

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

By William Shakespeare

Edited by Brian Work from the Moby™ & Folger Digital Texts

Characters in the Play

LEONATO, Governor of Messina

HERO, his daughter

BEATRICE, his niece

MARGARET, waiting gentlewoman to Hero

URSULA, waiting gentlewoman to Hero

BALTHASAR, a waiting man & musician in Leonato's household

DON PEDRO, Prince of Aragon

COUNT CLAUDIO, a young lord from Florence

SIGNIOR BENEDICK, a gentleman from Padua

DON JOHN, Don Pedro's brother

BORACHIO, Don John's follower

CONRADE, Don John's follower

DOGBERRY, Master Constable in Messina

VERGES, Dogberry's partner

SEACOLE, leader of the Watch

SEXTON

FRIAR FRANCIS

ACT I**SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.**

Enter LEONATO, Governor of Messina, HERO his daughter, and BEATRICE his niece, with BALTHASAR his waiting man.

LEONATO (*with a letter*): I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina.

BALTHASAR: He is very near by this: he was not three leagues off when I left him.

LEONATO: How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

BALTHASAR: But few of any sort, and none of name.

LEONATO: A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers. I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honor on a young Florentine called Claudio.

BALTHASAR: Much deserved on his part, and equally remembered by Don Pedro. he hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion: he hath indeed better bettered expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how.

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

BALTHASAR: I know none of that name, lady: there was none such in the army of any sort.

LEONATO: What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO: My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

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

BEATRICE: I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? for indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

LEONATO: Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

BALTHASAR: He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE: You had musty victual, and he hath holp to eat it: he is a very valiant trencherman; he hath an excellent stomach.

BALTHASAR: And a good soldier too, lady.

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

BALTHASAR: A lord to a lord, a man to a man; stuffed with all honourable virtues.

BEATRICE: It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuffed man: but for the stuffing,--well, we are all mortal.

LEONATO: You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

BEATRICE: Alas, he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

BALTHASAR: Is't possible?

BEATRICE: Very easily possible: he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block.

BALTHASAR: I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

BEATRICE: No. an he were, I would burn my study. But, I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no young squarer now that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

BALTHASAR: He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio.

BEATRICE: O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease! He is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad. God help the noble Claudio! If he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere he be cured.

BALTHASAR: I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE: Do, good friend.

LEONATO: You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE: No, not till a hot January.

BALTHASAR: Don Pedro is approached.

Enter DON PEDRO, Prince of Aragon, with CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and DON JOHN the Bastard.

DON PEDRO: Good Signior Leonato, are you come to meet your trouble? The fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

LEONATO: Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your Grace.

DON PEDRO: You embrace your charge too willingly. (*Turning to Hero.*) I think this is your daughter.

LEONATO: Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK: Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

LEONATO: Signior Benedick, no; for then were you a child.

DON PEDRO: You have it full, Benedick: we may guess by this what you are, being a man. Truly, the lady fathers herself. Be happy, lady, for you are like an honorable father.

Leonato and Don Pedro move aside.

BENEDICK: If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

BEATRICE: I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.

BENEDICK: What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?

BEATRICE: Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

BENEDICK: Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

BEATRICE: A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humor for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

BENEDICK: God keep your Ladyship still in that mind, so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

BEATRICE: Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were.

BENEDICK: Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

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

BENEDICK: I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer. But keep your way, i' God's name; I have done.

BEATRICE: You always end with a jade's trick: I know you of old.

Leonato and Don Pedro come forward.

DON PEDRO: That is the sum of all, Leonato. Signior Claudio and Signior Benedick, my dear friend Leonato hath invited you all. I tell him we shall stay here at the least a month; and he heartily prays some occasion may detain us longer. I dare swear he is no hypocrite, but prays from his heart.

LEONATO: If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn. (*To DON JOHN.*) Let me bid you welcome, my lord: being reconciled to the Prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

DON JOHN: I thank you: I am not of many words, but I thank you.

LEONATO: Please it your grace lead on?

DON PEDRO: Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO: Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK: I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO: Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK: Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgment? Or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

CLAUDIO: No; I pray thee, speak in sober judgment.

BENEDICK: Why, i' faith, methinks she's too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise. Only this commendation I can afford her, that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome, and being no other but as she is, I do not like her.

CLAUDIO: Thou thinkest I am in sport. I pray thee tell me truly how thou likest her.

BENEDICK: Would you buy her that you inquire after her?

CLAUDIO: Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK: Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow? Come, in what key shall a man take you, to go in the song?

CLAUDIO: In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

BENEDICK: I can see yet without spectacles, and I see no such matter. There's her cousin, an she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

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

BENEDICK: Is't come to this? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Go to, i' faith; an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it, and sigh away Sundays.

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO: What secret hath held you here, that you followed not to Leonato's?

BENEDICK: I would your Grace would constrain me to tell.

DON PEDRO: I charge thee on thy allegiance.

BENEDICK: You hear, Count Claudio: I can be secret as a dumb man; I would have you think so; but on my allegiance, mark you this, on my allegiance. (*To Don Pedro.*) He is in love. With who? Now that is your grace's part. Mark how short his answer is: with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO: If this were so, so were it uttered.

DON PEDRO: Amen, if you love her; for the lady is very well worthy.

CLAUDIO: You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

DON PEDRO: By my troth, I speak my thought.

CLAUDIO: And, in faith, my lord, I spoke mine.

BENEDICK: And, by my two faiths and troths, my lord, I spoke mine.

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 in it at the stake.

DON PEDRO: Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the despite of beauty.

CLAUDIO: And never could maintain his part but in the force of his will.

BENEDICK: That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks. But that I will have a recheat winded in my forehead or hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick, all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none. And the fine is, for the which I may go the finer, I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO: I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.

BENEDICK: With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord, not with love. Prove that ever I lose more blood with love than I will get again with drinking, pick out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen and hang me up at the door of a brothel house for the sign of blind Cupid.

DON PEDRO: Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou wilt prove a notable argument.

BENEDICK: If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and shoot at me.

DON PEDRO: Well, as time shall try:

“In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.”

BENEDICK: The savage bull may, but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns and set them in my forehead, and let me be vilely painted, and in such great letters as they write “Here is good horse to hire,” let them signify under my sign “Here you may see Benedick the married man.”

CLAUDIO: If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be horn-mad.

DON PEDRO: Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly.

BENEDICK: I look for an earthquake too, then.

DON PEDRO: Well, you temporize with the hours. In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's. Commend me to him and tell him I will not fail him at supper, for indeed he hath made great preparation.

BENEDICK: I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassy, and so I commit you—

CLAUDIO: To the tuition of God. From my house, if I had it—

DON PEDRO: The sixth of July. Your loving friend, Benedick.

BENEDICK: Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is sometime guarded with fragments, and the guards are but slightly basted on neither. Ere you flout old ends any further, examine your conscience. And so I leave you.

Benedick Exits

CLAUDIO:

My liege, your Highness now may do me good.

DON PEDRO:

My love is thine to teach. Teach it but how,
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn
Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

CLAUDIO:

Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO:

No child but Hero; she's his only heir.
Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

CLAUDIO:

O, my lord,
When you went onward on this ended action,
I looked upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love.
But now I am returned and that war thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms

Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
 All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
 Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars.

DON PEDRO:

Thou wilt be like a lover presently
 And tire the hearer with a book of words.
 If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
 And I will break with her and with her father,
 And thou shalt have her. Was 't not to this end
 That thou began'st to twist so fine a story?

CLAUDIO:

How sweetly you do minister to love,
 That know love's grief by his complexion!
 But lest my liking might too sudden seem,
 I would have salved it with a longer treatise.

