

Measure for Measure abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 1.2

Death

Situation: Isabel visits Claudio in prison and tells him that “if I would yield him my virginity thou mightst be freed.” Without a pause he says “thou shalt not do ‘t.” But then after thinking about it for a moment, he says “O Isabel, death is a fearful thing.” She gets angry and leaves him.

CLAUDIO: Thou shalt not do’t.

ISABELLA: O, were it but my life I’d throw it down for your deliverance as freely as a pin.

CLAUDIO: Thanks, dear Isabel.

ISABELLA: Be ready, Claudio, for your death tomorrow.

CLAUDIO: Yes. Has he affections in him that thus can make him bite the law by th’ nose, when he would force it? O Isabel, death is a fearful thing.

ISABELLA: And shamed life a hateful.

Claudio to Isabella

**Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,
To rot as our lifeless body lies there,
Our warm senses-filled being becoming
A kneaded clod; and our filled-with-delight
Soul to reside in a terrifying
Region of thick-ribbed ice, to feel the bite
Of unseen winds and be blown with restless
Violence about what one can only guess;
Or, worse, to hear the unfortunate meet
In hell, howling; ‘tis a thought worse than one’s
Worst moments and what we fear of death. Sweet
Sister, let me live. Nature so pardons
Sin to save a brother’s life that for you
The offensive deed becomes a virtue.**

ISABELLA: O, you beast! O faithless coward, wilt thou be made a man out of this vice? Is ‘t not a kind of incest to take life from thine own sister’s shame? I’ll pray a thousand prayers for thy death, no word to save thee.

CLAUDIO: Nay, hear me, Isabel ---

ISABELLA: Thy sin’s not accidental, but a trade. ‘Tis best that thou diest quickly.

CLAUDIO: O, hear me, Isabella ---