

# Measure for Measure

## 1.2

*Enter Lucio, and two other Gentlemen*

**LUCIO** If the Duke with the other dukes come not to composition with the King of Hungary, why then, all the dukes fall upon the King.

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** Heaven grant us its peace, but not the King of Hungary's! 5

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** Amen.

**LUCIO** Thou concludest like the sanctimonious pirate, that went to sea with the Ten Commandments, but scraped one out of the table.

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** `Thou shalt not steal'? 10

**LUCIO** Ay, that he razed.

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** Why, 'twas a commandment to command the captain and all the rest from their functions: they put forth to steal. There's not a soldier of us all that in the thanksgiving before meat do relish the petition well that prays for peace. 15

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** I never heard any soldier dislike it.

**LUCIO** I believe thee, for I think thou never wast where grace was said.

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** No? A dozen times at least. 20

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** What, in metre?

**LUCIO** In any proportion, or in any language.

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** I think, or in any religion.

**LUCIO** Ay, why not? Grace is grace despite of all controversy; as for example, thou thyself art a wicked villain despite of all grace. 25

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** Well, there went but a pair of shears between us.

**LUCIO** I grant±±as there may between the lists and the velvet. Thou art the list. 30

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** And thou the velvet. Thou art good velvet, thou'rt a three-piled piece, I warrant thee. I had as lief be a list of an English kersey as be piled as thou art piled, for a French velvet. Do I speak feelingly now?

**LUCIO** I think thou dost, and indeed with most painful 35

feeling of thy speech. I will out of thine own confession  
learn to begin thy health, but whilst I live forget to  
drink after thee.

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** I think I have done myself wrong, have  
I not? 40

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** Yes, that thou hast, whether thou art  
tainted or free.

*Enter Mistress Overdone*

**LUCIO** Behold, behold, where Madam Mitigation comes! I  
have purchased as many diseases under her roof as  
come to±± 45

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** To what, I pray?

**LUCIO** Judge.

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** To three thousand dolours a year?

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** Ay, and more.

**LUCIO** A French crown more. 50

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** Thou art always figuring diseases in  
me, but thou art full of error±±I am sound.

**LUCIO** Nay not, as one would say, healthy, but so sound  
as things that are hollow±±thy bones are hollow,  
impiety has made a feast of thee. 55

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** (*to Mistress Overdone*) How now, which  
of your hips has the most profound sciatica?

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** Well, well! There's one yonder  
arrested and carried to prison was worth five thousand  
of you all. 60

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** Who's that, I pray thee?

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** Marry sir, that's Claudio, Signor  
Claudio.

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** Claudio to prison? 'Tis not so.

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** Nay, but I know 'tis so. I saw him 65  
arrested, saw him carried away; and, which is more,  
within these three days his head to be chopped off.

**LUCIO** But after all this fooling, I would not have it so.  
Art thou sure of this?

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** I am too sure of it, and it is for getting 70  
Madame Julietta with child.

**LUCIO** Believe me, this may be. He promised to meet me  
two hours since and he was ever precise in promise-  
keeping.

**SECOND GENTLEMAN** Besides, you know, it draws some- 75  
thing near to the speech we had to such a purpose.

**FIRST GENTLEMAN** But most of all agreeing with the  
proclamation.

**LUCIO** Away; let's go learn the truth of it.

*Exeunt Lucio and Gentlemen*

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** Thus, what with the war, what with 80  
the sweat, what with the gallows, and what with  
poverty, I am custom-shrunk.

*Enter Pompey*

How now, what's the news with you?

**POMPEY** You have not heard of the proclamation, have  
you? 85

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** What proclamation, man?

**POMPEY** All houses in the suburbs of Vienna must be  
plucked down.

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** And what shall become of those in  
the city? 90

**POMPEY** They shall stand for seed. They had gone down  
too, but that a wise burgher put in for them.

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** But shall all our houses of resort in  
the suburbs be pulled down?

**POMPEY** To the ground, mistress. 95

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** Why, here's a change indeed in the  
commonwealth. What shall become of me?

**POMPEY** Come, fear not you. Good counsellors lack no  
clients. Though you change your place, you need not  
change your trade. I'll be your tapster still. Courage, 100  
there will be pity taken on you. You that have worn  
your eyes almost out in the service, you will be  
considered.

