

Much Ado About Nothing

ACT I

SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a MESSENGER

LEONATO

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

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

MESSENGER

But few of any sort, and none of name.

LEONATO

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

MESSENGER

Much deserved on his part and equally remembered by Don Pedro: he hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO

My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

Alas! he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one: so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm, let him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

Don Pedro is approached.

Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK.

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace.

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet living?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, 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.

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn.

To DON JOHN

Let me bid you welcome, my lord: being reconciled to the prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

DON JOHN

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

LEONATO

Please it your grace lead on?

DON PEDRO

Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK

I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO

Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

CLAUDIO

Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK

Yea, and a case to put it into.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

Is't come to this? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Look Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

I would your grace would constrain me to tell.

DON PEDRO

I charge thee on thy allegiance.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

If this were so, so were it uttered.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

DON PEDRO

By my troth, I speak my thought.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO

That she is worthy, I know.

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: but that I will have a recheat winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an invisible baldric, all women shall pardon me. I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord, not with love.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

I look for an earthquake too, then.

DON PEDRO

Well, you temporize with the hours. In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's: commend me to him and tell him I will not fail him at supper.

BENEDICK

I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassage; 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,
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn
Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

CLAUDIO

Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

O, my lord,
When you went onward on this ended action,
I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am return'd and that war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars.

DON PEDRO

Thou wilt be like a lover presently
And tire the hearer with a book of words.
If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
And I will break with her and with her father,
And thou shalt have her.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

I know we shall have revelling to-night:
I will assume thy part in some disguise
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart
And take her hearing prisoner with the force
And strong encounter of my amorous tale:

Then after to her father will I break;
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.

Exeunt

SCENE II. A room in LEONATO's house.

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIA, meeting

LEONATO

How now, sister!

ANTONIA

I can tell you strange news that you yet dreamt not of. The prince and Count Claudio, walking in mine orchard, were thus much overheard by a man of mine: the prince discovered to Claudio that he loved my niece your daughter and meant to acknowledge it this night in a dance: 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?

ANTONIA

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

LEONATO

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

Exeunt

SCENE III. The same.

Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE

CONRADE

What the good-year, my lord! why are you thus out of measure sad?

DON JOHN

There is no measure in the occasion that breeds; therefore the sadness is without limit.

CONRADE

You should hear reason.

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

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

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

CONRADE
Yea, but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace.

DON JOHN
It better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any: in this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking: in the meantime let me be that I am and seek not to alter me.

CONRADE
Can you make no use of your discontent?

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

Enter BORACHIO

What news, Borachio?

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

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

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

DON JOHN
Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO
Even he.

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

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

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

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

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

CONRADE
To the death, my lord.

DON JOHN
Let us to the great supper: their cheer is the greater that I am subdued.

Exeunt

ACT II

SCENE I. A hall in LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, ANTONIA, HERO, BEATRICE, and others

LEONATO
Was not Count John here at supper?

ANTONIA
I saw him not.

BEATRICE
How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am heart-burned an hour after.

HERO

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

With a good leg and a good foot, uncle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world, if a' could get her good-will.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIA

In faith, she's too curst.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

BEATRICE

What should I do with him? dress him in my apparel and make him my waiting-gentlewoman? He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man: and he that is more than a youth is not for me, and he that is less than a man, I am not for him.

ANTONIA

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a pierce of valiant dust? to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none.

LEONATO

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

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

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

With me in your company?

HERO

I may say so, when I please.

DON PEDRO

And when please you to say so?

HERO

When I like your favour; for God defend the lute should be like the case!

DON PEDRO
Speak low, if you speak love.

[Drawing her aside]

BEATRICE
Will you not tell me who told you so?

BENEDICK
No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE
Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK
Not now.

BEATRICE
That I was disdainful--well this was Signior Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK
What's he?

BEATRICE
I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK
Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE
Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK
I pray you, what is he?

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

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

In every good thing.

BEATRICE

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

Then exeunt all except DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and CLAUDIO

DON JOHN

Sure my brother is amorous on Hero and hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it. The ladies follow her and but one visor remains.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Are not you Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO

You know me well; I am he.

