

*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,  
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;  
For which I must not plead, but that I am  
At war 'twixt will and will not.

**ANGELO**

Well; the matter?

**ISABELLA**

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

**Provost**

[Aside] Heaven give thee moving graces!

**ANGELO**

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

**ISABELLA**

O just but severe law!

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

**LUCIO**

[Aside to ISABELLA] Give't not o'er so: to him  
again, entreat him;

Kneel down before him, hang upon his gown:  
You are too cold; if you should need a pin,  
You could not with more tame a tongue desire it:  
To him, I say!

**ISABELLA**

Must he needs die?

**ANGELO**

Maiden, no remedy.

**ISABELLA**

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

**ANGELO**

I will not do't.

**ISABELLA**

But can you, if you would?

**ANGELO**

Look, what I will not, that I cannot do.

**ISABELLA**

But might you do't, and do the world no wrong,  
If so your heart were touch'd with that remorse  
As mine is to him?

**ANGELO**

He's sentenced; 'tis too late.

**LUCIO**

[Aside to ISABELLA] You are too cold.

**ISABELLA**

Too late? why, no; I, that do speak a word,  
May call it back again. Well, believe this,  
No ceremony that to great ones 'longs,  
Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,  
The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,  
Become them with one half so good a grace  
As mercy does.  
If he had been as you and you as he,  
You would have slipt like him; but he, like you,  
Would not have been so stern.

**ANGELO**

Pray you, be gone.

**ISABELLA**

I would to heaven I had your potency,  
And you were Isabel! should it then be thus?

No; I would tell what 'twere to be a judge,  
And what a prisoner.

**LUCIO**

[Aside to ISABELLA]

Ay, touch him; there's the vein.

**ANGELO**

Your brother is a forfeit of the law,  
And you but waste your words.

**ISABELLA**

Alas, alas!

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

**ANGELO**

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

**ISABELLA**

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

**LUCIO**

[Aside to ISABELLA] Ay, well said.

**ANGELO**

The law hath not been dead, though it hath slept:  
Those many had not dared to do that evil,  
If the first that did the edict infringe  
Had answer'd for his deed: now 'tis awake  
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,  
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;  
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  
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous  
To use it like a giant.

**LUCIO**

[Aside to ISABELLA] That's well said.

**ISABELLA**

Could great men thunder  
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,  
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  
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  
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**

[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**

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

**LUCIO**

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

**ANGELO**

Why do you put these sayings upon me?

**ISABELLA**

Because authority, though it err like others,  
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,  
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**

Gentle my lord, turn back.

**ANGELO**

I will bethink me: come again tomorrow.

**ISABELLA**

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

**ANGELO**

How! bribe me?

**ISABELLA**

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

**LUCIO**

[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

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**

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  
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!  
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,  
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!  
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,

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  
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.