

## 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**

25 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 . I came to find out what you want.

 "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

 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 yourself;  
Mortality and mercy in Vienna  
Live in thy tongue and heart: old Escalus,  
Though first in question, is thy secondary.  
50 Take thy commission.

**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**

55 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  
65 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.

permission: be completely like me. Mortality and mercy <sup>2</sup>  
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**

But now, my good lord, there should be some more tests for  
me <sup>3</sup> to go through before I'm given such a noble and  
important job.

<sup>3</sup> 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 carefully <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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**

5 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**

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

**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?" 

 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 .

 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 .

 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**

25 Ay, why not? Grace is grace, despite of all 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 kersey 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**

50 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 <sup>4</sup>.

**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 <sup>5</sup>.

**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 <sup>6</sup>! I've bought so many diseases in her house, to the tune of--

**SECOND GENTLEMAN**

Of what, indeed?

**LUCIO**

Guess.

**SECOND GENTLEMAN**

Three thousand dollars <sup>7</sup> a year.

**FIRST GENTLEMAN**

Yes, and more.

**LUCIO**

A French crown <sup>8</sup> more.

**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 <sup>9</sup>! Your sin is eating you alive.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Lucio suggests the gentleman has some kind of contagious disease.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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).

<sup>9</sup> 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**

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

**MISTRESS OVERDONE**

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

**SECOND GENTLEMAN**

Who's that, I pray thee?

**MISTRESS OVERDONE**

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

**FIRST GENTLEMAN**

60 Claudio to prison? 'tis not so.

**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**

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

**MISTRESS OVERDONE**

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

**LUCIO**

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

**SECOND GENTLEMAN**

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

**FIRST GENTLEMAN**

But, most of all, agreeing with the proclamation.

**LUCIO**

75 Away! let's go learn the truth of it.

*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 <sup>10</sup> in it?

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Claudio.

<sup>11</sup> "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 <sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> 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, <sup>13</sup> and poverty, I have no customers left.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

*Exeunt*

*Enter Provost, CLAUDIO, JULIET, and Officers*

**MISTRESS OVERDONE**

Well? What did he do?

**POMPEY**

A woman.

**MISTRESS OVERDONE**

But what's his offence?

**POMPEY**

Groping for fish<sup>14</sup> in a strange river.

**MISTRESS OVERDONE**

What, has he knocked up a girl?

**POMPEY**

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

**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**

What can we do, Mr. Bartender? Let's go in.

**POMPEY**

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

*They all exit.*

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

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

<sup>15</sup> "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.

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

**CLAUDIO**

Fellow, why dost thou show me thus to the world?

110 Bear me to prison, where I am committed.

**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  
115 The words of heaven; on whom it will, it will;  
On whom it will not, so; yet still 'tis just.

*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,  
120 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.

**LUCIO**

If could speak so wisely under an arrest, I would  
125 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?

**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 <sup>17</sup>! 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?

<sup>17</sup> 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 <sup>18</sup>  
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 <sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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 unscour'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**

190 Come, officer, away!

*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 <sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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 <sup>1</sup>, don't even think of that. You can't  
believe that silly old love <sup>2</sup> would win over a man as  
steadfast as me. There's a reason for my asking you for a

<sup>1</sup> "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**

20 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.

**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 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.

**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 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.

*They exit.*

 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.

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

 A habit is a monk's robe.

## 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  
 5 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**

25 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](#).

 "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 around <sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 blaspheming <sup>2</sup> good Christians by mocking me.

<sup>2</sup> 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

husbandry <sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> 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 cousin <sup>4</sup> Juliet?

<sup>4</sup> 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:  
Commend me to my brother: soon at night  
I'll send him certain word of my success.

**LUCIO**

I take my leave of you.

**ISABELLA**

100 Good sir, adieu.

*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,  
15

### 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.

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 , 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.

 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  here  
before you.

 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  that all good Christians  
should have.

