

Measure for Measure

3.1

Enter the Duke, disguised as a friar, Claudio, and the Provost

DUKE

So then you hope of pardon from Lord Angelo?

CLAUDIO

The miserable have no other medicine

But only hope.

I've hope to live, and am prepared to die.

DUKE

Be absolute for death. Either death or life 5

Shall thereby be the sweeter. Reason thus with life.

If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing

That none but fools would keep. A breath thou art,

Servile to all the skyey influences

That dost this habitation where thou keep'st 10

Hourly afflict. Merely thou art death's fool,

For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun,

And yet runn'st toward him still. Thou art not noble,

For all th'accommodations that thou bear'st

Are nursed by baseness. Thou'rt by no means valiant, 15

For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork

Of a poor worm. Thy best of rest is sleep,

And that thou oft provok'st, yet grossly fear'st

Thy death, which is no more. Thou art not thyself,

For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains 20

That issue out of dust. Happy thou art not,

For what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get,

And what thou hast, forget'st. Thou art not certain,

For thy complexion shifts to strange effects

After the moon. If thou art rich, thou'rt poor, 25

For like an ass whose back with ingots bows,

Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,

And death unloads thee. Friend hast thou none,

For thine own bowels, which do call thee sire,

The mere effusion of thy proper loins, 30

Do curse the gout, serpigo, and the rheum,

For ending thee no sooner. Thou hast nor youth nor
age,
But as it were an after-dinner's sleep
Dreaming on both; for all thy blesseÁd youth
Becomes as ageÁd, and doth beg the alms 35
Of palsied eld; and when thou art old and rich,
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty,
To make thy riches pleasant. What's in this
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
Lie hid more thousand deaths; yet death we fear 40
That makes these odds all even.

CLAUDIO I humbly thank you.
To sue to live, I find I seek to die,
And seeking death, find life. Let it come on.

ISABELLA (*within*)
What ho! Peace here, grace, and good company!

PROVOST
Who's there? Come in; the wish deserves a welcome. 45

DUKE (*to Claudio*)
Dear sir, ere long I'll visit you again.

CLAUDIO Most holy sir, I thank you.
Enter Isabella

ISABELLA
My business is a word or two with Claudio.

PROVOST
And very welcome. Look, signor, here's your sister.

DUKE
Provost, a word with you.

PROVOST As many as you please. 50
The Duke and Provost draw aside

DUKE
Bring me to hear them speak where I may be
concealed.
They conceal themselves

CLAUDIO Now sister, what's the comfort?

ISABELLA
Why, as all comforts are: most good, most good
indeed.

Lord Angelo, having affairs to heaven,
Intends you for his swift ambassador, 55
Where you shall be an everlasting leiger.

Therefore your best appointment make with speed.
Tomorrow you set on.

CLAUDIO Is there no remedy?

ISABELLA

None but such remedy as, to save a head,
To cleave a heart in twain. 60

CLAUDIO But is there any?

ISABELLA Yes, brother, you may live.

There is a devilish mercy in the judge,
If you'll implore it, that will free your life,
But fetter you till death.

CLAUDIO Perpetual durance? 65

ISABELLA

Ay, just, perpetual durance; a restraint,
Though all the world's vastidity you had,
To a determined scope.

CLAUDIO But in what nature?

ISABELLA

In such a one as you consenting to't
Would bark your honour from that trunk you bear, 70
And leave you naked.

CLAUDIO Let me know the point.

ISABELLA

O, I do fear thee, Claudio, and I quake
Lest thou a feverous life shouldst entertain,
And six or seven winters more respect
Than a perpetual honour. Dar'st thou die? 75
The sense of death is most in apprehension,
And the poor beetle that we tread upon
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
As when a giant dies.

CLAUDIO Why give you me this shame?

Think you I can a resolution fetch 80
From flow'ry tenderness? If I must die,
I will encounter darkness as a bride,
And hug it in mine arms.

