

ISABELLA PLEADS FOR HER BROTHER

A Dramatic Reading

by
William Shakespeare



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From "Measure for Measure", Act II, Scene 2.

The Duke of Vienna goes in search of adventure and leaves his government in the hands of Angelo, who proves unworthy of the trust.

The play takes its name from the idea that the severity with which Angelo treats his subjects is measured out in retribution for his own sins. He is a hard, cold man and a severe ruler.

In this scene, Isabella comes before Angelo to plead for the life of her brother who has been condemned to die. Angelo speaks:

ANGELO: You are welcome. What's your will?

ISABELLA: I am a woeful suitor to your honor,
Please your honor hear me.
I have a brother is condemn'd to die:
I do beseech you, let it be his fault
And not my brother.

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 find the faults, whose fine stands in record,
And let go by the actor.

ISABELLA: O, just but severe law!

She turns away, despairing; then dries her eyes and bows to Angelo.

ISABELLA: Heaven keep your honor! (Turns to go)

Lucio takes her by the sleeve and urges her to turn back.

LUCIO: Give't not o'er so; to him again, intreat him;
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: I doubt,--

LUCIO: Our doubts are traitors
And make us lose the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt.

Isabella now feels she has not done her utmost for her brother. She approaches Angelo again.

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