 "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**

65 He, sir! a tapster, sir; parcel-bawd; one that 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**

80 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 <sup>4</sup>.

**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 <sup>5</sup> in the eyes of God and yourself.

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

**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 <sup>8</sup> here, you honorable man, prove it.

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

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

<sup>7</sup> In the original text, Elbow uses the mild oath "marry," a derivation of the Virgin Mary's name.

<sup>8</sup> In the original text, Elbow says "cardinally" (extremely; to the highest level) when he means "carnally" (controlled by bodily desire).

<sup>8</sup> 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**

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

**ESCALUS**

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

**POMPEY**

No, indeed, sir, not of a pin; you are therein in  
the right: but to the point. As I say, this  
100 Mistress Elbow, being, as I say, with child, and  
being great-bellied, and longing, as I said, for  
prunes; and having but two in the dish, as I said,  
Master Froth here, this very man, having eaten the  
rest, as I said, and, as I say, paying for them very  
105 honestly; for, as you know, Master Froth, I could  
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 <sup>9</sup>. 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--

<sup>9</sup> 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 said) 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 <sup>10</sup>  
of the aforementioned prunes--

<sup>10</sup> 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 <sup>11</sup> you had, unless they  
kept a very good diet, as I told you--

<sup>11</sup> 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 <sup>12</sup>.  
Wasn't it November 1, Mr. Froth?

<sup>12</sup> "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**

130 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?

**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**

135 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.

**ESCALUS**

I think no less. Good morrow to your lordship.

*Exit ANGELO*

140 Now, sir, come on: what was done to Elbow's wife, once more?

**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 do 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 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 wouldst discover if thou couldst, let him 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 <sup>13</sup>house. Second of all, this is a respected man. Finally, his wife is a respected woman.

<sup>13</sup> Elbow means "suspected" instead of "respected."

**POMPEY**

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

<sup>14</sup> 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" <sup>15</sup>with him before he married her.

<sup>15</sup> 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 <sup>16</sup>! 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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 <sup>17</sup>for that. What should I do, sir, with this evil piece of trash?

<sup>17</sup> "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*

210 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"<sup>18</sup> was the last one.

**ESCALUS**

Nine! Come over here, Mr. Froth. Mr. Froth, I recommend you don't make friends with any bartenders. They'll draw you<sup>19</sup>, Mr. Froth, and you'll get into trouble. Get out of here, and make sure I don't hear about you again.

**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**

Bum<sup>20</sup>, sir.

**ESCALUS**

Indeed, and your bum is the greatest thing about you, so that in the most physical sense you are "Pompey the Great"<sup>21</sup>. 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.

**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 castrate<sup>22</sup> and neuter all the young people in the city?

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

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

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

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

<sup>22</sup> 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  
240 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**

255 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**

260 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 <sup>23</sup> to you. To be honest,  
Pompey, I'll have you whipped. So, for now, Pompey,  
goodbye.

<sup>23</sup> 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**

270 Look you bring me in the names of some six or seven,  
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*

**ESCALUS**

Look: bring in the names of six or seven of the most capable men in your district.

**ELBOW**

To your Worship's house, sir?

**ESCALUS**

To my house. Take care.

*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.

*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,

50 And not my brother.

**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,  
55 To fine the faults whose fine stands in record,  
And let go by the actor.

**ISABELLA**

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

**LUCIO**

*[aside to ISABELLA]* Give't not o'er so: to him  
60 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!

**ISABELLA**

65 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.

**ISABELLA**

70 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?

**ANGELO**

75 He's sentenced; 'tis too late.

**LUCIO**

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

**ISABELLA**

Too late? why, no; I, that do speak a word.  
May call it back again. Well, believe this,  
No ceremony that to great ones 'longs,  
80 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,  
85 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?  
90 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,  
95 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,  
100 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;  
105 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**

115 *[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 though 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 advised 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 maids 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 offenceful act  
30 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,  
 35 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,  
 40 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, Benedicite!

