

## Dr. Faustus

### Summary and Analysis Scene 4

#### **Summary**

Wagner accosts the clown and tells him that he realizes that the clown is out of work. He accuses him of being so desperate that he would sell his soul to the devil for a shoulder of raw mutton. The clown insists that if he were to make so dangerous a bargain, he would require that his mutton at least be roasted in a fine sauce. Wagner asks the clown to serve him for seven years. If the clown refuses, Wagner threatens to have lice tear him to pieces.

Wagner gives the clown some French money and warns him that he will have a devil fetch him within an hour if he doesn't agree to become his servant; Wagner summons Baliol and Belcher — two devils — who come and frighten the poor clown. Wagner promises the clown that he will instruct him in how to summon up these devils. The clown agrees to the bargain but wants to be taught how to turn himself into a flea on a pretty wench.

#### **Analysis**

This scene re-echoes in a comic fashion various parts of the preceding scene between Faustus and Mephistophilis. In the largest view, both scenes involve a promise of servitude in exchange for certain benefits. Whereas Faustus is willing to sell his soul to the devil for complete power, Wagner accuses the clown of being willing to sell his soul to the devil for a piece of mutton. The clown modifies the condition by comically insisting upon a rich sauce to accompany the leg of mutton. In contrast to the servitude of Mephistophilis to Faustus, the clown agrees to serve Wagner. And instead of twenty-four years, the clown is only to serve for seven years.

In both scenes, supernatural devils appear; in the first scene their appearance is dramatically terrifying but in the latter scene it is purely comic. In the Wagner scene, even the names of the devils are comic; the clown mispronounces the devils' names as Banto and Belcheo. Wagner promises the clown that he can teach a person how to raise up devils and how to change people into dogs, cats, or mice. This boast is a deflation of the grandiose powers discussed in the preceding scene.

As noted earlier, there is a notable contrast between the language used in the third and fourth scenes. Faustus delivers his sentiments in lofty and noble language. In contrast, the clown speaks in a low and vulgar manner. The scene contains obscene puns which would be highly amusing to an Elizabethan audience but are little understood by a modern audience. Marlowe also parodies several biblical passages in the lines of Wagner and the clown.

Finally, the comic scene develops in a different manner, another of the contrasting servant-master relationships.