

## Act 1 Scene 1

Enter **LEONATO**, Governor of Messina; **HERO**, his daughter; and **BEATRICE** his niece, with a **MESSENGER**

### LEONATO

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

### MESSENGER

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

### LEONATO

5 How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

### MESSENGER

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.

### MESSENGER

10 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 bettered expectation than you must

**LEONATO**, Governor of Messina; **HERO**, his daughter; and **BEATRICE**, his niece, enter with a **MESSENGER**

### LEONATO

(holding a letter) According to this letter, **Don** Pedro of Aragon and his army are coming to Messina tonight.

### MESSENGER

He must be very near by now. When I left him, he was less than nine miles from here.

### LEONATO

How many noblemen were killed in the battle you just fought?

### MESSENGER

Not many, and no one important.

### LEONATO

A victory in battle is twice as victorious when all the soldiers return home safely. This letter also says that Don Pedro has given honors to a young man from Florence named Claudio.

### MESSENGER

Claudio deserves to be honored, and Don Pedro has rewarded him accordingly. Claudio has done more than anyone would expect of a man his age. He looks like a lamb but fights like a

expect of me to tell you how.

### **LEONATO**

15 He hath an uncle here in Messina will be very much glad of it.

### **MESSENGER**

I have already delivered him letters, and there appears much joy in him—even so much that joy could not show itself modest enough without a badge of bitterness.

### **LEONATO**

20 Did he break out into tears?

### **MESSENGER**

In great measure.

### **LEONATO**

A kind overflow of kindness. There are no faces truer than those that are so washed. How much better is it to weep at joy than to joy at weeping!

### **BEATRICE**

25 I pray you, is Signor Montanto returned from the wars or no?

### **MESSENGER**

I know none of that name, lady. There was none such in the

lion. He has so greatly exceeded all expectations that I can't even describe all he's done.

### **LEONATO**

He has an uncle here in Messina who will be glad to hear this news.

### **MESSENGER**

I have delivered some letters to his uncle, and he seemed very happy. He got so emotional that he actually looked like he was in pain.

### **LEONATO**

Did he start weeping?

### **MESSENGER**

Yes, heavily.

### **LEONATO**

That's a very natural display of affection. There's no face more sincere than one washed in tears. And it's definitely better to cry because you're happy than laugh because you're sad!

### **BEATRICE**

Please tell me, has Signior [Montanto](#) returned from battle?

### **MESSENGER**

army of any sort.

### LEONATO

What is he that you ask for, niece?

### HERO

30 My cousin means Signor Benedick of Padua.

### MESSENGER

Oh, he's returned, and as pleasant as ever he was.

### BEATRICE

He set up his bills here in Messina and challenged Cupid at the flight, and my uncle's Fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for Cupid and challenged him at the bird-bolt.

35 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 Signor Benedick too much, but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

### MESSENGER

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

### BEATRICE

You had musty victual, and he hath holp to eat it. He is a

I don't know anyone with that name, ma'am. There was no Signior Montanto in our army.

### LEONATO

Who are you talking about, niece?

### HERO

My cousin means Signor Benedick of Padua.

### MESSENGER

Oh, yes, Benedick has returned and is as cheerful as ever.

### BEATRICE

[Benedick](#) once put up a public notice in Messina challenging Cupid to an archery match. My uncle's jester accepted the contest on Cupid's behalf but used toy arrows at the shooting match. But tell me, how many men did he kill and eat in this battle? I promised him I would eat anyone he killed.

### LEONATO

For God's sake, Beatrice, you're criticizing Signor Benedick too heavily. But I'm sure he'll get even with you.

### MESSENGER

Signor Benedick served well in the war, my lady.

### BEATRICE

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

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

### BEATRICE

It is so indeed. He is no less than a stuffed man. But for the stuffing—well, we are all mortal.

### LEONATO

You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of  
50 merry war betwixt Signor 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, so that if he have wit enough to keep  
55 himself warm, let him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse, for it is all the wealth that he hath left

You had rotten food, and he helped you eat it. He's a very brave eater—he has a strong stomach.

### MESSENGER

He's a good soldier too, lady.

### BEATRICE

He's a good soldier to a lady? Well then, what is he to a lord?

### MESSENGER

He's a lord to a lord and a man to a man. He is positively stuffed with honorable virtues.

### BEATRICE

Absolutely—he is stuffed, like a dummy. As for what he's stuffed with—well, nobody's perfect.

### LEONATO

Please don't take my niece the wrong way, sir. Benedick and Beatrice have been waging a war of wits between themselves. Whenever they meet, there's a little battle.

### BEATRICE

And I always win. The last time we fought, he was so dazed by the end that he wasn't much smarter than his horse. So tell me, who is he hanging around with these days? Every month he has a new best friend.

to be known a reasonable creature. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

**MESSENGER**

Is 't possible?

**BEATRICE**

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

**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? Is there no young squarer now that  
65 will make a voyage with him to the devil?

**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  
70 Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere a be cured.

**MESSENGER****MESSENGER**

Is that possible?

**BEATRICE**

It's entirely possible. He's incredibly fickle—his affection changes faster than the latest fashions.

**MESSENGER**

I can see you don't like this gentleman.

**BEATRICE**

No, absolutely not. But please tell me, who's his best friend? Isn't there some new swaggering young ruffian who will happily go to hell with Benedick?

**MESSENGER**

He spends most of his time with the good, noble Claudio.

**BEATRICE**

Oh God, Benedick will plague him like a disease! Benedick is an infection that's easy to catch but hard to get rid of—and he'll drive you crazy once you've been infected. God help Claudio! If he's caught the Benedick, he'll lose all his money before he's cured.

**MESSENGER**

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.

**MESSENGER**

75 Don Pedro is approached.

*Enter DON PEDRO, Prince of Aragon, with CLAUDIO,  
BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, and DON JOHN the bastard*

**DON PEDRO**

Good Signor 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  
80 Grace, for trouble being gone, comfort should remain, but  
when you depart from me, sorrow abides and happiness  
takes his leave.

**DON PEDRO**

I'm going to make sure I stay on your good side, lady.

**BEATRICE**

Do that, my friend.

**LEONATO**

You will never fall victim to Benedick's charms, my niece.

**BEATRICE**

No, not until we see a hot January.

**MESSENGER**

Don Pedro is here.

*DON PEDRO, Prince of Aragon, enters with CLAUDIO,  
BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, and DON JOHN, the bastard.*

**DON PEDRO**

My dear Signior Leonato, hosting my whole army is such a  
huge burden, but you accept it—and me—with open arms.  
Most people choose to avoid trouble, but you run to it.

**LEONATO**

You are never trouble to this house, your Grace. It's comforting  
when trouble departs. But when you leave, you take happiness  
with you and leave sorrow in its place.

**DON PEDRO**

You embrace your charge too willingly. I think this is your daughter.

**LEONATO**

85 Her mother hath many times told me so.

**BENEDICK**

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

**LEONATO**

Signor 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 90 happy, lady, for you are like an honorable father.

**LEONATO** and **DON PEDRO** move to one side, still talking

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

You take up your duties too cheerfully. (*turning to HERO*) This must be your daughter.

**LEONATO**

That's what her mother always tells me.

**BENEDICK**

Did you doubt that she was your daughter, since you had to ask her mother?

**LEONATO**

(teasing) Of course not, Signor Benedick. You were only a child when my daughter was born, and not yet old enough to seduce my wife.

**DON PEDRO**

Ah, he got you back, Benedick! Leonato clearly knows your reputation with women. Seriously, though, the lady resembles Leonato so much that there can be no doubt about who her father is. Congratulations, lady: you resemble a most honorable man.

**LEONATO** and **DON PEDRO** move to one side, still talking.

**BENEDICK**

Well, even if he is her father, I'm sure she wouldn't want to have the head of the old man on her shoulders!

**BEATRICE**

I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick.  
Nobody marks you.

**BENEDICK**

95 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 Signor 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 100 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 105 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

I'm amazed you're still talking, Signior Benedick. No one's listening to you.

**BENEDICK**

Look, it's my dear Lady Disdain! Aren't you dead yet?

**BEATRICE**

How could disdain die when you're here? When you're around, even Lady Courtesy becomes Lady Disdain.

**BENEDICK**

That makes Lady Courtesy a traitor. All ladies love me, except you. It's too bad I'm so hard-hearted, because I really don't love anyone.

**BEATRICE**

Women are lucky, then. You would make a nasty suitor. Thankfully, I feel the same way you do. I have no need for romance. I would rather listen to my dog bark at a crow than hear a man swear that he loves me.

**BENEDICK**

Well, I hope you stay in that frame of mind or some poor man will end up with his face all scratched up.

**BEATRICE**

yours were.

### BENEDICK

110 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

115 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

120 If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn. (*to DON JOHN*) Let me bid you welcome, my lord. Being reconciled

If he has a face like yours, a good scratching couldn't make him look any worse.

### BENEDICK

Listen to you, instructing me like a parrot would.

### BEATRICE

I'd rather be a squawking bird than an animal like you.

### BENEDICK

I wish my horse moved as fast as your mouth and was as tireless. That's it—I'm done.

### BEATRICE

You always slip out of the argument like this. I know you from before.

*LEONATO and DON PEDRO come forward*

### DON PEDRO

And that's everything, Leonato.—Claudio, Benedick—my dear friend Leonato has invited you all to stay here at Messina. I told him we'll stay for at least a month, and he says that he hopes we'll stay longer. I think he's actually serious, and not just being polite.

### LEONATO

I am being serious, my lord. (*to DON JOHN*) I welcome you here as well. Now that you and your brother have made friends

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**

125 Your hand, Leonato. We will go together.

*Exeunt. Manent 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  
130 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.

again, I owe you the same allegiance I owe Don Pedro.

**DON JOHN**

Thank you. I'm not a man who talks a lot, but I thank you.

**LEONATO**

If it pleases you, your highness, will you lead us all inside?

**DON PEDRO**

Give me your hand, Leonato. We will go in together.

*Everyone exits except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO.*

**CLAUDIO**

Benedick, did you notice Signior Leonato's daughter?

**BENEDICK**

I saw her, but I didn't notice her.

**CLAUDIO**

Isn't she a well-mannered young lady?

**BENEDICK**

Do you want my true opinion? Or do you want me to criticize  
her like I do all women?

**CLAUDIO**

No, please, speak seriously.

**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  
135 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 lik'st her.

**BENEDICK**

140 Would you buy her, that you enquire 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? Or do you play the flouting jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder and Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in  
145 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****BENEDICK**

Well, it seems to me that she is too short to be praised highly, too dark to be praised fairly, and too small to be praised greatly. I can only say this about her: if she looked different than she does, she would be ugly, and since she can't be anything but herself, I don't like her.

**CLAUDIO**

You think I'm kidding. Please tell me seriously what you think of her.

**BENEDICK**

Are you thinking of buying her? Is that why you're asking?

**CLAUDIO**

Would it even be possible to buy a jewel as rare and precious as Hero?

**BENEDICK**

Yes, and you could buy a case to put it in, too. But tell me, are you speaking seriously? Or are you just teasing? If I'm going to sing along with you, I need to know what key you're singing in.

**CLAUDIO**

I think she's the most wonderful woman I've ever laid eyes 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  
150 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? In faith, hath not the world one man but  
155 he will wear his cap with suspicion? 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. Look, Don Pedro is returned to seek  
you.

*Enter DON PEDRO*

**DON PEDRO**

160 What secret hath held you here that you followed not to  
Leonato's?

**BENEDICK**

I would your grace would constrain me to tell.

I'm still young enough to see without glasses, and I don't see  
what you're talking about. If her cousin Beatrice didn't have  
such a nasty temper, she'd be so much more beautiful than  
Hero that it would be like comparing May to December. But,  
hey, this doesn't mean you're looking to get married, does it?

**CLAUDIO**

Even if I had sworn never to marry, I wouldn't trust myself to  
keep that promise if Hero would marry me.

**BENEDICK**

What's going on these days? Isn't there one man left in the  
world who knows not to take a wife? She's just going to cheat  
on him. Will I never see a sixty-year old bachelor again or will  
all men be swindled into marriage while they're young? Go  
ahead, then, if you have to yoke yourself to marriage, like an ox  
carrying his load, and throw away your free time. Look, Don  
Pedro has come back for you.

**DON PEDRO** enters.

**DON PEDRO**

What secrets between you have kept you from following us to  
Leonato's?

**BENEDICK**

Your highness will have to force 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  
165 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.

**BENEDICK**

170 Like the old tale, my lord: "It is not so nor 'twas not so but,  
indeed, God forbid it should be so."

**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**

175 You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

**DON PEDRO****DON PEDRO**

Your loyalty to me requires you to tell me what you've been  
talking about.

**BENEDICK**

Look, Claudio, I can keep secrets like a mute; I want you to  
know that. But I owe Don Pedro my allegiance—look, I *have* to  
tell him—*(to DON PEDRO)* Claudio is in love. With whom?  
That's what you're supposed to ask me next, your Grace. Look  
how short the answer is—with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

**CLAUDIO**

If you say so.

**BENEDICK**

Listen to him deny it, like that man in the old tale "Mr. Fox": "It  
isn't true and wasn't true and God forbid it should be so."

**CLAUDIO**

Unless my feelings change very soon, I have to admit it's true.

**DON PEDRO**

It's good if you love Hero, because she's worthy of your love.

**CLAUDIO**

You're trying to trick me, 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**

180 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**

185 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**

I swear, I'm telling you what I honestly think.

**CLAUDIO**

And I swear I spoke honestly to Benedick—I am in love with Hero.

**BENEDICK**

And / swear all up and down I spoke honestly when I said that this was a horrible idea.

**CLAUDIO**

I feel that I love her.

**DON PEDRO**

I know that she is worthy of that love.

**BENEDICK**

I, on the other hand, don't *feel* how she could be loved and don't *know* how she could be worthy. Even fire can't melt that opinion out of me. You could burn me at the stake, and I'd still think this.

**DON PEDRO**

You never did believe in the power of beauty.

**CLAUDIO**

Or in the power of reason.

**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 190 in an invisible baldric, 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

195 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

200 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, and he that hits me, let him be clapped on the shoulder and called Adam.

I was conceived by a woman, and I thank her very much for all her effort. And then she brought me up, and I thank her for that, too. But all the other women will have to forgive me for not being willing to be made a fool of—cheated on by a wife. I don't want to insult any particular woman by doubting and mistrusting her, so I'll just avoid them all. And the conclusion of this is that I'll live as a bachelor—and, with the money I save, dress better.

### DON PEDRO

I swear, before I die I'm going to see you sick with love.

### BENEDICK

With anger, with fever, or with hunger, sure, my friend, but never sick with love. If you can prove that I'll ever be so in love that I can't be brought to my senses with a good round of beers, you can pluck out my eyes with a love-poet's pen and hang me on a brothel's door where the picture of blind Cupid usually goes.

### DON PEDRO

I'll be sure to remember this fuss you've made, in case you ever do fall in love. That'll be news.

### BENEDICK

If I ever change my mind, you can use me for target practice. And whoever hits the bull's eye gets to be a hero.

**DON PEDRO**

205 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 210 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 wouldest be horn-mad.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**BENEDICK**

215 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

**DON PEDRO**

Well, time will tell. Even the most savage bull is eventually domesticated.

**BENEDICK**

Maybe the bull is, but if I am ever domesticated, you can take that bull's horns and put them right on my forehead, as my wife is sure to cuckold me soon enough. You might as well hang a big sign with enormous lettering around my neck. But instead of it saying "Horse for hire," it will say "Take a look at Benedick, the married man."

**CLAUDIO**

If that ever happened, you'd go absolutely mad.

**DON PEDRO**

Well, if Cupid hasn't used up all his arrows in Venice, where the courtesans are famous for making men lovesick, he'll get you to quiver and shake. Just you wait.

**BENEDICK**

That's about as likely as an earthquake.

**DON PEDRO**

Oh, you'll soften as time passes. While you're waiting for that to happen, though, hurry to Leonato's. Give him my respects, and

hath made great preparation.

**BENEDICK**

220 I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassage,  
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  
225 sometimes guarded with fragment and the guards are but  
slightly basted on neither. Ere you flout old ends any  
further, examine your conscience. And so I leave you.

*Exit*

**CLAUDIO**

My liege, your highness now may do me good.

**DON PEDRO**

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

tell him I'll definitely be there for dinner, since I know he has gone to great lengths for this meal.

**BENEDICK**

I think I can handle this mission. And so I commit you—

**CLAUDIO**

"Into God's hands. From my house, if I had a house—"

**DON PEDRO**

"The sixth of July. Sincerely, your loving friend, Benedick."

**BENEDICK**

Oh, stop joking around. You know, sometimes you two dress up your conversation with flimsy little bits of wit that don't hold together too well. Before you make *fun* of everyone else, look at yourselves in the mirror! And with that, I'm leaving.

*He exits.*

**CLAUDIO**

My lord, you could really help me out now.

**DON PEDRO**

I am at your service. Just tell me what you want me to do, and however hard it is, you'll see that I'm eager to do it.

**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,

235 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  
240 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  
245 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****CLAUDIO**

Does Leonato have a son, my lord?

**DON PEDRO**

Hero is his only child, and his only heir. Do you like her, Claudio?

**CLAUDIO**

Oh, my lord, when we left Messina to fight the war, I looked at Hero with the eyes of a soldier. I liked what I saw, but my mind was so occupied with the rough, violent task ahead of me that there was no chance that *like* would turn into *love*. But now that I'm back, the room in my head that I used to fill with war plans has become crowded with soft and delicate feelings. They all lead me to the same thought—how beautiful young Hero is and how I must have liked her even before I left to fight.

**DON PEDRO**

You will become a true lover soon, and exhaust your friends with your endless chatter about your feelings. Look, if you really love the beautiful Hero, enjoy it. I will speak to her and her father about the matter, and I'll convince Leonato to promise Hero to you. Isn't that the reason you told me all this?

**CLAUDIO**

250 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?  
255 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  
260 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,  
265 And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.  
In practice let us put it presently.

*Exeunt*

*Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO*

### LEONATO

How now, brother, where is my cousin, your son? Hath he

You can see that I'm sick with love, and you're taking care of me in just the right way! But I didn't want you to think that I'm hasty in my emotions. I was going to explain my feelings with a longer story.

### DON PEDRO

Why speak longer than you have to? That's like building a bridge wider than the river it crosses. Whatever gets the job done is best. You love Hero; that's all I need to know to want to find a remedy. They're going to have a costume party with dancing tonight. I'll disguise myself as you and pour out "my" feelings to Hero, taking her prisoner with the force of my love story. Then I'll talk to her father. And in the end, she's yours! Let's get started right away.

*They exit.*

## Act 1 Scene 2

*LEONATO and ANTONIO enter.*

### LEONATO

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**

5 Are they good?

**ANTONIO**

As the events stamps them, but they have a good cover; they show well outward. 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  
10 discovered to Claudio that he loved my niece your daughter and meant to acknowledge it this night in a dance, and if he found her accordant, he meant to take the present time by the top and instantly break with you of it.

**LEONATO**

Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

**ANTONIO**

15 A good sharp fellow. I will send for him, and question him yourself.

**LEONATO**

Hey, brother. Tell me, where is my nephew, your son? Has he taken care of the music?

**ANTONIO**

He is taking care of it as we speak. But brother, I have some strange news for you.

**LEONATO**

Is it good news?

**ANTONIO**

Well, it seems like good news. A servant of mine overheard the Prince and Claudio talking as they walked through my orchard. The Prince said that he is in love with Hero, your daughter, and that he is going to tell her so at the dance tonight. If he she wants to marry him, too, he's going to find you and ask for her hand immediately.

**LEONATO**

Is this servant of yours a smart man?

**ANTONIO**

He's very bright. I'll get him to come here, and you can ask 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 if peradventure this be true.  
20 Go you and tell her of it.

*Enter ANTONIO's son, with a musician and attendants*

Cousins, you know what you have to do.—O, I cry you  
mercy, friend. Go you with me and I will use your skill.—  
Good cousin, have a care this busy time.

*Exeunt*

*Enter DON JOHN and CONRAD*

**CONRAD**

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.

**CONRAD**

5 You should hear reason.

**DON JOHN**

And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it?

No, no, until it comes true we'll pretend it was just a dream we  
had. But my daughter should know about this, so she can be  
prepared with an answer just in case. Go to her and tell her for  
me.

*ANTONIO's son enters with a musician and attendants.*

Cousins, you all have work to do.—Oh, I beg your pardon.  
Come with me now, and help me out. —Dear cousin, please be  
careful during this busy time.

