SCENE I. An apartment in the DUKE'S palace.

[Enter DUKE VINCENTIO, ESCALUS, Lords and Attendants]


Escalus. My lord.

Duke Vincentio. Of government the properties to unfold,
Would seem in me to affect speech and discourse;
Since I am put to know that your own science
Exceeds, in that, the lists of all advice
My strength can give you: then no more remains,
But that to your sufficiency as your Worth is able,
And let them work. The nature of our people,
Our city's institutions, and the terms
For common justice, you're as pregnant in
As art and practise hath enriched any
That we remember. There is our commission,
From which we would not have you warp. Call hither,
I say, bid come before us Angelo.

[Exit an Attendant]

What figure of us think you he will bear?
For you must know, we have with special soul
Elected him our absence to supply,
Lent him our terror, dress'd him with our love,
And given his deputation all the organs
Of our own power: what think you of it?

Escalus. If any in Vienna be of worth
To undergo such ample grace and honour,
It is Lord Angelo.

Duke Vincentio. Look where he comes.

[Enter ANGELO]

Angelo. Always obedient to your grace's will,
I come to know your pleasure.

Duke Vincentio. Angelo,
There is a kind of character in thy life,  
That to the observer doth thy history  
Fully unfold. Thyself and thy belongings  
Are not thine own so proper as to waste  
Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.  
Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,  
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues  
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike  
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd  
But to fine issues, nor Nature never lends  
The smallest scruple of her excellence  
But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines  
Herself the glory of a creditor,  
Both thanks and use. But I do bend my speech  
To one that can my part in him advertise;  
Hold therefore, Angelo:--  
In our remove be thou at full ourself;  
Mortality and mercy in Vienna  
Live in thy tongue and heart: old Escalus,  
Though first in question, is thy secondary.  
Take thy commission.

Angelo. Now, good my lord,  
Let there be some more test made of my metal,  
Before so noble and so great a figure  
Be stamp'd upon it.

Duke Vincentio. No more evasion:  
We have with a leaven'd and prepared choice  
Proceeded to you; therefore take your honours.  
Our haste from hence is of so quick condition  
That it prefers itself and leaves unquestion'd  
Matters of needful value. We shall write to you,  
As time and our concernings shall importune,  
How it goes with us, and do look to know  
What doth befall you here. So, fare you well;  
To the hopeful execution do I leave you  
Of your commissions.

Angelo. Yet give leave, my lord,  
That we may bring you something on the way.

Duke Vincentio. My haste may not admit it;  
Nor need you, on mine honour, have to do  
With any scruple; your scope is as mine own  
So to enforce or qualify the laws  
As to your soul seems good. Give me your hand:  
I'll privily away. I love the people,  
But do not like to stage me to their eyes:  
Through it do well, I do not relish well  
Their loud applause and Aves vehement;
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion
That does affect it. Once more, fare you well.

Angelo. The heavens give safety to your purposes!

Escalus. Lead forth and bring you back in happiness!

Duke. I thank you. Fare you well.

[Exit]

Escalus. I shall desire you, sir, to give me leave
    To have free speech with you; and it concerns me
    To look into the bottom of my place:
    A power I have, but of what strength and nature
    I am not yet instructed.

Angelo. 'Tis so with me. Let us withdraw together,
    And we may soon our satisfaction have
    Touching that point.

Escalus. I'll wait upon your honour.

[Exeunt]

SCENE II. A Street.

[Enter LUCIO and two Gentlemen]

Lucio. If the duke with the other dukes come not to
    composition with the King of Hungary, why then all
    the dukes fall upon the king.

First Gentleman. Heaven grant us its peace, but not the King of
    Hungary's!

Second Gentleman. Amen.

Lucio. Thou concludest like the sanctimonious pirate, that
    went to sea with the Ten Commandments, but scraped
    one out of the table.

Second Gentleman. 'Thou shalt not steal'?

Lucio. Ay, that he razed.

First Gentleman. Why, 'twas a commandment to command the captain and
    all the rest from their functions: they put forth
    to steal. There's not a soldier of us all, that, in
    the thanksgiving before meat, do relish the petition
    well that prays for peace.
Second Gentleman. I never heard any soldier dislike it.

Lucio. I believe thee; for I think thou never wast where grace was said.

Second Gentleman. No? a dozen times at least.

First Gentleman. What, in metre?

Lucio. In any proportion or in any language.

First Gentleman. I think, or in any religion.

