***Measure for Measure*: Plot Summary**

**From *Stories of Shakespeare's Comedies* by Helene Adeline Guerber. New York: Dodd, Mead and company (1910).**

**Act I**  
The first act opens in Vienna, in the palace, just as the duke is informing his worthy counsellor, Escalus, that, trusting in his wisdom, he appoints him chief adviser of the man who will represent him during his absence. Then, after sending for this individual, he asks Escalus' opinion of his choice. The counsellor gravely rejoins that, if any man in Vienna 'be of worth to undergo such ample grace and honour, it is Lord Angelo,' who just then appears.

After praising Angelo for his modest, virtuous character, the duke bids him take charge of the government during his absence, altering and amending the laws as he sees fit. Although Angelo demurs that a test of his merit should be made before entrusting him with such responsibility, the duke names him his substitute, and gives him Escalus as adviser. Then, refusing Angelo's escort, the duke departs, confident he is leaving his affairs in good hands. After he has gone, Escalus begs to consult with Angelo, who invites him therefore to accompany him home.

When the curtain next rises, we behold a street in Vienna, where Lucio, a gentleman, talking to two companions, wonders whether the duke will succeed in making peace with Hungary. Their sprightly conversation touches upon sundry other topics, thus giving the spectators an idea of society in Vienna at that epoch. These three young men are finally interrupted by Mistress Overdone, keeper of a house of ill-fame, with whom all three are acquainted. She seems agitated, and, in answer to their questions, informs them a man has just been arrested who is worth five thousand of them all. This statement rouses their curiosity to such a pitch that she has to explain how Claudio has just been sent to prison by the duke's deputy, who has suddenly revived an old law condemning seducers to death. While there is no doubt of Claudio's guilt, the law not having been enforced for the past nineteen years, no one anticipated it would ever be called into play. Dismayed by these tidings, the three gentlemen hurry away, while the woman hails her servant Pompey, who breathlessly reports she has heard aright, — for Claudio is arrested, with Juliet his victim, — and further pursuit of their nefarious business is prohibited.

It is at this moment that the provost passes, escorting his two prisoners to jail. When Claudio objects to being thus exposed to public view, the provost rejoins he is acting by Lord Angelo's orders, and the young man bitterly realises how 'the demigod Authority makes us pay down for our offence.' A moment later, he is accosted by Lucio and the two gentlemen, who hasten up inquiring why he is in custody. Without trying to gloss over his wrongdoing, Claudio explains how Juliet was betrothed to him, and that, had not her relatives wished to use her dower money for trading, their marriage could have taken place and the present catastrophe have been averted. Unable to marry immediately, the impatient lovers met secretly, as is betrayed by Juliet's condition. Still, it is plain the new deputy is using his authority to make his power felt, since he has just revived this long disregarded law.

When Lucio suggests that an appeal be made to the duke, Claudio rejoins he has vainly tried to do so, but that the ruler has vanished, leaving no trace. His last hope is that his sister Isabella will intercede in his behalf, so he beseeches Lucio to hasten off to the convent where she is a novice, acquaint her with his peril, and implore her to use her influence with the governor to secure his pardon. Promising to fulfill this request, Lucio hurries off in one direction, while the officers lead away their prisoners in the other.

We next behold a monastery outside of Vienna, where the duke assures Friar Thomas he is asking for shelter and disguise, merely so as to circulate through the streets of Vienna unrecognised, and ascertain how his substitute is executing the laws. The duke sadly adds he is to blame for many of the disorders, because he feared, by enforcing certain laws, to forfeit the love of his people. Nevertheless, seeing crime flourish, he realises it is imperative to check it, and bring the people back to virtuous ways. He has, therefore, appointed Angelo, a man of merit, as his substitute, but wishes to make sure he is all he seems, and that the exercise of power will not change his character.