DON JOHN

Signior, you are very near my brother in his love: he is enamoured on Hero; I pray you, dissuade him from her: she is no equal for his birth: you may do the part of an honest man in it.

CLAUDIO

How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO

So did I too; and he swore he would marry her to-night.

DON JOHN

Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO

CLAUDIO

Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
'Tis certain so; the prince 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 negotiate for itself
And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.
This is an accident of hourly proof,
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell, therefore, Hero!

Re-enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Yea, the same.

BENEDICK

Come, will you go with me?

CLAUDIO

Whither?

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

I pray you, leave me.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

Exit

BENEDICK

Alas, poor hurt fowl! But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The prince's fool! Ha? It is the base, though bitter, disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

Now, signior, where's the count? did you see him?

BENEDICK

Troth, my lord: I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the good will of this young lady; and I offered him my company to a willow-tree, either to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipped.

DON PEDRO

To be whipped! What's his fault?

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the prince's jester; huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs: if her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her; she would infect to the north star. I would not marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam bad left him before he transgressed: indeed, all disquiet, horror and perturbation follows her.

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.

Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now that you can devise to send me on rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO

None, but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK

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

Exit

DON PEDRO

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

BEATRICE

Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile.

DON PEDRO

You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

Why, how now, count! wherefore are you sad?

CLAUDIO

Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

How then? sick?

CLAUDIO

Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

I' faith, lady, I think your blazon to be true; though, I'll be sworn, if he be so, his conceit is false. Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won.

LEONATO

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his grace hath made the match, and an grace say Amen to it.

BEATRICE

Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO

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

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE

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

CLAUDIO

And so she doth, cousin.

BEATRICE

Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes every one to the world but I, and I am sunburnt; I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband!

DON PEDRO

Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

BEATRICE

I would rather have one of your father's getting. Hath your grace ne'er a brother like you?
Your father got excellent husbands, if a maid could come by them.

DON PEDRO

Will you have me, lady?

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

Your silence most offends me, and to be merry best becomes you; for, out of question, you were born in a merry hour.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

Exit

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO

To-morrow, my lord: time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labours; which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection the one with the other. I would fain have it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO

And you too, gentle Hero?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will so practise on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer: his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The same.

Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

Yea, my lord; but I can cross it.

DON JOHN

How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

What proof shall I make of that?

BORACHIO

Find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone: tell them that you know that Hero loves me; offer them instances; which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber-window, hear me call Margaret Hero, hear Margaret term me Claudio; and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding,--for in the meantime I will so fashion the matter that Hero shall be absent,--and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

DON JOHN

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

Exeunt

SCENE III. LEONATO'S orchard.

Enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK

I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by failing in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

[Withdraws]

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

CLAUDIO

How still the evening is,
As hush'd on purpose to grace harmony!

DON PEDRO

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO

O, very well, my lord.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

O, ay: stalk on. stalk on; the fowl sits. I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

LEONATO

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

BENEDICK
Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

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

DON PEDRO
May be she doth but counterfeit.

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

DON PEDRO
Why, what effects of passion shows she?

CLAUDIO
Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

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

CLAUDIO
She did, indeed.

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

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

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

CLAUDIO
He hath ta'en the infection: hold it up.

DON PEDRO
Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO
No; and swears she never will: that's her torment.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

This says she now when she is beginning to write to him; for she'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper: my daughter tells us all.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

That.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

And she is exceeding wise.

DON PEDRO

In every thing but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

Were it good, think you?

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

She doth well: if she should make tender of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it; for the man, as you know all, hath a contemptible spirit. Shall we go seek Benedick, and tell him of her love?

CLAUDIO

Never tell him, my lord: let her wear it out with good counsel.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

My lord, will you walk? dinner is ready.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Let there be the same net spread for her; and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

[Coming forward] This can be no trick: the conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady: it seems her affections have their full bent. Love me! why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured: they say I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her; they say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry: I must not seem proud: happy are they that hear their detractions and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair; 'tis a truth, I can bear them witness; and virtuous; 'tis so, I cannot reprove it; and wise, but for loving me; by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railed so long against marriage: but doth not the appetite alter? a man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour? No, the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. Here comes Beatrice. By this day! she's a fair lady: I do spy some marks of love in her.

Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

You take pleasure then in the message?

BEATRICE

Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point and choke a daw withal. You have no stomach, signior: fare you well.

Exit

BENEDICK

Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner;' there's a double meaning in that 'I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me.' that's as much as to say, Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks. If I do not love her, I am a villain.

Exit

ACT III

SCENE I. LEONATO'S garden.

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA

HERO

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor;
 There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice.
 Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Ursula
 Walk in the orchard and our whole discourse
 Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us;
 And bid her steal into the pleached bower,
 There will she hide her,
 To listen our purpose.

MARGARET

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

Exit

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
 As we do trace this alley up and down,
 My talk to thee must be how Benedick
 Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
 Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made.

[Enter BEATRICE, behind]

Now begin;
 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
 That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO

So says the prince and my new-trothed lord.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA

Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman
Deserve as full as fortunate a bed
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?

HERO

O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man:
But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endeared.

URSULA

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

HERO

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,
But she would spell him backward.
So turns she every man the wrong side out
And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

URSULA

Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO

No, not to be so odd and from all fashions
As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable:
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.

Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire,
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:
It were a better death than die with mocks,
Which is as bad as die with tickling.

URSULA

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

HERO

No; rather I will go to Benedick
And counsel him to fight against his passion.
And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders
To stain my cousin with: one doth not know
How much an ill word may empoison liking.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA

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

HERO

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA

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

HERO

Why, every day, to-morrow. Come, go in:

URSULA

We have caught her, madam.

HERO

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

Exeunt HERO and URSULA

BEATRICE

[Coming forward]

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

Exit

SCENE II. A room in LEONATO'S house

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Nay, that would be as great a soil in the new gloss of your marriage as to show a child his new coat and forbid him to wear it. I will only be bold with Benedick for his company; for, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, he is all mirth: he hath twice or thrice cut Cupid's bow-string and the little hangman dare not shoot at him.

BENEDICK

Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO

So say I, methinks you are sadder.

CLAUDIO

I hope he be in love.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

I have the toothache.

DON PEDRO

Draw it.

BENEDICK

Hang it!

CLAUDIO

You must hang it first, and draw it afterwards.

DON PEDRO

What! sigh for the toothache?

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

Yet say I, he is in love. If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs.

DON PEDRO

Hath any man seen him at the barber's?

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

The greatest note of it is his melancholy.

CLAUDIO

And when was he wont to wash his face?

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Nay, but his jesting spirit; which is now crept into a lute-string and now governed by stops.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Nay, but I know who loves him.

DON PEDRO

That would I know too: I warrant, one that knows him not.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

Exeunt BENEDICK and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

For my life, to break with him about Beatrice.

CLAUDIO

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

Enter DON JOHN

DON JOHN

My lord and brother, God save you!

DON PEDRO

Good den, brother.

DON JOHN

If your leisure served, I would speak with you: yet Count Claudio may hear; for what I would speak of concerns him.

DON PEDRO

What's the matter?

DON JOHN

[To CLAUDIO] Means your lordship to be married to-morrow?

DON PEDRO

You know he does.

DON JOHN

I know not that, when he knows what I know.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

Who, Hero?

DON JOHN

Even she; Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

CLAUDIO

Disloyal?

DON JOHN

The word is too good to paint out her wickedness; I could say she were worse: think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it. Wonder not till further warrant: go but with me to-night, you shall see her chamber-window entered, even the night before her wedding-day: if you love her then, to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honour to change your mind.

CLAUDIO

May this be so?

DON PEDRO

I will not think it.

DON JOHN

If you dare not trust that you see, confess not that you know: if you will follow me, I will show you enough.

CLAUDIO

If I see any thing to-night why I should not marry her to-morrow in the congregation, where I should wed, there will I shame her.

DON PEDRO

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

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

O day untowardly turned!

CLAUDIO

O mischief strangely thwarting!

DON JOHN

O plague right well prevented!

