

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING--FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

by

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CHARACTERS

LEONATO	Governor of Messina
HERO	His daughter
BEATRICE	His niece
ANTONIO	Leonato's Brother
MARGARET	waiting gentlewoman to Hero
URSULA	waiting gentlewoman to Hero
DON PEDRO	Prince of Aragon
COUNT CLAUDIO	A young lord from Florence
SIGNIOR BENEDICK	A gentleman from Padua
BALTHASAR	
DON JOHN	Don Pedro's brother
BORACHIO	Don John's follower
CONRAD	Don John'd follower
DOGBERRY	Master Constable in Messina
VERGES	Dogberry's partner
GEORGE SEACOLE	Leader of the watch
FIRST WATCHMAN	
SECOND WATCHMAN	
SEXTON	
FRIAR FRANCIS	
MESSENGER TO LEONATO	
MESSENGER TO DON PEDRO	
BOY	I may have cut the Boy's part
MUSICIANS, LORDS, ATTENDANTS, SON OF ANTONIO	

SETTING

Leonato's House in Messina

TIME

1600's

ACT I

Scene 1 in front of Leonato's House. Day.

Scene 2 **A room in LEONATO's house.** Later.

Scene 3 The same.

ACT II

Scene 1 Leonato's House Evening

Scene 2 The same.

Scene 3 Leonato's Orchard The next day.

ACT III

Scene 1 Leonato's garden. The same day.

Scene 2 A room in Leonato's house. The same day.

Scene 3 Town Square. That night.

Scene 4 Hero's rooms. The next morning.

Scene 5 Another room. The same day.

ACT IV

Scene 1 A church. The next day.

Scene 2 A prison. The same day.

ACT V

Scene 1 In front of Leonato's House. Later the same

day.

Scene 2	Leonato's Garden.	The same day.
Scene 3	A church.	That night.
Scene 4	A room in Leonat's House	The next day.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(In front of LEONATO'S house.)

(Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE,
with a Messenger)

LEONATO

I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes
this night to Messina.

MESSENGER

He is very near by this: he was not ten miles off when
I left him.

LEONATO

How many gentlemen have you lost in this war?

MESSENGER

Only a few of any importance, and none of name.

LEONATO

A victory is twice as good when the winner brings home
all his soldiers. I find here that Don Pedro has
bestowed much honor on a young Florentine called
Claudio.

MESSENGER

Much deserved on his part and equally remembered by
Don Pedro: he has behaved better than most men his
age. He has done the feats of a lion in the shape of a
lamb.

BEATRICE

I pray you, is Signior Mountanto returned from the
wars or no?

MESSENGER

I know none of that name, lady.

LEONATO

What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO

My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER

O, he's returned; and as pleasant as he ever was.

BEATRICE

Tell me, how many has Benedick killed and eaten in this wars? Or, just how many as he killed? For, indeed I promised to eat all those he killed.

LEONATO

In faith, niece, you tease Signior Benedick too much. He'll tease you back, I doubt it not.

MESSENGER

He's been good soldier, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE

You had spoiled food, and he helped to eat it. He is a very valiant eater; he has an excellent stomach.

MESSENGER

And a good soldier, too, lady.

BEATRICE

And a good soldier to a lady: what is he to a lord?

MESSENGER

A lord to a lord, a man to a man, stuffed with all honorable virtues.

BEATRICE

It is so, indeed: he is no less than a stuffed man, a doll: except he is stuffed with...well, no one is perfect.

LEONATO

(to Messenger)

You must not mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her: They never meet but there as skirmish of wit between them.

BEATRICE

Alas! The poor man. In our last conflict, four of his five wits went stumbling off, injured, and now the whole man is only left with one: So if he has wit enough to keep himself warm, I suppose that makes him smarter than his horse. Who is his companion now? He has a new blood-brother every month.

MESSENGER

Is it possible?

BEATRICE

Very easily. He is as faithful to people as he is to fashion: they both change constantly.

MESSENGER

I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your book of favorites.

BEATRICE

No. If he were a book, I would burn my library. But, who is his new friend? Is there no young man now that will travel to hell and back with him?

MESSENGER

He is usually in the company of the noble Claudio.

BEATRICE

Oh Lord. He will hang upon him like a disease; Benedick is more easily caught than the plague, and the victim soon runs mad. God help the noble Claudio! If he has caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound before he can be cured!

MESSENGER

I will stay friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE

Do, good friend.

LEONATO

You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE

No, not until a hot January.

MESSENGER

Don Pedro is coming!

(Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO,
BENEDICK, and BALTHASAR)

DON PEDRO

Good Signior Leonato, you have come to meet your trouble! The rest of the world avoids expensive visitors, yet you come to meet us!

LEONATO

Never came trouble to my house with your grace, only comfort. But when you leave my house, sorrow will move in and happiness takes his leave.

DON PEDRO

You embrace your duties too willingly.

(turns to Hero)

This is your daughter, I think.

LEONATO

Her mother told me so many times.

BENEDICK

Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked if she were your child?

LEONATO

Signior Benedick, no; for at the time you were a child, so you couldn't be her father.

DON PEDRO

He has you there, Benedick. Your reputation as a lady-killer precedes you. But, the lady looks like her father, anyway. Be happy, lady; for you look like an honorable man.

(All but Benedick and Beatrice move a little off.)

BENEDICK

If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not want to look any more like him for all of Messina.

BEATRICE

I wonder why you are still talking, Signior Benedick. Nobody is listening to you.

BENEDICK

What! My dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?

BEATRICE

Is it possible disdain should die while she has so much food to eat as Signior Benedick? Lady Courtesy herself can't help but changing into Lady Disdain when you come by.

BENEDICK

Then is Lady Courtesy a double-agent. But you know, I am loved by all ladies, only except you. And I wish that I did not have a hard heart, for I truly love no one.

BEATRICE

Oh, a dear happiness to women: otherwise, they would have been troubled by an annoying suitor. But, I thank God and my own cold blood that I agree with you. I would rather hear my dog bark at a crow than hear a man swear that he loves me.

BENEDICK

I hope God keeps your ladyship that way! That way some gentleman or other will escape a scratched face.

BEATRICE

Scratching would not make such a face worse if it were a face like yours.

BENEDICK

Well, you are quite the screeching parrot.

BEATRICE

A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

BENEDICK

I wish my horse had the speed of your tongue, and the stamina! But whatever you say next, I'm finished.

BEATRICE

You always end with a trick. I know you from before.

DON PEDRO

(returning)

That is the whole story, Leonato. Signior Claudio and Signior Benedick, my dear friend Leonato has invited us all to stay here. I told him we shall stay here at least a month, and he wishes for some reason will come so that we will stay even longer. I think he means it, too!

LEONATO

If you swear, my lord, you shall not be a liar.

(to DON JOHN)

Let me bid you welcome, my lord: Since you and your

brother, Don Pedro, are no longer enemies, you are welcome here.

DON JOHN

I thank you. I don't talk much, but I thank you.

LEONATO

Will it please your grace to go first?

DON PEDRO

Your hand, Leonato. We will go together!

(exeunt all except BENEDICK and
CLAUDIO)

CLAUDIO

Benedick, did you see the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK

I didn't get a good look at her, but I saw her.

CLAUDIO

Isn't she a charming lady?

BENEDICK

Do you want my honest opinion? Or do you want me to criticize her as I criticize all women?

CLAUDIO

No! I want you to tell me the honest sober truth.

BENEDICK

Why, in faith, I think she is too short for high praise, too brown for fair praise, and too little for a great praise. I can only say this about her: If she were different than the way she is, she would be ugly. But being that she is the way she is, I do not like her.

CLAUDIO

You think I'm joking. Tell me truly if you like her.

BENEDICK

What? Are you interested in acquiring her? Is that why you are asking?

CLAUDIO

Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK

Yes, and a case to put it in. But, do you say this with a love-lorn face? Or are you joking? Tell me what you are thinking.

CLAUDIO

In my eye, she is the sweetest lady that I ever looked on.

BENEDICK

I can see yet without glasses, and I see no such lady. Her cousin, Beatrice, if she didn't have such a sharp tongue, is more beautiful in the way that the first of May is prettier than the last of December. But I hope you don't intend to get married, do you?

CLAUDIO

I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the opposite, if Hero would be my wife.

BENEDICK

Has it come to this? In faith, does the world have even one man who will not marry and spend his life suspicious of his wife? Will I never see a bachelor of sixty-three again? Go on, then. If you insist on being yoked like an ox to a woman, I can't stop you. Look. Don Pedro has come back looking for you.

DON PEDRO

What secret has kept you here? Why didn't you follow us inside?

BENEDICK

I ask your grace to forbid me to tell you.

DON PEDRO

Oh, no. I insist you tell me on your honor.

BENEDICK

You hear Count Claudio? I can be as silent as a mute man. I want you to believe that. But, here, on my honor! I have to tell. He is in love. With who? That's what you say, your grace. Listen to how short his answer is: he's in love with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO

Unless my feelings change soon, God forbid, it is true.

DON PEDRO

Amen, if you love her. The lady is very lovely.

CLAUDIO

You are only saying that to trick me, my lord.

DON PEDRO

No, truly, by my troth, I speak what I think.

CLAUDIO

And, in faith, I spoke what I think.

BENEDICK

And by my two faiths and troths, my lord, I said what I think.

CLAUDIO

That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO

That she is worthy, I know.

BENEDICK

That I neither feel how she should be loved nor know how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me: I will die at the stake on that fire.

DON PEDRO

You have always been a man who does not believe in beauty.

CLAUDIO

Or in reason.

BENEDICK

That a woman bore me, I thank her. That my mother brought me up, I likewise give her humble thanks. But excuse me if I don't want to marry a woman and then wonder forever after if she's being true to me. And since I don't want to wrong them all by mistrusting them, I'll just avoid them all. I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO

I shall see you, before I die, look pale with love.

BENEDICK

Pale with anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord, not with love. If you prove that I am ever in love and not just drunk, you can pluck out my eyes with a poet's pen and hang me in front of the pub as if I were a sign of blind Cupid.

DON PEDRO

Well, if ever you do fall in love, I'll be sure to tell everyone.

BENEDICK

If I fall in love, paint a bulls-eye on me and use me for target practice. And anyone who hits me, let him be praised and called a hero.

DON PEDRO

Well, as they say, "In time the savage bull will wear a yoke."

BENEDICK

The savage bull may, but if ever the sensible Benedick bears it, pluck off the bulls horns and put them on my forehead. Then, paint a sign in great letters "Here is Benedick, the married man!"

DON PEDRO

Well, you may find yourself changed soon. In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, go to Leonato's and tell him I will be there for supper. He has made a feast for us.

BENEDICK

I have almost enough material to entertain a feasting hall. And so I take my leave of you.