The next scene is played in the nunnery, where Isabella, talking to a sister, inquires what privileges are granted to nuns. The answers she receives cause her to exclaim conventual restraint is not nearly so severe as she anticipated, just as a man's voice is heard without clamouring for admittance. Bidding Isabella take the key and open the door (because she, as a professed nun, cannot speak to a man), the sister withdraws, leaving the young novice to open. Isabella thus finds herself face to face with Lucio, who breathlessly inquires for 'the fair sister to her unhappy brother, Claudio.' These words so startle Isabella that she asks why Claudio is unhappy, ere she thinks of saying she is the person he seeks. When Lucio states her brother is in prison for seduction, Isabella fancies at first he is mocking her, but when the messenger reiterates this statement, naming the lady in trouble, Isabella cries her brother should atone for his crime by marrying Juliet immediately. Then Lucio explains how the duke's substitute proposes to enforce a long disregarded law by making an example of Claudio, and that the only way to save him is to try and soften Angelo's heart by her entreaties. Frightened by the imminent danger of her beloved brother, Isabella promises to do all she can in his behalf, sending word to Claudio that she will let him know how she speeds, and delaying only long enough to inform the Superior of her intentions.

**Act II**  
The second act opens in Angelo's house, where he and the counsellor sit in state rendering justice, and where Angelo virtuously states 'we must not make a scarecrow of the law, setting it up to fear the birds of prey, and let it keep one shape, till custom make it their perch and not their terror.' The counsellor, knowing he is referring to Claudio's case, nevertheless pleads in behalf of the youth, whose family he knows. When he ventures to remind the governor that, exposed to similar temptations, they might have fallen in the same way, Angelo sanctimoniously rejoins, ''Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus, another thing to fall.' Then, determined the law shall be executed to the letter, he reiterates Claudio must die, and, calling for the provost, bids him provide the culprit with a confessor to prepare for 'the utmost of his pilgrimage,' and see that the execution take place at nine o'clock on the morrow. The provost having departed to carry out these orders, the counsellor hopes Heaven will forgive the governor and them all, as it seems a pity a youth should be condemned for one fault only, since 'some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.'

It is at this juncture a constable ushers in Pompey and another youth, whom he reports having arrested as 'notorious benefactors,' for he constantly misuses words in this way. His report in regard to the prisoners proves so long-winded that Angelo goes away, bidding Escalus try the case and whip the offenders if guilty. The counsellor, therefore, continues the examination, and, being inclined to leniency, dismisses both hardened and punning sinners with a reprimand, warning them they will be liable to all the severity of the law should they relapse into evil ways. The accused dismissed, Escalus interviews the constable, and, finding he has held office many years in succession, bids him select a substitute. Then, inviting the judge to dinner, Escalus leaves, still shaking his head over Claudio's sentence, although he knows severity is needful, for 'mercy is not itself, that oft looks so; pardon is still the nurse of second woe.'

In another room of the same house, a servant informs the provost that Angelo is trying a case, but will soon appear. This man having gone, the provost expresses a hope Angelo may relent, just as his superior enters the apartment. When he diffidently inquires whether Claudio must die, remarking that judges have repented of sentences when too late, he discovers repentance is far from the heart of Angelo, who sternly orders him to do his office or relinquish his place! Not daring offer further objections, the provost humbly inquires what he is to do with Juliet, whose time of trial is drawing near. After giving the necessary directions in regard to her custody, Angelo is informed by a servant the sister of the condemned man begs for an audience. Surprised to think Claudio has a sister (whom the provost describes as a virtuous lady shortly to be admitted into a sisterhood), Angelo orders his visitor admitted, and repeats his orders in regard to the culprits.

The opening door now admits Isabella and Lucio, just as Angelo bids the provost assist at this interview. In touching terms Isabella declares that, although she abhors one vice above all the rest, she must plead for its forgiveness, seeing it is her brother who is condemned to die. She, therefore, beseeches the governor to punish the fault, yet let the culprit live, her plea being supported by muttered encouragements from the provost. But when Angelo sternly rejoins that a fault cannot be condemned without the doer, poor Isabella, deeming her prayers vain, recognises it is a just but severe law, and sighs she had a brother.

