? (*She nods.*) I don't mind when you're making money....

Ann

No, you wouldn't... (*her timer beeps, she checks*) Oh lord, sorry, Baz I have to run, have a meeting in ten minutes. I totally forgot... Can we talk about this later?

Baz

Are you coming for dinner with Lawrence and Grace? And Lawrence said he'd bring his new girlfriend, too. At La Gondola? A new Italian. They say his Lasagna is just to die for...

Ann

I'll try to come! (*she hurries out*)

BREAKFAST AT SHYLOCK'S

Ruth Shylock *is sitting at breakfast with a business magazine.*

Shylock (*trying to read*)

I don't believe it! Solar Quest? Where are my glasses? (*starts looking for her glasses*)

Jessica (*calling from offstage*)

Mom!?

Shylock

Yes, what is it?

Jessica (*still offstage*)

Have you seen my pink shirt?

Shylock

(*mumbling*) Have I seen your pink shirt... Girl, you're 18 and can't keep track of your own wardrobe.... (*shouting*) Unless you've left it in your new boyfriend's bed it's probably in the laundry! (*reading*) Prices for Solar Quest shares are rocketing? I'll be damned if there isn't some speculator behind that. Who'll drop all the shares once they're high enough... Make profit quickly and then take the money and run... and leave the company to pick up the pieces...

Jessica (*hurrying in*)

Mom, I'm running late, I'll take the car, alright?

Shylock

Have you had breakfast?

Jessica

No. Mom, can I-

Shylock

You shouldn't start your day without breakfast.

Jessica

I might get something from the cafeteria-

Shylock

Stuffing yourself with junk-food... Have some cereal-

Jessica

Thanks, no, I've got to go. So I'll take the car, right?

Shylock

Do you know just how much CO₂ you'll burden this poor planet's atmosphere with just because you always oversleep? If you didn't always stay out to party quite so long, then you'd be able to get up at a decent time and bike to college – like I did when I was your age.

Jessica

Yes, I know and you also joined an anti-war demonstration on the way, enlightened a couple of downtrodden housewives about feminism and saved at least one endangered species before arriving on campus. I know you're a hero, Mom, but maybe I'm just different, okay? Love you, bye!

Shylock

Jessica! Did you revise for that language test you told me about?? (*Jessica is already gone.*) What do I do with that girl...? Almost as bad as Solar Quest... (*turns back to reading*)

CRISIS AT BELMONT HEADQUARTERS

(*Portia at her desk, Nerissa enters with coffee*)

PORTIA:

Jesus, Nerissa, I'm so sick of all this.

NERISSA:

(*teasing*) You'd have reason to be, if your problems were as big as your fortune. (*relents*) Okay, but I see that those who have too much can be just as sick as those who starve with nothing. Why don't you try for the middle way?

PORTIA:

You are wise Nerissa and what you say is right, of course.

NERISSA

Then why don't you draw the consequences?

PORTIA

Oh Nerissa... If it were so easy to practise what you preach... I could easily convince people that it is healthier for them to give up their career and go live as Buddhist monks... but I wouldn't want to do that myself. Sure, I could go and forsake my inheritance and live modestly but free...

NERISSA

You could – and be rid of all this trouble with the company...

PORTIA

But I want to work in this company. And I want my share of the inheritance. And if I can only get it by fulfilling the conditions of daddy's testament, fine... (*Pause*) So is the will of a living daughter ruled by the will of a dead father. But isn't it hard Nerissa, this being the 21st century and me not having any say in the matter? I mean, it's like an arranged marriage.

NERISSA

You are merely looking for a senior manager. You don't have to marry anyone.

PORTIA

But it's almost as bad. I love this company and I don't want just anyone to meddle with it.

NERISSA

You've got to trust your father's intuition, I'm afraid.

PORTIA

We should have put him under tutelage in his last years. Crazy old guy... As if I couldn't make my own decisions. I'd be able to manage the firm on my own. Why couldn't he trust me?

NERISSA

A daughter who would have put him under tutelage?

PORTIA

Oh, come on...

NERISSA

Well, how did you like the people who have presented themselves so far?

PORTIA

You got the list? Good. Read it to me again, please. I'll probably remember them when you tell me their names.

NERISSA

What did you think about the English guy, John Davis?

PORTIA

If I was round and made of leather, we'd probably get on really well.

NERISSA

Beg your pardon?

PORTIA

Oh, I heard him telling the others about the last football world cup. He said he didn't eat, sleep, shower or shave for six weeks because he had to watch every game.

NERISSA

How about the Israeli then? I guess there's no danger of him getting distracted by the next soccer world cup.

PORTIA

Too Jewish.

NERISSA

And the Polish lady, Ms Wojciechowski?

PORTIA

Too Catholic. And no sense of style – her clothes looked as if she'd stolen one piece each from the suitcases of the other ones.

NERISSA

Well, maybe her own suitcase got lost and she had to...borrow? You never know. (*Pause*) So, how did you like the Spanish gentleman, whose name was, um... Carlos María Eduardo García de la Cal Fernández Leal Luna Delgado.... López?

PORTIA

Oh, I haven't talked to him. He doesn't understand me and I don't understand him. He only speaks Spanish! And I don't. He's not bad-looking though...

NERISSA

But you're looking for a manager, not a model.

PORTIA

And I wouldn't want to conduct all my conversations in mime.

NERISSA

Well, how did you like Mike O'Brian, the Irish candidate?

PORTIA

Not very much in the morning, when he was sober, and even less in the afternoon, when he was drunk. When he is best, he is probably a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast. No please, not him. So... Can you understand now why I'm depressed?

NERISSA

Yes. It's not easy. Especially since you have so little influence on the procedure. But... I received an email yesterday from a young man named Baz... Do you remember him?

PORTIA

Baz... Yes! I do, Mr. Trump's party... right? Are we talking of the same person?

NERISSA

We are. He'd heard of your father's death and was writing me to tell you how sad he was to hear this news.

PORTIA

Oh... That's sweet of him.

NERISSA

I have a feeling that he might find his way here before too long.

PORTIA

Now... wouldn't that be nice.... Nerissa, have you handed the terms and conditions to all the applicants?

NERISSA

Sure. It's the first thing they get from me when they arrive. So, I wouldn't worry. They'll know

the conditions and that they have to sign the agreement before they take the test. They know that there's a lot at stake.

PORTIA

Thank God for that agreement. Let's hope it scares them all off.

NERISSA's

(Her cellphone rings) Yes? *(listens)* Yes, okay, thank you. So... Good news: the whole group has read the agreement and decided not to try their luck. And bad news: A new delegation is on the way, from China.

PORTIA

Oh great. If only I could welcome them as happily as I see the other ones go... I hope I won't live to see Belmont Enterprises ruled by Chinese investors... Chinese... what are they like, what will I have to prepare myself for?

NERISSA

Hmmm. I can read up on it, I took this intercultural training course once, I still have the papers somewhere. And I saw this book "Chinese War Stratagems" lying around in the library. You know, the Chinese base a lot of their negotiation strategies on these tricks and they usually sound like some strange proverb.

Portia

Proverb?

NERISSA

Yes. Like... 'point at the fish when you want to shoot the owl'

PORTIA

Point at the fish?

NERISSA

Or something... I'll go and refresh my memory before they come. Don't worry.

GETTING A LOAN

La Gondola, an Italian restaurant. Baz and Grace, seated at a table, have been discussing money for a while.

Baz

Find a bank, find a bank! It's not that easy! Ever since the financial crisis, banks have become pretty careful and I can hardly hide that I in the last few years have spent a bit more than was good for me.