*They all exit.*

## Act 1 Scene 3

**DON JOHN and CONRAD** enter.

**CONRAD**

Really, my lord, why are you so excessively sad?

**DON JOHN**

The things that cause my sadness are without limit. Therefore  
my sadness is without limit.

**CONRAD**

You should listen to reason. Then you'd stop being so gloomy.

**DON JOHN**

And after I have sat and listened to reason, what's my prize?

**CONRAD**

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

**DON JOHN**

I wonder that thou, being, as thou sayst thou art, born under Saturn, goest about to apply a moral medicine to a  
10 mortifying mischief. 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.

**CONRAD**

15 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  
20 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  
25 denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a

**CONRAD**

If not an end to your suffering, then at least you'll have the means to endure it patiently.

**DON JOHN**

I'm amazed that you—being such a moody man yourself—are moralizing about my deadly condition. I can't hide what I am. I'll be sad when I have reason to be sad and won't smile at anybody's jokes. I'll eat when I'm hungry and won't wait until it's convenient. I'll sleep when I'm tired and won't rouse myself for anything. I'll laugh when I'm happy and won't flatter and fawn over anyone.

**CONRAD**

Sure, but don't do it at full volume until there's no danger in it. Not long ago you challenged and opposed your brother, and it is only very recently that he has forgiven you. You need to act carefully if you're going to stay in his good graces. You have to wait for the appropriate time to let loose.

**DON JOHN**

I'd rather be a weed in a hedge than a rose in my brother's garden. It suits me more to be hated by everyone than to put on a fancy show and trick people into loving me. Though I am not a flattering, righteous man, at least you can say that I am honest about being a villain. My brother trusts me now? Yeah—

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.

**CONRAD**

30 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  
35 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**

as much as a master trusts the dog he muzzles or the peasant he "frees" by chaining a big block around the man's foot. If my mouth were unrestrained, I'd bite. If I were free, I'd do what I pleased. Until that happens, let me be who I am and don't try to change me.

**CONRAD**

Can't you somehow use your dissatisfaction to your own advantage?

**DON JOHN**

I use it all the time, since it's all that I have. Who's that?

*BORACHIO enters.*

What's going on, Borachio?

**BORACHIO**

I just came from a great feast where Leonato is entertaining the Prince, your brother. I can give you information about an intended marriage.

**DON JOHN**

Will this give me an opportunity to make some mischief? Who is this fool who wants all the fuss of marriage?

**BORACHIO**

Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

**DON JOHN**

40 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**

45 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

50 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

Your brother's right-hand man.

**DON JOHN**

Who? That pretty boy, Claudio?

**BORACHIO**

That's the one.

**DON JOHN**

He's a very fancy gentleman. And who's the girl who has caught his eye?

**BORACHIO**

Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonato.

**DON JOHN**

A lively young one! How did you learn about this?

**BORACHIO**

I was hired to perfume all the rooms in Leonato's house. As I was working on one musty room, the Prince and Claudio entered. They were in the middle of a serious conversation. I quickly hid behind a tapestry and heard them agree that the Prince would court Hero tonight at the dance and, once he won her consent to marry, would give her to Claudio.

**DON JOHN**

Come, let's go to the dance. This just may cheer me up. Claudio, the young upstart, was responsible for keeping me

overthrow. If I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure, and will assist me?

**CONRAD**

55 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 o' my mind! Shall we go prove what's to be done?

**BORACHIO**

We'll wait upon your lordship.

*Exeunt*

*Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, URSULA  
and MARGARET*

**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

from gaining power over my brother. If there's any way I can spoil his life, I'll be overjoyed. You'll both help me, right?

**CONRAD**

Until the day we die, my lord.

**DON JOHN**

Let's go to this great feast. They'll be even happier now that my mood has lightened. It's too bad the cook doesn't think like me; she would have poisoned them all if she did. Should we go check out the scene?

**BORACHIO**

Lead the way, sir.

*They all exit.*

## Act 2 Scene 1

**LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, URSULA, and MARGARET**  
enter.

**LEONATO**

Wasn't Don John at dinner tonight?

**ANTONIO**

I didn't see him.

**BEATRICE**

am heartburned an hour after.

### **HERO**

5 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**

10 Then half Signor Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth, and half Count John's melancholy in Signor 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  
15 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.

### **ANTONIO**

In faith, she's too curst.

That man always looks so sour! Just looking at him gives me heartburn.

### **HERO**

He has a very gloomy attitude.

### **BEATRICE**

It would be excellent if they could make a man halfway between Don John and Benedick. One of them is too much like a painting of a man—he never speaks—and the other is too much like a spoiled little boy, always chattering.

### **LEONATO**

So, the man would talk half as much as Benedick and be half as serious as Don John—

### **BEATRICE**

And if he were handsome, agile, and rich, too, he could have any woman in the world—all he'd need was her good will.

### **LEONATO**

Really, niece, you'll never get a husband if you keep saying such harsh things about people.

### **ANTONIO**

Honestly, she is too ill-tempered.

**BEATRICE**

Too curst is more than curst. I shall lessen God's sending  
20 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  
25 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  
30 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

**BEATRICE**

Being "too ill-tempered" is different from being simply "ill-tempered," right? So I suppose that means I can escape God's punishment, for in the old proverb, it is said that "God gives an ill-tempered cow short horns" so that she can't inflict damage on anyone. But it doesn't say anything about a cow that is *too* ill-tempered.

**LEONATO**

So then, for being too argumentative, God won't send you any horns?

**BEATRICE**

*Exactly*. I pray every morning and night that the Lord won't send me a husband. Really, I couldn't stand a husband with a beard. I'd rather be wrapped in scratchy blankets all night.

**LEONATO**

Maybe you will find a husband without a beard.

**BEATRICE**

And then what would I do with him? Dress him up in my clothes and pretend he's my lady servant? If he has a beard, he's more than a boy; if he doesn't have a beard, he's less than a man. If he's more than a boy, he's not the one for me, and if he's less than a man, I'm not the one for him. They say that

apes into hell.

### **LEONATO**

35 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 40 the heavens, he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

### **ANTONIO**

(to HERO) Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

### **BEATRICE**

Yes, faith, it is my cousin's duty to make curtsy and say, 45 "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**

women who die unmarried are destined to lead the apes to hell, and I suppose that'll be my fate as well.

### **LEONATO**

So you'll go to hell?

### **BEATRICE**

No, just to the gates of hell, where the devil will meet me, with the horns on his head like a cuckold, and say, "Go up to heaven, Beatrice. Hell is no place for you virgins." So I'll fly up to heaven (leaving the apes behind) where I'll be met by Saint Peter guarding heaven's gates. He will show me the part of heaven where the bachelors sit, and I'll have fun there forever.

### **ANTONIO**

(to HERO) Well, niece, I trust that you will defer to your father on these important decisions.

### **BEATRICE**

Surely, my cousin has a duty to please her father. But if the husband her father chooses isn't handsome, she should sweetly tell her father that she will please herself—with another one.

### **LEONATO**

Well, niece, I hope that I will see you married one day.

### **BEATRICE**

Not till God make men of some other metal than earth.  
50 Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust? To make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none. Adam's sons are my brethren, and truly I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

**LEONATO**

(to HERO) Daughter, remember what I told you. If the  
55 Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

**BEATRICE**

The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time. If the Prince 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  
60 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 ancienry; and then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster till he sink  
65 into his grave.

**LEONATO**

Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

**BEATRICE**

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

No, I won't take a husband until they make men out of something other than dirt. What woman wouldn't be distressed, being lorded over by a handful of dust? Can you imagine being hitched to a lump of clay? No, uncle, I won't be married. And anyhow, if [Adam](#) is the father of all mankind, then his sons are my brothers, and really I believe that incest is a sin.

**LEONATO**

(to HERO) Daughter, remember what I told you. If the Prince asks for your hand in marriage, you know what to tell him.

**BEATRICE**

But cousin, make sure he woos you properly and appropriately. If he is too insistent, tell him that romance is like a dance: it has its own rhythm and timing. Look, the three stages of romance are like three different dances. The wooing is like a Scottish jig: hot and fast and full of whimsy and illusion. The wedding is a like a dance you would do before the King: proper and decorous. Finally, you get to the part where you regret having gotten married in the first place. It is like the lively [cinquepace](#): it goes faster and faster until you eventually topple over and die.

**LEONATO**

Niece, you are exceptionally perceptive.

**BEATRICE**

I have a good eye, uncle. I can see what's in broad daylight.

**LEONATO**

The revelers are entering, brother. Make good room.

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

**DON PEDRO**

Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?

*They begin to dance*

**HERO**

70 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**

75 When I like your favor, for God defend the lute should be

**LEONATO**

The partygoers have arrived. Let's give them room.

*DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA enter along with other partygoers. They're all wearing masks.*

**DON PEDRO**

My lady, will you have a dance with me?

*They begin to dance.*

**HERO**

As long as you move gracefully, look handsome, and say nothing, I'm yours for the dance. And I'll even linger after I've gone.

**DON PEDRO**

Will I be with you then?

**HERO**

Perhaps, if I decide to let you.

**DON PEDRO**

And when will that be?

**HERO**

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. BALTHASAR and MARGARET move forward*

**BALTHASAR**

80 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.

When I like the way you look, for God forbid your face be as ugly as your mask!

**DON PEDRO**

My mask is like the roof of the poor [Philemon's](#) humble cottage; underneath the mask, I am as magnificent as the glorious god Jove.

**HERO**

Well, then, since Philemon's roof was thatched with straw, your mask should have a beard.

**DON PEDRO**

If you wish to speak of love, speak more softly.

*They move aside. BALTHASAR and MARGARET move forward.*

**BALTHASAR**

Well, I wish you liked me.

**MARGARET**

I'm glad I don't, for your sake. I have many awful qualities.

**BALTHASAR**

Tell me one.

**MARGARET**

I say my prayers out loud.

**BALTHASAR**

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

**MARGARET**

85 God match me with a good dancer!

**BALTHASAR**

Amen.

**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 move aside. URSULA and ANTONIO move forward.*

**URSULA**

90 I know you well enough. You are Signor Antonio.

**ANTONIO**

At a word, I am not.

**URSULA**

I know you by the wagging of your head.

**ANTONIO**

**BALTHASAR**

That makes me love you even more. Everyone who hears you can shout, "Amen."

**MARGARET**

God give me a good dance partner!

**BALTHASAR**

Amen. That would be me.

**MARGARET**

And God take him away from me when we're finished dancing!  
Go ahead—say "Amen."

**BALTHASAR**

No more talking. I've got my answer.

*They move aside. URSULA and ANTONIO move forward.*

**URSULA**

I know who you are; you are Signior Antonio.

**ANTONIO**

No, really, I'm not.

**URSULA**

I can tell by the way you waggle your head.

**ANTONIO**

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

**URSULA**

You could never do him so ill-well unless you were the very  
95 man. Here's his dry hand up and down. 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  
100 he. Graces will appear, and there's an end.

*They move aside. BENEDICK and BEATRICE move 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.

Really, I'm only pretending to be him.

**URSULA**

You could only imitate his imperfections so well if you were the  
man himself. Look, you've got his wrinkled hands. You are  
Antonio, you are he.

**ANTONIO**

In short, I'm not.

**URSULA**

Come on, do you think I can't recognize you by your excellent  
wit? Can a good thing hide itself? Be quiet, you are Antonio. A  
man's virtues will always show themselves, and that's the end  
of that.

*They move aside. BENEDICK and BEATRICE move forward.*

**BEATRICE**

Won't you tell me who told you that?

**BENEDICK**

No, you'll have to excuse me.

**BEATRICE**

And you won't tell me who you are?

**BENEDICK**

Not now.

**BEATRICE**

105 That I was disdainful and that I had my good wit out of The Hundred Merry Tales! Well this was Signor Benedick that said so.

**BENEDICK**

What's he?

**BEATRICE**

I am sure you know him well enough.

**BENEDICK**

110 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  
115 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.

**BEATRICE**

Who said that I was disdainful, and that I got all my best lines out of a bad joke book?! Well, it must have been Signor Benedick.

**BENEDICK**

Who's that?

**BEATRICE**

I'm sure you know him.

**BENEDICK**

No I don't, believe me.

**BEATRICE**

What, he never made you laugh?

**BENEDICK**

Please tell me, who is this man?

**BEATRICE**

Why, he's the Prince's fool, and a very dull fool at that. His only talent is his capacity to come up with unbelievable slanders. Only the most immoral people enjoy his company, and they like him not for his wit but his outrageousness. He manages to both please and anger people; they laugh at him and then beat him up. I'm sure he's out there dancing. I could have sworn he trampled on me.

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

120 Do, do. He'll but break a comparison or two on me, which, peradventure not marked or not laughed at, strikes him into melancholy, and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night.

*Music for the dance*

We must follow the leaders.

**BENEDICK**

125 In every good thing.

**BEATRICE**

Nay, if they lead to any ill, I will leave them at the next turning.

*Dance, then exeunt all except DON JOHN, BORACHIO, 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 130 ladies follow her, and but one visor remains.

**BORACHIO****BENEDICK**

When I meet this gentleman, I'll tell him what you've said.

**BEATRICE**

Oh, please do. He'll say a few nasty things about me, and if nobody listens to him or laughs, he'll be thrown into a funk. And that will save a partridge wing from being eaten, because he'll be too miserable for dinner.

*Music for the dance begins.*

Come on, we have to follow the leaders of the dance.

**BENEDICK**

In every good thing they do.

**BEATRICE**

No, if they try to lead us to harm, I will leave the dance floor at the next song.

*There is a dance. Everyone exits except DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and CLAUDIO.*

**DON JOHN**

(to BORACHIO) My brother just wooed Hero and now has taken her father inside to tell him his feelings. The ladies have followed Hero, but one masked man remains.

**BORACHIO**

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

**DON JOHN**

(to CLAUDIO) Are not you Signor Benedick?

**CLAUDIO**

You know me well. I am he.

**DON JOHN**

Signor, you are very near my brother in his love. He is  
135 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**

140 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**

That's Claudio. I can tell by the way he carries himself.

**DON JOHN**

(to CLAUDIO) Aren't you Signor Benedick?

**CLAUDIO**

You know me too well. I am Benedick.

**DON JOHN**

Sir, my brother is very fond of you. He is in love with Hero.  
Please make him change his mind. She doesn't have the  
proper rank to marry the Prince. You would be doing a good  
service.

**CLAUDIO**

How do you know he loves her?

**DON JOHN**

I heard him swear he did.

**BORACHIO**

I did too, and he also swore he would marry her tonight.

**DON JOHN**

Come on, let's get to the banquet.

*DON JOHN and BORACHIO exit.*

**CLAUDIO**

*(unmasking)*

Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,  
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.

145 'Tis certain so, the Prince woos 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 nogetiate for itself

150 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.

*Enter BENEDICK*

**BENEDICK**

Count Claudio?

**CLAUDIO**

155 Yea, the same.

**BENEDICK**

Come, will you go with me?

**CLAUDIO**

Whither?

**BENEDICK**

*(taking off his mask)*

Though I said my name was Benedick, I heard this news with Claudio's ears. Of course the Prince wants Hero for himself. Friendship is enduring except when love is involved. Therefore, all lovers should speak for themselves. They should look for themselves, without asking someone else to get involved in their affairs. Beauty is a witch whose spells can turn loyalty into passion. This happens a lot, but it didn't occur to me that it would happen to me. Goodbye then, Hero.

**BENEDICK** enters.

**BENEDICK**

Claudio?

**CLAUDIO**

Yes, that's me.

**BENEDICK**

Will you come with me?

**CLAUDIO**

Where?

**BENEDICK**

Even to the next willow, about your own business, county.  
What fashion will you wear the garland of? About your  
160 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 gat your Hero.

**CLAUDIO**

I wish him joy of her.

**BENEDICK**

Why, that's spoken like an honest drover; so they sell  
165 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**

170 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

Right over to that [willow tree](#) to see about your business. How  
do you want to wear your garland of willow leaves? Around  
your neck, like a moneylender's gold chain, or under your arm,  
like a lieutenant's sash? You have to wear it somehow, because  
the Prince has gotten your Hero.

**CLAUDIO**

I hope he enjoys her.

**BENEDICK**

You sound like a cattle dealer: that's the way they sell bulls.  
But do you really think the Prince would treat you that way?

**CLAUDIO**

Please, leave me alone.

**BENEDICK**

Look at you, thrashing about like a blind man. A boy robbed  
you, but you'll beat up the post instead.

**CLAUDIO**

If you won't leave, then *I'll* leave.

*He exits.*

**BENEDICK**

Oh, the poor bird. Now he'll hide himself in the bushes. But  
how strange that Beatrice should seem to know who I was and

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  
175 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.

*Enter DON PEDRO*

**DON PEDRO**

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

**BENEDICK**

Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame. I  
180 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  
185 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.

yet not know at the same time. "The Prince's fool"! Maybe they call me that because I am cheerful. Yes, but I am insulting myself by thinking this way. I don't have that kind of reputation! Beatrice's mean, sarcastic nature makes her believe that the entire world shares her opinions; that's why she describes me this way. Well, I'll get my revenge.

*DON PEDRO enters.*

**DON PEDRO**

Now, sir, where is Claudio? Did you see him?

**BENEDICK**

Yes, my lord, I played the part of a gossip and brought him the news. I found him here, [as sad as a rabbit in a burrow](#). I told him—and I think I was telling the truth—that you had won the lady's heart. I offered to accompany him to the willow tree, where he could either make a garland—fit to be worn by an abandoned lover—or gather sticks into a bundle, ready for his beating.

**DON PEDRO**

Beating? Why, what did he do?

**BENEDICK**

He was like a schoolboy who finds a bird's nest and happily shows it to his friend, who then steals it from him.

**DON PEDRO**

190 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  
195 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  
200 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  
205 jester, that I was duller than a great thaw, huddling jest

**DON PEDRO**

What, is trusting a friend such a crime? The criminal is the one  
who stole the nest.

**BENEDICK**

It might have been appropriate to make both the rod and the  
garland. He could have worn the garland himself and beaten  
you with the rod, since you—as I understand it—have stolen his  
bird's nest.

**DON PEDRO**

I only want to teach the baby birds to sing; then I will return the  
nest to its rightful owner.

**BENEDICK**

We'll wait and see; if the chicks follow your lead—if Hero is  
ready to love Claudio—then we'll know you're telling the truth.

**DON PEDRO**

Lady Beatrice is angry with you. The gentleman she danced  
with told her you insulted her.

**BENEDICK**

Not even a block of wood could handle her abuses! An oak  
tree barely clinging to life would have revived itself to fight her.  
Even my mask seemed to come to life in order to argue with  
her. She told me—not realizing it was me—that I was the  
Prince's jester and as dull as mud. She hurled mocking insults

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. You shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. 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.

*Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO*

**DON PEDRO**

Look, here she comes.

**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 toothpicker 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 embassage to the Pygmies,

at me with such incredible speed that all I could do was stand there, paralyzed. She speaks daggers, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her words, she would kill every living thing from here to the furthest star. I wouldn't marry her, even if she were as blessed as paradise. If she were married to the great hero Hercules, she would have humiliated him with chores around the house and ordered him to chop up his famous club for firewood. Please, don't mention her. She's as wicked as [Ate](#), just disguised in pretty clothes. I wish to God that some wise man would conjure her away, because as long as she lives on earth, our lives are filled with turmoil. It's quieter in hell, where people, sinning on purpose, are eager to be sent just to get away from her. So chaos, horror, and sorrow follow her wherever she goes.

*CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO enter.*

**DON PEDRO**

Look, here she comes.

**BENEDICK**

Your highness, could you send me on a mission to the ends of the earth? I'll go to the Antipodes for any little errand you can think of. I'll fetch you a toothpick from the [farthest reaches of Asia](#), or find out Prester John's shoe size, or snatch a hair from Kublai Khan's beard, or deliver any message you wish to relay to the Pygmies—anything rather than

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**

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

*Exit*

**DON PEDRO**

(to BEATRICE) 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  
235 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  
240 the mother of fools. I have brought Count Claudio, whom  
you sent me to seek.

exchange three words with this awful, screeching woman. Isn't  
there something you want from me?

**DON PEDRO**

Nothing but your good company.

**BENEDICK**

Oh, God, sir, here comes a dish I hate. I can't stand tongue.

*He exits.*

**DON PEDRO**

(to BEATRICE) Lady, you have lost Signior Benedick's heart.

**BEATRICE**

It's true, my lord. He lent it to me once, and I paid him back  
with interest: a double heart for his single one. Really, he won it  
from me once before in a dishonest game of dice. So I  
suppose your grace can truly say that I have lost it.