Exeunt

SCENE III. A street.

Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES with the Watch

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

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

First Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

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

SEACOLE

Both which, master constable,--

DOGBERRY

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

SEACOLE

How if a' will not stand?

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none of the prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY

True, and they are to meddle with none but the prince's subjects. 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.

Second Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

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

Second Watchman

How if they will not?

DOGBERRY

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

Watchman

Well, sir.

DOGBERRY

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

Second Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

Truly, by your office, you may; but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled: the most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is and steal out of your company.

VERGES

You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY

Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, much more a man who hath any honesty in him. Well, masters, good night: an there be any matter of weight chances, call up me: keep your fellows' counsels and your own; and good night. Come, neighbour.

Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES

SEACOLE

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

Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE

BORACHIO

What Conrade!

SEACOLE

[Aside] Peace! stir not.

BORACHIO

Conrade, I say!

CONRADE

Here, man; I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO

Stand thee close, then, under this pent-house, for it drizzles rain; and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.

SEACOLE

[Aside] Some treason, masters: yet stand close.

BORACHIO

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

CONRADE

Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear?

Second Watchman

[Aside] I know that Deformed; a' has been a vile thief this seven year; a' goes up and down like a gentleman: I remember his name.

BORACHIO

Didst thou not hear somebody?

CONRADE

No; 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO

I have to-night wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero: she leans me out at her mistress' chamber-window, bids me a thousand times good night,--I tell this tale vilely:--I should first tell thee how the prince, Claudio and my master, planted and placed and possessed by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter.

CONRADE

And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

Two of them did, the prince and Claudio; but the devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his oaths, which first possessed them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my 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'er night and send her home again without a husband.

First Watchman

We charge you, in the prince's name, stand! Call up the right master constable. We have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery that ever was known in the commonwealth. And one Deformed is one of them: I know him.

CONRADE

Master, master,--

SEACOLE

You'll be made bring Deformed forth, I warrant you.

CONRADE

Master,--

SEACOLE

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

CONRADE

Come, we'll obey you.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. HERO's apartment.

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA

HERO

Good morrow, coz.

BEATRICE

Good morrow, sweet Hero.

HERO

Why how now? do you speak in the sick tune?

BEATRICE

I am out of all other tune, methinks. 'Tis almost five o'clock, cousin; tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceeding ill: heigh-ho!

MARGARET

For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

BEATRICE

For the letter that begins them all, H.

MARGARET

Well, and 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 every one their heart's desire!

HERO

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

BEATRICE

I am stuffed, cousin; I cannot smell.

MARGARET

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

BEATRICE

O, God help me! God help me! 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.

BEATRICE

Benedictus! why Benedictus? you have some moral in this Benedictus.

MARGARET

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

BEATRICE

What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

MARGARET

Not a false gallop.

Enter URSULA

URSULA

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

HERO

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

Exeunt

ACT IV

SCENE I. A church.

Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, LEONATO, FRIAR FRANCIS, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, HERO, BEATRICE, and Attendants

LEONATO

Come, Friar Francis, be brief.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

No.

LEONATO

To be married to her: friar, you come to marry her.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

Know you any, Hero?

HERO

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Know you any, count?

LEONATO

I dare make his answer, none.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

How now! interjections? Why, then, some be of laughing, as, ah, ha, he!

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO

Sweet prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.
There, Leonato, take her back again:
Give not this rotten orange to your friend;
She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none:
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATO

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

I know what you would say: if I have known her,
You will say she did embrace me as a husband,
And so extenuate the 'forehand sin:
No, Leonato,
I never tempted her with word too large;
But, as a brother to his sister, show'd
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

HERO

And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

CLAUDIO

Out on thee! Seeming! I will write against it:
You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown;
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus, or those pamper'd animals
That rage in savage sensuality.

HERO

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

LEONATO

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO

What should I speak?

I stand dishonour'd, that have gone about
To link my dear friend to a common stale.

LEONATO

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN

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

BENEDICK

This looks not like a nuptial.

HERO

True! O God!