ISABELLA

There spake my brother; there my father's grave
Did utter forth a voice. Yes, thou must die. 85
Thou art too noble to conserve a life

In base appliances. This outward-sainted deputy,
Whose settled visage and deliberate word
Nips youth i'th' head and follies doth enew
As falcon doth the fowl, is yet a devil. 90
His filth within being cast, he would appear
A pond as deep as hell.

CLAUDIO The precise Angelo?

ISABELLA

O, 'tis the cunning livery of hell
The damnedest body to invest and cover
In precise guards! Dost thou think, Claudio: 95
If I would yield him my virginity,
Thou might'st be freed!

CLAUDIO O heavens, it cannot be!

ISABELLA

Yes, he would give't thee, from this rank offence,
So to offend him still. This night's the time
That I should do what I abhor to name, 100
Or else thou diest tomorrow.

CLAUDIO Thou shalt not do't.

ISABELLA O, were it but my life,
I'd throw it down for your deliverance
As frankly as a pin.

CLAUDIO Thanks, dear Isabel. 105

ISABELLA

Be ready, Claudio, for your death tomorrow.

CLAUDIO

Yes. Has he affections in him
That thus can make him bite the law by th' nose
When he would force it? Sure it is no sin,
Or of the deadly seven it is the least. 110

ISABELLA Which is the least?

CLAUDIO

If it were damnable, he being so wise,
Why would he for the momentary trick
Be perdurably fined? O Isabel!

ISABELLA What says my brother? 115

CLAUDIO Death is a fearful thing.

ISABELLA And shame—Ad life a hateful.

CLAUDIO

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;

To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become 120
A kneaded clod, and the dilated spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about 125
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling—'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment 130
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

ISABELLA Alas, alas!

CLAUDIO Sweet sister, let me live.
What sin you do to save a brother's life, 135
Nature dispenses with the deed so far
That it becomes a virtue.

ISABELLA O, you beast!
O faithless coward, O dishonest wretch,
Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?
Is't not a kind of incest to take life 140
From thine own sister's shame? What should I think?
Heaven shield my mother played my father fair,
For such a warped slip of wilderness
Ne'er issued from his blood. Take my defiance,
Die, perish! Might but my bending down 145
Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed.
I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
No word to save thee.

CLAUDIO Nay, hear me, Isabel.

ISABELLA O fie, fie, fie! 150
Thy sin's not accidental, but a trade.
Mercy to thee would prove itself a bawd.
'Tis best that thou diest quickly.

[She parts from Claudio]

CLAUDIO O hear me, Isabella.

DUKE *(coming forward to Isabella)*
Vouchsafe a word, young sister, but one word. 155

ISABELLA What is your will?

DUKE Might you dispense with your leisure, I would by
and by have some speech with you. The satisfaction I
would require is likewise your own benefit.

ISABELLA I have no superfluous leisure; my stay must be 160
stolen out of other affairs; but I will attend you a while.

DUKE *[standing aside with Claudio]* Son, I have overheard
what hath passed between you and your sister. Angelo
had never the purpose to corrupt her; only he hath
made an assay of her virtue, to practise his judgement 165
with the disposition of natures. She, having the truth
of honour in her, hath made him that gracious denial
which he is most glad to receive. I am confessor to
Angelo, and I know this to be true. Therefore prepare
yourself to death. Do not falsify your resolution with 170
hopes that are fallible. Tomorrow you must die. Go to
your knees and make ready.

CLAUDIO Let me ask my sister pardon. I am so out of love
with life that I will sue to be rid of it.

DUKE Hold you there. Farewell. 175
[Claudio joins Isabella]

Provost, a word with you.

PROVOST *(coming forward)* What's your will, father?