(exit)

CLAUDIO

My liege, your rank may do me some good now.

DON PEDRO

My love is yours to use.

CLAUDIO

Has Leonato any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO

No child but Hero; she's his only heir.
Do you like her, Claudio?

CLAUDIO

O, my lord,
When we went off on this finished battle,
I looked on her with a soldier's eye.
I liked, but I had rougher tasks at hand
Than to move liking her to loving her.
But now I am returned and those war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant. In their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
Making me think how fair young Hero is.
So, I like her even more than before.

DON PEDRO

If you do love Hero, cherish it,
And I will ask the girl and her father,
And you shall have her. Isn't that what
You wanted when you started talking?

CLAUDIO

How observant you are to see my love
And know I love by my pale complexion!
But, to keep you from thinking I love
Too quickly, I told a longer story.

DON PEDRO

Whatever will work will do. First, you love her,
And I will fix for you a remedy.
I know we shall have a party tonight.
I will pretend to be you in disguise
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart.
After that I will break with her father,
And the conclusion is, she shall be yours.
Let us make it so immediately.

(exeunt)

ACT I

SCENE 2

SCENE II. A room in LEONATO's house.

(Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, meeting)

LEONATO

How now, brother! Where is my cousin, your son? Has he provided this music?

ANTONIO

He is very busy about it. But, brother, I can tell you strange news that you haven't yet dreamt of.

LEONATO

Is it good news?

ANTONIO

As I heard it. The Prince and Count Claudio, as they walked in the leafy alley in my garden, were overheard by a servant of mine: The prince revealed to Claudio that he loved my niece, your daughter and meant to tell her tonight at the dance. If he found she liked him, too, he meant to ask you for her hand.

LEONATO

And you trust this servant?

ANTONIO

He's a good sharp fellow. I'll send for him and you can ask him yourself.

LEONATO

No need. I won't believe it until it actually happens. But I will tell my daughter, though, so that she might be prepared to answer the Prince if this story is true. I will go tell Hero about it.

(enter attendants)

LEONATO

Cousins, you know what you have to do. O, good sir, be careful in this busy time.

(exeunt)

ACT I

SCENE 3

SCENE III. The same.

(Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE)

CONRADE

What's the matter, my lord? Why are you this sad?

DON JOHN

There is no limit to the things that make me sad, so there is no limit to my sadness.

CONRADE

You should hear reason and be happier.

DON JOHN

And when I hear reason, what blessing brings it?

CONRADE

If reason doesn't fix your problem right away, maybe it will help you feel better.

DON JOHN

I'm surprised that you, a melancholy person, goes around using philosophy to treat an incurable disease. I cannot hide what I am. I must be sad when I have a reason, and not smile at a man's jokes; eat when I have stomach and not have to wait for anyone else; sleep when I am drowsy and not finish someone else's work; laugh when I am merry and not to flatter another person.

CONRADE

True, but you can't be yourself until you can do so without restraint. Only recently, you were at war with the Prince, your brother, and he has only just forgiven you. You won't be able to take root in court unless you make fair weather for yourself. You need to keep the storms at bay so you can reap the rewards.

DON JOHN

I would rather be a canker in a bush than a rose in his favor, and it better suits me to be disliked by all than to pretend to be someone I'm not and steal

love from them. In this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied that I am a plain-dealing villain. I have decided not to sing in my cage. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my freedom, I would do what I liked. In the meantime, let me be what I am and don't seek to change me.

(Enter Borachio)

DON JOHN

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO

I came from a great supper. The prince, your brother, is royally entertained by Leonato. And I can give you news of an intended marriage.

DON JOHN

Can I use this information to make mischief? Who is he who is foolish enough to get married?

BORACHIO

I say, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN

Who? The exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he.

DON JOHN

A dandy man. And who, and who? Which girl does he look?

BORACHIO

Why, on Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonato.

DON JOHN

A very sweet spring chick! How did you learn this?

BORACHIO

I was working in a musty room when the Prince and Claudio came in talking seriously. I ducked behind a curtain and there I heard them agree that the prince would woo Hero for Claudio with his soft words, and when she agreed, the prince would give her to Claudio.

DON JOHN

Now, this may prove a way to feed my pain. That young up-start gained glory when he over-threw me. If I can cross him in any way, I will be blessed in every way. You are both with me and will assist me?

CONRADE

To the death, my lord.

DON JOHN

Let us to the great supper. They are happy because I am weak. Shall we go see what we can do to change that?

BORACHIO

We will wait upon your lordship.

ACT II

SCENE 1

(Leonato's House)

(Enter Leonato, his brother Antonio, Hero, his daughter, and Beatrice, his neice, with Ursula and Margaret)

LEONATO

Wasn't Count John here at supper?

ANTONIO

I saw him not.

BEATRICE

How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I have heart-burn an hour later.

HERO

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE

An excellent man could be produced if he were made just halfway between Don John and Benedick. The one is too much like a picture and says nothing, and the other is too much like a spoiled child, always tattling.

LEONATO

Then half of Signior Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth, and half of Count John's melancholy in Signior Benedick's face--

BEATRICE

With a good leg and a a good foot, Uncle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world...if he could get her to like him!

LEONATO

By my word, niece. You will never get a husband if you are too sharp-tongued.

ANTONIO

Indeed, she's too cursed.

BEATRICE

Too cursed is more than cursed. I shall save God the trouble. It is said that "God sends a cursed cow short horns," but to a cow who is too cursed, he sends none.

LEONATO

So, but being too cursed, God will send you no horns?

BEATRICE

Only if he sends me no husband to be untrue to me. For this blessing, I thank him upon my knees every morning and evening. Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face: I had rather wrap myself in a wool blanket.

LEONATO

You may get a husband who has no beard.

BEATRICE

And what should I do with him? Dress him in my gowns and make him my lady in waiting? He that has a beard is more than a youth, and he that has no beard is less than a man. And he that is more than a youth is not for me. And he that is less than a man, I am not for him. Therefore, I will go with the maidens to hell.

LEONATO

What? Then you'll go to hell?

BEATRICE

No. Just to the gate. And there the Devil will meet me, like an old cuckold with horns on his head, and say, "Get you to heaven, Beatrice. Get you to heaven. Hell's no place for you maids." So away I'll go to Saint Peter and to the heavens. He shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

ANTONIO

(to Hero)

Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

BEATRICE

Yes, indeed. It is my cousin's duty to make curtsy and say "father, as it pleases you." But yet, for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy and say "Father, as it pleases

me."

LEONATO

Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

BEATRICE

Not until God makes men of some other stuff than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be linked forever with a piece of earnest dust?

LEONATO

Daughter, remember what I told you. If the prince does ask you, you know your answer.

BEATRICE

The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you are not wooed in good time.

LEONATO

Cousin, you understand things shrewdly.

BEATRICE

I have a good eye, Uncle. I can see a church by daylight.

LEONATO

The partiers are arriving! Brother, make room!

(All put on their masks)

(Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, Balthasar, Don John, Borachio, Margaret, Ursula and others, masked)

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you dance with your friend?

HERO

If you dance lightly and look sweetly and say nothing, I am yours for the dance...and especially when I dance away!

DON PEDRO

With me in your company?

HERO

I might let you when it pleases me.

DON PEDRO

And when might it please you to say so?

HERO

When I like your looks without a mask.

DON PEDRO

Speak low, if you speak love.

(drawing her aside)

BALTHASAR

Well, I wish you did like me.

MARGARET

I would hope I did not like you for your own sake, for I have many bad qualities.

BALTHASAR

Like what?

MARGARET

I say my prayers aloud.

BALTHASAR

I love you the better: people who hear you may cry, Amen!

MARGARET

Oh, Lord, match me with a good dancer!

BALTHASAR

Amen!

MARGARET

And God keep him away from me when the dance is over! Well? Answer Amen.

BALTHASAR

No more words from you. Let's dance!

URSULA

I know you well enough; you are Signior Antonio.

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA

I know you by the way your head waggles.

ANTONIO

To tell you true, I am pretending to be Antonio.

URSULA

You could never pretend to do such a bad impression of him unless you were him! Here's his weak hand: you are he, you are Antonio!

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not!

URSULA

Come, come. Do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? Can virtue hide itself? Go on, you are him. Your virtues, such as they are, appear, and so I'm right!

BEATRICE

Will you not tell me who told you so?

BENEDICK

No, you will pardon me.

BEATRICE

Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK

Not now.

BEATRICE

That I was disdainful, and that all my jokes came from a book? Well, this was Signior Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK

Who is he?

BEATRICE

I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK

Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE

Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK

No. Who is he?

BEATRICE

Why, he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool; his only talent is in inventing impossible lies: none but the very lowest delight in him; and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy; for her both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is bobbing like a ship on the dance floor. I wish he had tried to board me.

BENEDICK

When I meet this gentleman, I will well him what you say.

BEATRICE

Do, do. He'll say a mean thing or two about me; and, if no one laughs at his jokes, it will cause him to be depressed. And then there's a plate of food saved, because then he will not eat supper.

(music)

We must follow the leaders.

BENEDICK

In every good thing.

BEATRICE

Yay. If they lead to anything bad, I will leave them at the next spin.

(Dance. Then all exeunt except Don John, Borachio, and Claudio)

DON JOHN

Look! my brother is in love with Hero and has pulled her father aside to ask him for her hand in marriage. The ladies follow her, but one masked person hangs back.

BORACHIO

That's Claudio. I know him by the way he stands.

DON JOHN

(to Claudio)

Are you not Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO

You know me well. I am he.

DON JOHN

Signior, you are very close friends with my brother. He is in love with Hero. I ask you, tell him not to marry her. She is no equal to his birth.

CLAUDIO

How do you know he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO

So did I. And he swore he would marry her tonight.

DON JOHN

Come, let us go to the banquet.

(exeunt Don John and Borachio)

CLAUDIO

And so I pretend to be Benedick,
And hear this ill news with the ears of Claudio.
It's certainly true; Pedro wooes for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things
Except in the office and affairs of love.
So, all hearts in love should use their own tongues;
Let every eye negotiate for itself
And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch
Against whose charms melts faith into blood.
Farewell, therefore, Hero!

(re-enter Benedick)

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Yes. The same.

BENEDICK

Come, will you come with me?

CLAUDIO

Where?

BENEDICK

Even to the next willow, about your own business. Will you make a leash with it for your future wife to lead you with? You must wear a chain of some sort for the prince has got your Hero.

CLAUDIO

I wish him joy with her.

BENEDICK

Why, did you think the prince would have cheated you so?

CLAUDIO

I pray you, leave me.

BENEDICK

Ho! Now you strike like a blind man: It was the boy who stole your meat, but you'll beat messenger.

CLAUDIO

If you won't go, I'll leave you.

