

Scene II. The Mayor's Study

[Ariellonius sits at the desk, reading. Enter Grizabella.]

Grizabella: Ariellonius, have you gone to see my child today?

Ariellonius: The truly wise need not open their eyes, Madam.

Grizabella: Then I beg you, be a fool for once.

Ariellonius: A fool is but a philosopher; a beggar, his king.

Grizabella: Dearest Ariellonius, do not answer me with this madness. You are an upright man.

Ariellonius: Yet, Madam, to be upright is harder than to do anything else. We are ever led toward the easier road, where men are judged by rules rather than by talent. Those who are no geniuses, yet long for prominence, all fall to its temptation. They delight in believing they have risen by their own ability—yet in the very process lose what is most precious. The heart, Madam, the heart is what matters most.

Grizabella: Say no more.

Ariellonius: Ah, poor child.

Grizabella: What are you saying, Ariellonius?

Ariellonius: Poor child—his feet have not yet touched the soil of Venice, and already he counts the land he may gain or lose. What benefit is there in that?

Grizabella: You know, Ariellonius, he is not a genius—

Ariellonius: Madam, in youth, true prodigies have always been few. And if he were truly clever, he could never endure such a life.

Grizabella: ...

Ariellonius: O Lord, grant not victory to him before he can bear it. Let him first become a free man.

Ariellonius: Madam, it is fortunate his audience worships Shakespeare's sonnets—thus we may yet add a touch of flavor, lest they be altogether smothered.

Grizabella: ...

Grizabella: You would have my child become—

Ariellonius: No, Madam. I have given him a firmer place.

A wealthy mediocrity wastes his fortune without needing our envy. But an upright man of means—whose outward life is as kindly as his inward heart—how shall we reproach him? Then you too will pray in silence: "O, thank God! It is He who bestowed wealth upon so lovable a man."