DUKE That now you are come, you will be gone. Leave
me a while with the maid. My mind promises with my
habit no loss shall touch her by my company. 180

PROVOST In good time.
Exit [with Claudio]

DUKE The hand that hath made you fair hath made you
good. The goodness that is cheap in beauty makes
beauty brief in goodness; but grace, being the soul of
your complexion, shall keep the body of it ever fair. 185
The assault that Angelo hath made to you fortune hath
conveyed to my understanding; and but that frailty
hath examples for his falling, I should wonder at
Angelo. How will you do to content this substitute, and
to save your brother? 190

ISABELLA I am now going to resolve him. I had rather
my brother die by the law than my son should be
unlawfully born. But O, how much is the good Duke

deceived in Angelo! If ever he return and I can speak
to him, I will open my lips in vain, or discover his 195
government.

DUKE That shall not be much amiss. Yet as the matter
now stands, he will avoid your accusation: he made
trial of you only. Therefore fasten your ear on my
advising. To the love I have in doing good, a remedy 200
presents itself. I do make myself believe that you may
most uprightly do a poor wronged lady a merited
benefit, redeem your brother from the angry law, do
no stain to your own gracious person, and much please
the absent Duke, if peradventure he shall ever return 205
to have hearing of this business.

ISABELLA Let me hear you speak farther. I have spirit to
do anything that appears not foul in the truth of my
spirit.

DUKE Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful. Have you 210
not heard speak of Mariana, the sister of Frederick, the
great soldier who miscarried at sea?

ISABELLA I have heard of the lady, and good words went
with her name.

DUKE She should this Angelo have married, was affianced 215
to her oath, and the nuptial appointed; between which
time of the contract and limit of the solemnity, her
brother Frederick was wrecked at sea, having in that
perished vessel the dowry of his sister. But mark how
heavily this befell to the poor gentlewoman. There she 220
lost a noble and renowned brother, in his love toward
her ever most kind and natural; with him, the portion
and sinew of her fortune, her marriage dowry; with
both, her combinate husband, this well-seeming
Angelo. 225

ISABELLA Can this be so? Did Angelo so leave her?

DUKE Left her in her tears, and dried not one of them
with his comfort; swallowed his vows whole, pre-
tending in her discoveries of dishonour; in few,
bestowed her on her own lamentation, which she yet 230
wears for his sake; and he, a marble to her tears, is
washed with them, but relents not.

ISABELLA What a merit were it in death to take this poor

maid from the world! What corruption in this life, that
it will let this man live! But how out of this can she 235
avail?

DUKE It is a rupture that you may easily heal, and the
cure of it not only saves your brother, but keeps you
from dishonour in doing it.

ISABELLA Show me how, good father. 240

DUKE This forenamed maid hath yet in her the
continuance of her first affection. His unjust unkind-
ness, that in all reason should have quenched her love,
hath, like an impediment in the current, made it more
violent and unruly. Go you to Angelo, answer his 245
requiring with a plausible obedience, agree with his
demands to the point; only refer yourself to this
advantage: first, that your stay with him may not be
long; that the time may have all shadow and silence
in it; and the place answer to convenience. This being 250
granted in course, and now follows all. We shall advise
this wronged maid to stand up your appointment, go
in your place. If the encounter acknowledge itself
hereafter, it may compel him to her recompense; and
hear, by this is your brother saved, your honour 255
untainted, the poor Mariana advantaged, and the
corrupt deputy scaled. The maid will I frame and make
fit for his attempt. If you think well to carry this, as
you may, the doubleness of the benefit defends the
deceit from reproof. What think you of it? 260

ISABELLA The image of it gives me content already, and
I trust it will grow to a most prosperous perfection.

DUKE It lies much in your holding up. Haste you speedily
to Angelo. If for this night he entreat you to his bed,
give him promise of satisfaction. I will presently to 265
Saint Luke's; there at the moated grange resides this
dejected Mariana. At that place call upon me; and
dispatch with Angelo, that it may be quickly.

ISABELLA I thank you for this comfort. Fare you well,
good father. 270

Exit

Enter Elbow, Clown, and officers

ELBOW Nay, if there be no remedy for it but that you will

needs buy and sell men and women like beasts, we
shall have all the world drink brown and white bastard.

DUKE O heavens, what stuff is here?

