

CLAUDIO AND ISABELLA

I know my sister well, she's obstinate
This two-faced judge would make a whore of me –
and quite prepared to leave me to my fate:

insane to hope she'd even hesitate.
says he will spare my brother, set him free
I know her well, she's far too obstinate,

determined to remain immaculate
leaving me damned in perpetuity.
and quite prepared to leave me to my fate.

She feeds me platitudes, both out of date
But dare I trust in his veracity?
and trite: I know her well, she's obstinate,

but not kind, loving or compassionate.
I'm pushed to an absurd extremity:
She really means to leave me to my fate,

me – unrepentant, sinful, desperate?
more than my brother is my chastity?
She does: my sister remains obdurate
And mercilessly leaves me to my fate.

From Shakespeare's Measure for Measure. Claudio has been condemned to death for sexual immorality by Angelo – who has proved his own hypocrisy by demanding that Isabella sleep with him in order to spare Claudio's life. Isabella, who is about to enter a convent, believes this would result in her own damnation, and tells her brother he must prepare to die. Claudio is desperate to live; Isabella is unyielding.