She is about to turn away in despair, when Lucio softly admonishes her not to give up, but kneel and implore, exclaiming that if she needed a pin she could not 'with more tame a tongue desire it.' Thus encouraged, Isabella again inquires whether her brother must really die and entreats the judge to make use of his unlimited authority to pardon Claudio. Although admitting he could do so, Angelo insists sentence has been pronounced, and that it is too late to recall it. Still urged by Lucio, Isabella pleads eloquently in favour of mercy, saying, 'not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword, the marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe, become them with one-half so good a grace as mercy does.' She also sadly reminds the governor that if her brother 'had been as you and you as he, you would have slipt like him; but he, like you, would not have been so stern.'

Although Angelo turns his back upon her, Isabella continues to entreat, her prayers being prompted by Lucio, who softly urges her to keep them up. She, therefore, does so, even after Angelo repeats her brother ' is a forfeit of the law,' and that her words are wasted. When he baldly states Claudio shall die on the morrow, Isabella wails her brother is not prepared for death, adding that, even 'for our kitchens we kill the fowl of season: shall we serve heaven with less respect than we do minister to our gross selves?' Then she urges that Claudio be at least granted time to repent, gently reminding Angelo that, although many have been guilty of similar offences, none have died for it heretofore. Although this argument seems pertinent to Lucio, Angelo rejoins 'the law hath not been dead, though it hath slept,' and that, had it only been rigidly enforced from the beginning, no such disorders would have ensued as prevail at present in Vienna.

Implored in spite of this logic to show mercy, Angelo insists he can best do so by enforcing justice, and reiterates Claudio must die, although Isabella reminds him he is the first to pronounce so cruel a sentence, and her brother the first to feel its weight. Egged on by secret signs from Lucio and the provost, Isabella urges that a man in authority should make use of that power mercifully, that gods never waste their thunders on small offences, and that it is only the man 'drest in a little brief authority' who inclines to undue severity. Both Lucio and the provost subscribe to this, and, as they covertly sign to her to keep it up, she begs the governor to exercise Christian charity, remembering it is not right to 'weigh our brother with ourself,' and imploring him to look down in his own heart, and see whether he has always been free from sin. By this time, her beauty and emotion have produced so vivid an impression upon Angelo that he has fallen in love with her, but he yields to his passion only enough to bid her call again on the morrow, when he may have a different answer to give her. Delighted with this slight concession, Isabella rapturously cries she will 'bribe' him, and, when Angelo indignantly inquires how, declares not with gold or precious stones, but with fervent prayers in his behalf.

Then, overjoyed at having obtained a reprieve, Isabella retires with Lucio, while Angelo acknowledges 'I am that way going to temptation, where prayers cross.' Left alone, he next marvels that a man, who has never felt the attraction of women before, should succumb now, and wonders whether 'modesty may more betray our sense than woman's lightness?' He realises, however, that he has granted Isabella a second interview merely for the pleasure of seeing once more the spotless maiden, who has made a deeper impression upon his heart than he ever felt before.

We next behold the prison, in which the duke enters, disguised as a friar, and telling the provost he has come to visit, the prisoners. So as to minister intelligently to their needs, he inquires the nature of their offences; and, seeing Juliet pass, the provost points her out as one of the victims of the recently enforced seduction law. On learning a young man is to die on the morrow on this charge, the friar questions Juliet, only to discover that, loving and truly beloved, she feels no remorse for her sin, but is ready 'to take her shame with joy.'

After dismissing her with his blessing, the friar visits the prisoner who is to die on her account, while Juliet bewails her lover's fate as the provost leads her off the scene.

We are now transferred to a room in Angelo's house, where he is debating whether to yield to Isabella's solicitations, for the temptation which assails him prevents his seeking aid in prayer as usual. It is while he is soliloquising on this subject that a servant announces the arrival of Isabella, whom Angelo eagerly orders admitted alone. When the man has gone, he wonders why his blood rushes so madly to his head, and why his feelings are in such a turmoil. Next Isabella enters, humbly inquiring what he has decided, and Angelo repeats her brother cannot live; then, seeing she pretends to misunderstand him, he baldly states Claudio must die under his sentence. When the sister pleads for time for preparation, Angelo sternly refuses further reprieve, holding forth virtuously against the heinous sin which Claudio has committed. Hearing Isabella timidly rejoin it is not considered as unpardonable a crime on earth as in heaven, the governor sternly demands whether she would be willing to rescue her brother at the cost of her chastity. Then, as she exclaims nothing would induce her so to risk her soul, he artfully hints there might be charity in such a sin, a suggestion she does not understand.