DON PEDRO:

What need the bridge much broader than the flood?
 The fairest grant is the necessity.
 Look, what will serve is fit: 'tis once, thou lovest,
 And I will fit thee with the remedy.
 I know we shall have reveling tonight.
 I will assume thy part in some disguise
 And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
 And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart
 And take her hearing prisoner with the force
 And strong encounter of my amorous tale.
 Then after to her father will I break,
 And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
 In practise let us put it presently.

Exeunt

SCENE II. (CUT FROM THIS EDITION OF THE PLAY)

SCENE III. A room in LEONATO's house.

Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE

CONRADE: What the goodyear, my lord, why are you thus out of measure sad?

DON JOHN: There is no measure in the occasion that breeds. Therefore the sadness is without limit.

CONRADE: You should hear reason.

DON JOHN: And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it?

CONRADE: If not a present remedy, at least a patient sufferance.

DON JOHN: I cannot hide what I am: I must be sad when I have cause, and smile at no man's jests; eat when I have stomach, and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am drowsy, and tend on no man's business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humor.

CONRADE: Yea, but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace, where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself. It is needful that you frame the season for your own harvest.

DON JOHN: I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any. In this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking. In the meantime let me be that I am and seek not to alter me.

CONRADE: Can you make no use of your discontent?

DON JOHN: I make all use of it, for I use it only. Who comes here?

Enter BORACHIO

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO: I came yonder from a great supper. The prince your brother is royally entertained by Leonato, and I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

DON JOHN: Will it serve for any model to build mischief on? What is he for a fool that betroths himself to unquietness?

BORACHIO: Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN: Who? The most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO: Even he.

DON JOHN: A proper squire! And who, and who? Which way looks he?

BORACHIO: Marry, on Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonato.

DON JOHN: A very forward March chick! How came you to this?

BORACHIO: Being entertained for a perfumer, as I was smoking a musty room, comes me the Prince and Claudio, hand in hand in sad conference. I whipped me behind the arras; and there heard it agreed upon that the Prince should woo Hero for himself, and having obtained her, give her to Count Claudio.

DON JOHN: Come, come, let us thither. This may prove food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow. If I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure, and will assist me?

CONRADE: To the death, my lord.

DON JOHN: Let us to the great supper. Their cheer is the greater that I am subdued. Would the cook were of my mind! Shall we go prove what's to be done?

BORACHIO: We'll wait upon your lordship.

Exeunt

ACT II**SCENE I. A hall in LEONATO'S house.**

Enter LEONATO, HERO, BEATRICE, URSULA, MARGARET, and BALTHASAR

LEONATO: Was not Don John here at supper?

BALTHASAR: I saw him not.

BEATRICE: How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am heartburned an hour after.

HERO: He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE: He were an excellent man that were made just in the midway between him and Benedick: the one is too like an image and says nothing, and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling.

LEONATO: Then half Signior Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth, and half Count John's melancholy in Signior Benedick's face—

BEATRICE: With a good leg and 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 goodwill.

LEONATO: By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.

BALTHASAR: In faith, she's too curst.

BEATRICE: Too curst is more than curst. I shall lessen God's sending that way, for it is said, "God sends a curst cow short horns," but to a cow too curst, he sends none.

LEONATO: So, by being too curst, God will send you no horns.

BEATRICE: Just, if He send me no husband, for the which blessing I am at Him upon my knees every morning and evening. Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face. I had rather lie in the woolen!

LEONATO: You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

BEATRICE: What should I do with him? Dress him in my apparel and make him my waiting gentlewoman? He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath 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 even take sixpence in earnest of the bearherd, and lead his apes into hell.

LEONATO: Well, then, go you into hell?

BEATRICE: No, but to the gate, and there will the devil meet me like an old cuckold with horns on his head, and say "Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids." So deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter. For the heavens, he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

BALTHASAR: *[To HERO]* Well, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

BEATRICE: Yes, faith, it is my cousin's duty to make curtsy and say "Father, as it please you." But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy and say "Father, as it please me."

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

BEATRICE: Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. No, uncle, I'll none. Adam's sons are my brethren, and truly I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

[To HERO] The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time. If the man be too important, tell him there is measure in everything and so dance out the answer. For hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly modest as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster till he sink into his grave.

LEONATO: Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

BEATRICE: I have a good eye, uncle. I can see a church by daylight.

LEONATO: The revelers are entering. Make good room.

All put on their masks

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, CONRADE, MARGARET, URSULA, and others, all masked

DON PEDRO: *[To HERO]* Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

HERO: So you walk softly, and look sweetly, and say nothing, I am yours for the walk, and especially when I walk away.

DON PEDRO: With me in your company?

HERO: I may say so when I please.

DON PEDRO: And when please you to say so?

HERO: When I like your favor, for God defend the lute should be like the case.

DON PEDRO: My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house is Jove.

HERO: Why, then, your visor should be thatched.

DON PEDRO: Speak low if you speak love.

They move aside. Benedick and Margaret move forward.

BENEDICK: *[To Margaret]* Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET: So would not I for your own sake, for I have many ill-qualities.

BENEDICK: Which is one?

MARGARET: I say my prayers aloud.

BENEDICK: I love you the better; the hearers may cry, "Amen."

MARGARET: God match me with a good dancer!

BENEDICK: Amen.

They separate. Benedick moves aside. Balthasar moves forward.

MARGARET: And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done! Answer, clerk.

BALTHASAR: No more words. The clerk is answered.

They separate. Margaret moves aside. Ursula moves forward.

URSULA: I know you well enough. You are Signior Balthasar.

BALTHASAR: At a word, I am not.

URSULA: I know you by the wagging of your head.

BALTHASAR: To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA: You could never do him so ill-well unless you were the very man. Here's his plucker's hand up and down. You are he, you are he.

BALTHASAR: 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 to, mum, you are he. Graces will appear, and there's an end.

BEATRICE: Will you not tell me who told you so?

BENEDICK: No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE: Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK: Not now.

BEATRICE: That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of *The Hundred Merry Tales!* Well this was Signior Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK: What's he?

BEATRICE: I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK: Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE: Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK: I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE: Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool; only his gift is in devising impossible slanders. None but libertines delight in him, and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy, for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet. I would he had boarded me.

BENEDICK: When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what you say.

BEATRICE: Do, do. He'll but break a comparison or two on me, which peradventure not marked or not laughed at strikes him into melancholy, for the fool will eat no supper that night.

Music for the dance.

We must follow the leaders.

Dance. Then exeunt all except DON JOHN, BORACHIO, CONRADE, and CLAUDIO.

DON JOHN: *[To Borachio]* Sure my brother is amorous on Hero, and hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it. The ladies follow her, and but one visor remains.

BORACHIO: And that is Claudio. I know him by his bearing.

DON JOHN: *[To Claudio]* Are not you Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO: You know me well. I am he.

DON JOHN: Signior, you are very near my brother in his love. He is enamored on Hero. I pray you dissuade him from her. She is no equal for his birth. You may do the part of an honest man in it.

CLAUDIO: How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN: I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO: So did I too, and he swore he would marry her tonight.

DON JOHN: Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO

CLAUDIO: [unmasking]

Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,
 But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
 'Tis certain so. The prince wooes for himself.
 Friendship is constant in all other things
 Save in the office and affairs of love.
 Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.
 Let every eye negotiate for itself
 And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch
 Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.
 This is an accident of hourly proof,
 Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore, Hero!

Re-enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK: Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO: Yea, the same.

BENEDICK: Come, will you go with me?

CLAUDIO: Whither?