**DON PEDRO**

You've humiliated him, lady: you've put him down.

**BEATRICE**

And I hope that he won't [put me down](#) or I'm sure to have fools  
for children. I've brought Claudio, who you sent me to find.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

Not sad, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

How then, sick?

**CLAUDIO**

<sup>245</sup> 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  
<sup>250</sup> 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 goodwill obtained. Name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy.

**LEONATO**

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes.  
<sup>255</sup> His grace hath made the match, and all grace say "Amen" to it.

**DON PEDRO**

Why, what's wrong, count? Why are you so sad?

**CLAUDIO**

I'm not sad, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

What then, sick?

**CLAUDIO**

I'm neither, my lord.

**BEATRICE**

The count is neither sad nor sick nor cheerful nor well—he's just civil, as Seville as an orange, with the same jealous-yellow complexion.

**DON PEDRO**

Truly, lady, I think your description is correct, though I swear he has no reason to look like that. Here, Claudio, I've wooed Hero for you, and she's agreed to marry you. I've told her father, and he's given his permission. Tell us when you wish to get married, and may God give you joy.

**LEONATO**

Claudio, take my daughter, and, with her, take my fortunes. The Prince has made the match, and may God bless 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  
260 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**

265 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,  
270 "Heigh-ho for a husband!"

**BEATRICE**

Speak, Claudio, that's your cue.

**CLAUDIO**

Complete joy makes one speechless; if I were only a little happy, then I could say exactly how much. Lady, you are mine and I am yours. For you, I give myself away and I'm ecstatic about the exchange.

**BEATRICE**

Say something, cousin. Or, if you can't say anything, stop his mouth with a kiss and don't let him speak, either.

**DON PEDRO**

Truly, lady, you have a merry heart.

**BEATRICE**

Yes, my lord. I thank my heart—the poor fool—for it keeps away from seriousness. Look, my cousin is whispering to Claudio that she loves him.

**CLAUDIO**

Why, you're absolutely right, cousin.

**BEATRICE**

Thank the lord for alliances! So everyone goes off into the world except me, who stays in because I'm sunburned. I

**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**

275 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**

280 Your silence most offends me, and to be merry best becomes you, for out o' 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

should sit in the corner and sing that song, "Heigh-Ho for a Husband!"

**DON PEDRO**

Lady Beatrice, I'll get you a husband.

**BEATRICE**

I'd rather get a husband from your father. Don't you have any brothers like you? Your father's sons would make excellent husbands, if only a girl could catch one for herself.

**DON PEDRO**

Will you take me, my lady?

**BEATRICE**

No, my lord, unless I could have another husband for the work week. You are too expensive to wear every day. But please, forgive me, your highness. I was born to speak cleverly, not seriously.

**DON PEDRO**

I'd be more offended if you were silent, for being lively and cheerful suits you best. Surely, you must have been born at a happy time.

**BEATRICE**

Actually, my lord, my mother cried when she was giving birth to me. But then a star danced in the sky, and that's the

285 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  
290 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**

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

**DON PEDRO**

295 She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

moment I was born.—Kinsmen, I'm off.

**LEONATO**

Niece, will you take care of those things I mentioned?

**BEATRICE**

Oh, yes, I'm sorry, uncle.—If you'll excuse me, your grace.

*She exits.*

**DON PEDRO**

I swear, she's a very good-natured lady.

**LEONATO**

There's very little about her that's gloomy, my lord. She's only sad when she sleeps—and not even then. Hero told me that Beatrice has often had dreams about being unhappy, and managed to wake herself from them by laughing.

**DON PEDRO**

She can't stand to hear about getting a husband.

**LEONATO**

No, not at all. She mocks all her suitors so severely that they drop the suit.

**DON PEDRO**

She would make a good wife for Benedick.

**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  
300 his rites.

**LEONATO**

Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence a just  
sevennight, and a time too brief, too, to have all things  
answer my mind.

**DON PEDRO**

(to CLAUDIO) 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 Signor Benedick and the Lady  
Beatrice into a mountain of affection, th' one with th' other.  
I would fain have it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion  
310 it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall  
give you direction.

**LEONATO****LEONATO**

Oh, Lord, if they were married, they'd drive themselves crazy  
within a week.

**DON PEDRO**

Count Claudio, when do you plan to go to church and be  
married?

**CLAUDIO**

Tomorrow, my lord. Time will move as slowly as an old man  
until our love receives its proper ceremony.

**LEONATO**

Wait till Monday, my dear son, which is only a week away. Even  
that is too short a time to plan things the way I would like.

**DON PEDRO**

(to CLAUDIO) Oh, don't look so frustrated at having to wait so  
long. I promise you, Claudio, the time will go by quickly. While  
we're waiting for the wedding, I'm going to take on an  
impossible task: to make Signor Benedick and the Lady  
Beatrice fall in love with each other. I aim to see them  
matched, and with all of your help, I'm sure we can make it  
happen.

**LEONATO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

And I, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

315 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 unhopefulest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble strain, of approved 320 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 325 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*

*Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO*

My lord, I will help you, even if it means I have to stay awake for ten nights straight.

**CLAUDIO**

Me too, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

And you, sweet Hero?

**HERO**

I'll do any decent thing, my lord, to help my cousin get a good husband.

**DON PEDRO**

And Benedick is not the worst husband I can think of. This much I can say about him: he is well-born, has proven his bravery in battle, and has established his good character. Hero, I'll show you how to influence your cousin so she falls in love with Benedick. We men will trick Benedick so that, despite his quick wit and his queasiness about marriage, he will fall in love with her. If we can do this, then we will steal Cupid's glory. We will be the supreme love gods! Come inside with me, and I will tell you my plan.

*They all exit.*

## **Act 2 Scene 2**

*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 med'cinal 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**

10 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

**DON JOHN**

It's arranged. The Count Claudio will marry Leonato's daughter.

**BORACHIO**

Yes, my lord, but I can spoil it.

**DON JOHN**

Any obstacle or barrier to Claudio's happiness will be like medicine to me. I hate him so much it makes me sick, and whoever can ruin his happiness will make me happy. How will you wreck this marriage?

**BORACHIO**

I can only do it by lying, my lord, but I can do it so secretly that no one will suspect me.

**DON JOHN**

Quickly, tell me how.

**BORACHIO**

I think it was a year ago that I told you how much Margaret, Hero's servant woman, likes me.

**DON JOHN**

I remember.

**BORACHIO**

15 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,  
20 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**

25 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

I can arrange it so that at some indecent hour of the night, she looks out Hero's bedroom window.

**DON JOHN**

How will that kill this marriage?

**BORACHIO**

That part is up to you. Go to the Prince, your brother, and tell him that he has done a terrible thing by matching the renowned Claudio—whom you greatly admire—with such a tainted whore as Hero.

**DON JOHN**

What will be my evidence?

**BORACHIO**

Evidence enough to deceive the Prince, anger Claudio, ruin Hero, and kill Leonato. Is there anything else you wish?

**DON JOHN**

That's all I want, and I'll do anything to accomplish it.

**BORACHIO**

Find a time to speak with Don Pedro and Claudio alone. Tell them you know that Hero loves me. Pretend to be very concerned about both the Prince, who has compromised his honor by making the match, and Claudio, whose reputation

30 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  
35 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  
40 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  
45 shame me.

**DON JOHN**

I will presently go learn their day of marriage.

*Exeunt*

*Enter BENEDICK*

will be ruined by this woman who's pretending to be a virgin. Of course, they won't believe you without proof. Tell them you've seen the two of us at Hero's bedroom window, and then bring them to see for themselves on the night before the wedding. I'll arrange it so that Hero is away for the night, so what they'll actually see is Margaret and me at the window, calling each other "Hero" and "**Claudio**." It'll be such blatant evidence of Hero's disloyalty that Claudio's jealousy will quickly turn to certainty, and the wedding will be instantly called off.

**DON JOHN**

Make the arrangements, and I'll do it. Do this carefully, and I will reward you with a thousand gold coins.

**BORACHIO**

If you make the accusation convincingly, then my cunning won't fail me.

**DON JOHN**

I'll go now to find out the date of the wedding.

*They exit.*

## Act 2 Scene 3

**BENEDICK** enters.

**BENEDICK**

Boy!

*Enter BOY*

**BOY**

Signior?

**BENEDICK**

In my chamber window lies a book. Bring it hither to me in the orchard.

**BOY**

5 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, 10 become the argument of his own scorn by falling 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

**BENEDICK**

Boy!

*A BOY enters.*

**BOY**

Yes Signior?

**BENEDICK**

In my bedroom window there is a book. Go get it and bring it to me here in the orchard.

**BOY**

I'm already here, sir.

**BENEDICK**

I see that you are here, but I'd like you to go there and then come back again.

*The BOY exits.*

I'm amazed that a man, after watching romance turn another man into a fool and laughing at that man, can turn right around and become the thing he's scorned. That's the kind of man Claudio is. I knew him when he listened to nothing but the military drum and fife; now he would rather hear the sweet and refined music of the tabor and pipe. I knew him when he would've walked ten miles to see a well-crafted suit of armor;

would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armor, and  
15 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  
20 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,  
25 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 ever look on her; mild, or come not near  
me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an  
30 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.

*He hides*

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO, and BALTHASAR  
with music*

now he spends ten nights awake in his room designing himself  
a fancy new jacket. He used to speak plainly and to the point,  
like an honorable man and soldier; now his speech is elaborate  
and flowery. His words are like a miraculous banquet, full of  
strange new dishes. Will I be changed like that, and see the  
world through a lover's eyes? I'm not sure, but I don't think so.

I can't promise that love won't transform me, but I can promise  
you this: until I truly fall in love, a woman will never make me  
act like such a fool. A beautiful woman comes along, but I'm  
unmoved. A wise woman turns up, but I'm unmoved. A virtuous  
woman appears, but I'm unmoved. I refuse to fall in love until  
all three qualities unite in a single woman. She must be rich,  
certainly, and smart, or I'll have nothing to do with her. She has  
to be virtuous, or I'll never bid on her; beautiful, or I won't  
bother to look at her. Mild-mannered, or else she should stay  
away from me. Noble, or I won't have her even if she's an  
angel. She must be well spoken, an excellent musician, and  
her hair should be—well, I suppose the color doesn't matter.  
Ha! Look, it's the Prince and Mr. Love. I'll hide in the arbor.

*He hides.*

*DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO enter. BALTHASAR enters  
with music*

**DON PEDRO**

Come, shall we hear this music?

**CLAUDIO**

Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,  
35 As hushed 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. The music ended,  
40 We'll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**BALTHASAR**

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

**DON PEDRO**

It is the witness still of excellency  
45 To put a strange face on his own perfection.  
I pray thee, sing, and let me woo no more.

**BALTHASAR****DON PEDRO**

Well, should we hear some music?

**CLAUDIO**

Yes, my lord. Listen to how quiet the evening is, as if it's  
purposefully setting the stage for a song.

**DON PEDRO**

(speaking so that only CLAUDIOcan hear) Do you see where  
Benedick is hiding?

**CLAUDIO**

(speaking so that only DON PEDROcan hear) Yes, very well, my  
lord. Once the music has ended, we'll give him more than he  
bargained for.

**DON PEDRO**

Come on, Balthasar, let's hear that song again.

**BALTHASAR**

Oh, my good lord, don't make me insult music again with my  
awful singing.

**DON PEDRO**

You can tell an artist is excellent when he denies his own  
perfection. Please, sing for us; don't make me woo you  
anymore!

**BALTHASAR**

Because you talk of wooing, I will sing,  
Since many a wooer doth commence his suit  
To her he thinks not worthy, yet he woos,  
50 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 crotchetts that he speaks!  
55 Note notes, forsooth, and nothing.

*Music plays*

**BENEDICK**

(aside) Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished. Is it not strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bodies? Well, a horn for my money, when all's done.

**BALTHASAR**

Since you put it that way, I'll sing. You're like a suitor who courts a woman insincerely, swearing that he loves her even though he really doesn't find her worthy.

**DON PEDRO**

Come on, please sing. If you'd like to continue this discussion, at least do so with music.

**BALTHASAR**

Just know this before I begin: I can't play a single note that's worthy of note.

**DON PEDRO**

Listen to him speaking in quarter notes! Get on with your note-playing now.

*Music plays*

**BENEDICK**

(to himself) That music must be divine, because their souls have been captivated. Isn't it strange that strings made of sheep's guts are capable of drawing men's souls out of their bodies? Well, I'd rather listen to a plain old hunting horn than this music, when all is said and done.

**BALTHASAR**

(singing)

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 leavy.  
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

60 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

(singing)

Don't cry anymore, ladies, don't cry anymore  
Men have always been deceivers,  
One foot on a ship and one on the shore,  
Never devoted to anything.  
So don't cry like that, just let them go  
And be happy and carefree forever,  
Turning all your sad sounds around  
When you sing "Hey, nonny nonny" instead.  
Don't sing more sad songs  
About being down in the dumps  
For men have been committing this kind of fraud  
Ever since the first summer trees had leaves.  
So don't cry like that, just let them go  
And be happy and carefree forever,  
Turning all your sad sounds around  
When you sing "Hey, nonny nonny" instead.

### DON PEDRO

That's a good song.

### BALTHASAR

And a bad singer, my lord.

### DON PEDRO

Ha! No, no, really, your voice is good enough in a pinch.

### BENEDICK

(aside) An he had been a dog that should have howled thus,  
they would have hanged him. And I pray God his bad voice  
65 bode no mischief. I had as lief have heard the night raven,  
come what plague could have come after it.

**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**

70 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 Signor Benedick?

**CLAUDIO**

Oh, ay. (*aside to DON PEDRO*) Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl  
75 sits.—I did never think that lady would have loved any  
man.

**LEONATO**

No, nor I neither, but most wonderful that she should so

(*to himself*) If a dog had howled like that, I would have hung it. I  
hope his horrible singing doesn't have any ill effects. I would've  
rather listened to the night raven screech, even if the bird's  
noise does give me the plague, as they say it will.

**DON PEDRO**

Yes, do you hear me, Balthasar? Please, get some excellent  
music, because tomorrow we want to serenade Lady Hero at  
her bedroom window.

**BALTHASAR**

I'll do the best I can, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

Please do. Goodbye.

*BALTHASAR exits.*

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

**CLAUDIO**

Oh yes. (*speaking so that only DON PEDRO can hear*) Go on,  
keep walking: our prey is in sight.—I never thought that woman  
would love any man.

**LEONATO**

dote on Signior Benedick, whom she hath in all outward behaviors seemed ever to abhor.

**BENEDICK**

80 (*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**

May be she doth but counterfeit.

**CLAUDIO**

85 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**

I didn't, either. But how wonderful that she should be so fond of Signior Benedick, whom she has always appeared to hate.

**BENEDICK**

(*to himself*) Is it possible? Is that the way the wind is blowing?

**LEONATO**

Really, my lord, I don't know what to make of it, but she loves him with such a passion that it's past all understanding.

**DON PEDRO**

Maybe she's just pretending.

**CLAUDIO**

Yes, that's quite likely.

**LEONATO**

Oh God! Pretending? No one has ever faked passion as skillfully as this, then.

**DON PEDRO**

Why, what symptoms of love does she exhibit?

**CLAUDIO**

(*speaking so that only LEONATO can hear*) Bait the hook well; this fish is going to bite.

**LEONATO**

90 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**

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

**BENEDICK**

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

**CLAUDIO**

100 (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.

What symptoms, my lord? She will have a seat—you heard my daughter tell you how.

**CLAUDIO**

Yes, she did tell us.

**DON PEDRO**

Please, please tell me! This is amazing. I would have thought she was invincible against any assault of love.

**LEONATO**

I would have sworn that, too, my lord, especially against Benedick.

**BENEDICK**

(to himself) I would take this as a joke if the old man weren't saying it. Mischief surely can't be hiding in such a respectable man.

**CLAUDIO**

(speaking so that only DON PEDRO can hear) We've infected him! Keep it up.

**DON PEDRO**

Has she told Benedick how she feels?

**LEONATO**

No, and she swears she never will. That's what's driving her crazy.

**CLAUDIO**

'Tis true indeed, so your daughter says. "Shall I," says she, "that have so oft encountered him with scorn, write to him  
105 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**

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

**LEONATO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

That.

**LEONATO**

115 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,

**CLAUDIO**

It's true, Hero says so. Beatrice asks, "Does it make any sense to write and tell him I love him when I have always treated him with scorn?"

**LEONATO**

She says this as she begins to write the letter. She'll be getting up twenty times in a night, sitting there in her slip until she's written a page. My daughter told me everything.

**CLAUDIO**

Now that you speak of paper, I remember a funny story of Hero's.

**LEONATO**

Oh, you mean when Beatrice writes a letter and Hero sees that it has "Benedick" and "Beatrice" written all over it?

**CLAUDIO**

Yes, that's the one.

**LEONATO**

Oh, she tears that letter into a thousand small pieces and berates herself for being so forward as to write a letter to a man she knows would mock her. "I compare him," she says, "to

though I love him, I should."

### **CLAUDIO**

120 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  
125 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  
130 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**

myself, and I know that I would mock him if he wrote me such a letter. Yes, even though I love him, I would mock him."

### **CLAUDIO**

Then she falls down to her knees, weeps, sobs, beats her breast, tears her hair, prays, and curses: "Oh sweet Benedick! God give me patience!"

### **LEONATO**

She did indeed, my daughter says so. She worries that Beatrice is so overwrought that she might do herself harm someday. It's true.

### **DON PEDRO**

If she won't tell Benedick, someone else should.

### **CLAUDIO**

And what would that accomplish? He'll just turn it into a joke and torment the poor woman even more.

### **DON PEDRO**

If he did that, it would be a charitable deed to hang him. She's an excellent, sweet woman, and there's no doubt that she is virtuous.

### **CLAUDIO**

And she is exceeding wise.

**DON PEDRO**

135 In every thing but in loving Benedick.

**LEONATO**

Oh, 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**

140 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 145 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,

And she is very smart.

**DON PEDRO**

Except for the fact that she loves Benedick.

**LEONATO**

Oh, my lord, when wisdom and passion are in one body, it's ten to one that the passion will win. I am sorry for her, as I should be, since I am both her uncle and her guardian.

**DON PEDRO**

I wish she were in love with me instead. I would have thrown away all other considerations and made her my wife. Please, tell Benedick about her feelings and see what he has to say.

**LEONATO**

Is that a good idea, do you think?

**CLAUDIO**

Hero thinks Beatrice will surely die, for she says she'll die if he doesn't love her, and that she'll die before she tells him, and she'll die if he woos her and she's made to hold back even one of her usual insults.

**DON PEDRO**

She's probably right. If she offers him her love, it's very possible that he'll scorn it, since, as we all know, he tends to be

150 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**

155 And I take him to be valiant.

**DON PEDRO**

As Hector, I assure you, and in the managing of quarrels you may say he is wise, for either he avoids them with great discretion or undertakes them with a most Christian-like fear.

**LEONATO**

160 If he do fear God, he must necessarily keep peace. If he break the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

**DON PEDRO**

contemptuous.

**CLAUDIO**

He's a very proper man.

**DON PEDRO**

Indeed, he is good-looking and carries himself well.

**CLAUDIO**

And I swear to God he's very smart.

**DON PEDRO**

He does indeed show sparks of something like wit.

**CLAUDIO**

And I believe him to be brave.

**DON PEDRO**

As brave as [Hector](#), surely. And you could say that he is wise in managing fights, for he either avoids them discreetly or enters into them timidly.

**LEONATO**

If he fears God, he must necessarily keep the peace. If he breaks the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

**DON PEDRO**

And so will he do, for the man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests he will make. Well, I  
165 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**

170 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.

**CLAUDIO**

175 (*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 he'll do that, because he's a God-fearing man, even though his joking makes it seem otherwise. Well, I'm sorry for your niece. Should we go find Benedick and tell him about Beatrice's love?

**CLAUDIO**

No, don't ever tell him, my lord. Let her get over it, with the help of good advice.

**LEONATO**

No, that's impossible. Her heart will break first.

**DON PEDRO**

Well, we'll hear more about it from your daughter. Let it sit for a while. I am very fond of Benedick, and I just wish he would take a look at himself and realize how unfairly he's treating this good woman.

**LEONATO**

My lord, will you come with me? Dinner is ready.

**CLAUDIO**

(*speaking so that only DON PEDRO and LEONATO can hear*) If he doesn't fall in love with her now, I'll never trust my intuition again.

