

# Measure for Measure

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## SCENE IV. A nunnery.

*Enter ISABELLA and FRANCISCA*

**ISABELLA**

And have you nuns no farther privileges?

**FRANCISCA**

Are not these large enough?

**ISABELLA**

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

**LUCIO**

[Within] Ho! Peace be in this place!

**ISABELLA**

Who's that which calls?

**FRANCISCA**

It is a man's voice. Gentle Isabella,  
Turn you the key, and know his business of him;  
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.  
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,  
A novice of this place and the fair sister  
To her unhappy brother Claudio?

**ISABELLA**

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

**LUCIO**

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

**ISABELLA**

Woe me! for what?

**LUCIO**

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

**ISABELLA**

Sir, make me not your story.

**LUCIO**

It is true.  
I would not--though 'tis my familiar sin  
With maids to seem the lapwing and to jest,  
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**

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  
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  
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;  
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,  
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  
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  
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  
'Twixt you and your poor brother.

**ISABELLA**

Doth he so seek his life?

**LUCIO**

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

**ISABELLA**

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  
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  
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  
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**

Good sir, adieu.

