

One day a man called Egeon landed in port called Ephesus where he is arrested by a Duke. The Duke says to Egeon If any Syracusian born Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies. There is only one way that Egeon can be set free and that is if he has 1,000 marks. Egeon empties his pockets but has no money at all. The Duke asks Egeon to tell his story and give the reason why he has landed illegally in Ephesus.

CLAP

Egeon began his story.

In Syracuse was I born; and wed

Unto a **woman**, happy but for me.

With her I liv'd in joy; our wealth increas'd

By prosperous voyages I often made

To Epidamnum. My spouse

From whom my absence was not six months old,

Made provision for her following me,

And soon and safe arrived where I was.

There had she not been long but she became

A joyful mother of **two goodly sons**;

And, which was strange, the one so like the other

As could not be disdnguish'd but by names.

CLAP

That very hour, and in the self-same inn,

A **mean woman** was delivered

Of such a burden, **male twins**, both alike:

Those **Egeon** bought, and brought up to attend **my sons**.

My **wife**, not meanly proud of two such boys,

Made daily motions for our home return:

Unwilling I agreed; alas! too soon!

CLAP

Egeon, his wife, their twin sons and the son's servants** came aboard a **big ship with two masts:

A league from Epidamnum had we sail'd

Before the always-wind-obeying deep

Gave any tragic instance of our harm;

And a storm made the ship sway and rock
My wife, more careful for the latter-born,
Had fast'ned him unto a small spare mast,
Such as sea-faring men provide for storms:
To him one of the other twins was bound,
Whilst I had been like heedful of the other.
The children thus dispos'd, my wife and I,
Fixing our eyes on whom our care was fix'd,
Fast'ned ourselves at either end the mast,
And, floating straight, obedient to the stream,
Were carried towards Corinth, as we thought.
At length **the sun**, gazing upon the earth,
Dispers'd those vapours that offended us;
And, by the benefit of his wish'd light,
We were encount'red by a **mighty rock**,
Which being violently borne upon,
Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst;
So that, in this unjust divorce of us,
Fortune had left to both of us alike
What to delight in, what to sorrow for.
Her part, poor soul! seeming as burdened
With lesser weight, but not with lesser woe,
Was carried with more speed before the wind;
And in our sight they three were taken up
By fishermen of Corinth, as we thought.
At length **another ship** had seiz'd on us;

CLAP

My **youngest boy**, and yet my eldest care,
At eighteen years became inquisitive
After his brother -- and importun'd me
That his **attendant**,--so his case was like,

Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name,--
Might bear him company in the quest of him.
Whom whilst I laboured of a love to see -

CLAP

The **Duke** can't change the law but gives Egeon a day to find the money saying:

Try all the friends thou hast in Ephesus:

Beg thou, or borrow, to make up the sum,

And live.

If not, then thou art doom'd to die.

CLAP The End of the Beginning