After wringing from her an agonised admission that she would sacrifice anything to save her brother, Angelo plainly informs her he will pardon Claudio, provided she grant a sinful favour. Thinking he is testing her virtue, Isabella, at first, shows only surprise, but when he assures her such is not the case, she indignantly threatens to denounce him, unless he sign her brother's pardon immediately. Angelo, who, this time, has shrewdly provided for an interview without witnesses, haughtily assures her she is at his mercy, as no one would believe her word against his. Then he cruelly adds that unless she yield, her brother shall 'die the death,' giving her only twenty-four hours wherein to decide. Watching him disappear after pronouncing this ultimatum, Isabella wildly wrings her hands, wondering where she can find aid and redress, for she is torn both ways, and suffers agony for the sake of the brother whom, nevertheless, she cannot rescue at the cost of her virtue.

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**Act III**  
We now return to the prison, where the disguised duke is talking with Claudio, who confided to him he still hopes for pardon. The friar advises him, however, to prepare for death, so Claudio, deeming his interlocutor the holy man he seems, bespeaks his aid. With due humility he listens to the sermon the duke preaches on the worthlessness of life and the necessity of repentance — an eloquent speech for which Claudio has barely expressed thanks, — when his sister demands admittance. It is while stepping out to make room for the newcomer, that the friar whispers to the provost to place him where he can see and hear this interview unnoticed.

Meantime, brother and sister forget him, Claudio being eager to learn what comfort Isabella brings. When she gravely tells him, 'Lord Angelo, having aifairs to heaven, intends you for his swift ambassador,' he understands hope is vain. To his despairing inquiry whether no remedy can be found, Isabella refuses an answer, until she has ascertained he is brave enough to die should things come to the worst. It is only when duly assured of his physical courage, that she dares impart Angelo's alternative, which Claudio cannot credit, such is the governor's reputation for virtue. When convinced, however, his first impulse is to vow she shall not make such a sacrifice for his sake, but soon after the fear of death seizes him so sorely that he begins to argue that a sin committed for another's sake is less heinous than one indulged in for self-gratification. Finally, confessing he is afraid to die and go, 'we know not where,' he beseeches Isabella to save him at any cost. Although his description of what might befall his disembodied spirit is so ghastly that she shudders, Isabella maintains nothing could excuse wrongdoing on her part, and chides Claudio for asking her to forfeit her soul for his sake. In her righteous indignation, she bids him die if necessary, promising to pray for him dead, but refusing sin for him living. Then, as he continues to plead, she concludes he is a man hardened to sin, to whom mercy would prove injurious, and that hence it is best he should die!

It is at this moment the disguised duke reappears, expressing a desire to confer with Isabella, who steps aside to await his pleasure. Meanwhile, turning to Claudio, the friar states he has overheard what his sister has said, and feels confident Angelo has merely been testing her virtue. He further assures the prisoner that as no hope of pardon remains, he had better make his peace with heaven as quickly as possible. Thus recalled to better sentiments, Claudio humbly begs his sister's pardon, and promises to leave life without regret. Next the provost leads him away, leaving the friar, as requested, alone with the grieving sister.