CLAUDIO

Leonato, stand I here?
Is this the prince? is this the prince's brother?
Is this face Hero's? are our eyes our own?

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

Let me but move one question to your daughter;
And, by that fatherly and kindly power
That you have in her, bid her answer truly.

LEONATO

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

HERO

O, God defend me! how am I beset!

CLAUDIO

What man was he talk'd with you yesternight
Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?
Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

HERO

I talk'd with no man at that hour, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear: upon mine honour,
Myself, my brother and this grieved count
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber-window
Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,
Confess'd the vile encounters they have had
A thousand times in secret.

DON JOHN

Fie, fie! they are not to be named, my lord,
Not to be spoke of.

CLAUDIO

O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been,
If half thy outward graces had been placed
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! farewell,
Thou pure impiety and impious purity!

LEONATO

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

[HERO swoons]

BEATRICE

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

DON JOHN

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

Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO

BENEDICK

How doth the lady?

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

O Fate! take not away thy heavy hand.
Death is the fairest cover for her shame
That may be wish'd for.

BEATRICE

How now, cousin Hero!

FRIAR FRANCIS

Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO

Dost thou look up?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Yea, wherefore should she not?

LEONATO

Wherefore! Why, doth not every earthly thing
 Cry shame upon her? 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,
 Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches,
 Strike at thy life--why, she, O, she is fallen
 Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
 Hath drops too few to wash her clean again
 And salt too little which may season give
 To her foul-tainted flesh!

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

BENEDICK

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE

No, truly not; although, until last night,
 I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow.

LEONATO

Confirm'd, confirm'd! O, that is stronger made
 Which was before barr'd up with ribs of iron!
 Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie,
 Who loved her so, that, speaking of her foulness,
 Wash'd it with tears? Hence from her! let her die.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Hear me a little;
 By noting of the lady I have mark'd
 A thousand blushing apparitions
 To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
 In angel whiteness beat away those blushes;
 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.

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.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

They know that do accuse me; I know none.
O my father,
Prove you that any man with me conversed
At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight
Maintain'd the change of words with any creature,
Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death!

FRIAR FRANCIS

There is some strange misprision in the princes.

BENEDICK

Two of them have the very bent of honour;
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,
The practise of it lives in John the bastard,
Whose spirits toil in frame of villanies.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

LEONATO

What shall become of this? what will this do?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse; that is some good:
She dying, as it must so be maintain'd,

Upon the instant that she was accused,
 Shall be lamented, pitied and excused
 Of every hearer: then shall Claudio mourn,
 And wish he had not so accused her.
 The supposition of the lady's death
 Will quench the wonder of her infamy.

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

'Tis well consented: presently away;
 For to strange sores strangely they strain the cure.
 Come, lady, die to live: this wedding-day
 Perhaps is but prolong'd: have patience and endure.

Exeunt all but BENEDICK and BEATRICE

BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE

You have no reason; I do it freely.

BENEDICK

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Is there any way to show such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK

May a man do it?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

BEATRICE

Do not swear, and eat it.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Will you not eat your word?

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK

What offence, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK
And do it with all thy heart.

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

BENEDICK
Come, bid me do any thing for thee.

BEATRICE
Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK
Ha! not for the wide world.

BEATRICE
You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK
Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE
I am gone, though I am here: there is no love in you: nay, I pray you, let me go.

BENEDICK
Beatrice,--

BEATRICE
In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK
We'll be friends first.

BEATRICE
You dare easier be friends with me than fight with mine enemy.

BENEDICK
Is Claudio thine enemy?

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

BENEDICK

Hear me, Beatrice,--

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Beat--

BEATRICE

O that I were a man for his sake! or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake!

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Enough, I am engaged; I will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account.

Exeunt

SCENE II. A prison.

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

DOGBERRY

Is our whole dissembly appeared?

VERGES

O, a stool and a cushion for the sexton.

Sexton

Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY

Marry, that am I and my partner.

VERGES

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

Sexton

But which are the offenders that are to be examined? let them come before master constable.

DOGBERRY

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

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

Pray, write down, Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

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

CONRADE and 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 better than false knaves. How answer you for yourselves?