Lucio. Ay, why not? Grace is grace, despite of all controversy: as, for example, thou thyself art a wicked villain, despite of all grace.

First Gentleman. Well, there went but a pair of shears between us.

Lucio. I grant; as there may between the lists and the velvet. Thou art the list.

First Gentleman. And thou the velvet: thou art good velvet; thou'rt a three-piled piece, I warrant thee: I had as lief be a list of an English kersey as be piled, as thou art piled, for a French velvet. Do I speak feelingly now?

Lucio. I think thou dost; and, indeed, with most painful feeling of thy speech: I will, out of thine own confession, learn to begin thy health; but, whilst I live, forget to drink after thee.

First Gentleman. I think I have done myself wrong, have I not?

Second Gentleman. Yes, that thou hast, whether thou art tainted or free.

Lucio. Behold, behold. where Madam Mitigation comes! I have purchased as many diseases under her roof as come to--

Second Gentleman. To what, I pray?

Lucio. Judge.

Second Gentleman. To three thousand dolours a year.

First Gentleman. Ay, and more.

Lucio. A French crown more.
**First Gentleman.** Thou art always figuring diseases in me; but thou art full of error; I am sound.

**Lucio.** Nay, not as one would say, healthy; but so sound as things that are hollow: thy bones are hollow; impiety has made a feast of thee.

[Enter MISTRESS OVERDONE]

**First Gentleman.** How now! which of your hips has the most profound sciatica?

**Mistress Overdone.** Well, well; there's one yonder arrested and carried to prison was worth five thousand of you all.

**Second Gentleman.** Who's that, I pray thee?

**Mistress Overdone.** Marry, sir, that's Claudio, Signior Claudio.

**First Gentleman.** Claudio to prison? 'tis not so.

**Mistress Overdone.** Nay, but I know 'tis so: I saw him arrested, saw him carried away; and, which is more, within these three days his head to be chopped off.

**Lucio.** But, after all this fooling, I would not have it so. Art thou sure of this?

**Mistress Overdone.** I am too sure of it: and it is for getting Madam Julietta with child.

**Lucio.** Believe me, this may be: he promised to meet me two hours since, and he was ever precise in promise-keeping.

**Second Gentleman.** Besides, you know, it draws something near to the speech we had to such a purpose.

**First Gentleman.** But, most of all, agreeing with the proclamation.

**Lucio.** Away! let's go learn the truth of it.  
[Exeunt LUCIO and Gentlemen]

**Mistress Overdone.** Thus, what with the war, what with the sweat, what with the gallows and what with poverty, I am custom-shrunk.  
[Enter POMPEY]  
How now! what's the news with you?

**Pompey.** Yonder man is carried to prison.

**Mistress Overdone.** Well; what has he done?
Pompey. A woman.

Mistress Overdone. But what's his offence?

Pompey. Groping for trouts in a peculiar river.

Mistress Overdone. What, is there a maid with child by him?

Pompey. No, but there's a woman with maid by him. You have not heard of the proclamation, have you?

Mistress Overdone. What proclamation, man?

Pompey. All houses in the suburbs of Vienna must be plucked down.

Mistress Overdone. And what shall become of those in the city?

Pompey. They shall stand for seed: they had gone down too, but that a wise burgher put in for them.

Mistress Overdone. But shall all our houses of resort in the suburbs be pulled down?

Pompey. To the ground, mistress.

Mistress Overdone. Why, here's a change indeed in the commonwealth! What shall become of me?

Pompey. Come; fear you not: good counsellors lack no clients: though you change your place, you need not change your trade; I'll be your tapster still. Courage! there will be pity taken on you: you that have worn your eyes almost out in the service, you will be considered.

Mistress Overdone. What's to do here, Thomas tapster? let's withdraw.

Pompey. Here comes Signior Claudio, led by the provost to prison; and there's Madam Juliet.

[Exeunt]

[Enter Provost, CLAUDIO, JULIET, and Officers]

Claudio. Fellow, why dost thou show me thus to the world? Bear me to prison, where I am committed.

Provost. I do it not in evil disposition, But from Lord Angelo by special charge.

Claudio. Thus can the demigod Authority
Make us pay down for our offence by weight
The words of heaven; on whom it will, it will;
On whom it will not, so; yet still 'tis just.

[Re-enter LUCIO and two Gentlemen]

Lucio. Why, how now, Claudio! whence comes this restraint?

Claudio. From too much liberty, my Lucio, liberty:
As surfeit is the father of much fast,
So every scope by the immoderate use
Turns to restraint. Our natures do pursue,
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,
A thirsty evil; and when we drink we die.