**DON PEDRO**

and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry.  
The sport will be when they hold one an opinion of  
180 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  
185 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  
190 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  
195 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

(speaking so that only LEONATO can hear) The same trap must be set for her; that's your daughter's and servants' job. The real fun will be when they both believe the other to be in love, without any of it being true. I can't wait to watch that drama—it'll be a pantomime, since both of them will be totally speechless! Let's send Beatrice to call Benedick in to dinner

*Everyone except BENEDICK exits.*

### BENEDICK

(coming forward) This can't be a trick. They spoke with great seriousness, and they have Hero's testimony. They seem to pity the lady. It seems her love is stretched to the limit. She loves me? Well, that love must be returned! I hear how I'm criticized. They say I'll be smug if I find out she loves me. They also say she'd rather die than give any sign of her feelings. I never thought I'd marry. I can't appear to be proud. People who discover their faults and can then change them are lucky indeed. They say the lady is beautiful; it's true, I've seen it myself. And virtuous; that's true, I can't disprove that. And smart, except that she loves me. That may not be any proof of her intelligence, but I swear it won't be evidence of her stupidity—for I'm going to be horribly in love with her! People might tease me here and there, since I attacked marriage for so long. But don't tastes change? A man can love a dish when he is young that he hates when he turns old. Will quips and clever remarks and scathing written words keep a man from

200 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  
205 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**

210 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.

getting what his heart desires? No! The world needs to be  
populated. When I said that I'd die as a bachelor, I just meant  
that I didn't think I'd live until I got married. Here comes  
Beatrice. By God! She's a beautiful lady. I think I sense some  
signs of love in her.

*BEATRICE enters.*

**BEATRICE**

Against my will, I've been told to bring you in to dinner.

**BENEDICK**

Lovely Beatrice, I thank you for taking the pains to tell me that.

**BEATRICE**

I didn't take any more pains bringing this message than you  
took pains in thanking me. If the job had been painful, I would  
not have come.

**BENEDICK**

So you took pleasure in bringing me this message?

**BEATRICE**

Yes, as much pleasure as one might take in choking a bird at  
knifepoint. You don't want to eat, sir? Goodbye, then.

*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 Jew. I will go get her picture.

*Exit*

*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  
5 Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse  
Is all of her. Say that thou overheardst us,  
And bid her steal into the pleachèd bower  
Where honeysuckles ripened by the sun  
Forbid the sun to enter, like favorites  
10 Made proud by princes, that advance their pride

*She exits.*

### BENEDICK

Ha! "Against my will, I've been told to bring you in to dinner." There's a double meaning in that. "I didn't take any more pains bringing this message than you took pains in thanking me." That's like saying, "Any thing I do for you is as easy as saying 'thank you.'" If this doesn't move me to take pity on her, I'm a horrible person. If I don't love her, I'm completely *hard-hearted*. I will go get her picture.

*He exits.*

## Act 3 Scene 1

*HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA enter.*

### HERO

Margaret, run into the sitting room. You'll find Beatrice there, talking to Claudio and the Prince. Whisper to her that Ursula and I are walking in the orchard and that we're talking all about her. Tell her you heard us, and that she should sneak into the arbor where the crisscrossing branches overhead keep the honeysuckles out of the sun. (The same honeysuckles that were once ripened in the sun; they're like courtiers who rise because the king favors them, then plot to overthrow his Majesty.) She can hide there and eavesdrop on our conversation. This is your job. Do it well, and then leave us.

Against that power that bred it. There will she hide her  
To listen our propose. 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**

15 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.  
20 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,  
For look where Beatrice like a lapwing runs  
25 Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

**URSULA**

(aside to HERO)

**MARGARET**

I'll make her come right away, I promise you.

*She exits.*

**HERO**

All right Ursula, as Beatrice arrives, we'll be walking up and down this alley and speaking about nothing but Benedick. Whenever I mention him, praise him more than any man deserves. It'll be my job to talk about how Benedick is sick with love for Beatrice. We'll make our arrows the same way Cupid does: with gossip and rumor.

**BEATRICE** enters, behind.

Let's start. See, Beatrice has run over like a little bird, keeping close to the ground and trying to overhear us.

**URSULA**

The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish  
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream  
And greedily devour the treacherous bait.  
30 So angle we for Beatrice, who even now  
Is couchèd in the woodbine coverture.  
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

**HERO**

(aside to URSULA)

Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing  
35 Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.—  
(approaching the bower)  
No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful.  
I know her spirits are as coy and wild  
As haggards of the rock.

**URSULA**

But are you sure  
40 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,

(speaking so that only HERO can hear) The best part of fishing is watching the fish cut through the water and greedily take the bait. Now we're fishing for Beatrice, who's hiding right now in the honeysuckle arbor. Don't worry, I'll do my part.

**HERO**

(speaking so that only URSULAcans hear) Then let's get closer, so she can hear all the false, sweet bait we're setting for her.—  
(approaching the bower) No, truly, Ursula, she's too scornful. She's as devious and fierce as the wild hawks on the rocks.

**URSULA**

But are you sure that Benedick loves Beatrice that much?

**HERO**

That's what the Prince and my fiancé say.

**URSULA**

And did they ask you to tell Beatrice about this, madam?

**HERO**

But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick,  
45 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**

50 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,  
55 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-endeared.

### **URSULA**

Sure, I think so,  
60 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,

They did want me to tell her, but I persuaded them that, if they truly loved Benedick, they would try to get him to battle his emotions and keep Beatrice in the dark.

### **URSULA**

Why did you do that? Doesn't Benedick deserve as much luck with a mate as he would have with Beatrice?

### **HERO**

By the god of love, I know that he deserves all that a man might possess. But Nature never made a woman's heart as proud and tough as Beatrice's. There is scorn and disdain in her eyes, and those sparkling eyes despise everything they look upon. She values her wit more highly than anything else, which looks weak by comparison. She's so in love with herself, she's incapable of loving anyone else. She can't even imagine what "love" is.

### **URSULA**

Yes, you're right. It would be bad if she knew about Benedick's love and teased him about it.

### **HERO**

How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured  
But she would spell him backward. If fair-faced,  
65 She would swear the gentleman should be her sister;  
If black, why, Nature, drawing of an antic,  
Made a foul blot; if tall, a lance ill-headed;  
If low, an agate very vilely cut;  
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;  
70 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

75 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.  
  
80 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.

It's true. Whenever she meets a man—no matter how wise, noble, young, handsome—she rearranges all his good qualities so they end up looking bad. If he has a fair complexion, she'll say the pretty man should be her sister, not her husband. If he's dark-skinned, Nature must have spilled some ink while drawing his foolish face. If he's tall, she'll say he's a spear topped by an odd head; if he's short, she says he looks like a badly carved miniature. If he's talkative, he's a weathervane, moving in all directions at once; if he's silent, he's a block that can't be moved at all. And so she turns men inside out and never acknowledges the integrity and merit that a man has.

### URSULA

It's true, her nitpicking is hardly admirable.

### HERO

No, it certainly is not admirable to be so perverse and eccentric. But who would dare tell her? If I said something, she'd mock me so mercilessly that I'd probably disintegrate into air. She'd laugh me right out of my body and kill me with her wit.

So Benedick should conceal his emotions. Like a fire that gets covered up, Benedick should smother his love and waste away. It would be better to die that way than to die from being mocked, which is as bad as being killed by tickling.

**URSULA**

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

**HERO**

85 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**

90 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 Signor Benedick.

**HERO**

95 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. Signor Benedick,  
For shape, for bearing, argument and valor,  
100 Goes foremost in report through Italy.

**URSULA**

But you should tell her about this, and hear what she has to say.

**HERO**

No, instead I'll go to Benedick and advise him to fight his emotions. I'll make up some awful things about my cousin and ruin her reputation. You don't know how quickly affection can be killed with a single nasty word.

**URSULA**

Oh, don't injure your cousin like that! With the quick, intelligent wit she's rumored to have, she can't really be such a bad judge of character that she'd refuse a man as exceptional as Signor Benedick.

**HERO**

He's the only worthy man in Italy, aside from my dear Claudio.

**URSULA**

Don't be angry with me for speaking my mind, but throughout Italy, Benedick is considered the best man in looks, bearing, intelligence, and bravery.

**HERO**

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

**URSULA**

His excellency did earn it, ere he had it.

When are you married, madam?

**HERO**

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

105 I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel

Which is the best to furnish me tomorrow.

*They move aside from the bower*

**URSULA**

(aside to HERO)

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

**HERO**

(aside to URSULA)

110 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?

**HERO**

True, he has an excellent reputation.

**URSULA**

And he deserves it, having been excellent before he had a reputation for it. When are you getting married, madam?

**HERO**

Tomorrow, and then every day after that. Come on, let's go inside. I want to show you some clothing, so you can tell me what I should wear tomorrow.

*They move away from the bower.*

**URSULA**

(speaking so that only HERO can hear) We caught her in our trap, madam, I'm sure of it.

**HERO**

(speaking so that only URSULACan hear) If so, then you never know where love will come from. Cupid gets some lovers with arrows, but some he lays traps for!

*Everyone but BEATRICE exits.*

**BEATRICE**

(coming forward) I'm burning up with shame! Can this be true? Do people criticize me this much for being proud and scornful? Then I'll say goodbye to my contempt and my pride in being

115 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  
120 To bind our loves up in a holy band.  
For others say thou dost deserve, and I  
Believe it better than reportingly.

*Exit*

*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  
5 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 bow-string, and  
the little hangman dare not shoot at him. He hath a heart as

unmarried! No good is spoken of such a person as me behind  
her back. Benedick, keep on loving me and I will return your  
love, like a wild hawk being tamed by her handler. I'll be kind to  
you from now on, and if you really do love me, that kindness  
will encourage you to seal our love with a wedding band.  
People say that you deserve my love, and I believe it—not just  
because they've said so.

*She exits.*

## Act 3 Scene 2

*DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO enter.*

**DON PEDRO**

I'll stay in Messina until you're married, and then I'll go to  
Aragon.

**CLAUDIO**

I'll go with you, my lord, if you'll allow me.

**DON PEDRO**

No, taking you away from your new marriage would be like  
showing a child a new coat and then not letting him wear it. I'll  
ask only Benedick to come with me, for from the top of his  
head to the soles of his feet he's a joker. He's evaded love once  
or twice, and since then Cupid doesn't dare to shoot at him.

10 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**

15 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**

20 You must hang it first, and draw it afterwards.

Benedick's heart is like a bell, with his tongue as the clapper: everything his heart thinks, his tongue speaks.

**BENEDICK**

Gentleman, I am not the same man I was before.

**LEONATO**

I agree. I think you seem more serious.

**CLAUDIO**

I hope he's in love.

**DON PEDRO**

Come off it, man! There isn't a single drop of sincerity in him that could be touched with love. If he looks serious, he must need money.

**BENEDICK**

I have a [toothache](#).

**DON PEDRO**

[Draw it.](#)

**BENEDICK**

[Hang it!](#)

**CLAUDIO**

You have to hang it first. Then you can [draw it](#).

**DON PEDRO**

What, sigh for the toothache?

**LEONATO**

Where is but a humor or a worm.

**BENEDICK**

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

**CLAUDIO**

Yet say I, he is in love.

**DON PEDRO**

25 There is no appearance of fancy in him, unless it be a fancy  
that he hath to strange disguises, as to be a Dutchman  
today, a Frenchman tomorrow, or in the shape of two  
countries at once, as a German from the waist downward,  
all slops, and a Spaniard from the hip upward, no doublet.  
30 Unless he have a fancy to this foolery, as it appears he hath,  
he is no fool for fancy, as you would have it appear he is.

**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**

What, are you moaning on about your toothache?

**LEONATO**

It could only have been caused by some humor or [worm](#).

**BENEDICK**

Well, everyone knows how to overcome an injury except the  
one who actually has one.

**CLAUDIO**

I repeat, he's in love.

**DON PEDRO**

No, there's no love in him, unless you mean his love for strange  
costumes. He's a Dutchman today, a Frenchman tomorrow,  
and sometimes wears the clothing of two countries at once: a  
German from the waist down, with his baggy pants, and a  
Spaniard from the hips up, with a cloak and no jacket. Unless  
you're talking about his love for this kind of foolishness—which,  
judging from his appearance, he has—he is no fool for love, as  
you pretend.

**CLAUDIO**

If he's not in love with a woman, then you can't trust the usual  
symptoms. He brushes his hat in the mornings. What do you  
think that means?

**DON PEDRO**

35 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, by the loss of a beard.

**DON PEDRO**

Nay, he rubs himself with civet. Can you smell him out by  
40 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**

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

**CLAUDIO**

**DON PEDRO**

Has any man seen him at the barber's?

**CLAUDIO**

No, but the barber's assistant has been seen with him. The beard that used to decorate Benedick's cheeks has been shaved off and is now stuffing [tennis balls](#).

**LEONATO**

Getting rid of the beard definitely makes him look younger.

**DON PEDRO**

And he's rubbed himself with perfume. Can you smell out his secret now?

**CLAUDIO**

That's as good as proof that the sweet young man's in love.

**DON PEDRO**

The biggest clue is his seriousness.

**CLAUDIO**

And when has he ever been known to wash his face?

**DON PEDRO**

Yes, or to wear cosmetics? I hear what they say about him for doing that.

**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**

50 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**

55 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 hobbyhorses must not hear.

*Exeunt BENEDICK and LEONATO*

**DON PEDRO**

For my life, to break with him about Beatrice!

Indeed, his mocking spirit has now crawled into a [lute](#), and he can be played like an instrument—

**DON PEDRO**

Truly, it all adds up to a serious story for Benedick. A conclusion, a conclusion: he is in love.

**CLAUDIO**

Oh, and I know who loves him.

**DON PEDRO**

I bet I know, too: someone who clearly doesn't know him at all.

**CLAUDIO**

No, she does know him, and she also knows all his bad qualities—and in spite of all this, she still dies for him.

**DON PEDRO**

She'll be buried with her face upwards, then.

**BENEDICK**

This chatter is no cure for my toothache. (*to LEONATO*) Old sir, please walk with me a bit. I have eight or nine well-considered words to say to you, and I don't want these fools to hear.

**BENEDICK and LEONATO exit.**

**DON PEDRO**

I bet my life he's gone to speak with Leonato about Beatrice!

**CLAUDIO**

'Tis even so. Hero and Margaret have by this played their  
60 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**

65 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?

**CLAUDIO**

It must be. By now, Hero and Margaret have done their part  
with Beatrice. The two bears won't bite each other the next  
time they meet.

*DON JOHN enters.*

**DON JOHN**

My lord and brother, God save you.

**DON PEDRO**

Good evening, brother.

**DON JOHN**

If you don't mind, I'd like to speak with you.

**DON PEDRO**

In private?

**DON JOHN**

If you wish. But Count Claudio can stay, for what I'm about to  
say concerns him.

**DON PEDRO**

What's the matter?

**DON JOHN**

(to CLAUDIO) Do you plan on getting married tomorrow?

**DON PEDRO**

70 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  
75 brother, I think he holds you well, and in dearness of heart hath holp 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  
80 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.

**DON PEDRO**

You know that he does.

**DON JOHN**

I don't know that, once he knows what I know.

**CLAUDIO**

If there's any reason we shouldn't get married, I urge you to tell me.

**DON JOHN**

You may think that I don't love you. I hope that, after I tell you my news, you will think better of me. My brother thinks highly of you, and because of his affection, has helped arrange your marriage—but that was definitely a waste of his time and energy.

**DON PEDRO**

Why, what's the matter?

**DON JOHN**

I came here to tell you—I'll make this short, since she's already been talked about for too long—the lady is unfaithful.

**CLAUDIO**

Who, Hero?

**DON JOHN**

That's the one: 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  
85 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  
90 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  
95 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.

**CLAUDIO**

Unfaithful?

**DON JOHN**

The word is too good to represent her wickedness. She is  
worse than wicked. If you can think of a more awful title, I'll call  
her that. But don't keep wondering without more proof. Come  
with me tonight, and you'll see a man enter her bedroom  
chamber—even tonight, the night before her wedding. If you  
still love her after that, then marry her tomorrow. But you  
would be more honorable if you changed your mind.

**CLAUDIO**

(to DON PEDRO) Is this possible?

**DON PEDRO**

I won't consider it.

**DON JOHN**

If you won't risk coming to see her tonight, then don't claim to  
know what she's like. If you follow me, I'll give you all the proof  
you need. Once you have seen more and heard more, then you  
can decide what to do.

**CLAUDIO**

If I see anything tonight that convinces me not to marry her, I'll  
shame her tomorrow in the very congregation where I would  
have married her.

**DON PEDRO**

And as I wooed for thee to obtain her, I will join with thee  
100 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**

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

*Exeunt*

*Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES with the Watch*

**DOGBERRY**

Are you good men and true?

**DON PEDRO**

And since I wooed her in your name, I'll join you in disgracing  
her.

**DON JOHN**

I won't say anything else about her until you two see things for  
yourselves. Remain calm until midnight, and then you'll see  
what the trouble is.

**DON PEDRO**

Oh, this day has turned into a disaster!

**CLAUDIO**

Oh, mischief has ruined our plans!

**DON JOHN**

Oh, a plague has been prevented, thank God! That's what you'll  
say once you've seen part two.

*They all exit.*

## Act 3 Scene 3

*DOGBERRY and VERGES with several of the Prince's  
WATCHMEN enter.*

**DOGBERRY**

Are you all good and honest men?

**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  
5 should have any allegiance in them, being chosen for the Prince's watch.

**VERGES**

Well, give them their charge, neighbor Dogberry.

**DOGBERRY**

First, who think you the most desartless man to be constable?

**FIRST WATCHMAN**

Hugh Otecake, sir, or George Seacole, for they can write  
10 and read.

**DOGBERRY**

Come hither, neighbor 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****VERGES**

Yes they are, otherwise it would be proper for them to suffer salvation , body and soul.

**DOGBERRY**

If they had any [allegiance](#) when they were chosen for the Prince's watch, a punishment like that would be too good for them.

**VERGES**

Well, give them their assignment, Sir Dogberry.

**DOGBERRY**

First, which man do you think is most [desertless](#) to be leader of the watch?

**FIRST WATCHMAN**

Either Hugh Otecake, sir, or else George Seacole, because both of them can read and write.

**DOGBERRY**

Come here, Sir Seacole. God has blessed you with a good name. To be good-looking is a matter of luck, but to read and write is a natural gift.

**SECOND WATCHMAN**

Both of which, master constable—

**DOGBERRY**

15 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; 20 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 he will not stand?

### **DOGBERRY**

Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go and 25 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 30 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.

You have. I knew that would be your answer. Well, for your good looks, sir, thank God and don't boast about it. As for your reading and writing, use those skills when you can't use your looks. You're thought to be the most *senseless* and fit man here, so you will carry the lantern and be constable. This is your assignment:

you will *comprehend* any vagrant men you see. You are to order all men to stop, in the Prince's name.

### **SECOND WATCHMAN**

And what if he won't stop?

### **DOGBERRY**

Well then, don't bother with him and let him go. Then immediately call the rest of the watch together and thank God that you've gotten rid of such a criminal.

### **VERGES**

If he won't stop when he's told to, then he isn't one of the Prince's subjects.

### **DOGBERRY**

True, and you aren't supposed to meddle with anyone but the Prince's subjects. You will also stay quiet in the streets, for a babbling watch is most *tolerable* and will not be endured.

**WATCHMAN**

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

**DOGBERRY**

35 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.

**WATCHMAN**

How if they will not?

**DOGBERRY**

40 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.

**WATCHMAN**

Well, sir.

**DOGBERRY**

If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your 45 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.

**WATCHMAN**

We'll sleep instead of talk. We know what's appropriate for a watch.

**DOGBERRY**

Why, you speak like an experienced and quiet watchman. Sleeping on the watch shouldn't be a problem; just make sure that your weapons don't get stolen. Also, you're supposed to visit all the bars and tell anyone who's drunk to go home and go to bed.

**WATCHMAN**

And what if they won't go?

**DOGBERRY**

Well then, leave them alone until they're sober. If even then they don't answer to your satisfaction, you can say that they're not the men you thought they were.

**WATCHMAN**

Very good, sir.

**DOGBERRY**

If you meet a thief, you can expect him to be dishonest. The less you have to do with that kind of man, the more honest you will be.

**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  
50 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**

55 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.

**WATCHMAN**

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

**DOGBERRY**

60 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.

**WATCHMAN**

So if we know that a man is a thief, should we try to arrest him?

**DOGBERRY**

Your position permits you to, but I think that those who stick  
their hands in [pitch](#) get their hands dirty. If you encounter a  
thief, I think the most peaceable thing to do is to let him be  
himself—and steal away.

**VERGES**

You have always been known as a merciful man, partner.

