

*William Shakespeare's*  
**Much Ado About  
Nothing**

*Adapted by:*  
*Shannon Lindsay*

# CAST AND CREW

Don Pedro	Aidan Smith
Don John	Dino Loftin
Signor Benedick	Matthew Simms
Signor Claudio	Chris Rains
Balthasar/1 <sup>st</sup> Watchman	Isabel Scott
Conrad	Gabriel Stewart
Borachio	Preston Bayani
Leonato	Joshua Ratcliffe
Antonio	Ashlin Glover
Hero	Mackenzie Cannon
Beatrice	Holly Tomblin
Margaret	Elizabeth Harvey
Ursula	Dyllon Glaze
Friar Francis/2 <sup>nd</sup> Watchman	Chloe King
Dogberry	Brayden Fennell
Verges	Emma Kate Noggle
Sexton/Messenger	Luisa Longo

Stage Manager	Tristen Estes
Assistant Stage Manager	Reagan Reynolds
Assistant Stage Manager	Tracen Estes
Production Manager/Dramaturg	Caroline Byrd
Marketing Department Head	Tracen Estes

Set & Props Department Head	Zoe Duvall
Set & Props Crew	Brooke Henderson
	Will Mitchell
	Logan Pagelson
	Caroline Byrd

Costumes & Makeup Dept. Head	Maddie Masoudpour
Costumes & Makeup Crew	Melissa Calva
	Alana Nesbit

Lighting Department Head	Lily Sosebee
Lighting Crew	John Holley

Sound Department Head	Sarah Ngugi
Sound Crew	Sophie Skelton

**ACT I**

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

*Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a Messenger*

**LEONATO**

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

**Messenger**

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?

**Messenger**

But few of any sort, and none of name.

**LEONATO**

I find here that Don Pedro hath  
bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.

**Messenger**

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.

**BEATRICE**

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

**Messenger**

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

**HERO**

My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

**Messenger**

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.

**Messenger**

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

**BEATRICE**

He is a very valiant trencherman; he hath an  
excellent stomach.

**Messenger**

And a good soldier too, lady.

**BEATRICE**

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

**Messenger**

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.

**Messenger**

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?

**Messenger**

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 a' be cured.

**Messenger**

I will hold friends with you, lady.

**BEATRICE**

Do, good friend.

**Messenger**

Don Pedro is approached.

*Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and BALTHASAR*

**DON PEDRO**

Good Signior Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble.

**LEONATO**

Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace; but when you depart from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave.

**DON PEDRO**

You embrace your charge too willingly. 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.

**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 humour 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. 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.

**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**

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.

**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?  
Look Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

*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: mark you this, on my allegiance. 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 my passion change not shortly, God forbid it should be otherwise.

**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 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; 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.

**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.'

**DON PEDRO**

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**

Examine your conscience: and so I leave you.

*Exit*

**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 look'd 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 return'd 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**

If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,  
And I will break with her and with her father,  
And thou shalt have her.

**CLAUDIO**

How sweetly you do minister to love,  
That know love's grief by his complexion!

**DON PEDRO**

And I will fit thee with the remedy.  
I know we shall have revelling to-night:  
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. A room in LEONATO's house.**

*Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, meeting*

**LEONATO**

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

**ANTONIO**

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

**LEONATO**

Are they good?

**ANTONIO**

The prince and Count Claudio,  
walking in a thick-pleached alley in mine  
orchard, were thus much overheard by a man of mine:  
the prince discovered to Claudio that he loved my  
niece your daughter and meant to acknowledge it  
this night in a dance.

**LEONATO**

Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

**ANTONIO**

A good sharp fellow: I will send for him; and  
question him yourself.

**LEONATO**

No, no; we will hold it as a dream till it appear  
itself: but I will acquaint my daughter withal,  
that she may be the better prepared for an answer.  
Go you and tell her of it.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. The same.**

*Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE*

**CONRADE**

What the good-year, 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**

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 humour.

**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.

**DON JOHN**

I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in  
his grace, 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. 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.  
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**

I 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  
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.

