

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter DUKE VINCENTIO, ESCALUS, Lords and Attendants

DUKE VINCENTIO

Escalus.

ESCALUS

My lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Of government the properties to unfold,
Would seem in me to affect speech and discourse;
5 Since I am put to know that your own science
Exceeds, in that, the lists of all advice
My strength can give you: then no more remains,
But that to your sufficiency as your Worth is able,
And let them work. The nature of our people,
10 Our city's institutions, and the terms
For common justice, you're as pregnant in
As art and practise hath enriched any
That we remember. There is our commission,
From which we would not have you warp. Call hither,
15 I say, bid come before us Angelo.

Exit an attendant

What figure of us think you he will bear?
For you must know, we have with special soul
Elected him our absence to supply,
Lent him our terror, dress'd him with our love,
20 And given his deputation all the organs
Of our own power: what think you of it?

ESCALUS

If any in Vienna be of worth
To undergo such ample grace and honour,
It is Lord Angelo.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Look where he comes.

Enter ANGELO

ANGELO

Always obedient to your grace's will,
I come to know your pleasure.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Angelo,
30 There is a kind of character in thy life,
That to the observer doth thy history
Fully unfold. Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.
35 Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd
But to fine issues, nor Nature never lends
40 The smallest scruple of her excellence
But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines

Shakescleare Translation

DUKE VINCENTIO, ESCALUS, lords, and attendants enter.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Escalus.

ESCALUS

My lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It seems like I should make a speech to explain all the ins and outs of government to you. But since I know that your knowledge of that exceeds all the lists of advice I would give you, there's nothing left to do other than to put them into your capable hands and let them work. When it comes to the nature of our people, our city's institutions, and the standards of public law, you have as much theory and practice as anyone I can remember. There's our commission, from which I don't want you to waver.

[To an attendant] Hey, call up Angelo; ask him to come to me.

An attendant exits.

How do you think Angelo will measure up to me? You should know that I've especially chosen him to fill in during my absence: I've given him my authority, dressed him in my love, and granted him access to all the implements of my own power. What do you think about it?

ESCALUS

If anyone in Vienna is worthy of such plentiful grace and honor, it is Lord Angelo.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Look, here he comes.

ANGELO enters.

ANGELO

I am always obedient to you, your Grace.¹ I came to find out what you want.

¹ "Your Grace" is an honorific title, similar to "Your Highness" or "Your Majesty."

DUKE VINCENTIO

Angelo, there is a level of quality in your life that makes your whole story apparent to any observer. Your circumstances and your very self are not exclusively your own, for you to weary yourself in becoming virtuous. Heaven does with us what we do with torches; we don't light them for their own sake. If our virtues didn't radiate from us, it would be as if we didn't have them. Our spirits are finely created to do fine things. Nature's a penny-pinching goddess: she won't give even the tiniest piece of greatness without figuring out how she will profit from it-- both from people thanking her for it, and from them using it. But I'm speaking to someone that can take on my role himself. Kneel, then, Angelo. [ANGELO kneels] With my

² Angelo has the power to put citizens to death or to declare mercy. Because the Duke thinks Angelo is

Herself the glory of a creditor,
Both thanks and use. But I do bend my speech
To one that can my part in him advertise;
45 Hold therefore, Angelo: --
In our remove be thou at full ourself;
Mortality and mercy in Vienna
Live in thy tongue and heart: old Escalus,
Though first in question, is thy secondary.
50 Take thy commission.

permission: be completely like me. *Mortality and mercy*² in Vienna are at your word and in your heart. Old Escalus, though my right-hand man, is second to you. Take your commission.

virtuous, he believes Angelo will use this power responsibly.

ANGELO

Now, good my lord,
Let there be some more test made of my metal,
Before so noble and so great a figure
Be stamp'd upon it.

DUKE VINCENTIO

No more evasion:
We have with a leaven'd and prepared choice
Proceeded to you; therefore take your honours.
Our haste from hence is of so quick condition
That it prefers itself and leaves unquestion'd
60 Matters of needful value. We shall write to you,
As time and our concernings shall importune,
How it goes with us, and do look to know
What doth befall you here. So, fare you well;
To the hopeful execution do I leave you
55 Of your commissions.

ANGELO

Yet give leave, my lord,
That we may bring you something on the way.

DUKE VINCENTIO

My haste may not admit it;
Nor need you, on mine honour, have to do
70 With any scruple; your scope is as mine own
So to enforce or qualify the laws
As to your soul seems good. Give me your hand:
I'll privily away. I love the people,
But do not like to stage me to their eyes:
75 Though it do well, I do not relish well
Their loud applause and Aves vehement;
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion
That does affect it. Once more, fare you well.

ANGELO

The heavens give safety to your purposes!

ESCALUS

80 Lead forth and bring you back in happiness!

DUKE

I thank you. Fare you well.

Exit

ESCALUS

I shall desire you, sir, to give me leave
To have free speech with you; and it concerns me
85 To look into the bottom of my place:
A power I have, but of what strength and nature
I am not yet instructed.

ANGELO

'Tis so with me. Let us withdraw together,
And we may soon our satisfaction have
90 Touching that point.

ANGELO

But now, my good lord, there should be some more tests for me³ to go through before I'm given such a noble and important job.

3 Angelo compares himself to metal which is stamped with a "figure" or image, like a coin is stamped with the image of a king.

DUKE VINCENTIO

No more side-stepping. I carefully⁴ considered and deliberated before I chose you, so take your role. My exit has to be so quick that I have to leave now—we won't have time to cover some of the important matters. I'll write to you, as time and circumstances require, and let you know how things are going with me. And I'll want to know what's happened to you here. So, take care. I leave you to your post with the highest expectations.

4 In the original text, "leavened" refers to the process of raising bread with yeast. The Duke is saying he has fully deliberated with himself, reaching a decision only when the process was fully complete.

ANGELO

My lord, may I have permission to bring you something along the way?

DUKE VINCENTIO

I'm in too much of a hurry to allow it. And I swear on my honor that I don't need you to have anything to do with any controversy. Your power is the same as my own; you can enforce or modify the laws as you see fit. Give me your hand: I'll leave discreetly. I love the people, but I don't like being watched all the time. Though it does good in the long run, I don't really enjoy their loud applause and shouting, "Hail!"—and I don't know any trustworthy man that does enjoy it. Once again, take care!

ANGELO

May the heavens keep you safe on your journey!

ESCALUS

May they guide you and bring you back happy!

DUKE

Thank you. Goodbye.

He exits.

ESCALUS

Sir, I ask you to give me permission to speak freely with you. I want to fully understand my position: I know I have power, but I'm not sure its extent, and what it entails.

ANGELO

I agree. Let's leave together so that we can quickly reach an agreement on that point.

ESCALUS

I'll wait upon your honour.

Exeunt

ESCALUS

I'll follow you, your Honor.

They all exit.

Act 1, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter LUCIO and two 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!

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

10 "Thou shalt not steal?"

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 15 the thanksgiving before meat, do relish the petition well that prays for peace.

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

20 No? a dozen times at least.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

What, in metre?

LUCIO

In any proportion or in any language.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

I think, or in any religion.

Shakescleare Translation

LUCIO and two GENTLEMEN enter.

LUCIO

If the Duke and the other dukes don't unite with the King of Hungary, then all the dukes will rebel against the king.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

May heaven give us peace, but not peace with the King of Hungary!

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Amen.

LUCIO

You sound like the hypocritical pirate, who took the Ten Commandments with him to sea, but scraped one of the commandments off.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

"Thou shalt not steal?"

1 The gentleman refers to one of the Ten Commandments from the Book of Exodus in the Bible.

LUCIO

Yes, he burned that one off.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Well, it was a commandment commanding the captain and all the rest not to do their jobs! They went out to steal. There isn't a soldier among us that, when he sits down to pray before a meal, wants to hear someone pray for peace.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

I've never heard a soldier say he didn't like it.

LUCIO

I believe you, since I think you've never heard someone say a prayer before.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

No? A dozen times at least?

2 Most Renaissance English Christians would say grace before each meal. To have only heard grace twelve times in one's life shows a lack of robust Christian faith.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

A dozen times in poetic form?

3 In the original text, "meter" refers to the systematic arrangement of "feet"--or syllables--in poetry.

LUCIO

In any form or in any language.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

I think, or in any religion.

LUCIO

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

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.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

30 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 kersay as be piled, as thou art piled, for a French velvet. Do I speak feelingly now?

LUCIO

35 I think thou dost; and, indeed, with most painful 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?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

40 Yes, that thou hast, whether thou art tainted or free.

LUCIO

Behold, behold. where Madam Mitigation comes! I have purchased as many diseases under her roof as come to--

SECOND GENTLEMAN

To what, I pray?

LUCIO

45 Judge.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

To three thousand dolours a year.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Ay, and more.

LUCIO

A French crown more.

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.

LUCIO

Yes, why not? Grace is grace, in spite of all the controversy. For example, you're a twisted crook, in spite of all grace.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Well, you just cut all ties between us.

LUCIO

I swear, just as you'd cut between the hem and the velvet. You're the hem 4.

4 In Shakespeare's time, velvet was often hemmed, or bordered, with cheaper fabrics, so that the expensive fabric was shielded from wear and tear. Lucio insults the gentleman by comparing him to cheap fabric.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

And you're the velvet? You're good velvet; I bet you're a three-layer piece. I'd rather be a hem of English wool than be layered the way you are, into a French velvet. Am I speaking clearly enough now?

LUCIO

I think you are. And, in fact, it's having a painful effect on the listeners. From what you've said, I'll drink to you but, while I live, I won't drink after you 5.

5 Lucio suggests the gentleman has some kind of contagious disease.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

I feel like I've done myself wrong, haven't I?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Yes, you have, whether you're sick or not.

LUCIO

Look, look, here comes Mrs. Moderation 6! I've bought so many diseases in her house, to the tune of--

6 Mistress Overdone is the owner of a brothel. Lucio calls her "Madam Mitigation"--implying discipline and curbing of appetites-- when her name means exactly the opposite.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Of what, indeed?

LUCIO

Guess.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Three thousand dollars 7 a year.

7 The gentleman puns on the similarity between "dolors" (pain) and "dollars" (money). Both money and pain (from venereal disease) have been a feature of the brothel.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Yes, and more.

LUCIO

A French crown 8 more.

8 Lucio refers to the "French crown" as both an actual coin, and a euphemism for syphilis (known as the "French pox" in Shakespeare's England).

FIRST GENTLEMAN

You're always accusing me of having diseases, but you're wrong; I'm solidly healthy.

LUCIO

Well, we wouldn't exactly say you're healthy, but you're as solid as things that are hollow. Your bones are hollow 9! Your sin is eating you alive.

9 Here, Lucio refers to negative health effects of sexually transmitted diseases, implying that the gentleman has been a regular customer at Mistress Overdone's.

Enter MISTRESS OVERDONE

FIRST GENTLEMAN

How now! which of your hips has the most profound sciatica?

55

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Well, well; there's one yonder arrested and carried to prison was worth five thousand of you all.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Who's that, I pray thee?

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Marry, sir, that's Claudio, Signior Claudio.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Claudio to prison? 'tis not so.

60

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Nay, but I know 'tis so: I saw him 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?

65

MISTRESS OVERDONE

I am too sure of it: and it is for getting Madam 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.

70

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Besides, you know, it draws something near to the speech we had to such a purpose.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

But, most of all, agreeing with the proclamation.

75

Exeunt LUCIO and Gentlemen

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Thus, what with the war, what with 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

80 Yonder man is carried to prison.

MISTRESS OVERDONE enters.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Really, now? Which of your hips has the worst ache 10 in it?

10 The gentleman suggests that Lucio, too, suffers declining health resulting from a lifetime of unprotected sex.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Well, well! Someone over there was arrested and carried to prison who's worth five thousand of you all.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Who's that, then?

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Well, sir, that's Claudio, Mr. 11 Claudio.

11 "Signior" is the Italian form of male address. However, as the play is actually set in Vienna (in German-speaking Austria), the title is less of a geographically accurate feature and more of a general gesture toward the exotic.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Claudio's going to prison? It can't be.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Unfortunately, I know it is. I saw him arrested, saw him carried away, and--even worse--three days from now he'll have his head chopped off.

LUCIO

All joking aside, that can't be true. Are you sure about this?

MISTRESS OVERDONE

I'm too sure of it. And it's for getting Ms. Juliet pregnant.

LUCIO

Believe me, it might be true. He promised to meet me two hours ago, and he's always kept his promises.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Besides, you know, it's in line with the speech we heard to that effect.

FIRST GENTLEMAN

Yes, above all, it matches up with the proclamation 12.

12 The gentlemen allude to an announcement made by Angelo, the stand-in Duke, regarding punishment for sex outside the context of marriage.

LUCIO

Come on! Let's go figure out if it's true.

LUCIO and the GENTLEMEN exit.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

So because of the war, and the sweat, and the gallows, 13 and poverty, I have no customers left.

13 The gallows were the site of public hangings.

POMPEY enters.

Hello there! What news do you have?

POMPEY

That man was carried off to prison.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Well; what has he done?

POMPEY

A woman.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

But what's his offence?

POMPEY

Groping for trouts in a peculiar river.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

85 What, is there a maid with child by him?

POMPEY

No, but there's a woman with maid by him. You have not heard of the proclamation, have you?

MISTRESS OVERDONE

What proclamation, man?

POMPEY

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

MISTRESS OVERDONE

And what shall become of those in the city?

POMPEY

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

MISTRESS OVERDONE

95 But shall all our houses of resort in the suburbs be pulled down?

POMPEY

To the ground, mistress.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Why, here's a change indeed in the commonwealth! What shall become of me?

POMPEY

100 Come; fear you not: good counsellors lack no clients: though you change your place, you need not change your trade; I'll be your tapster still. Courage! there will be pity taken on you: you that have worn your eyes almost out in the service, you will be considered.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

105 What's to do here, Thomas tapster? let's withdraw.

POMPEY

Here comes Signior Claudio, led by the provost to prison; and there's Madam Juliet.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Well? What did he do?

POMPEY

A woman.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

But what's his offense?

POMPEY

Groping for fish ¹⁴ in a strange river.

¹⁴ Pompey uses a metaphor for having sex, in which "river" refers to the female genitalia.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

What, has he knocked up a girl?

POMPEY

Well, she's not a girl ¹⁵ anymore, but she is knocked up. You haven't heard the proclamation, have you?

¹⁵ "Maid" in Renaissance English referred to an unmarried girl, a virgin. Because Juliet has had sex with Claudio, Pompey jokes that she is now a "woman," and that the only virgin (or "maid") is her unborn child.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

What proclamation, man?

POMPEY

All the brothels on the outskirts of Vienna have to be shut down.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

And what about the ones in the city?

POMPEY

They get to stay. They would have gone down, too, but a smart businessman stood up for them.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

So will all the brothels in the outskirts be pulled down?

POMPEY

To the ground, mistress.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

Well, this is certainly a change in our country! What will happen to me?

POMPEY

Come on, don't be afraid. Good lawyers don't have to look far for clients; even if you change locations, you don't have to change your business. And I'll still be your bartender. Courage! They'll take pity on you; you've worked yourself to the bone in this business, and you'll be taken care of.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

They all exit.

POMPEY

Here comes Sir Claudio, with the provost ¹⁶ leading him to prison. And there's Ms. Juliet.

¹⁶ A provost was a chief magistrate responsible for arresting and punishing criminals, not unlike a sheriff today.

Exeunt

Enter Provost, CLAUDIO, JULIET, and Officers

The PROVOST, CLAUDIO, JULIET, and officers come in.

CLAUDIO

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

110

PROVOST

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

CLAUDIO

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

115

Re-enter LUCIO and two Gentlemen

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,
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,
A thirsty evil; and when we drink we die.

120

LUCIO

If 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 morality of imprisonment. What's thy
offence, Claudio?

125

CLAUDIO

What but to speak of would offend again.

LUCIO

130

What, is't murder?

CLAUDIO

No.

LUCIO

Lechery?

CLAUDIO

Call it so.

PROVOST

Away, sir! you must go.

CLAUDIO

135

One word, good friend. Lucio, a word with you.

LUCIO

A hundred, if they'll do you any good.
Is lechery so look'd after?

CLAUDIO

Thus stands it with me: upon a true contract
I got possession of Julietta's bed:
140 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,
145 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.

CLAUDIO

Man, why are you showing me to the whole world like this?
Take me to prison, where I've been committed.

PROVOST

I'm not doing it out of spite; it's Lord Angelo's special
orders.

CLAUDIO

So the mighty government can make us pay for our crimes
as if it were God himself. They punish who they'll punish,
and don't who they don't, and yet it's still "just."

LUCIO and two GENTLEMEN enter.

LUCIO

Well, how are you, Claudio? Why the handcuffs?

CLAUDIO

Too much freedom, Lucio, too much freedom. After
overeating we want to fast for a while; in the same way,
other kinds of excess lead us to restraint. Our human nature
thirsts for evil, like rats devouring their scavenged food. And
when we drink, we die.

LUCIO

If I thought I could talk like that under arrest, I'd call up
some of my creditors ¹⁷! And yet, to tell you the truth, I'd
rather have the indulgence of freedom than the morality of
imprisonment. What was your crime, Claudio?

¹⁷ Lucio implies that he is in debt, and that he would go to debtor's prison if he called up his creditors.

CLAUDIO

To speak of it would be another crime

LUCIO

What was it, murder?

CLAUDIO

No.

LUCIO

Sexual immorality?

CLAUDIO

You could call it that.

PROVOST

Come on, sir! You have to go.

CLAUDIO

Just a minute, good friend. Lucio, can I speak with you?

LUCIO

As long as you want, if it'll do you any good. Is sex such a
serious crime?

CLAUDIO

This is how it is with me: I slept with Juliet on the condition ¹⁸ that we would be married. You know her, she's basically
my wife, except that we haven't had a public wedding. We
came to this because we were waiting for a dowry ¹⁹ to
materialize, which is still in her family's bank at the
moment. And we thought it might be smart to keep our
love a secret until they came around to us. But, as it
happens, the evidence of our liaisons has become all too
apparent in Juliet.

¹⁸ In Shakespeare's day, two people could be legally considered married if they had exchanged vows privately and then consummated their vows. Many court cases in Shakespeare's time revolved around young men who made vows, had sex, and then failed to marry their lovers publicly.

¹⁹ A dowry is a gift--usually of money, goods, or property--given by the family of the bride to the groom on the occasion of marriage.

LUCIO

With child, perhaps?

CLAUDIO

150 Unhappily, 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,
155 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 emmence that fills it up,
I stagger in: --but this new governor
160 Awakes me all the enrolled penalties
Which have, like unsavour'd armour, hung by the wall
So long that nineteen zodiacs have gone round
And none of them been worn; and, for a name,
Now puts the drowsy and neglected act
165 Freshly on me: 'tis surely for a name.

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

170 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:
175 Implore her, in my voice, that she make friends
To the strict deputy; bid herself assay him:
I have great hope in that; for in her youth
There is a prone and speechless dialect,
Such as move men; beside, she hath prosperous art
180 When she will play with reason and discourse,
And well she can persuade.

LUCIO

I pray she may; as well for the encouragement of the
like, which else would stand under grievous
imposition, as for the enjoying of thy life, who I
185 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.

LUCIO

Within two hours.

CLAUDIO

Come, officer, away!

190

Exeunt

LUCIO

She's pregnant, that is?

CLAUDIO

Unfortunately, yes. And the Duke's new deputy--whether by mistake because he's new, or because he's intentionally trying to punish the public, like a new rider breaking in a horse and letting it know he's in charge with the kick of a spur--well, whether the role of governor is tyrannical, or just the man that's currently in that role, I'm not sure. But this new governor has dredged up all the old punishments which, like unwashed armor, have hung on the wall for nineteen years without being worn. Now, for the sake of his reputation, he's called these old, forgotten rules into effect. It surely has to be for the sake of his reputation.

LUCIO

I bet it is. And you've got such a pretty face on those shoulders of yours that any old girl, if she were in love, would go to pieces over it. Write to the Duke and appeal to him.

CLAUDIO

I've done that, but he's nowhere to be found. Please, Lucio, do this for me: today my sister is supposed to enter the convent ²⁰ and take her vows; let her know what danger I'm in. Ask her to make friends with the deputy governor; ask her to win him over. I have high hopes for that because she's young, and her honest, plain way of speaking has the power to convince men. Besides, she's usually successful when she argues or debates, and can easily persuade someone.

²⁰ A convent is a place where nuns (unmarried, religiously-focused women in the Catholic Church) live and work. Taking vows is the first step to becoming a nun; Isabella is a "novice," or a nun in her trial period.

LUCIO

I hope she can, both to encourage lovers that others could be horribly punished, and to save your life. I'd be sorry to lose you over something as silly as a game of tic-tac-toe. I'll go to her.

CLAUDIO

Thanks, Lucio; you're a good friend.

LUCIO

I'll go to her within these two hours.

CLAUDIO

Come on, officer, let's go!

They all exit.

Act 1, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter DUKE VINCENTIO and FRIAR THOMAS

DUKE VINCENTIO

No, holy father; throw away that thought;
Believe not that the dribbling dart of love
Can pierce a complete bosom. Why I desire thee

Shakescleare Translation

DUKE VINCENTIO and FRIAR THOMAS enter.

DUKE VINCENTIO

No, holy father ¹, don't even think of that. You can't believe that silly old love ² would win over a man as steadfast as me. There's a reason for my asking you for a

¹ "Holy father" is the usual term of address for a friar.

To give me secret harbour, hath a purpose
 5 More grave and wrinkled than the aims and ends
 Of burning youth.

FRIAR THOMAS

May your grace speak of it?

DUKE VINCENTIO

My holy sir, none better knows than you
 How I have ever loved the life removed
 10 And held in idle price to haunt assemblies
 Where youth, and cost, and witless bravery keeps.
 I have deliver'd to Lord Angelo,
 A man of stricture and firm abstinence,
 My absolute power and place here in Vienna,
 15 And he supposes me travell'd to Poland;
 For so I have strew'd it in the common ear,
 And so it is received. Now, pious sir,
 You will demand of me why I do this?

FRIAR THOMAS

Gladly, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

We have strict statutes and most biting laws.
 The needful bits and curbs to headstrong weeds,
 Which for this nineteen years we have let slip;
 Even like an o'ergrown lion in a cave,
 That goes not out to prey. Now, as fond fathers,
 25 Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch,
 Only to stick it in their children's sight
 For terror, not to use, in time the rod
 Becomes more mock'd than fear'd; so our decrees,
 Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead;
 30 And liberty plucks justice by the nose;
 The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
 Goes all decorum.

FRIAR THOMAS

It rested in your grace
 To unloose this tied-up justice when you pleased:
 35 And it in you more dreadful would have seem'd
 Than in Lord Angelo.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I do fear, too dreadful:
 Sith 'twas my fault to give the people scope,
 'Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them
 40 For what I bid them do: for we bid this be done,
 When evil deeds have their permissive pass
 And not the punishment. Therefore indeed, my father,
 I have on Angelo imposed the office;
 Who may, in the ambush of my name, strike home,
 45 And yet my nature never in the fight
 To do in slander. And to behold his sway,
 I will, as 'twere a brother of your order,
 Visit both prince and people: therefore, I prithee,
 Supply me with the habit and instruct me
 50 How I may formally in person bear me
 Like a true friar. More reasons for this action
 At our more leisure shall I render you;
 Only, this one: Lord Angelo is precise;
 Stands at a guard with envy; scarce confesses
 55 That his blood flows, or that his appetite
 Is more to bread than stone: hence shall we see,
 If power change purpose, what our seemers be.

Exeunt

secret hiding place--an old man's reason, serious reason as far from lusty youth's desires and goals as possible.

 2 The Duke uses the metaphor of a "dart," the weapon used by Cupid in Greek and Roman mythology to pierce people's hearts to make them fall in love.

FRIAR THOMAS

Can you tell me, your Grace?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Holy father, no one knows better than you how much I've loved living in isolation, and how little I've valued the gatherings where young people, wealth, and stupid acts of bravery take place. I've given my absolute power and position here in Vienna to Lord Angelo, a man of upstanding discipline and strict abstinence. He thinks I've traveled to Poland, since I've spread that rumor in public and it's come back to him. Now, devout sir, do you want to know why I'm doing this?

FRIAR THOMAS

Yes, please, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

We have strict statutes and extremely harsh laws. I've let the necessary bits  3 and restraints for unruly citizens slip in the last nineteen years, like an overgrown lion in a cave who doesn't go out to hunt. It's like fathers who make threatening switches out of twigs not to use them, but only to scare their children. Over time, these sorts of fathers are ridiculed more than they're feared. So my decrees--which I haven't enforced--are essentially useless. Freedom takes advantage of justice, the baby beats the babysitter, and all order goes to pieces.

 3 In the original text, Duke Vincentio mentions "bits and curbs"--implements used to control a horse.

FRIAR THOMAS

Sir, you had the power to unleash this pent-up justice whenever you wanted, and it would have seemed more serious coming from you than from Lord Angelo.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I'm afraid it would have seemed too serious, since it was my fault to give the people such free reign. I would seem like a tyrant if I punished and chastised them for what I told them to do--since I effectively let evil deeds go unpunished. For that reason, father, I've given Angelo the job: so that he can ambush them in my name and strike home without me dirtying my hands in the fight. To keep an eye on his progress, I'll disguise myself as a friar of your order, and visit both the governor and the people. So, will you please supply me with the habit  4 and teach me how to properly act like a true friar? I'll share more of the reasons for my actions with you soon. Here's one: Lord Angelo is precise. He keeps his jealousy in check, hardly admits that he's flesh and blood or that he ever gets hungry. So we'll see if he is what he truly seems to be, or if power changes him.

 4 A habit is a monk's robe.

They exit.

Act 1, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter ISABELLA and FRANCISCA

ISABELLA

And have you nuns no farther privileges?

FRANCISCA

Are not these large enough?

ISABELLA

Yes, truly; I speak not as desiring more;
But rather wishing a more strict restraint
Upon the sisterhood, the votarists of Saint Clare.

LUCIO

[*Within*] Ho! Peace be in this place!

ISABELLA

Who's that which calls?

FRANCISCA

It is a man's voice. Gentle Isabella,
Turn you the key, and know his business of him;
10 You may, I may not; you are yet unsworn.
When you have vow'd, you must not speak with men
But in the presence of the prioress:
Then, if you speak, you must not show your face,
Or, if you show your face, you must not speak.
15 He calls again; I pray you, answer him.

Exit

ISABELLA

Peace and prosperity! Who is't that calls?

Enter LUCIO

LUCIO

Hail, virgin, if you be, as those cheek-roses
Proclaim you are no less! Can you so stead me
As bring me to the sight of Isabella,
20 A novice of this place and the fair sister
To her unhappy brother Claudio?

ISABELLA

Why "her unhappy brother?" let me ask,
The rather for I now must make you know
I am that Isabella and his sister.

LUCIO

Gentle and fair, your brother kindly greets you:
Not to be weary with you, he's in prison.

ISABELLA

Woe me! for what?

LUCIO

For that which, if myself might be his judge,
He should receive his punishment in thanks:
30 He hath got his friend with child.

ISABELLA

Sir, make me not your story.

Shakescleare Translation

ISABELLA and FRANCISCA enter.

ISABELLA

And you nuns don't have any other privileges?

FRANCISCA

Are these not enough?

ISABELLA

Yes, indeed they are. I'm not saying that I want anything more, I'm actually wishing for stricter rules here in the sisterhood of the nuns of Saint Clare.¹

¹ "Poor Clares" are the female branch of the Franciscan order; Isabella's religious role is the complement to Friar Thomas'.

LUCIO

[*Offstage*] Hey! Peace be in this place!

ISABELLA

Who's that who's calling?

FRANCISCA

It's a man's voice. Dear Isabella: you turn the key and find out what he wants. You can; I can't. You haven't taken your vows yet. Once you've taken your vows, you can't speak with men unless the prioress is there. Then, if you speak, you can't show your face. Or if you show your face, you can't speak. He's calling again; please, answer him.

FRANCISCA exits.

ISABELLA

Peace and prosperity! Who's there?

