

Measure for Measure

2.2

Enter the Provost and a Servant

SERVANT

He's hearing of a cause; he will come straight.
I'll tell him of you.

PROVOST Pray you do.

Exit Servant

I'll

know

His pleasure; maybe he will relent. Alas,
He hath but as offended in a dream.
All sects, all ages, smack of this vice; and he
To die for't!

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Enter Angelo

ANGELO Now, what's the matter, Provost?

PROVOST

Is it your will Claudio shall die tomorrow?

ANGELO

Did not I tell thee yea? Hadst thou not order?
Why dost thou ask again?

PROVOST Lest I might be too rash.

Under your good correction, I have seen
When after execution judgement hath
Repented o'er his doom.

10

ANGELO Go to; let that be mine.

Do you your office, or give up your place,
And you shall well be spared.

PROVOST I crave your honour's pardon.

What shall be done, sir, with the groaning Juliet?
She's very near her hour.

15

ANGELO Dispose of her

To some more fitter place, and that with speed.

Enter Servant

SERVANT

Here is the sister of the man condemned
Desires access to you.

ANGELO Hath he a sister?

PROVOST

Ay, my good lord; a very virtuous maid, 20
And to be shortly of a sisterhood,
If not already.

ANGELO Well, let her be admitted.

Exit Servant

See you the fornicatress be removed.
Let her have needful but not lavish means.
There shall be order for't.

Enter Lucio and Isabella

PROVOST God save your honour. 25

ANGELO

Stay a little while. *(To Isabella)* You're welcome.
What's your will?

ISABELLA

I am a woeful suitor to your honour.
Please but your honour hear me.

ANGELO

Well, what's your suit?

ISABELLA

There is a vice that most I do abhor,
And most desire should meet the blow of justice, 30
For which I would not plead, but that I must;
For which I must not plead, but that I am
At war 'twixt will and will not.

ANGELO

Well, the matter?

ISABELLA

I have a brother is condemned to die.
I do beseech you, let it be his fault, 35
And not my brother.

PROVOST *(aside)* Heaven give thee moving graces!

ANGELO

Condemn the fault, and not the actor of it?
Why, every fault's condemned ere it be done.
Mine were the very cipher of a function,
To fine the faults whose fine stands in record, 40
And let go by the actor.

ISABELLA

O just but severe law!

I had a brother, then. Heaven keep your honour.

LUCIO *(aside to Isabella)*

Give't not o'er so. To him again; entreat him.
Kneel down before him; hang upon his gown.

You are too cold. If you should need a pin, 45
 You could not with more tame a tongue desire it.
 To him, I say!
ISABELLA (*to Angelo*) Must he needs die?
ANGELO Maiden, no remedy.
ISABELLA
 Yes, I do think that you might pardon him, 50
 And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy.
ANGELO
 I will not do't.
ISABELLA But can you if you would?
ANGELO
 Look what I will not, that I cannot do.
ISABELLA
 But might you do't, and do the world no wrong,
 If so your heart were touched with that remorse 55
 As mine is to him?
ANGELO He's sentenced; 'tis too late.
LUCIO (*aside to Isabella*) You are too cold.
ISABELLA
 Too late? Why, no; I that do speak a word
 May call it again. Well, believe this, 60
 No ceremony that to great ones 'longs,
 Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,
 The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,
 Become them with one half so good a grace
 As mercy does. 65
 If he had been as you and you as he,
 You would have slipped like him, but he, like you,
 Would not have been so stern.
ANGELO Pray you be gone.
ISABELLA
 I would to heaven I had your potency,
 And you were Isabel! Should it then be thus? 70
 No; I would tell what 'twere to be a judge,
 And what a prisoner.
LUCIO (*aside to Isabella*) Ay, touch him; there's the vein.
ANGELO
 Your brother is a forfeit of the law,
 And you but waste your words.
ISABELLA Alas, alas!

Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once, 75
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be
If He which is the top of judgement should
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips, 80
Like man new made.

ANGELO Be you content, fair maid.
It is the law, not I, condemn your brother.
Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son,
It should be thus with him. He must die tomorrow.

ISABELLA
Tomorrow? O, that's sudden! Spare him, spare him! 85
He's not prepared for death. Even for our kitchens
We kill the fowl of season. Shall we serve heaven
With less respect than we do minister
To our gross selves? Good good my lord, bethink you:
Who is it that hath died for this offence? 90
There's many have committed it.

