

Enter ISABELLA

~~ISABELLA My business is a word or two with Claudio.~~

~~PROVOST And very welcome. Look, signior, here's your sister.~~

~~DUKE Provost, a word with you.~~

~~PROVOST As many as you please.~~

~~DUKE Bring me to hear them speak where I may be concealed.~~

~~[Duke and Provost conceal themselves.]~~

CLAUDIO Now, sister, what's the comfort?

ISABELLA Why,

As all comforts are: most good, most good indeed.

Lord Angelo, having affairs to heaven,

Intends you for his swift ambassador,

Where you shall be an everlasting lieger;

Therefore your best appointment make with speed,

Tomorrow you set on.

CLAUDIO Is there no remedy?

ISABELLA None, but such remedy as, to save a head,
To cleave a heart in twain.

CLAUDIO But is there any?

ISABELLA Yes, brother, you may live;

There is a devilish mercy in the judge,

If you'll implore it, that will free your life,

But fetter you till death.

CLAUDIO Perpetual durance?

ISABELLA Ay, just, perpetual durance, a restraint,
Though all the world's vastidity you had,

52 me to hear them] *Malone, conj. Steevens*; them to hear me F; this line in F2 reads: Bring them to speake, where I may be conceal'd, yet heare them. 52 SD] *This edn*; DUKE and PROVOST retire / NS; Provost leads him aside / Winny: Excunt Duke and Provost. / *Rome*; Excunt. F2; not in F 53-5] F; Now . . . comfort? / Why . . . indeed: *Pope*; Now . . . Why, / As . . . indeed, *Dyce* 68 Though] *Rome*; Through F

rather than Stoic, advice in what the Duke-as-Friar has said. It is as if Claudio is responding to what a friar ought to have said, not to what has actually been said here.

52 SD It is important that the audience remain aware of the observing but concealed presence of these two characters during the Claudio-Isabella encounter: see 151, 170. They should certainly not simply leave the stage.

53-4 F's lineation stresses the emphatic pause before and after Isabella's 'Why', as she collects herself before addressing Claudio.

56 affairs to business with.

58 lieger resident, permanent ambassador.

59 appointment preparation.

66 durance imprisonment.

66-9 Perpetual . . . scope I prefer the conditional clause beginning 'Though' since it gives emphasis to the spirit, the power of conscience. Claudio's sense of guilt would be inescapable however much scope he might have in other terms. F's 'Through' can be seen as possible if no comma follows 'restraint' but one is placed after 'had'. The sense could then be 'A restraint throughout all the world's vastidity which once was yours'.

68 vastidity vastness, immensity.

To a determined scope.

CLAUDIO But in what nature?

ISABELLA In such a one as you, consenting to't,
Would bark your honour from that trunk you bear
And leave you naked.

CLAUDIO Let me know the point.

ISABELLA Oh, I do fear thee, Claudio, and I quake
Lest thou a feverous life shouldst entertain
And six or seven winters more respect
Than a perpetual honour. Dar'st thou die?
The sense of death is most in apprehension,
And the poor beetle that we tread upon
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
As when a giant dies.

CLAUDIO Why give you me this shame?

Think you I can a resolution fetch
From flowery tenderness? If I must die
I will encounter darkness as a bride
And hug it in mine arms.

ISABELLA There spake my brother, there my father's grave
Did utter forth a voice. Yes, thou must die:
Thou art too noble to conserve a life
In base appliances. This outward-sainted deputy
Whose settled visage and deliberate word
Nips youth i'th'head and follies doth enew

88 outward-sainted] *Pope*; outward sainted F 90 enew] *Keightley*; emmew F

69 **determined scope** fixed and limited bounds (explained in 70–2: Claudio would be unable to escape his guilt).

71 **bark** Stripping its bark kills a tree. Compare *Cym.* 3.3.60–4, where this natural image is more fully developed in the metaphor of Belarius being stripped of honours as a tree is stripped of fruit and leaves.

74 **entertain** maintain (*OED* sv v 3), admit to consideration (*OED* v 14b).

75 **respect** value.