Addressing Isabella, the holy man gravely states 'the hand that made you fair, made you good,' and adds he would wonder at Angelo's proposals, were he not aware that 'frailty hath examples for his falling.' When he asks what steps she means to take to save her brother, Isabella sadly replies she will tell Angelo it is better Claudio should die by law, than her son 'be unlawfully born,' adding that, as soon as the duke returns, she will reveal to him how sorely he was mistaken in his choice. While approving of this decision, the friar rejoins that if Isabella will follow his advice, meantime, she can right a wronged lady, redeem her brother from death while remaining stainless, and please the absent duke. Such a proposal amazes Isabella, who declares she has 'spirit to do anything that appears not foul.' Hearing this, the friar asks whether she ever heard of Mariana, a lady so solemnly betrothed to Angelo six years ago that the contract was equivalent to a marriage. He adds that, having lost brother and dower in a shipwreck shortly before the nuptial ceremony, this lady was repudiated by Angelo, under pretext he had discovered matters reflecting upon her honour. When the friar adds that she still mourns the loss of her lover, and that Isabella can, if she chose, bring Mariana and her plighted husband together once more, the maiden gladly volunteers her services, provided he will point out what she is to do. Thereupon the holy man bids Isabella accept Angelo's proposals, and appoint a midnight tryst, which Mariana will keep in her stead, an action he deems no sin, since they are formally plighted. Meantime, he proposes to betake himself to the 'moated grange,' where this 'dejected Mariana' dwells, so as to prepare her to play her part in deceiving Angelo.

While Isabella hastens away comforted, the friar, in the street before the prison, encounters the constable with Pompey, whom the counsellor recently pardoned, but who has again infringed the law. After questioning culprit and official, the friar discovers this man is an inveterate sinner and punster, just as Lucio joins them, inquiring why Pompey is under arrest. A frequenter of the house where Pompey serves, Lucio indulges in doubtful jokes with him, ere he is taken away. Then, under pretext of giving the news, Lucio informs the friar that the duke has been reported in various places, and that Angelo is ruling wisely in his absence, although a little more lenity might become his office.

In reply to this statement, the friar explains Angelo is fighting against a vice so prevalent that only severity can cure it. But when Lucio remarks the governor is not made of the same stuff as other men, and that even the duke was not impeccable, the friar coldly contradicts him. Pretending to know many doubtful things about his master, Lucio continues his tales, protesting meanwhile he loves the duke dearly, and knows what he is talking about. Threatening to report these calumnies, the friar, after answering a few questions in regard to Claudio, watches Lucio out of sight, and then comments there is 'no might nor greatness in mortality can censure 'scape; black wounding calumny the whitest virtue strikes,' for he is conscious of being innocent of the crimes of which he has been so jauntily accused.

While the friar is thus soliloquising, the counsellor appears with the provost and officers, to order Mistress Overdone to prison, because, in spite of repeated admonitions, she still infringes the law. When the officers have led the protesting prisoner away, the counsellor sadly informs the provost Claudio will have to die, as Angelo refuses to yield to any intercession. He seems pleased, however, to hear that the friar, — to whom he is introduced, — has visited this poor prisoner, and has given him the benefit of his ministrations. During the ensuing conversation, hearing the friar ask whether the duke was really inclined to pleasure as Lucio hinted, the counsellor warmly testifies in favour of his morality. Then, satisfied that Claudio is in a proper frame of mind to die, he goes off to pay him a last visit, accompanied by the friar's blessing.

Left alone upon the stage, the friar concludes that 'he who the sword of heaven will bear should be as holy as severe,' and that Angelo should be ashamed to punish others for sins to which he is secretly inclined. He adds that, applying 'craft against vice,' Angelo shall be tricked this very night into receiving the betrothed he despised, and thus compelled to 'perform an old contracting.'

**Act IV**  
The fourth act opens in the 'moated grange,' where Mariana is languidly listening to a love-song, which she interrupts as soon as she notices the approach of the 'man of comfort.' When the friar enters, he finds Mariana in a less merry mood than the sounds would imply, so exclaims that 'music oft hath such a charm to make bad good, and good provoke to harm.' Then, he inquires whether any one has asked for him, and, seeing Isabella draw near, begs Mariana to go away for a while, and let him converse privately with the stranger. As soon as Mariana is out of earshot, the friar inquires whether Isabella has successfully performed her part, and learns how Angelo has appointed as trysting-place a garden, for which he has given her the key, bidding her meet him there at midnight. When the friar questions whether she can find her way in the dark, Isabella explains how Angelo twice led her over every turn, how she warned him a servant would accompany her, — for she is supposed to be pleading for a brother's life, — and how, for that reason, their interview would have to be brief. Satisfied with these arrangements, the friar summons Mariana, and, introducing Isabella, bids her listen attentively to this lady's proposals, as they have his full sanction and approval.