LUCIO enters.

LUCIO

Greetings, virgin--if you are one, since those rosy cheeks show you're nothing less! Can you help me out by bringing me to Isabella, a novice here and the pretty sister of her unlucky brother Claudio?

ISABELLA

Why "her unlucky brother?" I have to ask, and now I should let you know that I am Isabella, his sister.

LUCIO

Gentle and pretty one, your brother sends his warm greetings. I don't want to beat around the bush: he's in prison.

ISABELLA

Oh no! For what?

LUCIO

For that which, if I were his judge, his only punishment would be congratulations. He got his girlfriend pregnant.

ISABELLA

Sir, you're making this up.

LUCIO

It is true.
I would not--though 'tis my familiar sin
With maids to seem the lapwing and to jest,
35 Tongue far from heart--play with all virgins so:
I hold you as a thing ensky'd and sainted.
By your renouncement an immortal spirit,
And to be talk'd with in sincerity,
As with a saint.

ISABELLA

40 You do blaspheme the good in mocking me.

LUCIO

Do not believe it. Fewness and truth, 'tis thus:
Your brother and his lover have embraced:
As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time
That from the seedness the bare fallow brings
45 To teeming foison, even so her plenteous womb
Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.

ISABELLA

Some one with child by him? My cousin Juliet?

LUCIO

Is she your cousin?

ISABELLA

Adoptedly; as school-maids change their names
50 By vain though apt affection.

LUCIO

She it is.

ISABELLA

O, let him marry her.

LUCIO

This is the point.
The duke is very strangely gone from hence;
55 Bore many gentlemen, myself being one,
In hand and hope of action: but we do learn
By those that know the very nerves of state,
His givings-out were of an infinite distance
From his true-meant design. Upon his place,
60 And with full line of his authority,
Governs Lord Angelo; a man whose blood
Is very snow-broth; one who never feels
The wanton stings and motions of the sense,
But doth rebate and blunt his natural edge
65 With profits of the mind, study and fast.
He--to give fear to use and liberty,
Which have for long run by the hideous law,
As mice by lions--hath pick'd out an act,
Under whose heavy sense your brother's life
70 Falls into forfeit: he arrests him on it;
And follows close the rigour of the statute,
To make him an example. All hope is gone,
Unless you have the grace by your fair prayer
To soften Angelo: and that's my pith of business
75 'Twixt you and your poor brother.

ISABELLA

Doth he so seek his life?

LUCIO

It's true. Though I'm often prone to run around² and joke with girls, not meaning what I say, I wouldn't play with all virgins that way. To me, you're like an angel in the sky. By taking your vows, you're an immortal spirit to have serious conversations with, like with a saint.

² In the original text, Lucio refers to lapwings--English birds that lead predators away from their nests by showing their colorful feathers and making distracting noises.

ISABELLA

You're blaspheming³ good Christians by mocking me.

³ Blasphemy is the sin of cursing or otherwise disrespecting God, Jesus, and the saints, according to Christian beliefs.

LUCIO

No, not at all! Truth be told, this is it: your brother and his girlfriend have had sex. Just like people who eat get full and seeds at springtime grow from bare soil into blossoming plants, her fertile womb reflects his full cultivation and husbandry⁴.

⁴ Lucio puns on "husband," which means both a married man and a man who takes care of plants/animals. He compares Juliet's pregnancy to her growing a plant.

ISABELLA

Who did he get pregnant? My cousin⁵ Juliet?

⁵ In Shakespeare's time, "cousin" was used as an expression of kinship, not necessarily an indicator of relation by blood.

LUCIO

Is she your cousin?

ISABELLA

My adopted cousin, in the way that schoolgirls change their names when they're silly and like each other.

LUCIO

She's the one.

ISABELLA

Oh, let him marry her.

LUCIO

That's the point. The Duke has mysteriously left the country. He left many gentlemen behind waiting for action--myself included. But we have heard from those at the very head of the state that what happened was far from his original intentions. Lord Angelo rules in the Duke's place, and with his complete authority. Angelo is a man with snow running through his veins. He never feels the tugs of human emotion or the senses, but rather stifles and contains his natural inclinations with prayer, study, and fasting. To scare those of us who have gotten used to being free and doing what we please despite the horrible laws, like mice scared by lions--Angelo has picked out an act--fornication--of which your brother is convicted and sentenced cruelly to death. He arrested him for it, and is following the letter of the law closely to make an example of him. All hope is gone, unless you're able--with your pretty face and sweet prayers--to soften Angelo. And that's the heart of my business between you and your poor brother.

ISABELLA

Does Angelo want to take my brother's life away, just like that?

LUCIO

Has censured him
Already; and, as I hear, the provost hath
A warrant for his execution.

ISABELLA

80 Alas! what poor ability's in me
To do him good?

LUCIO

Assay the power you have.

ISABELLA

My power? Alas, I doubt--

LUCIO

Our doubts are traitors
85 And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt. Go to Lord Angelo,
And let him learn to know, when maidens sue,
Men give like gods; but when they weep and kneel,
All their petitions are as freely theirs
90 As they themselves would owe them.

ISABELLA

I'll see what I can do.

LUCIO

But speedily.

ISABELLA

I will about it straight;
No longer staying but to give the mother
95 Notice of my affair. I humbly thank you:
Command me to my brother: soon at night
I'll send him certain word of my success.

LUCIO

I take my leave of you.

ISABELLA

Good sir, adieu.

100

Exeunt

LUCIO

Angelo's charged him already. And I've heard that the provost has a warrant for his execution.

ISABELLA

Alas! What can I possibly do to help him?

LUCIO

Use all the power you have.

ISABELLA

My power? Oh, no, I doubt--

LUCIO

Our doubts betray us. They make us lose the prize we might otherwise win by convincing us not to try. Go to Lord Angelo, and make him understand: when young girls make requests, men give like gods. But when girls cry and grovel, men grant their wishes as quickly as if the men owed them in the first place.

ISABELLA

I'll see what I can do.

LUCIO

But be quick about it.

ISABELLA

I'll do it immediately; I just need a moment to tell the Mother Superior what I'm up to. I give you my humble thanks. Give my best to my brother. Soon, tonight, I'll let him know if I've been successful.

LUCIO

I'll leave you, then.

ISABELLA

Farewell, good sir.

They exit.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter ANGELO, ESCALUS, and a Justice, Provost, Officers, and other Attendants, behind

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

5 Ay, but yet
Let us be keen, and rather cut a little,
Than fall, and bruise to death. Alas, this gentleman
Whom I would save, had a most noble father!
Let but your honour know,
10 Whom I believe to be most strait in virtue,
That, in the working of your own affections,
Had time cohered with place or place with wishing,
Or that the resolute acting of your blood
Could have attain'd the effect of your own purpose,

Shakescleare Translation

ANGELO, ESCALUS, the PROVOST, a judge, officers, and other attendants enter.

ANGELO

We can't let the law become like a scarecrow. When a scarecrow is set up to scare away scavenger birds, it becomes such a familiar presence that the birds perch on it instead of being afraid.

ESCALUS

Yes, but let's be smart, and improve it little by little so that the whole thing doesn't fall out from under us. But this man who I want to save has a powerful, aristocratic father! I know you are incredibly virtuous, your Honor. But please just ask yourself about your own experiences with love. If you've ever been in the right place at the right time when the desire hit you, have you gotten carried away with feeling and fulfilled that desire? Haven't you ever made a mistake like the one for which you're now punishing Claudio? Imagine if the law had come down on you then.

15

Whether you had not sometime in your life
Err'd in this point which now you censure him,
And pull'd the law upon you.

ANGELO

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

ESCALUS

Be it as your wisdom will.

ANGELO

35 Where is the provost?

PROVOST

Here, if it like your honour.

ANGELO

See that Claudio
Be executed by nine to-morrow morning:
Bring him his confessor, let him be prepared;
40 For that's the utmost of his pilgrimage.

Exit PROVOST

ESCALUS

[aside] Well, heaven forgive him! and forgive us all!
Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall:
Some run from brakes of ice, and answer none:
And some condemned for a fault alone.

Enter ELBOW, and Officers with FROTH and POMPEY

ELBOW

45 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
50 constable, and my name is Elbow: I do lean upon
justice, sir, and do bring in here before your good
honour two notorious benefactors.

ANGELO

Benefactors? Well; what benefactors are they? are
they not malefactors?

ELBOW

55 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.

ANGELO

Escalus, it's one thing to be tempted, but another thing entirely to fall. I cannot deny that, among a jury of twelve people trying a prisoner, there might be a thief or two more guilty than the man on trial. What justice sees ¹, justice grabs. Who knows what the code of law is among thieves? It's like how we bend down and pick up a jewel *because* we see it. But we walk right over the things we don't see and are never the wiser. You can't excuse his crime on the grounds that I have similar faults. Instead, you should tell me when I, who judge him, commit that offense. My judgment on him will be the model for my own death, so nothing is done partially. Sir, he has to die.

¹ Ironically, Justice was portrayed as a blindfolded female figure carrying scales—meant to represent impartiality. Angelo, though, argues that Justice is impartial because she acts on what she sees.

ESCALUS

If you say so, sir.

ANGELO

Where is the provost?

PROVOST

I'm here, sir.

ANGELO

Make sure that Claudio is executed by nine tomorrow morning. Bring the priest to him for confession and last rites, since his pilgrimage ends here.

The PROVOST exits.

ESCALUS

[To himself] Well, heaven forgive him! And forgive us all! Some people get ahead by sinning, and others fall on hard times for doing good. Some who commit a whole heap of crimes never have to answer for them, while others are condemned for a single mistake.

ELBOW and officers guarding FROTH and POMPEY enter.

ELBOW

Come on, bring them away. If these people—who do nothing but raise hell in brothels—are good people, then I don't know the law. Bring them away!

ANGELO

What's going on, sir? What's your name? What's the matter?

ELBOW

Begging your pardon, your Honor. I'm the poor Duke's constable, and my name is Elbow. Sir, I depend upon justice, and bring in two notorious benefactors ² here before you.

² Elbow is a comic character who says the opposite of what he means. Here, he says "benefactors" when he means "malefactors."

ANGELO

Benefactors? Well, they're benefactors, are they? Aren't they malefactors?

ELBOW

Begging your pardon, your Honor, I don't know exactly who they are. But they are downright crooks, I'm sure of that. And they lack the profanation ³ that all good Christians should have.

³ "Profanation" can mean "sacrilege"—Elbow probably means to say that the thieves lack Christian piety, but instead implies that all Christians are impious.

ESCALUS

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

ANGELO

60 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
65 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?

ELBOW

70 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--

ESCALUS

Dost thou detest her therefore?

ELBOW

75 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?

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 spit in his face, so she defied him.

POMPEY

85 Sir, if it please your honour, this is not so.

ELBOW

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

ESCALUS

That makes plenty of sense. This is a smart officer!

ANGELO

Oh, enough. What are these men like? Elbow is your name, yes? Why don't you speak up, Elbow?

POMPEY

He can't sir, he's out at the elbow 4.

4 Pompey uses an old idiom "out at elbow," meaning "poorly dressed" or "out of money."

ANGELO

[To POMPEY] What's your profession, sir?

ELBOW

Him, sir? He's a bartender, sir, and the servant of a brothel-keeper. He serves a bad woman whose house, sir, was, as they say, "torn down" in the outskirts of the town. And now she claims she runs a sauna which is, I think, a very dirty place, too.

ESCALUS

How do you know that?

ELBOW

My wife, sir, whom I detest 5 in the eyes of God and yourself.

5 Elbow probably means "protest," that he will swear by his wife's honor (and his own). "Detest," on the other hand, means "hate."

ESCALUS

What? Your wife?

ELBOW

Yes, sir, who is, thank God, an honest woman--

ESCALUS

And you "detest" her for that?

ELBOW

Yes, sir, and I'll detest myself, too, along with my wife, that house is a brothel. If it's not a brothel, then I swear on her life that it's at least a very naughty place.

ESCALUS

How do you know that, constable?

ELBOW

Indeed 6, sir, from my wife. If she had been more virtuous 7, she might have been guilty of fornication, adultery, and all sorts of trouble there.

6 In the original text, Elbow uses the mild oath "marry," a derivation of the Virgin Mary's name.

7 In the original text, Elbow says "cardinally" (extremely; to the highest level) when he means "carnally" (controlled by bodily desire).

ESCALUS

As a prostitute?

ELBOW

Yes, sir, under Mistress Overdone. But because she spit in his face, she got away.

POMPEY

Sir, begging your pardon: it's not true.

ELBOW

Prove it before these lowly servants 8 here, you honorable man, prove it.

8 In the original text, Elbow says "varlets," meaning "low servants," switching his description of the criminals with that of the judges.

ESCALUS

Do you hear how he misplaces?

POMPEY

Sir, she came in great with child; and longing,
90 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 of some three-pence; your honours have seen
such dishes; they are not China dishes, but very
95 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, being, as I say, with child, and
100 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, I could
105 not give you three-pence 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.

POMPEY

110 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.

POMPEY

115 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.

ESCALUS

120 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 four-score pound a year; whose
father died at Hallowmas: was't not at Hallowmas,
125 Master Froth?

FROTH

All-hallond eve.

ESCALUS

Do you hear how he misuses his words?

POMPEY

Sir, she came in very pregnant, with a craving--begging your
pardon, your Honor--for stewed prunes 9. Sir, we only had
two in the house, which way back then were sitting in a fruit
bowl, a bowl worth three pence--you've all seen the kind of
dish, they're not cheap dishes, they're very good dishes--

9 In Shakespeare's day, stewed prunes were a dish associated with houses of prostitution, perhaps because they were mistakenly thought to prevent venereal disease.

ESCALUS

Enough, enough! The dish isn't important, sir.

POMPEY

Of course, sir, not at all. You're completely right there. To
the point. Like I said, this Mrs. Elbow, who (like I said) was
very pregnant and craving, like I said, prunes, and only two
being in the bowl (like I said) because Mr. Froth here, this
very man, had eaten the rest (like I said), and (as I say) had
paid for them up front. For, as you know, Mr. Froth, I
couldn't give you three pence again.

FROTH

No, of course not.

POMPEY

All right. So you were, if you remember, breaking the pits 10
of the aforementioned prunes--

10 Pompey uses "stone" to refer to the large, hard seed in the middle of fruits like peaches and plums. "Stone" is also a slang term for testicle.

FROTH

Yes, I was doing that.

POMPEY

Well then, there you go. And I was telling you then, if you
remember, that someone or other was past the help of
medicine with the same disease 11 you had, unless they
kept a very good diet, as I told you--

11 Pompey refers here to venereal disease, or possibly to conditions of the bowels.

FROTH

All this is true.

POMPEY

Well, there you have it--

ESCALUS

Enough, you're dragging on; get to the point. What
happened to Elbow's wife that's made him so upset? Tell
me what happened to her.

POMPEY

Sir, you can't jump ahead to that yet, your Honor.

ESCALUS

No, sir, I'm serious.

POMPEY

Sir, we'll get to that, begging your Honor's pardon. And,
please: look at Mr. Froth here, a man who earns eighty
pounds per year, and father Dad died on November 1 12.
Wasn't it November 1, Mr. Froth?

12 "All Hallows Day" or "All Saints Day" is a Christian holiday that falls on November 1. "All Hallows Eve" is simply the day before, which we call "Halloween."

FROTH

October 31.

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?

130

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: I'll take my leave.
And leave you to the hearing of the cause;
Hoping you'll find good cause to whip them all.

135

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?

140

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

145

Well, sir; what did this gentleman to her?

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

150

Nay; I beseech you, mark it well.

ESCALUS

Well, I do so.

POMPEY

Doth your honour see any harm in his face?

ESCALUS

Why, no.

POMPEY

155

I'll be supposed upon a book, his face is the worst
thing about him. Good, then; if his face be the
worst 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?

POMPEY

Well, that's all right. I hope that's true. Sir, he was sitting (as
I said) in a small chair, sir. It was in living room, wasn't it,
where you usually like to sit, right?

FROTH

That's right, because it's an open room and good for winter.

POMPEY

Well, that's all right, then. I hope that's true.

ANGELO

This story is longer than a winter night in Russia. I'm leaving
now.

[To ESCALUS] I'll leave you to hear the testimony, and hope
you'll find a reason to whip them all.

ESCALUS

I suspect I will. Goodbye, your Lordship.

ANGELO exits.

Now come on, sir. What happened to Elbow's wife? Once
more.

POMPEY

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

ELBOW

Sir, I'm begging you: ask him what this man did to my wife.

POMPEY

I'm begging you, sir: ask me.

ESCALUS

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

POMPEY

I'll ask you, sir, to look in this man's face. Mr. Froth, look into
his eyes. It's for a good reason. Sir, can you see his face?

ESCALUS

Yes, sir, very well.

POMPEY

No, I beg you--look really hard.

ESCALUS

All right, I'm doing it.

POMPEY

Do you see any harm in his face?

ESCALUS

Well, no.

POMPEY

I'll swear on the Bible that his face is the worst thing about
him. So, then, if his face is the worst thing about him, how
could Mr. Froth hurt the constable's wife? I'm asking you,
your Honor.

ESCALUS

He's making sense. Constable, what do you say to that?

ELBOW

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

POMPEY

By this hand, sir, his wife is a more respected person than any of us all.

ELBOW

165 Varlet, thou liest; thou liest, wicked varlet! the time has 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

170 Which is the wiser here? Justice or Iniquity? Is this true?

ELBOW

O thou caitiff! O thou varlet! O thou wicked Hannibal! I respected with her before I was married to her! If ever I was respected with her, or she 175 with me, let not your worship think me the poor duke's officer. Prove this, thou wicked Hannibal, or I'll have mine action of battery on thee.

ESCALUS

If he took you a box o' the ear, you might have your action of slander too.

ELBOW

180 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 wouldest discover if thou couldst, let him 185 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.

ESCALUS

190 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. What trade are you of, sir?

POMPEY

195 Tapster; a poor widow's tapster.

ELBOW

First of all (begging your pardon, sir): that house is a respected ¹³ house. Second of all, this is a respected man. Finally, his wife is a respected woman.

¹³ Elbow means "suspected" instead of "respected."

POMPEY

I swear by my right hand, sir, that his wife is a more "respected" ¹⁴ person than any of us all.

¹⁴ Pompey uses Elbow's own word literally, inadvertently complimenting Elbow's wife's reputation.

ELBOW

Crook, you lie, you lie, you crooked criminal! She has yet to ever be respected with man, woman, or child.

POMPEY

Sir, she was "respected" ¹⁵ with him before he married her.

¹⁵ Pompey hints here that Elbow and his wife had premarital sex--the very crime of which Claudio is accused.

ESCALUS

Who's coming out on top here? Justice, or crime? Is this true?

ELBOW

Oh, you piece of trash! You crook! Oh, you evil Hannibal ¹⁶ Me, respected with her before I married her? If I was ever respected with her, or she with me, don't think for one second, sir, that I'm an officer of the Duke. Prove it, you evil Hannibal, or I'll have the right to beat you up.

¹⁶ Elbow means "cannibal" (someone who eats people), but says "Hannibal," the name of an ancient Carthaginian general.

ESCALUS

If he hit you in the head, you might have the right to call him some names, too.

ELBOW

Of course, and thank your Worship ¹⁷ for that. What should I do, sir, with this evil piece of trash?

¹⁷ "Your Worship" is a term of address for a high-ranking individual.

ESCALUS

Really, officer, since he's guilty of some crimes that you could find out if you questioned him, let him keep talking until you see what they are.

ELBOW

Of course, and thank you, sir, for that. You see what you've gotten into now, you evil crook: keep talking, you crook, keep talking.

ESCALUS

Where were you born, friend?

FROTH

Here in Vienna, sir.

ESCALUS

Do you make at least eighty pounds a year?

FROTH

Yes, of course, sir.

ESCALUS

So, what's your occupation, sir?

POMPEY

Bartender. A poor widow's bartender.

ESCALUS

Your mistress' name?

POMPEY

Mistress Overdone.

ESCALUS

Hath she had any more than one husband?

POMPEY

Nine, sir; Overdone by the last.

ESCALUS

200 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

205 I thank your worship. For mine own part, I never 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.

ESCALUS

What else?

POMPEY

Bum, sir.

ESCALUS

215 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, howsoever you colour it in being a tapster, are you not? come, tell me true: it shall be the better for you.

POMPEY

220 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?

POMPEY

If the law would allow it, sir.

ESCALUS

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

POMPEY

Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city?

ESCALUS

What's your employer's name?

POMPEY

Mistress Overdone.

ESCALUS

Has she had more than one husband?

POMPEY

Nine, sir. "Overdone"¹⁸ was the last one.

¹⁸ Pompey means both that her last husband's surname was "Overdone," and also that she was exhausted after marrying nine times.

ESCALUS

Nine! Come over here, Mr. Froth. Mr. Froth, I recommend you don't make friends with any bartenders. They'll draw you¹⁹, Mr. Froth, and you'll get into trouble. Get out of here, and make sure I don't hear about you again.

¹⁹ Escalus puns on Froth's name, as "froth" can refer to the head or foam that forms on a beer as it is poured.

FROTH

Thank you, your Worship. As far as I'm concerned, I never go into any room in a pub; I'm just drawn in.

ESCALUS

Well, that's it, then, Mr. Froth. Goodbye.

FROTH exits.

Come over here, Mr. Bartender. What's your name, Mr. Bartender?

POMPEY

Pompey.

ESCALUS

What else?

POMPEY

Bum²⁰, sir.

²⁰ Just like today, "bum" meant both a person's behind and, more generally, a useless object or person.

ESCALUS

Indeed, and your bum is the greatest thing about you, so that in the most physical sense you are "Pompey the Great"²¹. Pompey: you're also a pimp, Pompey, no matter how much you spin it as being a "bartender." Aren't you? Come on, tell me the truth. It'll be easier for you.

²¹ Pompey the Great was an ancient Roman general. Escalus makes fun of Pompey here for his large, or "great," rear end.

POMPEY

Really, sir, I'm just a poor man who wants to make a living.

ESCALUS

How do you make your living, Pompey? By being a pimp? What do you think of the business, Pompey? Is it a legal business?

POMPEY

If the law would allow it, sir.

ESCALUS

But the law won't allow it, Pompey. And it won't be allowed in Vienna.

POMPEY

Sir, do you intend to castrate²² and neuter all the young people in the city?

²² Escalus' hard line on prostitution outrages Pompey, who carries that judgment to its logical conclusion:

removing the sexual parts of those who would be sexually active.

ESCALUS

No, Pompey.

POMPEY

230 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.

ESCALUS

There are pretty orders beginning, I can tell you: it is but heading and hanging.

POMPEY

235 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 three-pence a bay: if you live to see this come to pass, say Pompey told you so.

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, 245 I shall beat you to your tent, and prove a shrewd Caesar to you; in plain dealing, Pompey, I shall have you whipt: so, for this time, Pompey, fare you well.

POMPEY

I thank your worship for your good counsel. *[aside]* but 250 I shall follow it as the flesh and fortune shall better determine. Whip me? No, no; let carman whip his jade: The valiant heart is not whipt out of his trade.

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 your readiness in the office, you had continued in it some time. You say, seven years together?

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 in your ward sufficient to serve it?

ELBOW

265 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

No, Pompey.

POMPEY

Really, sir, in my humble opinion, then they'll get on with it. If you, sir, will punish the sluts and the hooligans, then you won't need to worry about the pimps.

ESCALUS

The punishments are beginning, I can tell you: both beheading and hanging.

POMPEY

If you behead and hang everyone who has sex--even for just ten years straight--you'll hardly have any heads left to chop off. If this law stands in Vienna for ten years, I'll rent the nicest house in the city for three pence a month. If you live to see this happen, say that Pompey told you so.

ESCALUS

Thank you, Pompey. And in return for your prophecy, listen: I'll advise you not to let me find you in front of me again for any crime whatsoever--not even for living where you do. If I do, Pompey, I'll beat you into a retreat, Pompey. And I'll turn out to be a savvy [Caesar](#) ²³ to you. To be honest, Pompey, I'll have you whipped. So, for now, Pompey, goodbye.

²³ Escalus styles himself as Julius Caesar, the ancient general Pompey's opponent in the conflict which Pompey eventually lost.

POMPEY

Thank you, sir, for your good advice.

[To himself] ...but as to how much I'll follow it, I'll leave it all up to luck. Whip me? No, no. A man can whip his old horse, but a brave heart won't be whipped out of its business.

POMPEY exits.

ESCALUS

Come over here, Mr. Elbow. Come here, Mr. Constable. How long have you had the position of constable?

ELBOW

Seven and a half years, sir.

ESCALUS

I thought you've done the job for a while, because of your obvious expertise. You said seven years all together?

ELBOW

And a half, sir.

ESCALUS

It's a shame; it must have been such a strain on you. They're doing you wrong by making you work for so long. Aren't there other men in your district who'd be capable of serving?

ELBOW

Indeed, sir, not many with a sharp enough mind for such things. Whenever they're nominated, they're glad to nominate me in their place. I take it for a little money, and go through with it all.

ESCALUS

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

ELBOW

To your worship's house, sir?

ESCALUS

To my house. Fare you well.

Exit ELBOW

What's o'clock, think you?

JUSTICE

Eleven, sir.

ESCALUS

275 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.

ESCALUS

280 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.

Exeunt

ELBOW exits.

What time is it, do you think?

JUSTICE

Eleven, sir.

ESCALUS

Please, come to my house and have lunch with me.

JUSTICE

I'm humbled; thank you.

ESCALUS

I'm sad for Claudio's death, but there's nothing to be done.

JUSTICE

Lord Angelo is severe.

ESCALUS

It's only necessary. What often seems to be mercy isn't
mercy at all. Pardoning someone can just lead to more
harm. But still--poor Claudio! There's no help for it. Come
on, sir.

They all exit.

Act 2, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter 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

5 His pleasure; may be 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!

Enter ANGELO

ANGELO

Now, what's the matter. Provost?

PROVOST

10 Is it your will Claudio shall die tomorrow?

Shakescleare Translation

The PROVOST and a SERVANT enter.

SERVANT

He's hearing a case, but he'll come straight from there. I'll
let him know you're here.

PROVOST

Please, do.

The SERVANT exits.

I'll see what he wants; maybe he'll back down. Alas, he's
only committed a crime if we're in a dream! All kinds, all
ages are guilty of this vice, and Claudio's going to die for it?

ANGELO enters.

ANGELO

Now, what's the matter, Provost?

PROVOST

Do you want Claudio to 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,
15 When, after execution, judgment hath
Repented o'er his doom.

ANGELO

Go to; let that be mine:
Do you your office, or give up your place,
And you shall well be spared.

PROVOST

20 I crave your honour's pardon.
What shall be done, sir, with the groaning Juliet?
She's very near her hour.

ANGELO

Dispose of her
To some more fitter place, and that with speed.

25

Re-enter Servant

SERVANT

Here is the sister of the man condemn'd
Desires access to you.

ANGELO

Hath he a sister?

PROVOST

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

ANGELO

Well, let her be admitted.

Exit PROVOST

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

Enter ISABELLA and LUCIO

PROVOST

God save your honour!

ANGELO

Stay a little while. *[to ISABELLA]* You're welcome:
what's your will?

ISABELLA
I am a woeful suitor to your honour,
40 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;
For which I would not plead, but that I must;
45 For which I must not plead, but that I am
At war 'twixt will and will not.

ANGELO

Didn't I tell you "yes?" Don't you have the order? Why are
you asking again?

PROVOST

I don't want to be too hasty. Under your leadership, I've
seen judges wish they hadn't killed a man after an
execution.

ANGELO

Enough; let me worry about that. Do your job, or give up
your position; then you'll definitely be spared.

PROVOST

I beg your pardon, your Honor. Sir, what should we do
about Juliet, who's pregnant? She's getting close to her due
date.

ANGELO

Take her to a more appropriate place--and quickly.

The SERVANT enters.

SERVANT

The sister of the condemned man is here, and wants to
speak with you.

ANGELO

He has a sister?

PROVOST

Yes, sir: a very virtuous girl who's about to become a nun, if
she isn't one already.

ANGELO

Well, let her come in.

The PROVOST exits.