Grace

So they know that you're really really deep in the red *(looks at her glass of red wine)* – good wine by the way... Oh, sorry - and won't give you credit. Hm...

(Lawrence and Jessica arrive)

Grace
Hey Lawrence! Over here!

Baz
And that must be Jessica! Nice bit of work...

Grace
She's Lawrence's girlfriend, so keep your fingers to yourself.

Baz
Sure. Hi Lawrence! Hey!

Lawrence
Hi! This is Jessica. Jessica, my old friends Baz and Grace.

Jessica
Hi, nice meeting you. He's told me a lot about you.

Grace
Great, then you already know that my friend here is totally broke and we are trying to figure out a way he could make a lot of money in a short time.. *(They laugh)*

Jessica
Excuse me for a second. *(She goes to hang up her coat and Lawrence helps her)*

Baz
Thanks Grace...

Grace
You're welcome. Hey - she would eventually have known that you don't own a single dollar - when it came to paying the bill at the latest. *(Jessica and Lawrence come back and sit down too)* Hm...
What else? Play the lottery?

Baz
Takes too long to win...

Grace
Go to the casino-

Baz
They won't let me in...Not anymore...

Lawrence
Rob a bank?

Baz
Again, you've drawn a blank. I couldn't even afford a gun.

Grace

Find a well-paid job?

Baz

I'm too young to work. No, actually... that's what I'm trying to do. But in order to land this fantastic job I need this little sum to get me started. I have to get a new outfit, charter a plane, book rooms at the best hotel in the city – in sum, look as if I could already afford to spend the salary which I will be earning if I actually get the post.

Grace

Hm... Speculate on the stockmarket?

Baz

Better leave that to Ann. My last try was a complete disaster.

Grace

Oh, talk of the devil, here she comes! (*shouting through the room*) Ann! I always thought you were making tons of money every day!? And now you cannot lend a little to an old friend?

Ann (*comes to their table, slightly annoyed at the shouting*)

Well, I'd love to, but it's all invested in some project or other.

Grace

But if you don't have money right now, couldn't you get a loan instead of Baz? You shouldn't have any difficulties with banks.

Ann

Yes, I could but do you know what that would mean for my credit rating?

Grace

Ummm... No? Hey, I work in advertising... I'm just interested in how we can get people to spend money on certain products. How they can get enough money to spend... well, I don't have clue!

Ann

Okay. If I get a loan, then my bank will know about it. And I have several loans running, funding for my projects. If my banks hear that I have taken another loan, they could increase interest on my loans considerably – and if I can't react – since my capital is invested, I go bankrupt. Finished. Kaput. I don't think that would help.

Jessica (*has been listening attentively*)

But you would get a loan for him if your bank wouldn't know?

Ann (*surprised*)

Yes. Sure.

Jessica

Then, how about peer to peer credits? Find a private lender? And your bank won't know.

Ann

Hmmmm.

Baz
Jessica, you're a smart girl!

Jessica
Thanks...

BAZ
Ann - if I find you a private lender, would you try?

Ann
Well... From what I've heard, the interest rates a private lender can charge can be pretty high. But yes, yes I would try it, sure. *(her cell phone rings)* Oh shit, sorry! *(she gets up and wanders off)*
Yes? Yes. Oh no! Why couldn't you sell them? Damn...

Baz
But where do I find such a fabulous private lender? Put an ad on the internet?

Jessica whispers to Lawrence

Lawrence
There are internet platforms where you can do that. But... Do you know Jessica's mum?

Baz
The hippie? Oh sorry. I always heard that your mum was some kind of communist hippie – no offence. Your mum lends money to other people?

Jessica
She's some kind of alternative investor, runs some kind of eco-bank. She takes money from people who want to invest their money and have a good conscience about it and gives it to people who want to build wells in Africa or start a farm with happy cows in New Jersey, whatever... The only problem is... you'd have to pretend that you need the money for some kind of wonderful project that will help humanity and make the world better, bla bla bla....

Baz
Oh, no problem – I mean, isn't securing a promising young man a future a great investment in humanity?

Jessica
... Are you ethically safe? Environmentally friendly? Politically correct? Sustainable?

Baz
Oh very much. No, honestly I can think of something.

Grace
Yeah, developing great visionary schemes is something he's good at. Even though he's not quite as good in implementing them.

Baz
So... your mum... why not? What was her name again?

Jessica
Ruth. Ruth Shylock.

ANN (*coming back, has only heard the last words of the conversation*)
Shylock? You aren't talking about the crazy hippie who's financing all kinds of help-to-make-the-world-better schemes? Are you? Oh Baz....

Baz
Why not? What's the problem?

ANN
You'll see.

THE CHINESE DELEGATION IS GETTING READY

Mr. Jin and Mrs. Wang, an office

Mr. Jin
Okay, now let's run through this once more. We want to make a good impression. So we will behave as they do. So what have you found out?

Mrs. Wang
They don't have hierarchies, so we will have to greet everyone the same way.

Mr. Jin
Okay, greet everyone. No hierarchies.

Mrs. Wang
And we should get to the point quickly. Western people don't want to wait.

Mr. Jin
Okay, then we can save money for hotel costs. I mean, if we can get back quickly?

Mrs. Wang
Yes. And you have to look them in the eyes. All the time. They think that is important. Otherwise they think you don't like them.

Mr. Jin
Good, if you say so. And... Oh, wait, the boss is French. What do we know about French people?

Mrs. Wang
They always kiss when they meet.

Mr. Jin
Okay, good. Are we ready to do that?

Mrs. Wang
I don't know...

Mr. Jin

If it would make a good impression, then I think we should do it.

Mrs. Wang

And what if they have a cold? Then we'll catch their germs.

Mr. Jin

Getting a job as senior business partner in that firm is worth a cold, I think.

Mrs. Wang (*sighs*)

All right, if you think so.

THE BOND

Shylock and Baz are sitting in Shylock's office. At some time during the conversation, Shylock starts opening letters that are sitting in a pile on her desk, she uses a knife to open the letters. She glances at the letters briefly before putting them onto a different pile.

SHYLOCK

300 000, well.

BASSANIO

Yes, for three months. To dig wells in the desert.

SHYLOCK

Wells in the desert. And three months only?

BASSANIO

It's not a very deep desert. I mean, you don't have to dig so deep. And, as I told you, Ann Tonnier will act as a surety.

SHYLOCK

Ann Tonnier will act as a surety, right.

BASSANIO

Do we have a deal?

Shylock

I think I have heard somewhere that Miss Tonnier's means are invested in different projects. Part of it in a Russian gas pipeline, another part in a wind-farm off the African coast, another in a big dam-building project in China, right, and I hear that her latest project consists of solar panels in the Libyan desert? Risky business, isn't it? What about sea storms? What about dictators and civil war? Risky indeed. But still, I think I will make a deal with you.

BASSANIO

You won't regret it.

SHYLOCK

Won't I? Give me some time to consider and I will speak with her.

BASSANIO

How about lunch at La Gondola?

SHYLOCK

Yes, to smell pork... Eat the poor creatures that your friend Ann made such wonderful profit with in the last few years. Pork belly futures, right? Trading the meat of pigs that aren't even born yet and once they are born they haven't got long to live and under what circumstances... Futures, indeed... so that she can have a future so many animals can have none. No, thanks. I will do business with you but I'd rather not dine with you.

BASSANIO

I'm sure Luigi at La Gondola does vegetarian too. Pizza tofu, maybe?