**DOGBERRY**

Truly, I wouldn't even hang a dog, much [more](#) a man who has  
any honesty in him.

**VERGES**

(*to the watchmen*) If you hear a child crying in the night, you  
should call the nurse and tell her to quiet the child.

**WATCHMAN**

What if the nurse is asleep and doesn't hear us?

**DOGBERRY**

Well then, leave quietly, and let the child's crying wake up the  
nurse. The ewe that doesn't go to her lamb when it *baas* will  
never tend to another animal's child.

**VERGES**

'Tis very true.

**DOGBERRY**

This is the end of the charge. You, constable, are to present  
65 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  
70 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, good night.  
An there be any matter of weight chances, call up me. Keep  
your fellows'  
75 counsels and your own; and good night.—Come, neighbor.

**WATCHMAN**

Well, masters, we hear our charge. Let us go sit here upon

**VERGES**

That's very true.

**DOGBERRY**

And that's the end of your assignment. You, constable, are  
representing the Prince himself. If you meet the Prince in the  
night, you can order him to stop.

**VERGES**

No, by our Lady, I don't think he can.

**DOGBERRY**

I'll bet any man who knows the law five shillings to one on it.  
Truly though, you can't stop the Prince without the Prince's  
consent, for the watch shouldn't offend anyone, and it's an  
offense to keep a man without his consent.

**VERGES**

By our Lady, I think that's true.

**DOGBERRY**

Ha, ha, ha! Well, gentlemen, good night. And if anything  
important happens, find me and let me know. Keep each  
other's secrets and your own. Good night. Come, friend.

**WATCHMAN**

the church bench till two, and then all to bed.

**DOGBERRY**

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

*Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES*

*Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE*

**BORACHIO**

What Conrade!

**SEACOAL**

(aside) Peace! Stir not.

**BORACHIO**

Conrade, I say!

**CONRADE**

85 Here, man. I am at thy elbow.

**BORACHIO**

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

Well gentlemen, we've heard our assignment. Let's sit here on the church bench until two and then go off to bed.

**DOGBERRY**

One more thing, good gentlemen. Watch over Signior Leonato's house; with the wedding being held there tomorrow, there's a great to-do there tonight. Adieu. Be *vigitant*, I beg you.

*DOGBERRY and VERGES exit.*

*BORACHIO and CONRADE enter.*

**BORACHIO**

Conrade!

**WATCHMAN**

(whispering) Quiet! Don't move!

**BORACHIO**

Conrade, I say!

**CONRADE**

I'm here, man, at your elbow.

**BORACHIO**

Come to think of it, I thought I felt a scab there.

**CONRADE**

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

**BORACHIO**

90 Stand thee close, then, under this penthouse, for it drizzles rain, and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.

**WATCHMAN**

(aside) Some treason, masters. Yet stand close.

**BORACHIO**

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

**CONRADE**

95 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.

**BORACHIO**

100 That shows thou art unconfirmed. Thou knowest that the

**CONRADE**

I'll get you for that. Now get on with your story.

**BORACHIO**

Since it's drizzling, stand under this overhang with me and, like a true drunk, I'll tell you everything.

**WATCHMAN**

(speaking so that only the other WATCHMEN can hear) There's some treason occurring, gentlemen. Stay here.

**BORACHIO**

You should know I've earned a thousand gold pieces from Don John.

**CONRADE**

Is it possible that any crime could be so valuable?

**BORACHIO**

You should ask instead if it's possible that any criminal could be so rich. Because when rich villains need poor villains' services, those poor ones can name the price.

**CONRADE**

I can't believe it.

**BORACHIO**

fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a cloak, is nothing to a man.

**CONRADE**

Yes, it is apparel.

**BORACHIO**

I mean the fashion.

**CONRADE**

Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

**BORACHIO**

105 Tush, I may as well say the fool's the fool. But seest thou not what a deformed thief this fashion is?

**WATCHMAN**

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

**BORACHIO**

110 Didst thou not hear somebody?

**CONRADE**

No, 'twas the vane on the house.

That only proves how inexperienced you are. You know that the style of a man's jacket or hat or coat means nothing.

**CONRADE**

Yes, it's just clothing.

**BORACHIO**

No, I mean, the fashion of a man's clothing tells us nothing about the man.

**CONRADE**

Yes, fashion is fashion.

**BORACHIO**

C'mon, I might as well say the fool's the fool! But don't you see what a [deformed](#) villain fashion is?

**WATCHMAN**

(speaking so that only the other WATCHMEN can hear) I know that man, [Deformed](#). For the past seven years, he's been a wicked thief. He walks around as if he were a gentleman. I remember that name.

**BORACHIO**

Did you hear someone?

**CONRADE**

Just the weathervane moving.

### **BORACHIO**

Seest thou not, I say, what a deformed thief this fashion is,  
how giddily he turns about all the hot bloods between  
fourteen and five-and-thirty, sometimes fashioning them  
115 like Pharaoh's soldiers in the reechy painting, sometime  
like god Bel's priests in the old church-window, sometime  
like the shaven Hercules in the smirched worm-eaten  
tapestry, where his codpiece seems as massy as his club?

### **CONRADE**

All this I see, and I see that the fashion wears out more  
120 apparel than the man. But art not thou thyself giddy with  
the fashion too, that thou hast shifted out of thy tale into  
telling me of the fashion?

### **BORACHIO**

Not so, neither. But know that I have tonight wooed  
Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of  
125 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  
130 encounter.

### **CONRADE**

### **BORACHIO**

As I was saying, fashion is a deformed villain. It makes hot-blooded young men spin around feverishly, forever changing their appearances, dictating that sometimes they dress like Pharaoh's soldiers in that grimy painting and sometimes like the priests of the god Baal, as seen in old church windows. And sometimes fashion dresses them like the great Hercules in that dirty, worm-eaten tapestry—the one where his [codpiece](#) seems almost as big as his club.

### **CONRADE**

I get all this. And I also understand how fashion changes so quickly that a man's clothing never gets a chance to wear itself out. But you're all wound up about fashion, too. Otherwise, why would you stray from your story to blabber on about it?

### **BORACHIO**

No, I'm not wound up. But I will tell you that I seduced Margaret, the Lady Hero's waiting woman, tonight. I called her "Hero" the whole time. She leaned out of her mistress's bedroom window and told me good night a thousand times—but I am telling this story poorly. I should backtrack and begin with how my master, Don John, arranged for the Prince, Claudio, and himself to witness this friendly encounter from the orchard.

### **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  
135 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  
140 and send her home again without a husband.

### SECOND WATCHMAN

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

### FIRST WATCHMAN

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

### SECOND WATCHMAN

145 And one Deformed is one of them. I know him; he wears a lock.

### CONRADE

Masters, masters—

And they thought Margaret was Hero?

### BORACHIO

The Prince and Claudio did, but the devil, my master, knew that it was Margaret. They believed the charade partially because of my master's testimony—which first caused them to doubt Hero—and partially because of how dark and deceiving the night was, but mostly because of my villainous actions, which confirmed Don John's slander. Claudio went away enraged, swearing that he'd meet Hero at the temple as planned and there, before the entire congregation, shame her with what he'd discovered and send her home without a husband.

### SECOND WATCHMAN

We charge you, in the Prince's name, to stop!

### FIRST WATCHMAN

Call up the Master Constable Dogberry. We have [recovered](#) the most dangerous piece of lechery that was ever known in the commonwealth.

### SECOND WATCHMAN

And one of them is the criminal Deformed. I know him; he wears a lock of hair.

### CONRADE

Gentlemen, gentlemen—

**SECOND WATCHMAN**

(to BORACHIO) You'll be made bring Deformed forth, I warrant you.

**FIRST WATCHMAN**

150 Masters, never speak, we charge you, let us obey you 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  
155 obey you.

*Exeunt*

*Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA*

**HERO**

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

**URSULA**

I will, lady.

**HERO****SECOND WATCHMAN**

(to BORACHIO) I bet you'll be forced to bring Deformed forward.

**FIRST WATCHMAN**

Gentlemen, don't speak. We **obey** you to go with us.

**BORACHIO**

We're probably a very valuable catch for these guys.

**CONRADE**

Well, our value is debatable, I bet. Let's go, we'll obey you.

*They all exit.*

## Act 3 Scene 4

**HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA** enter.

**HERO**

Good Ursula, go wake my cousin and ask her to get up.

**URSULA**

I will, lady.

**HERO**

And bid her come hither.

**URSULA**

5 Well.

*Exit*

**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**

10 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**

15 Oh, that exceeds, they say.

And request that she come here.

**URSULA**

Very well.

*She exits.*

**MARGARET**

Really, I think your other ruff is better.

**HERO**

No, please good Meg, I'll wear this one.

**MARGARET**

Honestly, it's not as good as the other one, and I'm sure your cousin will agree with me.

**HERO**

My cousin's a fool, and you are too. I'll wear this one and none other.

**MARGARET**

I like your new wig and headdress, though I'd like it more if the hair were a shade browner. And your gown is really stylish. You know, I saw the Duchess of Milan's gown, the one that everyone praises so highly.

**HERO**

Oh, they say that dress surpasses all others.

**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  
20 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  
25 honorable in a beggar? Is not your lord honorable without  
marriage? I think you would have me say, "Saving your  
reverence, a husband." An bad thinking do not wrest true  
speaking, I'll offend nobody. Is there any harm in "the  
heavier for a husband"? None, I think, an it be the right  
30 husband and the right wife. Otherwise, 'tis light and not

**MARGARET**

Compared to your dress, it's no better than a nightgown. The cloth is interwoven with gold thread, and slashes in the material show the fabric beneath. It is trimmed with silver lace and embroidered with pearls. It has one set of fitted sleeves and another ornamental pair that hangs open from the shoulders. The skirts are trimmed with a blue, metallic fabric. But for a fine, elegant, graceful, and excellent dress, yours is worth ten of those.

**HERO**

I hope I enjoy wearing it, for my heart is very heavy.

**MARGARET**

It will be made even heavier soon—by the weight of a man.

**HERO**

Watch your tongue! Have you no shame?

**MARGARET**

Shame of what, lady? Sex and marriage are honorable things—even for a beggar, right? And isn't your husband an honorable man? You're so prudish you'd probably like me to say, "I beg your pardon, your *husband*"—as if husband were a dirty word! So long as suspicious minds aren't misinterpreting my honest words, I'll offend no one. What's wrong with admitting your husband's going to lie on you? Nothing, as long as it's the right

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**

35 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**

Ye light o' love, with your heels! Then, if your husband  
have stables enough, you'll see he shall lack no barns.

**MARGARET**

husband with the right wife. That's right and proper—anything  
else is frivolous and immoral. Ask Beatrice. Here she comes.

**BEATRICE** enters.

**HERO**

Good morning, cousin.

**BEATRICE**

Good morning, sweet Hero.

**HERO**

Why do you sound so odd? Are you ill? You sound out of tune.

**BEATRICE**

I must be ill—I don't think I can speak in any other tune.

**MARGARET**

If it's a tune we want, let's sing "Light on Love!" It's a light song  
and doesn't require a man to sing the baritone. You sing, and I'll  
dance.

**BEATRICE**

You're "light on love" sure enough—your frivolous dancing  
proves you have light heels! When you're married one of these  
days, if your husband is rolling in dough, you'll let him roll in  
the hay whenever he wants.

**MARGARET**

40 O illegitimate construction! I scorn that with my heels.

**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**

For the letter that begins them all, H.

**MARGARET**

45 Well, an you be not turned Turk, there's no more sailing by  
the star.

**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  
50 perfume.

**BEATRICE**

Never! I reject that life; I kick it away with my [heels](#).

**BEATRICE**

(to HERO) It's almost five o'clock, cousin. You should be ready  
by now. Oh, I really don't feel well. Heigh-ho!

**MARGARET**

Are you sighing for a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

**BEATRICE**

I have an ache; I'm sighing for the letter that begins all those  
words.

**MARGARET**

Well, if you haven't [renounced](#) your old faith yet, we can't trust  
anything anymore.

**BEATRICE**

What does the fool mean by that, I wonder?

**MARGARET**

I don't mean anything—but God sends everyone their heart's  
desire.

**HERO**

The Count sent me an excellent pair of perfumed gloves.

**BEATRICE**

I am stuffed, cousin. I cannot smell.

**MARGARET**

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

**BEATRICE**

Oh, God help me, God help me! How long have you professed apprehension?

**MARGARET**

55 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**

60 There thou prick'st her with a thistle.

**BEATRICE**

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

**MARGARET**

Sorry, I'm all stuffed. I can't smell a thing.

**MARGARET**

Oh, just a young lady and already *stuffed!* That's a nice way to catch a cold.

**BEATRICE**

Oh, God help me! Since when have you claimed to be such a great wit?

**MARGARET**

Ever since you lost yours. Doesn't my wit suit me well?

**BEATRICE**

It doesn't get seen enough; you should wear it in your cap, the way fools wear coxcombs. God, I'm really sick.

**MARGARET**

You should get some distilled *carduus benedictus* and put it on your chest. It's the only way to cure a sudden faintness.

**HERO**

With that you've managed to prick her with a thistle.

**BEATRICE**

*Benedictus!* Why do you suggest I use *benedictus*? Is there some double meaning in that word, "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  
65 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  
70 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**

75 Not a false gallop.

### *Enter URSULA*

### **URSULA**

Madam, withdraw: the Prince, the Count, Signor  
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.

Double meaning! No, honestly, there's no other meaning. I just meant that you should use some holy thistle. Maybe you think that I think you're in love. No, by Our Lady, I'm not such a fool to think what I please, and I don't please to think what I can, and in fact I cannot think, even if I could think my heart right past thinking, that you are in love or that you will be in love or even that you can be in love. But Benedick was once an enemy of love as well, and now he's become a real man. He swore that he'd never get married, but now, despite his earlier protestations, he loves ungrudgingly. How we're going to convert you I'll never know. And yet I think you look with your eyes just like every other woman does.

### **BEATRICE**

Why are you talking at such a crazy clip?

### **MARGARET**

It's not a false gallop, anyway.

### *URSULA enters.*

### **URSULA**

Madam, we have to go: the Prince, the Count, Signior  
Benedick, Don John, and all the gentlemen of the town have  
come to bring you to church.

### **HERO**

*Exeunt*

Good cousin, good Meg, good Ursula, come help me get dressed.

*They all exit.*

## Act 3 Scene 5

*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**

5 Marry, this it is, sir.

**VERGES**

Yes, in truth it is, sir.

**LEONATO**

What is it, my good friends?

**DOGBERRY**

*LEONATO enters with DOGBERRY and VERGES.*

**LEONATO**

What do you want from me, my good man?

**DOGBERRY**

Please, sir, I would like to discuss some news that *decerns* you greatly.

**LEONATO**

Be brief, please, because, as you can see, this is a busy time for me.

**DOGBERRY**

Indeed, sir, it is.

**VERGES**

Yes, it truly is.

**LEONATO**

What's the news, 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  
10 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*, neighbor Verges.

### **LEONATO**

15 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**

20 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

Sorry, sir, Goodman Verges tends to ramble. He's an old man, sir, and his wits are not as [blunt](#) as I wish they were. But truly, he's as honest as the skin between his brows.

### **VERGES**

Yes, I thank God that I am as honest as all the other old men who are not honester than me.

### **DOGBERRY**

Making comparisons is [odorous](#) , Verges. Get on with your story.

### **LEONATO**

Friends, you are becoming tedious.

### **DOGBERRY**

Thank you for saying that, your Worship, but we're just the poor duke's officers. But truly, if I were as [tedious](#) as a king, I would give everything to you, your Worship.

### **LEONATO**

Oh, so you'd give me all your tediousness?

### **DOGBERRY**

Yes, even if I had a thousand more pounds than that, for I hear that you are [exclaimed](#) throughout the city, and though I am

city, and though I be but a poor man, I am glad to hear it.

**VERGES**

And so am I.

**LEONATO**

25 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 30 the age is in, the wit is out." God help us, it is a world to see! Well said, i' faith, neighbor Verges.—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, 35 alas, good neighbor!

**LEONATO**

Indeed, neighbor, he comes too short of you.

**DOGBERRY**

Gifts that God gives.

**LEONATO**

only a poor man, it makes me glad to hear it.

**VERGES**

Me, too.

**LEONATO**

Gentlemen, please, I'd like to hear your news.

**VERGES**

Sir, our watch tonight— *expectfully*, sir—has captured a couple of the worst criminals in Messina.

**DOGBERRY**

(to LEONATO) Verges is a good old man, sir, but he's always babbling. Like they say, "When age comes, wit goes." God help us, what a world! (to VERGES) You did well, Verges, honestly. (to LEONATO) Well, God's a fair man. If two men are riding on one horse, one must naturally ride behind. Verges is as honest a man as any, but, God bless him, not all men are created equal. Am I right, my friend?

**LEONATO**

Truly, my friend, he isn't nearly as impressive as you are.

**DOGBERRY**

God gives those gifts—I had nothing to do with it.

**LEONATO**

I must leave you.

**DOGBERRY**

One word, sir. Our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended  
40 two auspicious 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**

45 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**

Now I must return to the wedding.

**DOGBERRY**

One more thing, sir. Our watch, sir, as you know, has  
[comprehended](#) two auspicious persons. We'd like for you to  
examine them this morning.

**LEONATO**

Examine them yourselves, then bring me your findings. Now  
I'm in a great hurry, as I'm sure you can see.

**DOGBERRY**

That will be [suffigance](#).

**LEONATO**

Have some wine before you go. Goodbye.

*A MESSENGER enters.*

**MESSENGER**

My lord, they're waiting for you to give your daughter away to  
Claudio.

**LEONATO**

I'm coming.

*LEONATO and the MESSENGER exit.*

**DOGBERRY**

Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacole. Bid him  
50 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  
55 writer to set down our excommunication and meet me at  
the jail.

*Exeunt*

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

Go to Francis Seacole, the constable of the watch. Tell him to  
bring his pen and his inkwell to the jail. We will now go to  
[examination](#) these men.

### VERGES

We must do this wisely.

### DOGBERRY

We won't hold back any of our wisdom. We'll drive them to a  
[noncome](#). Go get the educated writer to record our  
excommunication, and I'll meet you at the jail.

*They all exit.*

## Act 4 Scene 1

**DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, LEONATO, FRIAR FRANCIS, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, HERO, and BEATRICE enter with ATTENDANTS.**

### LEONATO

All right, Friar Francis, let's keep this short. Do a simple  
ceremony, and list all the particular duties of marriage later.

### FRIAR FRANCIS

(to CLAUDIO) Have you come here, my lord, to marry this lady?

### CLAUDIO

5 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  
10 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**

15 I dare make his answer, none.

No.

**LEONATO**

No, he comes to be married *to* her. Friar, you are the one who has come to marry her.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Lady, do you come here to be married to this count?

**HERO**

I do.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

If either of you knows any secret reason why you two should not be joined in marriage, I order you on your souls to say so.

**CLAUDIO**

Do you know any, Hero?

**HERO**

None, my lord.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Do you know any, count?

**LEONATO**

I'm sure I can answer for him—he doesn't know any, either.

**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**

20 Stand thee by, Friar.—Father, by your leave,  
Will you with free and unconstrainèd 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  
25 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.  
30 She's but the sign and semblance of her honor.

**CLAUDIO**

Oh, the things men dare to do! The things men are allowed to do! The things men do daily, not knowing what they're doing!

**BENEDICK**

What, are we playing with interjections? Well then, add some interjections that indicate laughter, like "ah," "ha," and "he!"

**CLAUDIO**

Hold on, Friar. (to LEONATO) Father, are you giving me your daughter freely?

**LEONATO**

As freely, son, as God gave her to me.

**CLAUDIO**

And what should I give you that would be equal in value to this rare and precious gift?

**DON PEDRO**

Nothing, sir, except grandchildren.

**CLAUDIO**

Good Prince, you have taught me how to accept things nobly. There, Leonato, take your daughter back. Don't insult a friend by giving him a beautiful orange that rots inside. She only appears honorable from the outside. Look, how she blushes

Behold how like a maid she blushes here!  
Oh, what authority and show of truth  
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!  
Comes not that blood as modest evidence  
35 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**

40 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**

45 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

like a virgin! Oh, sin can disguise itself so artfully! Doesn't that rising blush suggest that she is virtuous and innocent? All of you who are looking at her, wouldn't you swear that she's a virgin, judging by these outward shows? But she is no virgin. She has been in a man's bed. She blushes from guilt, not modesty.

**LEONATO**

What do you mean, my lord?

**CLAUDIO**

I won't be married. I won't join my soul to such a proven slut.