The ladies having gone off together, the friar spends the time of waiting in meditating upon greatness. Before long Isabella returns, triumphantly proclaiming that since he sanctions the plan, Mariana will help them. Then, she reminds her companion not to speak, and only on leaving to whisper softly 'remember now my brother.' Thus schooled, Mariana promises to play her part, the friar again assuring her this act will be sinless, as Angelo is her husband by pre-contract.

We are now transferred to a room in the prison, where the provost offers Pompey pardon, provided he will act as assistant to the executioner, who is summoned to teach the new candidate his duties. The conversation between these men proves lengthy but uninteresting, and, as soon as they leave the stage, Claudio appears and is shown his death-warrant by the provost. Then this official asks for Bernardine, who, instead of repenting, spends all his time drinking, and sends Claudio back to his cell, hoping a reprieve may yet arrive.

Just then a knock is heard at the door, and the provost admits the friar, who seems surprised to learn Isabella has not been seen since curfew. He adds that there are faint hopes of saving Claudio, news the provost eagerly welcomes, before hurrying out to answer a second knock. When he returns, the friar eagerly asks whether this was the reprieve, only to be told no such order has come, to the provost's despair.

It is at this juncture that Angelo's messenger arrives, and delivers a paper with injunctions that its orders be carried out immediately. The friar deems this the pardon just purchased by Isabella, until the provost reads it aloud when he discovers that Bernardine and Claudio are both to be executed, the latter's head being sent to the governor in token the deed is done. The provost seems horrified, but when the friar asks about Bernardine, describes him as a hardened criminal and persistent drinker. After admitting such a man deserves death, the friar suggests Bernardine's head be sent to Angelo instead of Claudio's, a substitution to which the provost consents only after the friar has exhibited a letter, signed and sealed by the duke, which accredits him fully.

In another room in the jail, Pompey is commenting on his past life, when the executioner enters, bidding him prepare to behead Bernardine. This prisoner is then brought in, too drunk to do more than stammer he is not fit for execution, a patent fact, as the friar confirms. Bernardine is, therefore, sent back to his cell, just as the provost announces that a notorious pirate has died in prison, whose hair and beard are of the same colour as Claudio's, and whose head can, therefore, easily be substituted for that of the young man. Concluding this death is providential, the friar orders the pirate's head sent to Angelo, while Claudio and Bernardine are confined in a secret dungeon, where they are to remain until the duke's return.

The provost having gone to carry out these orders, the friar murmurs he will write to Angelo, announcing his master's return home, and bidding him meet the duke outside of the city to escort him home. While he is thus deciding, the provost passes through the room, with the head he is bearing to Angelo. Just as he goes out, Isabella comes in, and the friar hastily decides to keep her ignorant of his interference, giving her 'heavenly comforts of despair, when it is least expected.' When she, therefore, breathlessly inquires whether the deputy has sent her brother's pardon, she is gravely informed her brother is released from all earthly pain, and his head on its way to Angelo. Incredulous at first, Isabella, overcome with grief, finally raves she will pluck out Angelo's eyes. Thereupon the friar bids her be patient, adding that, if she conforms to his advice, she will be able to seek redress from the duke on the morrow, on the very spot where the counsellor and Angelo are to meet him. In case she follow his instructions he promises revenge and rehabilitation, bidding her, meanwhile, carry a letter to Friar Peter, whom she will find at Mariana's house, ready to assist them both. As Isabella is about to leave, Lucio enters, assuring her he shares her grief for her beloved brother, and that, had the duke only been in Vienna, Claudio would never have perished.

When Isabella has gone, another short conversation takes place between Lucio and the friar in the course of which the young man again taxes his master with loose morals, revealing, incidentally, that he himself is guilty of a sin, which the friar duly notes.

We now behold a room in Angelo's house, where he and the counsellor discuss letters recently received from the duke, but which contradict each other. Angelo is amazed that the last missive should summon him to meet his superior outside the town and to proclaim that any one with a grievance against him shall immediately make it known. Although the counsellor suggests the duke takes these measures merely to free them from further responsibility, Angelo, — whose conscience is uneasy, — expresses his doubts in a soliloquy after the counsellor's departure. Still, he comforts himself with the belief that no maid would have the hardihood to confess her shame, and feels safe because he has done away with Isabella's brother, the only person who could have called him to account for dishonouring her.