SHYLOCK

Vegan, not vegetarian. Pizza contains cheese, you know. I don't consume any animal products.

BASSANIO

Oh. I'm sure he also serves an excellent... um... pasta bianca.

SHYLOCK

And that would be?

BASSANIO

Noodles with nothing?

SHYLOCK

Very funny... *(a knock)* Yes? ANN is lead in by Lancy

LANCY

Sorry to disturb. She said it was urgent.

SHYLOCK

And if a murderer with an axe rings at my door and says it is urgent you will let him in too, yes?

LANCY

Sorry.

(goes out)

BAZ

Ann. May I introduce: Ann Tonnier. Ruth Shylock.

SHYLOCK (*icily*)

Ann Tonnier – what a pleasant surprise.

BAZ

Ann, can I have a quick word with you? (*he turns to explain the situation to Ann*)

SHYLOCK

(*Aside*) Pin-striped atrocity! Capitalist vulture...making fun of me whenever she has the opportunity. One entry in her blog, one word to her journalist friends Sally and Solange and I'm the laughing stock of the business world. The one-woman-bank who wants to make the world a better place – what a laugh! And now – turn around 180 degrees... she has the cheek to propagate green investments – going ethical, the new fashion! I have worked hard to make money in a responsible way and now she and her capitalist locust friends come and try to make a quick profit before they wander off to exploit the next market! But maybe having her at my mercy is not such a bad thing... Not bad at all...

BAZ

Ms Shylock?

ANN

Ms Shylock. Nice to meet you. Even though I usually wouldn't do business with people as... exotic as you... my friend here has urgent business that needs financing, so, I'll break a custom...

SHYLOCK

Because the banks have become careful of bad credits and will not give him a loan and you don't want to risk getting a bad rating from your bank?

ANN

I assume Baz has informed you how much he needs and for how long?

SHYLOCK

He has.

ANN

So, what do you think?

SHYLOCK

How often have you made fun of me? Called me a crazy pot-smoking hippie no sane person would give money to for her strange green projects? And now you want to borrow money for digging wells in the desert? You, who have ridiculed me all these years and called me unfit to be in business at all? What should I say to you? Oh thank you so much for making fun of me and for this I will gladly lend you money? You called me crazy and expect me to cry out with joy now that you finally deign to do business with me?

ANN

I might very likely call you so again. It is my friend who needs the money for a venture of his own which I think is worth supporting. If you lend me the money, please don't treat me like one of your dope-head, aura-seeing friends – I don't like Chai tea and soy-milk, thank you very much. Lend it rather to your enemy, for if I break, you can with better face exact the penalty. And dance naked around the bonfire afterward if you like...

SHYLOCK

Why, look, how you storm! I am open-minded, so open-minded that I will even do business with you and your... friend. I will lend you the money, free of interest – how does that sound?

BASSANIO

That's very kind.

SHYLOCK

Yes, and to make this a bond that lives up to the expectations you apparently have of me, let's make this a special contract. If you repay me not on such a day, in such a place, such sum or sums as are expressed in the contract, let the penalty be that I will be the owner of an equal pound of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken in what part of your body I like. (*Ann and Baz laugh, unbelieving*) You think me a witch – so I have to offer you a voodoo contract, right?

ANN

Oh this is great... Yes, I'll seal to such a bond. And tell all my friends that you are a very generous investor!

BAZ

Ann – you must be kidding. No, sorry, you shouldn't seal to such a bond for me.

ANN

Why, fear not, man... I will not forfeit it. Within these two months, that's a month before this bond expires, I expect to have earned three times the value of this bond.

SHYLOCK

Oh Lord, what, are you suspicious? Have you watched your friend Ann's dealings too closely to trust somebody who is, for a change, honest? I mean, what do I gain by taking a pound of flesh off her? If you've already forgotten, I'm a vegan. I'd probably even do her a favour with that, one pound less she has to lose through dieting... And if I take it at the right place she can save the trip to the plastic surgeon.

ANN

Yes, whatever! Don't you worry for me Shylock, you won't have to speculate about selecting a good spot since I will pay you back in advance. Come on, Baz, let's get it over with, I will seal unto this bond.

SHYLOCK (*goes out*)

Lancy!

LANCY

Yes? Would you like some coffee?

SHYLOCK

What are you doing? Playing farmville on facebook again? On my computer, while I pay you for work you never get done? What am I, a public charity? Come on, get me the forms for a loan contract. Thanks! *(She comes back, Lancy follows with some forms)* No! Not the green ones. The red ones. Oh Lord, do I have to do everything myself? *(they go out)*

LANCY *(pokes her head back in)*

Her coffee is not very good anyway. It's this fair-trade stuff, tastes like vinegar. I only wish she would let me buy true Italian espresso, but no... too expensive...*(Lancy goes back out.)*

BAZ

Well, at least the secretary knows what is good...

ANN

Now... Who would have thought the old witch had a sense of humour? Voodoo contract... I love it.

BAZ

I don't like it.

ANN

But you've got the money now – so go and don't worry about me. I expect my profits to come in long before the bond matures. *(Pause)* Now, go and buy what you need. Get some new outfits, hire the best management trainers in the city – or in the whole country – to prepare for that assessment center –

BAZ

And I could hire a secretary and a driver...

ANN

Yes, all you need and come back as senior management partner at Belmont enterprises!

(They embrace)

The application

Sheila is sitting in a café, reading a report. Lancy appears at the door, spots her and walks up to her.

Lancy

Sweetie! Sweetie! Hi!

Sheila
Oh, hi-

Lancy
Hey, how are things going with Ben?

Sheila
Oh, leave me alone. *(Sheila turns back to her papers)*

Lancy
Still not speaking to each other?*(Pause, Sheila doesn't answer)* Sweetie you've got to help me!

Sheila
I want to read this report. And why aren't you at work?

Lancy
Oh, Ms. Shylock has gone out for the afternoon... Yoga or something. Or to her psychologist. She got so worked up about something that she had to go and see her guru – or her therapist, I forget which. Listen, I've got a problem. I really need to change my job.

Sheila
Again?

Lancy
Look, look, I've got all these books. *(takes books about application-writing out of the bag)* I really need your help. I'm quitting, I can't take it any longer. I've got to get out of this dump. I'm sure I'm meant for higher things.

Sheila
Higher than that? I wonder you can walk in them at all. *(looks at Lancy's heels)*

Lancy
No, not my heels... I mean, a better job... slaving away for the old witch is getting me nowhere. I mean, my good heart says – no Lancy, you should not leave your employer. But my inner voice says yes do it, you deserve better than this. Besides, the pay is just awful. How am I to pay for the dress I bought yesterday? And the nail polish? I run through two bottles every week. So, I'm going to try my luck and you have to help me write an impli-appli-impli... um... *(looks at the book's title)* application.

Sheila
But... why should I help you?

Lancy
Because... because if you help me you can have your own personal beauty day with me. I'll do your nails, your hair, your make-up... I am going to make you look so gorgeous that Ben will be speechless with jealousy.

Sheila
A beauty day? Hm, sounds like good a deal... Okay. But I don't know much about applications.

Lancy

No problem. ... This is the plan: You read to me from these books and I get my application together. Here, that's as far as I got but I'm not completely sure about it.

Sheila (*reads Lancy's application letter*)

“Please find enclosed my VC which I am downgrading to you as an implication for the position of your secretary”. Umm, yes, sounds good. Even though I don't understand it.

Lancy

That's because it is business language. It said in the book that “the first paragraph should state why you are writing to them”. Here is where it goes on. Can you read it to me?

