

knowest for a certainty who is in that chamber; because, behind the curtain or some other hidden place, there might be shut up or concealed a person who would hearken unto all thy deeds or sayings. If thou desirest to speak of secret things, go thou to speak thy secrets in an open place, or in a field, or meadow or open ground, but look well that there be no person near who can hear thee, and beware of hedges, of trees, caves, or walls, or the corners of streets, where other persons might be hidden.

But wherefore all these precautions? Perhaps to whisper into the ear of friend or companion advice like this last which I shall repeat here :

When thou sittest among the judges, receive though no gifts which have been sent unto thee from either side; but I tell thee, on the contrary, that if in a court of law thou hast need of the friendship of some lord or ruler of a place, his friendship is very easily gained if thou makest gifts unto him. Look and see who of his household is the most in his confidence, and make thou friends first with that person and bestow something upon him, and then ask help and counsel of him, and he will show thee how to obtain the love of his lord and how to present unto him the thing for which the man heareth his lord hath the greatest desire.

Truly this reads almost like a scene from Shakespeare!
Iago in secret converse with Shylock!

GUIDO BIAGI.