

ISABELLA Be ready, Claudio, for your death tomorrow.  
 120 CLAUDIO Yes. Has he affections in him,  
 That thus can make him bite the law by th'nose,  
 When he would force it? Sure it is no sin,  
 Or of the deadly seven, it is the least.  
 ISABELLA Which is the least?  
 125 CLAUDIO If it were damnable, he being so wise,  
 Why would he for the momentary trick  
 Be perdurably fined? O Isabel!  
 ISABELLA What says my brother?  
 CLAUDIO Death is a fearful thing.  
 130 ISABELLA And shamèd life a hateful.  
 START CLAUDIO Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,  
 To lie in cold obstruction and to rot,  
 This sensible warm motion to become  
 A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit  
 135 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside  
 In thrilling region of thick-ribbèd ice,  
 To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,  
 And blown with restless violence round about  
 The pendent world; or to be worse than worst  
 140 Of those that lawless and incertain thought  
 Imagine howling — 'tis too horrible!  
 The weariest and most loathèd worldly life  
 That age, ache, penury and imprisonment  
 Can lay on nature is a paradise  
 END 145 To what we fear of death.  
 ISABELLA Alas, alas!  
 CLAUDIO Sweet sister, let me live.  
 What sin you do to save a brother's life.

120 affections lust 121 bite . . . th'nose i.e. mock, insult the law 122 force enforce (plays on the sense of "violate") 126 trick trifle/whim/sexual act 127 perdurably fined eternally punished 132 obstruction state of death 133 sensible warm motion feeling, living, body 134 kneaded clod compacted lump of earth delighted capable of delight 136 thrilling bitterly cold region separate part of the universe thick-ribbèd formed into ridges 137 viewless invisible 139 pendent hanging in space 140 lawless and incertain frenzied and uncertain 143 penury poverty 144 nature human nature, powers of endurance 145 To compared to

Nature dispenses with the deed so far  
 150 That it becomes a virtue.  
 ISABELLA O you beast!  
 O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!  
 Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?  
 Is't not a kind of incest to take life  
 155 From thine own sister's shame? What should I think?  
 Heaven shield my mother played my father fair,  
 For such a warpèd slip of wilderness  
 Ne'er issued from his blood. Take my defiance!  
 Die, perish! Might but my bending down  
 160 Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed.  
 I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,  
 No word to save thee.  
 CLAUDIO Nay, hear me, Isabel.  
 ISABELLA O, fie, fie, fie!  
 165 Thy sin's not accidental, but a trade.  
 Mercy to thee would prove itself a bawd,  
 'Tis best that thou diest quickly.  
 CLAUDIO O, hear me, Isabella! *The Duke comes forward*  
 DUKE Vouchsafe a word, young sister, but one word.  
 170 ISABELLA What is your will?  
 DUKE Might you dispense with your leisure, I would by  
 and by have some speech with you: the satisfaction I would  
 require is likewise your own benefit.  
 ISABELLA I have no superfluous leisure, my stay must be stolen  
 175 out of other affairs, but I will attend you awhile. *She walks apart*  
 DUKE Son, I have overheard what hath passed between  
 you and your sister. Angelo had never the purpose to corrupt

149 Nature human nature/nature itself dispenses pardons 151 beast i.e. creature lacking judgment or compassion 152 dishonest shameful 153 made a man given life or prosperity 156 shield ensure/forbid played . . . fair was faithful 157 warpèd . . . wilderness twisted seedling/offspring of licentiousness 158 defiance rejection/contempt 159 but merely bending down praying (on bended knees) 165 accidental a one-off event trade habitual practice 166 prove itself turn out to be 169 Vouchsafe permit 171 dispense . . . leisure give up your time by and by soon 172 satisfaction recompense 173 likewise . . . benefit as much to your advantage as mine 175 attend wait for 177 purpose intention