We next see fields outside of town, where the duke in person delivers letters which Friar Peter is to carry to the provost. After the friar has gone, the duke summons his attendants to escort him to the appointed tryst. Meantime, in a street near the city gate, Isabella and Mariana are preparing, by Friar Peter's directions, to fall at the duke's feet, and denounce Angelo. While Isabella seems doubtful, Mariana, full of confidence in her spiritual adviser, implores her to obey; so Isabella concludes at last to do so, saying philosophically, ''tis a physic that's bitter to sweet end.' They are still debating when joined by Friar Peter, who urges them to hasten to the gate, as the trumpets have already twice sounded, and the duke is about to appear.

**Act V**  
The fifth act opens at the city gate, just as the duke is formally welcomed by Angelo and Escalus, whom, in recognition of their good offices, he places on either side of him, for the remainder of the journey. It is at this moment that Friar Peter leads Isabella forward, and that, falling at the duke's feet, she loudly calls for justice. With the grave assurance that Lord Angelo, here present, will see it is awarded her, the duke turns to Isabella, who rejoins he bids her 'seek redemption of the devil,' and implores him to grant redress in person. Hearing this, Angelo, with pretended good nature, whispers she is crazy, having vainly entreated him to spare a guilty brother's life. Isabella, however, interrupts this speech, denouncing him as a murderer, and accusing him, besides, of having broken the commandments. Although the duke now compassionately orders Isabella removed, she insists upon a hearing, talking so wildly that he first concludes she is insane, only to reverse this verdict when he discovers her statements are coherent. They are, besides, supported by Lucio, the time-server, who, stepping forward, testifies he urged Isabella to plead with Angelo for her brother's life. Thus the whole story of Angelo's guilt is divulged; but the duke, pretending to disbelieve it, orders Isabella off to prison for slandering so worthy an official as the immaculate Angelo.

Perceiving he can do an ill turn to one he hates on account of his virtue, Lucio, who overheard the friar advise Isabella to claim justice, suggests this is all the fault of a man who spoke in so evil a way of the duke that had it not been for his cloth, he would have chastised him. When Friar Peter exclaims this cannot be true, Lucio insists so vehemently, that the friar says his companion will soon be vindicated and Isabella proved a liar. Meanwhile, Isabella is led away, and Mariana advances in her turn to fall at the duke's feet. She remains veiled, however, saying she has vowed not to reveal her countenance until bidden to do so by her husband. In her next breath, however, she admits being neither maid, wife, nor widow, statements so contradictory, that the duke questions her closely, amid many forward interruptions on Lucio's part. Before long he hears Mariana testify that Angelo, while he fancied he was betraying Isabella, consorted with his own wife. At these words, Angelo bids Mariana remove her veil, which she immediately does, expressing great readiness to obey her lawful spouse. Then, with face exposed, she explains how she took Isabella's place, whereupon Angelo remarks that since both women claim he dishonoured them at the same time, the falsity of their accusation is palpable, and that he begs permission to settle the case in person. This favour the duke readily grants, appointing Escalus as his assistant, and ordering that the friar, who advised these two women so unwisely, be summoned to answer for his conduct.

The duke now excuses himself for a while, leaving his deputies to judge this knotty point. After questioning Lucio, who repeats the monk spoke villainously of the duke, the counsellor sends for Isabella, whom he suspects of having been suborned by the wicked friar to make this wanton accusation against Angelo. The provost soon returns, accompanied by his prisoner and the duke, who has, meantime, resumed his friar habit. The trial proceeds, the counsellor experiencing great difficulty in silencing Lucio, who constantly interjects impudent or scurrilous remarks.

