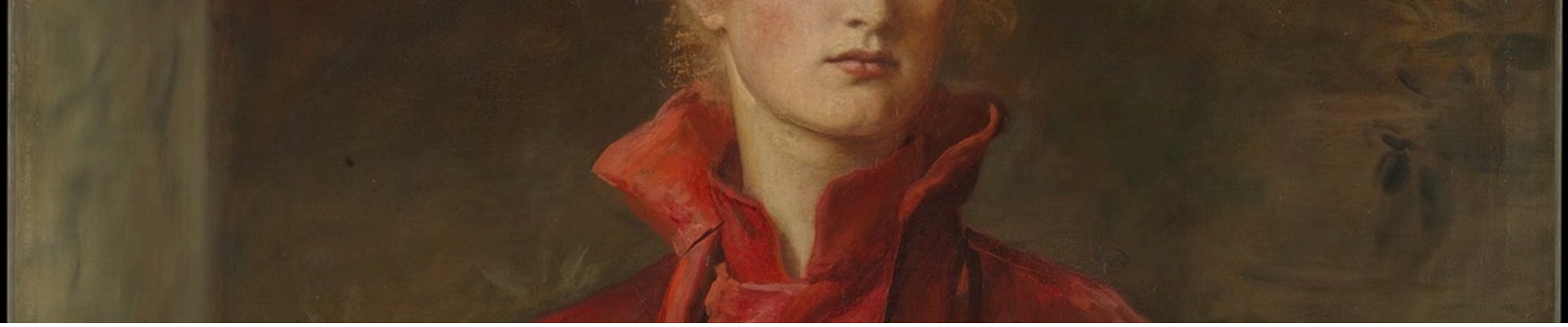


The Merchant of Venice – William Shakespeare, c. 1596-8

How does Shakespeare use language and rhetoric to explore the relationship between mercy and justice? Consider how the speaker tries to persuade and what this reveals about attitudes to power, law, and morality

PORTIA:
The quality of mercy is not strain’d,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
’Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown.
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God’s
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea;
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

SHYLOCK:
My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

PORTIA:
Is he not able to discharge the money?

BASSANIO:
Yes, here I tender it for him in the court;
Yea, twice the sum. If that will not suffice,
I will be bound to pay it ten times o’er,
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart:
If this will not suffice, it must appear
That malice bears down truth. And I beseech you,
Wrest once the law to your authority:
To do a great right, do a little wrong,
And curb this cruel devil of his will.

PORTIA:
It must not be. There is no power in Venice
Can alter a decree establishèd:
’Twill be recorded for a precedent,
And many an error by the same example
Will rush into the state. It cannot be.

The Rover – Aphra Behn, 1677

How does Behn use language and dramatic techniques in this extract to present female independence and challenge societal expectations?

Hellena and Florinda, two noble sisters, are discussing love and their futures. Hellena challenges her expected path of becoming a nun.

HELLENA:
What an impertinent thing is a young girl bred in a nunnery! How full of questions!—Prithee no more, Hellena; I have told thee more already than thou understand’st.

FLORINDA:
I would give the world to know whether you were first a lover or a mistress—my brother Frederic thinks you a perfect mistress already.

HELLENA:
Why—will he be my judge? I'm resolv'd to be free and a woman of wit and pleasure, and to live as the rest of my sex do, that love gallantly. I’ll not be confin’d, and for a nun I have no calling.

FLORINDA:
Sister, I’m afraid you’ll prove the ruin of us all.

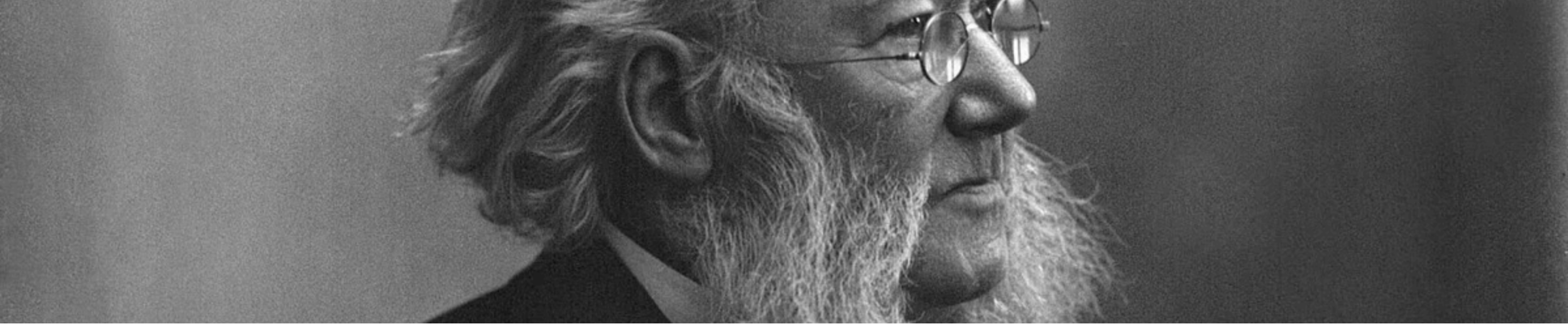
HELLENA:
Come, come, you shall not persuade me out of my senses—this is a good, honest, bawdy world, and I desire to know it. I tell you, Florinda, I’ll see and be seen; I’ll go to the Carnival, and be as madly in love as the rest—for I’ll not die a maid, or live a nun, I warrant you.