BENEDICK: Even to the next willow, about your own business, county. What fashion will you wear the garland of? About your neck like an usurer's chain? Or under your arm like a lieutenant's scarf? You must wear it one way, for the prince hath got your Hero.

CLAUDIO: I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK: Why, that's spoken like an honest drover; so they sell bullocks. But did you think the Prince would have served you thus?

CLAUDIO: I pray you, leave me.

BENEDICK: Ho, now you strike like the blind man. 'Twas the boy that stole your meat, and you'll beat the post.

CLAUDIO: If it will not be, I'll leave you.

Claudio Exits

BENEDICK: Alas, poor hurt fowl, now will he creep into sedges. But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The Prince's fool! Ha, it may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong. I am not so reputed! It is

the base, though bitter, disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO: Now, signior, where's the Count? Did you see him?

BENEDICK: Troth, my lord. I found him here as melancholy as a lodge in a warren. I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the goodwill of this young lady, and I offered him my company to a willow tree, either to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipped.

DON PEDRO: To be whipped! What's his fault?

BENEDICK: The flat transgression of a schoolboy, who, being overjoyed with finding a birds' nest, shows it his companion, and he steals it.

DON PEDRO: Wilt thou make a trust a transgression? The transgression is in the stealer.

BENEDICK: Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been made, and the garland too, for the garland he might have worn himself, and the rod he might have bestowed on you, who, as I take it, have stolen his birds' nest.

DON PEDRO: I will but teach them to sing, and restore them to the owner.

BENEDICK: If their singing answer your saying, by my faith, you say honestly.

DON PEDRO: The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you. The gentleman that danced with her told her she is much wronged by you.

BENEDICK: O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! An oak but with one green leaf on it would have answered her. My very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the Prince's jester, that I was duller than a great thaw, huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her; she would infect to the North Star. I would not marry her though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed. She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire too. Come, talk not of her. I would to God some scholar would conjure her, for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary, and people sin upon purpose because they would go thither. So, indeed, all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follows 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 tooth-picker now from the furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester John's foot, fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard, do you any embassy to the Pigmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO: None, but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK: O God, sir, here's a dish I love not! I cannot endure my Lady Tongue.

Benedick Exits

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, a double heart for his single one. Marry, once before he won it of me with false dice. Therefore your grace may well say I have lost it.

DON PEDRO: You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.

BEATRICE: So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools. I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seek.

DON PEDRO: Why, how now, count! Wherefore 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: I' faith, lady, I think your blazon to be true; though, I'll be sworn, if he be so, his conceit is false. Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won. I have broke with her father 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. His Grace hath made the match, and all grace say "Amen" to it.

BEATRICE: Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO: Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but little happy if I could say how much. Lady, as you are mine, I am yours. I give away myself for you and dote upon the exchange.

BEATRICE: Speak, cousin, or, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss and let not him speak neither.

DON PEDRO: In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE: Yea, 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 doth, cousin.

BEATRICE: Good Lord for alliance! Thus goes everyone to the world but I, and I am sunburnt. 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. Hath your Grace ne'er a brother like you? Your father got excellent husbands, if a maid could come by them.

DON PEDRO: Will you have me, lady?

BEATRICE: No, my lord, unless I might have another for working days. Your Grace is too costly 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 out of question you were born in a merry hour.

BEATRICE: No, 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: I cry you mercy, uncle. By your Grace's pardon.

Beatrice Exits

DON PEDRO: By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO: There's little of the melancholy element in her, my lord. She is never sad but when she sleeps, and not ever sad then, for I have heard my daughter say she hath often dreamed of unhappiness and waked herself with laughing.

DON PEDRO: She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO: O, by no means: she mocks all her wooers out of suit.

DON PEDRO: She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

LEONATO: O Lord, my lord, if they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad.

DON PEDRO: County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO: Tomorrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

LEONATO: Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence a just seven-night, and a time too brief, too, to have all things answer my mind.

DON PEDRO: Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing, but I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us. I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labors, which is to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection, the one with the other. I would fain have it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

LEONATO: My lord, I am for you, though it cost me ten nights' watchings.

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: And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble strain, of approved valor, and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humor your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick— And I, with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer: his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The same.

Enter DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and CONRADE

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

BORACHIO: Yea, my lord, but I can cross it.

DON JOHN: Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinable to me. I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO: Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me.

DON JOHN: Show me briefly how.

BORACHIO: I think I told your lordship a year since, how much I am in the favor of Margaret, the waiting gentlewoman to Hero.

DON JOHN: I remember.

BORACHIO: I can, at any unseasonable instant of the night, appoint her to look out at her lady's chamber window.

DON JOHN: What life is in that, to be the death of this marriage?

BORACHIO: The poison of that lies in you to temper. Go you to the prince your brother; spare not to tell him that he hath wronged his honor in marrying the renowned Claudio, whose estimation do you mightily hold up, to a contaminated stale, such a one as Hero.

DON JOHN: What proof shall I make of that?

BORACHIO: Proof enough to misuse the Prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero, and kill Leonato. Look you for any other issue?

DON JOHN: Only to despite them, I will endeavor anything.

BORACHIO: Go then, find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone. Tell them that you know that Hero loves me; intend a kind of zeal both to the Prince and Claudio, as in love of your brother's honor, who hath made this match, and his friend's reputation, who is thus like to be cozened with the semblance of a maid, that you have discovered thus. They will scarcely believe this without trial. Offer them instances, which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber window, hear me call Margaret "Hero," hear Margaret term me "Borachio," and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, for in the meantime I will so fashion the matter that Hero shall be absent, and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

DON JOHN: Grow this to what adverse issue it can, I will put it in practice. Be cunning in the working this, and thy fee is a thousand ducats.

BORACHIO: Be you constant in the accusation, and my cunning shall not shame me.

DON JOHN: I will presently go learn their day of marriage.

Exeunt

SCENE III. LEONATO'S orchard.*Enter BENEDICK*

BENEDICK: I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by failing in love—and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe. I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armor; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthography; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not. I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in 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; noble, or not I for an angel; 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 me in the arbor.

*Benedick Withdraws**Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, LEONATO, and BALTHASAR***DON PEDRO:** Come, shall we hear this music?**CLAUDIO:**

Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,
As hush'd on purpose to grace harmony!

DON PEDRO: [*aside to Claudio*]

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO: [*aside to Don Pedro*]

O, very well my lord.

DON PEDRO:

Come, Balthasar, we'll hear that song again.

BALTHASAR:

O, good my lord, tax not so bad a voice
To slander music any more than once.

DON PEDRO:

I pray thee, sing, and let me woo no more.

BALTHASAR:

Because you talk of wooing, I will sing,
Since many a woer doth commence his suit
To her he thinks not worthy, yet he woos,
Yet will he swear he loves.

DON PEDRO: Nay, pray thee, come,
Or if thou wilt hold longer argument,
Do it in notes.

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 plays

BENEDICK: [*Aside*] Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished! Is it not strange that sheeps' guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?

Balthasar sings

BALTHASAR:
*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 mo,
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, thou sing'st well enough for a shift.

BENEDICK: [*Aside*] An he had been a dog that should have howled thus, they would have hanged him.

DON PEDRO: Yea, marry, dost thou hear, Balthasar? I pray thee, get us some excellent music, for tomorrow night we would have it at the Lady Hero's chamber window.

BALTHASAR: The best I can, my lord.

DON PEDRO: Do so. Farewell.

