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# Measure for Measure

Act I, sc. 3

**VINCENTIO:** No, holy father; throw away that thought;  
Believe not that the dribbling dart of love  
Can pierce a complete bosom. Why I desire thee  
To give me secret harbour, hath a purpose  
More grave and wrinkled than the aims and ends  
Of burning youth.

**FRIAR THOMAS:** May your grace speak of it?

**VINCENTIO:** My holy sir, none better knows than you  
How I have ever loved the life removed  
And held in idle price to haunt assemblies  
Where youth, and cost, and witless bravery keeps.  
I have deliver'd to Lord Angelo,  
A man of stricture and firm abstinence,  
My absolute power and place here in Vienna,  
And he supposes me travell'd to Poland;  
For so I have strew'd it in the common ear,  
And so it is received. Now, pious sir,  
You will demand of me why I do this?

**FRIAR THOMAS:** Gladly, my lord.

**VINCENTIO:** We have strict statutes and most biting laws.  
The needful bits and curbs to headstrong weeds,  
Which for this nineteen years we have let slip;  
Even like an o'ergrown lion in a cave,  
That goes not out to prey. Now, as fond fathers,  
Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch,  
Only to stick it in their children's sight

For terror, not to use, in time the rod  
Becomes more mock'd than fear'd; so our decrees,  
Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead;  
And liberty plucks justice by the nose;  
The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart  
Goes all decorum.