FLORINDA:
Fie, Hellena! What do you talk of love and wenching?

HELLENA:
Wenching! By this hand, I’ll love as long as I can. You see, sister, I’m not fit for a nun, I have a world of business in my head yet; I have thought of nothing but fine clothes and a handsome husband, and I must confess, I love mischief strangely.

FLORINDA:
Well, if you are resolv’d upon this, I’ll venture with you—but I’ll lay all the fault upon your lightness of brain.

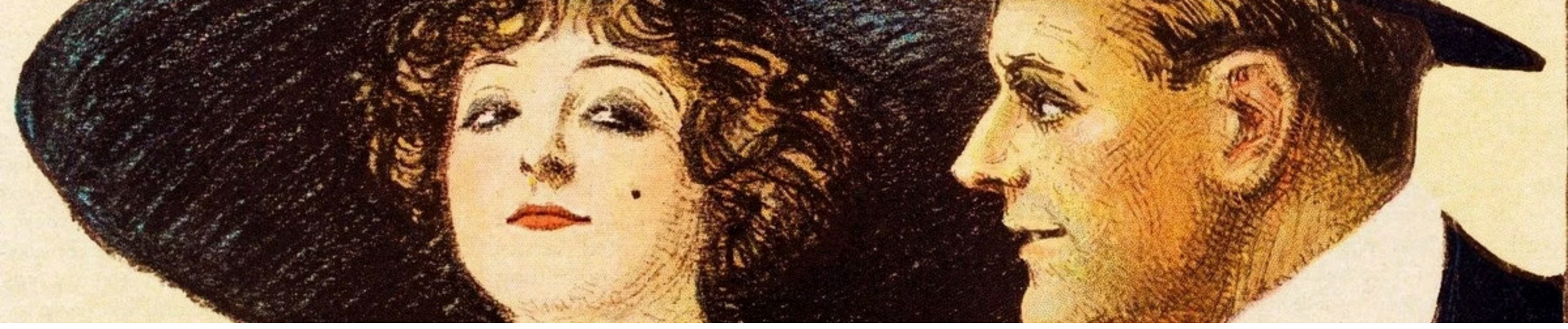
HELLENA:
Do, chide me; I’ll bear it all—let’s in and dress us for the Carnival. Who knows what mad adventure fate may send us?



A Dolls House – Henrik Ibsen, 1879

How does Ibsen use dialogue and dramatic conflict in this extract to explore individual identity and the constraints of social expectations?

> **NORA:**
> It is not easy for a woman to be judged by man's laws when she has tried to save her husband's life.
>
> **HELMER:**
> You talk like a child. You don't understand the society you live in.
>
> **NORA:**
> No, I don't. But now I shall try to learn. I must stand quite alone, if I am ever to discover myself and the world outside.
>
> **HELMER:**
> You are forsaking your most sacred duties.
>
> **NORA:**
> What do you consider my most sacred duties?
>
> **HELMER:**
> Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and your children?
>
> **NORA:**
> I have other duties equally sacred.
>
> **HELMER:**
> Impossible! What duties do you mean?
>
> **NORA:**
> Duties to myself.
>
> **HELMER:**
> Before all else you are a wife and a mother.
>
> **NORA:**
> I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are—or at least I shall try to become one. I know that most people would agree with you, Torvald, and that's what has stood in my way. I must think things out for myself and try to understand them.
>
> **HELMER:**
> And can you forsake your home, your husband, your children? Do you not feel your religion tells you—?
>
> **NORA:**
> I don't really know what religion is... I'm afraid I don't even know what society is. I know only that what I do now is right for me.



Pygmalion – George Bernard Shaw, 1913

How does Shaw use language, character interaction, and humour in this extract to explore ideas about class and transformation?

[The laboratory of Professor Henry Higgins. Eliza Doolittle enters, hesitantly.]

ELIZA:
Good morning, my good man. Might I have a word with you?

HIGGINS (absorbed in writing, without looking up):
I’m busy. Sit down.