Exit BALTHASAR

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

CLAUDIO: O, ay. [*Aside to Don Pedro*] Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl sits.—I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

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

BENEDICK: [*Aside*] Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

LEONATO: By my troth, my lord, I cannot tell what to think of it, but that she loves him with an enraged affection: it is past the infinite of thought.

DON PEDRO: Maybe she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO: Faith, like enough.

LEONATO: O God! Counterfeit? There was never counterfeit of passion came so near the life of passion as she discovers it.

DON PEDRO: Why, what effects of passion shows she?

CLAUDIO: [*Aside to Leonato*] Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

LEONATO: What effects, my lord? She will sit you—you heard my daughter tell you how.

CLAUDIO: She did, indeed.

DON PEDRO: How, how I pray you? You amaze me. I would have thought her spirit had been invincible against all assaults of affection.

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

BENEDICK: [*Aside*] I should think this a gull, but that Leonato speaks it. Knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

CLAUDIO: [*Aside to Don Pedro*] He hath ta'en th' infection. Hold it up.

DON PEDRO: Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

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

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

LEONATO: This says she now 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 have writ a sheet of paper. My daughter tells us all.

CLAUDIO: Now you talk of a sheet of paper, I remember a pretty jest your daughter told us of.

LEONATO: O, when she had writ it and was reading it over, she found "Benedick" and "Beatrice" between the sheet?

CLAUDIO: That.

LEONATO: O, she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence, railed at herself, that she should be so immodest to write to one that she knew would flout her. "I measure him," says she, "by my own spirit, for I should flout him if he writ to me, yea, though I love him, I should."

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 doth indeed, my daughter says so, and the ecstasy hath so much overborne her that my daughter is sometime afeared she will do a desperate outrage to herself. It is very true.

DON PEDRO: It were good that Benedick knew of it by some other, if she will not discover it.

CLAUDIO: To what end? He would make but a sport of it and torment the poor lady worse.

DON PEDRO: An he should, it were an alms to hang him. She's an excellent sweet lady, and, out of all suspicion, she is virtuous.

CLAUDIO: And she is exceeding wise.

DON PEDRO: In everything but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO: O, my lord, wisdom and blood combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one that blood hath the victory. I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

DON PEDRO: I would she had bestowed this dotage on me. I would have daffed all other respects and made her half myself. I pray you, tell Benedick of it, and hear what he will say.

LEONATO: Were it good, think you?

CLAUDIO: Hero thinks surely she will die, for she says she will die, if he love her not, and she will die ere she make her love known, and she will die if he woo her rather than she will bate one breath of her accustomed crossness.

DON PEDRO: She doth well. If she should make tender of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it, for the man, as you know all, hath a contemptible spirit.

CLAUDIO: He is a very proper man.

DON PEDRO: He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

CLAUDIO: Before God, and in my mind, very wise.

DON PEDRO: He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

CLAUDIO: And I take him to be 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 with good counsel.

LEONATO: Nay, that's impossible; she may wear her heart out first.

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

LEONATO: My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready.

LEONATO, DON PEDRO, and CLAUDIO begin to exit.

CLAUDIO: *[Aside to Don Pedro and Leonato]* If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation.

DON PEDRO: *[Aside to Leonato]* Let there be the same net spread for her, and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be when they hold one an opinion of another's dotage, and no such matter. That's the scene that I would see, which will be merely a dumb show. Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

BENEDICK: *[Coming forward]* This can be no trick. The conference was sadly borne; they have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady; it seems her affections have their full bent. Love me? Why, it must be requited! I hear how I am censured. They say I will bear myself proudly if I perceive the love come from her. They say too that she will 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, I can bear them witness. And virtuous; 'tis so, I cannot reprove it. And wise, but for loving me; by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her! I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railed so long against marriage, but doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor? No! The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were 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: Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point and choke a sparrow withal. You have no stomach, signior. Fare you well.

Beatrice Exits

BENEDICK: Ha! "Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner." There's a double meaning in that. "I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me." That's as much as to say "Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks." If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain; if I do not love her, I am a fool. I will go get her picture.

Benedick Exits

ACT III**SCENE I. LEONATO'S garden.**

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA

HERO:

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor.
 There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice
 Proposing 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 thou overheardst us,
 And bid her steal where she can hide her
 To listen our purpose. This is thy office.
 Bear thee well in it and leave us alone.

MARGARET:

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

Margaret Exits

HERO:

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
 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 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, who hides in the bower.

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

URSULA: [*Aside to Hero*]

The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish
 Cut with her golden oars the silver stream
 And greedily devour the treacherous bait.
 So angle we for Beatrice.
 Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

HERO: [*Aside to Ursula*]

Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing
 Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.

They walk near the bower.

No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful.
 I know her spirits are as coy and wild
 As haggerds of the rock.

URSULA: But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO:
So says the prince and my new-trothèd 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? Doth not the gentleman
Deserve as full as fortunate a bed
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?

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,
Misprizing what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endearèd.

URSULA: Sure, I think so;
And therefore certainly it were not good
She knew his love, lest she make sport at it.

HERO:
Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,
But she would spell him backward. If fair-faced,
She would swear the gentleman should be her sister;
If tall, then he must be a lance ill-headed;
If low, an agate very vilely cut;
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moved with none.
So turns she every man the wrong side out
And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

URSULA:
Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO:

No, not to be so odd and from all fashions
 As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable.
 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 covered fire,
 Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly.
 It were a better death than die with mocks,
 Which is as bad as die with tickling.

URSULA:

Yet tell her of it. Hear what she will say.

HERO:

No, rather 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 doth not know
 How much an ill word may empoison liking.

URSULA:

O, do not do your cousin such a wrong!
 She cannot be so much without true judgment,
 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.

URSULA:

I pray you be not angry with me, madam,
 Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedick,
 For shape, for bearing, argument, and valor,
 Goes foremost in report through Italy.

HERO:

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA:

His excellence did earn it, ere he had it.
 When are you married, madam?

HERO:

Why, every day, tomorrow. Come, go in.
 I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel
 Which is the best to furnish me tomorrow.

They move away from the bower.

URSULA: *[Aside to Hero]*

She's limed, I warrant you. We have caught her, madam.

HERO: *[Aside 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 condemned for pride and scorn so much?
Contempt, farewell! And maiden pride, adieu!
No glory lives behind the back of such.
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 reportingly.

Beatrice Exits

SCENE II. A room in LEONATO'S house

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO

DON PEDRO: I do but stay till your marriage be consummate, and then go I toward Aragon.

CLAUDIO: I'll bring you thither, my lord, if you'll vouchsafe me.

DON PEDRO: Nay, that would be as great a soil in the new gloss of your marriage as to show a child his new coat and forbid him to wear it. I will only be bold with Benedick for his company, for from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, he is all mirth. He hath twice or thrice cut Cupid's bowstring and the little hangman dare not shoot at him. He hath a heart as sound as a bell and his tongue is the clapper, for what his heart thinks his tongue speaks.

BENEDICK: Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO: So say I methinks you are sadder.

CLAUDIO: I hope he be in love.

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

BENEDICK: I have the toothache.

DON PEDRO: Draw it.

BENEDICK: Hang it!

CLAUDIO: You must hang it first, and draw it afterwards.

DON PEDRO: What, sigh for the toothache?

BENEDICK: Well, everyone can master a grief but he that has it.

CLAUDIO: Yet say I, he is in love.

DON PEDRO: There is no appearance of fancy in him.

CLAUDIO: If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs. He brushes his hat o' mornings. What should that bode?

DON PEDRO: He rubs himself with civet. Can you smell him out by that?

CLAUDIO: And when was he wont to wash his face?

DON PEDRO: Yea, or to paint himself? For the which I hear what they say of him.