Make sure the slut is taken away. Give her what she needs
to survive, but no more. I'll provide for it.

ISABELLA, LUCIO, and the PROVOST enter.

PROVOST

God bless you, your Honor!

ANGELO

[To the PROVOST] Stay a little while.

[To ISABELLA] You're welcome here. What do you want?

ISABELLA

I'm a sad petitioner, your Honor. Please, just listen to my
request, your Honor.

ANGELO

Well, what's your request?

ISABELLA

There's a sin that I hate more than anything, and that I truly
hope will be punished. I wouldn't defend it unless I had to.
And I can't defend it without debating myself whether I will
or won't.

ANGELO

Well; the matter?

ISABELLA

I have a brother is condemn'd to die:
I do beseech you, let it be his fault,
And not my brother.

50

PROVOST

[*a side*] Heaven give thee moving graces!

ANGELO

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

55

ISABELLA

O just but severe law!
I had a brother, then. Heaven keep your honour!

LUCIO

60

[*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,
You could not with more tame a tongue desire it:
To him, I say!

65

ISABELLA

Must he needs die?

ANGELO

Maiden, no remedy.

ISABELLA

Yes; I do think that you might pardon him,
And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy.

ANGELO

I will not do't.

70

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 touch'd with that remorse
As mine is to him?

75

ANGELO

He's sentenced; 'tis too late.

LUCIO

[*aside to ISABELLA*] You are too cold.

ISABELLA

80

Too late? why, no; I, that do speak a word.
May call it back again. Well, believe this,
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.
If he had been as you and you as he,
You would have slipt like him; but he, like you,
Would not have been so stern.

ANGELO

Well, what is it?

ISABELLA

I have a brother who's condemned to die. Please, let his
fault be condemned, but not him!

PROVOST

[*To himself*] God has blessed you with the power of
speaking!

ANGELO

Condemn the fault and not the person who did it? Well,
every fault's condemned before it's even done. But it would
be very difficult to find faults in the record that paid their
fines while the people who did the faults went free.

ISABELLA

The law is harsh, but it is just! I *had* a brother, in that case.
God bless you, your Honor!

LUCIO

[*To ISABELLA so that only she can hear*] Don't give in to him
so easily! Beg him. Kneel down in front of him. Pull on the
edge of his robe. You're too cold! If you only need a pin you
could hardly ask with less conviction. Go to him, I say!

ISABELLA

Does he have to die?

ANGELO

Girl, there's no help for it.

ISABELLA

But I do think you could pardon him, and that neither God
nor people would disapprove of your mercy.

ANGELO

I will not do it.

ISABELLA

But could you, if you wanted to?

ANGELO

Look: what I won't do, I can't do.

ISABELLA

But couldn't you pardon him without doing anything
wrong? If so, isn't your heart filled with pity, like mine is for
him?

ANGELO

He's sentenced to die. It's too late.

LUCIO

[*To ISABELLA so that only she can hear*] You're too cold.

ISABELLA

Too late? I don't think so; when I say something, I can
always take it back again. Well, believe this: no fancy things
that powerful people have--like the king's crown, or the
soldier's sword, or the police man's club, or the judge's
robe--look as good on them as mercy does. If Claudio had
been you instead of himself, you would have made the
same mistake. And Claudio, unlike you, wouldn't have been
so strict with you if you were in his position.

ANGELO

Pray you, be gone.

ISABELLA

I would to heaven I had your potency,
And you were Isabel! should it then be thus?
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;
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be,
If He, which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are? O, think on that;
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
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

To-morrow! O, that's sudden! Spare him, spare him!
He's not prepared for death. Even for our kitchens
110 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?
There's many have committed it.

LUCIO

[aside to ISABELLA] 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 the edict infringe
Had answer'd for his deed: now 'tis awake
120 Takes note of what is done; and, like a prophet,
Looks in a glass, that shows what future evils,
Either new, or by remissness new-conceived,
And so in progress to be hatch'd and born,
Are now to have no successive degrees,
125 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 dismiss'd offence would after gall;
130 And do him right that, answering one foul wrong,
Lives not to act another. Be satisfied;
Your brother dies to-morrow; be content.

ISABELLA

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

ANGELO

Please get out of here.

ISABELLA

I wish I had your power, and that you were Isabella! Would it be the same then? No. I would say what it meant to be a judge, and what it meant to be a prisoner.

LUCIO

[To ISABELLA so that only she can hear] Yes, get him; that's touched a nerve.

ANGELO

Your brother is a prisoner of the law. You're only wasting your words.

ISABELLA

Oh no! Oh no! Well, all souls were prisoners once, and God, who could have punished them, gave them the Savior instead. How would things turn out for you if God--the highest judge--judged you as you are? Oh, think about that, and then you'll want to be merciful. You'll be like a brand new man.

ANGELO

Calm down, pretty girl. It's the law--not me--that condemns your brother. If he were my relative, brother, or my son, he would get the same treatment. He has to die tomorrow.

ISABELLA

Tomorrow! Oh, that's soon! Spare his life, spare his life! He's not prepared to die. Even when it comes to our own food, we only kill birds when they're in season. Should we kill a man for the sake of God's law when he doesn't deserve it--when we follow stricter regulations for our own food? My good, good lord, just think: who has ever died for Claudio's offense? Many have committed it.

LUCIO

[To ISABELLA so that only she can hear] Yes! Well said.

ANGELO

The law hasn't been dead, even thought it's slept. Many of them wouldn't have done what they did if the first man who broke the law would have been punished. Now, the law is awake, and it sees what people do. Like a prophet, the law looks into a magic mirror that shows future evils--either new ones, or those committed by repeat offenders--that are being thought up and put into practice. And now they won't happen. They'll end before they begin.

ISABELLA

But show some pity.

ANGELO

I show the most pity when I'm just. Then I'm pitying people I don't know, who might be encouraged to do wrong if an offense went unpunished. By punishing the wrongdoer, I'm also helping him by not letting him live to commit another crime. Let it go. Your brother dies tomorrow. Be content.

ISABELLA

So you have to be the first person to give this sentence, and he's the one that suffers? It must be great to have unlimited power. But it's corrupt to use that power without limits.

LUCIO

[aside to ISABELLA] That's well said.

ISABELLA

Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,
140 For every pelting, petty officer
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
145 Than the soft myrtle: but man, proud man,
Drest 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
150 As make the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
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

155 [aside] Pray heaven she win him!

ISABELLA

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

LUCIO

Thou'rt i' the right, girl; more o', that.

ISABELLA

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

LUCIO

[aside to ISABELLA] Art avised o' that? more on 't.

ANGELO

Why do you put these sayings upon me?

ISABELLA

Because authority, though it err like others,
165 Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself,
That skins the vice o' the top. Go to your bosom;
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,
170 Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
Against my brother's life.

ANGELO

[aside] She speaks, and 'tis
Such sense, that my sense breeds with it. Fare you well.

ISABELLA

175 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.

LUCIO

[To ISABELLA so that only she can hear] That's well said.

ISABELLA

If powerful men could thunder like Jove  does, Jove would never be quiet! Every worthless officer would use his heavenly thunder--there'd be nothing but thunder! Merciful God, you'd rather split the strong, old oak tree than the soft myrtle tree. But man--proud man--with a little, brief power in his hands is ignorant of the grace that's promised him. He mimics the essence of God like an angry ape, playing such awful tricks that the angels weep. If they had mortal bodies like us, they'd laugh themselves to death.

 Jove was the chief ancient Roman god, who wielded thunder and lightning.

LUCIO

[To ISABELLA so that only she can hear] Oh, move in, move in, girl! He'll relent. He's about to give in; I can tell.

PROVOST

[To himself] I pray to God that she wins him over!

ISABELLA

We can't compare ourselves to our brothers. Great men can joke around with saints, and it seems witty. But if regular men do it, it might seem like crass profanity.

LUCIO

You're in the right, girl! More of that!

ISABELLA

What sounds like a harsh word coming from a captain sounds like blasphemy coming from a soldier.

LUCIO

[To ISABELLA so that only she can hear] Are you sure about that? Say more.

ANGELO

Why are you saying these things to me?

ISABELLA

When a man of authority makes a mistake, his power works like a kind of medicine to take the edge off his fault. Look into heart, probe it, and ask yourself if you have a fault like my brother's. If you find that you're just as naturally guilty as he is, then don't even think of saying a single word against my brother's life.

ANGELO

[To himself] When she speaks, she makes so much sense  that I want to sleep with her.

 Here, Angelo puns on the word "sense" as both "wisdom" and "sensuality."

[To ISABELLA] Take care.

ISABELLA

My noble lord, reverse your decision.

ANGELO

I'll think about it. Come again tomorrow.

ISABELLA

Listen how I'll bribe you. My good lord, reverse your decision.

ANGELO

How! bribe me?

ISABELLA

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

LUCIO

180 *[aside to ISABELLA]* You had marr'd all else.

ISABELLA

Not with fond shekels of the tested gold,
Or stones whose rates are either rich or poor
As fancy values them; but with true prayers
That shall be up at heaven and enter there
185 Ere sun-rise, prayers from preserved souls,
From fasting maid's whose minds are dedicate
To nothing temporal.

ANGELO

Well; come to me to-morrow.

LUCIO

[aside to ISABELLA] Go to; 'tis well; away!

ISABELLA

190 Heaven keep your honour safe!

ANGELO

[aside] Amen:
For I am that way going to temptation,
Where prayers cross.

ISABELLA

At what hour to-morrow
195 Shall I attend your lordship?

ANGELO

At any time 'fore noon.

ISABELLA

'Save your honour!

Exeunt ISABELLA, LUCIO, and Provost

ANGELO

From thee, even from thy virtue!
200 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
That, lying by the violet in the sun,
Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
205 Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be
That modesty may more betray our sense
Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough,
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there? O, fie, fie, fie!
210 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!
Thieves for their robbery have authority
When judges steal themselves. What, do I love her,
215 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,
With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
220 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
Subdues me quite. Even till now,
When men were fond, I smiled and wonder'd how.

ANGELO

What? Bribe me?

ISABELLA

Yes, with the blessings that heaven will give you.

LUCIO

[To ISABELLA so that only she can hear] You've ruined everything else.

ISABELLA

Not with precious golden coins, and not with gems whose value fluctuates with market demand, but with honest prayers that will rise to heaven and enter before sunrise. Prayers from pure souls, from fasting virgins whose minds are dedicated only to holy things.

ANGELO

Well, come to see me again tomorrow.

LUCIO

[To ISABELLA so that only she can hear] That's enough; all's well. Let's go!

ISABELLA

May God keep you safe, your Honor!

ANGELO

[To himself] Amen. Since I'm on the way to temptation, I could use the prayers.

ISABELLA

What time tomorrow should I come to you, your Lordship?

ANGELO

At any time before noon.

ISABELLA

God bless you, your Honor!

ISABELLA, LUCIO, and the PROVOST exit.

ANGELO

Seduced by you, actually--by your virtue! What's this, what's this? Is this her fault or mine? Who sins most: the tempter, or the tempted? Ha! Not her. She's not tempting, anyway. Like a dead animal lying next to a sweet-smelling flower, it's me that covers the good smells with my stink. Is it possible that modesty is more seductive to me than loose women? With everything I've done, am I going to corrupt a holy nun and do evil things with her? Oh, for shame, for shame! What are you doing? Who are you, Angelo? Do you want her--disgustingly--because of all the things that make her good? Oh, let her brother live! Thieves have an excuse for their robbery if judges steal, too. What? Do I love her? I want to hear her speak again, and look into her eyes! What is it I'm dreaming of? Oh, tricky devil: to catch a saint, you've baited your hook with saints. The temptation that pushes us to sin by loving virtue is very dangerous. With all her energy, craft, and looks, a whore could never arouse me. But this virtuous girl has gotten the better of me. Until now, when men fell in love, I smiled and wondered how.

[Exit](#)*He exits.*

Act 2, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter, severally, DUKE VINCENTIO disguised as a friar, and Provost

DUKE VINCENTIO

Hail to you, provost! so I think you are.

PROVOST

I am the provost. What's your will, good friar?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Bound by my charity and my blest order,
I come to visit the afflicted spirits
5 Here in the prison. Do me the common right
To let me see them and to make me know
The nature of their crimes, that I may minister
To them accordingly.

PROVOST

I would do more than that, if more were needful.

Enter JULIET

10 Look, here comes one: a gentlewoman of mine,
Who, falling in the flaws of her own youth,
Hath blister'd her report: she is with child;
And he that got it, sentenced; a young man
More fit to do another such offence
15 Than die for this.

DUKE VINCENTIO

When must he die?

PROVOST

As I do think, to-morrow.
I have provided for you: stay awhile,
20 [To JULIET] And you shall be conducted.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Repent you, fair one, of the sin you carry?

JULIET

I do; and bear the shame most patiently.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience,
And try your penitence, if it be sound,
25 Or hollowly put on.

JULIET

I'll gladly learn.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Love you the man that wrong'd you?

JULIET

Yes, as I love the woman that wrong'd him.

DUKE VINCENTIO

So then it seems your most offensive act
Was mutually committed?

Shakescleare Translation

DUKE VINCENTIO (disguised as a friar) and the PROVOST enter, one at a time.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Greetings to you, Provost! At least I think that's who you are.

PROVOST

I am the provost. How can I help you, good friar?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Owing to my charity and the duties of my order, I've come to visit the troubled people here in the prison. Do me a favor: let me see them, and tell me what their crimes were so that I can minister to them accordingly.

PROVOST

I would do more than that if it were necessary.

JULIET enters.

Look, her comes one: a gentlewoman who is one of my prisoners. She caved in to her own youthful desires and has ruined her reputation. She's pregnant, and the man who knocked her up is sentenced to die--a young man who ought to be committing another "offense" of that kind rather than dying for it.

DUKE VINCENTIO

When is he scheduled to die?

PROVOST

Tomorrow, I think. I've prepared everything for you, so stay a while.

[To JULIET] And you'll be taken care of.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Pretty girl: do you repent of the sin that got you pregnant?

JULIET

I do, and I'm bearing the shame most patiently.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I'll show you how to put your conscience on trial so that you can see if your repentance is real, or only hollow and fake.

JULIET

I'm happy to learn.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Do you love the man that wronged you?

JULIET

Yes, as much as I love the woman  that wronged him.

 Here, Juliet refers to herself.

DUKE VINCENTIO

So then, it seems your offensive act was mutually committed?

JULIET

Mutually.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Then was your sin of heavier kind than his.

JULIET

I do confess it, and repent it, father.

DUKE VINCENTIO

'Tis meet so, daughter: but lest you do repent,
As that the sin hath brought you to this shame,
Which sorrow is always towards ourselves, not heaven,
Showing we would not spare heaven as we love it,
But as we stand in fear,--

JULIET

I do repent me, as it is an evil,
And take the shame with joy.

DUKE VINCENTIO

There rest.
Your partner, as I hear, must die to-morrow,
And I am going with instruction to him.
Grace go with you, Benedicte!

Exit

JULIET

Must die to-morrow! O injurious love,
That respites me a life, whose very comfort
Is still a dying horror!

PROVOST

'Tis pity of him.

Exeunt

DUKE VINCENTIO exits.

JULIET

He dies tomorrow! Oh, unjust love: because I'm carrying
Claudio's child, my life has been spared. But any comfort I
gain from that turns to horror because Claudio's death!

PROVOST

It's a shame about him.

They exit.

Act 2, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter ANGELO

ANGELO

When I would pray and think, I think and pray
To several subjects. Heaven hath my empty words;
Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue,
Anchors on Isabel: Heaven in my mouth,
5 As if I did but only chew his name;
And in my heart the strong and swelling evil
Of my conception. The state, whereon I studied
Is like a good thing, being often read,
Grown sere and tedious; yea, my gravity,
10 Wherein--let no man hear me--I take pride,
Could I with boot change for an idle plume,
Which the air beats for vain. O place, O form,
How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit,
Wrench awe from fools and tie the wiser souls
15 To thy false seeming! Blood, thou art blood:
Let's write good angel on the devil's horn:
'Tis not the devil's crest.

Enter a SERVANT

How now! who's there?

SERVANT

One Isabel, a sister, desires access to you.

Shakescleare Translation

ANGELO enters.

ANGELO

When I want to pray and think, I end up praying and
thinking about a lot of different things. My empty words are
directed to God, while the object of my prayers is Isabella,
despite what I say. "Heaven" is on my lips as if I spoke the
name of "Jesus" half-heartedly. And my heart is filled with
the steady, growing evil of my thoughts. I have studied
government, and it is like a good book that gets boring
when you read it too many times. As for my power, in
which--I hope no one's listening--I take pride, I'd be happy
to trade it for any boring, useless job. Oh, high rank! Oh,
formalities! How often do your appearances and clothes
impress idiots, and even corrupt smarter men so that they
think they really are what they seem to be! I'll write "Good
Angel" on my forehead, and pretend there's not devil horns
growing there.

A SERVANT enters.

Hello? Who's there?

SERVANT

A nun named Isabella wants to see you.

ANGELO

20 Teach her the way.

Exit SERVANT

O heavens!
Why does my blood thus muster to my heart,
Making both it unable for itself,
And dispossessing all my other parts
25 Of necessary fitness?
So play the foolish throngs with one that swoons;
Come all to help him, and so stop the air
By which he should revive: and even so
The general, subject to a well-wish'd king,
30 Quit their own part, and in obsequious fondness
 Crowd to his presence, where their untaught love
 Must needs appear offence.

Enter ISABELLA

How now, fair maid?

ISABELLA

I am come to know your pleasure.

ANGELO

35 That you might know it, would much better please me
Than to demand what 'tis. Your brother cannot live.

ISABELLA

Even so. Heaven keep your honour!

ANGELO

Yet may he live awhile; and, it may be,
As long as you or I; yet he must die.

ISABELLA

40 Under your sentence?

ANGELO

Yea.

ISABELLA

When, I beseech you? that in his reprieve,
Longer or shorter, he may be so fitted
That his soul sicken not.

ANGELO

45 Ha! fie, these filthy vices! It were as good
To pardon him that hath from nature stolen
A man already made, as to remit
Their saucy sweetness that do coin heaven's image
In stamps that are forbid: 'tis all as easy
50 Falsely to take away a life true made
As to put metal in restrained means
To make a false one.

ISABELLA

'Tis set down so in heaven, but not in earth.

ANGELO

Say you so? then I shall pose you quickly.
55 Which had you rather, that the most just law
Now took your brother's life; or, to redeem him,
Give up your body to such sweet uncleanness
As she that he hath stain'd?

ISABELLA

Sir, believe this,
60 I had rather give my body than my soul.

ANGELO

Show her the way.

The SERVANT exits.

For goodness' sake! Why is my blood rushing to my heart--
making my heart pound and depriving the rest of my body
of the blood it needs? It's like a dumb crowd around a
fainting person: they all come to help him and then deprive
him of the air he needs to revive. It's like when the subjects
of a king, wishing him well, all crowd up to him; since they
don't know how to show affection, it actually comes off as
offensive.

ISABELLA enters.

How are you, beautiful girl?

ISABELLA

I came to find out what you've decided.

ANGELO

I like that you came to "find out," instead of demanding to
know. Your brother will not live.

ISABELLA

Well, all right. God bless you, your Honor!

ANGELO

And yet, he might live a little longer--maybe as long as you
and I--and then he'll have to die.

ISABELLA

By your command?

ANGELO

Yes.

ISABELLA

When, may I ask? Let him know how long or short his
release will be, so he won't be sick with worry about it.

ANGELO

Ha! Shame on these dirty sins. It's as good as pardoning
someone who murdered a full-grown man to forgive those
cheeky lovers who make babies before they're supposed to.
It's as easy to wrongly take away a truly  made life as it is
to have sex outside of marriage to make a false life.

 Here, Angelo likens human reproduction to coin-making. Children born in wedlock are "true" and those born out of it are "false" in his estimation.

ISABELLA

That may be the case in heaven, but not on earth.

ANGELO

Do you say so? Then I'll ask you quickly, which would you
prefer: that your brother were killed now under the just
law? Or that, to save him, you would give up your body to
the same sexual sin that has ruined Juliet?

ISABELLA

Sir, believe this: I would rather give up my body than my
soul.

ANGELO

I talk not of your soul: our compell'd sins
Stand more for number than for accomp't.

ISABELLA

How say you?

ANGELO

Nay, I'll not warrant that; for I can speak
65 Against the thing I say. Answer to this:
I, now the voice of the recorded law,
Pronounce a sentence on your brother's life:
Might there not be a charity in sin
To save this brother's life?

ISABELLA

70 Please you to do't,
I'll take it as a peril to my soul,
It is no sin at all, but charity.

ANGELO

Pleased you to do't at peril of your soul,
Were equal poise of sin and charity.

ISABELLA

75 That I do beg his life, if it be sin,
Heaven let me bear it! you granting of my suit,
If that be sin, I'll make it my morn prayer
To have it added to the faults of mine,
And nothing of your answer.

ANGELO

80 Nay, but hear me.
Your sense pursues not mine: either you are ignorant,
Or seem so craftily; and that's not good.

ISABELLA

Let me be ignorant, and in nothing good,
But graciously to know I am no better.

ANGELO

85 Thus wisdom wishes to appear most bright
When it doth tax itself; as these black masks
Proclaim and enshield beauty ten times louder
Than beauty could, display'd. But mark me;
To be received plain, I'll speak more gross:
90 Your brother is to die.

ISABELLA

So.

ANGELO

And his offence is so, as it appears,
Accountant to the law upon that pain.

ISABELLA

True.

ANGELO

95 Admit no other way to save his life,--
As I subscribe not that, nor any other,
But in the loss of question,--that you, his sister,
Finding yourself desired of such a person,
Whose credit with the judge, or own great place,
100 Could fetch your brother from the manacles
Of the all-building law; and that there were
No earthly mean to save him, but that either
You must lay down the treasures of your body
To this supposed, or else to let him suffer;
105 What would you do?

ANGELO

I'm not talking about your soul. Sins that we're forced to
commit don't really count.

ISABELLA

What do you mean?

ANGELO

No, I can't guarantee that, since I can contradict myself
easily. Answer this: As the legal authority at this time, I
sentence your brother to death. Wouldn't it be charitable to
commit a sin that might save your brother's life?

ISABELLA

If you'll do it, I'll take the spiritual consequences. It's not a
sin at all; it's charity.

ANGELO

If you'll do it in spite of the spiritual consequences, I'd say
the sin and charity are about even.

ISABELLA

Then I beg you to spare his life, if that's a sin. May God help
me bear it! If your granting my request is a sin, I'll have it
added to my faults and will pray for it every morning, so
that you don't have to answer for anything.

ANGELO

No, listen to me. You're not understanding what I'm saying.
Either you're ignorant or pretending to be ignorant, and
that's not good.

ISABELLA

I hope to be ignorant and not good at anything, so that I
always know I'm not better than anyone else.

Angelo

People show their wisdom most when they hold back. In
the same way, your nun's outfit announces and protects
your beauty ten times more than your beauty could on its
own, if it were visible. But listen--to make myself clear--your
brother will die.

ISABELLA

So.

ANGELO

The punishment for his crime is death, according to the law.

ISABELLA

True.

ANGELO

What if his life couldn't be spared in any possible way--since
nothing else can be said on his behalf--unless you, his
sister--finding yourself desired by someone connected to
the judge, or the judge himself--could save your brother
from the punishment of the supreme law? And what if there
were no way on earth to save him except sleeping with this
hypothetical judge? Otherwise you'd have to let him suffer.
What would you do?

ISABELLA

As much for my poor brother as myself:
That is, were I under the terms of death,
The impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
And strip myself to death, as to a bed
110 That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield
My body up to shame.

ANGELO

Then must your brother die.

ISABELLA

And 'twere the cheaper way:
Better it were a brother died at once,
115 Than that a sister, by redeeming him,
Should die for ever.

ANGELO

Were not you then as cruel as the sentence
That you have slander'd so?

ISABELLA

120 Ignomy in ransom and free pardon
Are of two houses: lawful mercy
Is nothing kin to foul redemption.

ANGELO

You seem'd of late to make the law a tyrant;
And rather proved the sliding of your brother
A merriment than a vice.

ISABELLA

125 O, pardon me, my lord; it oft falls out,
To have what we would have, we speak not what we mean:
I something do excuse the thing I hate,
For his advantage that I dearly love.

ANGELO

We are all frail.

ISABELLA

130 Else let my brother die,
If not a feodary, but only he
Owe and succeed thy weakness.

ANGELO

Nay, women are frail too.

ISABELLA

Ay, as the glasses where they view themselves;
135 Which are as easy broke as they make forms.
Women! Help Heaven! men their creation mar
In profiting by them. Nay, call us ten times frail;
For we are soft as our complexions are,
And credulous to false prints.

ANGELO

140 I think it well:
And from this testimony of your own sex, --
Since I suppose we are made to be no stronger
Than faults may shake our frames, --let me be bold;
I do arrest your words. Be that you are,
145 That is, a woman; if you be more, you're none;
If you be one, as you are well express'd
By all external warrants, show it now,
By putting on the destined livery.

ISABELLA

I have no tongue but one: gentle my lord,
150 Let me entreat you speak the former language.

ANGELO

Plainly conceive, I love you.

ISABELLA

I would do the same for my brother that I would do for myself. I mean, if I were sentenced to death, I'd gladly endure beating with whips, strip myself down to nothing, and lie sick in bed before I would surrender my body to shame.

ANGELO

Then your brother has to die.

ISABELLA

And it's better that way. It's better my brother dies immediately than that his sister--by saving him--condemned her soul to hell forever.

ANGELO

Aren't you being just as harsh as the death sentence you've been criticizing?

ISABELLA

Demanding a bribe that will cause me public shame and freely granting a pardon are two different things. Legal mercy has nothing to do with this dirty deal.

ANGELO

Just a few minutes ago you seemed to think the law was too harsh, and that your brother's sin was more of a joke than a sin.

ISABELLA

Oh, forgive me, my lord. It sometimes comes out like that. When we really want something, we say things we don't mean. Even though I hate premarital sex, I had to forgive this sin for my brother's sake, because I love him.

ANGELO

We're all weak.

ISABELLA

Let my brother die, then, if no one else has the same weakness. And no other man will ever commit the same "crime."

ANGELO

No, women are weak, too.

ISABELLA

It's true, we're as weak as the mirrors we use to look at ourselves; they break as easily as they reflect shapes. Women! God help us! Men make the earth a worse place by having children with them. No, call us weak ten more times--we're as soft as the skin on our faces, and gullible, too.

ANGELO

I think you're right. Since you, a woman, have said so--and since I guess we can't be any stronger than the weakness of our own bodies--I'll be bold, and take you at your word. Be what you are: a woman. If you insist on being a nun, you're not really a woman. If you are a woman, as you seem to be from what I can see of your attractive body, show me now. Show me your weakness.

ISABELLA

I can only be the way that I am. My noble lord, can we please go back to talking like we were before?

ANGELO

Understand me clearly: I love you.

ISABELLA

My brother did love Juliet,
And you tell me that he shall die for it.

ANGELO

He shall not, Isabel, if you give me love.

ISABELLA

155 I know your virtue hath a licence in't,
Which seems a little fouler than it is,
To pluck on others.

ANGELO

Believe me, on mine honour,
My words express my purpose.

ISABELLA

160 Ha! little honour to be much believed,
And most pernicious purpose! Seeming, seeming!
I will proclaim thee, Angelo; look for't:
Sign me a present pardon for my brother,
Or with an outstretch'd throat I'll tell the world
165 aloud
What man thou art.

ANGELO

Who will believe thee, Isabel?
My unsoil'd name, the austereness of my life,
My vouch against you, and my place i' the state,
170 Will so your accusation outweigh,
That you shall stifle in your own report
And smell of calumny. I have begun,
And now I give my sensual race the rein:
Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite;
175 Lay by all nicety and prolixious blushes,
That banish what they sue for; redeem thy brother
By yielding up thy body to my will;
Or else he must not only die the death,
But thy unkindness shall his death draw out
180 To lingering sufferance. Answer me to-morrow,
Or, by the affection that now guides me most,
I'll prove a tyrant to him. As for you,
Say what you can, my false o'erweighs your true.