POMPEY 'Twas never merry world since, of two usuries, 275
the merriest was put down, and the worser allowed by
order of law, a furred gown to keep him warm±±and
furred with fox on lambskins too, to signify that craft,
being richer than innocency, stands for the facing.

ELBOW Come your way, sir.±±Bless you, good father friar. 280

DUKE And you, good brother father. What offence hath
this man made you, sir?

ELBOW Marry, sir, he hath offended the law; and, sir, we
take him to be a thief, too, sir, for we have found upon
him, sir, a strange picklock, which we have sent to the 285
deputy.

DUKE (*to Pompey*)

Fie, sirrah, a bawd, a wicked bawd!
The evil that thou causest to be done,
That is thy means to live. Do thou but think
What 'tis to cram a maw or clothe a back 290
From such a filthy vice. Say to thyself,
'From their abominable and beastly touches
I drink, I eat, array myself, and live'.
Canst thou believe thy living is a life,
So stinkingly depending? Go mend, go mend. 295

POMPEY Indeed it does stink in some sort, sir. But yet, sir,
I would prove±±

DUKE

Nay, if the devil have given thee proofs for sin,
Thou wilt prove his.±±Take him to prison, officer.
Correction and instruction must both work 300
Ere this rude beast will profit.

ELBOW He must before the deputy, sir; he has given him
warning. The deputy cannot abide a whoremaster. If
he be a whoremonger and comes before him, he were
as good go a mile on his errand. 305

DUKE

That we were all as some would seem to be±±
Free from our faults, or faults from seeming free.

ELBOW His neck will come to your waist: a cord, sir.

Enter Lucio

POMPEY I spy comfort, I cry bail. Here's a gentleman, and
a friend of mine. 310

LUCIO How now, noble Pompey? What, at the wheels of
Caesar? Art thou led in triumph? What, is there none
of Pygmalion's images newly made woman to be had
now, for putting the hand in the pocket and extracting
clutched? What reply, ha? What sayst thou to this 315
tune, matter, and method? Is't not drowned i'th' last
rain, ha? What sayst thou, trot? Is the world as it was,
man? Which is the way? Is it sad and few words? Or
how? The trick of it?

DUKE Still thus and thus; still worse! 320

LUCIO How doth my dear morsel thy mistress? Procures
she still, ha?

POMPEY Troth, sir, she hath eaten up all her beef, and
she is herself in the tub.

LUCIO Why, 'tis good, it is the right of it, it must be so. 325
Ever your fresh whore and your powdered bawd; an
unshunned consequence, it must be so. Art going to
prison, Pompey?

POMPEY Yes, faith, sir.

LUCIO Why 'tis not amiss, Pompey. Farewell. Go; say I 330
sent thee thither. For debt, Pompey, or how?

ELBOW For being a bawd, for being a bawd.

LUCIO Well then, imprison him. If imprisonment be the
due of a bawd, why, 'tis his right. Bawd is he doubtless,
and of antiquity too±±bawd born. Farewell, good 335
Pompey. Commend me to the prison, Pompey. You will
turn good husband now, Pompey; you will keep the
house.

POMPEY I hope, sir, your good worship will be my bail?

LUCIO No, indeed, will I not, Pompey; it is not the wear. 340
I will pray, Pompey, to increase your bondage. If you
take it not patiently, why, your mettle is the more.
Adieu, trusty Pompey.±±Bless you, friar.

DUKE And you.

LUCIO Does Bridget paint still, Pompey, ha? 345

ELBOW (to Pompey) Come your ways, sir, come.

POMPEY (to Lucio) You will not bail me then, sir?

LUCIO Then, Pompey, nor now.±±What news abroad,
friar, what news?

ELBOW *(to Pompey)* Come your ways, sir, come. 350

LUCIO Go to kennel, Pompey, go.
Exeunt Elbow, Pompey, and officers
What news, friar, of the Duke?

DUKE I know none. Can you tell me of any?

