

Measure for Measure

2.1

Enter Angelo, Escalus, and servants; a Justice

ANGELO

We must not make a scarecrow of the law,
Setting it up to fear the birds of prey,
And let it keep one shape till custom make it
Their perch, and not their terror.

ESCALUS

Ay, but yet

Let us be keen, and rather cut a little 5
Than fall and bruise to death. Alas, this gentleman
Whom I would save had a most noble father.
Let but your honour know±±
Whom I believe to be most strait in virtue±±
That in the working of your own affections, 10
Had time cohered with place, or place with wishing,
Or that the resolute acting of your blood
Could have attained th'effect of your own purpose±±
Whether you had not sometime in your life
Erred in this point which now you censure him, 15
And pulled the law upon you.

ANGELO

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall. I not deny
The jury passing on the prisoner's life
May in the sworn twelve have a thief or two 20
Guiltier than him they try. What knows the law
That thieves do pass on thieves? What's open made to
justice,
That justice seizes. 'Tis very pregnant:
The jewel that we find, we stoop and take't
Because we see it, but what we do not see 25
We tread upon and never think of it.
You may not so extenuate his offence
For I have had such faults; but rather tell me,
When I that censure him do so offend,
Let mine own judgement pattern out my death, 30
And nothing come in partial. Sir, he must die.

ESCALUS

Be it as your wisdom will.

ANGELO

Where is the Provost?

Enter Provost

PROVOST

Here, if it like your honour.

ANGELO

See that Claudio

Be execute by nine tomorrow morning.

Bring him his confessor, let him be prepared,

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For that's the utmost of his pilgrimage.

Exit Provost

ESCALUS

Well, heaven forgive him, and forgive us all!

Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.

Some run from brakes of vice, and answer none;

And some condemneÁd for a fault alone.

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Enter Elbow, Froth, Pompey, and officers

ELBOW

Come, bring them away. If these be good people
in a commonweal, that do nothing but use their abuses
in common houses, I know no law. Bring them away.

ANGELO

How now, sir? What's your name? And what's the
matter?

ELBOW

If it please your honour, I am the poor Duke's
constable, and my name is Elbow. I do lean upon
justice, sir; and do bring in here before your good
honour two notorious benefactors.

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ANGELO

Benefactors? Well! What benefactors are they?

Are they not malefactors?

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ELBOW

If it please your honour, I know not well what
they are; but precise villains they are, that I am sure
of, and void of all profanation in the world that good
Christians ought to have.

ESCALUS *(to Angelo)*

This comes off well; here's a wise officer!

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ANGELO

Go to, what quality are they of? Elbow is your
name? Why dost thou not speak, Elbow?

POMPEY

He cannot, sir; he's out at elbow.

ANGELO

What are you, sir?

ELBOW He, sir? A tapster, sir, parcel bawd; one that 60
serves a bad woman whose house, sir, was, as they
say, plucked down in the suburbs; and now she
professes a hot-house, which I think is a very ill house
too.

ESCALUS How know you that? 65

ELBOW My wife, sir, whom I detest before heaven and
your honour±±

ESCALUS How, thy wife?

ELBOW Ay, sir, whom I thank heaven is an honest
woman±± 70

ESCALUS Dost thou detest her therefor?

ELBOW I say, sir, I will detest myself also, as well as she,
that this house, if it be not a bawd's house, it is pity
of her life, for it is a naughty house.

ESCALUS How dost thou know that, constable? 75

ELBOW Marry, sir, by my wife, who, if she had been a
woman cardinally given, might have been accused in
fornication, adultery, and all uncleanness there.

ESCALUS By the woman's means?

ELBOW Ay, sir, by Mistress Overdone's means. But as she 80
spit in his face, so she defied him.

POMPEY (*to Escalus*) Sir, if it please your honour, this is
not so.

ELBOW Prove it before these varlets here, thou honourable
man, prove it. 85

ESCALUS (*to Angelo*) Do you hear how he misplaces?

POMPEY Sir, she came in great with child, and longing±±
saving your honour's reverence±±for stewed prunes.
Sir, we had but two in the house, which at that very
distant time stood, as it were, in a fruit dish±±a dish 90
of some threepence; your honours have seen such
dishes; they are not china dishes, but very good dishes.