(exits)

BENEDICK

Alas, poor hurt fowl! He'll now creep into the underbrush...But that my Lady Beatrice should know me in a mask, and yet not know me! The prince's fool! Ha? It may be I go under that title because I am merry. But no. I am not so reputed. It is the bitter disposition of Beatrice that says so because she thinks that the world shares her opinion of me. Well, I'll be revenged.

(re-enter Don Pedro)

DON PEDRO

Now, Signior, where's the count? Did you see him?

BENEDICK

In truth, my lord. I have played the part of Lady Rumor. I found him here as melancholy as a orange. I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the will of this young lady, and I offered him my company to meet you. But he left.

DON PEDRO

Why?

BENEDICK

He's like a schoolboy, who, being overjoyed with finding a birds' nest, shows it to his friend, who steals it.

DON PEDRO

I will but teach the little bird to sing, and restore her to the owner.

BENEDICK

If her singing says the same thing you do, there is no fault.

DON PEDRO

You know, the Lady Beatrice has a quarrel with you: the gentleman who danced with her told her she is much wronged by you.

BENEDICK

O! She misused me past endurance! An oak with but one green leaf on it would have been angered by her. My very mask began to assume life and quarrel with her. She told me, not knowing I was myself, that I was the prince's jester, that I was duller than a great thaw. She speaks with arrows. Every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her words, she would infect the air all the way to the north star. I would not marry her even if she were to inherit paradise. Come, talk not of her. Where she goes, all disquiet, horror and perturbation follow her.

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.

(Enter Claudio, Beatrice, Hero, and Leonato)

BENEDICK

Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on. I will fetch you a toothpick now from the furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester John's foot, fetch you a hair off of the great Cham's beard, rather

than have three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO

None, but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK

Oh God, sir, here's a dish I love not. I cannot endure my Lady Tongue.

(exit)

DON PEDRO

Come, lady, come. You have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.

BEATRICE

Indeed, my lord. He lent it me awhile, and I gave him use for it. I gave him two hears for his single one. Indeed, one time before he won my heart from me with false dice, and therefore, your grace may well say I have lost it.

(brings forward Claudio)

BEATRICE

But, look. I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seek.

DON PEDRO

Why, how now, Count! Why are you sad?

CLAUDIO

Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

How, then? Sick?

CLAUDIO

Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE

The count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, nor well: but civil count. Civil as an orange, and something of that jealous complexion.

DON PEDRO

In faith, land, I think your words are true. Though,

I'll be sworn, If his is jealous, his reasons are false. Here, Claudio, I have wood in your name, and fair Hero is won. I have asked her father for you, too, and his good will obtained. Name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!

LEONATO

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: the Prince has made the match, and I say Amen to it.

BEATRICE

Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO

Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: if I were a little happy, I could say how happy I was. Lady, as you are mine, I am yours.

BEATRICE

Speak, cousin, or, if you cannot, stop wish mouth with a kiss, and don't let him speak neither.

DON PEDRO

In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE

Yes, my lord. I thank it, poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care. My cousin tells him in his ear that he is in her heart.

CLAUDIO

And so she does, cousin.

BEATRICE

Good Lord, for marriage! Thus goes every one to the altar but me, and I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband!

DON PEDRO

Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

BEATRICE

I would rather have one of your father's getting. Don't you have any brothers like you? Your father bred excellent husbands, if a lady could come by them.

DON PEDRO

Will you have me, lady?

BEATRICE

Ah. No, my lord, unless I might have another husband for working-days. Your grace is too expensive to wear every day. But, I beseech your grace, pardon me: I was born to speak all mirth and no matter.

DON PEDRO

Your silence most offends me, and to be merry best becomes you; for, without question, you were born in a merry hour.

BEATRICE

No, for sure, my lord. My mother cried. But then there was a star danced, and under that was I born. Cousins! God give you joy!

LEONATO

Niece, will you look to those things I told you of?

BEATRICE

Of course, uncle! Excuse me, your grace.

(exits)

DON PEDRO

I swear, she's a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

There's hardly any melancholy in her, my lord. She is never sad but when she sleeps, and not ever sad then. For I have heard my daughter say that Beatrice has often dreamed of unhappiness and then waked herself with laughing.

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure tell of a husband.

LEONATO

Oh, by no means. She mocks all her woers out of suit.

DON PEDRO

She would make an excellent wife for Benedick.

LEONATO

O Lord! My lord, if they were married for a week, they

would talk each other mad.

DON PEDRO

Count Claudio, when do you want to get married?

CLAUDIO

Tomorrow!

LEONATO

Not till Monday, my dear son, which is only a week.
Even then, there is too much to do.

DON PEDRO

Come, don't be so impatient. I warrant thee, Claudio, we shall not be bored. As we wait, I will undertake one of Hercules' labors: which is to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection with each other. I expect they will fall in love with each other if you three will help me.

LEONATO

My lord, I will follow you, even if it costs me ten nights' sleep.

CLAUDIO

And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO

And you too, gentle Hero?

HERO

I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my cousin to a good husband.

DON PEDRO

Oh, Benedick is not the worst possible husband that I know. I can say this for him: he is of a noble family, has proved his valor and is confirmed honest. I will give you ideas on how to change your cousin's mind so that she is primed to fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will also trick Benedick so that, despite his quick wit and queasy stomach, he will also fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer! His glory will be ours for we will be the only love-gods. Come inside with me, and I will tell you my plan!

(Exeunt)

ACT II

SCENE 2

(Enter Don John and Borachio)

DON JOHN

It is so: Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

BORACHIO

Yea, my lord; but I can prevent it.

DON JOHN

Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be like medicine to me. I am sick with hating him. Whatever I can do to thwart his happiness will make me better. How can you cross this marriage?

BORACHIO

Not by any honest means, my lord, but in such a way that I will not appear dishonest.

DON PEDRO

Tell me how.

BORACHIO

I think I told your lordship last year, how much I am loved by Margaret, the waiting gentlewoman of Hero.

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

I can, at any unreasonable hour of the night, appoint her to look out of her lady's chamber window.

DON JOHN

So what? How will that be the death of a marriage?

BORACHIO

The poison of that lies in how you present it. You go to the prince your brother, tell him not to let Claudio marry Hero because she is a contaminated harlot.

DON JOHN

How can I prove that?

BORACHIO

Find the prince and Claudio and tell them that you know that Hero loves me. Tell them that you are informing them because you love them both and don't want their honors stained by a liar and cheat like Hero. They will scarcely believe this without proof. Offer them examples, that you have seen me at her bedroom window, and that you will likely see her there again with me at a certain time. Bring them at that time so they can see us as I call Margaret "Hero." Bring them the night before the wedding, and they will see what they will assume is proof of Hero's disloyalty, and the wedding will be off.

DON JOHN

I will put this into practice. Be cunning as you do this, and your fee will be a thousand ducats.

BORACHIO

Make the accusation stick, and my cunning shall not shame me.

DON JOHN

I will go now and learn what day they marry.

(exeunt)

ACT II

SCENE 3

(Leonato's orchard.)

(Enter Benedick)

BENEDICK

I do wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his actions to love, will, after he has laughed at other's shallow love follies, become the target of his own scorn by falling in love himself. Such a man is Claudio. I have known him when he loved no music but the military drum and fife. Now he had rather hear dancing music. I have known him when he would have walked ten miles to see a good armor. Now he will lie ten nights awake, designing a new vest. He used to speak plain and to the purpose like an honest man and a soldier. Now he has turned to poetry, and his words are a very fantastical banquet. Might I be so converted and see with lover's eyes? I cannot tell. I think not. I could be wrong, but love may transform me to an oyster. But I'll take my oath on it, till love has made an oyster, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well. Another is wise, yet I am well. Another is virtuous, yet I am well. But until all these graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come into my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain. Wise, or I'll none. Virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her. Fair, or I'll never look on her. Mild, or come not near me. Of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what color it please God. Ha! The prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide in the arbor.

(Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato)

DON PEDRO

Come, shall we hear this music?

CLAUDIO

Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,
And quiet on purpose to grace the music!

DON PEDRO

See you where Benedick has hid himself?

CLAUDIO

O, very well, my lord: The music ended,
We'll trap this kid-fox with his reward.

(enter Balthasar with music)

BALTHASAR

Note this before my notes:
There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting

DON PEDRO

Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks;
Note, notes, forsooth, and nothing.

(Music)

BENEDICK

Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished! Is it not
strange that sheeps' guts should pull souls out of
men's bodies? Well, a horn for my money.

(the song)

BALTHASAR

(sings)

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never:
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.
Sing no more ditties, sing no more,
Of dumps so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leafy:
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a good song.

BALTHASAR

And an ill singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Ha!, no, no, faith. You sing better than any of us.

BENEDICK

If he had been a dog that had howled in this way, they would have shut him up.

DON PEDRO

Thanks to you Balthasar.

BALTHASAR

Farewell, my lord.

(exit Balthasar)

DON PEDRO

Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of today? That your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO

(Whispers) O, ay! Keep going! He's listening. (Aloud) I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

LEONATO

No, nor I neither, but most wonderful that she should dote so on Signior Benedick, whom she hath in all outward behaviors seemed ever to hate.

BENEDICK

Is't possible? Does the wind blow from that direction?

LEONATO

By my troth, my lord, I cannot tell what to think of it but that she loves him with an enraged affection. It boggles the imagination.

DON PEDRO

Maybe she's pretending?

LEONATO

O God, pretending? There was never a pretend passion that that came so near real life passion.

DON PEDRO

Why, what kind of passions does she show?

CLAUDIO

(whispers)

Bait the hook well. This fish will bite.

LEONATO

What effects, my lord? You heard my daughter tell you how.

CLAUDIO

She did, indeed.

DON PEDRO

How, how, pray you? (They whisper) You amaze me. I would have thought her spirit invincible against the assaults of love.

LEONATO

I would have sworn it had, my lord; especially against Benedick.

BENEDICK

I would have thought this a trick, but the white-bearded fellow speaks it. Such a reverend man cannot hide such trickery.

CLAUDIO

(whispers)

He has taken the bait. Bring him up!

DON PEDRO

Has she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO

No, and she swears she never will. That's her torment.

CLAUDIO

'Tis true, indeed. So your daughter says. "Shall I," says she, "that have so oft met him with scorn, write to him that I love him?"

LEONATO

This says she when she is beginning to write to him, for she'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she has written a sheet of paper. So my daughter tells us. Then she tore the letter into a thousand pieces, railed at herself, that she should be so immodest to write to one that she

knew would make fun of her. "I assume he will make fun of me," she says, "because if he wrote to me, I would make fun of him, even if I loved him."

CLAUDIO

Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps, sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses: "O sweet Benedick! God give me patience!"

LEONATO

She does indeed. My daughter says so: and the passion has so much overcome her that my daughter is sometimes afraid that she will do a desperate thing to herself. It is very true.