LUCIO Some say he is with the Emperor of Russia; other
some, he is in Rome. But where is he, think you? 355

DUKE I know not where; but wheresoever, I wish him
well.

LUCIO It was a mad, fantastical trick of him to steal from
the state, and usurp the beggary he was never born
to. Lord Angelo dukes it well in his absence; he puts 360
transgression to't.

DUKE He does well in't.

LUCIO A little more lenity to lechery would do no harm
in him. Something too crabbed that way, friar.

DUKE It is too general a vice, and severity must cure it. 365

LUCIO Yes, in good sooth, the vice is of a great kindred,
it is well allied. But it is impossible to extirp it quite,
friar, till eating and drinking be put down. They say
this Angelo was not made by man and woman, after
this downright way of creation. Is it true, think you? 370

DUKE How should he be made, then?

LUCIO Some report a sea-maid spawned him, some that
he was begot between two stockfishes. But it is certain
that when he makes water his urine is congealed ice;
that I know to be true. And he is a motion ungenerative; 375
that's infallible.

DUKE You are pleasant, sir, and speak apace.

LUCIO Why, what a ruthless thing is this in him, for the
rebellion of a codpiece to take away the life of a man!
Would the Duke that is absent have done this? Ere he 380
would have hanged a man for the getting a hundred
bastards, he would have paid for the nursing a
thousand. He had some feeling of the sport, he knew
the service, and that instructed him to mercy.

DUKE I never heard the absent Duke much detected for 385
women; he was not inclined that way.

LUCIO O sir, you are deceived.

DUKE 'Tis not possible.

LUCIO Who, not the Duke? Yes, your beggar of fifty; and his use was to put a ducat in her clack-dish. The Duke had crochets in him. He would be drunk too, that let me inform you. 390

DUKE You do him wrong, surely.

LUCIO Sir, I was an inward of his. A shy fellow was the Duke, and I believe I know the cause of his withdrawing. 395

DUKE What, I prithee, might be the cause?

LUCIO No, pardon, 'tis a secret must be locked within the teeth and the lips. But this I can let you understand. The greater file of the subject held the Duke to be wise.

DUKE Wise? Why, no question but he was. 400

LUCIO A very superficial, ignorant, unweighing fellow.

DUKE Either this is envy in you, folly, or mistaking. The very stream of his life, and the business he hath helmed, must, upon a warranted need, give him a better proclamation. Let him be but testimonied in his own bringings-forth, and he shall appear to the envious a scholar, a statesman, and a soldier. Therefore you speak unskilfully, or, if your knowledge be more, it is much darkened in your malice. 405

LUCIO Sir, I know him and I love him. 410

DUKE Love talks with better knowledge, and knowledge with dearer love.

LUCIO Come, sir, I know what I know.

DUKE I can hardly believe that, since you know not what you speak. But if ever the Duke return, as our prayers are he may, let me desire you to make your answer before him. If it be honest you have spoke, you have courage to maintain it. I am bound to call upon you; and I pray you, your name? 415

LUCIO Sir, my name is Lucio, well known to the Duke. 420

DUKE He shall know you better, sir, if I may live to report you.

LUCIO I fear you not.

DUKE O, you hope the Duke will return no more, or you imagine me too unhurtful an opposite. But indeed I can do you little harm; you'll forswear this again. 425

LUCIO I'll be hanged first. Thou art deceived in me, friar.
But no more of this. Canst thou tell if Claudio die
tomorrow or no?

DUKE Why should he die, sir? 430

LUCIO Why? For filling a bottle with a tundish. I would
the Duke we talk of were returned again; this
ungenitured agent will unpeople the province with
continency. Sparrows must not build in his house-
eaves, because they are lecherous. The Duke yet would 435
have dark deeds darkly answered: he would never
bring them to light. Would he were returned. Marry,
this Claudio is condemned for untrussing. Farewell,
good friar. I prithee pray for me. The Duke, I say to
thee again, would eat mutton on Fridays. He's not past 440
it yet, and, I say to thee, he would mouth with a
beggar, though she smelt brown bread and garlic. Say
that I said so. Farewell.

