**Scene XIII (The Court of the Duke of Vanholt)**

**Summary**

The duke and duchess of Vanholt have been enjoying Faustus and [Mephastophilis](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Doctor-Faustus/character-analysis/%22%20%5Cl%20%22Mephastophilis)'s company. Addressing the duchess, who is pregnant, Faustus asks what he might provide in the way of a delicacy to please her. She replies that she craves a dish of ripe grapes—something impossible to get at this time, during winter. Faustus says she shall have it and sends off Mephastophilis. The devil returns moments later with the best grapes the duchess has ever tasted. She asks how Faustus obtained them, when grapes are available only in summer. The doctor explains while it is winter here, it is summer in some far countries of the world. He only must send a "swift spirit" to fetch the grapes. With thanks, the duke and duchess promise to reward Faustus well for this great kindness.

**Analysis**

This brief scene further accentuates the trivial uses to which Faustus puts his magic. Conjuring grapes in winter bears little resemblance to his original ambitions to be "emperor of the world" and "make bridges through the moving air" or to change the configuration of continents by joining Africa to Spain ([Act 1, Scene 3](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Doctor-Faustus/act-1-scene-3-summary/)). Instead of dominating kings and other figures of power, he performs tricks for them at their command.

The doctor's explanation of how grapes may be obtained demonstrates existing, though imperfect, knowledge of the world and describes the division between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. However, "India, Saba, and farther countries in the east" ("east" referring to the Middle East) do not lie in the Southern Hemisphere any more than Germany does. This problem is addressed in the later B-Text when Faustus states that these countries "have fruit twice a year."

With this scene, the B-Text aligns once again with the A-Text. However, in the B-Text the scene has been expanded for comic effect to include the reappearance of characters such as Robin and the horse-courser.

**Scene XIV (A room in Faustus' House)**

**Summary**

In a brief soliloquy, Wagner expresses concern that his master intends to die soon. Faustus has given him all his possessions. Yet it seems odd to him that, for a man about to die, the doctor is feasting, drinking, and partying to excess with university students.

**Analysis**

The scene opens with Wagner, still in the role of Faustus's faithful servant, speaking as a choric narrator (taking the place of the chorus). He relates what Faustus has been doing and confides his personal fears for his master's well-being. Through his description of Faustus's eating, drinking, and carousing, it becomes clear that the doctor has reached new lows in his corruption. While Faustus apparently realizes that his time is nearly up, he seems interested not in repentance, but in indulging in as much sensuality as possible before going to hell.

**Scene XV** **&VXI** **(A room in Faustus' House)**

As Wagner departs, Faustus enters with three scholars. They have been dining together, and the scholars now beg Faustus to conjure up the peerless beauty Helen of Troy. Seeing that they are sincere in their interest, Faustus consents. With the help of [Mephastophilis](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Doctor-Faustus/character-analysis/%22%20%5Cl%20%22Mephastophilis), Helen appears in all her glory, to the awe and delight of the scholars. They depart happy men.

An old man enters as the scholars are leaving. He offers Faustus yet another chance to repent. Though the doctor's sins are heinous, he still may be saved through the mercy of Jesus Christ, the Savior. Disbelieving and in despair, Faustus takes a dagger offered by Mephastophilis, intending to commit suicide. The old man begs the doctor to stop, declaring that an angel hovers over him, ready to grant him grace. Faustus senses some truth in this and asks the old man to go away while he ponders it. The old man leaves with a heavy heart.

Faustus teeters on the verge of repentance until Mephastophilis calls him a traitor to [Lucifer](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Doctor-Faustus/character-analysis/#Lucifer) and threatens to tear him apart. With apologies, Faustus declares he will reaffirm his vow in blood and, cutting his arm, writes. Then he commands Mephastophilis to torment the old man who dared tempt him to break his pact with Lucifer. However, the old man's faith is strong, and Mephastophilis predicts that no torment can touch his soul, only his body. Faustus then asks the devil to bring back Helen to be his lover, which the devil does gladly "in a twinkling of an eye." Bedazzled by her beauty and her kiss, Faustus swears she will be his one and only paramour. When Faustus departs with Helen, the old man (who has returned) is threatened by devils. However, as Mephastophilis expected, his faith remains strong and unshaken by their abuse.

**Analysis**

The scholars enter the scene discussing their latest topic of debate: which lady in all the world was the most beautiful. While they no doubt applied their scholarly gifts for logical dispute to the debate, the topic itself is trivial. These scholars would deny any resemblance between themselves and characters such as Wagner, the clown, or Robin and Rafe. However, their everyday interest in the topic of women and lustful response to the appearance of Helen—though eloquently expressed—demonstrates they are more similar to these characters than they would probably want to admit. Education has not altered the scholars' ordinary interests or added nobility to their characters. They are just three guys fascinated by a beautiful woman.

In this scene the Good Angel and Evil Angel are replaced by the old man. He enters as a force for good, encouraging Faustus to "break heart, drop blood, and mingle it with tears." In other words, with a blood offering and the tears of true repentance, Faustus may yet save his soul. Nevertheless, Faustus chooses despair and wails, "Damned thou art, Faustus, damned! Despair and die!" Christian belief holds that despair is a mortal sin involving deliberate and complete abandonment of all hope for salvation. An individual intentionally rejects the possibility of God's mercy and grace. Despair not only cuts off all hope of escape, it encourages surrender to sinful earthly pleasures. Faustus willfully turns his back on God once more, reaffirms his bargain with [Lucifer](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Doctor-Faustus/character-analysis/#Lucifer) in blood, and gives in to his lust for Helen. In taking Helen for his paramour, Faustus once again trivializes his power. All his early grand aspirations have shrunk to the pursuit of sensuous, self-indulgent pleasure. His despair is complete.