LUCIO (*aside*) Ay, well said.

ANGELO
The law hath not been dead, though it hath slept.
Those many had not dared to do that evil
If the first that did th'edict infringe
Had answered for his deed. Now 'tis awake, 95
Takes note of what is done, and, like a prophet,
Looks in a glass that shows what future evils,
Either raw, or by remissness new conceived
And so in progress to be hatched and born,
Are now to have no successive degrees, 100
But ere they live, to end.

ISABELLA Yet show some pity.

ANGELO
I show it most of all when I show justice,
For then I pity those I do not know
Which a dismissed offence would after gall,
And do him right that, answering one foul wrong, 105
Lives not to act another. Be satisfied.
Your brother dies tomorrow. Be content.

ISABELLA

So you must be the first that gives this sentence,
And he that suffers. O, it is excellent
To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous 110
To use it like a giant.

LUCIO (*aside to Isabella*) That's well said.

ISABELLA Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would never be quiet,
For every pelting petty officer 115
Would use his heaven for thunder, nothing but
thunder.

Merciful heaven,
Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
Split'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak
Than the soft myrtle. But man, proud man, 120
Dressed in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep, who, with our spleens, 125
Would all themselves laugh mortal.

LUCIO (*aside to Isabella*)

O, to him, to him, wench! He will relent.
He's coming; I perceive't.

PROVOST (*aside*) Pray heaven she win him!

ISABELLA

We cannot weigh our brother with ourself.
Great men may jest with saints; 'tis wit in them, 130
But in the less, foul profanation.

LUCIO (*aside to Isabella*) Thou'rt i'th' right, girl. More o'
that.

ISABELLA

That in the captain's but a choleric word,
Which in the soldier is flat blasphemy. 135

LUCIO (*aside to Isabella*) Art advised o' that? More on't.

ANGELO

Why do you put these sayings upon me?

ISABELLA

Because authority, though it err like others,
Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself
That skins the vice o'th' top. Go to your bosom; 140

Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know
That's like my brother's fault. If it confess
A natural guiltiness, such as is his,
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
Against my brother's life.

ANGELO (*aside*) She speaks, and 'tis such sense ¹⁴⁵
That my sense breeds with it. (*To Isabella*) Fare you
well.

ISABELLA Gentle my lord, turn back.

ANGELO
I will bethink me. Come again tomorrow.

ISABELLA
Hark how I'll bribe you; good my lord, turn back.

ANGELO How, bribe me? ¹⁵⁰

ISABELLA
Ay, with such gifts that heaven shall share with you.

LUCIO (*aside to Isabella*) You had marred all else.

ISABELLA
Not with fond shekels of the tested gold,
Or stones, whose rate are either rich or poor
As fancy values them; but with true prayers, ¹⁵⁵
That shall be up at heaven and enter there
Ere sunrise, prayers from preserveÁd souls,
From fasting maids whose minds are dedicate
To nothing temporal.

ANGELO Well, come to me tomorrow. ¹⁶⁰

LUCIO (*aside to Isabella*) Go to; 'tis well; away.

ISABELLA Heaven keep your honour safe.

ANGELO (*aside*) Amen;
For I am that way going to temptation,
Where prayer is crossed.

ISABELLA At what hour tomorrow ¹⁶⁵
Shall I attend your lordship?

ANGELO At any time fore noon.

ISABELLA

God save your honour.

ANGELO (*aside*) From thee; even from thy virtue.

Exeunt Isabella, Lucio, and Provost

What's this? What's this? Is this her fault or mine?
The tempter or the tempted, who sins most, ha?

Not she; nor doth she tempt; but it is I 170
That, lying by the violet in the sun,
Do, as the carrion does, not as the flower,
Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be
That modesty may more betray our sense
Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough, 175
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary,
And pitch our evils there? O, fie, fie, fie!
What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?
Dost thou desire her foully for those things
That make her good? O, let her brother live! 180
Thieves for their robbery have authority,
When judges steal themselves. What, do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again,
And feast upon her eyes? What is't I dream on?
O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint, 185
With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue. Never could the strumpet,
With all her double vigour±±art and nature±±
Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid 190
Subdues me quite. Ever till now
When men were fond, I smiled, and wondered how.

Exit