

Measure for Measure abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 1.1

Death

Situation: Disguised as Friar Lodowick, The duke visits Claudio in prison. He does his best, and his best is pretty good, to convince Claudio that death is preferred to life.

DUKE AS FRIAR: So then you hope of pardon from Lord Angelo?

CLAUDIO: The miserable have no other medicine but only hope. I have hope to live and am prepared to die.

DUKE AS FRIAR: Think of death without relationship to anything else. Either death or life shall thereby be the sweeter. Reason thus with life:

Duke to Claudio, No. 1

Losing life is losing that which only
Fools would keep. Life afflicts us hourly,
Only a breath away from the effects
Of this habitation. Lives art death's fools,
For life by its flight and labors rejects
Death, yet always runs towards it. Death rules
Life; life fearing the forked tongue of a snake.
Death draws fear from sleep that thou may not wake,
Yet death's the best of rest and rest's a must.
Thou art no more than what life doth allow;
The many grains that issue out of dust.
Thou changes as the moon and happy thou
Art not, for what thou hast not, thou striv'st
To get, and what thou hast, thou forget'st.

Duke to Claudio, No. 2

If thou art rich, thou art like a donkey
Whose back with ingots bows through its journey;
But with death its riches are unloaded.
Rich men have no friends in their children who
Curse the diseases that have not ended
Them sooner. It's as a dream whether you
Have youth or age, for all thy blessed youth
Act as aged, begging for alms in sooth
Of palsied elders. And when thou art old
And rich, thou'll have not passion's youthful flame,
Nor good limbs or beauty to make thy gold
Pleasant. What's left in this that bears the name
Of life? In this life a thousand death's lie

Hid; yet death we fear, and here we ask why.

CLAUDIO: I humbly thank you. I find I seek to die, and seeking death find life. Let it come on.