Sheila

Wait – what kind of are you applying at?

Lancy

Some guy is looking for a private secretary. Offers very good pay. So come on, read it.

Sheila (*reads*)

“Analyse your career and summarise it in a few sentences, highlight what you specialise in, or how many years in the industry you might have, or even the level that you have reached.”

Lancy

What, wait, not so fast. Highlight what?

Sheila

Umm... What you specialise in.

Lancy

Spending as much time as possible on my nails and my hair and as little as possible on sorting the files without Ms. Shylock noticing....

Sheila

I don't think that will get you the job. Hm... the level you have reached...

Lancy

Hey, I've reached quite a high level at playing Farmville on facebook.

Sheila

Are you kidding? This is not about computer games. It's about how good you are at something.

(*reads*) “This paragraph should direct the reader to your CV and should sell you on some unique points that you might have.”

Lancy (*looking at her curves*)

Oh, I have some unique points!

Sheila

Hm... I don't think that's what they mean. And if you don't get invited to an interview you won't get much chance to show them off. Unless you want to include a full-body photo.

Lancy

I can do that. I did a photo-shoot with Frank some time ago. Really beautiful pictures. We were at the beach-

Sheila

But it says here that you should not include a picture at all unless you are applying for a job as a model or TV presenter or something.

Lancy

That's a great idea! I've always wanted to be a model! (*she mimes walking the catwalk*)

Sheila (*a bit embarrassed by her friend's behaviour*)

I don't know... models are on a diet all the time.

Lancy (*comes back*)

Okay, maybe secretary is better.

Sheila

Um... you could write that you are very good at working with the PC. They don't have to know that it's Farmville.

Lancy (*sits down again*)

Cool! You're a genius.

Sheila (*reads*)

"Respond to their needs. If they are asking for someone with good co-ordination skills, then ensure you mention something to that effect."

Lancy

I'm very coordinated – I can carry a coffee cup and doughnut while reading a magazine without bumping into the door-frame.

Sheila

Oh, I think I know the word for that! That is multitasking.

Lancy

Ok, then I will write: I am very multitasking?

Sheila

I think it has to be: I can do multitasking. Or something like that... (*sighs*) Hm. Maybe you should send him a photo after all... with all your unique points...

The Chinese delegation arrives

Portia and Nerissa are waiting to welcome the Chinese managers.

Portia
Hello, nice to meet you.

Mrs. Wang and Mr. Jin enter, Mrs. Wang whispers to Mr. Jin
We've got to kiss them.

The Chinese rush towards Portia and Nerissa and try to embrace and kiss them.

Mr. Jin
(to Nerissa) Nice to meet you. *(to Mrs. Wang)* Both cheeks?

Mrs. Wang
I think so. *(to Portia)* Nice to meet you.

Portia
Oh, yes, yes, hello. Um. *(wipes her cheek)*

Nerissa *(whispers)*
Small talk!

Portia
So... I hope you had a pleasant flight...

Mr. Jin
Yes.

Nerissa *(to herself)*
Was that just “stomp the water to scare the snake”?

Portia *(slightly confused, talking really fast)*
It's really too bad with the strike. You know the people around here are always on strike for something or other, really terrible. I hope you weren't affected by it?

Mr. Jin and Mrs. Wang
Yes. *(They smile)*

Portia
Oh? *(she looks to Nerissa for help.)*

Nerissa *(looking through her book, talking to herself, doesn't notice Portia's look)*
Or maybe it was “disturb the water to catch the fish”? *(Portia is getting desperate but doesn't get any help.)*

Mr. Jin *(whispering to Mrs. Wang)*
What did she say?

Mrs. Wang
I don't know.

Portia
Do you understand me?

Mr. Jin and Mrs. Wang
Yes.

Portia doesn't know what to say.

Nerissa (*emerges from her book, whispers to Portia*)
Offer them something to drink.

Portia
Ok, would you like something to drink?

Mr. Jin and Mrs. Wang
Yes.

Portia (*talking very fast again*)
Good. What would you like to drink? A glass of water, orange juice, cherry juice, pineapple juice, espresso, latte, mocha, café au lait? Or tea?

Mr. Jin and Mrs. Wang
Yes.

Portia
Tea?

Mr. Jin and Mrs. Wang
Yes.

Portia
Nerissa, tea for our guests please? And the usual for me.

Embarrassed silence. Nerissa goes to get the tea things and a coffee for Portia. Portia goes to help her.

Mrs. Wang (*whispering to Mr Jin*)
I don't like tea. I wanted coffee.

Portia
Great, here we are. Chinese are very fond of tea, yes?

Mr. Jin
Can we take the test now?

Portia
Oh, no, no need to hurry. Here. (*hands over the tea cups*)

Mrs. Wang

Thank you. (*drinks, to Jin*) Their tea is awful.

Portia *to Nerissa*

What do we do with them? They want to take the test now!

Mrs Wang *to Mr Jin*

They could at least have served Chinese tea. And not this... It tastes like dishwater.

Nerissa (*to Portia*)

But it said in the book that Chinese need a lot of time to get acquainted so we've scheduled the test for tomorrow afternoon, allowing for a company tour and dinner and... The others will only arrive tomorrow!

(*The Chinese secretly empty their tea-cups into the flowerpot.*)

Portia (*quietly discussing with Nerissa, then turning back to her guests*)

Good? (*looks into their cups*) Oh, you were really thirsty. Here's more. (*Pours them more tea.*)

Mr. Jin (*slightly desperate*)

About the test- Can you tell us more about it?

Mrs. Wang

If we take it today we'll save a lot of time.

Portia

Oh, you want to take the test now? But first we've got to get to know each other a bit better and Nerissa here wanted to show you around.

Nerissa:

Yes, take a tour around the company? We do that for all candidates. Give them a chance to have a look at the headquarters and the surroundings, explain about our company's history. We are a family firm, you know, the company has been in the family for three generations and we want-

Mrs. Wang

That is very interesting. But could you explain more about the test maybe?

Mr. Jin

What type of assessment center is it going to be?

Nerissa

Umm... (*whispers to Portia*) Why do they keep staring at us? Do I have something funny on my nose?(*to the Chinese*) Oh... okay, um... you will have to choose between several options and explain your reasoning. Um, yes. And the tour... How about we take the tour and I tell you something about the assessment center, so you can combine both?

Portia

But we mustn't-

Nerissa
Shh. Sacrifice the plum tree to preserve the peach tree.

Portia
Huh? Okay, whatever.

Mr. Jin and Mrs. Wang
Yes. Okay.

Nerissa
Great. Then we will meet in the lobby in half an hour, so you can refresh yourselves and then take the tour.

Mr. Jin and Mrs. Wang
Okay. (*They go out*)

Mr. Jin (*on their way out*)
These Western people are really strange.

JESSICA'S PLAN

Jessica and her friends Katie and Lisa meet for coffee in front of a café

Jessica (*comes running*)
Oh sorry, sorry I'm late...

Lisa
What kept you so long?

Jessica
Oh you know.... I was talking to Lawrence on the phone...

Katie
Lawrence? What Lawrence?

Jessica
Yes. I've got to tell you something! You won't believe it! A real surprise! He's my new boyfriend!
I'm so happy!

Lisa
What? You're not talking about that Lawrence we know from college? The one in business studies who's in his senior year?

Jessica
Yes I am! He's so wonderful!

Katie
Jessie! What do you see in a guy like that? I mean, I never really noticed him, he just seemed to be...

Lisa
Completely exchangeable, no personality.