CLAUDIO: Nay, but his jesting spirit, which is now crept into a lute string and now governed by stops—

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 that knows him not.

CLAUDIO: Yes, and his ill conditions; and, in despite of all, dies for him.

DON PEDRO: She shall be buried with her face upwards.

BENEDICK: Yet is this no charm for the toothache. Old signior, 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 him about Beatrice!

CLAUDIO: 'Tis even so. Hero and Ursula 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 e'en, brother.

DON JOHN: If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO: In private?

DON JOHN: If it please you. Yet Count Claudio may hear, for what I would speak of concerns him.

DON PEDRO: What's the matter?

DON JOHN: *[To Claudio]* Means your lordship to be married tomorrow?

DON PEDRO: You know he does.

DON JOHN: I know not that, when he knows what I know.

CLAUDIO: If there be any impediment, I pray you discover it.

DON JOHN: You may think I love you not. Let that appear hereafter, and aim better at me by that I now will manifest. For my brother, I think he holds you well, and in dearness of

heart hath help to effect your ensuing marriage—surely suit ill spent and labor ill bestowed.

DON PEDRO: Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN: I came hither to tell you; and, circumstances shortened, for she has been too long a talking of, the lady is disloyal.

CLAUDIO: Who, 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. Think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it. Wonder not till further warrant. Go but with me tonight, you shall see her chamber window entered, even the night before her wedding day. If you love her then, tomorrow wed her. But it would better fit your honor to change your mind.

CLAUDIO: [*To Don Pedro*] May this be so?

DON PEDRO: I will not think it.

DON JOHN: If you dare not trust that you see, confess not that you know. If you will follow me, I will show you enough, and when you have seen more and heard more, proceed accordingly.

CLAUDIO: If I see anything tonight why I should not marry her, tomorrow in the congregation, where I should wed, there will I shame her.

DON PEDRO: And, as I wooed for thee to obtain her, I will join with thee to disgrace her.

DON JOHN: I will disparage her no farther till you are my witnesses. Bear it coldly but till midnight, and let the issue show itself.

DON PEDRO: O day untowardly turned!

CLAUDIO: O mischief strangely thwarting!

DON JOHN: O plague right well prevented! So will you say when you have seen the sequel.

Exeunt

SCENE III. A street.

Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES with SEACOLE

DOGBERRY: Are you good men and true?

VERGES: Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation, body and soul.

DOGBERRY: Nay, that were a punishment too good for them, if they should have any allegiance in them, being chosen for the prince's watch.

VERGES: Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

DOGBERRY: First, who think you the most desertless man to be constable?

VERGES: George Seacole, sir, for he can write and read.

DOGBERRY: Come hither, neighbour Seacole. God hath blessed you with a good name. To be a well-favored man is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature.

SEACOLE: Both which, master constable—

DOGBERRY: You have. I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favor, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it, and for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch; therefore bear you the lantern. This is your charge: you shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the Prince's name.

SEACOLE: How if he will not stand?

DOGBERRY: Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go, and presently call the rest of the watch together and thank God you are rid of a knave.

VERGES: If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none 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; for, for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable and not to be endured.

SEACOLE: We will rather sleep than talk. We know what belongs to a watch.

DOGBERRY: Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I cannot see how sleeping should offend; only, have a care that your bills be not stolen. Well, you are to call at all the alehouses, and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

SEACOLE: How if they will not?

DOGBERRY: Why, then, let them alone till they are sober. If they make you not then the better answer, you may say they are not the men you took them for.

VERGES: Well, sir.

DOGBERRY: If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true man, and for such kind of men, the less you meddle or make with them, why, the more is for your 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 most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is and steal out of your company.

VERGES: You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY: Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, much more a man who hath any honesty in him.

VERGES: [*To The Watch*] If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call to the nurse and bid her still it.

SEACOLE: How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?

DOGBERRY: Why, then depart in peace, and let the child wake her with crying, for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baas will never answer a calf when he bleats.

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 in the night, you may stay him.

VERGES: Nay, by 'r Lady, that I think he cannot.

DOGBERRY: Five shillings to one on't, with any man that knows the statutes, he may stay him—marry, not without the Prince be willing, for indeed the watch ought to offend no man, and it is an offense to stay a man against his will.

VERGES: By 'r lady, I think it be so.

DOGBERRY: Ha, ha, ha! Well, masters, goodnight. An there be any matter of weight chances, call up me. Keep your fellows' counsels and your own, and goodnight.

DOGBERRY begins to exit.

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

DOGBERRY: One word more, honest neighbours. I pray you watch about Signior Leonato's door, for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is a great coil tonight. Adieu: be vigilant, I beseech you.

Exeunt DOGBERRY

Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE

BORACHIO: What, Conrade!

VERGES: [*Aside*] Peace! Stir not.

BORACHIO: Conrade, I say!

CONRADE: Here, man, I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO: Mass, and my elbow itched, I thought there would a scab follow.

CONRADE: I will owe thee an answer for that. And now forward with thy tale.

BORACHIO: Stand thee close, then, and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.

SEACOLE: [*Aside*] Some treason, masters. Yet stand close.

BORACHIO: Therefore know I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats.

CONRADE: Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear?

BORACHIO: Thou shouldst rather ask if it were possible any villainy should be so rich; for when rich villains have need of poor ones, poor ones may make what price they will.

CONRADE: I wonder at it.

A noise from Verges.

BORACHIO: Didst thou not hear somebody?

CONRADE: No, 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO: Know that I have tonight wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero. She leans me out at her mistress' chamber window, bids me a thousand times goodnight. I tell this tale vilely. I should first tell thee how the Prince and Claudio,

planted and placed and possessed by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter.

CONRADE: And thought they 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 oaths, which first possessed them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my villainy, which did confirm any slander that Don John had made, away went Claudio enraged, swore he would meet her, as he was appointed next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'ernight and send her home again without a husband.

SEACOLE: We charge you, in the prince's name, stand!

VERGES: Call up the right Master Constable.

SEACOLE Exits.

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

CONRADE: Masters, masters—

VERGES: [*To Borachio*] You'll be made come forth, I warrant you.

Re-enter DOGBERRY and SEACOLE.

CONRADE: Masters—

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

BORACHIO: [*To Conrade*] We are like to prove a goodly commodity, being taken up of these men's bills.

CONRADE: A commodity in question, I warrant you. Come, we'll obey you.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. HERO's apartment.

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA

HERO: Good Ursula, wake my cousin Beatrice and desire her to rise.

URSULA: I will, lady.

HERO: And bid her come hither.

URSULA: Well.

URSULA Exits

MARGARET: Troth, I think your other rebato were better.

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

MARGARET: By my troth, 's not so good, and I warrant your cousin will say so.

HERO: My cousin's a fool, and thou art another. I'll wear none but this.

MARGARET: I like the new tire within excellently, if the hair were a thought browner; and your gown's a most rare fashion, i' faith. I saw the Duchess of Milan's gown that they praise so.

HERO: O, that exceeds, they say.

MARGARET: By my troth, 's but a nightgown in respect of yours: cloth o' gold, and cuts, and laced with silver, set with pearls, down sleeves, side sleeves, and skirts round underborne with a bluish tinsel. But for a fine, quaint, graceful, and excellent fashion, yours is worth ten on 't.

HERO: God give me joy to wear it, for my heart is exceeding heavy.

MARGARET: 'Twill be heavier soon by the weight of a man.

HERO: Fie upon thee! Art not ashamed?