*Exit*

**JULIET**

45 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*

**JULIET**

Mutually.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

Then your sin was more serious than his was.

**JULIET**

I confess it and repent it, father.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

That's good, daughter. But don't only repent because the sin has caused you to be ashamed. Shame is always self-centered, not God-centered. It shows we don't obey God because we love him, but only because we're afraid--

**JULIET**

I repent it because it's evil, and I accept the shame joyfully.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

Rest, then. I hear your partner has to die tomorrow, and I'm going to give him his last rites. Grace be with you, and God bless you!

*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 of 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 accompt.

**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**

Ignomy in ransom and free pardon  
120 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**

135 Ay, as the glasses where they view themselves;  
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**

150 I have no tongue but one: gentle my lord,  
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 approval;  
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,  
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.

60

**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,  
If you'll implore it, that will free your life,  
But fetter you till death.

70

**CLAUDIO**

Perpetual durance?

**ISABELLA**

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

75

**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.

**CLAUDIO**

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?  
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.

85

**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 prezie Angelo!

**ISABELLA**

O, 'tis the cunning livery of hell,  
 105 The damned'st body to invest and cover  
 In prezie 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 perdurably 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 incertain 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 Reprive 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  
by 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](#) you commit more  
sins. It's best you die quickly.

 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**

180 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  
185 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,  
205 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  
220 that you may most uprightly do a poor wronged lady a merited benefit; redeem your brother from the angry law; do no stain to your own gracious person; and much please the absent duke, if

**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**,  
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.

**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** 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.

**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.

 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.

 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.

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

**ISABELLA**

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

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

230 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?

**ISABELLA**

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

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

235 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  
240 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 combinate husband, this well-seeming Angelo.

**ISABELLA**

245 Can this be so? did Angelo so leave her?

**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  
250 wears for his sake; and he, a marble to her tears, is washed with them, but relents not.

**ISABELLA**

255 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?

**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**

260 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.  
270 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

**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 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.  
285

**ISABELLA**

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

*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**

'Twas never merry world since, of two usuries, the merriest was put down, and the worse 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 innocence, stands for the facing.  
5  
10

**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.  
15

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

Fie, sirrah! a bawd, a wicked bawd!  
The evil that thou causeth to be done,  
20

### 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. 🗨️

🗨️ "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 🗨️. What crime has this man committed against you, sir?

🗨️ 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 🗨️! You pimp, you wicked pimp! You make your living from this horrible evil. Do you even think

🗨️ 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 have 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**

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

**LUCIO**

Why, 'tis good; it is the right of it; it must be  
 so: ever your fresh whore and your powdered bawd:  
 60 an unshunned consequence; it must be so. Art going  
 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?  
 45 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  
 50 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  
 55 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.

70 Pompey; you will turn good husband now, Pompey; you will keep the house.

**POMPEY**

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

**LUCIO**

No, indeed, will I not, Pompey; it is not the wear. I will pray, Pompey, to increase your bondage: If

75 you take it not patiently, why, your mettle is the more. Adieu, trusty Pompey. 'Bless you, friar.

**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 <sup>8</sup>, Pompey. Goodbye. Go, and say I sent you. Was it for debt, Pompey? Or what?

**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 <sup>9</sup>.

**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 <sup>10</sup> still wear makeup, Pompey, huh?

**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 <sup>11</sup>, Pompey, go.

*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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

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

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

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

**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  
100 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  
115 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;  
125 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](#)<sup>12</sup> when he's really rich. Lord Angelo is doing well while the Duke is gone. He makes people answer for their crimes.

<sup>12</sup> 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](#)<sup>13</sup>! 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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](#)<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> 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](#)<sup>15</sup> woman and put a coin in her bucket; he had his quirks. And he'd get drunk, too, let me tell you.