**BORACHIO**

We'll wait upon your lordship.

*Exeunt*

**ACT II**

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

*Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, and others*

**LEONATO**

Was not Count John here at supper?

**ANTONIO**

I saw him not.

**BEATRICE**

How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see  
him but I am heart-burned 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 says nothing,  
and the other 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 a' could get her good-will.

**LEONATO**

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

**ANTONIO**

In faith, she's too curst.

**BEATRICE**

Too curst is more than curst:  
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;  
Lord, I could not endure a husband with a  
beard on his face.

**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.

**ANTONIO**

(To HERO) Well, niece, 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.

**LEONATO**

Daughter, remember what I told you: if the prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer. The revellers are entering, brother: make good room.

*All put on their masks*

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA and others, masked*

**DON PEDRO**

Lady, will you 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**

Speak low, if you speak love.

*They move aside: BALTHASAR and MARGARET come forward*

**BALTHASAR**

Well, I would you did like me.

**MARGARET**

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

**BALTHASAR**

Which is one?

**MARGARET**

I say my prayers aloud.

**BALTHASAR**

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

**MARGARET**

God match me with a good dancer!

**BALTHASAR**

Amen.

**MARGARET**

And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done!

*They move aside: URSULA and ANTONIO come forward*

**URSULA**

I know you well enough; you are Signior Antonio.

**ANTONIO**

At a word, I am not.

**URSULA**

I know you by the wagging of your head.

**ANTONIO**

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

**URSULA**

You could never do him so ill-well, unless you were the very man: you are he, you are he.

**ANTONIO**

At a word, I am not.

**URSULA**

Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? can virtue hide itself? Go to, mum, you are he: graces will appear, and there's an end.

*They move aside: BEATRICE and BENEDICK come forward*

**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;

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

Do, do.

*Music*

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

**DON JOHN**

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**

*(aside to DON JOHN)* And that is Claudio:  
I know him by his bearing.

**DON JOHN**

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 enamoured 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 to-night.

**DON JOHN**

Come, let us to the banquet.

*Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO*

**CLAUDIO**

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:  
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, for the prince hath got your Hero.

**CLAUDIO**

I wish him joy of her.

**BENEDICK**

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.

**CLAUDIO**

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

*Exit*

**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 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, I told him, and I think I told him true,  
that your grace had got the good will of this young lady

**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!  
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.  
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,  
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.

*Exit*

**DON PEDRO**

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

**BEATRICE**

Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile; and I gave  
him use for it, 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.  
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 an 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.

**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 every one 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, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born. Cousins, God give you joy!

**LEONATO**

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

**BEATRICE**

I cry you mercy, uncle. By your grace's pardon.

*Exit*

**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**

To-morrow, 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' labours; 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 valour and confirmed honesty. I  
will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she

shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will so practise 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 and BORACHIO*

**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 medicinal to me.  
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 favour 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 honour 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 endeavour any thing.

**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 honour, 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 Claudio; 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 practise. 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**

Boy!

*Enter Boy*

**Boy**

Signior?

**BENEDICK**

In my chamber-window lies a book: bring it hither to me in the orchard.

**Boy**

I am here already, sir.

**BENEDICK**

I know that; but I would have thee hence, and here again.

*Exit Boy*

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 tabour and the pipe. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not. 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 colour it please God. Ha! the prince and  
Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

*Withdraws*

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO*

**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**

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

**CLAUDIO**

O, very well, my lord.

*Enter BALTHASAR with Music*

**DON PEDRO**

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

*The Song*

**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 moe,  
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 singest well enough for a shift.

**BENEDICK**

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 to-morrow 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  
to-day, that your niece Beatrice was in love with  
Signior Benedick?

**CLAUDIO**

O, ay: 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**

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**

May be 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**

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

**LEONATO**

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

**BENEDICK**

I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

**CLAUDIO**

He hath ta'en the 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 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.

**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.

**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 every thing but in loving Benedick.

**LEONATO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

I pray you, tell Benedick of it, and hear what a' 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.

**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**

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.

**CLAUDIO**

If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation.