Exit

ISABELLA

To whom should I complain? Did I tell this,
185 Who would believe me? O perilous mouths,
That bear in them one and the self-same tongue,
Either of condemnation or approof;
Bidding the law make court'sy to their will:
Hooking both right and wrong to the appetite,
190 To follow as it draws! I'll to my brother:
Though he hath fallen by prompture of the blood,
Yet hath he in him such a mind of honour.
That, had he twenty heads to tender down
On twenty bloody blocks, he'd yield them up,
195 Before his sister should her body stoop
To such abhor'd pollution.
Then, Isabel, live chaste, and, brother, die:
More than our brother is our chastity.
I'll tell him yet of Angelo's request,
200 And fit his mind to death, for his soul's rest.

Exit

ISABELLA

My brother loved Juliet, and you're telling me he has to die for it.

ANGELO

Isabella, if you make love to me, your brother won't die.

ISABELLA

I know you're virtuous, so I think you're just testing me--
although this test seems foul.

ANGELO

Believe me; I swear I mean what I say.

ISABELLA

Ha! Everyone thinks you're a good man, but you're not. And look what you've done with it! You seem, you seem! I'll tell everyone about you, Angelo. Just wait and see. Sign a pardon for my brother immediately, or I'll tell the world at the top of my lungs just what kind of man you are.

ANGELO

Who would believe you, Isabella? My perfect reputation and disciplined life will work against you. And my place in the government will outweigh your accusation to the point that you'll be ruined by your own report, and be filled with shame. Now that I've gotten going, I'll give my sexual desire free rein: give me what I'm hungry for. Forget all your manners and polite blushing about what your brother did; save him by giving your body up to me. Or else he'll not only die--because of your unkindness he'll also be tortured beforehand, and we'll draw out his suffering. Answer me tomorrow or, I swear by the love I have for you in this moment, I'll be as harsh as I can with him. As for you, say what you want. My lie has more power than your truth.

He exits.

ISABELLA

Who can I complain to? If I told, who would believe me?
Curse the men who have the power, who utter words of condemnation or forgiveness with the same tongue! They can make the law do whatever they want--doing right or wrong to feed their own appetite as it grows! I'll go to my brother. Although he's committed a sexual sin, I still believe he's a good person. If he had twenty heads that he could give to be chopped off twenty times, he'd give them up before he'd let his sister stoop to such a dirty level. So, Isabella: live and be a virgin. Brother: die. My virginity is worth more than my brother's life. I'll tell him what Angelo asked, and help him prepare for death so that his soul can rest in peace.

She exits.

Act 3, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Enter DUKE VINCENTIO disguised as before, CLAUDIO, and Provost

DUKE VINCENTIO

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 VINCENTIO

5 Be absolute for death; either death or life
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,
10 That dost this habitation, where thou keep'st,
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 the accommodations that thou bear'st
15 Are nursed by baseness. Thou'rt by no means valiant;
For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork
Of a poor worm. Thy best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provokest; yet grossly fear'st
Thy death, which is no more. Thou art not thyself;
20 For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains
That issue out of dust. Happy thou art not;
For what thou hast not, still thou strivest to get,
And what thou hast, forget'st. Thou art not certain;
For thy complexion shifts to strange effects,
25 After the moon. If thou art rich, thou'rt poor;
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,
30 The mere effusion of thy proper loins,
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 blessed youth
35 Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
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 yet in this
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
40 Lie hid moe thousand deaths: yet death we fear,
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

45 [Within] What, ho! Peace here; grace and good company!

PROVOST

Who's there? come in: the wish deserves a welcome.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Dear sir, ere long I'll visit you again.

CLAUDIO

Most holy sir, I thank you.

Enter ISABELLA

ISABELLA

50 My business is a word or two with Claudio.

DUKE VINCENTIO (disguised as a friar), CLAUDIO, and the PROVOST enter.

DUKE VINCENTIO

So then you hope Lord Angelo will pardon you?

CLAUDIO

The miserable have nothing to help them except hope. I
hope that I live, but I'm prepared to die.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Be completely set on death. That way, whether you live or
die, it will be all the sweeter. Just say to life, "If I lose you, I
lose something that only idiots want to keep. You're just the
breath that keeps this body of mine going by the hour,
under God's direction. You lose out to Death every time. You
do everything you can to get away from him, but every
second you get closer to Death. You're not classy;
everything that sustains you is low-down and humble.
You're not brave; you're afraid of a bee's sting. Sleep is the
best rest, and you always want to sleep. But you're grossly
afraid of death, which is basically the same thing as a long
sleep. You're not yourself; you're made of a thousand tiny
particles that came from dust. You're not happy; you want
what you don't have and forget what you do have. You're
not consistent; you change your mind as often as the moon
changes its shape. If you're rich, you're poor, because, like a
donkey carrying heavy gold on his back, you can only carry
your riches in life. You will have to leave them behind when
you die. You have no friends; you're constantly cursing your
own internal organs (which you supposedly command) for
the gout, arthritis, and rheumatism that should have killed
you sooner. You're neither young nor old; you're always
dreaming about the one that you're not. When you're
young, you're like an old man who has to beg for money
from older folks. And when you're old, you no longer have
the desire, agility, and good looks to enjoy your wealth." So
what's so good about the thing we call "life?" There's a
thousand things to suffer from in life, yet it's death we fear.
That makes these odds all even.

CLAUDIO

I give you my humble thanks. In begging to live, I'm killing
myself spiritually. Seeking death gives me eternal life. Bring
it on.

ISABELLA

[Offstage] Hey! Hello? Peace, grace, and blessings!

PROVOST

Who's there? Come in. Such kind wishes deserve a
welcome.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Dear sir, I'll visit you again before too long.

CLAUDIO

Thank you, most holy sir.

ISABELLA enters.

ISABELLA

I want to have a word or two with Claudio.

PROVOST

And very welcome. Look, signior, here's your sister.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Provost, a word with you.

PROVOST

As many as you please.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Bring me to hear them speak, where I may be concealed.

55

Exeunt DUKE VINCENTIO and Provost

CLAUDIO

Now, sister, what's the comfort?

ISABELLA

Why,
As all comforts are; most good, most good indeed.
Lord Angelo, having affairs to heaven,
60 Intends you for his swift ambassador,
Where you shall be an everlasting leiger:
Therefore your best appointment make with speed;
To-morrow you set on.

CLAUDIO

Is there no remedy?

ISABELLA

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

CLAUDIO

But is there any?

ISABELLA

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

CLAUDIO

Perpetual durance?

ISABELLA

Ay, just; perpetual durance, a restraint,
Though all the world's vastidity you had,
75 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,
And leave you naked.

80

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. Darest thou die?
85 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.

PROVOST

You're welcome to. Look, sir, here's your sister.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Provost, a word with you.

PROVOST

As many words as you please.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Can you hide me somewhere so I can hear them speak?

DUKE VINCENTIO and the PROVOST exit.

CLAUDIO

Now, sister, is there good news?

ISABELLA

Why, as good as news can be! Very good, very good indeed.
Lord Angelo, who is a servant of heaven, wants you to go to
heaven soon as his ambassador. And you'll stay there as his
representative. So your exciting appointment is coming up
fast; it'll be tomorrow.

CLAUDIO

Is there no help for it?

ISABELLA

No help, except to save your head by breaking a heart.

CLAUDIO

But is there any way to avoid death?

ISABELLA

Yes, brother. You could live. The judge has a kind of evil
mercy. But if you ask for it, it'll save your life, but burden
you until death.

CLAUDIO

Forever?

ISABELLA

Yes, exactly. Forever. Even if you had the whole world, this
"mercy" would keep you in a tiny piece of it.

CLAUDIO

What kind of mercy is it?

ISABELLA

The kind that, if you agreed to it, would strip you of your
honor and leave you naked.

CLAUDIO

Get to the point already.

ISABELLA

Oh, I'm afraid of you, Claudio. And I'm shaking just thinking
of you leading a sinful life, as if you'd value six or seven
years more than eternal honor. Are you afraid to die? The
scariest part of death is the anticipation. And the little
beetle that you step on feels as much pain as a huge giant
when he dies.

CLAUDIO

Why give you me this shame?
 90 Think you I can a resolution fetch
 From flowery 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
 95 Did utter forth a voice. Yes, thou must die:
 Thou art too noble to conserve a life
 In base appliances. This outward-sainted deputy,
 Whose settled visage and deliberate word
 Nips youth i' the head and follies doth emmew
 100 As falcon doth the fowl, is yet a devil
 His filth within being cast, he would appear
 A pond as deep as hell.

CLAUDIO

The prenzie Angelo!

ISABELLA

O, 'tis the cunning livery of hell,
 105 The damned'st body to invest and cover
 In prenzie guards! Dost thou think, Claudio?
 If I would yield him my virginity,
 Thou mightst be freed.

CLAUDIO

O heavens! it cannot be.

ISABELLA

110 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,
 Or else thou diest to-morrow.

CLAUDIO

Thou shalt not do't.

ISABELLA

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

CLAUDIO

Thanks, dear Isabel.

ISABELLA

Be ready, Claudio, for your death tomorrow.

CLAUDIO

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

ISABELLA

Which is the least?

CLAUDIO

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

ISABELLA

What says my brother?

CLAUDIO

Death is a fearful thing.

CLAUDIO

Why are you embarrassing me like this? Do you think I can man up with all this flowery poetry? If I have to die, I'll go into the darkness like a bride, and embrace it with my arms.

ISABELLA

So said my brother. My father just spoke from beyond the grave. Yes, you have to die. You're too good to save your life by lowering yourself. This deputy--who seems so saintly, who slaps young people upside the head with his stern face and harsh words, and snaps up mistakes the way falcons snap up birds--is a devil. If you could see the depth of evil inside him, it would be a pit as deep as hell.

CLAUDIO

That perfect Angelo!

ISABELLA

Oh, it's just hell's clever scheme to dress the most accursed men up as perfect soldiers! What do you think, Claudio? If I gave up my virginity to him, you could be freed.

CLAUDIO

Oh, heavens! It can't be.

ISABELLA

Yes, he would free you, but after this horrible crime you would offend him more. Tonight's when I'm supposed to do what I can't even name, or else you die tomorrow.

CLAUDIO

You shouldn't do it.

ISABELLA

Oh, if it were only my life, I'd give it up for your freedom as easily as a pin.

CLAUDIO

Thanks, dear Isabella.

ISABELLA

Be ready for your death tomorrow, Claudio.

CLAUDIO

Yes. Does he have such desires in him that he's willing to break the law like that whenever he feels the urge? Surely it's not a sin. Or, of the deadly seven, it's the least serious.

ISABELLA

Which is the least?

CLAUDIO

If lust were really that bad, why would a wise man like him willingly take on the eternal consequences for a momentary thrill? Oh, Isabella!

ISABELLA

What are you saying, brother?

CLAUDIO

Death is a scary thing.

 According to the Bible, the seven deadly sins are pride, anger, greed, laziness, jealousy, gluttony, and lust. Claudio suggests that lust is the least serious of the sins.

ISABELLA

130 And shamed 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
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
135 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
140 Of those that lawless and uncertain thought
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
145 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,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far
150 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
155 From thine own sister's shame? What should I think?
Heaven shield my mother play'd 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
160 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!
165 Thy sin's not accidental, but a trade.
Mercy to thee would prove itself a bawd:
'Tis best thou diest quickly.

CLAUDIO

O hear me, Isabella!

Re-enter DUKE VINCENTIO

DUKE VINCENTIO

170 Vouchsafe a word, young sister, but one word.

ISABELLA

What is your will?

DUKE VINCENTIO

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

ISABELLA

And a life of shame is a hateful thing.

CLAUDIO

Yes, but to die, and to go somewhere unknown, to lie in a
cold grave and rot...for my warm, thinking body to become
a piece of dirt, and for my soul to go either down to fiery
hell or up to the exciting icy castle of heaven...to be blown
about violently in the winds around and around the
world...or to be in worse suffering than we imagine even in
our most uncensored, uncertain thoughts...it's too horrible!
The most tired, deplorable worldly life with all the age,
ache, poverty, and imprisonment that nature can lay on is a
paradise compared with death, which we fear.

ISABELLA

Oh no! Oh no!

CLAUDIO

Sweet sister, let me live. Nature will be so forgiving of
whatever sin you have to commit to save your brother's life,
that the sin will become a virtue.

ISABELLA

Oh, you animal! You weak coward! You lying dog! You want
to save your life through my sin? Isn't it a kind of incest to
take your life from your own sister's shame? What am I
supposed to think? I hope my mother didn't cheat on my
father--but I'm sure such a deformed piece of savagery
never came from his side of the family. I defy you! Die, die! If
I could save you from your fate by praying, I'd do it. I'll pray
a thousand prayers for your death, but not a word to save
you.

CLAUDIO

No, listen to me, Isabella.

ISABELLA

Oh, shame on you! Your sin wasn't just an accident; it's your
occupation. Mercy would just help ² you commit more
sins. It's best you die quickly.

² In the original text, Isabella calls mercy a "bawd," or a madam who facilitates liaisons between prostitutes and customers, like Mistress Overdone. She suggests that receiving mercy will cause Claudio to commit more sexual sins.

CLAUDIO

Oh, listen to me, Isabella!

DUKE VINCENTIO enters.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Let me have a word with you, little sister. Just a word.

ISABELLA

What do you want?

DUKE VINCENTIO

If you don't mind giving up your free time, I'd like to speak
with you. What I want will be to your own benefit, too.

ISABELLA

175 I have no superfluous leisure; my stay must be stolen out of other affairs; but I will attend you awhile.

DUKE VINCENTIO

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 essay of her virtue to practise his judgment 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 satisfy your resolution with hopes that are fallible: tomorrow you must die; go to your knees and make ready.

CLAUDIO

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

DUKE VINCENTIO

Hold you there: farewell.

Exit CLAUDIO

Provost, a word with you!

Re-enter Provost

PROVOST

What's your will, father?

DUKE VINCENTIO

195 That now you are come, you will be gone. Leave me awhile with the maid: my mind promises with my habit no loss shall touch her by my company.

PROVOST

In good time.

Exit Provost. ISABELLA comes forward

DUKE VINCENTIO

200 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. 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?

ISABELLA

210 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 government.

DUKE VINCENTIO

215 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 advisings: to the love I have in doing good a remedy presents itself. I do make myself believe that you may most uprighteously 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

ISABELLA

I don't have any extra free time. My visit is taking time away from other things. But I'll listen to you awhile.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Son, I overheard what you and your sister said to each other. Angelo was never trying to corrupt her. He was only testing her virtue to practice his judgment of people's dispositions. She's honorable and truthful, so she's denied him in exactly the way he wanted. I'm Angelo's confessor, 3 and I know this to be true. So prepare yourself for death. Don't depend on empty hope. You have to die tomorrow. Pray and get ready.

3 In the Catholic Church, a confessor is a priest or other official who listens to people confess their sins and offers them forgiveness on God's behalf.

CLAUDIO

Tell my sister that I ask for her forgiveness. I'm hate this life so much that I'd do anything to die.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Stay there. Goodbye.

CLAUDIO exits.

Provost, a word with you!

The PROVOST enters.

PROVOST

What do you want, father?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Now that you just got here, I ask that you'll leave again. Leave me alone with the girl for a while. You can trust me to be alone with her--I'm a monk.

PROVOST

Take your time.

The PROVOST exits. ISABELLA comes forward.

DUKE VINCENTIO

The same God that made you beautiful has also made you good. The little good that's in beauty means that goodness is hardly ever beautiful. But grace--which is the core of your being--will keep you beautiful forever. I've found out about how Angelo propositioned you. And if there weren't so many who've fallen before him, then I'd be surprised at Angelo. What happens if you agree to his trade and save your brother?

ISABELLA

I'm going to respond to him now: I'd rather my brother die legally than that my son be born 4 illegitimate. But, oh, the Duke is so wrong about Angelo! If the Duke ever comes back and I can speak to him, I will tell him about Angelo's government as soon as I can open my lips.

4 Here, Isabella expresses her fear that having sex with Angelo will result in a pregnancy out of wedlock--the same crime for which Juliet is imprisoned.

DUKE VINCENTIO

That wouldn't be a bad thing to do. And yet, as it now stands, it'd be hard to accuse Angelo, since he only propositioned you. So listen to my advice: I love doing good, and I have a solution in mind. I almost think that you could do some much-needed good for a poor, abused lady. At the same time, you could redeem your brother from the harsh law, avoid dirtying yourself, and really please the Duke who isn't here--if by chance he ever comes back and has a chance to hear about all this.

peradventure he shall ever return to have hearing of
this business.

225

ISABELLA

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

DUKE VINCENTIO

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

230

ISABELLA

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

DUKE VINCENTIO

She should this Angelo have married; was affianced to her by 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 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 combinante husband, this well-seeming Angelo.

235

ISABELLA

Can this be so? did Angelo so leave her?

245

DUKE VINCENTIO

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

250

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 avail?

255

DUKE VINCENTIO

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.

DUKE VINCENTIO

This forenamed maid hath yet in her the continuance of her first affection: his unjust unkindness, 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 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 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 here, by this, is your brother saved, your honour untainted, the poor Mariana advantaged, and the corrupt deputy scaled. The maid will I frame and make fit for his attempt. If you

260

265

270

275

ISABELLA

Please tell me more. I'm willing to do anything that doesn't seem wrong to me.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Virtue is bold, and good people are never afraid. Have you ever heard of Mariana, the sister of the great soldier Frederick, who died at sea?

ISABELLA

I've heard of her, and have heard good things attached to that name.

DUKE VINCENTIO

She was supposed to marry this Angelo. He was engaged to her, and the wedding date was set. But between the engagement and the ceremony, her brother Frederick was shipwrecked, and her dowry sunk along with the ship. But listen how terribly it worked out for the poor woman: she lost her noble, respected brother, who was always kind and loving to her. Along with him, she lost her entire fortune and her marriage dowry. And, along with all of that, she lost her would-be husband, this well-seeming Angelo.

ISABELLA

Is this true? And did Angelo leave her like that?

DUKE VINCENTIO

He left her in tears, and he didn't stick around to comfort her. He went back on his vows, and made up a story about her having an affair. In short, he sent her into a period of mourning, which she's still in for his sake. He hasn't taken pity on her at all. He's not even sympathetic to her constant tears.

ISABELLA

It would have been better for him to kill this poor girl, and take her out of the world! Life is horrible if it lets this man live! But how can she get out of this?

DUKE VINCENTIO

It's a break which you could easily fix. Fixing it not only saves your brother, but keeps you from dishonoring yourself while you do it.

ISABELLA

Show me how, good father.

DUKE VINCENTIO

The woman I mentioned, Mariana, is still in love with Angelo. The wrong he did her--which, all things considered, should have ended her love--has only made it stronger and wilder, like a rock in a stream. Go to Angelo. Answer his request obediently and convincingly. Agree to his demands completely. Only ask him this: that your first visit to him is short, that it stays dark and silent the entire time, and that the place is convenient. If he grants all this--and now it all comes together--we'll get the abandoned woman to go to the appointment in your place. If the encounter is acknowledged afterward, it might convince him to marry her. And with all that, your brother is saved, your reputation is clean, the poor Mariana is helped, and the corrupt deputy gets his just deserts. I'll talk to the girl and get her ready for his attempt. If you don't mind doing this, the benefit to everyone will make your lie inconsequential. What do you think?

think well to carry this as you may, the doubleness
of the benefit defends the deceit from reproof.
280 What think you of it?

ISABELLA

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

DUKE VINCENTIO

It lies much in your holding up. Haste you speedily
to Angelo: if for this night he entreat you to his
285 bed, give him promise of satisfaction. I will
presently to 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

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

Exeunt severally

ISABELLA

I feel better just imagining it. I think it will work out
extremely well.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It all depends on how you carry it out. Go quickly to Angelo.
If he asks you to come to his bed tonight, promise him you
will. I'll go now to St. Luke's, where poor Mariana lives at the
convent. Find me there, and take care of Angelo so that it
can all happen soon.

ISABELLA

Thank you for your help. Take care, good father.

They exit in different directions.

Act 3, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter, on one side, DUKE VINCENTIO disguised as before; on the other, ELBOW, and Officers with POMPEY

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 VINCENTIO

O heavens! what stuff is here?

POMPEY

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

ELBOW

Come your way, sir. 'Bless you, good father friar.

DUKE VINCENTIO

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 deputy.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Fie, sirrah! a bawd, a wicked bawd!
The evil that thou causest to be done,

Shakescleare Translation

DUKE VINCENTIO (*disguised as a friar*) enters from one side
of the stage. From the other side, ELBOW and officers
holding POMPEY enter.

ELBOW

Well, if there's nothing to be done about it and you're intent
on selling men and women like animals, the whole world
can just drink cheap wine. 1

1 "Bastard" was an inexpensive,
sweet Spanish wine, but, as Vincentio
notes, Elbow unintentionally makes a
pun. To "drink brown and white
bastard" can also mean "to procreate
children of mixed race."

DUKE VINCENTIO

Oh, heavens! What's going on here?

POMPEY

Things have never been right since sex and money-
lending were repaid like this: the one who was just having
fun was killed, and the worse one was allowed by order of
the law to wear a fur coat to keep him warm--and made
with fox and lamb-skins, too. This all goes to show that
because the guilty are richer than the innocent, they can do
whatever they want!

ELBOW

Come on, sir. Bless you, good father friar.

DUKE VINCENTIO

And you, good brother father 2. What crime has this man
committed against you, sir?

2 The Duke puns on Elbow's word
"friar," which is a corruption of the
French word "frere," meaning
"brother."

ELBOW

Well, sir, he's broken the law. And, sir, we think he's a thief,
too, sir. For we found a lock-picking device with him which
we sent to the deputy.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Shame on you, sir 3! You pimp, you wicked pimp! You
make your living from this horrible evil. Do you even think

3 In the original text, the Duke uses
the word "sirrah"--a familiar term of

That is thy means to live. Do thou but think
What 'tis to cram a maw or clothe a back
From such a filthy vice: say to thyself,
From their abominable and beastly touches
I drink, I eat, array myself, and live.
25 Canst thou believe thy living is a life,
So stinkingly depending? Go mend, go mend.

POMPEY

Indeed, it does stink in some sort, sir; but yet,
sir, I would prove--

DUKE VINCENTIO

Nay, if the devil has given thee proofs for sin,
30 Thou wilt prove his. Take him to prison, officer:
Correction and instruction must both work
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
35 he be a whoremonger, and comes before him, he were
as good go a mile on his errand.

DUKE VINCENTIO

That we were all, as some would seem to be,
From our faults, as faults from seeming, free!

ELBOW

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

POMPEY

40 I spy comfort; I cry bail. Here's a gentleman and a
friend of mine.

Enter LUCIO

LUCIO

How now, noble Pompey! What, at the wheels of
Caesar? art thou led in triumph? What, is there
45 none of Pygmalion's images, newly made woman, to be
had now, for putting the hand in the pocket and
extracting it clutch'd? What reply, ha? What
sayest thou to this tune, matter and method? Is't
not drowned i' the last rain, ha? What sayest
50 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 VINCENTIO

Still thus, and thus; still worse!

LUCIO

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

POMPEY

Trot, 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: ever your fresh whore and your powdered bawd:
an unshunned consequence; it must be so. Art going
60 to prison, Pompey?

POMPEY

Yes, faith, sir.

about what it means to put food on the table or clothes on
your back by such a dirty crime? Do you say to yourself,
"from their disgusting, beastly encounters I drink, eat,
clothe myself, and live?" Can you believe your living is a life
that depends on such filth? Go improve yourself, improve
yourself.

*address derived from "sir," often used
when speaking to men of a lower
social rank.*

POMPEY

It's true, sir. It does stink in a way. But sir, I would argue--

DUKE VINCENTIO

No, if the devil has given you arguments with which to
defend sin, then you're his already.

*[To an officer] Take him to prison, officer. Correction and
teaching will have to help this rude animal improve himself.*

ELBOW

He has to have a trial in front of the deputy, sir. The deputy
has given him a warning, and he can't stand a pimp. If he is
a pimp, and stands trial, he'd be better off doing anything
else.

DUKE VINCENTIO

If only we were all free from our faults--as some seem to be--
and that our faults weren't so apparent to others!

ELBOW

He'll be hanged  with rope like your belt, sir.

 Elbow uses a euphemism for
Pompey's impending death by
referring to the rope belt that friars
wear around their waists.

POMPEY

There is hope; I might get bail! Here comes a gentleman
who's a friend of mine.

LUCIO enters.

LUCIO

What's going on, noble Pompey? Are you being held
prisoner ? Are you on display like a prisoner of war?
Don't you have any beautiful women  , all dolled up and
ready to reach into our pockets and rob us of all our cash?
What, no reply? Ha. What do you have to say about this
thing and the way it's been done? Shouldn't it all be over
and done, huh? What do you have to say for yourself? Is the
world the same as it was, man? How do you feel? Are you
sad? Do you want to say a few words? Or anything? Tell us
the gist.

  Lucio refers to the ancient Roman
tradition of leading prisoners of war
behind a general's chariot in victory
parades.

  In the ancient Roman poetry of
Ovid, Pygmalion was an artist who fell
in love with a statue he created, and
the gods brought her to life. Lucio
jokingly refers to Pompey's prostitutes
as similar "creations."

DUKE VINCENTIO

It just keeps going on and on and getting worse and worse!

LUCIO

How's my sweetie pie, your mistress? Is she still pimping?

POMPEY

To tell you the truth, sir, she's eaten up all her beef and is
soaking in the bathtub. 

  Taking a salt-bath (called
"powdering") was supposedly a
remedy for venereal diseases.

LUCIO

Well that's good. That's the right thing to do. It got to be
that way. You've got to have a fresh whore and a powdered
pimp. Got to embrace the consequences. Are you going to
prison, Pompey?

POMPEY

Yes, indeed I am, sir.

LUCIO

Why, 'tis not amiss, Pompey. Farewell: go, say I sent thee thither. For debt, Pompey? or how?

ELBOW

65 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 Pompey. Commend me to the prison, Pompey: you will turn good husband now, Pompey; you will keep the house.

70

POMPEY

I hope, sir, your good worship will be my bail.

LUCIO

No, indeed, will I not, Pompey; it is not the wear. 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.

75

DUKE VINCENTIO

And you.

LUCIO

Does Bridget paint still, Pompey, ha?

ELBOW

Come your ways, sir; come.

POMPEY

80 You will not bail me, then, sir?

LUCIO

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

ELBOW

Come your ways, sir; come.

LUCIO

Go to kennel, Pompey; go.

Exeunt ELBOW, POMPEY and Officers

85 What news, friar, of the duke?

DUKE VINCENTIO

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?

DUKE VINCENTIO

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

LUCIO

Well, it's not wrong ⁸, Pompey. Goodbye. Go, and say I sent you. Was it for debt, Pompey? Or what?

⁸ We recall that in Act 1, Mistress Overdone said that Lucio was an informer--his happy-go-lucky manner here seems to indicate that is the case.

ELBOW

For being a pimp, for being a pimp.

LUCIO

Well, then, put him in prison. If imprisonment is the punishment for pimping, then it's right, isn't it? He's definitely a pimp, and has been one for a long time. He was born a pimp. Farewell, dear Pompey. Give the prison my best wishes, Pompey. You'll be a good husband now, Pompey, and keep house ⁹.

⁹ The "house" here is the prison; Lucio jokingly refers to Pompey as a woman, a "housekeeper," as a mark of his fall from grace.

POMPEY

I had hoped that you might pay my bail, your good Worship.

LUCIO

No I won't, Pompey. It's not meant to be. I'll pray that your punishment is even worse, Pompey. And if you don't take it well, then you're even worse than I thought. Goodbye, trusty Pompey.

[To DUKE VINCENTIO] Bless you, friar.

DUKE VINCENTIO

And you.

LUCIO

Does Bridget ¹⁰ still wear makeup, Pompey, huh?

¹⁰ In naming "Bridget," Lucio refers to one of the prostitutes Pompey knows.

ELBOW

Come on, sir, come on.

POMPEY

You won't bail me out, then, sir?

LUCIO

Not then, Pompey, and not now.

