

Measure for Measure abbreviated

Act 2, Scene 2

Pleading

Situation: Lucio and Isabella have been admitted as visitors to the prison by the provost. Isabel pleads with Angelo to release her brother, Claudio, whose pregnant fiancée, Juliet, is “very near her hour.”

ISABELLA TO ANGELO: 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: He’s sentenced. ‘Tis too late.

LUCIO ASIDE TO ISABELLA: You are too cold.

ISABELLA: Too late? Why, no.

Isabella to Angelo

No tribute better applies to great ones,
Not crowns, nor batons, nor swords, nor kings’ sons;
None become them with half so good the grace
As mercy does. If he had been as you,
And you as he, you too would have to face
A judge, but he in your role would not do
The harm you intend. What if He had found
A way to save those souls taken and wound
Up profiting? How would you be if He,
The top of judgment, should judge you as you
Are? Think on that, and perhaps then mercy
May breathe through your lips like a new man. Who
Has died for this offense, there having been
So many who have committed this sin?

LUCIO: Ay, well said.

ANGELO: The law hath not been dead, though it hath slept. Now ‘tis awake, takes note of what is done, and looks in a glass that shows what future evils are now to have no successive degrees, but before they live, to end.

ISABELLA: Yet show some pity.

ANGELO: I show it most of all when I show justice. Be satisfied; your brother dies tomorrow; be content.