ELIZA (uncertain, sitting):
Thank you, sir.

HIGGINS:
What do you want?

ELIZA:
Well, I want to be a lady in a flower shop stead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road. But they won’t take me unless I can talk more genteel. He said he could teach me. Well, here I am ready to pay.

HIGGINS (turning to her, suddenly interested):
Aha! You’re the girl I recorded last night. You’re the one with the kerbstone English!

ELIZA (indignant):
I’m not dirt under your feet. I’ve got feelings same as you.

HIGGINS:
And you think I’m going to waste my time teaching you to speak proper English for the price of a few lessons? What do you propose to pay me with?

ELIZA (taking out coins):
I can pay. I got a shilling—maybe more later, when I earn it.

HIGGINS (mocking):
A shilling! Do you realise that a professor of phonetics has to live?

ELIZA (earnestly):
You said you could turn me into a lady. I want to learn to talk like a lady in a flower shop, not like a common guttersnipe.

PICKERING (intervening kindly):
If you seriously want to learn, why not try her, Higgins?

HIGGINS:
Try her? The girl’s so deliciously low, so horribly dirty. It's the most fascinating experiment I’ve ever undertaken. I shall make a duchess of this draggle-tailed guttersnipe!

ELIZA (offended):
You’re no gentleman, to talk like that!

HIGGINS (amused):
Oh, I’m not a gentleman, thank Heaven! I treat all human souls alike—no nonsense of class or manners with me. I’ll take your money and teach you.

PICKERING (to Eliza):
He’s a good man, really, if a bit eccentric. You’re in safe hands.

ELIZA (cautiously hopeful):
Then you’ll help me?

HIGGINS:
Yes. In six months you shall speak as well as any duchess in London. You shall go to parties, to the opera, and pass for a lady—if you can keep at it.

A View From The Bridge – Arthur Miller, 1955

How does Miller use language and dramatic tension in this extract to reveal Eddie's complex feelings toward Catherine and to explore themes of control, protection, and growing independence?

> **EDDIE:**
> Listen, you been givin' me the willies the way you walk down the street, I mean it.
> It's too short, ain't it?
>
> **CATHERINE:**
> No! Not when I stand up.
>
> **EDDIE:**
> Yeah, but you walk wavy. I don't like the looks they're givin' you in the candy store. And with them new high heels on the sidewalk – clack, clack, clack. The heads are turnin' like windmills.
>
> **CATHERINE (flustered):**
> But those guys look at every girl you know!
>
> **EDDIE:**
> No, no, you're the one lookin' good, that's all, so the guys'll look. But you're gonna walk back home if nobody's in the office, so go ahead.
>
> **CATHERINE:**
> I don't understand. You said I could go.
>
> **EDDIE (after a pause):**
> Well, I don't like it. The way you act. I mean, you're growin' up, that's all. You gotta keep yourself more... you can't be so friendly, kid.
>
> **CATHERINE:**
> I'm not. What do you want me to do?
>
> **EDDIE:**
> I don't like the way you talk to Rodolpho.
>
> **CATHERINE (surprised):**
> He's only bowin' to me. He's just bein' polite.
>
> **EDDIE:**
> Yeah, but he's laughin' too much. What's so funny?
>
> **CATHERINE:**
> I like to see him happy. I mean – he's always so polite, I thought it was nice he was laughin' for a change.
>
> **EDDIE:**
> He's got no right to be happy when he's lookin' at you.
>
> **CATHERINE:**
> He's not lookin' at me like that. Stop it!
>
> **EDDIE:**
> I'm responsible for you. You're still a baby to me, you know that?
>
> **CATHERINE (softly):**
> I ain't a baby no more, Eddie.
>
> **(Eddie stares at her for a moment, unable to speak. The tension thickens.)**
>
> **EDDIE (more softly):**
> When you're walkin' down the street with your head high, you gotta be smart. You can't let the neighborhood see you all over the place. You're makin' a fool outta yourself.
>
> **CATHERINE:**
> I'm just tryin' to live, Eddie. I want to have a life outside of this apartment.
>
> **EDDIE:**
> What's outside? You got no job. You got no money. You got no husband. You got me, and that's all you need.
>
> **CATHERINE (frustrated):**
> You think I don't know that? I'm twenty years old, Eddie. I want more.
>
> **EDDIE (quietly):**
> You want more? You don't know what you want. You're only gonna get hurt.
>
> **CATHERINE:**
> I'm not a kid anymore. You gotta let me be.

A Raisin in the Sun – Lorraine Hansberry, 1959

How does Hansberry use the language and interaction between characters in this extract to explore the conflicts around dreams, responsibility, and family in the play?