[To DUKE VINCENTIO] What's the news out there, friar? What's the news?

ELBOW

Come on, sir, come on.

LUCIO

Go to your kennel ¹¹, Pompey, go.

¹¹ A kennel is the place where a dog sleeps; Lucio insults Pompey by implying that he's a dog.

ELBOW, POMPEY, and the officers exit.

What the news about the Duke, friar?

DUKE VINCENTIO

I don't know anything. Can you tell me anything?

LUCIO

Some say he's with the Emperor of Russia; others say he's in Rome. But where do you think he is?

DUKE VINCENTIO

I don't know where. But wherever he is, I wish him well.

LUCIO

90 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 transgression to 't.

DUKE VINCENTIO

He does well in 't.

LUCIO

95 A little more lenity to lechery would do no harm in him: something too crabbed that way, friar.

DUKE VINCENTIO

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

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?

DUKE VINCENTIO

How should he be made, then?

LUCIO

105 Some report a sea-maid spawned him; some, that he was begot between two stock-fishes. 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 generative; that's infallible.

DUKE VINCENTIO

110 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 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 VINCENTIO

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

LUCIO

120 O, sir, you are deceived.

DUKE VINCENTIO

'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 crotchets in him. He would be drunk too; that let me inform you.

DUKE VINCENTIO

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.

LUCIO

What a crazy, fantastic trick for him to sneak away from the government and pretend to be a beggar ¹² when he's really rich. Lord Angelo is doing well while the Duke is gone. He makes people answer for their crimes.

¹² Lucio's speech is ironic, since the Duke is now disguised as a friar who begs for donations to survive.

DUKE VINCENTIO

He's doing well with it.

LUCIO

A little more leniency with sex wouldn't do him any harm. He's a little too uptight with that, friar.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It's a common fault, so you have to be harsh to put an end to it.

LUCIO

Yes, it's true, everyone seems to have a weakness for sex; it's pretty far-spread. But it's impossible to exterminate it completely, friar. You could as easily put an end to eating and drinking. They say that Angelo wasn't conceived by a man and a woman in the usual way. Do you think that's true?

DUKE VINCENTIO

How would he be born, then?

LUCIO

Some say a sea-nymph gave birth to him. Others say he was conceived by two dried fish. But it's true that when he pees, his urine is pure ice. I know that's true. He's a puppet without the ability to reproduce, that's undoubtable.

DUKE VINCENTIO

You're funny, sir, and you speak quickly.

LUCIO

It's so unforgiving of him, to kill a man for a little rebellion of the penis ¹³! Would the absent Duke have done this? Before he would have hanged one man for having a hundred bastards, he would have paid to care for a thousand bastards. He knew a little about the game. He got it, and that led him to be merciful.

¹³ In the 15th and 16th centuries, men wore a decorated pouch called a "codpiece" over their breeches to cover the genitals. Lucio uses "codpiece" as a metonym for "penis."

DUKE VINCENTIO

I never heard that the absent Duke was a ladies' man. He wasn't built that way.

LUCIO

Oh, sir, you're wrong.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It's not possible ¹⁴.

¹⁴ In this scene, irony builds as Lucio tries to tell the disguised Duke what he himself is like.

LUCIO

Who, the Duke? He'd see a fifty-year-old beggar ¹⁵ woman and put a coin in her bucket; he had his quirks. And he'd get drunk, too, let me tell you.

¹⁵ Lucio names the Duke's charitable acts and construes them as vices. Namely, he implies that the Duke would use a beggar woman for sex.

DUKE VINCENTIO

You're definitely being too hard on him.

LUCIO

Sir, I was a good friend of his. The Duke was a shy man, and I think I know why he left.

DUKE VINCENTIO

130 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 VINCENTIO

135 Wise! why, no question but he was.

LUCIO

A very superficial, ignorant, unweighing fellow.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Either this is the 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 140 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.

LUCIO

145 Sir, I know him, and I love him.

DUKE VINCENTIO

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

LUCIO

Come, sir, I know what I know.

DUKE VINCENTIO

150 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?

LUCIO

155 Sir, my name is Lucio; well known to the duke.

DUKE VINCENTIO

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

LUCIO

I fear you not.

DUKE VINCENTIO

O, you hope the duke will return no more; or you 160 imagine me too unhurtful an opposite. But indeed I can do you little harm; you'll forswear this again.

LUCIO

I'll be hanged first: thou art deceived in me, friar. But no more of this. Canst thou tell if Claudio die to-morrow or no?

DUKE VINCENTIO

165 Why should he die, sir?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Please tell me, what might be the reason?

LUCIO

No, sorry. It's a secret and my lips are sealed. But I can tell you this: most of the people thought of the Duke as a wise man.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Wise? Well, there's no question about it; he was--

LUCIO

--a very superficial, ignorant, and impulsive man.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Either you're jealous of him, you're stupid, or you've made a mistake. The quality of his life and the work he's done have to give him a better name. Let his actions be a testament to his critics: he's a scholar, a governor, and a soldier. You don't know what you're talking about. Or if you do know, you're lying out of bad intentions.

LUCIO

Sir, I know him, and I love him.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Love should know better. And if you did know him, you'd speak with more love.

LUCIO

Come on, sir, I know what I know.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I can hardly believe that, since you don't know what you're talking about. But, if the Duke ever returns--as we hope and pray--let me ask you to tell him what you've said. If you've told the truth, you'll say it to his face. I'll have to call on you to do so. And, tell me, what was your name?

LUCIO

Sir, my name is Lucio, and I'm familiar with the Duke.

DUKE VINCENTIO

He'll know you better soon, sir, if I live to report you.

LUCIO

I'm not afraid of you.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Oh, you'd better hope the Duke will never come back, since you think I'm not someone to fear. But it's true I can't hurt you much. You'll repeat this in front of the Duke?

LUCIO

I'll be hanged first. You're wrong about me, friar. But enough of this. Can you tell me if Claudio will die tomorrow, sir?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Why would he die, sir?

LUCIO

Why? For filling a bottle with a tundish. I would
the duke we talk of were returned again: the
ungenitured agent will unpeople the province with
continenency; sparrows must not build in his
house-eaves, because they are lecherous. The duke
170 yet would 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
175 Fridays. He's not past 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 VINCENTIO**

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

*Enter ESCALUS, Provost, and Officers with MISTRESS OVERDONE***ESCALUS**

Go; away with her to prison!

MISTRESS OVERDONE

185 Good my lord, be good to me; your 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

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

MISTRESS OVERDONE

My lord, this is one Lucio's information against me.
Mistress Kate Keepdown was with child by him in the
duke's time; he promised her marriage: his child
195 is a year and a quarter old, come 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;
200 no more words.

Exeunt Officers with MISTRESS OVERDONE

Provost, my brother Angelo will not be altered;
Claudio must die to-morrow: 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
advised him for the entertainment of death.

ESCALUS

Good even, good father.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Bliss and goodness on you!

LUCIO

Why? For sticking his pipe in the hole. I wish the Duke we
were talking about would come back already. The deputy
he's left in his place will reduce the population with his
abstinence policy. Even the sparrows can't build nests on
window-sills because they're too lustful! The Duke, too,
would have punished serious crimes. But he would never
have exposed them. I wish he were back! Indeed, Claudio is
condemned for having sex. Goodbye, good friar. Please pray
for me. The Duke, I'll tell you again, would eat meat on
16 Fridays. He's not too high and mighty, I'm saying, to talk
with a beggar, even if she smelled like brown bread and
garlic. You can tell him I said so. Goodbye.

[16] Observant Catholics do not eat meat on Fridays, or at all during Lent. The point Lucio is making is that the Duke is willing to bend the rules; unlike Angelo, he is not a legalist.

*He exits.***DUKE VINCENTIO**

No matter how big or powerful you are, you're not immune
to criticism. Back-breaking rumors can ruin even the best
reputation. Could even the strongest king stop the power of
a gossiping tongue? But who's this?

*ESCALUS, the PROVOST, and officers holding MISTRESS OVERDONE enter.***ESCALUS**

Go, take her away to prison!

MISTRESS OVERDONE

My good lord, be good to me. I've heard that you're a
merciful man, your Honor. My good lord.

ESCALUS

You were warned two, then three times. And you're still up
to the same stuff! This would make even the most merciful
man act like a tyrant.

PROVOST

A bawd for eleven years straight, if you will, sir.

MISTRESS OVERDONE

My lord, Lucio's the one who informed on me. Ms. Kate
Keepdown [17] got knocked up by him back in the Duke's
day, and he promised to marry her. His child is a year and
three months old, come May 1 [18]. I've taken care of the
child myself, and look how he goes around and rats on me!

[17] Mistress Overdone names one of her prostitutes.

[18] "Philip and Jacob" are the feast days of Saints by those names.

ESCALUS

That man is way too liberal. Bring him here to us. Take her
away to prison! Cut it out, don't say anything else.

The officers and MISTRESS OVERDONE exit.

Provost, my friend Angelo won't change his mind; Claudio
has to die tomorrow. Send him a priest so he can have his
last rites. If Angelo had listened to me take pity on him,
Claudio wouldn't be going to his death.

PROVOST

Sir, the friar has visited him and counseled him about being
prepared for death.

ESCALUS

Good evening, good father.

DUKE VINCENTIO

God bless you with happiness and goodness!

ESCALUS

210 Of whence are you?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Not of this country, though my chance is now
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

215 What news abroad i' the world?

DUKE VINCENTIO

None, but that there is so great a fever on
goodness, 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
220 to be constant in any undertaking. There is scarce
truth enough alive to make societies secure; but
security enough to make fellowships accurst: much
upon this riddle runs the wisdom of the world. This
news is old enough, yet it is every day's news. I
225 pray you, sir, of what disposition was the duke?

ESCALUS

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

DUKE VINCENTIO

What pleasure was he given to?

ESCALUS

Rather rejoicing to see another merry, than merry at
230 any thing which professed to make him rejoice: a
gentleman of all temperance. But leave we him to
his 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
235 lent him visitation.

DUKE VINCENTIO

He professes to have received no sinister measure
from his judge, but most willingly humbles himself
to the determination of justice: yet had he framed
240 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.

ESCALUS

You have paid the heavens your function, and the
prisoner the very debt of your calling. I have
245 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.

DUKE VINCENTIO

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.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Peace be with you!

Exeunt ESCALUS and Provost

He who the sword of heaven will bear
255 Should be as holy as severe;
Pattern in himself to know,

ESCALUS

Where are you from?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Not from this country, though I'm here for now. I'm a monk
in a holy order, and came from the Vatican on a special
mission from the Pope.

ESCALUS

What's the news abroad in the world?

DUKE VINCENTIO

None, except there seems to be such a lack of goodness
that the only way to change things would be if the whole
generation died. Everyone wants something new. It's as
dangerous to have done anything for very long as it is to be
virtuous and trustworthy in any project. There's hardly
enough truth out there to keep society secure, but there's
20 enough security¹⁹ to keep business corrupt. This is the
paradox at the heart of earthly wisdom. This is old news,
really. But it's the same news every day. Let me ask you, sir,
what kind of person was the Duke?

¹⁹ The Duke puns on the meaning of
the word "security" as speculation, or
the investment in securities.

ESCALUS

The kind of man that tried to be self-aware, above all else.

DUKE VINCENTIO

What did he like to do?

ESCALUS

He preferred to see other people happy than to do anything
that would make him happy himself. He was a very modest
man. But we'll leave him to his own affairs, and we'll pray
they turn out well. Let me know if Claudio seems ready. I'm
led to understand that you've been to see him.

DUKE VINCENTIO

He claims he doesn't think he's been punished too harshly
by the judge, and willingly humbles himself to receive
justice. He had kept on hoping, in his weakness, that he had
a chance to live. But I've taken the time to help him see it
isn't possible. Now he's set to die.

ESCALUS

You've done God's work, helping prisoners just as you've
been called to do. I've done everything I can to help the
poor man. But Angelo has been so severe that he's forced
me to admit he is Justice incarnate.

DUKE VINCENTIO

If Angelo's own life lives up to the strictness of his
judgement, then good for him. On the other hand, if he
happens to mess up, he's sentenced himself.

ESCALUS

I'm going to visit the prisoner. Take care.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Peace be with you!

ESCALUS and the PROVOST exit.

20 Anyone²¹ who says he's dishing out God's justice should
be as perfect as he is strict. He should be an example of

²⁰ In this speech, the Duke speaks in
seven- and eight-syllable couplets,

Grace to stand, and virtue go;
More nor less to others paying
Than by self-offences weighing.
260 Shame to him whose cruel striking
Kills for faults of his own liking!
Twice treble shame on Angelo,
To weed my vice and let his grow!
O, what may man within him hide,
265 Though angel on the outward side!
How may likeness made in crimes,
Making practise on the times,
To draw with idle spiders' strings
Most ponderous and substantial things!
270 Craft against vice I must apply:
With Angelo to-night shall lie
His old betrothed but despised;
So disguise shall, by the disguised,
Pay with falsehood false exacting,
275 And perform an old contracting.

Exit

knowledge, grace, and virtue, and he shouldn't dole out punishments greater or less than those he would give himself. Shame on the cruel man who kills another for crimes he himself commits! Double, triple times the shame on Angelo, to punish another man's crime while he lets his own go! A man can hide so much when he looks like an angel from the outside! Identical crimes in these strange times seem to be teaching us thought-provoking, substantial things! I have to be clever to put an end to this evil. Tonight, Angelo will sleep with Mariana, his one-time fiancée whom he abandoned. Her disguise, and she herself, will give Angelo exactly what he deserved--and make good on an old promise.

meaning the lines are shorter than those in the rest of the play, and that they rhyme. When spoken aloud, the speech has a sing-song quality, emphasizing the content of proverbial wisdom the Duke shares.

. 21 In the original text, the Duke delivers this soliloquy in seven- and eight-syllable couplets, meaning the lines are shorter than those in the rest of the play, and that they rhyme. When spoken aloud, the speech has a sing-song quality, emphasizing the proverbial nature of the wisdom that the Duke shares.

He exits.

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter MARIANA and a Boy

BOY

Take, O, take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsown;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn:
5 But my kisses bring again, bring again;
Seals of love, but sealed in vain, sealed in vain.

Enter DUKE VINCENTIO disguised as before

MARIANA

Break off thy song, and haste thee quick away:
Here comes a man of comfort, whose advice
Hath often still'd my brawling discontent.

Exit Boy.

MARIANA

10 I cry you mercy, sir; and well could wish
You had not found me here so musical:
Let me excuse me, and believe me so,
My mirth it much displeased, but pleased my woe.

DUKE VINCENTIO

'Tis good; though music oft hath such a charm
15 To make bad good, and good provoke to harm.
I pray, you, tell me, hath any body inquired
for me here to-day? much upon this time have
I promised here to meet.

MARIANA

You have not been inquired after:
20 I have sat here all day.

Enter ISABELLA

DUKE VINCENTIO

I do constantly believe you. The time is come even now. I shall crave your forbearance a little: may be I will call upon you anon, for some advantage to yourself.

Shakescleare Translation

MARIANA and a BOY enter.

BOY

[Singing]
*Take, oh, take those lips away
That so sweetly promised you'd be faithful to me;
And those eyes that, like the dawn,
Make you think that morning has come.
But kiss me again and again,
To prove your love, though it's all fake, all fake.*

DUKE VINCENTIO (disguised as a friar) enters.

MARIANA

End your song there and go away now. Here comes a religious man whose advice always makes me feel better when I'm upset.

The BOY exits.

MARIANA

Forgive me, sir. I wish you hadn't found me listening to music. Let me excuse myself, and please believe me: it didn't make me happy, it just made me sadder.

DUKE VINCENTIO

That's all right, although music often has the power to turn bad into good, and good into bad. Please tell me, has anyone asked for me here today? I promised to meet someone here at this time.

MARIANA

No one has asked for you. I've sat here all day.

ISABELLA enters.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Of course, I believe you. It's just coming to be the time now. Please wait here for a minute--I'll come back to you shortly with some news that will help you.

MARIANA

I am always bound to you.

Exit

DUKE VINCENTIO

Very well met, and well come.
What is the news from this good deputy?

ISABELLA

30 He hath a garden circummured with brick,
Whose western side is with a vineyard back'd;
And to that vineyard is a planch'd gate,
That makes his opening with this bigger key:
This other doth command a little door
35 Which from the vineyard to the garden leads;
There have I made my promise
Upon the heavy middle of the night
To call upon him.

DUKE VINCENTIO

But shall you on your knowledge find this way?

ISABELLA

40 I have ta'en a due and wary note upon't:
With whispering and most guilty diligence,
In action all of precept, he did show me
The way twice o'er.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Are there no other tokens
45 Between you 'greed concerning her observance?

ISABELLA

No, none, but only a repair i' the dark;
And that I have possess'd him my most stay
Can be but brief; for I have made him know
I have a servant comes with me along,
50 That stays upon me, whose persuasion is
I come about my brother.

DUKE VINCENTIO

'Tis well borne up.
I have not yet made known to Mariana
A word of this. What, ho! within! come forth!

Re-enter MARIANA

55 I pray you, be acquainted with this maid;
She comes to do you good.

ISABELLA

I do desire the like.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Do you persuade yourself that I respect you?

MARIANA

Good friar, I know you do, and have found it.

DUKE VINCENTIO

60 Take, then, this your companion by the hand,
Who hath a story ready for your ear.
I shall attend your leisure: but make haste;
The vaporous night approaches.

MARIANA

Will't please you walk aside?

65

Exeunt MARIANA and ISABELLA

MARIANA

I will always follow your instructions.

MARIANA exits.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Good to see you. And you're welcome here. What's the news from the good deputy?

ISABELLA

[Showing him a ring of keys] He has a garden with a brick wall around it; the western side backs up onto a vineyard. To enter the vineyard, there's a gate that can be opened with this bigger key. This other one opens a little door between the vineyard and the garden. I promised to meet him there in the middle of the night.

DUKE VINCENTIO

But do you know how to get there?

ISABELLA

I was careful to remember it. He showed me the way twice, whispering and looking guilty about everything he did.

DUKE VINCENTIO

And you didn't agree on any other details for the meeting?

ISABELLA

No, none, just that we'll meet in the dark and that I can only stay for a little while. I told him that my servant will come with me and wait for me, thinking I'm visiting my brother.

DUKE VINCENTIO

That's well done. I haven't told Mariana about this yet.

[To MARIANA] Hello there! You in there, come out!

MARIANA enters.

Please be introduced. Here's a girl who's come to help you.

ISABELLA

That's what I hope.

DUKE VINCENTIO

You know that I respect you, right?

MARIANA

Good friar, I know you do; I've found you to be respectful.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Take this girl's hand, then, and listen to the story she has to tell you. I'll wait for you. But hurry--it's nearly nightfall.

MARIANA

Will you come walk with me alone?

MARIANA and ISABELLA exit.

DUKE VINCENTIO

O place and greatness! millions of false eyes
Are stuck upon thee: volumes of report
Run with these false and most contrarious quests
Upon thy doings: thousand escapes of wit
70 Make thee the father of their idle dreams
And rack thee in their fancies.

Re-enter MARIANA and ISABELLA

DUKE VINCENTIO

Welcome, how agreed?

ISABELLA

She'll take the enterprise upon her, father,
75 If you advise it.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It is not my consent,
But my entreaty too.

ISABELLA

Little have you to say
When you depart from him, but, soft and low,
80 "Remember now my brother."

MARIANA

Fear me not.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Nor, gentle daughter, fear you not at all.
He is your husband on a pre-contract:
To bring you thus together, 'tis no sin,
85 Sith that the justice of your title to him
Doth flourish the deceit. Come, let us go:
Our corn's to reap, for yet our tithe's to sow.

Exeunt

DUKE VINCENTIO

Oh, rank! Oh, power! Millions of eyes are on you at all times.
The history books are full of misleading, misguided
attempts to secure you. You always seem to remain out of
reach, which is why you continue to fill people's dreams
and take up all their waking thoughts.

MARIANA and ISABELLA enter.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Welcome back. Have you both agreed?

ISABELLA

Father, she'll do it, if you tell her to.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I don't just agree to it, I'm asking her to do it, too.

ISABELLA

You don't have to say anything when you leave him, except
whisper, "Remember my brother, now."

MARIANA

Don't worry.

DUKE VINCENTIO

And you, my daughter, don't you worry at all. He's your
husband by engagement. It's not sinful for you to have sex
with him. The fact that you're legally bound to him as a wife
makes the trick the opposite of dishonest. Come on, let's
go. It's time to put our plan into action.

They all exit.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter Provost and POMPEY

PROVOST

Come hither, sirrah. Can you cut off a man's head?

POMPEY

If the man be a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a
married man, he's his wife's head, and I can never
cut off a woman's head.

PROVOST

5 Come, sir, leave me your snatches, and yield me a
direct answer. To-morrow morning are to die Claudio
and Barnardine. Here is in our prison a common
executioner, who in his office lacks a helper: if
you will take it on you to assist him, it shall
10 redeem you from your gyves; if not, you shall have
your full time of imprisonment and your deliverance
with an unpitied whipping, for you have been a
notorious bawd.

POMPEY

Sir, I have been an unlawful bawd time out of mind;
but yet I will be content to be a lawful hangman. I
would be glad to receive some instruction from my
fellow partner.

Shakescleare Translation

The PROVOST and POMPEY enter.

PROVOST

Come here, sir. Could you cut off a man's head?

POMPEY

I can if he's a bachelor, sir. But if he's a married man, he's
his wife's head , and I could never cut off a woman's
head.

 Here, Pompey's joke stems from
the idea that a man is the head of a
family, and therefore head of his wife.

PROVOST

Come on, sir, none of your jokes--give me a direct answer.
Tomorrow morning, Claudio and Barnardine are sentenced
to die. There's a common executioner here in our prison
who needs a helper. If you'll help him, you can get out of
prison early. If not, you'll serve your full sentence and be
released with a full whipping, since you're a notorious
pimp.

POMPEY

Sir, I've been an illegal pimp for as long as I can remember,
but I'd be happy to be a legal executioner. It'd be helpful to
receive some instructions from my fellow worker.

PROVOST

What, ho! Abhorson! Where's Abhorson, there?

Enter ABHORSON

ABHORSON

Do you call, sir?

PROVOST

Sirrah, here's a fellow will help you to-morrow in your execution. If you think it meet, compound with him by the year, and let him abide here with you; if not, use him for the present and dismiss him. He cannot plead his estimation with you; he hath been a bawd.

ABHORSON

A bawd, sir? fie upon him! he will discredit our mystery.

PROVOST

Go to, sir; you weigh equally; a feather will turn the scale.

Exit

POMPEY

Pray, sir, by your good favour,--for surely, sir, a good favour you have, but that you have a hanging look,--do you call, sir, your occupation a mystery?

ABHORSON

Ay, sir; a mystery

POMPEY

Painting, sir, I have heard say, is a mystery; and your whores, sir, being members of my occupation, using painting, do prove my occupation a mystery: but what mystery there should be in hanging, if I should be hanged, I cannot imagine.

ABHORSON

Sir, it is a mystery.

POMPEY

Proof?

ABHORSON

Every true man's apparel fits your thief: if it be too little for your thief, your true man thinks it big enough; if it be too big for your thief, your thief thinks it little enough: so every true man's apparel fits your thief.

Re-enter Provost

PROVOST

Are you agreed?

POMPEY

Sir, I will serve him; for I do find your hangman is a more penitent trade than your bawd; he doth oftener ask forgiveness.

PROVOST

Hello there! Abhorson 2! Where's Abhorson? Are you there?

2 The executioner Abhorson's name combines the words "abhor" (to hate or loathe) and "whoreson" (son-of-a-whore).

ABHORSON enters.

ABHORSON

Did you call me, sir?

PROVOST

Sir, this man will help you tomorrow with the execution. If you see fit, take him on full-time and let him live here with you. If not, use him for now and then get rid of him. He can't say much for himself when it comes to his reputation; he's been a pimp.

ABHORSON

A pimp, sir? Get rid of him! He'll ruin all the mystery.

PROVOST

Enough, sir. The two of you are equally on the scale. A feather would tip it.

He exits.

POMPEY

Please, sir, if you don't mind -- and I'm sure you don't mind, except that you have a hanging look 3 about you--did you refer to your occupation, sir, as a "mystery"?

3 Pompey refers both to the typical method of execution--hanging someone by a rope until his or her neck broke--and also Abhorson's sad expression.

ABHORSON

Yes, sir, a mystery.

POMPEY

Sir, I've heard that painting is a mystery. And whores, sir, who work in my occupation, paint their faces, so that makes my occupation a mystery. 4 But the mystery of hanging? If I were going to be hanged, I can't imagine.

4 Pompey implies that because prostitutes wear heavy makeup, it's a mystery what they really look like.

ABHORSON

Sir, it is a mystery.

POMPEY

Proof?

ABHORSON

Every executioner's clothes fit 5 the thief. If the clothes are too small for the thief, the executioner thinks they look big enough. If they're too big for the thief, the executioner thinks they're small enough. So every executioner's clothes fit a thief.

5 In Shakespeare's day, part of an executioner's payment was that he got to keep the clothes of the people he executed. The "mystery" of execution, then, is that the executioner can always use these clothes--no matter the size of the person condemned to die.

The PROVOST enters.

PROVOST

Have you reached an agreement?

POMPEY

Sir, I'll work for him. I think being a hangman is a more holy trade than being a pimp; he asks for forgiveness 6 more often.

6 Pompey refers to the tradition in which hangmen usually asked forgiveness of the condemned before the execution.

PROVOST

You, sirrah, provide your block and your axe
to-morrow four o'clock.

ABHORSON

Come on, bawd; I will instruct thee in my trade;
follow.

55

POMPEY

I do desire to learn, sir: and I hope, if you have
occasion to use me for your own turn, you shall find
me yare; for truly, sir, for your kindness I owe you
a good turn.

PROVOST

Call hither Barnardine and Claudio.

60

Exeunt POMPEY and ABHORSON

The one has my pity; not a jot the other,
Being a murderer, though he were my brother.

Enter CLAUDIO

Look, here's the warrant, Claudio, for thy death:
'Tis now dead midnight, and by eight to-morrow
Thou must be made immortal. Where's Barnardine?

65

CLAUDIO

As fast lock'd up in sleep as guiltless labour
When it lies starkly in the traveller's bones:
He will not wake.

PROVOST

Who can do good on him?
70 Well, go, prepare yourself.
[Knocking within]
But, hark, what noise?
Heaven give your spirits comfort!

Exit CLAUDIO

By and by.
75 I hope it is some pardon or reprieve
For the most gentle Claudio.

Enter DUKE VINCENTIO disguised as before

Welcome father.

DUKE VINCENTIO

The best and wholesomest spirits of the night
Envelope you, good Provost! Who call'd here of late?

PROVOST

80 None, since the curfew rung.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Not Isabel?

PROVOST

No.

DUKE VINCENTIO

They will, then, ere't be long.

PROVOST

What comfort is for Claudio?

PROVOST

You, sir: bring your block  and your ax tomorrow at four o'clock.

 *The provost refers to the "block," a piece of wood upon which the prisoner placed his or her neck before the ax chopped his or her head off.*

ABHORSON

Come on, pimp. I'll teach you my trade. Follow me.

POMPEY

I want to learn, sir. And I hope--if you have the need to use
me for longer--that you'll find I'm up to the task. For, truly, I
owe you for your kindness, sir.

PROVOST

Bring Barnardine and Claudio here.

POMPEY and ABHORSON exit.

I pity one of them, but wouldn't pity the other one--a
murderer--even if he were my own brother.

CLAUDIO enters.

Look, Claudio: here's the warrant for your death. It's now
exactly midnight, and by eight tomorrow you'll be on your
way to the afterlife. Where's Barnadine?

CLAUDIO

As fast asleep as an innocent traveler when he sleeps along
the road. He won't wake up.

PROVOST

What can anyone do to help him? Well, go, prepare yourself.
[The sound of knocking comes from offstage] But wait,
what's that noise? May God give you peace.

CLAUDIO exits.

[Shouting offstage] Just a moment!

*[To himself] I hope it's a pardon or reprieve for the very
noble Claudio.*

DUKE VINCENTIO (disguised as a friar) enters.