*[A noise within]*

**MISTRESS OVERDONE** What's to do here, Thomas Tapster?  
Let's withdraw! 105

*Enter the Provost, Claudio, Juliet, and officers;*

*Lucio and the two Gentlemen*

**POMPEY** Here comes Signor Claudio, led by the Provost to  
prison; and there's Madame Juliet.

*Exeunt Mistress Overdone and Pompey*

**CLAUDIO** *(to the Provost)*

Fellow, why dost thou show me thus to th' world?  
Bear me to prison, where I am committed.

**PROVOST**

I do it not in evil disposition, 110  
But from Lord Angelo by special charge.

**CLAUDIO**

Thus can the demigod Authority  
Make us pay down for our offence, by weight,  
The bonds of heaven. On whom it will, it will;  
On whom it will not, so; yet still 'tis just. 115

**LUCIO**

Why, how now, Claudio? Whence comes this  
restraint?

**CLAUDIO**

From too much liberty, my Lucio, liberty.  
As surfeit is the father of much fast,  
So every scope, by the immoderate use,  
Turns to restraint. Our natures do pursue, 120  
Like rats that raven down their proper bane,  
A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die.

**LUCIO** If I could speak so wisely under an arrest, I would  
send for certain of my creditors. And yet, to say the  
truth, I had as lief have the foppery of freedom as the 125  
morality of imprisonment. What's thy offence, Claudio?

**CLAUDIO**

What but to speak of would offend again.

**LUCIO**

What, is't murder?

**CLAUDIO** No.

**LUCIO** Lechery?

**CLAUDIO** Call it so.

**PROVOST** Away, sir; you must go.

**CLAUDIO**

One word, good friend.

*[The Provost shows assent]*

Lucio, a word with you.

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**LUCIO** A hundred, if they'll do you any good.

*[Claudio and Lucio speak apart]*

Is lechery so looked after?

**CLAUDIO**

Thus stands it with me. Upon a true contract,  
I got possession of Julietta's bed.  
You know the lady; she is fast my wife,  
Save that we do the denunciation lack  
Of outward order. This we came not to  
Only for propagation of a dower  
Remaining in the coffer of her friends,  
From whom we thought it meet to hide our love  
Till time had made them for us. But it chances  
The stealth of our most mutual entertainment  
With character too gross is writ on Juliet.

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**LUCIO**

With child, perhaps?

**CLAUDIO**

Unhapp'ly even so.

And the new deputy now for the Duke±±  
Whether it be the fault and glimpse of newness,  
Or whether that the body public be  
A horse whereon the governor doth ride,  
Who, newly in the seat, that it may know  
He can command, lets it straight feel the spur±±  
Whether the tyranny be in his place,  
Or in his eminence that fills it up±±  
I stagger in. But this new governor  
Awakes me all the enrolleÁd penalties  
Which have, like unscoured armour, hung by th' wall  
So long that fourteen zodiacs have gone round,  
And none of them been worn; and, for a name,  
Now puts the drowsy and neglected act  
Freshly on me. 'Tis surely for a name.

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**LUCIO** I warrant it is; and thy head stands so tickle on  
thy shoulders that a milkmaid, if she be in love, may  
sigh it off. Send after the Duke, and appeal to him.

**CLAUDIO**

I have done so, but he's not to be found.  
I prithee, Lucio, do me this kind service.  
This day my sister should the cloister enter,  
And there receive her approbation.  
Acquaint her with the danger of my state.  
Implore her in my voice that she make friends  
To the strict deputy. Bid herself assay him.

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I have great hope in that, for in her youth 170  
There is a prone and speechless dialect  
Such as move men; beside, she hath prosperous art  
When she will play with reason and discourse,  
And well she can persuade.

**LUCIO** I pray she may±±as well for the encouragement of 175  
thy like, which else would stand under grievous  
imposition, as for the enjoying of thy life, who I would  
be sorry should be thus foolishly lost at a game of tick-  
tack. I'll to her.

**CLAUDIO** I thank you, good friend Lucio. 180

**LUCIO** Within two hours.

**CLAUDIO** Come, officer; away.

*Exeunt [Lucio and gentlemen at one door;  
Claudio, Juliet, Provost, and officers at another]*