Jessica
I think he's cute. He's so... so normal. Not one of those alternative guys that Mom likes. You know what?

Lisa
No?

Jessica
I am going to leave my mother and I am going to go off with Lawrence. Burn all the bridges. Start a new life.

Katie
I need a drink. (*they enter the café*)

Jessica
I want to marry him, have 2 kids, a small house and be a stay-at-home Mom.... A normal family.

Lisa
You're not serious!?

Katie
And your mum?

Jessica
Well, I'm not going to tell her. Surprise, surprise...

Katie
A surprise?

Lisa
You're just 18, you don't to want run off with a man and have kids, at your age!?

Jessica
You can come baby-sit!

Lisa
I hate kids.

Katie
Jessie the housewife... (*Jessica is angry*) Can you cook?

Jessica.
Um... Not really.

Katie
What are you going to serve? Sandwiches?

Lisa

That will also be a surprise... for your boyfriend!

Jessica

Oh, come on! I can learn. I just want to have a normal family.

Katie

And what are your plans? Where will you get the money to buy the house you are talking about?

Jessica

We'll think of something. (*Katie and Lisa are whispering*) Hey, what are you doing? I thought you were my friends?

Lisa

Okay. Okay, it's fine. If that's the kind of person you want to be, then be it.

Jessica (*sullenly*)

Yeah – over my Mom's dead body, I guess.

Katie

Well, she certainly won't like what you are planning to do.

Jessica

No, I guess not.

Katie

She only wants the best for you!

Jessica

Mom... I'm sure she just wants the best. But she's so... so extreme... She just can't do 'normal'.

Lisa

What you are planning is pretty drastic, too.

Jessica

I mean, she has this complex, she has to prove to everyone that she can do it despite being what she is... a minority... a woman, black, Jewish, eco-feminist...yeah, you name it, she's every minority you could imagine! Which is okay, if only she'd leave *me* in peace! But she wants me to be like her!

Katie

Is that so bad?

Jessica

You can't imagine what it's like. I remember my 6th birthday. I had asked for a princess party and Mom had promised to let me have a party just like the other girls. And I was so happy. But then...

Lisa

Then?

Jessica

Oh, it was so embarrassing! She couldn't let us play the way we wanted, no, she told my friends that princesses couldn't just sit around in their castle and wait to be rescued by a prince. No, princesses must think about finding a job of their own, take responsibility! Or if they are so rich that they don't have to work then they must at least spend their time and money on making the world a better place, help the poor and so on... I mean, telling that to a group of six-year-olds who just want to dress up pretty and feel good about it!?

Lisa

But she took care of you, she gave you a home, a good education. Without her you'd be nothing...

Jessica

Oh come on!

Katie

No?

Jessica

Yes... Probably. But... I mean that's also something I hate about her – sometimes I think that I'm just another of her projects. But I want to live my own life!

Katie

Okay. Then do it. You have made up your mind and nothing we say is going to make you change it.

Jessica

But you must not tell anybody about it. Promise.

Lisa and Katie

Okay. Promise.

Lisa

But don't blame us if this doesn't work out.

Lancy's reservation

Lancy in a new office. It turns out this is Baz's office

Baz (*entering with a cup of coffee*)

Lancy – that espresso is really great. I never tasted a better one.

Lancy

Thanks. It was the best I could get. Oh, um – and the most expensive...

Baz

As long as it's good... By the way, did you do what I asked you to do?

Lancy

Oh, you mean the preservation? Um... The restoration...? Um, reservation! Yes, I did. Three nights for three people, right?

Baz

Me, Jessica, Lawrence, yes. And a return flight for me and a one-way flight for my friends.

Lancy

Why just a one-way flight for them?

Baz

They don't want to return here for some time.

Lancy

Oh. Take an extended holiday?

Baz

Sort of... travel around a bit... And the hotel, is it good?

Lancy

Yes. I booked you and your friends into a very good hotel. At least I think so, I mean the person I phoned didn't speak so much English and my French is not so good... the hotel... it was something with a knight... and I thought that fits because you are also going on a quest, like a knight...

Baz

What was it called?

Lancy (*is looking for the note she wrote*)

Hotel Shield or something... no, Hotel Armour I think. (*finds it*) Ah! Here it is. (*hands it to Baz*)

Baz

Hotel Armour? (*reads*) Oh! Hotel d'Amour... Okay... Oh, but that means "love", I think. Hotel Love?

Lancy

Oh, that's not too bad either, is it? It must be a really good hotel. I mean, it's really expensive.

Baz

Uhuh...

Lancy

And very flexible. You can check out every hour. And you pay by the hour, actually.

Baz

Oh. Okay...

Lancy

I mean, the receptionist asked me how many hours I wanted and I said three days and she got really strange and asked if I didn't mean three hours. And I said, no, no, three days and she said, oh, your boss must be a really potent man. And I said, yes, he's a real high potential – I guess that's what she meant.

Baz (*the truth is dawning on him, but Lancy has no idea*)

Hm...And you got two rooms, one for me, and one for Lawrence and Jessica?

Lancy

Yeah... you see, there was a little problem because she said it wasn't allowed to bring ladies. And I told her – hey, what century are you living in? Why shouldn't a man share a room with his lady?

Baz

And did you ask her for a single room for Jessica?

Lancy

Yes, I did. And do you know what she said? That this was absolutely impossible and if we must bring the lady then at least she must share a room with the man. Apparently they have really dominant chamber-maids.

Baz

Dominant... chamber-maids?

Lancy

Yes, apparently the maids, or girls, that is what she called them, don't want to work for single women. I didn't quite understand her, she had a bit of an accent...

Baz

Oh, really... Um... Did she mention anything more about the chambermaids by any chance?

Lancy

Yes, she asked if you wanted a dark or a light one, slim or plump and I said, hey, we don't care as long as they clean up decently!

Baz (*trying not to laugh*)

And...?

Lancy

She started laughing! And said that she'd give you Pussy and Gina... Well.. seems to be a hotel with very personal service. Very familial... I mean, if they tell you the names of the maids in advance...

Baz

Um... Lancy?

Lancy

Yes?

Baz

This... um... I'm sure you meant really well... but maybe... Actually... I think I'd be more comfortable in a really big, really anonymous chain-hotel.

Lancy

Oh?

Baz

Hilton or Crowne Plaza maybe, nothing special. Can you try to get us rooms there?

Lancy

Yeah, I can try. But I'm sure this Hotel Love is much more romantic and cozy...

Baz

Oh Lancy, I'm going there for work, basically. Do me a favour and change the reservation, yes?

Lancy

Okay...

Baz

Lancy, you're a darling! *He turns to go, talking to himself.* Hotel d'amour... Oh man... Maybe Ann was right. Maybe I shouldn't have chosen my secretary for her taste in espresso...

BAD NEWS FOR ANN

Split stage: In one half, Sal and Sol in a TV studio, talking to the camera.

In the other half, Ms. Shylock is sitting in front of a TV set, watching, while Jessica is clandestinely taking packets of bank-notes out of a box, packing them into a bag. Shylock does not notice because she is too absorbed by the news.

Sal

Hello this is Sally and Solange. Welcome to today's edition of Market Watch.

Sol

Yes, hello and today, I'm afraid to say, we have some pretty bad news concerning some of the new promising markets.

Sal

Do you remember last month's interview with Ann Tonnier, the young venture capitalist with the good eye for the market?

Sol

Well, it seems that Ann and everybody who has invested in the big Desert Sun project will have to fear for their capital.