CONRADE

Marry, sir, we say we are none.

First Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

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

BORACHIO

Master constable,--

DOGBERRY

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

Sexton

What heard you him say else?

Second Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

Flat burglary as ever was committed.

Sexton

What else, fellow?

First Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

O villain! thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this.

Sexton

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

Exit

DOGBERRY

Come, let them be opinioned.

VERGES

Let them be in the hands--

CONRADE

Off, coxcomb!

DOGBERRY

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

CONRADE

Away! you are an ass, you are an ass.

DOGBERRY

Dost thou not suspect my place? dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass!

Exeunt

ACT V

SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIA

ANTONIA

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.
Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid him speak of patience.
But there is no such man:
No, no; 'tis all men's office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
To be so moral when he shall endure
The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel.

ANTONIA

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIA

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

LEONATO

There thou speak'st reason: nay, I will do so.

ANTONIA

Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO

DON PEDRO

Good e'en, good e'en.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO

Hear you. my lords,--

DON PEDRO

We have some haste, Leonato.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

ANTONIA

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:--
Know, Claudio,
Thou hast so wrong'd mine innocent child and me
That I am forced to lay my reverence by
And, with grey hairs and bruise of many days,
Do challenge thee to trial of a man.
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child;
Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors;
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
Save this of hers, framed by thy villainy!

CLAUDIO

My villainy?

LEONATO

Thine, Claudio; thine, I say.

DON PEDRO

You say not right, old man.

LEONATO

My lord, my lord,
I'll prove it on his body, if he dare.

CLAUDIO

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIA

He shall kill two of us, and men indeed:
But that's no matter; let him kill one first.
Come, follow me, boy; come, sir boy, come, follow me:
Sir boy, I'll whip you from your foining fence.

LEONATO

Sister,--

ANTONIA

Content yourself. God knows I loved my niece;
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villains!

LEONATO

Sister Antonia,--

ANTONIA

Hold you content. What, man! I know them, yea,
And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple,--
Scrambling, out-facing, fashion-monging boys,
That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander--

LEONATO

But, sister Antonia,--

ANTONIA

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

My lord, my lord,--

DON PEDRO

I will not hear you.

LEONATO

No?

-- Come, sister; away! I will be heard.

ANTONIA

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

Exeunt LEONATO and ANTONIA, Enter BENEDICK

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Now, signior, what news?

BENEDICK

Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

We have been up and down to seek thee; for we are high-proof melancholy and would fain have it beaten away. Wilt thou use thy wit?

BENEDICK

It is in my scabbard: shall I draw it?

DON PEDRO

Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

CLAUDIO

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

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

CLAUDIO

What, courage, man! What though care killed a cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.

BENEDICK

You are a villain; I jest not: I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you. [to Don Pedro] My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you: I must discontinue your company: your brother the bastard is fled from Messina: you have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet: and, till then, peace be with him.

Exit

DON PEDRO

He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO

Most sincerely.

DON PEDRO

What a pretty thing man is when he goes in his doublet and hose and leaves off his wit! But, soft you, let me be: pluck up, my heart, and be sad. Did 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! Officers, what offence have these men done?

DOGBERRY

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

DON PEDRO

Who have you offended, masters, that you are thus bound to your answer? this learned constable is too cunning to be understood: what's your offence?

BORACHIO

Sweet prince, I have deceived even your very eyes: what your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light: who in the night overheard me confessing to this man how Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero, how you were brought into the orchard and saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments, how you disgraced her, when you should marry her. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation; and, briefly, I desire nothing but the reward of a villain.

DON PEDRO

Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO

I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

DON PEDRO

But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

Here, here comes master Signior Leonato.

Re-enter LEONATO

LEONATO

Which is the villain? which of these is he?

BORACHIO

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

LEONATO

Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast kill'd
Mine innocent child?

BORACHIO

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO

No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself:
Here stand a pair of honourable men;
A third is fled, that had a hand in it.
I thank you, princes, for my daughter's death.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

O noble sir,
Your over-kindness doth wring tears from me!