**DON PEDRO**

Let there be the same net spread for her; and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be, when they hold one an opinion of another's dotage, and no such matter: that's the scene that I would see.

Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

*Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO*

**BENEDICK**

*(Emerging)* 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. 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? 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 daw withal. You have no stomach,  
signior? Fare you well.

*Exit*

**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.

*Exit*

**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  
Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Ursula  
Walk in the orchard and our whole discourse  
Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us;  
And bid her steal into the pleached bower:  
there will she 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.

*Exit*

**HERO**

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

*Enter BEATRICE, behind*

Now begin;

*Approaching 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-trothed 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,  
Misprising 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-endear'd.

**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.  
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 cover'd fire,

Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:  
It were a better death than die with mocks.

**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**

When are you married, madam?

**HERO**

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

**URSULA**

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

**HERO**

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

*Exeunt HERO and URSULA*

**BEATRICE**

*(Emerging)* What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?  
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?  
Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!  
No glory lives behind the back of 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.

*Exit*

**SCENE II. A room in LEONATO'S house**

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO*

**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**

What! sigh for the toothache?

**LEONATO**

Where is but a humour or a worm.

**BENEDICK**

Well, every one 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, unless it be  
a fancy that he hath to strange disguises.

**CLAUDIO**

If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs: a' brushes his hat o' mornings; what should that bode?

**DON PEDRO**

Hath any man seen him at the barber's?

**CLAUDIO**

No, but the barber's man hath been seen with him, and the old ornament of his cheek hath already stuffed tennis-balls.

**LEONATO**

Indeed, he looks younger than he did.

**DON PEDRO**

Nay, a' rubs himself with civet: can you smell him out by that?

**CLAUDIO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

The greatest note of it is his melancholy.

**CLAUDIO**

And when was he wont to wash his face?

**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.

**BENEDICK**

Yet is this no charm for the toothache. (*to LEONATO*) 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 Margaret have by this played their parts with Beatrice; and then the two bears will not bite one another when they meet.

*Enter DON JOHN*

**DON JOHN**

My lord and brother, God save you!

**DON PEDRO**

Good den, 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 to-morrow?

**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.

**DON PEDRO**

Why, what's the matter?

**DON JOHN**

I came hither to tell you; the lady is disloyal.

**CLAUDIO**

Who, Hero?

**DON PEDRO**

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 to-night, you shall see her chamber-window entered, even the night before her wedding-day: if you love her then, to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honour to change your mind.

**CLAUDIO**

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 any thing to-night why I should not marry her to-morrow 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 the Watch*

**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?

**First Watchman**

George Seacole; for he can write and read.

**DOGBERRY**

Come hither, neighbour Seacole. 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.

**Second Watchman**

How if a' 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 they are to meddle with none but the prince's subjects. 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.

**Second Watchman**

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.  
If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call  
to the nurse and bid her still it.

**First Watchman**

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 baes will never answer a calf when he bleats.

**VERGES**

'Tis very true.

**DOGBERRY**

This is the end of the charge:--  
Well, masters, good night: an there be  
any matter of weight chances, call up me: keep your  
fellows' counsels and your own; and good night.  
Come, neighbour.

**Second Watchman**

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 to-morrow, there is a great coil to-night.  
Adieu: be vigitant, I beseech you.

*Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES*

*Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE*

**BORACHIO**

What Conrade!

**Second Watchman**

*(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.

**Second Watchman**

*(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 villany should be so dear?

**BORACHIO**

Know that I have to-night 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 good night,--I tell this tale vilely:--I should first tell thee how the prince, Claudio and my master, 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 villany, 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'er night and send her home again without a husband.

**First Watchman**

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

**Second Watchman**

Call up the right master constable. We have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery that ever was known in the commonwealth.

**CONRADE**

Masters, masters,--

**First Watchman**

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

**BORACHIO**

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.

*Exit*

**MARGARET**

Troth, I think your other rabato 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**

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

**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**

Neighbours, 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 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 a Messenger*

**Messenger**

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 Messenger*

**DOGBERRY**

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

*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**

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 honour.  
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 approved wanton.

