***The Comedy of Errors***

1. i. Egeon’s plight and his tale [Note that shipwrecks and separated families are usually the stuff of romantic comedy rather than farce.]

ii. Antipholus of Syracuse (A.S.) with a merchant friend and with Dromio of Syracuse (D.S.); D.S. exits; merchant exits; Dromio of Ephesus (D.E.) enters, and two errors ensue: (1) D.E. tries to summon A.S. to A.E.’s dinner, while A.S. tries to determine where D.E. put A.S.’s money. The result is that A.S. beats D.E. [Presumably beatings can be and were played for laughs.]

1. i. Adriana and Luciana are talking; D.E. enters, but his account of the previous scene is not believed.

ii. A.S. meets D.S., who can account for A.S.’s money but gets beaten for not remembering scene between A.S. and D.E. Adriana and Luciana enter and bear A.S. and D.S. home to dinner.

1. i. A.E. and his friends Angelo and Balthasar meet D.E.; they go to A.E.’s home, where D.S., Luciana, and Adriana take turns denying them entry; therefore, they go to the courtesan’s for dinner, and the necklace (called a chain) that Angelo is making for A.E. to give Adriana is promised to the courtesan instead. She gives him her ring in the meantime.

ii. A.S. declares his love at first sight to Luciana; she exits; D.S. enters and declares Nell’s love for him (whom she thinks D.E.); D.S. exits; Angelo enters, gives A.S. the chain, and exits.

1. i. A.E. sends D.E. to buy a rope for him to whip his wife and servants; Angelo, threatened with arrest for debt, asks A.E. to pay for the chain, which he has not received (A.S. has it); A.E. is arrested by Pinch for his debt to Angelo, who is also arrested, for his own debt; D.S. enters to tell of the ship waiting for A.S., and A.E. sends him to get money for bail from Adriana.

ii. Adriana learns from Luciana of A.S.’s love for her; D.S. fetches the money to bail A.E. out.

iii. D.S. gives A.E.’s money to A.S.; courtesan asks A.S. for either her ring back or her chain, but gets neither, as A.E. has the ring and A.S. (who has the chain) doesn’t know the courtesan.

iv. A.E. asks D.E. for the money he sent D.S. to fetch and instead gets the rope he had sent D.E. to buy; Adriana, Luciana, the courtesan, and Pinch confront A.E. with confused or lying tales; they have him and D.E. seized, bound, and carried off; then A.S. and D.S. enter with swords drawn, frightening the women, who flee for reinforcements.

1. Angelo and his creditor confront A.S. and D.S.; Adriana, Luciana, the courtesan, and their servants enter to bind A.S. and D.S., who hide in the Priory. Its Abbess confronts Adriana and Luciana outside the Priory and then goes inside again. The Duke and Egeon enter and are stopped by Adriana’s appeal. A.E. and D.E. enter. All accusations are made, and Egeon appeals in vain to A.E. and D.E. With matters at their worst, the Abbess returns with A.S. and D.S., and all is made plain, bit by bit. Ring, chain, money, lives, wives, and loves – all go right.

Obvious differences from Plautus’ *Menaechmi*:

* Frame-tale about Egeon and Emilia is added by Shakespeare.
* Twin slaves are added.
* The married twin’s wife is named, and the courtesan is not.
* The dinner given to the single twin is at the married twin’s house, not at the courtesan’s.
* The married twin’s dinner at the courtesan’s and his promising her a chain were the result of his being locked out rather than being the cause of it.
* Luciana and Nell and all discussions of the nature of love are added.
* Arrests for debt are added.

Some effects of these differences:

Shakespeare had a higher opinion of marriage than Plautus had.

The introduction of romance elements into a farcical comedy produces audience sympathy.

There is real chaos in Plautus’s play, but there is order underlying the apparent chaos in Shakespeare’s, because all the characters are essentially honest and because there are authoritative characters in Shakespeare’s play (the Duke, the Abbess) but not in Plautus’s.