**LEONATO**

My dear lord, if it was you who conquered her and took her virginity—

**CLAUDIO**

I know what you're about to say. If I had slept with her, you'd say that we did so as husband and wife, merely anticipating our eventual marriage. No, Leonato. I never seduced her, or tempted her with indecent words. I treated her like a brother

50 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,  
55 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**

60 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?

would treat a sister, with modest sincerity and appropriate affection.

**HERO**

And have I ever seemed less than modest or appropriate to you?

**CLAUDIO**

Curse you for your false appearances! To me, you seemed like [Diana](#) in her orbit—as virginal as the flower bud before it blooms. But you're actually as hot-blooded as Venus, or a pampered animal allowed to run wild.

**HERO**

Are you sick, my lord? Is that why you're talking so wildly?

**LEONATO**

Good Prince, say something!

**DON PEDRO**

What should I say? I've been dishonored: I arranged for a friend of mine to marry a common whore.

**LEONATO**

Are you really saying these things, or am I dreaming?

**DON JOHN**

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

**BENEDICK**

65 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**

70 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**

75 Oh, God defend me! how am I beset!—

What kind of catechizing call you this?

**DON JOHN**

They're really being spoken, sir, and they're true.

**BENEDICK**

This doesn't look like a wedding.

**HERO**

It's true! Oh God!

**CLAUDIO**

Leonato, am I standing here? Is this the Prince? Is this the Prince's brother? Is this face Hero's? Are these our eyes?

**LEONATO**

Yes, that's all true—but what do you mean by it, my lord?

**CLAUDIO**

Let me just ask her one question, and by your authority as her father, order her to answer truthfully.

**LEONATO**

As my child, I order you to do so.

**HERO**

Oh, God help me! How I'm being attacked! What kind of game is 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!  
80 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**

85 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  
90 Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,  
Confessed the vile encounters they have had  
A thousand times in secret.

**DON JOHN****CLAUDIO**

We just want you to answer to your real name.

**HERO**

Isn't my name Hero? Who can stain that name with a just  
accusation?

**CLAUDIO**

Indeed, Hero herself can! You've stained your virtue with your  
own actions. What man were you talking to at your window last  
night, between the hours of midnight and one? If you're a  
virgin, you'll answer this question.

**HERO**

I wasn't talking to any man at that time, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

Well then, you are no virgin. Leonato, I'm sorry you have to  
hear this. I swear on my honor that we saw and heard Hero  
talking to a brute at her window last night.  
And that man confessed at length how he has secretly come  
to her bedroom thousands of times.

**DON JOHN**

Fie, fie, they are not to be named, my lord,  
Not to be spoke of!  
95 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  
100 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,  
105 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,  
110 Smother her spirits up.

No, my lord, don't name her sinful acts or speak of them!  
There's no way to describe them without offending everyone  
here. Pretty lady, I'm much ashamed of your shocking behavior.

### **CLAUDIO**

Oh Hero, you could have equaled the [mythical Hero](#) if only half  
your outward beauty matched your inner thoughts and  
desires! Goodbye, beautiful sinner. Goodbye to your pure  
wickedness and your wicked purity. Because of you, I'll keep  
myself away from love. I'll hang suspicion on my eyelids, so  
that all the beautiful things I see are transformed into dangers  
and are never able to trick me again.

### **LEONATO**

Does anyone have a dagger for me?

### ***HERO faints.***

### **BEATRICE**

What's wrong, cousin? Why have you collapsed?

### **DON JOHN**

Come, let's go. These revelations have overwhelmed her.

*Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO*

**BENEDICK**

How doth the lady?

**BEATRICE**

Dead, I think.—Help, uncle!—

Hero, why, Hero! Uncle! Signor Benedick! Friar!

**LEONATO**

O Fate! Take not away thy heavy hand!

Death is the fairest cover for her shame

115 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**

**DON PEDRO DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO** exit.

**BENEDICK**

How is she?

**BEATRICE**

She's dead, I think.—Help, uncle!—Hero, why Hero! Uncle!

Signior Benedick! Friar!

**LEONATO**

Oh Fate, don't spare Hero from being punished! Death is the best way to cover over her shame.

**BEATRICE**

How are you, Hero?

**HERO** *stirs.*

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

(to HERO) Take comfort, lady.

**LEONATO**

(to HERO) Are you looking up?

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Yes, why shouldn't she?

**LEONATO**

Wherfore! Why, doth not every earthly thing  
120 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 wouldest not quickly die,  
Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames,  
125 Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches,  
Strike at thy life. Grieved I had but one?  
Chid I for that at frugal Nature's frame?  
O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?  
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?  
130 Why had I not with charitable hand  
Took up a beggar's issue at my gates,  
Who, smirched thus, and mired with infamy,  
I might have said, "No part of it is mine;  
This shame derives itself from unknown loins"?  
  
135 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 fall'n  
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea  
140 Hath drops too few to wash her clean again  
And salt too little which may season give  
To her foul tainted flesh!

Why not! Isn't every living thing condemning her? Can she  
deny the accusations that are proven by her guilty blush? Die,  
Hero, don't open your eyes. If I didn't think you were about to  
die soon—if I thought your spirit could bear this shame—I  
would risk punishment and kill you myself. Am I sorry that I  
only had one child? Do I blame Nature for being so thrifty? Oh,  
one child is one too many! Why did I ever have one? Why did  
you once seem lovely to me? Why didn't I just adopt a  
beggar's child left at my doorstep, whose shame and dishonor  
I could have denied, not being its true father?  
  
But you were mine, and I loved and praised you for being mine,  
and was proud of you for being mine—I loved you so much  
that I hardly cared about myself.

Oh, but now you have fallen into a pit of ink, and there's not  
enough water in the whole wide sea to wash you clean again,  
and not enough salt to cover your stink.

**BENEDICK**

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

145 Oh, 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! Oh, that is stronger made  
150 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,  
155 For I have only silent been 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

Sir, sir, calm down. I'm so amazed by this, I don't know what to say.

**BEATRICE**

Oh, on my soul, my cousin has been slandered falsely!

**BENEDICK**

Lady, did you sleep in her room last night?

**BEATRICE**

No, I didn't, but I did every night for the past year.

**LEONATO**

Then it's confirmed! That's even more proof, and the case against her was airtight already. Would the two princes and Claudio lie? Claudio, who loved her so much that talking about her wickedness made him weep?

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Listen to me a moment. I've only remained silent this whole time because I've been watching Hero. I've seen her begin to blush a thousand times, only to watch those blushes disappear a thousand times and an innocent paleness take over her face. And in her eyes I see a fire that would seem to burn away the lies the princes have told about her chastity. Call me a fool,

160 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,  
165 Which with experimental seal doth warrant  
The tenor of my book; trust not my age,  
My reverence, calling, nor divinity,  
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here  
Under some biting error.

### LEONATO

Friar, it cannot be.  
170 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

175 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,

don't trust my observations—the truth of which is backed up by all my years of experience—don't trust my age, my reputation, my position, and my holiness.

You can doubt all these things if this sweet lady turns out to be guilty.

### LEONATO

But she must be, Friar. You see that any morals she has left are preventing her from denying the charges: she doesn't want to add perjury to her list of sins.

### FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, who do they accuse you of having taken as your lover?

### HERO

You should ask them. I don't know who they're talking about. If I've been with a man in any improper way, let all my sins be punished! Oh, father, if you yourself can prove that I talked with

Let all my sins lack mercy!—O my father,  
180 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

185 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,  
190 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  
Nor age so eat up my invention  
Nor fortune made such havoc of my means  
195 Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends  
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.

a man at an indecent hour, or indeed that I spoke to any creature last night, you can disown me, hate me, and torture me to death!

### FRIAR FRANCIS

The princes are under some strange misunderstanding.

### BENEDICK

Two of them are completely honorable, and if they have been tricked in this, we must blame John the Bastard, who lives to create conflict.

### LEONATO

I don't know. If they have spoken the truth about Hero, I will tear her apart with my bare hands. But if they have accused her falsely, even the greatest of them will have to deal with me. Age hasn't dried up my body or eroded my intelligence so much, and luck hasn't robbed me of so much of my fortune, and my bad ways haven't deprived me of so many friends, that they won't find me ready to seek revenge both physically and mentally, with money and friends at my disposal.

## FRIAR FRANCIS

Pause awhile,

200 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,  
205 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  
210 Change slander to remorse. That is some good.  
But not for that dream I on this strange course,  
But on this travail look for greater birth.  
She, dying, as it must so be maintained,  
Upon the instant that she was accused,  
215 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

## FRIAR FRANCIS

Hold on a moment, and listen to my advice. The princes left  
your daughter here for dead. Hide her for a while in your  
house, and tell everyone that she has, in fact, died. Make a bug  
show of mourning for her, hang sad epitaphs up at your  
family's tomb, and perform all the appropriate burial  
ceremonies.

## LEONATO

Why should we do this? What will this do?

## FRIAR FRANCIS

Listen, if we do this correctly, the men who slandered Hero will  
feel remorse for her instead. That will be a good thing. But I  
have an even greater goal in mind. We'll maintain that she died  
the instant she was accused, and everyone who hears this will  
grieve for her, pity her, and excuse her actions. That's how it  
goes: we don't value the things we have until we lose them,  
when we suddenly rack up their value and see  
all the virtues we were blind to when they were alive and with  
us. That's how Claudio will respond. When he hears that she  
died from his words, his imagination will be sweetly overtaken  
by thoughts of her. In death, every aspect of her life will be got  
up more beautifully, and in his mind she will seem more

220 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,

225 And every lovely organ of her life  
Shall come apparelléd in more precious habit,  
More moving, delicate and full of life,  
Into the eye and prospect of his soul  
Than when she lived indeed. Then shall he mourn,

230 If ever love had interest in his liver,  
And wish he had not so accused her,  
No, though he thought his accusation true.  
Let this be so, and doubt not but success  
Will fashion the event in better shape

235 Than I can lay it down in likelihood.  
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,

240 As best befits her wounded reputation,  
In some reclusive and religious life,

moving, more delicate, and more lively even than when she was alive. Then, if he ever truly felt love, he'll mourn and wish he hadn't accused her—even though he believed his accus-

sation to be true. Follow my plan, and trust that the actual events will play out even better than I am describing. And even if they don't, at least Hero's supposed death will stop the rumors of her infidelity. And if it doesn't go well, then you can keep her hidden in a nunnery, the best place for someone with her kind of dirtied reputation—away from the public's eyes, tongues, mind, and insults.

Out of all eyes, tongues, minds, and injuries.

### BENEDICK

Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you.  
And though you know my inwardness and love  
245 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

250 '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

255 Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

### BENEDICK

### BENEDICK

Signior Leonato, listen to the friar's plan. And even though you know I'm very close to the Prince and Claudio, I swear I'll keep your counsel and deal with this secretly and justly.

### LEONATO

Because I'm drowning in my grief, I'll grab onto the smallest piece of string dangled in front of me.

### FRIAR FRANCIS

This is a good agreement. Now, let's go. A strange disease requires a strange cure. Come, lady; you must die in order to live. Hopefully, your wedding day is only postponed. Have patience and endure.

*Everyone but BENEDICK and BEATRICE exits.*

### BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you been crying this entire time?

### BEATRICE

Yes, and I'll keep crying 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  
260 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**

265 I do love nothing in the world so well as you. Is not that  
strange?

**BEATRICE**

I don't wish that on you.

**BEATRICE**

You don't have to; I do it of my own free will.

**BENEDICK**

I really believe your cousin was falsely accused.

**BEATRICE**

Oh, the man who avenged her could ask anything of me!

**BENEDICK**

Is there any way I could show such friendship to you?

**BEATRICE**

A very clear way, but there is no friend who will undertake it.

**BENEDICK**

Can a man do it?

**BEATRICE**

It's a job meant for a man, but not you.

**BENEDICK**

There is nothing in the world that I love as much as you. Isn't  
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  
270 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**

275 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 offense, sweet Beatrice?

It's as strange as this other thing which I don't understand. I could just as easily say that there is nothing in the world that I love as much as you. But don't believe me—though I'm not lying. I confess nothing, and I deny nothing. I feel awful for my cousin.

**BENEDICK**

By my sword, Beatrice, you love me.

**BEATRICE**

Don't swear like that and then go back and [eat it](#) later.

**BENEDICK**

I'll swear by my [sword](#) that you love me, too, and I'll make any man who says that I don't love you eat it.

**BEATRICE**

But you won't eat your words?

**BENEDICK**

Not with any sauce they could provide for them. I swear, I love you.

**BEATRICE**

Well then, God forgive me!

**BENEDICK**

Why, what have you done, sweet Beatrice?

**BEATRICE**

You have stayed me in a happy hour. I was about to protest

280 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**

285 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**

**BEATRICE**

You got to me first. I was about to swear that I loved you.

**BENEDICK**

Then do so, with all your heart.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Come, ask me to do anything for you.

**BEATRICE**

Kill Claudio.

**BENEDICK**

Ha! I wouldn't do that for the whole wide world.

**BEATRICE**

Then, rejecting my request, you kill *me*, instead. Goodbye.

*BEATRICE begins to exit.*

**BENEDICK**

Wait, sweet Beatrice.

**BEATRICE**

I am gone, though I am here. There is no love in you. Nay,  
290 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  
295 enemy.

**BENEDICK**

Is Claudio thine enemy?

**BEATRICE**

Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath  
slandered, scorned, dishonored my kinswoman? Oh, that I  
were a man! What, bear her in hand until they come to take  
300 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—

My body waits here, but the rest of me is gone. You don't really  
love me. I beg you to let me go.

**BENEDICK**

Beatrice—

**BEATRICE**

I swear, I'm going.

**BENEDICK**

Not until we part as friends.

**BEATRICE**

How dare you try to be my friend when you refuse to fight my  
enemy.

**BENEDICK**

Is Claudio your enemy?

**BEATRICE**

Hasn't he proven himself to be a great villain—slandering,  
scorning, and dishonoring my cousin? Oh, I wish I were a man!  
He pretended that everything was fine until the moment they  
were exchanging vows, and then—with public accusation,  
blatant slander, pure hatred—Oh God, if only I were a man! I  
would rip his heart out in public and eat it.

**BENEDICK**

Listen to me, Beatrice—

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

305 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  
310 count, Count Comfect, a sweet gallant, surely! Oh, 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 curtsies,  
valor into compliment, and men are only turned into  
tongue, and trim ones too. He is now as valiant as Hercules  
315 that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with  
wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

**BENEDICK****BEATRICE**

Talking with a man outside her bedroom window! A likely story!

**BENEDICK**

No, but Beatrice—

**BEATRICE**

Sweet Hero, she's been wronged, she's been slandered, she's been ruined.

**BENEDICK**

Beat—

**BEATRICE**

Princes and counts! Oh, of course, it was all so proper and ceremonious—they gave a truly princely testimony. He's a proper count, that Count Sugarplum, a sweet gentleman, for sure! Oh, if only I were a man! Or had a friend who would be a man for me! But there are no real men left. Their manliness has melted into pretty curtsies and fancy manners, and their bravery is spent on making clever compliments. All this conversing has turned men into tongues—and fancy ones, at that. The man who tells a lie and swears by it is now considered as brave as Hercules. I can't make myself a man by wishing I were, so as a woman I'll die, from 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

320 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  
325 comfort your cousin. I must say she is dead, and so, farewell.

*Exeunt*

*Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and SEXTON, in gowns; and the Watch, with CONRADE and BORACHIO*

**DOGBERRY**

Is our whole dissembly appeared?

Wait, good Beatrice. I swear by this hand that I love you.

**BEATRICE**

Don't just swear by it; put your hand to some use that will prove you love me.

**BENEDICK**

Do you honestly think, in your soul, that Claudio has wrongly accused [Hero](#)?

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

That's enough for me, then. I'll challenge him. I'll kiss your hand, and with that I leave you. I swear that Claudio will pay dearly for this. Keep me in your thoughts and go comfort your cousin. I'll go tell them that she's dead. Goodbye.

*They exit.*

## Act 4 Scene 2

*DOGBERRY, VERGES, the SEXTON (in his official gown), and the WATCHMEN enter, bringing CONRADE and BORACHIO.*

**DOGBERRY**

Is our whole [dissembly](#) here?

**VERGES**

Oh, a stool and a cushion for the Sexton.

*A stool is brought in. **SEXTON** sits*

**SEXTON**

Which be the malefactors?

**DOGBERRY**

Marry, that am I and my partner.

**VERGES**

5 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.

What is your name, friend?

**BORACHIO** and **CONRADE** come forward

10 What's your name, friend?

**BORACHIO**

Borachio.

**VERGES**

Oh, we need a stool and a cushion for the sexton.

*A stool is brought in. The **SEXTON** sits down.*

**SEXTON**

Which ones are the malefactors?

**DOGBERRY**

Sir, that would be me and my partner.

**VERGES**

Yes, yes, we've been **exhibitioned** to examine this case.

**SEXTON**

No, you've misunderstood me—where are the criminals whom I'm supposed to examine? Have them come in front of the master constable.

**DOGBERRY**

Yes, indeed, bring them before me.

**BORACHIO** and **CONRADE** come forward.

What's 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  
15 you serve God?

**CONRADE, BORACHIO**

Yea, sir, 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  
20 better than false knaves, and it will go near to be thought so  
shortly. How answer you for yourselves?

**CONRADE**

Marry, sir, we say we are 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.  
25 Sir, I say to you it is thought you are false knaves.

**BORACHIO**

**DOGBERRY**

Please, write down "Borachio."—And yours?

**CONRADE**

I'm a gentleman, sir, and my name is Conrade.

**DOGBERRY**

Write down "Master Gentleman Conrade."—Gentlemen, are you  
good Christians, and do you serve God?

**CONRADE, BORACHIO**

Yes, sir, we hope so.

**DOGBERRY**

Write down that they hope they serve God. Oh, and write "God"  
first—for God forbid we put these criminals before God!—  
Gentlemen, it's already been proven that you aren't much  
better than lying criminals, and soon we'll know almost for  
certain. How do you both plead?

**CONRADE**

Honestly, sir, we say that we are not criminals.

**DOGBERRY**

He's a marvelously witty fellow, no doubt, but I'll outmaneuver  
him.—Come over here; I'll whisper a word in your ear. Sir, I tell  
you we believe you're both lying criminals.

**BORACHIO**

Sir, I say to you we are none.

### **DOGBERRY**

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

### **SEXTON**

Master Constable, you go not the way to examine. You  
30 must call forth the watch that are their accusers.

### **DOGBERRY**

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

### **FIRST WATCHMAN**

This man said, sir, that Don John, the Prince's brother, was  
35 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  
40 thee.

Sir, I tell you that we are not.

### **DOGBERRY**

Well, okay.—I swear to God, both their stories match. Have you written that down, that they aren't criminals?

### **SEXTON**

Master Constable, you're going about this all wrong. First, you have to speak to the watchmen who accused them.

### **DOGBERRY**

Yes, good idea; that's the [eftest](#) way. Bring the watchmen forward. Gentlemen, I order you in the Prince's name to accuse these men.

### **FIRST WATCHMAN**

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

### **DOGBERRY**

Write down that Prince John is a villain. Why, that's flat-out [perjury](#) —to call a prince's brother a villain.

### **BORACHIO**

Master Constable—

### **DOGBERRY**

Be quiet, you. I swear, I don't like the look of you.

**SEXTON**

(to Watch) 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**

45 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**

50 (to BORACHIO) O villain! Thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this.

**SEXTON**

What else?

**FIRST WATCHMAN****SEXTON**

(to the watchmen) What else did you hear him say?

**SECOND WATCHMAN**

That Don John had given him a thousand pieces of gold for wrongfully accusing the Lady Hero.

**DOGBERRY**

That's burglary, that is.

**VERGES**

Yes, by God, that it is.

**SEXTON**

What else did you hear?

**FIRST WATCHMAN**

I heard that Count Claudio meant to disgrace Hero in front of the whole wedding party and refuse to marry her.

**DOGBERRY**

(to BORACHIO) Oh, you villain! You'll be condemned to everlasting [redemption](#) for this!

**SEXTON**

What else?

**FIRST WATCHMAN**

This is all.

### **SEXTON**

And this is more, masters, than you can deny. Prince John  
55 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**

60 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  
65 naughty varlet!

### **CONRADE**

Away! You are an ass, you are an ass!

That's all.

### **SEXTON**

(*to CONRADE and BORACHIO*) You can't deny this, gentlemen.  
This morning, Prince John secretly snuck out of Messina. Hero  
was accused exactly as the watchman described, and died on  
the spot from the grief.  
Master Constable, tie up these men and bring them to  
Leonato's. I'll get there first and tell him what we found out.