**LEONATO**

Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof,  
Have vanquish'd the resistance of her youth,  
And made defeat of her virginity,--

**CLAUDIO**

No, Leonato,  
I never tempted her with word too large;  
But, as a brother to his sister, show'd  
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

**HERO**

And seem'd 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 pamper'd 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 dishonour'd, 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 catechising 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 talk'd with you yesternight  
Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?  
Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

**HERO**

I talk'd 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 honour,

Myself, my brother and this grieved 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,  
Confess'd 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 offence 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 swoons*

**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.

**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 wish'd for.

**BEATRICE**

How now, cousin Hero!

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Have comfort, lady.

**LEONATO**

Dost thou look up?

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Yea, wherefore should she not?

**LEONATO**

Wherefore! Why, doth not every earthly thing  
Cry shame upon her?  
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.  
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?  
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**

Confirm'd, confirm'd!  
Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie,  
Who loved her so, that, speaking of her foulness,  
Wash'd 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.  
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  
Maintain'd 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 honour;  
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,  
The practise of it lives in John the bastard,  
Whose spirits toil in frame of villanies.

**LEONATO**

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

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Pause awhile,  
And let my counsel sway you in this case.  
Your daughter here the princes left for dead:  
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,  
And publish it that she is dead indeed;

**LEONATO**

What shall become of this? what will this do?

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

She dying, as it must so be maintain'd,  
Upon the instant that she was accused,  
Shall be lamented, pitied and excused  
Of every hearer. 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;  
then shall he mourn,  
If ever love had interest in his liver,  
And wish he had not so accused her.

**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 honour, I will deal in this  
As secretly and justly as your soul  
Should with your body.

**LEONATO**

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

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

'Tis well consented: presently away;  
Come, lady, die to live: this wedding-day  
Perhaps is but prolong'd: 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 any thing for thee.

**BEATRICE**

Kill Claudio.

**BENEDICK**

Ha! not for the wide world.

**BEATRICE**

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

**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, dishonoured 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 rancour, --O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place.

**BENEDICK**

Hear me, Beatrice,--

**BEATRICE**

Talk with a man out 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 Comfect; 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, valour into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too: he is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. 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 the Watch, with CONRADE and BORACHIO*

**DOGBERRY**

Is our whole dissembly appeared?

**Sexton**

Which be the malefactors?

**DOGBERRY**

Marry, that am I and my partner.

**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. 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, 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 marvellous 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. 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 eftest way. Let the watch  
come forth. (*First and Second Watchmen come forward*)  
Masters, I charge you, in the prince's  
name, accuse these men.

**First Watchman**

(*indicating BORACHIO*) 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**

What heard you him say else?

**Second Watchman**

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?

**First Watchman**

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?

**Second Watchman**

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.

*Exit*

**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 gowns and every  
thing 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 ANTONIO*

**ANTONIO**

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.  
Bring me a father that so loved his child,  
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,  
And bid him speak of patience;  
But there is no such man: for, brother, men  
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief

Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,  
Their counsel turns to passion.  
Therefore give me no counsel:  
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

**ANTONIO**

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

**LEONATO**

I pray thee, peace. I will be flesh and blood;

**ANTONIO**

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 dishonour her.

**ANTONIO**

Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

*Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO*

**DON PEDRO**

Good den, good den.

**CLAUDIO**

Good day to both of you.

**LEONATO**

Hear you. my lords,--

**DON PEDRO**

We have some haste, Leonato.

**LEONATO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

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

**ANTONIO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

Who wrongs him?

**LEONATO**

Marry, thou dost wrong me; thou dissembler, thou:--  
Nay, never lay thy hand upon thy sword;  
I fear thee not.  
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 kill'd my child:  
If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.

**ANTONIO**

He shall kill two of us, and men indeed.

**DON PEDRO**

Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience.  
My heart is sorry for your daughter's death:  
But, on my honour, 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, brother; away! I will be heard.

**ANTONIO**

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

*Exeunt LEONATO and ANTONIO*

**DON PEDRO**

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

*Enter BENEDICK*

**CLAUDIO**

Now, signior, what news?

