

The Comedy of Errors

Schools' synopsis by Rebecca Lenkiewicz

If anyone from Syracuse arrives at Ephesus they have to pay a thousand marks or die. Egeon, a merchant, arrives there. He is from Syracuse but has only a few hundred marks. Solinus, the Duke of Ephesus, declares the death penalty. Egeon does not seem to fear death. He has been searching for his son Antipholus of Syracuse for the past five years. He is tired of the search and of life.

Egeon tells how he was shipwrecked as a young man. On board with him were his wife Emilia and their twins, both were named Antipholus. There was another set of twins who were to go into service for Egeon, they were both called Dromio. Egeon and Emilia were separated in the storm. Egeon saved one of his boys and one of the Dromios but they heard nothing more of the families they had lost. Solinus pities Egeon and gives him the day to find his ransom money.

Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant Dromio of Syracuse have also just arrived at Ephesus. Antipholus has been trying to find his twin for the past seven years:
'I to the world am like a drop of water / That in the ocean seeks another drop.'

Antipholus gives a thousand gold marks to Dromio and tells him to stash it at the Centaur pub where they will stay. Unbeknown to these new arrivals their twins Dromio and Antipholus have been living in Ephesus for years. Now Dromio of Ephesus approaches Antipholus of Syracuse. He naturally thinks the new Antipholus is his master. Antipholus asks him if he dealt with the gold? Dromio of Ephesus denies any dealings with gold and replies that Antipholus is late and his wife Adriana is waiting for him along with her sister Luciana...very strange. Antipholus of Syracuse denies being married and ends up hitting Dromio of Ephesus and heads off towards the Centaur.

Dromio of Ephesus returns and tells Adriana that her husband is mad. He is denying her and their home. Adriana and Luciana meet Antipholus of Syracuse and they shout at him. They suspect he is having an affair. Antipholus of Syracuse says he has just arrived but they think he is playing a game. He decides to go with them to their house as it's all so bizarre. Dromio of Syracuse decides they must be witches and follows the women and his master.

Now the real Antipholus of Ephesus arrives back at his house, late. He encourages his friends Angelo and Balthazar to make up a good excuse for his being out for so long. Dromio of Syracuse is now the doorman and he refuses to let the real master in. Antipholus of Ephesus calls to the housemaid Luce but she thinks her master is already in and eating supper so she tells him to clear off too. Antipholus of Ephesus threatens to break his own door down but Balthazar persuades him not to. They'll go to the Tiger tavern for a while. Antipholus has asked Angelo to make a chain as a present for his wife Adriana. Antipholus decides that Adriana does not deserve it and he'll give it to a prostitute instead.

Luciana tries to persuade Antipholus of Syracuse to comfort his wife as she is so upset. But of course she is not really this Antipholus' wife. And just to complicate things further this newly arrived Antipholus has fallen very rapidly in love with Luciana. He chats her up endlessly. Luciana is horrified. He is married to her sister! But Antipholus cannot help himself, it's Luciana or nobody. Trick...Meanwhile the Cook Nell who is 'spherical, like a globe' has claimed poor Dromio of Syracuse. He complains to Antipholus that Nell says that they're married! Dromio is obviously terrified: 'She's the kitchen wench and all grease.'

Nell has also described every birthmark on Dromio's body to him...witchcraft!

Angelo delivers the chain that was ordered to Antipholus of Syracuse...who did not order it. And now Angelo is pressed for money and needs payment for it. He sees Antipholus of Ephesus...coming out of a brothel...and asks him for the money. Antipholus of Ephesus did order the chain...good...but he has not seen the chain so he will not pay for it. Bad. They argue and Antipholus of Ephesus is arrested. Antipholus sends Dromio of Syracuse to Adriana to raise bail. He gets the money but gives it to Antipholus of Syracuse who is already free and is wearing this troublesome chain. Angelo sees the chain on him and has another argument with the wrong man.

Adriana goes to her imprisoned husband and brings a doctor with her because she thinks he is going mad. Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus light a fire and escape from the police. Antipholus of Ephesus sees the Duke Solinus and wants justice against his wife who he believes started all the trouble. Meanwhile Antipholus and Dromio, both of Syracuse, appear. Everyone runs off thinking they have escaped from prison and are out for blood. Adriana sees them and they are chased but they find sanctuary in an abbey. The Abbess there gives them shelter.

Egeon now sees Antipholus and Dromio, both of Ephesus and greets them with relief and love but they act like they don't know him. Surely his son cannot have forgotten him in just seven years? But now Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse enter. It's as though they were looking into a mirror. Both sets of twins truly see each other for the first time.

Dromio of Ephesus:
'Methinks you are my glass, and not my brother.'

The Abbess turns out to be Emilia, Egeon's wife and mother of the Antipholus twins. The family reunites and the Duke spares Egeon's life. Good! They all still have the same names...confusing!