*He exits.*

### **DOGBERRY**

Come on, let's get them *opinioned*.

### **VERGES**

Let them be in the hands—

### **CONRADE**

Get off me, you fool!

### **DOGBERRY**

Honest to God, where's the sexton? He should write down that  
the Prince's officer was called a fool. Come on, tie them up. (*to*  
*CONRADE*) You're a nasty little stinker!

### **CONRADE**

Get away from me, you ass! You ass!

### **DOGBERRY**

Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years? Oh, that he were here to write me down an ass! But masters, remember that I am an ass, though it be not  
70 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  
75 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 everything handsome about him.—Bring him away.—Oh, that I had been writ down an ass!

*Exeunt*

*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

### **DOGBERRY**

How can you call me that? Don't you suspect my office? Don't you *suspect* my age? Oh, if only the sexton were here to write down that I'm an ass! Gentlemen, remember that I am an ass; even though it's not written down, don't forget that I'm an ass. Oh, you're a rotten bastard, you are. I'm a wise man and, what's more, I'm an officer of the law and, what's more, I'm a householder and, what's more, I'm as handsome a hunk of meat as any in Messina. And I know the law, damn you, and I'm rich enough, damn you, and I used to have more, but I still have two robes and lots of lovely things.—Take him away!—Oh, if only the sexton had recorded that I'm an ass!

*They all exit.*

## **Act 5 Scene 1**

*LEONATO and ANTONIO enter.*

### **ANTONIO**

If you keep on the way you've been going, you'll kill yourself. There's no point in adding to your grief.

### **LEONATO**

Stop advising me; your words pass through my ears like water through a sieve. Don't counsel me. Only someone who's been

5 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,  
10 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,  
In every lineament, branch, shape, and form.

15 If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,  
Bid sorrow wag, cry "hem" when he should groan,  
Patch grief with proverbs, make misfortune drunk  
With candle-wasters, bring him yet to me  
And I of him will gather patience.

20 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 which before  
Would give preceptial med'cine to rage,  
25 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

wronged as I have can comfort me. Find a father who loved his child as overwhelmingly as I loved Hero and ask him to be patient. Compare the length and width of that man's sadness against my own; match up all the complaints and strong emotions that run through our bodies. If a man who has suffered as I have gave me advice the way you do—smiling and stroking his beard, telling me to toss away my sorrow, giving speeches when he should be wailing with me, trying to heal my grief with little proverbs, spinning my head around with philosophy—then I would take his advice and be patient. But that man doesn't exist. You can try to comfort a man who feels a pain that you have never felt, but once you feel it too, your sober advice will also turn into passion. You can't treat madness with rules or bind up insanity with little silken threads or cure heartache with hot air or lighten agony with pat phrases.

Every man thinks it's his duty to advise those who are overwrought with sorrow to be patient. But no man is so moral or so strong that they can endure the same advice when they

30 To be so moral when he shall endure  
The like himself. 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,  
35 For there was never yet philosopher  
That could endure the toothache patiently,  
However they have writ the style of gods  
And made a push at chance and sufferance.

**ANTONIO**

Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself.  
40 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*

**ANTONIO**

45 Here comes the Prince and Claudio hastily.

themselves are grieving. So don't advise me. My sorrow is crying too loudly to hear what you have to say.

**ANTONIO**

Well then you're no better than a child.

**LEONATO**

Please, leave me alone. I intend to be flesh and blood, not airy philosophy, for there has never yet been a philosopher who could endure a toothache patiently, even though they all write as if they had risen above human suffering and misfortune.

**ANTONIO**

But don't take all that pain on yourself. Make sure the ones who have wronged you suffer too.

**LEONATO**

Now you're talking. I definitely will. In my soul, I believe Hero has been falsely accused. And I'll make sure that Claudio, the Prince, and anyone else who helped dishonor her know about it.

*DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO enter.*

**ANTONIO**

The Prince and Claudio are hurrying this way.

**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**

50 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.

**DON PEDRO**

Good evening, good evening.

**CLAUDIO**

Good day to both of you.

**LEONATO**

Listen, my lords—

**DON PEDRO**

We're in a bit of a hurry, Leonato.

**LEONATO**

A bit of a hurry, my lord! Well then, good bye, my lord. You're in a hurry, are you? Well then, don't bother.

**DON PEDRO**

Come on, don't quarrel with us, good old man.

**ANTONIO**

If it's fighting he is after, some of us here should run and hide.

**CLAUDIO**

Who has wronged him?

**LEONATO**

Indeed, you have wronged me, you liar. Don't bother trying to intimidate me by putting your hand on your sword. I'm not

55 I fear thee not.

**CLAUDIO**

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

**LEONATO**

Tush, tush, man, never fleer and jest at me.  
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool,  
60 As under privilege of age to brag  
What I have done being young, or what would do  
Were I not old. Know, Claudio, to thy head,  
Thou hast so wronged mine innocent child and me  
That I am forced to lay my reverence by,  
65 And with gray 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,  
70 Oh, in a tomb where never scandal slept  
Save this of hers, framed by thy villainy.

**CLAUDIO**

My villainy?

**LEONATO**

Thine, Claudio, thine, I say.

scared of you.

**CLAUDIO**

Curse my hand if it ever threatened an old man like you. Really,  
I had no intention of going for my sword.

**LEONATO**

Damn you, don't mock and sneer at me. I'm not a doddering  
old fool who brags about the things he did when he was  
young, and what he would do now if he weren't so old.  
Claudio, I'm telling you right to your face that you have  
wronged me and my innocent child. I am forced to lay aside  
my old man's respectability, and with my gray hairs and my  
aching body I challenge you to a duel. You have ruined my  
innocent child. Your slander has broken her heart, and now she  
lies buried with her ancestors in a tomb—ancestors who had  
never been tainted by scandal until you caused one with your  
wickedness.

**CLAUDIO**

My wickedness?

**LEONATO**

Yours, Claudio, yours, 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,  
75 Despite his nice fence and his active practice,  
His May of youth and bloom of lustihood.

**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.

**ANTONIO**

80 He shall kill two of us, and men indeed,  
But that's no matter. Let him kill one first.  
Win me and wear me! Let him answer me.—  
Come, follow me, boy. Come, sir boy, come, follow me.  
Sir boy, I'll whip you from your foining fence,  
85 Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

**LEONATO**

Brother—

**DON PEDRO**

You've got it wrong, old man.

**LEONATO**

My lord, if he dares to accept my challenge, I'll beat him and prove he's guilty. I'll beat him despite his fancy fencing techniques and all the practicing he does, despite his youth and manliness.

**CLAUDIO**

Not a chance! I'll have nothing to do with you.

**LEONATO**

You think you can get rid of me that easily? You killed my child. Take on someone your own size: if you kill me, boy, you'll have killed a man.

**ANTONIO**

He'll have to kill both of us, and indeed we're both men. But let him start off easy by killing one of us. Come on—kill me and brag about it! Let me at him. Come on, come after me, little boy. Come on and get me. Little man, I'll be right in your face with my sword. I will, as surely as I am a gentleman.

**LEONATO**

Brother—

**ANTONIO**

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

**LEONATO**

Brother Anthony—

**ANTONIO**

Hold you content. What, man! I know them, yea,  
And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple—  
95 Scrambling, outfacing, fashion-monging boys,  
That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander,  
Go anticy and show outward hideousness,  
And speak off half a dozen dang'rous words  
How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst,  
100 And this is all.

**LEONATO**

But brother Anthony—

**ANTONIO**

Come, 'tis no matter.  
Do not you meddle. Let me deal in this.

**DON PEDRO****ANTONIO**

Quiet. God knows I loved my niece, and now she's dead—  
slandered to death by cowards who would just as likely fight a  
real man as I would grab a poisonous snake by the tongue.  
Boys, fools, braggars, scoundrels, babies!

**LEONATO**

Brother Anthony—

**ANTONIO**

Hold your peace. I know their kind, I know them exactly.  
They're petulant, disrespectful, fashion-crazy boys who lie and  
cheat and mock, defame and slander. They walk around in  
outlandish outfits, pretending to be brave and wild and saying  
a few inflammatory things about how they'll hurt their enemies  
—and that's all they do.

**LEONATO**

But brother Anthony—

**ANTONIO**

Don't, it's no big deal. Don't bother with it. Let me deal with this.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**ANTONIO**

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

*Exeunt LEONATO and ANTONIO*

*Enter BENEDICK*

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

Now, Signior, what news?

**BENEDICK**

Gentlemen, we won't stay here and anger you further. I'm sorry about your daughter's death, but I swear our accusations were true, and backed up with proof.

**LEONATO**

My lord, my lord—

**DON PEDRO**

I don't want to hear any more about it.

**LEONATO**

No? Come on, brother! I'm determined to be heard by someone.

**ANTONIO**

And you will be, or some people here will suffer for it.

*LEONATO and ANTONIO exit.*

**BENEDICK** enters.

**DON PEDRO**

Look, here comes just the man we were looking for.

**CLAUDIO**

What's up, mister?

**BENEDICK**

(to DON PEDRO) Good day, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

Welcome, Signior. You are almost come to part almost a  
115 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 think'st thou? Had we fought, I doubt we should have been too young for them.

**BENEDICK**

120 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**

125 It is in my scabbard. Shall I draw it?

**DON PEDRO**

Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

(to DON PEDRO) Hello, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

Welcome, sir. You just missed a fight that was barely avoided.

**CLAUDIO**

We were about to have our noses snapped off by two old men with no teeth.

**DON PEDRO**

Leonato and his brother. What do you think? I think if we had fought, we would have proven too young and strong for them after all.

**BENEDICK**

There's no bravery in an unfair fight. I've been looking for you two.

**CLAUDIO**

We've been looking for you, too. We're really depressed. Will you tell us some jokes to beat our sadness away?

**BENEDICK**

My wit's in my [scabbard](#). Should I unsheathe it?

**DON PEDRO**

You wear your wit next to you?

**CLAUDIO**

Never any did so, though very many have been beside their wit. I will bid thee draw, as we do the minstrels: draw to pleasure us.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

(to BENEDICK) What, courage, man! What though care killed a cat? Thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.

**BENEDICK**

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

**CLAUDIO**

(to DON PEDRO) Nay, then, give him another staff. This last was broke 'cross.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO****CLAUDIO**

No one carries their wit next to them, though some people are [beside their wit](#). Come on, draw your wit, just as musicians draw their bows across the instruments: draw for our pleasure.

**DON PEDRO**

Look: Benedick is so pale—are you sick, or angry?

**CLAUDIO**

(to BENEDICK) Buck up, man! [Care](#) may have killed the cat, but you are strong enough to kill care. Lighten up.

**BENEDICK**

Sir, don't even try to beat me in a battle of wits. I'll meet all your attacks, even if you come charging at me with a lance at full gallop. Choose another tack.

**CLAUDIO**

(to DON PEDRO) That was poor, Benedick! Give him another lance—that last one got broken in half.

**DON PEDRO**

Lord, he seems to be getting paler by the minute. I think he really is angry.

**CLAUDIO**

140 If he be, he knows how to turn his girdle.

**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  
145 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?

**CLAUDIO**

150 I' faith, I thank him. He hath bid me to a calf's head and a capon, the which if I do not carve most curiously, say my knife's naught. Shall I not find a woodcock too?

**BENEDICK**

If he is, that's his problem.

**BENEDICK**

Can I have a word with you privately?

**CLAUDIO**

God forbid he wants to challenge me!

**BENEDICK**

(speaking so that only CLAUDIO can hear) You are a villain. I'm not kidding. I challenge you however you like—with whatever weapons you choose, and whenever you want. Meet this challenge, or I'll say that you're a coward. You've killed an innocent woman, and you're going to pay dearly for her death. What do you say?

**CLAUDIO**

I'll be there, and I'll enjoy myself.

**DON PEDRO**

What, are we having a feast?

**CLAUDIO**

Yes, we are. He has invited me to have a [calf's head and a capon](#). He says if I don't carve them up and serve them elegantly, he'll declare I have no skills with a knife. Should I go get us a woodcock, too?

**BENEDICK**

Sir, your wit ambles well; it goes easily.

**DON PEDRO**

I'll tell thee how Beatrice praised thy wit he other day. I  
155 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, "the gentleman is wise."  
"Certain," said she, "a wise gentleman." "Nay," said I, "he  
160 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,  
165 thou wast the proper'st 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**

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

Sir, you have a very slow, rambling wit.

**DON PEDRO**

Benedick, Beatrice praised your wit the other day. I said you  
had a fine wit. "True," she said, "a fine little one." "No," I said, "a  
huge wit." "Right," she said, "a hugely awful one." "No," I said, "he  
has a good wit." "Exactly," she said, "it's good and mild; it  
doesn't hurt anyone." "No," I said, "Benedick is wise." "He is  
certainly," she said, "[a wise gentleman](#)." "No," I said, "he can  
speak many languages:" "I can believe that," she said, "because  
he swore one thing to me on Monday night and took it back on  
Tuesday morning. He spoke two languages then." She turned  
all your virtues into vices just about an hour ago. But in the end  
she sighed and admitted you were the handsomest man in  
Italy.

**CLAUDIO**

She cried a lot at that, and said she didn't care.

**DON PEDRO**

That she did. And yet for all that, if she didn't hate him to death,  
she'd love him to death. Leonato's daughter had told us  
everything.

**CLAUDIO**

Absolutely everything. And, moreover, God saw Benedick  
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  
<sup>175</sup> 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  
<sup>180</sup> 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**

<sup>185</sup> He is in earnest.

**CLAUDIO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

But when exactly will we see Benedick married?

**CLAUDIO**

Yes, with the sign underneath him that says: "Here lives  
Benedick the married man"?

**BENEDICK**

Goodbye, boy. You know what I intend. I'll leave you now to  
chatter and gossip like an old woman. The wit you flaunt is like  
a blunt sword—it can't hurt anyone, thank God.—My lord, I  
thank you for your many kindnesses. I'm leaving your court  
now.

Your brother Don John the Bastard has run away from Messina.  
The three of you have killed a sweet, innocent woman. Lord  
Babyface over there will meet me in a duel, and good luck to  
him then.

*He exits.*

**DON PEDRO**

He's serious.

**CLAUDIO**

Very serious, and I'm sure it's because of Beatrice.

**DON PEDRO**

And hath challenged thee?

**CLAUDIO**

Most sincerely.

**DON PEDRO**

190 What a pretty thing man is when he goes in his doublet and hose and leaves off his wit!

**CLAUDIO**

He is then a giant to an ape; but then is an ape a doctor to such a man.

**DON PEDRO**

But soft you, let me be. Pluck up, my heart, and be sad. Did 195 he not say my brother was fled?

*Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the Watch, 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! Borachio one!

**DON PEDRO**

And he challenged you to a duel?

**CLAUDIO**

He did, very sincerely.

**DON PEDRO**

What a strange sight—a man who has put on all his fancy clothes but forgotten his brain at home!

**CLAUDIO**

A guy like that is bigger than an ape, but the ape could be his doctor, it's so much smarter.

**DON PEDRO**

But wait a minute. Let me gather my wits and get serious here. Didn't he say my brother has run away?

*DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the WATCHMEN enter with CONRADE and BORACHIO.*

**DOGBERRY**

Come on, you. If they let you off, then we'll have to assume that Lady Justice has lost all her power. Since you are a lying hypocrite, we must look after you.

**DON PEDRO**

What's this? Two of my brother's men, all tied up! And Borachio is one of them!

**CLAUDIO**

200 Harken after their offense, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

Officers, what offense have these men done?

**DOGBERRY**

Marry, sir, they have committed false report; moreover, they have spoken untruths; secondarily, they are slanders; sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady; thirdly, they have 205 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**

210 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

**CLAUDIO**

Find out what they're being held for.

**DON PEDRO**

Officers, what crime have these men committed?

**DOGBERRY**

Well sir, they've lied; moreover, they have said things that were not true; secondarily, they are slanderers; sixth and lastly, they have falsely accused a lady; thirdly, they have confirmed things that did not in fact happen; and, in conclusion, they are lying scoundrels.

**DON PEDRO**

First, I ask you what they've done; thirdly, I ask you what offense they're charged with; sixth and lastly, I ask you why they've been committed here; and, in conclusion, I ask what they're accused of.

**CLAUDIO**

Nicely done, and organized in just the way he'll understand. My God, he manages to say the same thing six different ways.

**DON PEDRO**

(to BORACHIO and CONRADE) What have you done, gentlemen? This educated constable is too brilliant for me to understand. What is your crime?

215 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  
220 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  
225 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

230 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.

### BORACHIO

Prince, I won't wait for my trial: listen to my story, and let the count kill me now. I tricked your own eyes. These stupid fools have uncovered what you in all your wisdom could not. They heard me confess to Conrade how Don John, your brother, prompted me to slander Hero—how you came to the orchard and saw me making sexual advances toward Margaret, who was disguised as Hero; how you disgraced Hero when you should have married her. They've recorded my crimes, and I would rather die than have to retell this shameful story. The lady has died because of the false accusations of me and my master. I desire nothing now but a criminal's punishment.

### DON PEDRO

(to CLAUDIO) Doesn't this make your blood run cold?

### CLAUDIO

His words are like poison to me.

### DON PEDRO

(to BORACHIO) But did my brother prompt you to do all this?

### BORACHIO

Yes, and paid me well for doing it.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

235 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  
240 serve, that I am an ass.

**VERGES**

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

*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,  
245 I may avoid him. Which of these is he?

**BORACHIO**

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

**DON PEDRO**

He is made of treachery, and has run away to avoid his crimes.

**CLAUDIO**

Sweet Hero; when I imagine you now, you seem as beautiful as  
you did when I first loved you.

**DOGBERRY**

Come, take away the [plaintiffs](#). By now the sexton will have  
reformed Signior Leonato of the matter. *(to CLAUDIO and DON  
PEDRO)* And, gentlemen, please do not forget to specify,  
whenever it is convenient, that I am an ass.

**VERGES**

Here comes Master Signior Leonato with the sexton.

*LEONATO and ANTONIO enter with the SEXTON.*

**LEONATO**

Which one of them did it? Let me see what he looks like, so  
when I see another man who resembles him, I'll know to avoid  
him. Which one is it?

**BORACHIO**

If you want to see your deceiver, then look at 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.  
250 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**

255 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,  
260 And yet to satisfy this good old man  
I would bend under any heavy weight  
That he'll enjoin me to.

**LEONATO**

Are you the slave who, with your slanderous words, killed my  
innocent child?

**BORACHIO**

Yes, I am the one.

**LEONATO**

No, villain, but you didn't work alone. (*indicating CLAUDIO and DON PEDRO*) For here are two noblemen —the third has run away—who helped you. (*to CLAUDIO and DON PEDRO*) Thank you, gentlemen, for my daughter's death. Make a note of it on your long lists of righteous and worthy deeds. It was very brave of you.

**CLAUDIO**

I don't know how to ask you for forgiveness, but I have to say something. Choose your revenge. Punish me through any means you can devise, though I sinned by mistake.

**DON PEDRO**

Me too—but to satisfy this good old man, I too will bear any punishment he gives me.

**LEONATO**

I cannot bid you bid my daughter live—

That were impossible—but, I pray you both,

265 Possess the people in Messina here

How innocent she died. And if your love

Can labor ought in sad invention,

Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb

And sing it to her bones. Sing it tonight.

270 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.

275 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**

280 Tomorrow then I will expect your coming.

Tonight I take my leave. This naughty man

Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,

Who I believe was packed in all this wrong,

**LEONATO**

I can't ask you to make my daughter live—that's impossible—

but I beg you both to tell the people of Messina that she was innocent when she died. And if your love can produce

something from its sadness, write a poem for her; hang it on her grave and sing it to her bones. Sing it tonight. Then come to my house tomorrow morning, and since you couldn't be my son-in-law, be my nephew instead. My brother has a daughter

who looks exactly like Hero; this girl is heir to both our estates. Marry her as you should have married her cousin, and I will let my revenge die.

**CLAUDIO**

Oh, noble sir! Your overwhelming kindness makes me weep. I

willingly accept your offer and put my future in your hands.

**LEONATO**

I will see you tomorrow, then. Now I have to leave. This wicked man will be brought face to face with Margaret, who I believe was hired by Don John to take part in this plot.

Hired to it by your brother.

### BORACHIO

285 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

(to LEONATO) Moreover, sir, which indeed is not under  
290 white and black, this plaintiff here, the offender, did call me  
ass. I beseech you, let it be remembered in his punishment.  
And also the watch heard them talk of one Deformed. They  
say he wears a key in his ear and a lock hanging by it and  
borrows money in God's name, the which he hath used so  
295 long and never paid that now men grow hard-hearted and  
will lend nothing for God's sake. Pray you, examine him  
upon that point.