**BENEDICK**

Good day, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

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

**BENEDICK**

In a false quarrel there is no true valour. I came to seek you both. *(to CLAUDIO)* 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**

What, a feast, a feast?

**BENEDICK**

Fare you well, boy: you know my mind. 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.

*Exit*

**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**

Did he not say, my brother was fled?

*Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the Watch, with CONRADE and BORACHIO*

**DON PEDRO**

How now? two of my brother's men bound! Borachio one!

**CLAUDIO**

Hearken after their offence, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

Officers, what offence 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**

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 offence?

**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 villany 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**

Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

**CLAUDIO**

I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

**DON PEDRO**

But did my brother set thee on to this?

**BORACHIO**

Yea, and paid me richly for the practise of it.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**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.

**VERGES**

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

*Re-enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, 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 kill'd  
Mine innocent child?

**BORACHIO**

Yea, even I alone.

**LEONATO**

No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself:  
Here stand a pair of honourable 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 sinn'd 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; and if your love  
Can labour ought in sad invention,  
Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb  
And sing it to her bones, sing it to-night:  
To-morrow 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 over-kindness doth wring tears from me!  
I do embrace your offer; and dispose  
For henceforth of poor Claudio.

**LEONATO**

To-morrow then I will expect your coming;  
To-night I take my leave. This naughty man  
Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,  
Who I believe was pack'd 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 any thing that I do know by her.

**DOGBERRY**

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

**LEONATO**

I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

**DOGBERRY**

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

**LEONATO**

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;  
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, neighbour.

*Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES*

**LEONATO**

Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

**ANTONIO**

Farewell, my lords: we look for you to-morrow.

**DON PEDRO**

We will not fail.

**CLAUDIO**

To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

**LEONATO**

*(To the Watch)* Bring you these fellows on.

*Exeunt, severally*

**SCENE II. LEONATO'S garden.**

*Enter BENEDICK and BEATRICE*

**BENEDICK**

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**

Then 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.

**BEATRICE**

It appears not in this confession: there's not one  
wise man among twenty that will praise himself.

**BENEDICK**

So much for  
praising myself, who, I myself will bear witness, is  
praiseworthy: 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. There will I leave  
you too, for here comes one in haste.

*Enter URSULA*

**URSULA**

Madam, you must come to your uncle.  
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?

**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 IV. A room in LEONATA'S house.**

*Enter LEONATA, BENEDICK, BEATRICE, MARGARET, FRIAR FRANCIS, and HERO*

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

**LEONATA**

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.

**BEATRICE**

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.

**LEONATA**

Well, daughter, and you gentle-women all,  
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,  
And when I send for you, come hither mask'd.

*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 LEONATA, truth it is, good signior,  
Your niece regards me with an eye of favour.

**LEONATA**

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

**BENEDICK**

And I do with an eye of love requite her.

But, for my will, my will is your good will  
May stand with ours, this day to be conjoin'd  
In the state of honourable marriage:  
In which, good friar, I shall desire your help.

**LEONATA**

My heart is with your liking.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

And my help.  
Here comes the prince and Claudio.

*Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO*

**DON PEDRO**

Good morrow to this fair assembly.

**LEONATO**

Good morrow, prince; good morrow, Claudio:  
We here attend you. Are you yet determined  
To-day to marry with my brother's daughter?

**CLAUDIO**

I'll hold my mind were she a common drudge.

**LEONATO**

Call her forth.

*Enter masked Ladies*

**CLAUDIO**

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

**ANTONIO**

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**

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

**HERO**

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

**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,  
Fashion'd to Beatrice.

**HERO**

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

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Peace! I will stop your mouth.  
*(Kissing her)*

**DON PEDRO**

How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

**BENEDICK**

I'll tell thee what, prince; a college of  
wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humour.  
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.

*Enter a Messenger*

**Messenger**

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

**BENEDICK**

Think not on him till to-morrow:  
I'll devise thee brave punishments for him.  
Strike up, pipers.

*Dance*

*Exeunt*