

The Merchant of Venice

Act V, sc. 1 (line 194)

BASSANIO

Sweet Portia,

If you did know to whom I gave the ring,

If you did know for whom I gave the ring

And would conceive for what I gave the ring

And how unwillingly I left the ring,

When nought would be accepted but the ring,

You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

PORTIA

*If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.
What man is there so much unreasonable,
If you had pleased to have defended it
With any terms of zeal, wanted the modesty
To urge the thing held as a ceremony?
Nerissa teaches me what to believe:
I'll die for't but some woman had the ring.*

BASSANIO

No, by my honour, madam, by my soul,

No woman had it, but a civil doctor,

Which did refuse three thousand ducats of me

And begg'd the ring; the which I did deny him

And suffer'd him to go displeas'd away;

Even he that did uphold the very life

Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?

I was enforced to send it after him;

I was beset with shame and courtesy;
My honour would not let ingratitude
So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady;
For, by these blessed candles of the night,
Had you been there, I think you would have begg'd
The ring of me to give the worthy doctor.