<sup>15</sup> 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**

140 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 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**

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

**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 continency; sparrows must not build in his  
 170 house-eaves, because they are lecherous. The duke 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  
 175 duke, I say to thee again, would eat mutton on 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.  
 205 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  
 Fridays <sup>16</sup>. 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.

*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 <sup>17</sup> 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 <sup>18</sup>. I've taken care of the child myself, and look how he goes around and rats on me!

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> Mistress Overdone names one of her prostitutes.

<sup>18</sup> "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**

230 Rather rejoicing to see another merry, than merry at  
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  
to himself, by the instruction of his frailty, many  
240 deceiving promises of life; which I by my good  
leisure have discredited to him, and now is he  
resolved to die.

**ESCALUS**

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

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

250 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*

255 He who the sword of heaven will bear  
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  
enough security <sup>19</sup> 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?

<sup>19</sup> 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.*

<sup>20</sup> Anyone <sup>21</sup> who says he's dishing out God's justice should  
be as perfect as he is strict. He should be an example of

<sup>20</sup> 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.

*He exits.*

*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-songy quality, emphasizing the content of proverbial wisdom the Duke shares.*

 *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.*

## Act 4, Scene 1

### Shakespeare

*Enter MARIANA and a Boy*

#### BOY

Take, O, take those lips away,  
 That so sweetly were forsworn;  
 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 displeas'd, but pleas'd 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  
 25 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 planced 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**

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

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

It is not my consent,  
 But my entreaty too.

**ISABELLA**

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

**MARIANA**

Fear me not.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

85 Nor, gentle daughter, fear you not at all.  
 He is your husband on a pre-contract:  
 To bring you thus together, 'tis no sin,  
 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**

15 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.

**PROVOST**

Come on, sir, none of your jokes--give me a direct answer.  
 Tomorrow morning, Claudio and Barnadine 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.

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

**PROVOST**

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

*Enter ABHORSON*

**ABHORSON**

20 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**

30 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**

35 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**

45 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**

50 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](#) <sup>2</sup>! Where's Abhorson? Are you there?

*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](#) <sup>3</sup> about you--did you refer to your occupation, sir, as a "mystery?"

**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](#). <sup>4</sup> But the mystery of hanging? If I were going to be hanged, I can't imagine.

**ABHORSON**

Sir, it is a mystery.

**POMPEY**

Proof?

**ABHORSON**

Every executioner's clothes fit <sup>5</sup> 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.

*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](#) <sup>6</sup> more often.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

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

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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**

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

**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**

60 Call hither Barnardine and Claudio.

*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  
65 Thou must be made immortal. Where's Barnardine?

**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 Barnardine?

**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:

90 He doth with holy abstinence subdue  
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 siege 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,  
125 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.

130

**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**

155 How came it that the absent duke had not either  
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 Barnardine 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 Barnardine 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. Barnardine 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.  
180 Claudio, whom here you have warrant to execute, is  
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**

195 Angelo hath seen them both, and will discover the  
favour.

**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  
200 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  
215 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
- 225 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
- 230 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 <sup>8</sup> 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.

*They exit.*

<sup>8</sup> 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.

## 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 Dizzy, 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**

- 25 *[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.

### Shakesclore 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 <sup>8</sup>. He's in for lending <sup>9</sup> 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."

*ABHORSON enters.*

**ABHORSON**

Sir, bring Barnardine here.

**POMPEY**

Mr. Barnardine! You have to get up and be hanged! Mr. Barnardine!

**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.

<sup>8</sup> "Rash" means "hasty" or "impulsive." All the names of Pompey's former customers jokingly describe their crimes or occupations.

<sup>9</sup> 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**

Tell him he must awake, and that quickly too.

**POMPEY**

30 Pray, Master Barnadine, 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**

40 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**

55 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.

*BARNARDINE 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 gravel 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.

 The Duke explains that since Barnadine 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 Ragozine'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 Barnadine 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 Barnadine 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.  
Hath yet the deputy sent my brother's pardon?

