

“The Comedy of Errors”
by William Shakespeare

But for this contrivance, we had all been lost for the ship split on a mighty rock and was dashed in pieces. Clinging to these slender masts, we were supported above the water, where I, having the care of two children, was unable to assist my wife, who, with the other children, was soon separated from me. While they were yet in my sight, they were taken up by a boat of fishermen from Corinth. Seeing them in safety, I had no care but to fight the wild sea-waves to preserve my dear son and the youngest slave. At length we were taken up by a ship, and the sailors, knowing me, gave us kind welcome and assistance and landed us in safety at Syracuse. From that sad hour, I have

never known what became of my wife and eldest child.

“My youngest son, my only care, when he was eighteen years old, began to inquire after his mother and brother and often importuned me that he might take his attendant, the young slave, who had also lost his brother and go in search of them. At length I unwillingly gave consent. Though I anxiously desired to hear tidings of my wife and eldest son, in sending my younger one to find them, I hazarded the loss of him also. It is now seven years since my son left me; five years have I passed in traveling through the world in search of him. I have been in farthest Greece, through the bounds of Asia, and, coasting homeward, I landed here, being unwilling to leave any place

that harbors men. This day must end the story of my life, and happy should I think myself in my death if I were assured my wife and sons were living.”

Here the hapless Aegeon ended the account of his misfortunes. The duke, pitying this poor father who had brought upon himself great peril by his love for his lost son, said if it were not against the laws, which his oath and dignity did not permit him to alter, he would freely pardon him. Instead of dooming him to instant death, as the strict letter of the law required, he would give him that day to try if he could beg or borrow the money to pay the fine.

This day of grace did seem no great favor to Aegeon. Not knowing any man in Ephesus, there seemed to him but little

chance that a stranger would lend or give him a thousand marks to pay the fine. Helpless and hopeless of any relief, he retired from the presence of the duke in the custody of a jailer.

Aegeon supposed he knew no person in Ephesus. At the time he was in danger of losing his life through the careful search, his youngest son and his eldest son also, were in the city of Ephesus.

Aegeon's sons, besides being exactly alike in face and person, were both named alike—both called Antipholus. The twin slaves were also both named Dromio. The youngest son, Antipholus of Syracuse, he whom the old man had come to Ephesus to seek, happened to arrive at Ephesus with his slave Dromio that very same day that Aegeon did.