Exit

DUKE

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure scape; back-wounding calumny 445
The whitest virtue strikes. What king so strong
Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?

Enter Escalus, the Provost, and Mistress Overdone

But who comes here?

ESCALUS *(to the Provost)* Go, away with her to prison.

MISTRESS OVERDONE Good my lord, be good to me. Your 450
honour is accounted a merciful man, good my lord.

ESCALUS Double and treble admonition, and still forfeit in
the same kind! This would make mercy swear and play
the tyrant.

PROVOST A bawd of eleven years' continuance, may it 455
please your honour.

MISTRESS OVERDONE My lord, this is one Lucio's in-
formation against me. Mistress Kate Keepdown was
with child by him in the Duke's time; he promised her
marriage. His child is a year and a quarter old come 460
Philip and Jacob. I have kept it myself; and see how
he goes about to abuse me.

ESCALUS That fellow is a fellow of much licence. Let him

be called before us. Away with her to prison. Go to, no
more words. Provost, my brother Angelo will not be 465
altered; Claudio must die tomorrow. Let him be
furnished with divines, and have all charitable
preparation. If my brother wrought by my pity, it
should not be so with him.

PROVOST So please you, this friar hath been with him and 470
advised him for th'entertainment of death.

[Exeunt Provost and Mistress Overdone]

ESCALUS Good even, good father.

DUKE Bliss and goodness on you.

ESCALUS Of whence are you?

DUKE

Not of this country, though my chance is now 475
To use it for my time. I am a brother
Of gracious order, late come from the See
In special business from his Holiness.

ESCALUS What news abroad i'th' world?

DUKE None, but that there is so great a fever on goodness 480
that the dissolution of it must cure it. Novelty is only
in request, and it is as dangerous to be aged in any
kind of course as it is virtuous to be inconstant in any
undertaking. There is scarce truth enough alive to
make societies secure, but security enough to make 485
fellowships accursed. Much upon this riddle runs the
wisdom of the world. This news is old enough, yet it
is every day's news. I pray you, sir, of what disposition
was the Duke?

ESCALUS One that, above all other strifes, contended 490
especially to know himself.

DUKE What pleasure was he given to?

ESCALUS Rather rejoicing to see another merry than merry
at anything which professed to make him rejoice; a
gentleman of all temperance. But leave we him to his 495
events, with a prayer they may prove prosperous, and
let me desire to know how you find Claudio prepared.
I am made to understand that you have lent him
visitation.

DUKE He professes to have received no sinister measure 500
from his judge, but most willingly humbles himself to

the determination of justice. Yet had he framed to himself, by the instruction of his frailty, many deceiving promises of life, which I, by my good leisure, have discredited to him; and now is he resolved to die. 505

ESCALUS You have paid the heavens your function, and the prisoner the very debt of your calling. I have laboured for the poor gentleman to the extremest shore of my modesty, but my brother-justice have I found so severe that he hath forced me to tell him he is indeed Justice. 510

DUKE If his own life answer the straitness of his proceeding, it shall become him well; wherein if he chance to fail, he hath sentenced himself.

ESCALUS I am going to visit the prisoner. Fare you well. 515

DUKE Peace be with you.

Exit Escalus

He who the sword of heaven will bear
Should be as holy as severe,
Pattern in himself to know,
Grace to stand, and virtue go, 520
More nor less to others paying
Than by self-offences weighing.
Shame to him whose cruel striking
Kills for faults of his own liking!
Twice treble shame on Angelo, 525
To weed my vice, and let his grow!
O, what may man within him hide,
Though angel on the outward side!
How may likeness made in crimes
Make my practice on the times 530
To draw with idle spiders' strings
Most ponderous and substantial things?
Craft against vice I must apply.
With Angelo tonight shall lie
His old betrothed but despise! 535
So disguise shall, by th' disguise,
Pay with falsehood false exacting,
And perform an old contracting.

Exit