LEONATO

To-morrow then I will expect your coming;

DOGBERRY

Moreover, sir, the offender did call me ass: I beseech you, let it be remembered in his punishment. 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 reverend youth; and I praise God for you.

LEONATO

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

Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES

LEONATO

Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

DON PEDRO

We will not fail.

CLAUDIO

To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

Exeunt, severally

SCENE II. LEONATO'S garden.

Enter BENEDICK

Sings

The God of love,
That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve,--

I mean in singing; but in loving, Leander the good swimmer, Troilus the first employer of panders, and a whole bookful of these quondam carpet-mangers, 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 'scornn', 'horn' – a hard rhyme; for 'school', 'fool', a babbling rhyme: very ominous endings. No, I was not born under a rhyming planet nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

Enter BEATRICE

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

BEATRICE

Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK

O, stay but till then!

BEATRICE

'Then' is spoken; fare you well now: and yet, ere I go, let me go with that I came; which is, with knowing what hath passed between you and Claudio.

BENEDICK

Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Suffer love! a good epithet! I do suffer love indeed, for I love thee against my will.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably. Tell me, how doth your cousin?

BEATRICE

Very ill.

BENEDICK

And how do you?

BEATRICE

Very ill too.

BENEDICK

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

Enter URSULA

URSULA

Madam, you must come to your uncle. It is proved my Lady Hero hath been falsely accused, the prince and Claudio mightily abused; and Don John is the author of all, who is fed and gone. Will you come presently?

BEATRICE

Will you go hear this news, signior?

BENEDICK

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

Exeunt

SCENE III. A church.

CLAUDIO

[Reading out of a scroll]

Done to death by slanderous tongues
Was the Hero that here lies:
Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,
Gives her fame which never dies.
So the life that died with shame
Lives in death with glorious fame.
Hang thou there upon the tomb,
Praising her when I am dumb.
Now, unto thy bones good night!
Yearly will I do this rite.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. A room in LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, ANTONIA, BENEDICK, BEATRICE, MARGARET, URSULA, FRIAR FRANCIS, and HERO

FRIAR FRANCIS

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

ANTONIA

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

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

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

[Exeunt Ladies]

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

ANTONIA

Which I will do with confirm'd countenance.

BENEDICK

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS

To do what, signior?

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

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

BENEDICK

And I do with an eye of love requite her.

LEONATO

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

BENEDICK

Your answer, sir, is enigmatical:
But, for my will, my will is your good will
May stand with ours, this day to be conjoin'd
In the state of honourable marriage.

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

Good Morrow, prince; good Morrow, Claudio:

We here attend you. Are you yet determined

To-day to marry with my sister's daughter?

CLAUDIO

I'll hold my mind.

LEONATO

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

Exit ANTONIA

Re-enter ANTONIA, with the Ladies masked

CLAUDIO

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

ANTONIA

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

No, that you shall not, till you take her hand

Before this friar and swear to marry her.

CLAUDIO

Give me your hand: before this holy friar,

I am your husband, if you like of me.

HERO

And when I lived, I was your other wife:

[Unmasking]

And when you loved, you were my other husband.

CLAUDIO
Another Hero!

HERO
Nothing certainer:
One Hero died defiled, but I do live,
And surely as I live, I am a maid.

DON PEDRO
The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

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

BENEDICK
Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE
[Unmasking] I answer to that name. What is your will?

BENEDICK
Do not you love me?

BEATRICE
Why, no; no more than reason.

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

BEATRICE
Do not you love me?

BENEDICK
Troth, no; no more than reason.

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

BENEDICK
They swore that you were almost sick for me.

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her;
For here's a paper written in his hand,
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
Fashion'd to Beatrice.

HERO

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Peace! I will stop your mouth.

[Kissing her]

DON PEDRO

How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK

I'll tell thee what, prince; a college of wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humour. Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram? No. In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it; for man is a giddy thing. For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised and love my cousin.

CLAUDIO

I had well hoped thou wouldest have denied Beatrice, that I might have cudgelled thee out of thy single life.

BENEDICK

Come, come, we are friends. 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

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

BENEDICK

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

Exeunt