> **WALTER:**
> Man, why you puttin’ on all that stuff?
> You ain’t got nothin’ to worry about.
> We got this little old world, and we goin’ to make it our own.
> You hear me? Our own.
> That money—Mama’s money—it’s supposed to be the key to everything we want.
> You got a dream, you gotta protect it.
> If you don’t, it’ll just disappear.
> Like a raisin in the sun.
> You ever see a raisin dry up in the sun?
> That’s what happens to dreams, son.
> Don’t let nobody take your dreams away from you.
>
> **RUTH:**
> Walter, we can’t just throw away the money.
> We gotta be practical.
> A business—like the liquor store—could ruin us.
> You don’t think about the family, you think about your own ambitions.
>
> **WALTER:**
> It’s for the family!
> For all of us!
> You think I want to be stuck in this job, sweatin’ and servin’ white folks all my life?
> I want more than this.
> I want to build something better.
>
> **MAMA (enters, stern):**
> What’s all this talk?
> You children don’t know what it means to struggle.
> I’ve carried this family on my back for years.
> That money is a blessing.
> We have to use it wisely.
> No reckless dreams.
>
> **WALTER (defiant):**
> Mama, I’m not reckless.
> I’m just tired of bein’ told what to do.
> I want to live my life on my own terms.
>
> **MAMA:**
> Your terms?
> And what if your terms bring ruin?
> We have to think of each other.
> That’s what family means.

Top Girls – Caryl Churchill, 1982

How does Churchill use Marlene's language and her interaction with Joan in this extract to explore ideas about ambition, gender roles, and the costs of success?

> **MARLENE:**
> It was an achievement. I don't mean just going to work, I mean getting this job, this position. You don't know what it's like. The struggle. You think it's easy, being a woman, moving ahead in a man's world? No. It's war.
> I had to be tougher than the men, smarter, faster.
> I worked my way up. I'm the managing director now. That's something to be proud of.
> (Beat.)
> But it cost me. It cost me everything.
>
> **(She pauses, looks out, gathering her thoughts.)**
>
> **MARLENE:**
> I don't have children. I don't have a family. Not really.
> When I was young, I wanted all those things — children, love, home. But you have to make choices.
> If you want to succeed, you have to put yourself first.
> That's what I did.
>
> **(Enter JOAN, Marlene's sister.)**
>
> **JOAN:**
> Marlene. You're here early. What's the occasion?
>
> **MARLENE:**
> Lunch with some important people. Clients.
> You know how it is.
>
> **JOAN:**
> Always working, huh? Still chasing the top. But at what cost?
>
> **MARLENE:**
> Cost? Don't talk to me about cost. I made my bed. I'm on top now. That's all that matters.
> (She smiles sharply.)
> Besides, what do you want? To live in the past? To be a victim? No thanks.
>
> **JOAN:**
> I want a life. A family. To be happy.
> Is that so wrong?
>
> **MARLENE:**
> Happiness is a luxury. Power is what keeps you alive in this world.
> You have to fight for it.
>
> (They stare at each other, two different paths, two different lives.)

DNA – Dennis Kelley, 2008

How does Dennis Kelly use language and dialogue in this extract to create tension and explore themes of guilt, responsibility, and group pressure?

LEAH:
We need to talk. This thing… it's gone way too far now. We can't just pretend it didn't happen. We have to deal with it.

MARK:
(trying to stay calm) Leah, it was an accident. None of us wanted this. No one meant for anyone to get hurt.

LEAH:
Accident? You call leaving him out there an accident? Not calling for help? That's not an accident, Mark, that's cowardice.

PHIL:
(snarling) We were scared! What else could we do? If the cops get involved, all of us are finished. Think about that.

LEAH:
But what about doing the right thing? What about owning up to what happened? You don't think this guilt will haunt us forever?

MARK:
(sighing) Leah, if we start blaming each other, we're done for. We have to stick together — keep quiet, keep calm. Otherwise, we all go down.

LEAH:
That's just it. Secrets don't stay secrets. Lies catch up. The truth always does.

PHIL:
You're naive if you think the truth matters here. People like us, we get stamped out. No one cares about what's fair.

LEAH:
Maybe not. But I care. I care about what happens to us. And if we don't act, we're as bad as the ones who hurt us.

MARK:
What are you saying? We should turn ourselves in? Just hand over everything? That's madness.

LEAH:
I'm saying we can't keep running from this. We have to face it — or it'll destroy us from inside.

PHIL:
(angrily) You're just scared. Scared of what might happen. We've got power now, and I'm not giving that up.

LEAH:
Power? This isn't power, Phil. It's a trap. The more we hide, the deeper we sink.

MARK:
(speaking quietly) We made a choice. Now we have to live with it, one way or another.

(The group falls silent. The weight of their shared secret presses down on them. No one speaks.)