Lucio. If could speak so wisely under an arrest, I would
send for certain of my creditors: and yet, to say
the truth, I had as lief have the foppery of freedom
as the morality of imprisonment. What's thy
offence, Claudio?

Claudio. What but to speak of would offend again.

Lucio. What, is't murder?

Claudio. No.

Lucio. Lechery?

Claudio. Call it so.

Provost. Away, sir! you must go.

Claudio. One word, good friend. Lucio, a word with you.

Lucio. A hundred, if they'll do you any good.
Is lechery so look'd after?

Claudio. Thus stands it with me: upon a true contract
I got possession of Julietta's bed:
You know the lady; she is fast my wife,
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order: this we came not to,
Only for propagation of a dower
Remaining in the coffer of her friends,
From whom we thought it meet to hide our love
Till time had made them for us. But it chances
The stealth of our most mutual entertainment
With character too gross is writ on Juliet.

Lucio. With child, perhaps?
Claudio. Unhappily, even so.
And the new deputy now for the duke--
Whether it be the fault and glimpse of newness,
Or whether that the body public be
A horse whereon the governor doth ride,
Who, newly in the seat, that it may know
He can command, lets it straight feel the spur;
Whether the tyranny be in his place,
Or in his emmence that fills it up,
I stagger in:--but this new governor
Awakes me all the enrolled penalties
Which have, like unscour'd armour, hung by the wall
So long that nineteen zodiacs have gone round
And none of them been worn; and, for a name,
Now puts the drowsy and neglected act
Freshly on me: 'tis surely for a name.

Lucio. I warrant it is: and thy head stands so tickle on
thy shoulders that a milkmaid, if she be in love,
may sigh it off. Send after the duke and appeal to
him.

Claudio. I have done so, but he's not to be found.
I prithee, Lucio, do me this kind service:
This day my sister should the cloister enter
And there receive her approbation:
Acquaint her with the danger of my state:
Implore her, in my voice, that she make friends
To the strict deputy; bid herself assay him:
I have great hope in that; for in her youth
There is a prone and speechless dialect,
Such as move men; beside, she hath prosperous art
When she will play with reason and discourse,
And well she can persuade.

Lucio. I pray she may; as well for the encouragement of the
like, which else would stand under grievous
imposition, as for the enjoying of thy life, who I
would be sorry should be thus foolishly lost at a
game of tick-tack. I'll to her.

Claudio. I thank you, good friend Lucio.

Lucio. Within two hours.

Claudio. Come, officer, away!

[Exeunt]
SCENE III. A monastery.

[Enter DUKE VINCENTIO and FRIAR THOMAS]

Duke Vincentio. No, holy father; throw away that thought; Believe not that the dribbling dart of love Can pierce a complete bosom. Why I desire thee To give me secret harbour, hath a purpose More grave and wrinkled than the aims and ends Of burning youth.

Friar Thomas. May your grace speak of it?

Duke Vincentio. My holy sir, none better knows than you How I have ever loved the life removed And held in idle price to haunt assemblies Where youth, and cost, and witless bravery keeps. I have deliver'd to Lord Angelo, A man of stricture and firm abstinence, My absolute power and place here in Vienna, And he supposes me travell'd to Poland; For so I have strew'd it in the common ear, And so it is received. Now, pious sir, You will demand of me why I do this?

Friar Thomas. Gladly, my lord.

Duke Vincentio. We have strict statutes and most biting laws. The needful bits and curbs to headstrong weeds, Which for this nineteen years we have let slip; Even like an o'ergrown lion in a cave, That goes not out to prey. Now, as fond fathers, Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch, Only to stick it in their children's sight For terror, not to use, in time the rod Becomes more mock'd than fear'd; so our decrees, Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead; And liberty plucks justice by the nose; The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart Goes all decorum.

Friar Thomas. It rested in your grace To unloose this tied-up justice when you pleased: And it in you more dreadful would have seem'd Than in Lord Angelo.

Duke Vincentio. I do fear, too dreadful: Sith 'twas my fault to give the people scope, 'Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them For what I bid them do: for we bid this be done,
When evil deeds have their permissive pass
And not the punishment. Therefore indeed, my father,
I have on Angelo imposed the office;
Who may, in the ambush of my name, strike home,
And yet my nature never in the fight
To do in slander. And to behold his sway,
I will, as 'twere a brother of your order,
Visit both prince and people: therefore, I prithee,
Supply me with the habit and instruct me
How I may formally in person bear me
Like a true friar. More reasons for this action
At our more leisure shall I render you;
Only, this one: Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with envy; scarce confesses
That his blood flows, or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone: hence shall we see,
If power change purpose, what our seemers be.