Welcome, father.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Bless you. I hope you're having a good night, good Provost!
Who came here so late?

PROVOST

No one, since the last bells rung.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Not Isabella?

PROVOST

No.

DUKE VINCENTIO

They will, then, before too long.

PROVOST

Is there any comfort for Claudio?

DUKE VINCENTIO

85 There's some in hope.

PROVOST

It is a bitter deputy.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Not so, not so; his life is parallel'd
Even with the stroke and line of his great justice:
He doth with holy abstinence subdue
90 That in himself which he spurs on his power
To qualify in others: were he meal'd with that
Which he corrects, then were he tyrannous;
But this being so, he's just.
95 [Knocking within]
Now are they come.

Exit PROVOST

This is a gentle provost: seldom when
The steeled gaoler is the friend of men.

100 [Knocking within]
How now! what noise? That spirit's possessed with haste
That wounds the unsisting postern with these strokes.

Re-enter Provost

PROVOST

105 There he must stay until the officer
Arise to let him in: he is call'd up.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Have you no countermand for Claudio yet,
But he must die to-morrow?

PROVOST

None, sir, none.

DUKE VINCENTIO

110 As near the dawning, provost, as it is,
You shall hear more ere morning.

PROVOST

Happily
You something know; yet I believe there comes
No countermand; no such example have we:
115 Besides, upon the very sieve of justice
Lord Angelo hath to the public ear
Profess'd the contrary.

Enter a MESSENGER

This is his lordship's man.

DUKE VINCENTIO

And here comes Claudio's pardon.

MESSENGER

120 [Giving a paper]
My lord hath sent you this note; and by me this
further charge, that you swerve not from the
smallest article of it, neither in time, matter, or
other circumstance. Good morrow; for, as I take it,
it is almost day.

PROVOST

I shall obey him.

Exit Messenger

DUKE VINCENTIO

[aside] This is his pardon, purchased by such sin
For which the pardoner himself is in.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Hope brings some comfort.

PROVOST

Angelo is a terrible deputy.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Not true, not true! His life holds up to the standard of his
extreme justice. He keeps his own desires at bay with holy
discipline; that's what gives him the authority to correct
faults in others. If he were the same as the people he
corrected, he'd be a tyrant. But, because of his good
character, he's just. [*The sound of knocking comes from
offstage*] Now they're here.

The PROVOST exits.

This is a good provost. It's not often that a steely jailor is
friendly like this. [*The sound of more knocking*] What now?
What's that noise? Anyone who knocks that hard at the
back door must be in a real hurry!

The PROVOST enters.

PROVOST

He'll stay there until the officer comes to let him in. His time
has come.

DUKE VINCENTIO

You don't have a pardon for Claudio yet? He has to die
tomorrow?

PROVOST

No pardon, sir, none.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Although it's already near morning, Provost, you'll hear
more before dawn.

PROVOST

I hope you know something, but I don't think there's a
pardon coming. There's no precedent for it. Besides, Lord
Angelo has spoken against overturning justice to the
public.

A MESSENGER enters.

This is his Lordship Angelo's servant.

DUKE VINCENTIO

And here comes Claudio's pardon.

MESSENGER

[Giving the Sheriff a paper] Angelo has sent you this note,
and has also asked me to tell you not to overlook even the
smallest part of it when it comes to timing, what to do, or
other circumstances. Good morning--since, as far as I can
tell, it's almost day.

PROVOST

I'll obey him.

The MESSENGER exits.

DUKE VINCENTIO

[To himself] This is his pardon, which was earned by
committing a sin with the pardoner himself. Look how

Hence hath offence his quick celerity,
When it is born in high authority:
When vice makes mercy, mercy's so extended,
That for the fault's love is the offender friended.
Now, sir, what news?

PROVOST

135 I told you. Lord Angelo, belike thinking me remiss
in mine office, awakens me with this unwonted
putting-on; methinks strangely, for he hath not used it
before.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Pray you, let's hear.

PROVOST

140 [Reads]
'Whatsoever you may hear to the contrary, let
Claudio be executed by four of the clock; and in the
afternoon Barnardine: for my better satisfaction,
let me have Claudio's head sent me by five. Let
145 this be duly performed; with a thought that more
depends on it than we must yet deliver. Thus fail
not to do your office, as you will answer it at your
peril.'
What say you to this, sir?

DUKE VINCENTIO

150 What is that Barnardine who is to be executed in the
afternoon?

PROVOST

A Bohemian born, but here nursed un and bred; one
that is a prisoner nine years old.

DUKE VINCENTIO

How came it that the absent duke had not either
155 delivered him to his liberty or executed him? I
have heard it was ever his manner to do so.

PROVOST

His friends still wrought reprieves for him: and,
indeed, his fact, till now in the government of Lord
Angelo, came not to an undoubtful proof.

DUKE VINCENTIO

160 It is now apparent?

PROVOST

Most manifest, and not denied by himself.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Hath he born himself penitently in prison? how
seems he to be touched?

PROVOST

165 A man that apprehends death no more dreadfully but
as a drunken sleep; careless, reckless, and fearless
of what's past, present, or to come; insensible of
mortality, and desperately mortal.

DUKE VINCENTIO

He wants advice.

PROVOST

170 He will hear none: he hath evermore had the liberty
of the prison; give him leave to escape hence, he
would not: drunk many times a day, if not many days
entirely drunk. We have very oft awaked him, as if
to carry him to execution, and showed him a seeming
warrant for it: it hath not moved him at all.

quickly wrongdoing can work when it's done by someone with authority. When sin leads to mercy, mercy extends itself to befriend the offender for the sake of his fault.

[To PROVOST] Now, sir, what's the news?

PROVOST

I told you. Lord Angelo--who thinks I'm not very good at my job--has woken me up with all this. I think it's strange; he's never done it before.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Let's hear it, then.

PROVOST

[Reading from the paper] "Whatever you might hear to the contrary, make sure Claudio is executed by four o'clock, and Barnadine in the afternoon. So that I can be sure, send me Claudio's head by five. Do this exactly as I say, and keep in mind that more depends on it than just what we do. Don't fail to do what you're supposed to, or you'll answer for it at your own risk."

[To DUKE VINCENTIO] What do you say to that, sir?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Who is this Barnadine that's supposed to be executed in the afternoon?

PROVOST

He's Czech by birth, but he grew up here. He's been a prisoner for nine years.

DUKE VINCENTIO

How come the absent Duke didn't either set him free or execute him? I've heard he typically used to do that.

PROVOST

His friends kept asking us to set him free. And, in fact, his case was unsettled until now, under Lord Angelo.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Is it settled now?

PROVOST

Completely. Barnadine himself doesn't deny his crime.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Has he seemed remorseful in prison? Does he regret it?

PROVOST

He's about as afraid of death as he is of a drunken sleep. He's careless, reckless, and fearless of the past, present, and future. He doesn't care about his own mortality, even though he's a mortal man.

DUKE VINCENTIO

He needs advice.

PROVOST

He won't listen to it. He likes being in prison. If you gave him the opportunity to escape, he wouldn't. He's drunk several times a day, and some days he's drunk all day. We have often tried to wake him, as if we were about to execute him--even though we didn't have a warrant for it--and he didn't care at all.

DUKE VINCENTIO

175 More of him anon. There is written in your brow, provost, honesty and constancy: if I read it not truly, my ancient skill beguiles me; but, in the boldness of my cunning, I will lay myself in hazard. Claudio, whom here you have warrant to execute, is
 180 no greater forfeit to the law than Angelo who hath sentenced him. To make you understand this in a manifested effect, I crave but four days' respite; for the which you are to do me both a present and a dangerous courtesy.

PROVOST

185 Pray, sir, in what?

DUKE VINCENTIO

In the delaying death.

PROVOST

A lack, how may I do it, having the hour limited, and an express command, under penalty, to deliver his head in the view of Angelo? I may make my case
 190 as Claudio's, to cross this in the smallest.

DUKE VINCENTIO

By the vow of mine order I warrant you, if my instructions may be your guide. Let this Barnardine be this morning executed, and his head born to Angelo.

PROVOST

Angelo hath seen them both, and will discover the favour.
 195

DUKE VINCENTIO

O, death's a great disguiser; and you may add to it. Shave the head, and tie the beard; and say it was the desire of the penitent to be so bared before his death: you know the course is common. If any thing fall to you upon this, more than thanks and good fortune, by the saint whom I profess, I will plead against it with my life.

PROVOST

Pardon me, good father; it is against my oath.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Were you sworn to the duke, or to the deputy?

PROVOST

205 To him, and to his substitutes.

DUKE VINCENTIO

You will think you have made no offence, if the duke avouch the justice of your dealing?

PROVOST

But what likelihood is in that?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Not a resemblance, but a certainty. Yet since I see
 210 you fearful, that neither my coat, integrity, nor persuasion can with ease attempt you, I will go further than I meant, to pluck all fears out of you. Look you, sir, here is the hand and seal of the duke: you know the character, I doubt not; and the signet is not strange to you.

PROVOST

I know them both.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I want to hear more about him later. Provost, I can tell that you're an honest, dependable man. If I'm wrong, then my lifelong skills have failed me. But I'll trust my instinct and take the risk. Although you have a warrant here for Claudio's execution, Claudio is no more guilty under the law than Angelo, the man who sentenced him. If you give me four days, I can prove this to you completely. In the meantime, I need you to do me an immediate and dangerous favor.

PROVOST

What's that, sir?

DUKE VINCENTIO

I need you to delay the death.

PROVOST

But how can I do it? The hour's been set and I have an express command--under threat--to bring Claudio's head to Angelo! I'll be sentenced to die like Claudio if I mess this up in the slightest.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I swear by the vow I made to my order that you'll be safe if you can follow my instructions. Have Barnardine executed this morning, and send his head to Angelo.

PROVOST

Angelo has seen both of them--he'll figure out the swap.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Oh, death changes the way people look--and you can add to it. Shave the head and tie the beard. Say it was the dead man's desire to be shaved before death; you know it's a common thing. If you get any trouble because of this, I swear by my patron saint that I will fight for you with my life.

PROVOST

Forgive me, good father. But it goes against my promise.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Did you swear to the Duke, or to the deputy?

PROVOST

To the Duke and to his substitutes.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Will you believe you've done nothing wrong if the Duke signs off on what you're doing?

PROVOST

But what's the chance of that?

DUKE VINCENTIO

It's not only possible, it's certain. But since I can tell that you're afraid--and that my outfit, my integrity, and my argument can't convince you--I'll go further than I meant to go to put you at ease. Look here, sir: this is the handwriting and seal of the Duke. You know his handwriting, I'm sure, and the seal is familiar to you?

PROVOST

I know both of them.

DUKE VINCENTIO

The contents of this is the return of the duke: you shall anon over-read it at your pleasure; where you shall find, within these two days he will be here.

220 This is a thing that Angelo knows not; for he this very day receives letters of strange tenor; perchance of the duke's death; perchance entering into some monastery; but, by chance, nothing of what is writ. Look, the unfolding star calls up the shepherd. Put not yourself into amazement how these things should be: all difficulties are but easy when they are known. Call your executioner, and off with Barnardine's head: I will give him a present shrift and advise him for a better place. Yet you are amazed; but this shall absolutely resolve you. Come away; it is almost clear dawn.

*Exeunt***DUKE VINCENTIO**

Then consider this letter like the return of the Duke. Later, you can read over it as much as you like, and you'll find out that he'll be here in two days. Angelo doesn't know that. Today he's received some strange letters--possibly about the Duke's death, or about him going into a monastery. But he doesn't know anything about what's written here. Look, you'll be guided just like the shepherds were guided to Jesus' manger by the star  in Bethlehem. You shouldn't be afraid of these things, since problems become much easier once we figure out what they are. Call your executioner and tell him to chop off Barnardine's head. I'll give him his last confession and prepare him for what's after death. You still seem amazed. But this letter will make up your mind. Come on, let's go; it's almost completely light out.

 In the New Testament, a bright star over the stable where Jesus was born showed shepherds the way to go to give gifts to the Messiah.

They exit.

Act 4, Scene 3

Shakespeare*Enter POMPEY***POMPEY**

I am as well acquainted here as I was in our house of profession: one would think it were Mistress Overdone's own house, for here be many of her old customers. First, here's young Master Rash; he's in 5 for a commodity of brown paper and old ginger, ninescore and seventeen pounds; of which he made five marks, ready money: marry, then ginger was not much in request, for the old women were all dead. Then is there here one Master Caper, at the suit of 10 Master Three-pile the mercer, for some four suits of peach-coloured satin, which now peaches him a beggar. Then have we here young Dizy, and young Master Deep-vow, and Master Copperspur, and Master Starve-lackey the rapier and dagger man, and young 15 Drop-heir that killed lusty Pudding, and Master Forthlight the tilter, and brave Master Shooty the great traveller, and wild Half-can that stabbed Pots, and, I think, forty more; all great doers in our trade, and are now "for the Lord's sake."

*Enter ABHORSON***ABHORSON**

20 Sirrah, bring Barnardine hither.

POMPEY

Master Barnardine! you must rise and be hanged. Master Barnardine!

ABHORSON

What, ho, Barnardine!

BARNARDINE

[Within] A pox o' your throats! Who makes that noise there? What are you?

POMPEY

Your friends, sir; the hangman. You must be so good, sir, to rise and be put to death.

BARNARDINE

[Within] Away, you rogue, away! I am sleepy.

Shakescleare Translation*POMPEY enters.***POMPEY**

I feel just as much at home here as I felt at the brothel. You'd think it was Mistress Overdone's own place, considering so many of her customers are here. First, here's young Mr.  Rash. He's in for lending  money through the stock commodities of brown paper and old ginger--one hundred ninety-seven pounds--and he made five pounds of ready money. But by then no one wanted the ginger, since his borrowers were all dead! And here we have Mr. Caper who's here because of his debt to Mr. Three-Fold the cloth-maker for four peach-colored satin suits, which have caused him to go bankrupt. Then we have Dunce, and Mr. Swearsalot, and Mr. Fools-Gold, and Mr. Starving-Servant the swordsman, and young Mr. Son-Slayer who killed the vivacious Pudding, and Mr. Bullseye the joustier, and brave Mr. Shoe-Tie who travels a lot, and crazy Half-Pint who stabbed Pots, and, I think, forty more--all the best customers in our business, all here "for the Lord's sake."

 "Rash" means "hasty" or "impulsive." All the names of Pompey's former customers jokingly describe their crimes or occupations.

 Because interest rates were capped at ten percent, moneylenders had to get creative in order to lend at higher rates, sometimes offering borrowers "commodities," or undesirable goods, for which they would "pay" a large amount.

*ABHORSON enters.***ABHORSON**

Sir, bring Barnardine here.

POMPEY

Mr. Barnadine! You have to get up and be hanged! Mr. Barnadine!

ABHORSON

Hello there, Barnardine!

BARNARDINE

[Offstage] A curse on both of you! Who's making noise out there? Who are you?

POMPEY

Your friends, sir, the executioners. Sir, you need to do us the favor of getting up and being put to death.

BARNARDINE

[Offstage] Go away, you rascal! I'm sleepy.

ABHORSON

Tell him he must awake, and that quickly too.

POMPEY

30 Pray, Master Barnardine, awake till you are executed, and sleep afterwards.

ABHORSON

Go in to him, and fetch him out.

POMPEY

He is coming, sir, he is coming; I hear his straw rustle.

ABHORSON

35 Is the axe upon the block, sirrah?

POMPEY

Very ready, sir.

Enter BARNARDINE

BARNARDINE

How now, Abhorson? what's the news with you?

ABHORSON

Truly, sir, I would desire you to clap into your prayers; for, look you, the warrant's come.

BARNARDINE

You rogue, I have been drinking all night; I am not fitted for 't.

POMPEY

45 O, the better, sir; for he that drinks all night, and is hanged betimes in the morning, may sleep the sounder all the next day.

Enter DUKE VINCENTIO disguised as before

ABHORSON

Look you, sir; here comes your ghostly father: do we jest now, think you?

DUKE VINCENTIO

50 Sir, induced by my charity, and hearing how hastily you are to depart, I am come to advise you, comfort you and pray with you.

BARNARDINE

Friar, not I. I have been drinking hard all night, and I will have more time to prepare me, or they shall beat out my brains with billets: I will not consent to die this day, that's certain.

DUKE VINCENTIO

O, sir, you must: and therefore I beseech you Look forward on the journey you shall go.

BARNARDINE

I swear I will not die to-day for any man's persuasion.

DUKE VINCENTIO

60 But hear you.

BARNARDINE

Not a word: if you have any thing to say to me, come to my ward; for thence will not I to-day.

Exit

ABHORSON

Tell him he has to wake up--and quickly too.

POMPEY

Please, Mr. Barnadine, stay awake until you're executed; you can sleep afterward.

ABHORSON

Go get him and bring him out.

POMPEY

He's coming sir, he's coming. I can hear his straw rustling.

ABHORSON

Is the ax on the block, man?

POMPEY

It's ready, sir.

BARNADINE enters.

BARNARDINE

How are you, Abhorson? What's new with you?

ABHORSON

Really, sir, I need you to say your prayers. Look: the warrant is here.

BARNARDINE

You rascal, I've been drinking all night. I'm not ready for it.

POMPEY

It's better that way, sir. If you drink all night and are executed in the morning, you sleep better the whole next day.

DUKE VINCENTIO (disguised as a friar) enters.

ABHORSON

Look, sir. Here comes the friar, your confessor. Do you still think we're joking now?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Sir, because I'm a charitable man and I heard you're meant to die soon, I came to talk with you, comfort you, and pray with you.

BARNARDINE

Friar, I won't. I've been drinking hard all night and need more time to get ready. Otherwise they'll have to beat my brains out with clubs. I won't agree to die today, that's for sure.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Oh, sir, you have to. I'm asking you to think about where you're headed.

BARNARDINE

I swear I won't die today, no matter what anyone says.

DUKE VINCENTIO

But listen--

BARNARDINE

Don't say another word. If you have anything to say to me, come into my cell. I'm not leaving there today.

He exits.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Unfit to live or die: O grave heart!
65 After him, fellows; bring him to the block.

Exeunt ABHORSON and POMPEY. Re-enter Provost.

PROVOST

Now, sir, how do you find the prisoner?

DUKE VINCENTIO

A creature unprepared, unmeet for death;
And to transport him in the mind he is
70 Were damnable.

PROVOST

Here in the prison, father,
There died this morning of a cruel fever
One Ragozine, a most notorious pirate,
A man of Claudio's years; his beard and head
75 Just of his colour. What if we do omit
This reprobate till he were well inclined;
And satisfy the deputy with the visage
Of Ragozine, more like to Claudio?

DUKE VINCENTIO

O, 'tis an accident that heaven provides!
80 Dispatch it presently; the hour draws on
Prefix'd by Angelo: see this be done,
And sent according to command; whiles I
Persuade this rude wretch willingly to die.

PROVOST

This shall be done, good father, presently.
85 But Barnardine must die this afternoon:
And how shall we continue Claudio,
To save me from the danger that might come
If he were known alive?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Let this be done.
90 Put them in secret holds, both Barnardine and Claudio:
Ere twice the sun hath made his journal greeting
To the under generation, you shall find
Your safety manifested.

PROVOST

I am your free dependant.

DUKE VINCENTIO

95 Quick, dispatch, and send the head to Angelo.

Exit PROVOST

Now will I write letters to Angelo,--
The provost, he shall bear them, whose contents
Shall witness to him I am near at home,
And that, by great injunctions, I am bound
100 To enter publicly: him I'll desire
To meet me at the consecrated fount
A league below the city; and from thence,
By cold gradation and well-balanced form,
We shall proceed with Angelo.

Re-enter Provost

PROVOST

105 Here is the head; I'll carry it myself.

DUKE VINCENTIO

He's doesn't deserve to live, and he refuses to die. What a hard heart! Go after him, men, and bring him to be executed.

ABHORSON and POMPEY exit. The PROVOST enters.

PROVOST

Now, sir, how's the prisoner doing?

DUKE VINCENTIO

The man's not prepared or suited for death. To kill him in his current mindset would be damnable.

3 The Duke explains that since Barnardine refused confession and last rites, the executioner would be knowingly sending him to hell.

PROVOST

Father, this morning in the prison a man named Ragozine--a notorious pirate--died of a terrible fever. He's about Claudio's age--his beard and complexion were about the same as his. What if we let this delinquent go until he's up for it, and send the deputy Ragazine's head--which is more like Claudio's anyway?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Oh, God has worked this detail out for us! Do it immediately. The time Angelo set is getting closer. Make sure this is done, and that the head is sent just as he commanded. Meanwhile, I'll try to convince this rude criminal to die willingly.

PROVOST

It'll be done immediately, good father. But Barnardine has to die this afternoon. What should we do with Claudio, considering I could be in danger if anyone found out that he was still alive?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Do this: put both Barnardine and Claudio in secret cells. Before the sun has risen over the earth two times, you'll be completely safe.

PROVOST

I'm entirely at your service.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Go quickly, and send Ragozine's head to Angelo.

The PROVOST exits.

Now I'll write a letter to Angelo, which the provost can bring him. I'll write to tell him that I'm close to home, and--because of the circumstances--I have to make a public entrance. I'll ask him to meet me at the holy spring a mile away from the city. From there I'll proceed coolly and carefully with Angelo.

The PROVOST enters with Ragozine's head.

PROVOST

Here's the head. I'll carry it myself.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Convenient is it. Make a swift return;
For I would commune with you of such things
That want no ear but yours.

PROVOST

I'll make all speed.

110

*Exit***ISABELLA**

[*Within*] Peace, ho, be here!

DUKE VINCENTIO

The tongue of Isabel. She's come to know
If yet her brother's pardon be come hither:
But I will keep her ignorant of her good,
To make her heavenly comforts of despair,
When it is least expected.

115

*Enter ISABELLA***ISABELLA**

Ho, by your leave!

DUKE VINCENTIO

Good morning to you, fair and gracious daughter.

ISABELLA

The better, given me by so holy a man.
120 Hath yet the deputy sent my brother's pardon?

DUKE VINCENTIO

He hath released him, Isabel, from the world:
His head is off and sent to Angelo.

120

ISABELLA

Nay, but it is not so.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It is no other: show your wisdom, daughter,
In your close patience.

125

ISABELLA

O, I will to him and pluck out his eyes!

DUKE VINCENTIO

You shall not be admitted to his sight.

ISABELLA

Unhappy Claudio! wretched Isabel!
Injurious world! most damned Angelo!

DUKE VINCENTIO

130 This nor hurts him nor profits you a jot;
Forbear it therefore; give your cause to heaven.
Mark what I say, which you shall find
By every syllable a faithful verity:
The duke comes home to-morrow; nay, dry your eyes;
135 One of our convent, and his confessor,
Gives me this instance: already he hath carried
Notice to Escalus and Angelo,
Who do prepare to meet him at the gates,
There to give up their power. If you can, pace your
140 wisdom
In that good path that I would wish it go,
And you shall have your bosom on this wretch,
Grace of the duke, revenges to your heart,
And general honour.

140

ISABELLA

145 I am directed by you.

DUKE VINCENTIO

That's convenient. Come back soon, since I want to talk
with you about things I can't tell anyone else.

PROVOST

I'll go as quickly as possible.

*He exits.***ISABELLA**

[*Offstage*] Hello! Peace be with you!

DUKE VINCENTIO

That's Isabella's voice. She wants to know if her brother's
pardon has gotten here. I won't tell her the good news yet.
I'll wait and tell her once she gets upset and she least
expects it.

*ISABELLA enters.***ISABELLA**

Hello, may I come in?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Good morning to you, my beautiful, gracious daughter.

ISABELLA

That's a high compliment coming from such a holy man.
Has the deputy sent my brother's pardon yet?

DUKE VINCENTIO

He released him from the world, Isabella. They cut off his
head and sent it to Angelo.

ISABELLA

No, say it isn't so!

DUKE VINCENTIO

It's true. Show your wisdom by being patient, daughter.

ISABELLA

Oh, I'll go to Angelo and scratch his eyes out!

DUKE VINCENTIO

You won't be allowed to get near him.

ISABELLA

Poor Claudio! Miserable Isabella! Unjust world! Most
damned Angelo!

DUKE VINCENTIO

This isn't hurting him, and it's not helping you. So stop it,
and pray instead. Listen to what I say, since every word of it
is true, as you'll come to realize. The Duke is coming home
tomorrow. Come on, dry your eyes. Someone from my
monastery--who's his confessor--told me that the Duke
already sent letters to Escalus and Angelo asking them to
meet him at the gates, where they'll give up their power. If
you can, follow the plan I've been laying out here. If you do,
you'll be able to reveal what Angelo did to you. The Duke
will look kindly on you, and you'll have your revenge and
general acclaim.

ISABELLA

I'll do what you say.

DUKE VINCENTIO

This letter, then, to Friar Peter give;
 'Tis that he sent me of the duke's return:
 Say, by this token, I desire his company
 At Mariana's house to-night. Her cause and yours
 150 I'll perfect him withal, and he shall bring you
 Before the duke, and to the head of Angelo
 Accuse him home and home. For my poor self,
 I am combined by a sacred vow
 And shall be absent. Wend you with this letter:
 155 Command these fretting waters from your eyes
 With a light heart; trust not my holy order,
 If I pervert your course. Who's here?

*Enter LUCIO***LUCIO**

Good even. Friar, where's the provost?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Not within, sir.

LUCIO

O pretty Isabella, I am pale at mine heart to see
 thine eyes so red: thou must be patient. I am fain
 to dine and sup with water and bran; I dare not for
 my head fill my belly; one fruitful meal would set
 me to 't. But they say the duke will be here
 165 to-morrow. By my troth, Isabel, I loved thy brother:
 if the old fantastical duke of dark corners had been
 at home, he had lived.

*Exit ISABELLA***DUKE VINCENTIO**

Sir, the duke is marvellous little beholding to your
 reports; but the best is, he lives not in them.

LUCIO

170 Friar, thou knowest not the duke so well as I do:
 he's a better woodman than thou takest him for.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Well, you'll answer this one day. Fare ye well.

LUCIO

Nay, tarry; I'll go along with thee
 I can tell thee pretty tales of the duke.

DUKE VINCENTIO

175 You have told me too many of him already, sir, if
 they be true; if not true, none were enough.

LUCIO

I was once before him for getting a wench with child.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Did you such a thing?

LUCIO

Yes, marry, did I but I was fain to forswear it;
 180 they would else have married me to the rotten medlar.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Sir, your company is fairer than honest. Rest you well.

LUCIO

By my troth, I'll go with thee to the lane's end:
 if bawdy talk offend you, we'll have very little of
 it. Nay, friar, I am a kind of burr; I shall stick.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Then give this letter to Friar Peter; it's the one he sent me
 telling me about the Duke's return. Tell him in the reply that
 I want to see him at Mariana's house tonight. I'll tell him
 what's gone on with her and with you, and he'll bring you to
 the Duke. Then you can get right to the point and accuse
 Angelo. As for me, I have a holy obligation and won't be
 able to be there. Make your way with this letter. Stop your
 crying, and be happy. If I'm leading you astray, then don't
 trust the Church! Who's there?

*LUCIO enters.***LUCIO**

Good evening. Friar, where's the provost?

DUKE VINCENTIO

He's not here, sir.

LUCIO

Oh, pretty Isabella, my heart hurts to see your eyes so red.
 You need to be patient. I want to sit and have a hearty
 dinner with water and bread, but I don't want to eat
 anything  that might get me going. But they say the Duke
 will be here tomorrow. I swear that I loved your brother,
 Isabella. If our old, imaginative, womanizing Duke had been
 here, he would have lived.

 Certain foods were said to prompt sexual desire; Lucio fears doing anything that might land him in the same situation as Claudio.

*ISABELLA exits.***DUKE VINCENTIO**

Sir, the Duke will have to thank you for those kind words.
 But, at the same time, they don't really describe him.

LUCIO

Friar, you don't know the Duke as well as I do. He's more of
 a ladies' man than you think he is.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Well, you'll have to answer for that one day. Take care.

LUCIO

No, wait. I'll go with you so I can tell you funny stories about
 the Duke.