77 **apprehension** Ambiguous: (1) imagination, (2) anticipation of something fearful.

82 **flowery** Alluding to her femininity (a tender violet) and to her use of metaphor, flowers of rhetoric.

83–4 Compare *Rom.* 4.5.36–40 and elsewhere for the idea of death as a bridal partner. The grammar here is ambiguous but presumably death is imag-

ined as the bride rather than Claudio imagining himself the bride. Still, such identifications with the opposite sex seem suggested in the language of Isabella (2.2.68) and Angelo (2.2.147). See nn. to those lines.

85 **my . . . grave** the true spirit of my father.

88 **base appliances** ignoble remedies.

89 **settled** composed, grave.

90 **Nips . . . head** Strikes fatally at youth (from the falcon's strike at the neck of its prey with its deadly, sickle-shaped talons) (T. R. Henn, *The Living Image*, 1972, p. 31).

90 **enew** (of a hawk) to drive a fowl into the water (*OED*). F's spelling is either a misprint or a confusion with 'emmew', 'enmew', which means 'to cause to lie close or keep concealed, as a hawk in a mew'. 'Mews' are cages or coops. Henn, *The Living Image*, p. 31, cites *The Boke of St Albans* (1486): 'And if it happyn as it dooth oftymes the

As falcon doth the fowl, is yet a devil:
His filth within being cast, he would appear
A pond as deep as hell.

CLAUDIO The prenzie Angelo?

ISABELLA Oh 'tis the cunning livery of hell
The damned'st body to invest and cover
In prenzie guards. Dost thou think, Claudio,
If I would yield him my virginity
Thou might'st be freed!

CLAUDIO Oh, heavens, it cannot be!

ISABELLA Yes, he would give't thee; from this rank offence
So to offend him still. This night's the time
That I should do what I abhor to name,
Or else thou diest tomorrow.

CLAUDIO Thou shalt not do't.

ISABELLA Oh, were it but my life
I'd throw it down for your deliverance
As frankly 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~~

93, 96 prenzie] F; Princely F2; priestly *Hanmer*; precise *Knight*, conj. *Tieck* 95 damned'st] F2; damnest F

fowle for fere of yowre hawke woll spryng and fall ayen in to the Ryuer. or the hawke sees hir. and so lie styll and dare not arise. ye shall say then yowre hawke hath ennewed the fowle in to the Ryuer.'

92 **cast** Taken together with 'pond' (93), probably 'empty of mud', dug out. Other meanings of 'cast' which are interesting and also possible with 'pond' include 'sounded' or 'vomited'. For the idea of outer sanctity disguising inner uncleanness compare Matt. 23.27. Possibly the sense of 'cast' as 'diagnose' is present, as in 'casting urine'.

93, 96 **prenzie** This crux still resists solution; F2's emendation 'princely' and Tieck's 'precise' are possible, the latter orthographically more plausible, the former attractive for its irony: but Collier supposed Shakespeare introduced the Italian word for 'prince', 'prenze' and this, if unlikely, cannot be ruled out with certainty. 'Precise' was often applied to Puritans in the sense 'strict, scrupulous' (*OED*). Perhaps 'prenzie' is Shakespeare's coinage, fusing 'princely' and 'precise'?

94 **livery** Probably 'the action of distributing clothing to retainers or servants' (*OED* sv v la). The alternative (*OED* sb 2), 'the suit of clothes bestowed on retainers by which they may be recognised', or 'a badge or suit worn by a servant', though also a meaning in use at the time, does not so well fit the grammar and sense here, since the emphasis is on the act of concealing the devil's servants.

95 **invest** dress.

96 **guards** trimmings, facings, or other ornaments applied on clothing (*OED* Guard sb 11b).

96 **Dost thou think** Would you believe it possible.

100 **So . . . still** To go on sinning in the same way.

105 **frankly** readily.

105 **pin** Recalling Lucio's reproof at 2.2.46, perhaps.

108 **bite . . . nose** treat . . . with contempt. Evans suggests 'an ironic reversal of the "biting laws" of 1.3.20'.