MARGARET: Of what, lady? Of speaking honorably? Is not marriage honorable in a beggar? Is not your lord honorable without marriage? And bad thinking do not wrest true speaking, I'll offend nobody. Is there any harm in "the heavier for a husband"? None, I think, and it be the right husband and the right wife. Otherwise, 'tis light and not heavy. Ask my Lady Beatrice else; here she comes.

Enter BEATRICE

HERO: Good morrow, coz.

BEATRICE: Good morrow, sweet Hero.

HERO: Why how now? Do you speak in the sick tune?

BEATRICE: I am out of all other tune, methinks.

MARGARET: Clap 's into "Light o' love." That goes without a burden. Do you sing it, and I'll dance it.

BEATRICE: 'Tis almost five o'clock, cousin. 'Tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceeding ill. Heigh-ho!

MARGARET: For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

BEATRICE: What means the fool, trow?

MARGARET: Nothing I; but God send everyone their heart's desire!

HERO: These gloves the Count sent me, they are an excellent perfume.

BEATRICE: I am stuffed, cousin. I cannot smell.

MARGARET: A maid, and stuffed! There's goodly catching of cold.

BEATRICE: O, God help me! God help me! How long have you professed apprehension?

MARGARET: Even since you left it. Doth not my wit become me rarely?

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

MARGARET: Get you some of this distilled *carduus benedictus*, and lay it to your heart: it is the only thing for a qualm.

HERO: There thou prick'st her with a thistle.

BEATRICE: *Benedictus!* Why *benedictus*? You have some moral in this *benedictus*.

MARGARET: Moral? No, by my troth, I have no moral meaning with this *carduus benedictus*; I meant plain holy thistle. You may think perchance that I think you are in love. Nay, by 'r Lady, I am not such a fool to think what I list, nor I list not to think what I can, nor indeed I cannot think, if I would think my heart out of thinking, that you are in love or that you will be in love or that you can be in love. Yet Benedick was such another, and now is he become a man. He swore he would never marry, and yet now, in despite of his heart, he eats his meat without grudging. And how you may be converted I know not, but methinks you look with your eyes as other women do.

BEATRICE: What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

MARGARET: Not a false gallop.

Re-enter URSULA

URSULA: Madam, withdraw. The Prince, the Count, Signior Benedick, Don John, and all the gallants of the town are come to fetch you to church.

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

Exeunt

SCENE V. Another room in LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, with DOGBERRY and VERGES

LEONATO: What would you with me, honest neighbor?

DOGBERRY: Marry, sir, I would have some confidence with you that decerns you nearly.

LEONATO: Brief, I pray you, for you see it is a busy time with 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 blunt 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: Comparisons are odorous. *Palabras*, neighbour 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 of your worship.

LEONATO: All thy tediousness on me, ah?

DOGBERRY: Yea, an 'twere a thousand pound more than 'tis, for I hear as good exclamation on your Worship as of any man in the city; and though I be but a poor man, I am glad to hear it.

VERGES: And so am I.

LEONATO: I would fain know what you have to say.

VERGES: Marry, sir, our watch tonight, excepting your worship's presence, ha' ta'en 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 is out." God help us, it is a world to see! *[To Verges]* Well said, i' faith, neighbor Verges.—*[To Leonato]* Well, God's a good man. An two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. An honest soul, i' faith, sir, by my troth he is, as ever broke bread, but God is to be worshipped, all men are not alike, alas, good neighbor!

LEONATO: Indeed, neighbor, he comes too short of 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, as it may appear unto you.

DOGBERRY: It shall be suffigance.

LEONATO: Drink some wine ere you go. Fare you well.

Enter BALTHASAR

BALTHASAR: My lord, they stay for you to give your daughter to her husband.

LEONATO: I'll wait upon them. I am ready.

Exeunt LEONATO and BALTHASAR

DOGBERRY: Go, good partner, go, get you to George 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. Here's that shall drive some of them to a noncome. Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication and meet me at the jail.

Exeunt

ACT IV**SCENE I. 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: *[To Claudio]* 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, charge you on your souls to utter it.

CLAUDIO: Know you any, Hero?

HERO: None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS: Know you any, count?

LEONATO: I dare make his answer, none.

CLAUDIO: O, what men dare do! What men may do! What men daily do, not knowing what they do!

BENEDICK: How now! Interjections? Why, then, some be of laughing, as, ah, ha, he!

CLAUDIO:

Stand thee by, friar.—Father, 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 counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO:

Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO:

Sweet prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.—
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!
O, what authority and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!

Comes not that blood as modest evidence
 To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,
 All you that see her, that she were 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 approvèd wanton.

LEONATO:

Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof,
 Have vanquished the resistance of her youth,
 And made defeat of her virginity—

CLAUDIO:

I know what you would say: if I have known her,
 You will say she did embrace me as a husband,
 And so extenuate the 'forehand sin.
 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 seem to me as Dian in her orb,
 As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown.
 But you are more intemperate in your blood
 Than Venus, or those pampered animals
 That rage in savage sensuality.

HERO:

Is my lord well, that he doth speak so wide?

LEONATO:

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO:

What should I speak?
 I stand dishonored, that have gone 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 nuptial.

HERO: True! O God!

CLAUDIO: Leonato, stand I here?

Is this the Prince? Is this the Prince's brother?

Is this face Hero's? Are our eyes our own?

LEONATO:

All this is so, but what of this, my lord?

CLAUDIO:

Let me but move one question to your daughter,

And by that fatherly and kindly power

That you have in her, bid her answer truly.

LEONATO:

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

HERO:

O, God defend me! How am I beset!—

What kind of catechizing call you this?

CLAUDIO:

To make you answer truly to your name.

HERO:

Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name

With any just reproach?

CLAUDIO:

Marry, that can Hero!

Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.

What man was he talked with you yesternight

Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?

Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

HERO:

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

DON PEDRO:

Why, then are you no maiden.—Leonato,

I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honor,

Myself, my brother, and this grievèd count

Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night

Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window

Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,

Confessed the vile encounters they have had

A thousand times in secret.

DON JOHN:

Fie, fie! They are not to be named, my lord,

Not to be spoke of!

There is not chastity enough in language
Without offense, to utter them.—Thus, pretty lady,
I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

CLAUDIO:

O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been
If half thy outward graces had been placed
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! Farewell,
Thou pure impiety and impious purity!
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,
And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang,
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,
And never shall it more be gracious.

LEONATO:

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

HERO falls.

BEATRICE:

Why, how now, cousin! Wherefore 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 doth the lady?

BEATRICE: Dead, I think.—Help, uncle!—

Hero! Why, Hero! Uncle! Signior Benedick! Friar!

LEONATO:

O 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!

HERO stirs.

FRIAR FRANCIS: *[To Hero]* Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO: *[To Hero]*

Dost thou look up?

FRIAR FRANCIS: Yea, wherefore should she not?

LEONATO:

Wherefore! Why, doth 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 ope thine eyes,

For, did I think thou wouldst not quickly die,
 Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames,
 Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches,
 Strike at thy life. Grieved I, I had but one?
 O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?
 Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?
 Why had I not with charitable hand
 Took up a beggar's issue at my gates,
 Who smirchèd thus, and mired with infamy,
 I might have said "No part of it is mine;
 This shame derives itself from unknown loins"?
 But mine, and mine I loved, and mine I praised,
 And mine that I was proud on, mine so much
 That I myself was to myself not mine,
 Valuing of her—why she, O she, is fallen
 Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
 Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,
 And salt too little which may season give
 To her foul tainted flesh!

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 been silent so long,
 And given way unto this course of fortune,
 By noting of the lady. I have marked
 A thousand blushing 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 observations,
 My reverence, calling, nor divinity,
 If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
 Under some biting error.