ESCALUS Go to, go to, no matter for the dish, sir.

POMPEY No, indeed, sir, not of a pin; you are therein in
the right. But to the point. As I say, this Mistress Elbow, 95
being, as I say, with child, and being great-bellied, and
longing, as I said, for prunes; and having but two in
the dish, as I said, Master Froth here, this very man,
having eaten the rest, as I said, and, as I say, paying

for them very honestly; for, as you know, Master Froth, 100
I could not give you threepence again.

FROTH No, indeed.

POMPEY Very well. You being, then, if you be remembered,
cracking the stones of the foresaid prunes±±

FROTH Ay, so I did indeed. 105

POMPEY Why, very well.±±I telling you then, if you be
remembered, that such a one and such a one were past
cure of the thing you wot of, unless they kept very
good diet, as I told you±±

FROTH All this is true. 110

POMPEY Why, very well then±±

ESCALUS Come, you are a tedious fool. To the purpose.
What was done to Elbow's wife that he hath cause to
complain of? Come me to what was done to her.

POMPEY Sir, your honour cannot come to that yet. 115

ESCALUS No, sir, nor I mean it not.

POMPEY Sir, but you shall come to it, by your honour's
leave. And I beseech you, look into Master Froth here,
sir, a man of fourscore pound a year, whose father died
at Hallowmas±±was't not at Hallowmas, Master Froth? 120

FROTH All Hallow Eve.

POMPEY Why, very well. I hope here be truths. He, sir,
sitting, as I say, in a lower chair, sir±±'twas in the
Bunch of Grapes, where indeed you have a delight to
sit, have you not? 125

FROTH I have so, because it is an open room, and good
for winter.

POMPEY Why, very well then. I hope here be truths.

ANGELO
This will last out a night in Russia,
When nights are longest there. (*To Escalus*) I'll take
my leave, 130
And leave you to the hearing of the cause,
Hoping you'll find good cause to whip them all.

ESCALUS
I think no less. Good morrow to your lordship.
Exit Angelo
Now, sir, come on, what was done to Elbow's wife,
once more? 135

POMPEY Once, sir? There was nothing done to her once.

ELBOW I beseech you, sir, ask him what this man did to my wife.

POMPEY I beseech your honour, ask me.

ESCALUS Well, sir, what did this gentleman do to her? 140

POMPEY I beseech you, sir, look in this gentleman's face. Good Master Froth, look upon his honour. 'Tis for a good purpose. Doth your honour mark his face?

ESCALUS Ay, sir, very well.

POMPEY Nay, I beseech you, mark it well. 145

ESCALUS Well, I do so.

POMPEY Doth your honour see any harm in his face?

ESCALUS Why, no.

POMPEY I'll be supposed upon a book his face is the worst thing about him. Good, then, if his face be the worst 150 thing about him, how could Master Froth do the constable's wife any harm? I would know that of your honour.

ESCALUS He's in the right, constable; what say you to it?

ELBOW First, an it like you, the house is a respected 155 house; next, this is a respected fellow; and his mistress is a respected woman.

POMPEY (*to Escalus*) By this hand, sir, his wife is a more respected person than any of us all.

ELBOW Varlet, thou liest; thou liest, wicked varlet. The 160 time is yet to come that she was ever respected with man, woman, or child.

POMPEY Sir, she was respected with him before he married with her.

ESCALUS Which is the wiser here, justice or iniquity? (*To 165 Elbow*) Is this true?

ELBOW (*to Pompey*) O thou caitiff, O thou varlet, O thou wicked Hannibal! I respected with her before I was married to her? (*To Escalus*) If ever I was respected with her, or she with me, let not your worship think 170 me the poor Duke's officer. (*To Pompey*) Prove this, thou wicked Hannibal, or I'll have mine action of battery on thee.

ESCALUS If he took you a box o'th' ear you might have your action of slander too. 175

ELBOW Marry, I thank your good worship for it. What
is't your worship's pleasure I shall do with this wicked
caitiff?

ESCALUS Truly, officer, because he hath some offences in
him that thou wouldst discover if thou couldst, let him 180
continue in his courses till thou knowest what they
are.