[Exeunt]

SCENE IV. A nunnery.

[Enter ISABELLA and FRANCISCA]

Isabella. And have you nuns no farther privileges?

Francisca. Are not these large enough?

Isabella. Yes, truly; I speak not as desiring more;
But rather wishing a more strict restraint
Upon the sisterhood, the votarists of Saint Clare.

Lucio. [Within] Ho! Peace be in this place!

Isabella. Who's that which calls?

Francisca. It is a man's voice. Gentle Isabella,
Turn you the key, and know his business of him;
You may, I may not; you are yet unsworn.
When you have vow'd, you must not speak with men
But in the presence of the prioress:
Then, if you speak, you must not show your face,
Or, if you show your face, you must not speak.
He calls again; I pray you, answer him.

[Exit]

Isabella. Peace and prosperity! Who is't that calls

[Enter LUCIO]
**Lucio.** Hail, virgin, if you be, as those cheek-roses
Proclaim you are no less! Can you so stead me
As bring me to the sight of Isabella,
A novice of this place and the fair sister
To her unhappy brother Claudio?

**Isabella.** Why 'her unhappy brother'? let me ask,
The rather for I now must make you know
I am that Isabella and his sister.

**Lucio.** Gentle and fair, your brother kindly greets you:
Not to be weary with you, he's in prison.

**Isabella.** Woe me! for what?

**Lucio.** For that which, if myself might be his judge,
He should receive his punishment in thanks:
He hath got his friend with child.

**Isabella.** Sir, make me not your story.

**Lucio.** It is true.
I would not--though 'tis my familiar sin
With maids to seem the lapwing and to jest,
Tongue far from heart--play with all virgins so:
I hold you as a thing ensky'd and sainted.
By your renouncement an immortal spirit,
And to be talk'd with in sincerity,
As with a saint.

**Isabella.** You do blaspheme the good in mocking me.

**Lucio.** Do not believe it. Fewness and truth, 'tis thus:
Your brother and his lover have embraced:
As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time
That from the seedness the bare fallow brings
To teeming foison, even so her plenteous womb
Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.

**Isabella.** Some one with child by him? My cousin Juliet?

**Lucio.** Is she your cousin?

**Isabella.** Adoptedly; as school-maids change their names
By vain though apt affection.

**Lucio.** She it is.

**Isabella.** O, let him marry her.

**Lucio.** This is the point.
The duke is very strangely gone from hence;  
Bore many gentlemen, myself being one,  
In hand and hope of action: but we do learn  
By those that know the very nerves of state,  
His givings-out were of an infinite distance  
From his true-meant design. Upon his place,  
And with full line of his authority,  
Governs Lord Angelo; a man whose blood  
Is very snow-broth; one who never feels  
The wanton stings and motions of the sense,  
But doth rebate and blunt his natural edge  
With profits of the mind, study and fast.  
He--to give fear to use and liberty,  
Which have for long run by the hideous law,  
As mice by lions--hath pick'd out an act,  
Under whose heavy sense your brother's life  
Falls into forfeit: he arrests him on it;  
And follows close the rigour of the statute,  
To make him an example. All hope is gone,  
Unless you have the grace by your fair prayer  
To soften Angelo: and that's my pith of business  
'Twixt you and your poor brother.

Isabella. Doth he so seek his life?

Lucio. Has censured him  
    Already; and, as I hear, the provost hath  
    A warrant for his execution.

Isabella. Alas! what poor ability's in me  
    To do him good?

Lucio. Assay the power you have.

Isabella. My power? Alas, I doubt--

Lucio. Our doubts are traitors  
    And make us lose the good we oft might win  
    By fearing to attempt. Go to Lord Angelo,  
    And let him learn to know, when maidens sue,  
    Men give like gods; but when they weep and kneel,  
    All their petitions are as freely theirs  
    As they themselves would owe them.

Isabella. I'll see what I can do.

Lucio. But speedily.

Isabella. I will about it straight;  
    No longer staying but to give the mother  
    Notice of my affair. I humbly thank you:
Commend me to my brother: soon at night
I'll send him certain word of my success.

Lucio. I take my leave of you.

Isabella. Good sir, adieu.

[Exeunt]