LEONATO: Friar, it cannot be.
 Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left
 Is that she will not add to her damnation
 A sin of perjury. She not denies it:
 Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse
 That which appears in proper nakedness?

FRIAR FRANCIS:
 Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO:
 They know that do accuse me; I know none.
 If I know more of any man alive
 Than that which maiden modesty doth warrant,
 Let all my sins lack mercy!—O my father,
 Prove you that any man with me conversed
 At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight
 Maintained the change of words with any creature,
 Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death!

FRIAR FRANCIS:
 There is some strange misprision 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,
 Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies.

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.
 Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,
 But they shall find, awaked in such a kind,
 Both strength of limb and policy of mind,
 Ability in means and choice of friends,
 To quit me of them throughly.

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.
 She dying, as it must so be maintained,
 Upon the instant that she was accused,
 Shall be lamented, pitied, and excused
 Of every hearer. For it so falls out
 That what we have we prize not to the worth
 Whiles we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost,
 Why, then we rack the value, then we find
 The virtue that possession would not show us
 Whiles it was ours. So will it 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 apparelled in more precious habit,
 More moving, delicate, and full of life,
 Than when she lived indeed. Then shall he mourn,
 And wish he had not so accused her,
 No, though he thought his accusation true.
 But if all aim but this be leveled false,
 The supposition of the lady's death
 Will quench the wonder of her infamy.
 And if it sort not well, you may conceal her,
 As best befits her wounded reputation,
 In some reclusive and religious life,
 Out of all eyes, tongues, minds, and injuries.

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,
 For to strange sores strangely they strain the cure.—

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 were 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 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: Will you not eat your word?

BENEDICK: With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.

BEATRICE: Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK: What offence, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE: You have stayed me in a happy hour: I was about to protest 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: Ha! Not for the wide world.

BEATRICE: You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BEATRICE begins to exit.

BENEDICK: Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE: I am gone, though I am 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 easier be friends with me than fight with mine enemy.

BENEDICK: Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE: Is he not approved in the height a villain that hath slandered, scorned, dishonored my kinswoman? O, that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until they come to take hands, and then, with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancor—O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the marketplace.

BENEDICK: Hear me, Beatrice—

BEATRICE: Talk with a man out at a window! A proper saying!

BENEDICK: Nay, but Beatrice—

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

BENEDICK: Beat—

BEATRICE: Princes and counties! Surely a princely testimony, a goodly count, Count Comfekt, a sweet gallant, surely! O, that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into courtesies, valor into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too. I cannot be a man with wishing; therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

BENEDICK: Tarry, good Beatrice. By this hand, I love thee.

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

BENEDICK: Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath wronged Hero?

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

BENEDICK: Enough, I am engaged. I will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account. As you hear of me, so think of me. Go, comfort your cousin. I must say she is dead: and so, farewell.

Exeunt

SCENE II. A prison.

Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and SEXTON, in gowns; and SEACOLE, with CONRADE and BORACHIO

DOGBERRY: Is our whole dissembly appeared?

VERGES: O, a stool and a cushion for the Sexton.

A stool is brought in; the Sexton sits.

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 which are the offenders that are to be examined? Let them come before Master Constable.

DOGBERRY: Yea, marry, let them come before me.

CONRADE and BORACHIO are brought forward.

What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO: Borachio.

DOGBERRY: Pray, write down "Borachio."—Yours, sirrah?

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

DOGBERRY: Write down "Master Gentleman Conrade."—Masters, do you serve God?

CONRADE: Yea, sir.

BORACHIO: We hope.

DOGBERRY: Write down that they hope they 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. How answer you for yourselves?

CONRADE: Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY: A marvelous witty fellow, I assure you, but I will go about with him.—Come you hither, 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 none.

DOGBERRY: Well, stand aside.—'Fore God, they are both in a tale. Have you writ down that they are none?

SEXTON: Master constable, you go not the way to examine. You must call forth the watch that are their accusers.

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.

VERGES: 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: Master constable—

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

SEXTON: [*To Watch*] What heard you him say else?

SEACOLE: Marry, that he had received a thousand ducats of 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?

SEACOLE: This 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.

SEXTON Exits

DOGBERRY: Come, let them be opinioned.

VERGES: Let them be in the hands—

CONRADE: Off, coxcomb!

DOGBERRY: God's my life, where's the sexton? 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: Dost 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.—No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow, and, which is more, an officer, and, which is more, a householder, and, which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina, and one that knows the law, go to, and a rich fellow enough, go to, and a fellow that hath had losses, and one that hath two coats and everything handsome about him.—Bring him away.—O, that I had been writ down an ass!

Exeunt

ACT V**SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.***Enter LEONATO and BALTHASAR***BALTHASAR:**

If you go on thus, you will kill yourself,
 And 'tis not wisdom thus to second grief
 Against 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
 But such a one whose wrongs do suit with 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 the 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, you see, men
 Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
 Which they themselves not feel, but tasting it,
 Their counsel turns to passion, which before
 Would give preceptual medicine to rage,
 Fetter 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 sufficiency
 To be so moral when he shall endure
 The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel.
 My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

BALTHASAR:

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATO:

I pray thee, peace. I will be flesh and blood,
 For there was never yet philosopher
 That could endure the toothache patiently.

BALTHASAR:

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

LEONATO:

There thou speak'st 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.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO

DON PEDRO:

Good e'en, good e'en.

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.

BALTHASAR:

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

CLAUDIO:

Who wrongs him?

LEONATO:

Marry, thou dost 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:

Never flear and jest at me.
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool.
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 trial of a man.
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child;
Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors,
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
Save this of hers, framed by thy villany!

CLAUDIO:

My villany?

LEONATO: Thine, 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.

CLAUDIO:

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO:

Canst thou so daff me? Thou hast killed my child.
If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.

DON PEDRO:

Gentlemen no, 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, Balthasar, away! I will be heard.

BALTHASAR:

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

Exeunt LEONATO and BALTHASAR

DON PEDRO:

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

Enter BENEDICK

CLAUDIO: Now, signior, what news?

BENEDICK: [*To Don Pedro*] Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO: Welcome, signior. You are almost come to part almost a fray.

BENEDICK: In a false quarrel there 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. Wilt thou use thy wit?

BENEDICK: It is in my scabbard. Shall I draw it?

DON PEDRO: Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

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

BENEDICK: Sir, I shall meet your wit in the career, and you charge it against me. I pray you,
choose another subject.

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

BENEDICK: Shall I speak a word in your ear?

CLAUDIO: God bless me from a challenge!

BENEDICK: [*Aside 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 have good cheer.

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." "Right," says she, "a great gross one." "Nay," said I, "a good wit." "Just," said she, "it hurts nobody." "Nay," said I, "he hath the tongues." "That I believe," said she, "for he swore a thing to me on Monday night which he forswore on Tuesday morning; there's a double tongue; there's two tongues." Thus did she an hour together transshape 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: Yea, that she did. But yet, for all that, an if she did not hate him deadly, she would love him dearly. The old man's daughter told us all.

CLAUDIO: All, all. And, moreover, God saw him when he was hid in the garden.

DON PEDRO: But when shall we set the savage bull's horns on the sensible Benedick's head?

CLAUDIO: Yea, and 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 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 there, he and I shall meet, and till then peace be with him.

Benedick Exits

DON PEDRO: He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO: In most profound earnest; and, I'll warrant you, for the love of Beatrice.

DON PEDRO: And hath challenged thee?

CLAUDIO: Most sincerely.

DON PEDRO: But soft, did he not say my brother was fled?

Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and SEACOLE, with CONRADE and BORACHIO

DOGBERRY: Come you, sir. If justice cannot tame you, she shall ne'er weigh more reasons in her balance. Nay, an you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be looked to.

DON PEDRO: How now? Two of my brother's men bound! 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, to conclude, they are lying knaves.

DON PEDRO: First, I ask thee what they have done; thirdly, I ask thee what's their offense; sixth and lastly, why they are committed; and, to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

CLAUDIO: Rightly reasoned, and in his own division: and, by my troth, there's one meaning well suited.

DON PEDRO: [*To Borachio and Conrade*] Who have you offended, masters, that you are thus bound to your answer? This learned constable is too cunning to be understood. What's your offense?

BORACHIO: Sweet prince, let me go no farther to mine answer. Do you hear me, and let this count kill me. I have deceived even your very eyes. What your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light, who in the night overheard me confessing to this man how Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero, how you were brought into the orchard and saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments, how you disgraced her when you should marry her. My villainy they have upon record, which I had rather seal with my death than repeat over to my shame. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation. And, briefly, I desire nothing but the reward of a villain.

DON PEDRO: [*To Claudio*]
Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO:
I have drunk poison whiles he uttered it.

DON PEDRO: [*To Borachio*]
But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO: Yea, and paid me richly for the practice of 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 loved 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.

Re-enter LEONATO and BALTHASAR, with the SEXTON

LEONATO:
Which is the villain? Let me see his eyes,
That, when I note 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 bethink you of it.

CLAUDIO:

I know not how to pray your patience,
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,
Possess the people in Messina here
How innocent she died; do so tonight.
Tomorrow morning come you to my house,
And since you could not be my son-in-law,
Be yet my nephew. My brother hath 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 overkindness doth wring tears from me!
I do embrace your offer and dispose
For henceforth of poor Claudio.

LEONATO:

Tomorrow then I will expect your coming.
Tonight I take my leave. This guilty man
Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
Who I believe was packed in all 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 hath been just and virtuous
In anything that I do know by her.

DOGBERRY: [*To Leonato*] 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 reverent youth, and I praise God for you.

LEONATO: [*giving him money*] There's for thy pains.

DOGBERRY: God save the foundation!

LEONATO: Go, I discharge thee of thy 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. God keep your Worship! I wish your 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.

BALTHASAR:
Farewell, my lords. We look for you tomorrow.

DON PEDRO:
We will not fail.

CLAUDIO: Tonight I'll mourn with Hero.

LEONATO: [*To Seacole*]
Bring you these fellows on.—We'll talk with Margaret,
How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.

Exeunt, severally

SCENE II. LEONATO'S garden.

Enter BENEDICK and MARGARET, meeting

BENEDICK: Pray thee, sweet Mistress Margaret, deserve well at my hands by helping me to the speech of Beatrice.

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

BENEDICK: In so high a style, Margaret, that no man living shall come over it, for in most comely truth, thou deservest it.

MARGARET: To have no man come over me? Why, shall I always keep below stairs?

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

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

BENEDICK: A most manly wit, Margaret; it will not hurt a woman. And so, I pray thee, call Beatrice. I give thee the bucklers.

MARGARET: Give us the swords; we have bucklers of our own. Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I think hath 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, Leander the good swimmer, Troilus the first employer of panders, and a whole book full of these quondam carpetmongers, 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 no rhyme to “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

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

BEATRICE: Yea, signior, 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 that I came, which is, with knowing what hath 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 noisome. Therefore I will depart unknissed.

BENEDICK: Thou hast frightened the 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 subscribe him a coward. And I pray thee now tell me, for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?

BEATRICE: For them all together, which maintained so politic a state of evil that they will not admit any good part to intermingle with them. But for which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?

BENEDICK: Suffer love! A good epithet. 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 it for yours, for I will never love that which my friend hates.

BENEDICK: Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably. And now tell me, how doth your cousin?

BEATRICE: Very ill.

BENEDICK: And how do you?

BEATRICE: Very ill, too.

BENEDICK: Serve God, love me, and mend.

Enter URSULA

URSULA: Madam, you must come to your uncle. Yonder's old coil at home. It is proved my Lady Hero hath been falsely accused, the Prince and Claudio mightily abused, and Don John is the author of all, who is fed and gone. Will you come presently?

URSULA exits.

BEATRICE: Will you go hear this news, signior?

BENEDICK: I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes—and, moreover, I will go with thee to thy uncle's.

Exeunt

SCENE III. A church.

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BALTHASAR, and three or four with candles

CLAUDIO: *[Reading an Epitaph out of a scroll]*

*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.*

He hangs up the scroll.

Hang thou there upon the tomb,
Praising her when I am dumb.
Now, unto thy bones, goodnight.
Yearly will I do this rite.

DON PEDRO:

Good morrow, masters. Put your torches out.
Thanks to you all, and leave us. Fare you well.

CLAUDIO:

Good morrow, masters. Each his several way.

Exeunt all but DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO

DON PEDRO:

Come, let us hence, and put on other weeds,
And then to Leonato's we will go.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. A room in LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, BALTHASAR, 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.

BALTHASAR:

Well, I am glad that all things sort so well.

BENEDICK:

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

LEONATO:

Well, daughter, and you gentlewomen all,
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
And when I send for you, come hither masked.

Exeunt Ladies

BENEDICK:

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS: To do what, signior?

BENEDICK:

To bind me, or undo me, one of them.—
Signior Leonato, truth it is, good signior,
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 whereof I think you had from me,
From Claudio, and the Prince. But what's your will?

BENEDICK:

Your answer, sir, is enigmatical.
But for my will, my will is your goodwill
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.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, and two or three 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, e'en were she uncomely.

LEONATO:

Call her forth, then.

Enter HERO, BEATRICE, MARGARET, and URSULA, all masked

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

LEONATO:

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

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: [To Hero]

Give me your hand before this holy friar:

They take hands.

I am your husband, if you like of me.

HERO:

And when I lived, I was your other wife:
And when you loved, you were my other husband.

She unmask.

CLAUDIO:

Another Hero!

HERO:

Nothing certainer:
One Hero died defiled, but I do live,
And 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 can I qualify:
When after that 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:

Soft and fair, friar.—Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE: [Unmasking]

I answer to that name. What is your will?

BENEDICK:

Do not you 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 not you love me?

BENEDICK:

Troth, 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 't that he loves her,
For here's a paper written in his hand,
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
Fashioned to Beatrice.

He shows a paper.

HERO: And here's another,
Writ in my cousin's hand, stolen from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto Benedick.

She shows a paper.

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 in a consumption.

BENEDICK: Peace! I will stop your mouth.

They kiss.

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 humor. Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram? No. If a man will be beaten with brains, he shall wear nothing handsome about him. In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it, and therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it. For man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion.—For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised, and love my cousin.

CLAUDIO: I had well hoped thou wouldst have denied Beatrice, that I might have cudged thee out of thy single life, to make thee a double-dealer, which out of question thou wilt be, if my cousin do not look exceedingly narrowly to thee.

BENEDICK: Come, come, we are friends. Let's have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts and our wives' heels.

LEONATO: We'll have dancing afterward.

BENEDICK: First, of my word! Therefore play, music.—Prince, thou art sad. Get thee a wife, get thee a wife. There is no staff more reverend than one tipped with horn.

Enter BALTHASAR

BALTHASAR: *[To Don Pedro]*

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

BENEDICK: *[To Don Pedro]* Think not on him till tomorrow. I'll devise thee brave punishments for him.—Strike up, pipers!

Music plays. They dance.

Exeunt