120

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

He hath released him, Isabel, from the world:  
His head is off and sent to Angelo.

**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**

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;  
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  
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.

130

135

140

**ISABELLA**

I am directed by you.

145

**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**

160 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**

180 Yes, marry, did I but I was fain to forswear it;  
 they would else have married me to the rotten medlar.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

Sir, your company is fairer than honest. Rest you well.

**LUCIO**

185 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 <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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**

15 Well, I beseech you, let it be proclaimed betimes 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 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 blench 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 fortified 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, 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 forsworn; 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  
85 To try her gracious fortune with Lord Angelo  
For her poor brother's pardon.

**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 concupiscible intemperate 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 unbeliev'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 swung 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 ungot.

**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 "ungot," 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,  
165 As he's reported by this gentleman;  
And, on my trust, a man that never yet  
Did, as he vouches, misreport your grace.

**LUCIO**

My lord, most villanously; 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,  
Whensoever he's convented. 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.

**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.

**MARIANA**

Pardon, my lord; I will not show my face  
190 Until my husband bid me.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

What, are you married?

**MARIANA**

No, my lord.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

Are you a maid?

**MARIANA**

No, my lord.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

195 A widow, then?

**MARIANA**

Neither, my lord.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

Why, you are nothing then: neither maid, widow, nor  
wife?

**LUCIO**

200 My lord, she may be a punk; for many of them are  
neither maid, widow, nor wife.

**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 , friar?  
First, make her show her face, and then have her speak.

 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**

205 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 Isabel'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 swore'st 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**

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  
 265 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;  
 285 But stir not you till you have well determined  
 Upon these slanderers.

**ESCALUS**

My lord, we'll do it thoroughly.

*Exit DUKE*

**ESCALUS**

290 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 villanous speeches of the duke.

**ESCALUS**

295 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**

300 Call that same Isabel here once again; I would speak with her.

*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 with her alone.

 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**

325 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.

**ESCALUS**

The duke's in us; and we will hear you speak:  
Look you speak justly.

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

330 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  
335 Which here you come to accuse.

**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.  
345 What "unjust!"

**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,  
355 As much in mock as mark.

**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**

360 'Tis he, my lord. Come hither, goodman baldpate:  
do you know me?

**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.

 *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**

370 You must, sir, change persons with me, ere you make  
that my report: you, indeed, spoke so of him; and  
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**

375 Hark, how the villain would close now, after his  
treasonable abuses!

**ESCALUS**

380 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  
speak no more. Away with those giglots too, and  
with the other confederate companion!

**DUKE VINCENTIO**

*[To Provost]* Stay, sir; stay awhile.

**ANGELO**

What, resists he? Help him, Lucio.

**LUCIO**

385 Come, sir; come, sir; come, sir; foh, sir! Why, you  
bald-pated, lying rascal, you must be hooded, must  
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**

390 Thou art the first knave that e'er madest a duke.  
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**

395 *[To ESCALUS]* What you have spoke I pardon: sit you  
down:  
We'll borrow place of him.  
*[To ANGELO]* Sir, by your leave.  
400 Hast thou or word, or wit, or impudence,  
That yet can do thee office? If thou hast,  
Rely upon it till my tale be heard,  
And hold no longer out.

**ANGELO**

405 O my dread lord,  
I should be guiltier than my guiltiness,  
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 wouldst 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 though 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 squarest 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, BARNADINE, 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 BARNADINE]* 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  
 coward,  
 560 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,  
 As I have heard him swear himself there's one  
 570 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.  
 585 Joy to you, Mariana! Love her, Angelo:  
 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 grateful.  
 Thanks, provost, for thy care and secrecy:  
 590 We shall employ thee in a worthier place.  
 Forgive him, Angelo, that brought you home  
 The head of Ragozine for Claudio's:  
 The offence pardons itself. Dear Isabel,  
 I have a motion much imports your good;  
 595 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.

*Exeunt*

*[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.

*They all exit.*

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