DUKE VINCENTIO

You've told me too many about him already, if they're true,
 sir. If they're not true, I'd rather hear none at all.

LUCIO

Once he put me on trial for getting a girl pregnant.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Did you do such a thing?

LUCIO

Well, yes, I did. But I was eager to deny it. Otherwise, they
 would have made me marry the slut.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Sir, you're better company in looks than you are when you
 talk. Take care.

LUCIO

I think I'll go with you to the end of the road. If my raunchy
 talk offends you, I'll cut it out. No, friar, I'm like a burr--I'll
 stick to you.

*Exeunt**They exit.*

Act 4, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter ANGELO and ESCALUS

ESCALUS

Every letter he hath writ hath disvouched other.

ANGELO

In most uneven and distracted manner. His actions show much like to madness: pray heaven his wisdom be not tainted! And why meet him at the gates, and 5 redeliver our authorities there?

ESCALUS

I guess not.

ANGELO

And why should we proclaim it in an hour before his entering, that if any crave redress of injustice, they should exhibit their petitions in the street?

ESCALUS

10 He shows his reason for that: to have a dispatch of complaints, and to deliver us from devices hereafter, which shall then have no power to stand against us.

ANGELO

Well, I beseech you, let it be proclaimed betimes 15 i' the morn; I'll call you at your house: give notice to such men of sort and suit as are to meet him.

ESCALUS

I shall, sir. Fare you well.

ANGELO

Good night.

Exit ESCALUS

- 20 This deed unshapes me quite, makes me unpregnant
And dull to all proceedings. A deflower'd maid!
And by an eminent body that enforced
The law against it! But that her tender shame
Will not proclaim against her maiden loss,
25 How might she tongue me! Yet reason dares her no;
For my authority bears of a credent bulk,
That no particular scandal once can touch
But it confounds the breather. He should have lived,
Save that riotous youth, with dangerous sense,
30 Might in the times to come have ta'en revenge,
By so receiving a dishonour'd life
With ransom of such shame. Would yet he had lived!
A lack, when once our grace we have forgot,
Nothing goes right: we would, and we would not.

Exit

Shakescleare Translation

ANGELO and ESCALUS enter.

ESCALUS

Every letter the Duke has sent has contradicted the others.

ANGELO

And in such a random, irresponsible way, too. He's starting to seem a little crazy. I pray to God that he hasn't gone insane! And why would I meet him at the gates to hand over 5 my power to him there?

ESCALUS

I have no idea.

ANGELO

And why do we have to announce an hour before he gets here that--if anyone wants to appeal a case of injustice--they should make their case in the street?

ESCALUS

He explained the reason for that. So he can hear all the complaints before we step down. That way, they won't bother us afterward.

ANGELO

Well, then, I command you to make the announcement in the morning. Inform the appropriate people to be ready to meet him.

ESCALUS

I will, sir. Goodbye.

ANGELO

Good night.

ESCALUS exits.

This command puts me in a tough position, and makes me less excited about all my plans. A girl forced to give up her virginity by a powerful ruler, under threat of the law? If she weren't worried about her reputation, she might ruin mine! But she'd be stupid to do that. My authority is so respected that no one can say a harsh word against me; it would only make them look bad. Claudio should have lived. But that wild boy--with his crazy behavior--might have come to take revenge on me because of the way I dishonored his sister. But if only he had lived! That's the problem: once we've lost our minds, nothing goes right. We want something and we don't want it at the same time.

He exits.

Act 4, Scene 5

Shakespeare

Enter DUKE VINCENTIO in his own habit, and FRIAR PETER

DUKE VINCENTIO

These letters at fit time deliver me.
The provost knows our purpose and our plot.
The matter being afoot, keep your instruction,
And hold you ever to our special drift;
5 Though sometimes you do bленch from this to that,
As cause doth minister. Go call at Flavius' house,
And tell him where I stay: give the like notice
To Valentinus, Rowland, and to Crassus,
And bid them bring the trumpets to the gate;
10 But send me Flavius first.

FRIAR PETER

It shall be speeded well.

Exit

Enter VARRIUS

DUKE VINCENTIO

I thank thee, Varrius; thou hast made good haste:
Come, we will walk. There's other of our friends
15 Will greet us here anon, my gentle Varrius.

Exeunt

Shakescleare Translation

DUKE VINCENTIO (dressed as himself) and FRIAR PETER enter.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Deliver these letters for me at the appropriate time. The provost knows all about our ideas and the plan. While the plan is underway, remember your instructions and stick to what I told you—even if you have to go back and forth a little as the situation demands. Go to Flavius' house and tell him where I'm hiding. Also tell Valentinus, Rowland, and Crassus—and tell them to bring their trumpets to the gate. But send me Flavius first.

FRIAR PETER

I'll do it as quickly as possible.

He exits.

VARRIUS enters.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Thank you, Varrius. You've made good time. Come on; we'll take a walk. There are other friends of mine that will come to see us soon, dear Varrius.

They exit.

Act 4, Scene 6

Shakespeare

Enter ISABELLA and MARIANA

ISABELLA

To speak so indirectly I am loath:
I would say the truth; but to accuse him so,
That is your part: yet I am advised to do it;
He says, to veil full purpose.

MARIANA

5 Be ruled by him.

ISABELLA

Besides, he tells me that, if peradventure
He speak against me on the adverse side,
I should not think it strange; for 'tis a physic
That's bitter to sweet end.

MARIANA

10 I would Friar Peter--

ISABELLA

O, peace! the friar is come.

Enter FRIAR PETER

FRIAR PETER

Come, I have found you out a stand most fit,
Where you may have such vantage on the duke,
15 He shall not pass you. Twice have the trumpets sounded;
The generous and gravest citizens

Shakescleare Translation

ISABELLA and MARIANA come in.

ISABELLA

I hate to put it so bluntly. I want to tell the truth, but accusing him—that's your job. And yet, the friar said I should do it so as to keep our full plan a secret.

MARIANA

Do what he says.

ISABELLA

Besides, he told me that if Angelo contradicts my accusation, it'll be fine. It's a bitter pill to swallow, but the end will be sweet.

MARIANA

I wish Friar Peter--

ISABELLA

Oh, quiet! The friar is here.

FRIAR PETER enters.

FRIAR PETER

Come on, I found you the perfect place to stand so that you can easily flag down the Duke. He won't pass you by. The trumpets have sounded twice. The wealthy, aristocratic

Have hent the gates, and very near upon
The duke is entering: therefore, hence, away!

Exeunt

citizens have opened up the gates, and the Duke will be entering soon. So hurry, get out of here!

They all exit.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

MARIANA veiled, ISABELLA, and FRIAR PETER, at their stand. Enter DUKE VINCENTIO, VARRIUS, Lords, ANGELO, ESCALUS, LUCIO, Provost, Officers, and Citizens, at several doors

DUKE VINCENTIO

My very worthy cousin, fairly met!
Our old and faithful friend, we are glad to see you.

ESCALUS

Happy return be to your royal grace!

DUKE VINCENTIO

Many and hearty thankings to you both.
5 We have made inquiry of you; and we hear
Such goodness of your justice, that our soul
Cannot but yield you forth to public thanks,
Forerunning more requital.

ANGELO

You make my bonds still greater.

DUKE VINCENTIO

10 O, your desert speaks loud; and I should wrong it,
To lock it in the wards of covert bosom,
When it deserves, with characters of brass,
A forted residence 'gainst the tooth of time
And razure of oblivion. Give me your hand,
15 And let the subject see, to make them know
That outward courtesies would fain proclaim
Favours that keep within. Come, Escalus,
You must walk by us on our other hand;
And good supporters are you.

FRIAR PETER and ISABELLA come forward

FRIAR PETER

20 Now is your time: speak loud and kneel before him.

ISABELLA

Justice, O royal duke! Vail your regard
Upon a wrong'd, I would fain have said, a maid!
O worthy prince, dishonour not your eye
By throwing it on any other object
25 Till you have heard me in my true complaint
And given me justice, justice, justice!

DUKE VINCENTIO

Relate your wrongs; in what? by whom? be brief.
Here is Lord Angelo shall give you justice:
Reveal yourself to him.

ISABELLA

30 O worthy duke,
You bid me seek redemption of the devil:
Hear me yourself; for that which I must speak
Must either punish me, not being believed,
Or wring redress from you. Hear me, O hear me, here!

Shakescleare Translation

MARIANA (wearing a veil), ISABELLA, and FRIAR PETER are at their stand. DUKE VINCENTIO, VARRIUS, lords, ANGELO, ESCALUS, LUCIO, the PROVOST, officers, and citizens enter from different directions.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It's good to see you, cousin! My old, faithful friend--I'm glad to see you.

ESCALUS

Welcome back, your royal Grace!

DUKE VINCENTIO

I give you both many and hearty thanks. I've kept tabs on you, and have heard good things about your justice. I want to thank you publicly, and then reward you more later.

ANGELO

I owe you even more.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It's clear how deserving you are. It would be wrong of me to keep it to myself when it deserves to be proclaimed in brass letters on a monument--one to stand the test of time, so you'll be remembered forever. Give me your hand so that the people can see that I want to honor you publicly as much as I honor you in my heart.

[To ESCALUS] Come and walk on my other side, Escalus.

[To ESCALUS and ANGELO] You're good supporters.

FRIAR PETER and ISABELLA come forward.

FRIAR PETER

Now's your chance: speak loudly and kneel in front of him.

ISABELLA

[Running out and kneeling in front of the DUKE] Justice, royal Duke! Help me! I've been wronged. I wish I could say I was a virgin! Oh, admirable prince, don't do yourself the disservice of passing me by before you've heard my true testimony, and have given me justice, justice, justice, justice!

DUKE VINCENTIO

Tell me what happened to you. What was it? Who did it? And get to the point. Here's Lord Angelo; he'll give you justice. Tell him your story.

ISABELLA

Oh, admirable Duke: you're asking me to look for redemption from the devil. Listen to me yourself, since what I'm about to say will either get me punished--if you don't believe me--or force you to help me. Hear me, oh, hear me here!

ANGELO

35 My lord, her wits, I fear me, are not firm:
She hath been a suitor to me for her brother
Cut off by course of justice,--

ISABELLA

By course of justice!

ANGELO

And she will speak most bitterly and strange.

ISABELLA

40 Most strange, but yet most truly, will I speak:
That Angelo's forsown; is it not strange?
That Angelo's a murderer; is 't not strange?
That Angelo is an adulterous thief,
An hypocrite, a virgin-violator;
45 Is it not strange and strange?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Nay, it is ten times strange.

ISABELLA

It is not truer he is Angelo
Than this is all as true as it is strange:
Nay, it is ten times true; for truth is truth
50 To the end of reckoning.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Away with her! Poor soul,
She speaks this in the infirmity of sense.

ISABELLA

O prince, I conjure thee, as thou believest
There is another comfort than this world,
55 That thou neglect me not, with that opinion
That I am touch'd with madness! Make not impossible
That which but seems unlike: 'tis not impossible
But one, the wicked'st caitiff on the ground,
May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute
60 As Angelo; even so may Angelo,
In all his dressings, caracts, titles, forms,
Be an arch-villain; believe it, royal prince:
If he be less, he's nothing; but he's more,
Had I more name for badness.

DUKE VINCENTIO

65 By mine honesty,
If she be mad,--as I believe no other,--
Her madness hath the oddest frame of sense,
Such a dependency of thing on thing,
As e'er I heard in madness.

ISABELLA

70 O gracious duke,
Harp not on that, nor do not banish reason
For inequality; but let your reason serve
To make the truth appear where it seems hid,
And hide the false seems true.

DUKE VINCENTIO

75 Many that are not mad
Have, sure, more lack of reason. What would you say?

ISABELLA

I am the sister of one Claudio,
Condemn'd upon the act of fornication
To lose his head; condemn'd by Angelo:
80 I, in probation of a sisterhood,
Was sent to by my brother; one Lucio
As then the messenger,--

ANGELO

My lord, I'm afraid she's crazy. She came to ask me to help
her brother, who was justly sentenced--

ISABELLA

"Justly?"

ANGELO

And she'll say bitter, strange things.

ISABELLA

Very strange things, but I'll speak the truth. Angelo's in
office--isn't that strange? Angelo's a murderer--isn't that
strange? Angelo's a sexually immoral thief, a hypocrite, a
rapist--isn't that all stranger and stranger?

DUKE VINCENTIO

No, it's ten times as strange.

ISABELLA

All of these strange things are true, or his name's not
Angelo. No, it's ten times as true--since truth is truth until
the end of time.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Take her away! Poor thing, she's completely out of her
mind.

ISABELLA

Oh, prince, I'm begging you--if you believe that God is real
and works in the world, then don't do this to me. Don't
believe that I've gone crazy! Just because it's unlikely
doesn't mean that it's impossible. It's just shy of impossible
that the most evil scoundrel on earth could seem as shy,
serious, just, and solid as Angelo. And so Angelo--with all
his fancy clothes, badges, titles, and roles--can be the
supreme villain. Believe it, royal prince. If he's anything less
than that, he's nothing. But he's more--if I had more names
for badness.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I swear, if she is crazy--as I believe--her craziness makes the
strangest sense. I've never heard a crazy person make such
a logical argument.

ISABELLA

Oh, gracious Duke, forget all of that. Don't think I'm crazy
just because it doesn't seem right. Look carefully and see
the hidden truth. And overlook the false things that seem
true.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Lots of sane people certainly have less reason than you.
What do you want to say?

ISABELLA

I'm the sister of Claudio, condemned to die for the crime of
premarital sex by Angelo. I am in my trial period as a nun,
and my brother reached out to me in the convent through a
messenger named Lucio--

LUCIO

That's I, an't like your grace:
 I came to her from Claudio, and desired her
 To try her gracious fortune with Lord Angelo
 For her poor brother's pardon.

85

ISABELLA

That's he indeed.

DUKE VINCENTIO

You were not bid to speak.

LUCIO

No, my good lord;
 90 Nor wish'd to hold my peace.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I wish you now, then;
 Pray you, take note of it: and when you have
 A business for yourself, pray heaven you then
 Be perfect.

LUCIO

95 I warrant your honour.

DUKE VINCENTIO

The warrants for yourself; take heed to't.

ISABELLA

This gentleman told somewhat of my tale,--

LUCIO

Right.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It may be right; but you are i' the wrong
 100 To speak before your time. Proceed.

ISABELLA

I went
 To this pernicious caitiff deputy,--

DUKE VINCENTIO

That's somewhat madly spoken.

ISABELLA

Pardon it;
 105 The phrase is to the matter.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Mended again. The matter; proceed.

ISABELLA

In brief, to set the needless process by,
 How I persuaded, how I pray'd, and kneel'd,
 How he refell'd me, and how I replied,--
 110 For this was of much length, --the vile conclusion
 I now begin with grief and shame to utter:
 He would not, but by gift of my chaste body
 To his concupiscent temperate lust,
 Release my brother; and, after much debatement,
 115 My sisterly remorse confutes mine honour,
 And I did yield to him: but the next morn betimes,
 His purpose surfeiting, he sends a warrant
 For my poor brother's head.

LUCIO

That's me, your Grace! I went to see her on Claudio's orders,
 and asked her to appeal to Lord Angelo for her poor
 brother's pardon.

ISABELLA

Yes, that's him.

DUKE VINCENTIO

No one told you to speak.

LUCIO

No, sir, but no one told me to be silent.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I'm telling you now, then. Please take note of it, and when
 you have a job to do, pray to God that you'll do it perfectly.

LUCIO

I warrant I will, your Honor.

DUKE VINCENTIO

The warrant's  for you; follow it.

 The Duke puns on Lucio's use of
 the word "warrant" (as in guarantee),
 saying he'll use a "warrant," a legal
 document, to arrest him.

ISABELLA

This man may have told my story already--

LUCIO

Right.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It may be right, but you're in the wrong to speak before
 your time.

[To ISABELLA] Go on.

ISABELLA

I went to this poisonous, rascal of a deputy--

DUKE VINCENTIO

That sounds a little crazy.

ISABELLA

Forgive me. The phrase is part of the point.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Then all is well. Get to the point; go on.

ISABELLA

In short (to skip over all the unimportant details, like how I
 begged, and prayed, and kneeled, and how he argued
 against me, and how I replied, since all of this took a long
 time) I'll say--shamefully and sadly--how it ended up.
 Angelo wouldn't release my brother unless I, a virgin, had
 sex with him and obeyed his unbounded, uncontrollable
 lust. After debating with myself for a long time, my duty as a
 sister overcame my sense of honor, and I gave in to Angelo.
 But the next morning, after he got what he wanted, Angelo
 sent a warrant for my brother's death.

DUKE VINCENTIO

This is most likely!

ISABELLA

120 O, that it were as like as it is true!

DUKE VINCENTIO

By heaven, fond wretch, thou knowest not what thou speak'st,
Or else thou art suborn'd against his honour
In hateful practise. First, his integrity
125 Stands without blemish. Next, it imports no reason
That with such vehemency he should pursue
Faults proper to himself: if he had so offended,
He would have weigh'd thy brother by himself
And not have cut him off. Some one hath set you on:
130 Confess the truth, and say by whose advice
Thou camest here to complain.

ISABELLA

And is this all?
Then, O you blessed ministers above,
Keep me in patience, and with ripen'd time
135 Unfold the evil which is here wrapt up
In countenance! Heaven shield your grace from woe,
As I, thus wrong'd, hence unbelieve'd go!

DUKE VINCENTIO

I know you'd fain be gone. An officer!
To prison with her! Shall we thus permit
140 A blasting and a scandalous breath to fall
On him so near us? This needs must be a practise.
Who knew of Your intent and coming hither?

ISABELLA

One that I would were here, Friar Lodowick.

DUKE VINCENTIO

A ghostly father, belike. Who knows that Lodowick?

LUCIO

145 My lord, I know him; 'tis a meddling friar;
I do not like the man: had he been lay, my lord
For certain words he spake against your grace
In your retirement, I had swinged him soundly.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Words against me? this is a good friar, belike!
150 And to set on this wretched woman here
Against our substitute! Let this friar be found.

LUCIO

But yesternight, my lord, she and that friar,
I saw them at the prison: a saucy friar,
A very scurvy fellow.

FRIAR PETER

155 Blessed be your royal grace!
I have stood by, my lord, and I have heard
Your royal ear abused. First, hath this woman
Most wrongfully accused your substitute,
Who is as free from touch or soil with her
160 As she from one ungod.

DUKE VINCENTIO

We did believe no less.
Know you that Friar Lodowick that she speaks of?

DUKE VINCENTIO

This is unbelievable!

ISABELLA

Oh, I wish it were as believable as it is true!

DUKE VINCENTIO

I swear, you foolish scoundrel, you either don't know what you're saying, or you're out to get the deputy because you hate him. First of all, his reputation is perfect. Second, there's no reason he would so aggressively punish faults that he himself had. If he had done what you said, he would have compared your brother to himself, and not killed him after all. Someone put you up to this. Tell the truth, and tell us who told you to come here and complain.

ISABELLA

Is this all I get? Then oh, God above, help me to be patient and wait for the moment when you'll expose the evil that's here in this man! God bless you, sir, and may he keep you from unhappiness. I, so wronged, will leave without being believed!

DUKE VINCENTIO

I knew you'd leave. Officer? Take her to prison! How can I allow such a loud-mouthed, scandalous voice to embarrass someone I care so much about? This is some kind of plot. Who knew about your plan to come here?

ISABELLA

Someone I wish were here: Friar Lodowick.

DUKE VINCENTIO

A holy father, probably. Does anyone know this Lodowick?

LUCIO

Sir, I know him. He's a sneaky friar. I don't like the man. If he weren't a holy person, sir, I would have smacked him in the face for some of the things he said about you while you were gone.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Bad things about me? This friar doesn't sound like a very good man. And he sent this horrible woman here to embarrass my deputy! Find this friar.

LUCIO

Sir, I saw her and the friar at the prison last night. A rude friar, an absolutely worthless man.

FRIAR PETER

Bless you, your royal Grace! I've stood by and heard people telling you lies. First of all, this woman has wrongfully accused the deputy. He's as devoid of wrongdoing as she is devoid of Jesus.

 According to the Bible, Jesus was "ungod," meaning he wasn't conceived by human parents, but placed in Mary's womb by God. The Friar compares Angelo—whom he considers sexually innocent—with Isabella, thinking she lacks religious conviction.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I thought so. Do you know this Friar Lodowick that she mentioned?

FRIAR PETER

I know him for a man divine and holy;
Not scurvy, nor a temporary meddler,
As he's reported by this gentleman;
And, on my trust, a man that never yet
Did, as he vouches, misreport your grace.

165

LUCIO

My lord, most villainously; believe it.

FRIAR PETER

Well, he in time may come to clear himself;
170 But at this instant he is sick my lord,
Of a strange fever. Upon his mere request,
Being come to knowledge that there was complaint
Intended 'gainst Lord Angelo, came I hither,
To speak, as from his mouth, what he doth know
175 Is true and false; and what he with his oath
And all probation will make up full clear,
Whosoever he's converted. First, for this woman.
To justify this worthy nobleman,
So vulgarly and personally accused,
180 Her shall you hear disproved to her eyes,
Till she herself confess it.

170

175

180

DUKE VINCENTIO

Good friar, let's hear it.

ISABELLA is carried off guarded and MARIANA comes forward

Do you not smile at this, Lord Angelo?
O heaven, the vanity of wretched fools!
185 Give us some seats. Come, cousin Angelo;
In this I'll be impartial; be you judge
Of your own cause. Is this the witness, friar?
First, let her show her face, and after speak.

185

MARIANA

Pardon, my lord; I will not show my face
Until my husband bid me.

190

DUKE VINCENTIO

What, are you married?

MARIANA

No, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Are you a maid?

MARIANA

No, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

A widow, then?

195

MARIANA

Neither, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Why, you are nothing then: neither maid, widow, nor wife?

LUCIO

My lord, she may be a punk; for many of them are
neither maid, widow, nor wife.

200

DUKE VINCENTIO

Silence that fellow: I would he had some cause
To prattle for himself.

FRIAR PETER

I know that he's divine and holy; he's neither rude nor
worthless like this man said. And I promise that he didn't
say anything against you, your Grace, as this man has
reported.

LUCIO

Sir, he did, and horribly. Believe it.

FRIAR PETER

Well, maybe he'll come to clear his name at some point, but
he's sick at the moment; he has some strange fever. I came
here on his behalf after he found out there was a complaint
coming against Lord Angelo. He asked me to relay what he
knew to be true, and what he knew to be false; he'll clear
everything up as soon as you can get hold of him. First, for
this woman Mariana. With her own confession, Mariana can
disprove the testimonies on behalf of Angelo, who's so
personally and vulgarly accused.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Good friar, let's hear it.

Guards carry ISABELLA away and MARIANA comes forward.

Can't you smile about this, Lord Angelo? For heaven's sake,
foolish people are so conceited! Bring us some seats. Come
on, Angelo, I'll sit this one out; you can be your own
judge. *[Pointing to MARIANA]* Is this the witness ³, friar?
First, make her show her face, and then have her speak.

³ What follows is a mock-trial, with Angelo sitting as his own judge.

MARIANA

I'm sorry, sir, but I won't show my face until my husband
tells me to.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Oh, so you're married?

MARIANA

No, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Are you a virgin?

MARIANA

No, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Are you a widow, then?

MARIANA

Not that either, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Well, then you're nothing at all! You're not a virgin, a widow,
or a wife?

LUCIO

My lord, maybe she's a prostitute. Lots of them are not
virgins, widows, or wives.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Make that man quiet. I wish he'd be content to chatter to
himself.

LUCIO

Well, my lord.

MARIANA

My lord; I do confess I ne'er was married;
And I confess besides I am no maid:
I have known my husband; yet my husband
Knows not that ever he knew me.

LUCIO

He was drunk then, my lord: it can be no better.

DUKE VINCENTIO

For the benefit of silence, would thou wert so too!

LUCIO

210 Well, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

This is no witness for Lord Angelo.

MARIANA

Now I come to't my lord
She that accuses him of fornication,
In self-same manner doth accuse my husband,
215 And charges him my lord, with such a time
When I'll depose I had him in mine arms
With all the effect of love.

ANGELO

Charges she more than me?

MARIANA

Not that I know.

DUKE VINCENTIO

220 No? you say your husband.

MARIANA

Why, just, my lord, and that is Angelo,
Who thinks he knows that he ne'er knew my body,
But knows he thinks that he knows Isabell's.

ANGELO

This is a strange abuse. Let's see thy face.

MARIANA

225 My husband bids me; now I will unmask.
[Unveiling]
This is that face, thou cruel Angelo,
Which once thou sworest was worth the looking on;
This is the hand which, with a vow'd contract,
230 Was fast belock'd in thine; this is the body
That took away the match from Isabel,
And did supply thee at thy garden-house
In her imagined person.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Know you this woman?

LUCIO

235 Carnally, she says.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Sirrah, no more!

LUCIO

Enough, my lord.

LUCIO

Very well, my lord.

MARIANA

My lord, I'll admit that I was never married. And I'll admit, too, that I'm not a virgin. I've slept with my husband, but my husband doesn't know that he ever slept  with me.

 According to Renaissance law, two people were married if two things happened: a promise (verbal or written) and a consummation (sex). So Mariana knows that she and Angelo are legally married, but Angelo doesn't.

LUCIO

He was drunk then, my lord. That must've been it.

DUKE VINCENTIO

If it would keep you quiet, I wish you were drunk, too!

LUCIO

Very well, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

This doesn't have anything to do with Lord Angelo.

MARIANA

I'm getting to that, my lord. The woman who accused him of assaulting her accuses my husband in the same way. My lord, she makes her charges against him based on the time when I held him in my arms and made love to him, as I'll explain.

ANGELO

Is she charging someone besides me?

MARIANA

Not that I know of.

DUKE VINCENTIO

No? But you said "your husband."

MARIANA

Well, exactly, my lord. Angelo is my husband. He thinks he knows he's never had sex with me. But he knows that he thinks he's had sex with Isabella.

ANGELO

This is a strange accusation. Let us see your face.

MARIANA

Since my husband's telling me to do so, I'll take off my veil now. *[She removes her veil]* This is the face, you cruel man, which you used to say was worth looking at. This is the hand which you held when you promised to marry me. And this is the body which you thought was Isabella's, and which you had your way with in your garden shack, imagining it was her.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Do you know this woman?

LUCIO

235 She said he knew her sexually.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Sir, that's enough!

LUCIO

Enough, my lord.

ANGELO

My lord, I must confess I know this woman:
And five years since there was some speech of marriage
240 Betwixt myself and her; which was broke off,
Partly for that her promised proportions
Came short of composition, but in chief
For that her reputation was disvalued
In levity: since which time of five years
245 I never spake with her, saw her, nor heard from her,
Upon my faith and honour.

MARIANA

Noble prince,
As there comes light from heaven and words from breath,
As there is sense in truth and truth in virtue,
250 I am affianced this man's wife as strongly
As words could make up vows: and, my good lord,
But Tuesday night last gone in's garden-house
He knew me as a wife. As this is true,
Let me in safety raise me from my knees
255 Or else for ever be confixed here,
A marble monument!

ANGELO

I did but smile till now:
Now, good my lord, give me the scope of justice
My patience here is touch'd. I do perceive
260 These poor informal women are no more
But instruments of some more mightier member
That sets them on: let me have way, my lord,
To find this practise out.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Ay, with my heart
And punish them to your height of pleasure.
Thou foolish friar, and thou pernicious woman,
Compact with her that's gone, think'st thou thy oaths,
Though they would swear down each particular saint,
Were testimonies against his worth and credit
270 That's seal'd in approbation? You, Lord Escalus,
Sit with my cousin; lend him your kind pains
To find out this abuse, whence 'tis derived.
There is another friar that set them on;
Let him be sent for.

FRIAR PETER

275 Would he were here, my lord! for he indeed
Hath set the women on to this complaint:
Your provost knows the place where he abides
And he may fetch him.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Go do it instantly.

Exit Provost

280 And you, my noble and well-warranted cousin,
Whom it concerns to hear this matter forth,
Do with your injuries as seems you best,
In any chastisement: I for a while will leave you;
But stir not you till you have well determined
285 Upon these slanderers.