DON PEDRO

Benedick should know about this if she won't tell him.

CLAUDIO

To what end? He would but make fun of her and torment the poor lady worse.

DON PEDRO

If he would, it would be a good deed to hang him. She's an excellent sweet lady, and out of all suspicion, virtuous.

CLAUDIO

And she is exceedingly wise.

DON PEDRO

In every thing but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO

O, my lord, I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

DON PEDRO

I wish she loved me. I would have put aside all doubt and married her. I pray you, tell Benedick of it, and hear what he will say.

LEONATO

Do you think that's a good idea?

CLAUDIO

Hero thinks Beatrice will surely die, for she says she

will die if he love her not, and she will die before she makes her love know, and she will die, if he woos her, rather than change the way she behaves around him.

DON PEDRO

As she should. If she tells him of her love, it's very possible he will scorn it. For the man, as you all know, has a contemptible spirit.

CLAUDIO

He is a very proper man.

DON PEDRO

He seems outwardly happy.

CLAUDIO

Before God! And in my mind, very wise.

DON PEDRO

He does have some sparks that are like wit.

CLAUDIO

And he's valiant.

DON PEDRO

Well, I am sorry for your niece. Shall we go seek Benedick and tell him of her love?

CLAUDIO

Never tell him, my lord. Let her wear it out.

LEONATO

Nay, that's impossible. She may wear her heart out first.

DON PEDRO

Well, we will hear further of it from your daughter. Let it cool a while. I love Benedick well, and I wish he would modestly examine himself, to see how much he is unworthy of so good a lady.

LEONATO

My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready.

CLAUDIO

(whispers)

If he does not dote on her after this, I will never

trust my expectation.

DON PEDRO

Let there be the same net spread for her, and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be, when they learn of the love from the other one and then meet. That's the scene I want to see. Let us send Beatrice to call Benedick in to dinner.

(exeunt Don Pedro, Claudio, and
Leonato)

BENEDICK

(coming forward)

This can be no trick: they talked about it sadly. They have the truth of it from Hero. They seem to pity the lady: as if they completely believe in her love. Love me? Why? It must be requited. I hear how I am criticized: they say I will bear myself proudly if I think she loves me. They say too that she would rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry: I must not seem proud. Happy are they that hear their detractions and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair: 'tis a truth. And virtuous; 'tis so. And wise, but for loving me. By my troth, loving me is no addition to her wit, nor a great argument against her foolishness, for I will be horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks of wit broken against me, and be made fun of, because I have railed so long against marriage, but doesn't the appetite change? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot eat in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain keep a man from changing his mind? No. The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I would live until I was married. Here comes Beatrice. By this day! She's a fair lady. I do spy some marks of love in her.

(Enter Beatrice)

BEATRICE

Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.

BENEDICK

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

BEATRICE

I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me: if it had been painful, I would not have come.

BENEDICK

You take pleasure then in the message?

BEATRICE

Yes, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point. You are not hungry, signor? Fare you well.

(exit Beatrice)

BENEDICK

Ha! "Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner." There's a double meaning in that. If I do not love her, I am villain.

(exit)

ACT III

SCENE 1

(Leonato's garden. Enter Hero,
Margaret, and Ursula)

HERO

Good Margaret, run the to the parlor;
There you shall find my cousin Beatrice
Talking with the prince and Claudio:
Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Ursula
Walk in the orchard and our whole discourse
Is all of her; say that you overheard us;
And bid her hide into the braided bower:
There will she hide herself to hear our tale.

MARGARET

I'll make her come, I warrant you, presently.

(exits)

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice does come,
As we do walk this alley up and down,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit:
My talk to thee must be of how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay.

(Enter Beatrice, behind)

HERO

Now, begin,
For look where Beatrice, like a quick hen, runs
Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

URSULA

The pleasantest angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream,
And greedily devour the treacherous bait:
So we fish for Beatrice.

HERO

Then we'll go near her, so that she'll lose none
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.

(they approach the bower)

HERO

No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful;
I know her sprits are a coy and wild
As a wild falcon's.

URSULA

But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO

So says the prince and my newly-betrothed lord.

URSULA

And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?

HERO

They did entreat me to acquaint her of it;
But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick,
To wish him wrestle with affection,
And never to let Beatrice know of it.

URSULA

Why did you so? Does not the gentleman
Deserve as wise and virtuous a wife
As ever Beatrice will surely be?

HERO

O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man:
But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Despising what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
All matter else seems weak: She cannot love,
Nor take shape, nor show any affection,
She is so self-endear'd.

URSULA

Sure, I think so:
And therefore certainly it is not good

She knew of his love, lest she make sport of it.

HERO

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw a man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,
But she would describe him wrong: If fair-faced,
She swears the gentleman is her sister;
If speaking, why, a banner in the wind;
If silent, why, he's a block moved by none.
So turns she every man the wrong side out
And never gives to thought and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit earn.

URSULA

Sure, sure, such carping is not polite.

HERO

But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.
Therefore, let Benedick, like cover'd fire,
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:
It is a better death than to die with mocks
Which is as bad as to die with tickling.

URSULA

Yet tell her of it: hear what she will say.

HERO

No. Instead I will go to Benedick
And counsel him to fight against his passion.
And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders
To stain my cousin with: One does not know
How much an ill work may poison liking.

URSULA

O, do not do your cousin such a wrong.
She cannot be so much without true judgement--
Having so swift and excellent a wit
As she is prized to have--as to refuse
So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

HERO

He is the only man of Italy.
Always excepted my dear Claudio.

URUSLA

When are you married, madam?

HERO

Why, every day, tomorrow! Come, go in!

URSULA

(to Hero)

She's caught, I warrant you!

HERO

(to Ursula)

If it proves so, then loving goes by haps:
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

(exeunt Hero and Ursula)

BEATRICE

(coming forward)

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?
Contempt, farewell! And maiden pride, adieu!
No glory lives behind the back of this.
And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand:
If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
To bind our loves up in a holy band;
For others say thou dost deserve, and I
Believe it better than reprovngly!

(exit)

ACT III

SCENE 2

(A room in Leonato's house)

(Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, and Leonato. Benedick has on a fine coat and hat and has trimmed his beard or has had a haircut.)

DON PEDRO

I will stay here until just after you are married, and then I go toward Aragon.

CLAUDIO

I'll go with you to Aragon, my lord, if you'll have me.

DON PEDRO

Nay, that would be as hard on you and your new marriage as showing a child his new coat and forbidding him to wear it. I will only be bold with Benedick for this company; for, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, he is all mirth. He has twice or three times cut Cupid's bow-string.

BENEDICK

Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO

So say I. I think you are sadder.

CLAUDIO

I hope he is in love.

DON PEDRO

Hang him, truant! There's no true drop of blood in him, to be truly touched with love. If he is sad, he wants money.

BENEDICK

I have a toothache.

DON PEDRO

What? Sigh for a toothache?

BENEDICK

Well, everyone can taste a grief except he that has it.

CLAUDIO

Yet say I, he is in love.

DON PEDRO

There is no appearance of fancy in him, unless he has a fancy for dressing up a fool, as it appears he has. He is no fool for fancy love, as you would have it appear he is.

CLAUDIO

If he is not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs. He brushes his hat clean in the mornings. What should that mean?

DON PEDRO

Has any man seen him at the barber's?

CLAUDIO

No, but the barber's man has seen him.

LEONATO

Indeed, he looks younger than he did, by the loss of a beard.

DON PEDRO

Nay, he rubs himself all over with cologne. Can you smell him?

CLAUDIO

That's as much as to say, the sweet youth is in love.

DON PEDRO

The greatest tell of it is his melancholy.

CLAUDIO

And when did he ever wash his face before?

DON PEDRO

Indeed, that tells a heavy tale for him: conclude, conclude, he is in love.

CLAUDIO

Nay, but I know who loves him.

DON PEDRO

That would I know too. I warrant, one who doesn't know him.

CLAUDIO

Yes, or know his worse parts. Yet, despite of all, she dies for him.

BENEDICK

Yet this is no charm for the toothache. Old signor, walk aside with me: I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak to you, which these hobby-horses must not hear.

(exeunt Benedick and Leonato)

DON PEDRO

For my life, to break with Leonato about Beatrice.

CLAUDIO

'Tis even so. Hero and Margaret have by this played their parts with Beatrice; and then the two bears will not bite one another when they meet.

(enter Don John)

DON JOHN

My lord and brother, God save you!

DON PEDRO

Good evening, brother.

DON JOHN

If you have a moment, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO

In private?

DON JOHN

If it please you: yet Count Claudio may hear, for what I would say concerns him.

DON PEDRO

What's the matter?

DON JOHN

(to Claudio)

Means you lordship to be married tomorrow?

DON PEDRO

You know he does.

DON JOHN

I don't know that when he knows what I know.

CLAUDIO

If there be any impediment, I pray you tell me.

DON JOHN

You may think I love you not, I hope this changes your minds. For my brother, I think he holds you well, and had helped you to this marriage. Surely he will regret doing so.

DON PEDRO

Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN

I came here to tell you. The lady is disloyal.

CLAUDIO

What? Hero?

DON JOHN

Even she. Leonato's Hero. Your Hero. Every man's Hero.

CLAUDIO

Disloyal?

DON JOHN

The word is too good to paint out her wickedness; I could say she were worse. But don't take my word for it. Go with me tonight and you will see someone go in her bedroom window, even on the night before her wedding. If you love her then, tomorrow wed her, but it would better fit your honor to change your mind.

CLAUDIO

Can this be so?

DON PEDRO

I will not think it.

DON JOHN

If you follow me, I will show you enough. And when you have seen more and heard more, you can proceed accordingly.

CLAUDIO

If I see anything tonight that shows me why I should not marry her tomorrow, in the congregation where I should wed her, I will instead shame her.

DON PEDRO

And, as I wooed to get her for you, I will join with you to disgrace her.

DON JOHN

Bear it quietly until midnight, and let her show you herself.

DON PEDRO

O day badly turned!

CLAUDIO

O wickedness unbelievably revealed!

DON JOHN

O plague right well prevented! You will say so when you have seen it tonight.

(exeunt)

ACT III

SCENE 3

(Town Square. Enter Dogberry and his copartner [Verges] with the Watch (First Watchman, Second Watchmen, and Seacoal)

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

VERGES

Yea, or else it is a pit by they should suffer salvation, body and soul.

DOGBERRY

Nay, that is a punishment too good for them, if they should have any loyalty in them, since they have been chosen for the Prince's watch.

VERGES

Well, give home their charge, neighbor Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

First, who do you think the most deserve-less man should be constable?

FIRST WATCHMAN

Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacole; for they can write and read.

DOGBERRY

Come hither, neighbor Seacole. God has blessed you with a good name: to be handsome is a gift of luck, but to write and read comes by nature.

