

# *Measure for Measure*

Act III, sc. 1 (line 5)

## DUKE VINCENTIO

Be absolute for death; either 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 thou art,  
Servile to all the skyey influences,  
That dost this habitation, where thou keep'st,  
Hourly afflict: merely, thou art death's fool;  
For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun  
And yet runn'st toward him still. Thou art not noble;  
For all the accommodations that thou bear'st  
Are nursed 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 provokest; yet grossly fear'st  
Thy death, which is no more. Thou art 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 strivest to get,  
And what thou hast, forget'st. Thou art not certain;  
For thy complexion shifts to strange effects,  
After the moon. If thou art rich, thou'rt poor;

For, like an ass whose back with ingots bows,  
Thou bear's thy heavy riches but a journey,  
And death unloads thee. Friend hast thou none;  
For thine own bowels, which do call thee sire,  
The mere effusion of thy proper loins,  
Do curse the gout, serpigo, and the rheum,  
For ending thee no sooner. Thou hast nor youth nor age,  
But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,  
Dreaming on both; for all thy blessed youth  
Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms  
Of palsied eld; and when thou art old and rich,  
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty,  
To make thy riches pleasant. What's yet in this  
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life  
Lie hid moe thousand deaths: yet death we fear,  
That makes these odds all even.