
ACT III. SCENE I.

The Prison.

Enter Duke, Claudio, and Provost.

DUKE.

SO, then you hope for pardon from lord Angelo?
Claud. The miserable have no other medicine
 But only hope: I've hope to live, and am
 Prepar'd to die.

Duke. Be absolute for death; or death or life
 Shall thereby be the sweeter. Reason thus
 With life: if I do lose thee, I do lose
 A thing that none but fools would keep, a breath
 Servile to all the skiey influences,
 That do this habitation where thou keep'st
 Hourly afflict: merely, thou art death's fool;^a
 For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun,
 And yet run'st tow'rd him still. Thou art not noble;
 For all th' accommodations that thou bear'st
 Are nurs'd by baseness: thou'rt by no means valiant;
 For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork
 Of a poor worm. Thy best of rest is sleep,
 And that thou oft provok'st; yet grossly fear'st
 Thy death, which is no more. Thou'rt not thyself;
 For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains
 That issue out of dust. Happy thou art not;
 For what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get,
 And what thou hast, forgett'st. Thou art not certain;
 For thy complexion shifts to strange effects,

^a In the simplicity of the ancient shows upon our stage it was common to bring in two figures, one representing a fool, the other death or fate: the turn and contrivance of the piece was to make the fool lay many stratagems to avoid death, which yet brought him more immediately into the jaws of it.

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