SEACOLE

Both of which, Master Constable,---

DOGBERRY

You have: I knew that would be your answer. Well, for your handsomeness, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it; for you writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of it. You are thought here to be the most senseless and unfit man for the constable of the watch. Therefore, bear you the

latter. This is your charge: you shall comprehend all vagrant men; you are to make any man stand, in the prince's name.

SEACOLE

What if he will not stand?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go; and thank God you are rid of a knave.

VERGES

If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is not one of the prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY

True, and you are to meddle with none but the prince's subjects. You shall also make no noise in the streets.

SECOND WATCHMAN

We will rather sleep than talk: we know how to behave on a watch.

DOGBERRY

Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman; For I cannot see how sleeping should offend. Then, you are to call at all the ale-houses and bid those that are drunk to get themselves to bed.

FIRST WATCHMAN

And how if they will not?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, let them alone until they are sober: If they are not more polite, then, say they are not the polite men you took them for.

FIRST WATCHMAN

Well, sir.

DOGBERRY

If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true man; and of such men, the less you meddle or talk with them, why the more is for your own honesty.

SEACOLE

If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?

DOGBERRY

Truly, by your office, you may; but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled. The best thing to do with a thief is to let him steal out of your company.

VERGES

You have always been called a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY

Truly, I would not willingly hang a dog, much less a man with any honesty in him.

VERGES

'Tis very true.

DOGBERRY

This is the end of the charge: you, constable, are to present the Prince's own person: if you meet the prince, you may arrest him.

VERGES

Nay, by our lady, I think they cannot arrest the prince!

DOGBERRY

I'll bet you five shillings they can. Any man that knows the statues, may arrest him: That is, not without the prince being willing. For, indeed, the watch ought to offend no man; and it is an offense to arrest a man against his will.

VERGES

By our lady, I think it is so.

DOGBERRY

Ha, ha ha! Well, masters, good night: if there is any matter of consequence, call me up. Keep your fellow's counsels and your own and good night! Come, neighbor.

SEACOLE

Well, masters, we hear our charge: Let us sit here upon the church bench until two, and then all to bed.

DOGBERRY

One word more, honest neighbors. I pray you keep watch about Signior Leonato's door; for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is a great turmoil there tonight. Adieu. Be vigilant, I beseech you.

(exeunt Dogberry and Verges)

(enter Borachio and Conrade)

BORACHIO

What Conrade!

SEACOLE

(aside)

Peace! Stir not.

BORACHIO

Conrade, I say!

CONRADE

Here, man. I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO

Indeed, I thought so by the stink!

CONRADE

I will owe thee an answer for that jibe. Now, forward with your tale.

BORACHIO

Stand thee close, then, and I will utter all to thee.

FIRST WATCHMAN

(aside)

Some treason, masters: yet stand closer.

BORACHIO

Now know I have earned for Don John a thousand ducats.

CONRADE

Is it possible that any villainy should be worth so much?

BORACHIO

You should rather ask if it is possible any villainy should be so rich.

CONRADE

I wonder at it.

SECOND WATCHMAN

(aside)

I know that rascal. He has been a vile thief this seven year. He goes up and down like a gentleman. I remember his name.

BORACHIO

Did you hear somebody?

CONRADE

No. 'Twas the weather vane.

BORACHIO

Well. Then, know that I have tonight wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, and I called her "Hero." She leaned out of her mistress' bedroom window, bids me a thousand times good night--I tell this tale badly. I should first tell you how the prince, and Claudio, led there by my master Don John, saw from far off in the orchard this amiable encounter

CONRADE

And they thought Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

Two of them did, the prince and Claudio. But the devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his lies, and partly by the dark night, and chiefly by my villainy, which confirmed any slander that Don John had made, away went Claudio enraged. He swore he would see Hero the next morning at the altar and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw tonight and send her home again without a husband!

SEACOLE

We charge you, in the prince's name, Stand!

FIRST WATCHMAN

Call up the right master constable!

(Exit Second Watchman)

We have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery that ever was known in the commonwealth.

SEACOLE

And this thief is one of them! I know him!

(Enter Dogberry, Verges, and Second
Watchman)

CONRADE

Master, masters,--

DOGBERRY

Never speak: we charge you to let us obey you to go
with us.

BORACHIO

(to Conrade)

We are likely to prove a credit to these fools.

CONRADE

A credit in question, I warrant you. Come, we'll obey
you.

(Exeunt)

ACT III

SCENE 4

(Hero's Apartment.)

(Enter Hero, Margaret, and Ursula)

HERO

Good Ursula, wake my cousin Beatrice, and ask her to rise.

URUSLA

I will, lady.

HERO

And bid her come here.

URSULA

Of course.

(exits)

MARGARET

In truth, I think your other collar is better.

HERO

No, pray thee, good Meg, I'll wear this.

MARGARET

By my troth, it's not good, and I'll bet your cousin will say so.

HERO

My cousin's a fool, and you are another. I'll wear none but this.

MARGARET

I like the new headdress inside much better, and your gown's the highest fashion, in faith. I saw the Duchess of Milan's gown that they praised so.

HERO

Oh, that's a wonderful gown, they say.

MARGARET

By my troth, it is but a nightgown in respect of yours. It had cloth of gold, silver lace, and it was

set with pearls. It was fine, graceful, and of an excellent fashion. But yours is worth ten of it.

HERO

God give me joy to wear it! For my heart is exceeding tight.

MARGARET

'Twill be tighter soon with a hug from your man.

HERO

Fie upon thee! Are you not ashamed?

MARGARET

Of what, lady? Of speaking honorably? Is not marriage honorable in a beggar, is not your lord honorable without marriage? Is there any harm in "the tighter for a hug from your husband?" None, I think, and it will be the right husband and the right wife. Ask my Lady Beatrice. Here she comes.

(enter Beatrice)

HERO

Good morrow, coz.

BEATRICE

Good morrow, sweet Hero.

HERO

Why how now? Do you speak as if you were ill out of tune?

BEATRICE

I am all out of tune, methinks.

MARGARET

Let's sing "Light o'Love;" Sing it, and I'll dance it.

BEATRICE

You are "light o'love," and light with your heels!

MARGARET

O, I scorn that with my dancing heels.

BEATRICE

'Tis almost five o'clock cousin; tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceedingly ill; heigh-ho!

MARGARET

For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

BEATRICE

For the letter that begins them all, H.

HERO

These gloves the count sent me; they have an excellent perfume.

BEATRICE

I am stuffed up, cousin. I cannot smell.

MARGARET

A maid! And stuffed! Stuffed with what, I wonder?

BEATRICE

O, God help me! God Help me! How long have you been a professional tease?

MARGARET

Ever since you left the job. Does not my wit become me well?

BEATRICE

It is not seen enough, so you should wear it in your cap. By my troth, I am sick.

MARGARET

Get you some of this medicine "Cardus Benedictus," and lay it on your heart. It is the only thing for heartsickness.

HERO

There you prick her.

BEATRICE

Benedictus? Why Benedictus? You have some double meaning in this Benedictus.

MARGARET

Double meaning? No, by my troth, I have no double meaning. I meant plain holy-thistle. You may think perchance that I think you are in love. Nay, by our lady, I am not such fool to think that you are in love or that you will be in love or that you can be in love. Yet Benedick was such another before, and now he

is a man. He swore he would never marry, and yet now, in despite of his heart, he eats his crow without grudging. How you may be converted I know not, but methinks you look with your eyes on him as other women do.

BEATRICE

What fast pace is this that your tongue keeps?

MARGARET

It's not a false gallop.

(re-enter Ursula)

URSULA

Madam, withdraw: the prince, the count, Signior Benekick, Don John and all the gallants of the town are here to fetch you to church.

HERO

Help to dress me, good coz, good Meg, good Ursula.

(exeunt)

ACT III

SCENE 5

ANOTHER ROOM IN LEONATO'S HOUSE.

(enter Leonato, with Dogberry and Verges)

LEONATO

What would you have with me, honest neighbor?

DOGBERRY

Marry, sir, I would have some confidence with you that decrees you nearly.

LEONATO

Brief, I pray you; fo you see it is a busy time for me.

DOGBERRY

Marry, this it is, sir.

VERGES

Yes, in truth it is, sir.

LEONATO

What is it, my good friends?

DOGBERRY

Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little off the matter: an old man, sir, and his wits are not so blue as, God help, I would desire they were; but, in faith, honest as the skin between his brows.

VERGES

Yes, I thank God I am as honest as any man living that is an old man and no honester than I.

DOGBERRY

Comparison are odorous: palabras, neighbor Verges.

LEONATO

Neighbors, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY

It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor duke's officers; but truly, for mine own part, if I

were as tedious as a king, I could find it in my heart to bestow it all on your worship.

LEONATO

All your tediousness on me, ah?

DOGBERRY

Yea, if it were a thousand pound more than this.

LEONATO

Ah. I would like to know what you have to say.

VERGES

Marry, sir, our watch tonight, has taken a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY

A good old man, sir; he will be talking: as they say, when the age is in, the wit it out: God help us! It is a world to see. Well said, in faith, neighbor Verges: Well, God's a good man; if two men ride a horse, one must ride behind.

LEONATO

Indeed, neighbor, he's not as tedious as you.

DOGBERRY

Gifts that God gives.

LEONATO

I must leave you.

DOGBERRY

One word, sir: our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two aspicious persons, and we would have them this morning examined before your worship.

LEONATO

Take their examination yourself and bring it me. I am now in great haste.

DOGBERRY

It shall be suffigance.

LEONATO

Drink some wine ere you go. Fare you well.

(enter a messenger)

MESSENGER

My lord, they wait for you to give you daughter to her husband.

LEONATO

I am coming.

(exeunt Leonato and Messenger)

DOGBERRY

Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacole; Bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the jail. We are now to examination these men.

VERGES

And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY

We will spare for no wit, I warrant you; only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication and meet me at the jail.

(exeunt)

ACT IV

SCENE 1

(A church)

(Enter Don Pedro, Don John, Leonato,
Friar Francis, Claudio, Benedick, Hero,
Beatrice and attendants)

LEONATO

Come, Friar Francis, be brief; only to the plain form
of marriage, and you shall recount their particular
duties afterwards.

FRIAR FRANCIS

You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady.

CLAUDIO

No.

LEONATO

To be married to her, Friar. You come to marry her.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, you come hither to be married to this count.

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

If either of you know any inward impediment why you
should not be conjoined, I charge you, on your souls,
to say it.

CLAUDIO

Know you of any, Hero?

HERO

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Know you of any, count?

LEONATO

I dare make his answer, none.

CLAUDIO

O, what men dare to do. What men may do!

BENEDICK

How now! Jokes? Why, then, some of us are laughing,
hee hee!