Sal

As you will have heard on the general news there is a lot of political unrest in the North-African countries, which might turn into a civil war and the North-African partners for Desert Sun have suddenly withdrawn from the project negotiations.

Shylock (switches off the TV, lights off on Sal and Sol. Shylock gets up, getting ready to leave, Jessica stops what she was doing)

Looks like I will really get an opportunity to teach that arrogant little lady a good lesson. Too bad I'm a vegan.

Jessica (not sure if her mother has noticed her theft, decides to distract her)

Mom, you're not serious, are you?

Shylock

Why not – we signed a contract. If she doesn't pay she's forfeited a pound of her flesh.

Jessica

What's the matter with you – have you gone completely crazy? How could you suggest such a deal?

Shylock

They were asking for it. And Ann Tonnier was really happy to sign it, she won't have to pay any interest and what's a pound of flesh to this diet-crazy society, it's waste anyway. It's a good deal for her.

Jessica (*thinking her mother has finally gone crazy*)

Mom, tell me that you are not going to try to enforce that bond.

Shylock

Why not?

Jessica

Mom, it's insane! And illegal! You can't trade parts of your body away. Organ trade is forbidden and a bad thing and you yourself taught me that it is a terrible crime that the rich countries do business with poor people who have nothing to sell but their own kidneys.

Shylock

Don't get so upset. This is different. I will merely teach her a lesson.

Jessica

Teach her a lesson?

Shylock

Yeah, threaten her a bit.

Jessica

Mom you are... you are so crazy. This is criminal!

Shylock (*getting angry in turn*)

So since when do you have any moral fibers in your pampered body? Telling me that I'm a criminal when your fine friends are making millions of dollars by exploiting the poor, destroying the environment and not giving a damn about where their money comes from?

Jessica

But they are investing in green projects now!

Shylock

Yes, but in what way? They set up big projects – offshore wind farms - that will destroy the natural habitats of so many animals, they will ruin local fisher's lives, they-

Jessica

You always find a hair in the soup, don't you?

Shylock

Jessica, it's not that easy. But I've got to go now. Let's talk about it when I come back.

Shylock leaves.

Jessica (*to herself*)

When you come back, I won't be here anymore. Sorry mum.

(Jessica goes to take her bag, takes some more money and jewellery from the box, takes a final look around and leaves too)

The Assessment Center

Portia, Nerissa and the applicants are gathered for a coffee break before the test starts. They are making small talk.

Baz

Oh yes, yes, I have travelled quite a bit. The Seychelles are really a dream if you're into scuba-diving. Also very nice for wind-surfing. What do you think, ever been to the Seychelles?

Mr. Jin

I think working is more important than scuba-diving.

Mrs. Wang

Besides, you have to earn the money first before you can spend it – on the Seychelles or wherever.

Baz

Yes, yes, of course. But sometimes you just want to have a little fun in life – you cannot always work.

Candidate 2

Oh, so that is what you specialise in?

Baz

Sorry?

Candidate 2

You are an expert in not-working?

Portia

Well, there's also an art to leisure, I'm sure.

Baz to Portia

Yes, and it helps you for your job, too. I mean, it prepares you for certain situations. I mean, when I was surfing off the Australian coast last spring, I look into the water – and there's this shark, right under my board-

Portia (*laughs*)

Well, I don't think the executive board of Belmont is quite that bad.

Mrs. Wang (*only to Mr. Jin, while Baz and Portia continue their small talk. Nerissa turns to sort some papers*)

I don't think he has any chance to get the job.

Mr Jin

All the better for us.

Mrs. Wang.

Yes. But if you get this job, you have got to make sure that they buy decent Chinese tea in the future.

Mr Jin

Yes. Let's go through the papers once more.

Portia *to Baz*

Oh, and what kind of music are you interested in?

Baz

Well, I like....[insert whatever group or singer is currently in the top 10] How about you?

Portia

Oh, I like them too. And I just love heavy metal.

Portia

Heavy metal? You?

Portia

Yes, I know it is surprising, but life is full of surprises, isn't it?

Nerissa *turns back to Baz*

Yes, better keep that in mind, she's really particular about it. (*to everyone*) And now ladies and gentlemen, please get ready we are going to start the test in a few minutes.

Portia

We are going to read out the instructions and then you will get some time to consider. Afterwards you will be asked in individually to present your result.

Nerissa:

You have all signed the agreement: if you fail you will not be allowed to enter into business relations with Belmont or to buy supplies from Belmont and its subsidiaries ever again. You are obliged to keep the procedures and results of this test a secret and if you are not successful you will leave our headquarters immediately.

Portia

Any questions?

Nerissa

Very well, now this is your task. Belmont enterprises is about to launch a new product. It is a perfume for the upmarket sector with an attached cosmetics line, a bit of a luxury product line

actually. And it is going to be named after the lady of the house: Portia. This is about a marketing strategy for this product. How do you think are we going to market this? You will be given three options to choose from and depending on your choice we will know if you can think how this company thinks.

Portia

Good. The campaigns you have to choose between are: the gold campaign, the silver campaign and the lead campaign. Think about what they could consist of and tell us briefly why you choose this way. Okay? Now you can use these separate rooms to prepare your results. And we will call you in one after the other.

Fast forward to half an hour later

Nerissa

The Chinese candidates say they are ready to present. *(calls)* Mrs. Wang? Mr. Jin?

Portia

Very well, would you please let us know about your decision?

Mr. Jin

Yes, of course. We talked about the options you gave us and this is what we thought.

Mrs. Wang

Gold is the most valuable of the three and if you want to market a luxury product you have to stress that this product is something that many people desire. And gold is something desirable for many people, as history has shown.

Mr. Jin

So we think that Belmont would decide for the gold campaign.

Portia

Thank you very much. Now let's see. Nerissa? *(Nerissa gives her a sealed envelope)* Here's my father's assessment of the gold campaign. *(gives the envelope to Mrs. Wang)*

Mrs. Wang *(reads the paper)*

'All that glitters is not gold. Often have you heard that told. Fare you well, your suit is cold.'

Mr. Jin

What exactly does that mean?

Portia

It means that you chose the wrong campaign. I'm sorry. Goodbye. *(Silence)*

Mrs. Wang *(disappointed but trying to keep face)*

Thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. Jin

It was very nice meeting you. Goodbye.

Mrs. Wang

Goodbye. (*they go out, to Mr. Jin*) Oh, I don't know – maybe it is better that we don't do business with them. They are really crazy....

Portia (*to Nerissa*)
Thank goodness.

Nerissa (*goes out to call in the next one*)
The next candidate please. Mr. Cameron?

Mr. Cameron (candidate 2) *comes in, goes to flip chart, uncovers an elaborate equation*

Portia
Your decision?

Mr. Cameron
I have considered different scenarios, calculated probabilities – all derived from the data I could gather in this brief research period, and I have devised a mathematical model which will show you exactly why I made this decision. Ok, if you calculate the quantity of gold in contrast to the worldwide quantities of silver and lead and contrast this with the average esteem each metal is given in different cultures around the world, of course not forgetting to add into this the changes in prices over the last 50 years, and the luxury customer index from 1950 to-

Portia
Please, we don't need the whole model. Just a brief reasoning and then the decision.

Mr. Cameron
Oh, yes, okay. So, gold is thought by 93,5% of the world's population to be the most desirable metal, on the other hand, it was also associated with being faked, by about 45% of European males in 1999 and-

Portia
Yes, yes.