Turning to the friar, the counsellor first inquires whether it is he who egged the women on. Although the friar admits having done so, he asks why the duke is not present, saying he does not approve of leaving the 'trial in the villain's mouth.' Such a statement sounds so disrespectful, that Escalus threatens torture, until the friar tells him that, not being a subject of the duke, he is beyond reach of the law. He adds that his 'business in this state' made him 'a looker-on here in Vienna,' where he has 'seen corruption boil and bubble,' a statement viewed as such slander that the counsellor orders him taken to prison. Then, the forward Lucio boldly exclaims he deserves double punishment for speaking ill of the duke. Although the friar protests it was Lucio, himself, who uttered these calumnies, he is hustled out of the room, his accuser lending a hand so officiously that he jerks off the friar's cowl, thus revealing to all present that the duke has been among them in disguise.

Turning to his subjects, the duke now orders Lucio arrested, forgives the counsellor for his well-meant severity, and bids Angelo clear himself immediately, or suffer the penalty of his wrath. Seeing all is discovered, Angelo exclaims his confession will be his trial, and he will sentence himself to death. Then the duke summons Mariana, and, hearing she was legally betrothed to Angelo, bids friar Peter lead them both away, and celebrate the religious marriage, ere be bring them back to the ball While they are absent, the counsellor expresses surprise, and the duke, turning to Isabella, says she probably wonders why he did not use his authority to save Claudio. He adds that, although he fully intended doing so, 'the swift celerity of his death,' 'brain'd his purpose.' He is just remarking that life, 'past fearing death,' is better than a life of fear here below, when Angelo and Mariana are ushered in, their marriage having meanwhile been completed. Addressing Angelo, the duke decrees that, although he has now righted Mariana, there should be 'measure for measure,' and that, having cruelly sentenced to death a man for the crime he himself committed, he deserves the same penalty.

At these words the new-made bride falls at the duke's feet, pleading for her husband's life, although he coldly informs her it is vain, and says she shall have all Angelo's wealth to enable her to purchase a better spouse. As her prayers prove futile, Mariana calls upon Isabella to aid her, in spite of the fact that the duke reminds her it is rash to ask for the intervention of one Angelo cruelly wronged. Touched by Mariana's sorrow, however, Isabella kneels and pleads for Angelo's life, saying her brother, 'in that he did the thing for which he died,' perished justly, and reminding the duke that, as Angelo's 'act did not o'ertake his bad intent,' his life can be spared. Instead of answering the two suppliants, the duke demands how it happened that Claudio was beheaded at an unusual hour, and is informed it was by special order. On account of this infraction of the law, the provost is relieved of office, whereupon he immediately confesses having been guilty of another illegal act, that of sparing a prisoner's life. When the duke inquires this man's name, the provost replies it is Bemardine, whom he is bidden produce immediately. During his absence, the counsellor, too, intercedes for Angelo, who, however, consumed with shame and remorse, craves 'death more willingly than mercy,' knowing how amply he has deserved it.

It is at this moment the provost ushers in Bernardine, who is followed by two muffled figures. Addressing Bernardine, the duke declares, as the friar pronounced him unfit to die, he has decided to pardon him, in hopes he may repent before leaving this world. Then, the provost brings forward one of the muffled figures, saying he is 'almost as like Claudio as himself.' Bidding Isabella look at him, the duke states that if this youth resembles her brother, he will pardon Angelo. Meantime, Angelo has perceived, with relief, that his wicked intentions have been frustrated, and that the man whom he deemed slain still lives. Such is his relief, and humbled, repentant mood, that when the duke bids him live and love his wife, he gratefully promises to do so. Addressing Lucio, the duke publicly reveals his depravity, decreeing that, for slandering him he shall be whipped, and that, after having made such redress as lies in his power for the crime he committed, he shall be duly hanged. Then, having given Lucio this wholesome scare, the merciful duke remits all punishments, — save atonement for his crime, — and Lucio is led away, still punning, for nothing is sacred in his eyes.

Turning to Claudio, the duke gravely bids him indemnify Juliet for all she has suffered, wishes long life and joy to Mariana, congratulates the counsellor upon his blameless conduct, and finally implores Isabella to grant him a hearing, declaring if she is willing to listen to his proposals, 'what's mine is yours, what's yours is mine.' Saying this, he escorts her back to the palace, bidding the rest follow, and promising to reveal 'what's yet behind, that's meet you all should know.'