CLAUDIO

Stand thee by, Friar. Sir, by your leave:
Will you with free and unconstrained soul
Give me this maid, your daughter?

LEONATO

As freely, son, as God did give her me.

CLAUDIO

And what have I to give you back, whose worth
May compare to this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO

Nothing, unless you make her again.

CLAUDIO

Thank you, sweet prince.
There, Leonato, take her back again:
Give not this rotten orange to your friend;
She's but the sign and semblance of her honor.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence
To witness simple virtue: Would you not swear,
All you that see her, the she is a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none:
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATO

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO

Not to be married,
Not to knit my soul to an approved wanton.

LEONATO

Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof,
Have kissed her yourself...

CLAUDIO

I know what you would say: If I had kissed her,
You will say she did embrace me as a husband.
No, Leonato,
I never tempted her with word too large;
But as a brother to his sister, showed
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

HERO

And seemed I ever otherwise to you?

CLAUDIO

Out on thee! Seeming! I will write against it:
You seemed to me as Diana in the moon,
As pure as is the bud before it blooms,
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus.

HERO

Is my lord well, that he does speak so wildly?

LEONATO

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO

What should I speak?
I stand dishonored, that have got about
To link my dear friend to a common stale.

LEONATO

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN

Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.

BENEDICK

This looks not like a wedding.

HERO

True! O God!

CLAUDIO

Let me but move one question to your daughter;
And you have power to bid her answer.

LEONATO

I charge thee do so, as thou art my child.

CLAUDIO

(to Hero)

What man was he talked with you yesternight
Out at your window between twelve and one?

HERO

I talked with no man at that hour, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Why then you are no maiden. Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear: Upon my honor,
Myself, my brother, and this grieved count
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night
Talk with a ruffian at her bedroom window.
He is, indeed, a most liberal villain,
Has confessed the vile encounters they have had
A thousand times in secret.

CLAUDIO

Oh Hero, what a Hero had you been,
If half of your outward graces had been placed
Around your thoughts and counsels of your heart!
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! Farewell,
Thou pure impiety and impious purity!
For you I'll lock up al the gates of love,
And on my eyelids shall suspicion hang,
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm.

LEONATO

Has no man's dagger here a point for me?

(Hero faints)

BEATRICE

Why, how now, cousin! Why sink you down?

DON JOHN

Come, let us go. These things, come thus to light,
Smother her spirits up.

(Exeunt Don Pedro, Don John, and
Claudio)

BENEDICK

How does the lady?

BEATRICE

Dead, I think! Help, uncle!
Hero! Why, Hero! Uncle! Signior Benedick! Friar!

LEONATO

Oh, Fate! Take not away thy heavy hand.
Death is the fairest cover for her shame
That may be wished for.

BEATRICE

How now, cousin Hero!

FRIAR FRANCIS

Have comfort, lady.

(Hero wakes.)

LEONATO

Do you look up?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Yea, why should she not?

LEONATO

Why not? Why, does not every earthly thing
Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny
The story that is printed in her blood?
Do not live, Hero; do not open thy eyes:
For, if I did not think you would quickly die,
Myself would, after this public scandal,
Strike at your life. Grieved I I had but one?
O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?
Why ever was thou lovely in my eyes?

BENEDICK

Sir, sir, be patient.
For my part, I am so attired in wonder,
I know not what to say.

BEATRICE

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

BENEDICK

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE

No, truly not; although, until last night

I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow.

LEONATO

Confirmed! Confirmed! O, that is stronger made
Which was before barred up with ribs of iron!
Would the two princes lie? And Claudio lie,
Who loved her so, that, speaking of her foulness,
Washed it with tears? Hence from her! Let her die.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Hear me a little;
For I have only silent been so long
And watched this course of fortune.
By noting of the lady I have marked
A thousand blessed apparitions
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes;
And in her eye there hath appeared a fire
To burn the errors that these princes hold
Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool;
Trust not my reading nor my observation,
My severance, calling, nor divinity,
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
Under some biting error.
Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

They know that do accuse me; I know none.

FRIAR FRANCIS

There is some strange misunderstanding in the princes.

BENEDICK

Two of them have the very bent of honor;
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,
The practice of it lives in John the Bastard.

LEONATO

I know not. If they speak but truth of her,
These hands shall tear her; if they wrong her honor,
The proudest of them shall well hear of it.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Pause awhile,
And let my counsel sway you in this case.
Your daughter here the princes left for dead:
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,

And publish it that she is dead indeed;
 Maintain a mourning ostentation
 And on your family's old monument
 Hang mournful epitaphs and do all rites
 That appertain unto a burial.

LEONATO

What shall become of this? What will this do?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Marry, this, well carried, shall on her behalf
 Change slander to remorse; that is some good:
 But on this work look for greater birth.
 She, dying, as it must so be maintained,
 Upon the instant that she was accused,
 Shall be lamented, pitied, and excused
 By every hearer: for it so falls out
 That we prize not what we have to its worth
 Whiles we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost,
 Why then we stack the value.
 So it will fare with Claudio:
 When he shall hear she died upon his words,
 The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
 Into his study of imagination,
 And every lovely organ of her life
 Shall come appareled in more precious clothes,
 Than when she lived indeed; then shall he mourn,
 And wish he had not so accused her,
 No, though he thought his accusation true.

BENEDICK

Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you:
 And though you know my inwardness and love
 Is very much unto the prince and Claudio,
 Yet, by mine honor, I will deal in this
 As secretly and justly as your soul
 Should with your body.

LEONATO

Being that I flow in grief,
 The smallest twine may lead me.

FRIAR FRANCIS

'Tis well consented: presently away.
 Come, lady, die to live: this wedding-day
 Perhaps is but prolonged; have patience and endure.

(exeunt all but Benedick and Beatrice)

BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE

You have no reason. I do it freely.

BENEDICK

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE

Ah, how much might the man deserve of me that would right her!

BENEDICK

Is there any way to show such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK

May a man do it?

BEATRICE

It is a man's office, but not yours.

BENEDICK

I do love nothing in the world so well as you: is not that strange?

BEATRICE

As strange as the thing I know not. It is as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you: but believe me not; and yet I lie not; I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.

BENEDICK

By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me!

BEATRICE

Do not swear it, and eat it.

BENEDICK

I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love not you.

BEATRICE

Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK

For what offense, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE

You have kept me in a happy hour: I was about to profess that I loved you.

BENEDICK

And do it with all thy heart.

BEATRICE

I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest.

BENEDICK

Come, bid me do anything for thee.

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK

Ah. Not for the wide world.

BEATRICE

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK

Wait, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE

I am gone, though I and here: There is no love in you. Nay, I pray you, let me go.

BENEDICK

Beatrice...

BEATRICE

In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK

We'll be friends first.

BEATRICE

You dare think it is easier to be friends with me than fight with my enemy.

BENEDICK

Is Claudio your enemy?

BEATRICE

Is he not proved the height of a villain, that has slandered, scorned, dishonored my kinswoman? O, that I were a man! What? Bear her in hand until they come to be married, and then, with public accusation, uncover slander--O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market place!

BENEDICK

Hear me, Beatrice...

BEATRICE

Talk with a man out of a window! A fine story!

BENEDICK

Nay, but Beatrice...

BEATRICE

Sweet Hero! She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone.

BENEDICK

Bea--

BEATRICE

Princes and counts! Surely, a princely testimony, a goodly count. O, that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had any friend who would be a man for my sake! But he his now as valiant as Hercules even though he tells a lie and then swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore, I will die a woman with grieving.

BENEDICK

Wait, good Beatrice. By this hand, I love thee.

BEATRICE

Use it for my love some other way than by swearing by it.

BEATRICE

Think you in your soul the Count Claudio has wronged Hero?

BEATRICE

Yea, as sure as I have a thought or a soul.

BENEDICK

Enough. I am engaged; I will challenge him to a duel. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall pay dearly for this. Go, comfort your cousin: I must say she is dead. And so farewell.

(exeunt)

ACT IV

SCENE 2

(A prison)

(Enter Dogberry, Verges, and a Sexton in a gown; and the watch [First Watchman, Second Watchman, and Seacole] with Conrade and Borachio)

DOGBERRY

Is our whole disassembly appeared?

VERGES

O, a stool and a cushion for the sexton.

SEXTON

Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY

Marry, that am I and my partner.

VERGES

Nay, that's certain. We have the exhibition to examine.

SEXTON

But who are the offenders that are to be examined? Let them come before master constable.

DOGBERRY

Yea, marry, let them come before me. What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

Pray, write down, Borachio. Yours, boy?

CONRADE

I am a gentleman, sir, and my name is Conrade.

DOGBERRY

Write down, master gentleman Conrade. Masters, do you serve God?

CONRADE AND BORACHIO

Yea, sire, we hope.

DOGBERRY

Write down that they hope the serve God: and write God first; for God defend, but God should go before such villains! Masters, it is proved already that you are little better than false knaves; and it will go near to be thought so shortly. How answer you for yourselves?

CONRADE

Marry, sir, we say we are not.

DOGBERRY

A marvelous witty fellow, I assure you: but I will go about with him. Come you here, sirrah; a word in your ear. Sir, I say to you, it is thought you are false knaves.

BORACHIO

Sir, I say to you we are not.

DOGBERRY

Well, stand aside. 'Fore God, they are both in a tale. Have you write down that they are not?

SEXTON

Master constable, you don't know the way to examine: you must call forth the watch that accuse them.

DOGBERRY

Yea, marry, that's the efastest way. Let the watch come forth. Masters, I charge you, in the prince's name, accuse these men.

FIRST WATCHMAN

This man said, sir, that Don John, the prince's brother, was a villain.

DOGBERRY

Write down Prince John a villain. Why, this is flat perjury, to call a prince's brother villain.

BORACHIO

Mater constable...

DOGBERRY

Pray thee, fellow, peace: I do not like thy look, I promise thee.

SEXTON

What else did you hear him say?

SECOND WATCHMAN

Marry, that he had received a thousand ducats from Don John for accusing the Lady Hero wrongfully.

DOGBERRY

Flat burglary as ever was committed.

VERGES

Yea, by mass, that it is.

SEXTON

What else, fellow?

SEACOLE

And that Count Claudio did mean, upon his words, to disgrace Hero before the whole assembly, and not marry her.

DOGBERRY

O villain! Thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this!

SEXTON

What else?

WATCHMEN

That is all.

SEXTON

And this is more, masters, than you can deny. Prince John is this morning secretly stolen away; Hero was in this manner accused, in this very manner refused, and upon the grief of this, suddenly died. Master constable, let these men be bound and brought to Leonato's: I will go before and show him their examination.

(exit Sexton)

DOGBERRY

Come, let them be opinioned.

VERGES

Let them be in the hands...

CONRADE

Off, coxcomb!