ESCALUS

My lord, we'll do it thoroughly.

Exit DUKE

ESCALUS

Signior Lucio, did not you say you knew that
Friar Lodowick to be a dishonest person?

ANGELO

My lord, I have to admit I know this woman. Five years ago
there was some talk about marriage between us, but it was
broken off--partially because the dowry which was
promised didn't materialize, and mainly because her
reputation took a major hit. In the five years since then I
haven't spoken to her, seen her, or heard from her--I swear.

MARIANA

Noble prince, as much as light comes from the sky and
words come from our breath; as much as truth makes sense
and virtue is always truthful, I'm this man's betrothed wife--
if we put any stock in words and vows. And, my good lord,
last Tuesday night in his garden shack, he slept with me as
his wife. If this isn't true, may I never get up from here, and
be frozen forever as a marble statue!

ANGELO

I smiled up until now, Now, my good lord, let me do justice.
My patience is running out. I can see that these poor, tattle-tale
women are just the tools of some more powerful
person who's made them do this. My lord, allow me to
figure out what's going on.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Of course, gladly. Punish them as you see fit.

[To FRIAR PETER and MARIANA] You foolish friar, and you
lying woman--you're in cahoots with the other woman who
was taken away! Did you really think that you could support
a testimony against someone as perfectly unshakably
worthy and believable as Angelo, just because you swore by
all the saints in heaven?

[To ESCALUS] You, Lord Escalus: sit with Angelo. Help him
figure out who's behind all this, and where it came from.
There's another friar that put them up to this; bring him
here.

FRIAR PETER

I wish he were here, sir! He did put these women up to
making the complaint. Your provost knows where he lives
and can get him.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Go do it, immediately.

The PROVOST exits.

And you, my noble, completely justified cousin: it's your job
to hear this case and dole out whatever punishments you
see fit. I'll leave you here for a while, but don't move until
you've completely ruled on these slanderers.

ESCALUS

Sir, we'll do it thoroughly.

DUKE VINCENTIO leaves.

ESCALUS

Mr. Lucio, didn't you say that, as far as you knew, Friar
Lodowick was a dishonest person?

LUCIO

"Cucullus non facit monachum;" honest in nothing but in his clothes; and one that hath spoke most villainous speeches of the duke.

ESCALUS

We shall entreat you to abide here till he come and enforce them against him: we shall find this friar a notable fellow.

LUCIO

As any in Vienna, on my word.

ESCALUS

Call that same Isabel here once again; I would speak with her.

300

Exit an Attendant

Pray you, my lord, give me leave to question; you shall see how I'll handle her.

LUCIO

305 Not better than he, by her own report.

ESCALUS

Say you?

LUCIO

Marry, sir, I think, if you handled her privately, she would sooner confess: perchance, publicly, she'll be ashamed.

ESCALUS

310 I will go darkly to work with her.

LUCIO

That's the way; for women are light at midnight.

Re-enter Officers with ISABELLA; and Provost with the DUKE VINCENTIO in his friar's habit

ESCALUS

Come on, mistress: here's a gentlewoman denies all that you have said.

LUCIO

315 My lord, here comes the rascal I spoke of; here with the provost.

ESCALUS

In very good time: speak not you to him till we call upon you.

LUCIO

Mum.

ESCALUS

320 Come, sir: did you set these women on to slander Lord Angelo? they have confessed you did.

DUKE VINCENTIO

'Tis false.

ESCALUS

How! know you where you are?

LUCIO

"A holy habit doesn't make a friar devout." The most honest thing about him are his clothes. He's the one who said such awful things about the Duke.

ESCALUS

We'll have to ask you to stay here until he comes, so you can accuse him of it. I'm sure we'll find that this friar is unique.

LUCIO

As much as any friar in Vienna, I swear.

ESCALUS

Bring Isabella here again; I want to speak with her.

An attendant exits.

Please, my lord, let me question her. You'll see how I handle her.

LUCIO

No better than he did, according to what she said.

ESCALUS

Do you think?

LUCIO

Indeed, I do, sir. I think that if you talked to her privately she'd confess sooner. Publicly, she might be too ashamed.

ESCALUS

I'll go talk 5 with her alone.

5 In the original text, Escalus uses the phrase "darkly to work" to mean "talk in secret." But Lucio puns on its other meaning, "get with in the dark," as in "have sex with."

LUCIO

That's the spirit. Women are best that way.

The officers and ISABELLA; the PROVOST; and DUKE VINCENTIO (disguised as a friar) enter.

ESCALUS

Come on, miss. Here's a gentlewoman that denies everything you said.

LUCIO

My lord, here comes the rascal I was talking about. He's here with the provost.

ESCALUS

Perfect timing. Don't say anything until we tell you to.

LUCIO

Mum's the word.

ESCALUS

All right, sir. Did you ask these women to slander Lord Angelo? They confessed that you did.

DUKE VINCENTIO

That's false.

ESCALUS

What? Do you know where you are?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Respect to your great place! and let the devil
Be sometime honour'd for his burning throne!
Where is the duke? 'tis he should hear me speak.

325

ESCALUS

The duke's in us; and we will hear you speak:
Look you speak justly.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Boldly, at least. But, O, poor souls,
Come you to seek the lamb here of the fox?
Good night to your redress! Is the duke gone?
Then is your cause gone too. The duke's unjust,
Thus to retort your manifest appeal,
And put your trial in the villain's mouth
Which here you come to accuse.

330

335

LUCIO

This is the rascal; this is he I spoke of.

ESCALUS

Why, thou unreverend and unhallow'd friar,
Is't not enough thou hast suborn'd these women
To accuse this worthy man, but, in foul mouth
340 And in the witness of his proper ear,
To call him villain? and then to glance from him
To the duke himself, to tax him with injustice?
Take him hence; to the rack with him! We'll touse you
Joint by joint, but we will know his purpose.
What "unjust!"

345

DUKE VINCENTIO

Be not so hot; the duke
Dare no more stretch this finger of mine than he
Dare rack his own: his subject am I not,
Nor here provincial. My business in this state
350 Made me a looker on here in Vienna,
Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble
Till it o'er-run the stew; laws for all faults,
But faults so countenanced, that the strong statutes
Stand like the forfeits in a barber's shop,
As much in mock as mark.

355

ESCALUS

Slander to the state! Away with him to prison!

ANGELO

What can you vouch against him, Signior Lucio?
Is this the man that you did tell us of?

LUCIO

'Tis he, my lord. Come hither, goodman baldpate:
do you know me?

360

DUKE VINCENTIO

I remember you, sir, by the sound of your voice: I
met you at the prison, in the absence of the duke.

LUCIO

O, did you so? And do you remember what you said of the
duke?

DUKE VINCENTIO

365

Most notedly, sir.

LUCIO

Do you so, sir? And was the duke a fleshmonger, a
fool, and a coward, as you then reported him to be?

DUKE VINCENTIO

I respect you and your position as much as I respect the
devil on his burning throne! Where's the Duke? He's the one
who should hear my testimony.

ESCALUS

We're the Duke's substitutes, and we'll listen to your
testimony. Make sure you tell the truth.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I'll speak boldly, at least. But you poor souls have let the fox
set you on a lamb. Is this how you solve things? Is the
Duke gone? Then you have no power.

[6] The Duke compares Angelo to a fox (representing cunning) and himself to a lamb (representing innocence).

[To MARIANA] The Duke is unjust to reverse your appeal and
make you go on trial in front of the villain you came to
accuse.

LUCIO

This is the rascal, this is the man I was talking about!

ESCALUS

You blasphemous, unholy friar! Isn't it enough that you
forced these women to accuse a good man? Do you have to
insult the man to his face, and call him a "villain?" And then
go on to call the Duke himself unjust? Take him away,
torture him! We'll twist you up joint by joint until we get the
truth out of you. He said "unjust!"

DUKE VINCENTIO

Don't get so angry. The Duke wouldn't dare to touch my
little finger as much as he would dare to hurt himself. I'm
not his subject; I'm not from here. Because I've had
business here, I've been an onlooker in Vienna, where I've
seen corruption boil and bubble until it ran over the sides of
the pot. There are laws against every crime, but the crimes
are dealt with in such a way that the strong laws are a
laughingstock, like bald men in a barber shop. They're not
taken seriously at all.

ESCALUS

He's slandering the state! Take him away to prison!

ANGELO

What can you say against him, Mr. Lucio? Is this the man
you told us about?

LUCIO

Yes, it's him, sir. Come on, Mr. Baldie. Do you know who I
am?

DUKE VINCENTIO

I remember you by the sound of your voice, sir. I met you at
the prison while the Duke was gone.

LUCIO

Oh, did you? And do you remember what you said about
the Duke?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Very well, sir.

LUCIO

Do you, sir? And didn't you say the Duke was a womanizer,
an idiot, and a coward?

DUKE VINCENTIO

You must, sir, change persons with me, ere you make
that my report: you, indeed, spoke so of him; and
370 much more, much worse.

LUCIO

O thou damnable fellow! Did not I pluck thee by the
nose for thy speeches?

DUKE VINCENTIO

I protest I love the duke as I love myself.

ANGELO

Hark, how the villain would close now, after his
375 treasonable abuses!

ESCALUS

Such a fellow is not to be talked withal. Away with
him to prison! Where is the provost? Away with him
to prison! lay bolts enough upon him: let him
380 speak no more. Away with those gigglots too, and
with the other confederate companion!

DUKE VINCENTIO

[To Provost] Stay, sir; stay awhile.

ANGELO

What, resists he? Help him, Lucio.

LUCIO

Come, sir; come, sir; come, sir; foh, sir! Why, you
bald-pated, lying rascal, you must be hooded, must
385 you? Show your knave's visage, with a pox to you!
show your sheep-biting face, and be hanged an hour!
Will't not off? [Pulls off the friar's hood, and
discovers DUKE VINCENTIO]

DUKE VINCENTIO

Thou art the first knave that e'er madest a duke.
390 First, provost, let me bail these gentle three.
[to Lucio] Sneak not away, sir; for the friar and you
Must have a word anon. Lay hold on him.

LUCIO

This may prove worse than hanging.

DUKE VINCENTIO

[To ESCALUS] What you have spoke I pardon: sit you
395 down:
We'll borrow place of him.
[To ANGELO] Sir, by your leave.
Hast thou or word, or wit, or impudence,
400 That yet can do thee office? If thou hast,
Rely upon it till my tale be heard,
And hold no longer out.

ANGELO

O my dread lord,
I should be guiltier than my guiltiness,
405 To think I can be undiscernible,
When I perceive your grace, like power divine,
Hath look'd upon my passes. Then, good prince,
No longer session hold upon my shame,
But let my trial be mine own confession:
410 Immediate sentence then and sequent death
Is all the grace I beg.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Sir, I think you'll have to switch places with me before you
say that. It was you that said that about him--and much
more, much worse.

LUCIO

Oh, you accursed man! Didn't I punch you in the face for
what you said?

DUKE VINCENTIO

I have to say, I love the Duke as much as I love myself.

ANGELO

Listen how the scoundrel tries to cover it up now, after
committing treason!

ESCALUS

You can't reason with a man like that. Take him away to
prison! Where is the provost? Take him away to prison! Lock
him up and never let him speak again. Take those whores,
too, with their co-conspirator!

DUKE VINCENTIO

[To the PROVOST] Wait, sir. Wait a minute.

ANGELO

What, is he resisting? Help him, Lucio.

LUCIO

Come on, sir; come on, sir; come on, sir. Hey, sir! What, you
bald-headed, lying rascal, you have to keep your hood on,
huh? Show your foolish face, and damn you! Show your
dirty, lying face, and go die! Take it off! [LUCIO pulls off the
friar's hood, revealing DUKE VINCENTIO to everyone]

DUKE VINCENTIO

You're the first idiot that ever made someone a duke.

[To the PROVOST, gesturing toward ISABELLA, MARIANA,
and CLAUDIO] First, sheriff, let me bail out these three
innocent people.

[To LUCIO] Don't sneak away, sir. The friar and you have
more to say to each other. Grab him.

LUCIO

This might end up worse than hanging.

DUKE VINCENTIO

[To ESCALUS] I forgive you for what you said. Sit down; I'll
take his place.

[To ANGELO] Sir, with your permission: do you have
anything to say for yourself--any witty reply that can
improve your situation? If you do, tell me now before I tell
my story. Don't hold out any longer.

ANGELO

Oh, my sovereign lord, I feel guiltier than guiltiness itself
now that I know I didn't go undetected; now that I know
that you--like God himself--saw everything I did, your
Grace. So, good prince, don't make me stand up here any
longer in my shame. I'll cut my trial short with a confession.
All I ask is an immediate sentence and, after that, death.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Come hither, Mariana.
Say, wast thou e'er contracted to this woman?

ANGELO

I was, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

415 Go take her hence, and marry her instantly.
Do you the office, friar; which consummate,
Return him here again. Go with him, provost.

Exeunt ANGELO, MARIANA, FRIAR PETER and Provost

ESCALUS

My lord, I am more amazed at his dishonour
Than at the strangeness of it.

DUKE VINCENTIO

420 Come hither, Isabel.
Your friar is now your prince: as I was then
Advertising and holy to your business,
Not changing heart with habit, I am still
Attorney'd at your service.

ISABELLA

425 O, give me pardon,
That I, your vassal, have employ'd and pain'd
Your unknown sovereignty!

DUKE VINCENTIO

You are pardon'd, Isabel:
And now, dear maid, be you as free to us.
430 Your brother's death, I know, sits at your heart;
And you may marvel why I obscured myself,
Labouring to save his life, and would not rather
Make rash remonstrance of my hidden power
Than let him so be lost. O most kind maid,
435 It was the swift celerity of his death,
Which I did think with slower foot came on,
That brain'd my purpose. But, peace be with him!
That life is better life, past fearing death,
Than that which lives to fear: make it your comfort,
440 So happy is your brother.

ISABELLA

I do, my lord.

Re-enter ANGELO, MARIANA, FRIAR PETER, and Provost

DUKE VINCENTIO

For this new-married man approaching here,
Whose salt imagination yet hath wrong'd
445 Your well defended honour, you must pardon
For Mariana's sake: but as he adjudged your brother,--
Being criminal, in double violation
Of sacred chastity and of promise-breach
Thereon dependent, for your brother's life,--
450 The very mercy of the law cries out
Most audible, even from his proper tongue,
'An Angelo for Claudio, death for death!'
Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and MEASURE still FOR MEASURE.
455 Then, Angelo, thy fault's thus manifested;
Which, though thou wouldest deny, denies thee vantage.
We do condemn thee to the very block
Where Claudio stoop'd to death, and with like haste.
Away with him!

DUKE VINCENTIO

Come here, Mariana. [MARIANA comes forward] Tell me,
were you ever engaged to this woman?

ANGELO

I was, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Go take her away, and marry her immediately.

[To FRIAR PETER] Friar, you can do the service; once it's
done, bring him back here.

[To the PROVOST] You go with him, Provost.

ANGELO, MARIANA, FRIAR PETER, and the PROVOST exit.

ESCALUS

My lord, I'm more surprised by his dishonor than I am by
the unexpected nature of it.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Come here, Isabella. Your friar is really your ruler. Back
when I was in my disguise, I gave you holy advice for your
project. I haven't changed who I am when I changed my
clothes; I'm still completely at your service.

ISABELLA

Oh, forgive me, sir! I'm just your subject, and I ordered you
around, not realizing you were the Duke!

DUKE VINCENTIO

I forgive you, Isabella. And now, dear girl, forgive me, too. I
know you're grieving for your brother's death. And I know
that you're wondering why I stayed disguised the whole
time I was trying to save his life, instead of using my hidden
power to save him. Oh, sweet girl, his death came so
quickly, and I thought we had more time. So I didn't do
what I meant to. God rest his soul! He's in a better place
now, and doesn't have to be afraid of death anymore, the
way he was in life. Take comfort in the fact that your brother
is happy now.

ISABELLA

I do, my lord.

ANGELO, MARIANA, FRIAR PETER, and the PROVOST enter.

DUKE VINCENTIO

As for this newly-married man who's now approaching--
whose dirty mind has done you wrong--you need to forgive
him for Mariana's sake. But since he judged you brother--
criminally committing a double violation of the laws of
abstinence and honesty with which he charged Claudio--
the law itself seems to dictate that Angelo should die for
Claudio, death for death. Fast for fast, slow for slow, like for
like, and measure, too, for measure. So, Angelo, we all know
your crime. Even if you would deny it, you can't escape. I
condemn you to the same block where Claudio was killed,
and just as quickly. Take him away!

MARIANA

460 O my most gracious lord,
I hope you will not mock me with a husband.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It is your husband mock'd you with a husband.
Consenting to the safeguard of your honour,
I thought your marriage fit; else imputation,
465 For that he knew you, might reproach your life
And choke your good to come; for his possessions,
Although by confiscation they are ours,
We do instate and widow you withal,
To buy you a better husband.

MARIANA

470 O my dear lord,
I crave no other, nor no better man.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Never crave him; we are definitive.

MARIANA

Gentle my liege,-- [*Kneeling*]

DUKE VINCENTIO

You do but lose your labour.

475 Away with him to death!
[To LUCIO] Now, sir, to you.

MARIANA

O my good lord! Sweet Isabel, take my part;
Lend me your knees, and all my life to come
480 I'll lend you all my life to do you service.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Against all sense you do importune her:
Should she kneel down in mercy of this fact,
Her brother's ghost his paved bed would break,
And take her hence in horror.

MARIANA

485 Isabel,
Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel by me;
Hold up your hands, say nothing; I'll speak all.
They say, best men are moulded out of faults;
And, for the most, become much more the better
490 For being a little bad: so may my husband.
O Isabel, will you not lend a knee?

DUKE VINCENTIO

He dies for Claudio's death.

ISABELLA

Most bounteous sir,
Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd,
495 As if my brother lived: I partly think
A due sincerity govern'd his deeds,
Till he did look on me: since it is so,
Let him not die. My brother had but justice,
In that he did the thing for which he died:
500 For Angelo,
His act did not o'ertake his bad intent,
And must be buried but as an intent
That perish'd by the way: thoughts are no subjects;
Intents but merely thoughts.

MARIANA

505 Merely, my lord.

MARIANA

Oh, my most gracious lord, I hope you won't tease me with a husband!

DUKE VINCENTIO

Your husband's the one that teased you with a husband. I thought it was best for your reputation to have you married; otherwise, you might have a difficult time in the future, since you had sex with him. As for his possessions, although I could confiscate them, you're now his widow--so you can have it all. Buy yourself a better husband.

MARIANA

Oh, my dear lord, I don't want anyone else. I don't want a better man.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Stop wanting him. My word is final.

MARIANA

But, sir-- [*She kneels*]

DUKE VINCENTIO

You're wasting your time. Take him away to death!

[To LUCIO] Now, sir, to you.

MARIANA

Oh, my good lord! Sweet Isabella, help me! Beg with me on your knees, and I'll owe you anything and everything for the rest of my life.

DUKE VINCENTIO

It makes no sense for you to ask her. If she kneels and asks for mercy for him, her brother's ghost would come back to haunt her and steal her away in horror.

MARIANA

Isabella, sweet Isabella, just kneel with me. Hold up your hands--you don't have to say anything. I'll do all the talking.

[To DUKE VINCENTIO] They say that even the best men make mistakes. And most of them are actually better for having a little imperfection in them. My husband's just the same.

[To ISABELLA] Oh, Isabella, won't you kneel with me?

DUKE VINCENTIO

He dies for Claudio's death.

ISABELLA

Generous sir, please treat this condemned man the way you would treat my brother if he were still alive. I partially think that he acted sincerely before he met me. Since that's the case, don't let him die. My brother got his justice--he did the thing for which he died. But Angelo, he didn't do the thing that he intended. Since it was only an intention, we should forget about it. Thoughts aren't actions; intentions are just thoughts.

MARIANA

Just thoughts, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Your suit's unprofitable; stand up, I say.
I have bethought me of another fault.
Provost, how came it Claudio was beheaded
At an unusual hour?

PROVOST

510 It was commanded so.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Had you a special warrant for the deed?

PROVOST

No, my good lord; it was by private message.

DUKE VINCENTIO

For which I do discharge you of your office:
Give up your keys.

PROVOST

515 Pardon me, noble lord:
I thought it was a fault, but knew it not;
Yet did repent me, after more advice;
For testimony whereof, one in the prison,
That should by private order else have died,
520 I have reserved alive.

DUKE VINCENTIO

What's he?

PROVOST

His name is Barnardine.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I would thou hadst done so by Claudio.
Go fetch him hither; let me look upon him.

525

Exit Provost

ESCALUS

I am sorry, one so learned and so wise
As you, Lord Angelo, have still appear'd,
Should slip so grossly, both in the heat of blood.
And lack of temper'd judgment afterward.

ANGELO

530 I am sorry that such sorrow I procure:
And so deep sticks it in my penitent heart
That I crave death more willingly than mercy;
'Tis my deserving, and I do entreat it.

Re-enter Provost, with BARNARDINE, CLAUDIO muffled, and JULIET

DUKE VINCENTIO

Which is that Barnardine?

PROVOST

535 This, my lord.

DUKE VINCENTIO

There was a friar told me of this man.
Sirrah, thou art said to have a stubborn soul.
That apprehends no further than this world,
And squires thy life according. Thou'rt condemn'd:
540 But, for those earthly faults, I quit them all;
And pray thee take this mercy to provide
For better times to come. Friar, advise him;
I leave him to your hand. What muffled fellow's that?

DUKE VINCENTIO

Your request is useless. Stand up, now. I just thought of another mistake. Provost, why was it that Claudio was beheaded at such an unusual time?

PROVOST

That's what I was commanded to do.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Did you have a special warrant for it?

PROVOST

No, my good lord. It was in a private message.

DUKE VINCENTIO

For that, you're fired from your position. Give me your keys.

PROVOST

Forgive me, sir. I thought it was a mistake, but I wasn't sure.
I repented after I'd talked with someone about it. A man in
the prison--who should have died, but I kept alive--can
testify to it.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Who's that?

PROVOST

His name is Barnadine.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I wish you would have kept Claudio alive. Bring him here;
let me see him.

The PROVOST exits.

ESCALUS

Lord Angelo, I'm sad to see that someone as educated and
wise as you, --and who seemed good--would mess up so
badly, and let his desires get the best of him. And then to
have had such poor judgment afterward.

ANGELO

I'm sorrow that I've caused so much suffering. I feel it so
painfully in my remorseful heart that I want death more
than I want mercy. It's what I deserve; it's what I ask for.

The PROVOST, BARNARDINE, CLAUDIO (with a bag over his head), and JULIET enter.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Which one is Barnadine?

PROVOST

This one, sir.

DUKE VINCENTIO

A friar told me about this man.

[To BARNARDINE] Sir, I've heard that you have a stubborn
soul; that you don't care about the afterlife and live your life
accordingly. You're condemned. But, despite all of your
earthly faults, I pardon you. Please take advantage of this
mercy to improve your life in the future.

[To FRIAR PETER] Friar, speak with him; I leave him to you.

[To the PROVOST] Who's the man with the bag on his head?

PROVOST

This is another prisoner that I saved.
 545 Who should have died when Claudio lost his head;
 As like almost to Claudio as himself.
 [Unmuffles CLAUDIO]

DUKE VINCENTIO

[To ISABELLA] If he be like your brother, for his sake
 Is he pardon'd; and, for your lovely sake,
 550 Give me your hand and say you will be mine.
 He is my brother too: but fitter time for that.
 By this Lord Angelo perceives he's safe;
 Methinks I see a quickening in his eye.
 Well, Angelo, your evil quits you well:
 555 Look that you love your wife; her worth worth yours.
 I find an apt remission in myself;
 And yet here's one in place I cannot pardon.
 [To LUCIO] You, sirrah, that knew me for a fool, a
 560 coward,
 One all of luxury, an ass, a madman;
 Wherein have I so deserved of you,
 That you extol me thus?

LUCIO

'Faith, my lord. I spoke it but according to the
 trick. If you will hang me for it, you may; but I
 565 had rather it would please you I might be whipt.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Whipt first, sir, and hanged after.
 Proclaim it, provost, round about the city.
 Is any woman wrong'd by this lewd fellow,
 570 As I have heard him swear himself there's one
 Whom he begot with child, let her appear,
 And he shall marry her: the nuptial finish'd,
 Let him be whipt and hang'd.

LUCIO

I beseech your highness, do not marry me to a whore.
 Your highness said even now, I made you a duke:
 575 good my lord, do not recompense me in making me a
 cuckold.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Upon mine honour, thou shalt marry her.
 Thy slanders I forgive; and therewithal
 Remit thy other forfeits. Take him to prison;
 580 And see our pleasure herein executed.

LUCIO

Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death,
 whipping, and hanging.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Slandering a prince deserves it.

Exit Officers with LUCIO

She, Claudio, that you wrong'd, look you restore.
 Joy to you, Mariana! Love her, Angelo:
 585 I have confess'd her and I know her virtue.
 Thanks, good friend Escalus, for thy much goodness:
 There's more behind that is more gratulate.
 Thanks, provost, for thy care and secrecy:
 We shall employ thee in a worthier place.
 Forgive him, Angelo, that brought you home
 The head of Ragozine for Claudio's:
 590 The offence pardons itself. Dear Isabel,
 I have a motion much imports your good;
 Whereto if you'll a willing ear incline,
 What's mine is yours and what is yours is mine.

PROVOST

This is another prisoner that I saved. He should have died
 when Claudio lost his head, and looks as much like Claudio
 as Claudio himself. [He takes the bag off CLAUDIO's head]

DUKE VINCENTIO

[To ISABELLA] If he looks like your brother, then I'll pardon
 him for his sake. And as for your beautiful sake, give me
 your hand and say you'll be mine. He's my brother, too--or
 will be soon. Lord Angelo can tell that he's safe now; I can
 see the look in his eye.

[To ANGELO] Well, Angelo, you're not evil anymore. Make
 sure you love your wife, and that you're good enough to
 deserve her. And yet, there's one person here who I can't
 pardon.

[To LUCIO] You, sir. You called me an idiot, a coward,
 wasteful, an ass, crazy. What did I do to deserve what
 you've said about me?

LUCIO

Truly, my lord, I only said it as a joke. You can hang me for it
 if you want. But I'd rather just get whipped, if it would
 please you, sir.

DUKE VINCENTIO

Whipped first, and hanged afterward.

[To the PROVOST] Announce it all around the city, Provost.
 If any woman has been wronged by this nasty man--since
 I've heard him swear he got one pregnant--bring her here,
 and he'll marry her. After the wedding, have him whipped
 and hanged.

LUCIO

I beg you, your Highness: don't make me marry a whore.
 You said even now, your Highness, that I made you a duke.
 Please, my good lord, don't repay me by making me marry
 a loose woman.

 A cuckold is a man whose wife has been unfaithful. By marrying a prostitute, Lucio imagines he will immediately be the victim of unfaithfulness.

DUKE VINCENTIO

I swear on my honor--you'll marry her. I forgive your slander
 and pardon all your other crimes, too. Take him to prison
 and make sure my instructions are executed.

LUCIO

My lord, marrying a prostitute is worse than being pressed
 to death, whipped, and hanged.

DUKE VICENTIO

That's what you deserve for slandering a prince.

The officers exit with LUCIO.

[To CLAUDIO] Marry the woman you wronged, Claudio.

[To MARIANA] Best wishes to you, Mariana!

[To ANGELO] Love her, Angelo. I've heard her confessions
 and know how good she is.

[To ESCALUS] Thank you for your good friendship, Escalus.
 There's more congratulations to come.

[To the PROVOST] Thank you for being so careful and for
 keeping everything secret, Provost. I'll give you a
 promotion.

So, bring us to our palace; where we'll show
What's yet behind, that's meet you all should know.

[To ANGELO] Forgive the sheriff for bringing you Ragozine's head in place of Claudio's, Angelo. The offense pardons itself.

[To ISABELLA] Dear Isabella, I have something in mind that will benefit you, if you're willing to listen: what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine.

[To the crowd] So, let's go to my palace. I'll explain everything that's still unsaid and that you all should know.

Exeunt

They all exit.

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