Mr. Cameron
So I would not choose gold. Silver, on the other hand, used to be the basis of many monetary systems. My calculations have shown it to be the metal most associated with reliability and deserved reward. Since I am reliable and do consider that among the candidates, judging according to capability, I deserve this post, I chose silver.

Portia
Thank you. Nerissa, please hand over the envelope. So you can read what my late father thought of a silver campaign.

Mr. Cameron
Thank you. (*reads*) Oh. 'The fire seven times tried this: Seven times tried that judgment is, That did never choose amiss. Some there be that shadows kiss. Such have but a shadow's bliss.' Excuse me but what kind of nonsense is this?

Portia

I'm sorry you consider it offensive but it tells you that you made the wrong choice. Goodbye.

Mr. Cameron

This is all a joke. You're making a fool of me, aren't you?

Nerissa

Sorry. The test is over for you. Please leave. Goodbye.

Mr. Cameron goes out)

What nonsense! Preposterous!

Portia

Oh, let's hope that Baz chooses right. If only I could tell him what to do...

Nerissa

He has to try his luck. The last candidate please.

Baz

Right. Okay... I've always loved a game and I hope that all the trainings I went to have been of some use... so... here are my ideas. I thought, gold looks really nice – shiny and all, but yeah, it can look a bit cheap sometimes, if you know what I mean. Fake rolexes and bling bling... you know. And silver... well, it looks too much like money. And money... money is useful, but in itself it is such a dull, boring thing. No – I think you have to surprise people. Put something really great into a really unusual packaging. And people will want to buy it because it is different. So... I would choose the lead campaign. And I think, working with contrasts is also great, so maybe for the TV advert you could use heavy metal music and make the product a really nice and sweet fragrance... Yeah. What do you think?

Portia

See what my father thought.

Baz is given the letter.

'You that choose not by the view, Chance as fair and choose as true! Since this fortune falls to you, Be content and seek no new.' Okay – and that means..?

Portia

You did it! You chose right! Baz, you did it!

Baz

That means, I can stay?

Portia

Yes!

More bad news

A street. Sal and Sol are hurrying in one direction, almost run into Grace, who was going in the opposite direction. They greet each other.

Grace:
Have you heard about Shylock?

Sal:
Oh, sure, it was in the paper – eco-investor Ruth Shylock has been robbed. Cash and jewellery worth 50 000 have been stolen from Shylock's house. Well, too bad if you don't believe in credit cards and keep all your money under the mattress. (*they laugh*)

Sol:
It says also that Shylock suspects her own daughter of stealing the money, since the daughter has disappeared too and the house showed no signs of break-in. They started a search for her but haven't found her.

Grace:
That's because in the night of the theft Jessica got on the plane to Belmont with Baz and Lawrence.

Sol:
What?

Sal:
You don't say that. So it's true? She did it?

Sol:
Wow... it's not nice to have your own daughter plunder your piggy-bank.

Sal:
No, especially not since it was such a well-filled piggy-bank... Jessica must have really hated her mom.

Sol:
And now Shylock has sworn revenge to whoever stole her daughter, her money and her jewellery.

Grace:
From what I heard from Lawrence, it was Jessica's own idea to take a bit of travelling money.

Sal:
Shylock is raging and fuming – but if Jessica and Lawrence have gone with Baz then they're out of reach, at least for the moment. But be careful, she probably knows by now the connections between Lawrence and Ann – she might take it out on her if Ann doesn't come up with a miracle solution to cover her losses.

Grace: Cover her losses?

Sal:
She's lost her Solar Quest money. –You knew that, didn't you.

Grace:
Yes, she said something about the market being a bit unstable. But she's always looking worried, working far too much, poor girl.

Sol:

And now she has also lost the money she put into that wind-energy project. They've denied permission to build it. Too many ecological concerns, financing concept not solid, etc.

Grace:

Ok, that doesn't sound good. But still, I mean, she's got tons of money. What's a little loss to her?

Sol:

As far as we know, she has taken out a lot of loans and if she can't pay them back... (*mimes her throat being cut*)

Grace:

Yeah, still... She's so clever with that money she makes on the stock-market, she'll make it up.

Sol:

But we happen to know that the way the futures market has developed in the last few days, Ann will have lost about a million.

Grace:

Oh. Okay. That does sound serious.

Sal:

Yeah, maybe you'd better tell her to hire a bodyguard. (*they walk off, leaving Grace looking rather taken aback*)

MONEY IS NOT THE PROBLEM

Baz and Portia at the breakfast table

Portia

Some more coffee? Another croissant? Eggs? I'll go and see about some eggs, right? (*goes out*)

Baz

You're spoiling me. Thanks!

(*Baz' phone beeps. He reads the message*)

'Sorry to disturb you in your happiness but I thought that I should inform you that today is the day I should have paid Shylock back. I lost the money I invested, so I can't pay. My banks are getting troublesome about my other loans, hearing that I've lost money. So I'm going to see Ruth Shylock later today and ask her to prolong the time. Ann.' Oooh.... Crap... Completely forgot... Shit... (*gets up, dials*) Ann? It's me. Don't go. Wait till I'm back. I can handle this for you.

Ann (*on another part of the stage. She is on her way to Shylock,*)

Do you think I can't handle my own affairs? Baz, I'm not a little girl.

Baz

Don't do it, please. I'm afraid for you. Don't you remember what you signed?

Ann

When we went to get the money you weren't quite so worried, so why are you afraid now? Baz, that contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.

Baz

I don't have a good feeling about this. Shylock's a madwoman. Be reasonable, Ann. I beg you. Wait till I'm back. I will talk to her. Please... for my sake. Please. Don't I mean anything to you?

Ann

If you care so much for me why do you go off and start something with another woman? No, I will see this through, she can't be so mad as to try to attack me. Thanks for your concern Baz. (*rings off*)

Baz

Ann? Ann? Oh shit!

Portia *has come back in*

What...? What's the matter? Some old flame you disappointed?

Baz

No. No... In fact... Ok, Portia, there's something I have to tell you.

Portia

You're already married with 8 children and your wife just called because you weren't home for breakfast?

Baz

Very funny. No... It's not like that.

Portia

But it's about a woman?

Baz

Yes...

Portia (*coolly*)

I see.

Baz

No... actually, it's more about money.

Portia

Money?

Baz

You know, to come here, I had to make some investments and since my means were a bit reduced, I borrowed from a friend-

Portia (*relieved*)

Oh, silly boy... money's not a problem. How much do you need?

Baz (*speechless*)

Oh... I ... well.... 300 000.

Portia

Cash? Cheques? Bank draft?

Baz is lost for words.

Portia

Would cash be convenient? Go on, get up, get dressed and when you come out of the shower you'll get your money and then you can pay back whoever needs paying back. Okay?

Baz

I love you.

Portia

Hmmm.... I'll have the plane ready too, so you can bring them the money personally, okay?

Baz

I knew we were a perfect match. Thanks!

PAYING THE DEBT

Ann is sitting in Shylock's office. Shylock's letter opening knife from earlier on is again on the table.

Shylock

So you are telling me that you don't have the money? I thought it was so completely sure that you'd earn thrice as much long before the time was out? How come?

Ann

You know as well as I do what happened.

Shylock

Oh yes... so your wind-energy-project turned out to be nothing but hot air after all... And Solar Quest failed too... And the futures market... Oh, you don't need to tell me. Well, you know what it means.

Ann

Oh, well, about that... I mean, you know that this contract is void.

Shylock

Void? But you signed it!

Ann

Yes... But, oh come on, it's just paper and on the paper there's a lot of nonsense!