DOGBERRY

God's my life, where's the seton? Let him write down the prince's officer "coxcomb." Come, bind them. Thou naughty varlet!

CONRADE

Away! You are an ass. You are an ass!

DOGBERRY

Doest thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass. Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass!

(exeunt)

ACT V

SCENE 1

(In front of Leonato's house)

(Enter Leonato and Antonio)

ANTONIO

If you go on thus, you will kill yourself:

LEONATO

I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
 Which falls into mine ears as profitless
 As water in a sieve: give not me counsel;
 Nor let no comforter delight mine ear
 Except such a one whose hurts are like mine.
 Bring me a father that so loved his child,
 Whose joy of her is overwhelmed like mine,
 And bid him speak of patience;
 Measure his woe to length and breadth of mine
 And let it answer every strain for strain,
 As thus for thus and such a grief for such;
 If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,
 Patch grief with proverbs, make misfortune drunk
 With candle-wasters; bring him yet to me,
 And I of him will gather patience.
 But there is no such man: for, brother, men
 Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
 Which they themselves do not feel; but, tasting it,
 Their counsel turns to passion, which before
 Would try to cure insanity with rules,
 Tie strong madness in a silken thread,
 Charm ache with air and agony with words:
 No, no; 'tis all men's office to speak patience
 To those that wring under the load of sorrow
 But no man's virtue nor competency
 To say as much when he also endures
 The same things himself. Give me no counsel:
 My griefs cry and won't be soothed by proverbs.

ANTONIO

Therein do men from children differ not.

LEONATO

I pray thee, peace. I will be flesh and blood;
 For there was never yet philosopher

That should endure a toothache patiently.

ANTONIO

Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself;
Make those that do offend you suffer too.

LEONATO

There thou speakers reason: nay, I will do so.
My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;
And that shall Claudio know; so shall the prince
And all of them that thus dishonor her.

ANTONIO

Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

(enter Don Pedro and Claudio)

DON PEDRO

Good day, good day.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO

Hear you, my lords.

DON PEDRO

We have some haste, Leonato.

LEONATO

Some haste, my lord! Well, fare you well, my lord:
Are you so hasty now? Well, all is one.

DON PEDRO

Nay, do not quarrel with us, good old man.

ANTONIO

If he could right himself with quarreling,
Some of us would lie low.

CLAUDIO

Who wrongs him?

LEONATO

Marry, thou doest wrong me; thou dissembler, thou...
Nay, never lay thy hand upon thy sword;
I fear thee not.

CLAUDIO

Marry, beshrew my hand
If it should give your age such cause of fear:
In faith, my hand meant nothing to my sword.

LEONATO

Tush, tush, man; Don't jeer and jest at me:
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool,
As under privilege of age to brag
What I have done being young, or what would do
Were I not old. Know, Claudio, to thy head,
Thou hast so wronged mine innocent child and me
That I am forced to lay my reverence by
And, with grey hairs and bruise of many days,
Do challenge thee to a duel of a man.
I say thou has belied mine innocent child;
Thy slander hath gone through an through her heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors;
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
Except this of hers, framed by thy villainy!

CLAUDIO

My villainy?

LEONATO

Think, Claudio; Thine, I say.

DON PEDRO

You say not right, old man.

LEONATO

My lord, my lord,
I'll prove it on his body, if he dare,
Despite his nice sword and his active practice,
His May of youth and bloom of lustihood.

CLAUDIO

Away! I will not have anything to do with you.

LEONATO

Canst thou so put me off? Thou has killed my child:
If thou kills me, boy, you shall kill a man.

ANTONIO

He shall kill two of us, and men indeed:
But that's no matter; let him kill one first;
Win me and wear me; let him answer me.

Come, follow me, boy; come, sir boy, come, follow me:
 Sir boy, I'll whip you from your fancy fencing;
 Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

LEONATO

Brother...

ANTONIO

Content yourself. God knows I loved my niece;
 And she is dead, slandered to death by villains,
 That dare as well answer a man indeed
 As I dare take a serpent by the tongue:
 Boys, apes, braggarts, Jacks, milksops!

LEONATO

Brother Antony...

ANTONIO

Hold you content. What, man! I know them, yea,
 And what they weigh, even to the highest scruple--
 Boys who lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander,
 Go fancily, show outward hideousness,
 And speak off half a dozen dangerous words,
 How they might hurt their enemies, if they dare;
 And this is all.

LEONATO

But, brother Antony...

ANTONIO

Come, 'tis no matter:
 Do not meddle; let me deal in this.

DON PEDRO

Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience.
 My heart is sorry for your daughter's death:
 But, on my honor, she was charged with nothing
 But what was true and very full of proof.

LEONATO

My lord, my lord...

DON PEDRO

I will not hear you.

LEONATO

No? Come away brother, away! I will be heard.

ANTONIO

And shall, or some of us will smart for it.

(exeunt Leonato and Antonio)

DON PEDRO

See, see; here comes the man we went to seek.

(enter Benedick)

CLAUDIO

Now, signor, what news?

BENEDICK

Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Welcome, signor: you are almost come to part almost a fray.

CLAUDIO

We had like to have had our two noses snapped off by two old men without teeth.

DON PEDRO

Leonato and his brother. What thinkest thou? Had we fought, I doubt we should have been too young for them.

BENEDICK

In a false quarrel the is no true valor. I came to seek you both.

CLAUDIO

We have been up and down to seek thee; for we are high-proof melancholy and would fain have it beaten away. Will you use your wit to make us feel better?

BENEDICK

It is in my scabbard. Shall I draw it?

DON PEDRO

As I am an honest man, he looks pale. Art thou sick, or angry?

CLAUDIO

What, courage, man! Even though care killed a cat, you

have wit enough to kill care.

BENEDICK

Sir, I shall beat your wit in a battle, if you point it against me. I pray you choose another subject.

DON PEDRO

By this light, he changes more and more: I think he is angry indeed.

CLAUDIO

If he is, he knows how to draw a sword.

BENEDICK

Shall I speak a word in your ear?

CLAUDIO

God save me from a challenge!

BENEDICK

(to Claudio)

You are a villain; I jest not: I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you.

CLAUDIO

Well, I will meet you, so I may enjoy myself.

DON PEDRO

What, a feast? A feast?

CLAUDIO

In faith, I thank him; he hath bid me to a crow and a capon; the which if I do not carve well, he will say my sword is nothing.

BENEDICK

Sir, your wit ambles well; it goes easily.

DON PEDRO

I'll tell thee how Beatrice praised thy wit the other day. I said, thou hadst a fine wit: "True," said she, "a fine little one." "No," said I, "a great wit:" "Certainly," said she, "a wise gentleman." "Nay," said I, "he hath the tongues:" "That I believe," said she,

"for he swore a thing to me on Monday night, which he took back on Tuesday morning; there's a double tongue; there's two tongues." Thus did she, an hour together, describe thy particular virtues: yet at last she concluded with a sigh, thou wast the properest man in Italy.

CLAUDIO

For the which she wept heartily and said she cared not.

DON PEDRO

But when shall we see the savage bull's horns on the sensible Benedick's head?

CLAUDIO

Yea, and the text underneath, "here dwells Benedick the married man"?

BENEDICK

Fare you well, boy: you know my mind. I will leave you now to your gossip-like humor. You break jests as braggarts do break their blades, which God be thanked, hurt not. My lord, for your many courtesies, I thank you. I must discontinue your company. Your brother the bastard is fled from Messina: you have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard here, he and I shall meet. And, until then, peace be with him.

(exit Benedick)

DON PEDRO

He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO

In most profound earnest.

CLAUDIO

And has challenged thee.

CLAUDIO

Most sincerely.

DON PEDRO

But, soft you, let me be: Did he not say, my brother was fled?

(enter Dogberry, Verges, the Watch and
Conrade and Borachio)

DOGBERRY

Come you, sir: if justice cannot tame you, she shall
never weigh more reasons in her balance: nay, if you
are a cursing hypocrite once, you must be watched.

DON PEDRO

How now? Two of my brother's men bound? Borachio?

CLAUDIO

Ask after their offense, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Officers, what offense have these men done?

DOGBERRY

Marry, sir, they have committed false report;
moreover, they have spoken untruths; secondarily, they
are slanders; sixth and lastly, they have belied a
lady; thirdly, they have verified unjust things; and
so, to conclude, they are lying knaves.

DON PEDRO

Who have you offended, masters, that you are thus
bound to your answer? This learned constable is too
cunning to be understood. What is your offense?

BORACHIO

Sweet prince, let me go no farther to mine answer: You
hear me, and let this count kill me. I have deceived
even your very eyes. What your wisdoms could not find
out, these shallow fools have brought to light: They
overheard me last night confessing to this man how
Don John your brother had me slander the Lady Hero,
how you were brought to the garden and saw me court
Margaret in Hero's dress, how you disgraced Hero when
you should have married her. My villainy they have
written down. I would rather seal this with my death
than repeat over my shame. The lady is dead upon mine
and my master's false accusation.

DON PEDRO

Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO

I have drunk poison while he utters it.

DON PEDRO

But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO

Yea, and paid me richly for it.

DON PEDRO

He is composed and framed of treachery:
And fled he is upon this villainy.

CLAUDIO

Sweet Hero! Now thy image doth appear
In the rare semblance that I love it first.

DOGBERRY

Come, bring away the plaintiffs: by this time our
sexton hath reformed Signior Leonato of the matter:
and, masters, do not forget to specify, when time and
place shall serve, that I am an ass.

VERGES

Here, here comes Master Signior Leonato, and the
Sexton, too.

(re-enter Leonato and Antonio and the
Sexton)

LEONATO

Which is the villain? Let me see his eyes,
That, when I see another man like him,
I may avoid him: Which of these is he?

BORACHIO

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

LEONATO

Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast killed
Mine innocent child?

BORACHIO

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO

No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself:
Here stand a pair of honorable men;

A third is fled, that had a hand in it.
 I thank you, princes, for my daughter's death:
 Record it with your high and worthy deeds:
 'Twas bravely done, if you think on it.

CLAUDIO

I know not how to pray for your forgiveness;
 Yet I must speak. Choose your revenge yourself;
 Impose me to what penance your invention
 Can lay upon my sin: yet sinned I not
 But in mistaking.

DON PEDRO

By my soul, nor I:
 And yet, to satisfy this good old man,
 I would bend under any heavy weight
 That he'll enjoin me to.

LEONATO

I cannot bid you bid my daughter live;
 That were impossible: but, I pray you both,
 Tell the people in Messina here
 How innocent she died; and if your love
 Can work at all in sad creation,
 Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb
 And sing it to her bones, sing it tonight:
 Tomorrow morning come you to my house,
 And since you could not be my son-in-law,
 Be yet my nephew: my brother has a daughter,
 Almost the copy of my child that's dead,
 And she alone is heir to both of us:
 Give her the right you should have given her cousin,
 And so dies my revenge.