### LEONATO

I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

### DOGBERRY

Your worship speaks like a most thankful and reverent  
300 youth, and I praise God for you.

### LEONATO

### BORACHIO

No, she wasn't, and she didn't know anything about it. She has  
always been honest and good.

### DOGBERRY

(to LEONATO) Also, sir, this hasn't been put down in writing, but  
I should let you know that this [plaintiff](#) here, the criminal, did in  
fact call me an ass. Please remember that when you're  
punishing him. Plus, the watchmen heard the criminals talking  
about some man named [Deformed](#). They say that he has an  
earring made out of a key, with a lock hanging from it.  
Apparently, he borrows money from people in the name of  
God and then never pays it back, which angers everyone so  
much that they now refuse to fund anything in the name of  
God. Make sure you ask him about this.

### LEONATO

Thank you for all your efforts.

### DOGBERRY

You speak like a very thankful and respectful boy, and may  
God bless 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  
305 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**

310 Until tomorrow morning, lords, farewell.

**ANTONIO**

Farewell, my lords. We look for you tomorrow.

**DON PEDRO**

We will not fail.

**CLAUDIO**

Tonight I'll mourn with Hero.

(giving DOGBERRY money) This is for your trouble.

**DOGBERRY**

God save the charitable organization!

**LEONATO**

Go, you're relieved of your duty. Thank you.

**DOGBERRY**

I leave a slimy bastard with you, your Worship, for you to  
punish and make an example of. God bless your Worship! I  
wish you well. I hope that God restores you to health. I will  
humbly let you go now, God [prohibiting](#) we will meet again in  
the future.—Come on, man.

*DOGBERRY and VERGES exit.*

**LEONATO**

I'll see you tomorrow morning, gentlemen.

**ANTONIO**

Goodbye, gentlemen. We'll see you tomorrow.

**DON PEDRO**

We'll be there.

**CLAUDIO**

I will mourn Hero tonight.

**LEONATO**

(to the Watch)

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

*Exeunt*

Enter **BENEDICK** and **MARGARET**

**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  
5 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.

**LEONATO**

(to the watchmen) Bring these criminals with us. We'll go talk to  
Margaret, to see how she got involved with this worthless man.

*They all exit.*

## Act 5 Scene 2

**BENEDICK** and **MARGARET** enter.

**BENEDICK**

Please Margaret, help me write this poem for Beatrice.

**MARGARET**

Afterward, will you write a sonnet for me, praising my beauty?

**BENEDICK**

I'll write you such a glorious sonnet, Margaret, that no man will  
ever be able to come over it. You certainly deserve it.

**MARGARET**

No man will come [over me](#)! What a life that would be!

**BENEDICK**

Your wit is as quick as a greyhound's jaws—it catches whatever  
it goes after.

**MARGARET**

And yours as blunt as the fencer's foils, which hit but hurt  
10 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.

**BENEDICK**

If you use them, Margaret, you must put in the pikes with  
15 a vice, and they are dangerous weapons for maids.

**MARGARET**

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

**BENEDICK**

And therefore will come.

*Exit MARGARET*

(sings)

*The god of love,  
That sits above,*

**MARGARET**

And your wit is as blunt as a practice sword, with its dull tip; it hits people but doesn't hurt them.

**BENEDICK**

It's just that my wit is very gentlemanly, Margaret, and refuses to hurt a woman. Now please, tell Beatrice to come out. I admit defeat; I give you the *bucklers*.

**MARGARET**

No, you should give a woman your sword—we have our own *bucklers*!

**BENEDICK**

Watch out, though, Margaret—virgins shouldn't be brandishing their bucklers around.

**MARGARET**

I'll go get Beatrice for you, who can walk here by herself—she has legs.

**BENEDICK**

So that means she'll come.

*MARGARET exits.*

(singing)

*The god of love  
He sits in heaven 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 bookful 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.

*And he knows me, he knows me*

*He knows how much pity I deserve—*

I'm really a pitiful singer. But as a lover, well, that's another story. Take [Leander](#), [Troilus](#), or an entire book's worth of those legendary lover-boys, whose names sound so smooth and nice in a line of verse—not one of them has been driven as crazy by love as I have been. But I can't prove it in a poem. I have tried. I can't think of any rhyme for "lady" but "baby," which is a childish rhyme. The only rhyme for "scorn" I can come up with is "[horn](#)" —a bit off for a love poem. Nothing rhymes with "school" but "fool," and that's a ridiculous jingle. These are all very unpromising line endings. No, I wasn't destined to be a poet, and I can't woo a lady with pretty words.

**Enter BEATRICE**

30 Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

**BEATRICE**

Yea, Signior, and depart when you bid me.

**BENEDICK**

Oh , 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  
35 passed between you and Claudio.

**BEATRICE enters.**

Beatrice, have you come because I called for you?

**BEATRICE**

Yes, sir, and I'll leave when you ask me to.

**BENEDICK**

Oh, well, stay till then!

**BEATRICE**

There—you said "then." So I'll leave now. But before I go, let me get what I came for. What happened 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 unkissed.

**BENEDICK**

40 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  
45 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**

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

**BEATRICE****BENEDICK**

I spoke angry, foul words to him, and with that I will kiss you.

**BEATRICE**

If you had foul words in your mouth, then your breath must be foul, and foul breath is nauseating. Thus, I'll leave without being kissed.

**BENEDICK**

Your wit is so forceful, it frightens the very meaning out of your words. But I will tell you this very plainly: I have challenged Claudio, and either he'll accept the challenge or admit he's a coward. Now, tell me—which of my bad qualities did you fall in love with first?

**BEATRICE**

With all of them at once: they work together to create such an entirely evil person that no good ever manages to enter the mix. But tell me—which of my good qualities first made you suffer love for me?

**BENEDICK**

Suffer love! That's a good way of putting it. I do suffer love, because I love you 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 riend hates.

**BENEDICK**

55 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**

An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that lived in the lime of good neighbors. If a man do not erect in this age his own  
60 tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow weeps.

**BEATRICE**

And how long is that, think you?

**BENEDICK**

Question: why, an hour in clamor and a quarter in rheum. Therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if Don Worm,  
65 his conscience, find no impediment to the contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am to myself. So much for praising myself, who, I myself will bear witness, is praiseworthy. An now tell me, how doth your cousin?

You love me in spite of your heart, I think. If you spite your heart for my sake, then I will spite it for yours. I will never love the thing my friend hates.

**BENEDICK**

You and I are too wise to woo each other peacefully.

**BEATRICE**

It's said that no truly wise man will praise himself. If you say that you are wise, it's likely you're not.

**BENEDICK**

That's an old proverb, Beatrice, from the time when neighbors praised each other. In this day and age, if a man doesn't erect his own monument before he dies, he won't be remembered past the funeral bell's ringing and his widow's crying.

**BEATRICE**

Exactly how long is that, do you think?

**BENEDICK**

About an hour for the ringing and fifteen minutes for the crying. That's why it's better for wise men to trumpet their own virtues, like I do. That's why I praise myself, who—if I do say so myself—is quite praiseworthy. But tell me, how is your cousin?

**BEATRICE**

Very ill.

**BENEDICK**

70 And how do you?

**BEATRICE**

Very ill, too.

**BENEDICK**

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

*Enter URSULA*

**URSULA**

Madam, you must come to your uncle. Yonder's old coil at  
75 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 fled and gone. Will you  
come presently?

*Exit*

**BEATRICE**

Will you go hear this news, Signior?

**BENEDICK**

80 I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy

**BEATRICE**

She's very sick.

**BENEDICK**

And how are you?

**BEATRICE**

I'm very sick, too.

**BENEDICK**

Have faith, love me, and you will get better. And that's where I'll  
end, because someone is hurrying this way.

**URSULA** enters.

**URSULA**

Madam, you have to go to your uncle's. There's a huge racket  
going on there. It's been proven that Lady Hero is innocent,  
that the Prince and Claudio have been utterly deceived, and  
that Don John—who has run away—is the source of all the  
trouble. Will you come immediately?

*She exits.*

**BEATRICE**

Will you come with me to hear this news, sir?

**BENEDICK**

eyes—and moreover, I will go with thee to thy uncle's.

*Exeunt*

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, three or four LORDS with tapers, and musicians*

**CLAUDIO**

Is this the monument of Leonato?

**FIRST LORD**

It is, my lord.

**CLAUDIO**

(reading an epitaph)

Done to death by slanderous tongues

Was the Hero that here lies.

Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,

Gives her fame which never dies.

So the life that died with shame

Lives in death with glorious fame.

*Hangs the scroll*

<sup>10</sup> Hang thou there upon the tomb,  
Praising her when I am dumb.

I will live in your heart, die in your lap, and be buried in your eyes—and, what's more, I will go with you to your uncle's.

*They exit.*

## Act 5 Scene 3

*DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO enter with three or four LORDS carrying candles, and musicians.*

**CLAUDIO**

Is this the family tomb of Leonato?

**FIRST LORD**

It is, my lord.

**CLAUDIO**

(reading an epitaph)

Here lies Hero,

The heroic maiden killed by slanderous words.

To repay her for her troubles, Death

Gives her undying fame.

So the life that died with shame

Lives on with fame.

(he hangs the scroll)

This epitaph will hang here forever,  
Continuing to praise Hero after I die.

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

(Song)

*Pardon, goddess of the night,*

*Those that slew thy virgin knight,*

*For the which with songs of woe*

*Round about her tomb they go.*

*Midnight, assist our moan.*

*Help us to sigh and groan*

*Heavily, heavily.*

*Graves, yawn and yield your dead,*

*Till death be utterèd,*

*Heavily, heavily.*

Now start the music, and sing the solemn hymn.

(singing)

*Please pardon, goddess of the night,*

*The men who killed your virgin knight .*

*These men now walk around her tomb,*

*Singing songs of woe.*

*Oh, midnight, join our moaning*

*Help us with our sighs and groaning*

*Heavily, heavily.*

*Graves, open up and release your corpses*

*Until Hero's death is fully mourned*

*Heavily, heavily.*

## **CLAUDIO**

Now, unto thy bones good night!

15 Yearly will I do this rite.

## **DON PEDRO**

Good Morrow, masters. Put your torches out.

The wolves have preyed, and look, the gentle day,

Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about

Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.

20 Thanks to you all, and leave us. Fare you well.

## **CLAUDIO**

Good Morrow, masters. Each his several way.

## **CLAUDIO**

Now I say good night to your bones, Hero. I will perform this ceremony every year.

## **DON PEDRO**

Good morning, gentlemen. Put out your torches. The wolves have finished preying for the night, and look—the gentle dawn is rising, dappling the sleepy eastern sky with spots of light.

## **CLAUDIO**

Good morning, gentlemen. We go our separate ways.

*Exeunt LORDS and Musicians*

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

And Hymen now with luckier issue speed 's  
25 Than this for whom we rendered up this woe.

*Exeunt*

*LORDS and musicians exit*

**DON PEDRO**

Come, let's go and change our clothes. Then we'll visit  
Leonato's.

**CLAUDIO**

And I hope [Hymen](#) will give us better luck than Hero got.

*They all exit.*

## Act 5 Scene 4

*Enter LEONATO,ANTONIO, BENEDICK,BEATRICE,  
MARGARET,URSULA, FRIAR FRANCIS, and HERO*

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

**LEONATO**

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

**ANTONIO**

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

*LEONATO, ANTONIO,BENEDICK, BEATRICE,MARGARET,  
URSULA, FRIAR FRANCIS, and HERO enter.*

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Didn't I tell you she was innocent?

**LEONATO**

And the Prince and Claudio, who accused her, are innocent as  
well, because they were deceived by Don John. Margaret is  
partially guilty, although our investigation shows that she acted  
unintentionally.

**ANTONIO**

Well, I'm glad that everything has been sorted out.

**BENEDICK**

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

**LEONATO**

10 Well, daughter, and you gentlewomen all,  
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,  
And when I send for you, come hither masked.  
The Prince and Claudio promised by this hour  
To visit me.—You know your office, brother.  
15 You must be father to your brother's daughter,  
And give her to young Claudio.

*Exeunt Ladies*

**ANTONIO**

Which I will do with confirmed countenance.

**BENEDICK**

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

To do what, Signior?

**BENEDICK**

20 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.

**BENEDICK**

Me too—otherwise I would have had to duel with Claudio.

**LEONATO**

Hero, you and the other women should all retreat to a room.  
When I send for you, come out wearing masks. The Prince and  
Claudio are supposed to be here by now.—You know your job,  
brother. You have to pretend to be your niece's father, and give  
her away to Claudio.

*The ladies exit.*

**ANTONIO**

I'll do that, without giving away our secret.

**BENEDICK**

Friar, I think I need a favor from you.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

What do you need me to do?

**BENEDICK**

To tie me up, or to undo me: one or the other. Signior Leonato,  
the truth is, your niece likes me.

**LEONATO**

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

**BENEDICK**

And I do with an eye of love requite her.

**LEONATO**

25 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  
30 In the state of honorable marriage—  
In which, good Friar, I shall desire your help.

**LEONATO**

My heart is with your liking.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

And my help.  
Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

*Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, and two or three others*

**DON PEDRO**

Good morrow to this fair assembly.

**LEONATO**

She sees you with the eyes my daughter lent her, it's true.

**BENEDICK**

And I see her also through the eyes of love.

**LEONATO**

And those eyes were endowed with sight by Claudio, the  
Prince, and me. But what did you want?

**BENEDICK**

Sir, I'm puzzled by what you just said. But as far as what I want  
—I want you to give Beatrice and me your blessing to be  
married. That, good Friar, is where you come in.

**LEONATO**

Our wishes are aligned, then: I give you my blessing.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

And I'll help you. Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

*DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO enter with two or three others.*

**DON PEDRO**

Good morning to all these lovely people.

**LEONATO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

I'll hold my mind were she an Ethiope.

**LEONATO**

Call her forth, brother. Here's the friar ready.

*Exit ANTONIO*

**DON PEDRO**

40 Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what's the matter  
That you have such a February face,  
So full of frost, of storm and cloudiness?

**CLAUDIO**

I think he thinks upon the savage bull.  
Tush, fear not, man. We'll tip thy horns with gold,  
45 And all Europa shall rejoice at thee  
As once Europa did at lusty Jove  
When he would play the noble beast in love.

**BENEDICK**

Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low,  
And some such strange bull leapt your father's cow

**LEONATO**

Good morning, Prince; good morning, Claudio. We're waiting here for you. Are you still set on marrying my brother's daughter?

**CLAUDIO**

I wouldn't change my mind even if she were [black-skinned](#).

**LEONATO**

Bring her out, brother. The friar's ready.

*ANTONIO exits.*

**DON PEDRO**

Good morning, Benedick. What's the matter? Your face looks like the month of February—full of frost, storms, and cloudiness.

**CLAUDIO**

I think he's nervous—he's about to become the savage bull who got domesticated. Oh, don't worry about it—we'll dip your [horns](#) in gold and make you pretty, and you'll delight all of Europe, just like Jove delighted Europa when *he* was a bull.

**BENEDICK**

[Jove](#) came to earth lowing for love. A strange bull just like him mated with one of your father's cows and, voilà, gave birth to a

50 And got a calf in that same noble feat  
Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.

**CLAUDIO**

For this I owe you. Here comes other reck'nings.

*Enter ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, MARGARET, URSULA, the ladies masked*

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

**LEONATO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

55 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.  
I am your husband, if you like of me.

**HERO**

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

calf like you—you bleat the same as him.

**CLAUDIO**

I'll get you for that one. But here are other matters to be dealt with.

*ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, MARGARET, URSULA enter. The ladies wear masks.*

Which is the lady I'm supposed to marry?

**LEONATO**

This one, and I will give her to you.

**CLAUDIO**

Well, then she's the one for me. Sweetheart, let me see your face.

**LEONATO**

No, you can't do that until you take her hand and, in front of this friar, swear to marry her.

**CLAUDIO**

(to HERO) Give me your hand. With the friar as my witness, I am your husband, if you want me.

**HERO**

And when you loved, you were my other husband.

(She unmasks)

### **CLAUDIO**

Another Hero!

### **HERO**

Nothing certainer.

One Hero died defiled, but I do live,

65 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

70 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?

And when I lived, I was your other wife. And when you loved me, you were my other husband.(she removes her mask)

### **CLAUDIO**

It's another Hero!

### **HERO**

Exactly right. One Hero died when she was slandered, but I am alive. And as surely as I am alive, I am a virgin.

### **DON PEDRO**

It's the former Hero! The Hero that died!

### **LEONATO**

She was only dead, my lord, as long as her slander lived.

### **FRIAR FRANCIS**

I can confirm that all these shocking things are true. After the wedding ceremony, I'll tell you all about beautiful Hero's "death." In the meantime, just accept all these wonderful things, and let's head to the chapel.

### **BENEDICK**

Wait a moment, Friar. Which one of you is Beatrice?

### **BEATRICE**

(taking off her mask) That's my name. What do you want?

**BENEDICK**

75 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**

80 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?

**BENEDICK**

Do you love me?

**BEATRICE**

No, no more than is reasonable.

**BENEDICK**

Well then, your uncle and the Prince and Claudio have been  
deceived. They swore you did.

**BEATRICE**

Do you love me?

**BENEDICK**

Truly, no—no more than is reasonable.

**BEATRICE**

Well then, Margaret, Ursula, and my cousin have been very  
much deceived, for they swore you did.

**BENEDICK**

They swore that you were sick with love for me.

**BEATRICE**

They swore that you were nearly dead with love for me.

**BENEDICK**

Oh, well. So you don't love me?

**BEATRICE**

85 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,

90 Fashioned to Beatrice.

(Shows a paper)

**HERO**

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

(Shows a paper)

**BENEDICK**

95 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.

**BEATRICE**

No, I don't—except as a friend.

**LEONATO**

Come on, niece, I'm sure you love him.

**CLAUDIO**

And I'll swear that he loves her. Here's a clumsy sonnet, in  
Benedick's handwriting, dedicated to Beatrice. (*holding up a  
piece of paper*)

**HERO**

And here's another poem, which I stole from my cousin's  
pocket—in her handwriting and all about her adoration for  
Benedick. (*holding up a piece of paper*)

**BENEDICK**

What a miracle! Our handwriting gives away our hearts. Come  
on, I'll take you, but honestly I'm only doing it out of pity.

**BEATRICE**

I won't say no to you, but let it be known that I'm only doing  
this after a lot of persuasion and to save your life —I hear you  
were quickly wasting away without me.

**BENEDICK**

100 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 105 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 110 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 wouldest have denied Beatrice, that I might have cudgeled thee out of thy single life, to make thee a double-dealer, which out of question, thou wilt be, if my 115 cousin do not look exceedingly narrowly to thee.

**BENEDICK****BENEDICK**

Oh, shut up! I'll stop your mouth with a kiss.

*They kiss.*

**DON PEDRO**

How does it feel to be Benedick the Married Man?

**BENEDICK**

I'll tell you what, Prince: a whole university full of wisecrackers couldn't change my mood today. You think I care what I'm called? Well, I don't. If a man is always afraid of what others think, he won't even dare to dress nicely, because he'll be afraid people will talk about him. In short, since I intend to get married, I won't hear anyone say a bad thing about it. So don't go making fun of me for what I said before. Man is a giddy, flighty thing: that's my conclusion. And Claudio—though I'm sure I would have beaten you in our duel—since you're likely to become my relative, I'll let you go, unbruised, and love my cousin Hero.

**CLAUDIO**

I was sort of hoping you would say no to Beatrice, so that I could have smacked you out of your single life and made you a [double dealer](#). Which you'll probably turn into anyway, if my cousin Beatrice doesn't keep you on a short leash.

**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**

120 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 a MESSENGER*

**MESSENGER**

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

**BENEDICK**

125 (to DON PEDRO) Think not on him till tomorrow. I'll devise thee brave punishments for him.—Strike up, pipers.

*Dance*

*Exeunt*

Come on, we're all friends. Let's do a dance, and have some fun, before we're wed.

**LEONATO**

We'll dance after the wedding.

**BENEDICK**

No, before! Musicians, play us a song.—Prince, you look sad. You should get a wife! Your royal staff would be so much more impressive if it were topped off by a [horn](#).

*A MESSENGER enters.*

**MESSENGER**

(to DON PEDRO) My lord, your brother John was caught by armed soldiers as he fled. He's been brought back to Messina.

**BENEDICK**

(to DON PEDRO) Leave him till tomorrow. I'll think of some awful punishment for him. Play on, musicians!

*They all dance.*

*They all exit.*