Shylock

You signed a contract that specified a certain date.

Ann

You should be happy that I'm here, talking to you. I could have just said, hey, what the hell – if she goes to court with it, they'll just laugh at her. She doesn't stand a chance. But I've come here to actually talk to you about this. I don't have to do this! Do you know just how ridiculous your little contract is?

Shylock

Ridiculous? Okay, then I think we should have serious talk. (*goes to lock the door*)

Ann (*startled*)

What do you mean?

Shylock

You signed a contract. Which said if you cannot pay back the sum, I am the owner of a pound of your flesh.

Ann

It was a joke!

Shylock

It wasn't one to me. You have to be aware of the risk you take before you put your signature under something. Yes, I know, to you it's all just paper. Just another speculation. Do you ever stop to think about what it means when you drive up the price of corn, what that means to people in another part of the world who can't afford to buy bread any more? (*grabs her knife from the table, grabs Ann's shoulders and pins her to her chair by holding the knife to her throat*) It's the knife at their throats!

Ann (*taken by surprise, shocked into immobility*)

What the-

Shylock (*enjoying this*)

Now you are going to learn what it feels like if your life is at stake.

Ann

Please! I've done nothing to you-

Shylock

And what have the people in countries not quite as affluent as this one done to you? The peasant in Bolivia? The seamstress in Bangladesh? The labourer in Mali? Do you think about them when you speculate on the price of wheat and corn and rice? Aren't they people like you? Aren't they human like you? They have the same organs, dimensions, senses as you. They have affections and passions, just like you. If you tickle them – they will laugh. And if you cut them, they will bleed. (*a little crazily*) Just like you.

Ann (*trying to figure out how to escape from the situation, not able to think of anything*)

You are insane.

Shylock (*bitterly*)

No? And what about my daughter? You corrupted her! You and your lot!

Ann

What?

Shylock

You unscrupulous people, always taking, taking, taking! Never thinking about the people you take it from. Now I'm going to do the taking for once.

Ann

You're crazy. You can't-

Shylock

Can I not? How do you know I can't?

Baz (*Baz tests the door, cannot get in*)

Ann?

Shylock

Oh, and who comes here? Don't I know that voice?

Ann

Baz!

Shylock

You be quiet.

Baz

What's going on?

Shylock

What do you want?

Baz

I have the money. I can pay back the debt.

Shylock

Oh and I have to inform you that you come too late. The day has been and gone. Your bond is forfeit and your good friend... is going to learn a lesson today. About paying debts the way it has been agreed on.

Baz

What's going on? Ann? Open the door, please. I've got the money, for God's sake!

Shylock

I don't want your money. I want my pound of flesh.

Baz

You're crazy. Open the door!

Shylock

Say goodbye to your friend Ann. She really must have loved you that she was willing to risk her own life for your sake. And now she's going to pay.

Ann

This is completely insane.

Shylock

Not any more than signing a contract that says you will forfeit a pound of your flesh. You people, you never think about the consequences when you smell a good deal. Now, where do I take that pound from? I think near the heart is best. If I cut hard enough maybe I'll kill you instantly and you won't be aware of the rest.

The door is being forced. Policemen appear on the scene with Portia hurrying behind

Policemen, shouting:

Drop your weapon! Hands above your head!

Shylock (*drops her knife, completely surprised*)

What? The police? Who has called the police? What does that mean? (*policemen overwhelm Shylock and start handcuffing her*)

Portia

I did.

Shylock

But I haven't done anything! (*she starts struggling against the policemen*) What are you – you, you, police pigs! Capitalist swine! How dare you! I'm an innocent citizen! Leave me alone!

Policeman: You have the right to remain silent, you have- (*lead Shylock off*)

Shylock (*gives up her resistance*) This can't be true. This must all be a mistake...

Portia (*calling after them*)

We'll see each other in court.

After the judgement

Sol and Sal in the TV studio, reporting the result of the trial:

Sally

And in this week's edition of Market Watch, we have the latest news from the trial of Ruth Shylock, former eco-banker and now convicted criminal.

Sol

Ruth Shylock has been accused of aggravated assault of Ann Tonnier, whose creditor she was and who had not been able to pay back a loan in time. She has also been accused of insulting the police and resisting arrest.

Sally

Ms Shylock has been found guilty on all charges. She has been sentenced to one year of prison and a fine of 300 000. The fine might be lifted if she hands over the running of her business to her daughter Jessica.

Solange

Justice for Ann Tonnier it seems. And we have more good news for Ann and everyone who was investing in the Solar Quest project because since the new government has been instated, negotiations about the project have been taken up again.

Solange

So it seems that we will all see some return on that investment after all. Thank you for watching Market Watch and have a good day. Byebye from Sally and Solange.

A happy ending?

Light change to Baz, Portia and Ann who are leaving the court where the trial has just taken place.

Baz

Thank goodness this is over. I really hate courts. All these serious people...

Portia

It was a serious matter.

Baz

Oh yeah, Shylock was really looking completely destroyed. No more of that 'I'm so fucking good for the world so kiss my Birkenstock shoes'-attitude.

Ann

She's a hippie. And what could a hippie hate more than her freedom being taken away?

Baz

Hey, it's just for a year. Food and lodging for free-

Ann

Oh Baz...

Baz

Okay, I guess they don't serve vegan meals. Well, too bad for the old witch... But that's what you get for trying to kill the bravest girl I have ever known... *(Pause, he looks at Ann.)*

Portia *(clears her throat)*

Well, fortunately it all turned out well in the end.

Ann *(uneasily)*

For which, I guess, I have to thank you quite a bit.

Portia *(pretended generosity)*

Oh, don't mention it.

Ann

You had the good sense to call the police when that madwoman was about to slit me open with her damned knife. You recommended this lawyer to me, you lent me the money to finance the trial. Without you... *(she looks even more uneasy)*

Portia

Oh, but all is well now. And I have some more good news: I talked to some... acquaintances who have good political connections in various countries. They told me that this wind power project is very likely to go through after all... So you will very likely be able to make some nice profits pretty soon.

Ann

I will pay you back as soon as possible.

Portia

Oh, don't worry about that. Take your time. I mean... I have a good surety that you will be wanting to be on good terms with me, haven't I? (*smiles at Baz*)

Baz (*confused*)

What?

Portia

Oh nothing. But I suppose that maybe in order to give your friend Ann here a break and the opportunity to work in peace – and us the opportunity to finally get to know each other really well... Baz and I will go on an extended trip...

(*Ann is not looking too happy*)

Baz

Cool! We could go surfing, how about that?

Portia

...where you will have the opportunity to familiarise yourself with all the subsidiaries and branches of Belmont enterprises-

Baz

Oh. Okay.

Portia

...and learn how to be my right hand in this business. We'll start in Thailand where most of our raw materials come from. I've already booked the plane, so...

Baz

Bye Ann. Take care.

Ann

You too. Have a nice time. And if you ever need money again...

Baz (*a bit embarrassed*)

Oh, thanks but I guess not.

Portia (*is going on ahead*)

Baz?

Baz (*to Ann*)

Unless she throws me out... (*awkward silence. He hurries to catch up with Portia. To Portia, while they go off*) Sorry, darling. Okay, now I think I have heard that Thailand has great beaches...

Portia (*laughs*)

Oh Baz... You only think of your fun! But yes, it has great beaches! (*they go off*)

Ann stays to look after them, a little lost. After a while her cell phone rings.

Yes? (*listens, her face lights up*) Oh yes. Sounds good! Buy them, definitely, yes.

(*the lights fade to black*).