CLAUDIO

O, noble sir,
 Your over-kindness wrings tears from me!
 I do embrace your offer; and dispose
 For henceforth poor Claudio.

LEONATO

Tomorrow then I will expect you coming;
 Tonight I take my leave. This naughty man
 Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
 Who I believe was packed in this wrong,
 Hired to it by your brother.

BORACHIO

No, by my soul, she was not,
Nor knew not what she did when she spoke to me,
But always has been just and virtuous
In any thing that I do know by her.

DOGBERRY

Moreover, sir, which indeed is not under white and
black, this plaintiff here, the offender, did call me
ass: I beseech you, let it be remembered in his
punishment.

LEONATO

I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

DOGBERRY

Your worship speaks like a most thankful and reverend
youth; and I praised God for you.

LEONATO

(give a coin)

There's for your pains.

DOGBERRY

God save the foundation!

LEONATO

Go, I discharge thee of they prisoner, and I thank
thee.

DOGBERRY

I leave an arrant knave with your worship; which I
beseech your worship to correct yourself, for the
example of others. I wish you worship well; God
restore you to health! I humbly give you leave to
depart; and if a merry meeting may be wished, God
prohibit it! Come, neighbor.

(exeunt Dogberry and Verges)

LEONATO

Until tomorrow morning, lords, farewell.

ANTONIO

Farewell, my lords: we look for you tomorrow.

DON PEDRO

We will not fail.

CLAUDIO

Tonight I'll mourn with Hero.

LEONATO

(to the watch)

Bring you these fellows on. We'll talk with Margaret,
How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.

(exeunt)

ACT V

SCENE 2

(Leonato's Garden)

(Enter Benedick and Margaret, meeting)

BENEDICK

Pray thee, sweet Mistress Margaret, earn some good words at my hands by helping me to talk to Beatrice.

MARGARET

Will you then write me a sonnet in praise of my beauty?

BENEDICK

Yea, in so high a style, Margaret, that no man living shall come over and write something better.

MARGARET

To have no man come over to me! Why, shall I always hide below stairs?

BENEDICK

Thy wit is a quick as the greyhound's mouth; it catches.

MARGARET

And yours is as blunt as the fencer's foils, which hit, but hurt not.

BENEDICK

Mine is a most manly wit, Margaret; it will not hurt a woman: and so, I pray thee, call Beatrice. I give up.

MARGARET

Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I think has legs.

BENEDICK

And therefore will come.

(exit Margaret)

BENEDICK

(sings)

The god of love,

*That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve...*

I mean in singing; but in loving, a whole bookful of old pretend lovers, whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse, why, they were never so truly turned over and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme; I have tried. I can find out to rhyme for "lady," but "baby," an innocent rhyme. For "scorn," "horn," a hard rhyme. For "school," "fool," a babbling rhyme. Very ominous endings. No, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

(enter Beatrice)

BENEDICK

Sweet Beatrice, did you come when I called thee?

BEATRICE

Yea, signor, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK

O, stay but till then!

BEATRICE

"Then" is spoken; fare you well now. And yet, ere I go, let me go with what I came with; which is, with knowing what has passed between you and Claudio.

BENEDICK

Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE

Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul breath, and foul breath is nasty; therefore I will depart unkissed.

BENEDICK

You have frightened that word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit. But I must tell thee plainly, Claudio undergoes my challenge; and either I must shortly hear from him, or I will proclaim him a coward. And, I pray thee now, tell me for which of my bad parts did you first fall in love with me?

BEATRICE

For them all together; which created such a cunning state of evil that they will not allow for any good parts to intermingle with them. But for which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?

BENEDICK

Suffer love! A good saying! I do suffer love indeed, for I love thee against my will.

BEATRICE

In spite of your heart, I think. Alas, poor heart! If you spite it for my sake, I will spite mine for yours. For I will never love that which my friend hates.

BENEDICK

You and I are too wise to woo peaceably. And now tell me, how does your cousin?

BEATRICE

Very ill.

BENEDICK

And how do you?

BEATRICE

Very ill, too.

BENEDICK

Serve God, love me, and mend. There will I leave you, too, for here comes one in haste.

(enter Ursula)

URSULA

Madam, you must come to your uncle! Yonder's all sorts of turmoil at home. It is proved my Lady Hero has been falsely accused, the prince and Claudio mightily abused. And Don John is the author of all, and he is fled and gone. Will you come presently?

BEATRICE

Will yo uno hear this news, Signor?

BENEDICK

I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes, and moreover I will go with you to

your uncle's.

(exeunt)

ACT V

SCENE 3

(A church)

(Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, and three or four attendants with candles and musicians)

CLAUDIO

Is this the monument of Leonato?

FIRST LORD

It is, my lord.

CLAUDIO

(reading an epitaph)

*Done to death by slanderous tongues
Was the Hero that here lies:
Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,
Gives her fame which never dies.
So the life that died with shame
Lives in death with glorious fame.
Hang thou there upon the tomb,
Praising her when I am mute.*

Now, music, sound, and sing your solemn hymn.

MUSICIANS

(SONG.)

*Pardon, goddess of the night,
Those that slew thy virgin knight;
For the which, with songs of woe,
Round about her tomb they go.
Midnight, assist our moan;
Help us to sigh and groan,
Heavily, heavily:
Graves, yawn and yield your dead,
Till death be uttered,
Heavily, heavily.*

CLAUDIO

Now, unto thy bones good night!
Yearly will I do this rite.

DON PEDRO

Good morrow, masters; put your torches out:
The wolves have preyed; and look, the gentle day,
Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.
Thanks to you all, and leave us. Fare you well.

(Exeunt)

ACT V

SCENE 4

(A room in Leonato's house.)

(Enter Leonato, Antonio, Benedick,
Beatrice, Margaret, Ursula, Friar
Francis, and Hero)

FRIAR FRANCIS

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

LEONATO

So are the prince and Claudio, who accused her
Upon the error that you heard debated:
But Margaret was in some fault for this,
Although against her will, as it appears
In the true course of all the question.

ANTONIO

Well, I angled that all things sort so well.

BENEDICK

And so am I, being else by faith enforced
To call young Claudio to a duel for it.

LEONATO

Well, daughter, and your gentle-women all,
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
And enter when I send for you, come hither masked.

(exeunt ladies)

LEONATO

The prince and Claudio promised by this hour
To visit me. You know your office, brother:
You must be father to your brother's daughter
And give her to young Claudio.

ANTONIO

Which I will do with confirmed countenance.

BENEDICK

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS

To do what, signor?

BENEDICK

To bind me, or undo me; one of them
Signior Leonato, truth it is, good signor,
Your niece regards me with an eye of favor.

LEONATO

That eye my daughter lent her; 'tis most true.

BENEDICK

And I do with an eye of love requite her.

LEONATO

The sight of which I think you had from me,
From Claudio and the prince: but what's your will?

BENEDICK

Your answer, sir, confuses me:
But, for my will, my will is your good will
May stand with ours, this day to be conjoined
In the state of honorable marriage:
In which, good friar, I shall desire your help.

LEONATO

My heart is with your liking.

FRIAR FRANCIS

And my help.
Here comes the prince and Claudio.

(Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, and a few
others)

DON PEDRO

Good morrow to this fair assembly.

LEONATO

Good morrow, prince. Good morrow, Claudio.
We here attend you. Are you yet determined
Today to marry with my brother's daughter?

CLAUDIO

I'll hold my mind, were she an ugly troll.

LEONATO

Call her forth, brother; here's the friar ready.

(exit Antonio. He re-enters with the
ladies who are masked.)

CLAUDIO

Which is the lady I must marry?

ANTONIO

This same is she, and I do give her to you.

CLAUDIO

Why, then, she's mine. Sweet, let me see your face.

LEONATO

No, that you shall not, till you take her hand
Before this friar and swear to marry her.

CLAUDIO

Give me your hand: before this holy friar,
I am your husband, if you like of me.

HERO

And I when I lived, I was your other wife.

(she unmask)

And when you loved, you were my other husband.

CLAUDIO

Another Hero!

HERO

Nothing more certain.

One Hero died defiled, but I do live,
And as surely as I live, I am a maid.

DON PEDRO

The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

LEONATO

She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived.

FRIAR FRANCIS

All this amazement I can explain;
When after the holy rites are ended,
I'll tell you largely of fair Hero's death:
Meantime, let wonder seem familiar,
And to the chapel let us presently.

BENEDICK

Wait and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE

(unmasking)

I answer to that name. What is your will?

BENEDICK

Do you not love me?

BEATRICE

Why, no; no more than reason.

BENEDICK

Why, then your uncle and the prince and Claudio
Have been deceived. They swore you did.

BEATRICE

Do you not love me?

BENEDICK

In truth, no. No more than reason.

BEATRICE

Why, then my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula
Are much deceived, for they did swear you did.

BENEDICK

They swore that you were almost sick for me.

BEATRICE

They swore that you were well-nigh dead for me.

BENEDICK

'Tis no such matter. Then...you do not love me?

BEATRICE

No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

LEONATO

Come, cousin, I am sure you love the gentleman.

CLAUDIO

And I'll be sworn upon it that he loves her;
For here's a paper written in his hand,
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
Addressed to Beatrice.

(Claudio gives Beatrice a paper)

HERO

And here's another
Writ in my cousin's hand, stolen from her pocket,

Containing her affection unto Benedick.

(She give the paper to Benedick)

BENEDICK

A miracle! Here's our own hands against our hearts.
Come, I will have thee; but, by this light, I take
thee for pity.

BEATRICE

I would not deny you; but, by this good day, I yield
upon great persuasion; and partly to save your life,
for I was told you were sick with consumption.

BENEDICK

Peace! I will stop your mouth.

(He kisses her)

DON PEDRO

How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK

I'll tell thee what, prince; a college of wit-crackers
cannot flout me out of my good mood. Do you think I
care for a satire or an epigram? No. In brief, since I
do propose to marry, I will not hear a word against
it. And therefore, never flout me for what I have said
against it. For man is a giddy thing. For thy part,
Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee, but since
you will be my kinsman, live unbruised and love my
cousin. Come, come, we are friends: Let's have a dance
before we are married, that we may lighten our own
hears and our wives' heels.

LEONATO

We'll have dancing afterwards.

BENEDICK

First dancing, on my word; therefore play music!
Prince, thou art sad. Get thee a wife, get thee a
wife!

(enter a messenger)

MESSENGER

(to Don Pedro)

My lord, your brother John is taken in flight
And brought back with armed men to Messina.

BENEDICK

Think not on him till tomorrow;
I'll devise thee brave punishments for him.
Strike up, pipers!

(All dance until they go off stage)

(exeunt)

(THE END)