ELBOW Marry, I thank your worship for it.±±Thou seest,
thou wicked varlet now, what's come upon thee. Thou
art to continue now, thou varlet, thou art to continue. 185

ESCALUS (*to Froth*) Where were you born, friend?

FROTH Here in Vienna, sir.

ESCALUS Are you of fourscore pounds a year?

FROTH Yes, an't please you, sir.

ESCALUS So. (*To Pompey*) What trade are you of, sir? 190

POMPEY A tapster, a poor widow's tapster.

ESCALUS Your mistress's name?

POMPEY Mistress Overdone.

ESCALUS Hath she had any more than one husband?

POMPEY Nine, sir±±Overdone by the last. 195

ESCALUS Nine?±±Come hither to me, Master Froth. Master
Froth, I would not have you acquainted with tapsters.
They will draw you, Master Froth, and you will hang
them. Get you gone, and let me hear no more of you.

FROTH I thank your worship. For mine own part, I never 200
come into any room in a tap-house but I am drawn in.

ESCALUS Well, no more of it, Master Froth. Farewell.

Exit Froth

Come you hither to me, Master Tapster. What's your
name, Master Tapster?

POMPEY Pompey. 205

ESCALUS What else?

POMPEY Bum, sir.

ESCALUS Troth, and your bum is the greatest thing about
you; so that, in the beastliest sense, you are Pompey
the Great. Pompey, you are partly a bawd, Pompey, 210
howsoever you colour it in being a tapster, are you
not? Come, tell me true; it shall be the better for you.

POMPEY Truly, sir, I am a poor fellow that would live.

ESCALUS How would you live, Pompey? By being a bawd?

What do you think of the trade, Pompey? Is it a lawful trade? 215

POMPEY If the law would allow it, sir.

ESCALUS But the law will not allow it, Pompey; nor it shall not be allowed in Vienna.

POMPEY Does your worship mean to geld and spay all the youth of the city? 220

ESCALUS No, Pompey.

POMPEY Truly, sir, in my poor opinion they will to't then. If your worship will take order for the drabs and the knaves, you need not to fear the bawds. 225

ESCALUS There is pretty orders beginning, I can tell you. It is but heading and hanging.

POMPEY If you head and hang all that offend that way but for ten year together, you'll be glad to give out a commission for more heads. If this law hold in Vienna ten year, I'll rent the fairest house in it after threepence a bay. If you live to see this come to pass, say Pompey told you so. 230

ESCALUS Thank you, good Pompey; and in requital of your prophecy, hark you. I advise you, let me not find you before me again upon any complaint whatsoever; no, not for dwelling where you do. If I do, Pompey, I shall beat you to your tent, and prove a shrewd Caesar to you; in plain dealing, Pompey, I shall have you whipped. So for this time, Pompey, fare you well. 235 240

POMPEY I thank your worship for your good counsel; *[aside]* but I shall follow it as the flesh and fortune shall better determine. Whip me? No, no; let carman whip his jade. The valiant heart's not whipped out of his trade. 245

Exit

ESCALUS Come hither to me, Master Elbow; come hither, Master Constable. How long have you been in this place of constable?

ELBOW Seven year and a half, sir.

ESCALUS I thought, by the readiness in the office, you had continued in it some time. You say seven years together? 250

ELBOW And a half, sir.

ESCALUS Alas, it hath been great pains to you. They do
you wrong to put you so oft upon't. Are there not men 255
in your ward sufficient to serve it?

ELBOW Faith, sir, few of any wit in such matters. As they
are chosen, they are glad to choose me for them. I do
it for some piece of money, and go through with all.

ESCALUS Look you bring me in the names of some six or 260
seven, the most sufficient of your parish.

ELBOW To your worship's house, sir?

ESCALUS To my house. Fare you well.

Exit Elbow with officers

What's o'clock, think you?

JUSTICE Eleven, sir. 265

ESCALUS I pray you home to dinner with me.

JUSTICE I humbly thank you.

ESCALUS

It grieves me for the death of Claudio,
But there's no remedy.

JUSTICE Lord Angelo is severe. 270

ESCALUS It is but needful.

Mercy is not itself that oft looks so.

Pardon is still the nurse of second woe.

But yet, poor Claudio! There is no remedy.

Come, sir. 275

Exeunt