

Much Ado About Nothing

ABRIDGED



William Shakespeare
(1564-1616)

By
William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare's

Much Ado

About

Nothing

Edited by

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The Wichita Shakespeare Co.

Much Ado About Nothing

Dramatis Personae

Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon

Don John, The prince's bastard brother

Claudio, A young lord of Florence

Benedick, A young lord of Padua

Leonato, Governor of Messina

Antonio, Leonato's brother

Balthasar, servant to Don Pedro

Borachio, Follower of Don Juan

Conrade, Follower of Don Juan

Dogberry, A constable

Verges, A headborough

Friar Francis

A Messenger

A Sexton

First Watchman

Second Watchman

Third Watchman

Hero, Daughter to Leonato

Beatrice, Niece to Leonato

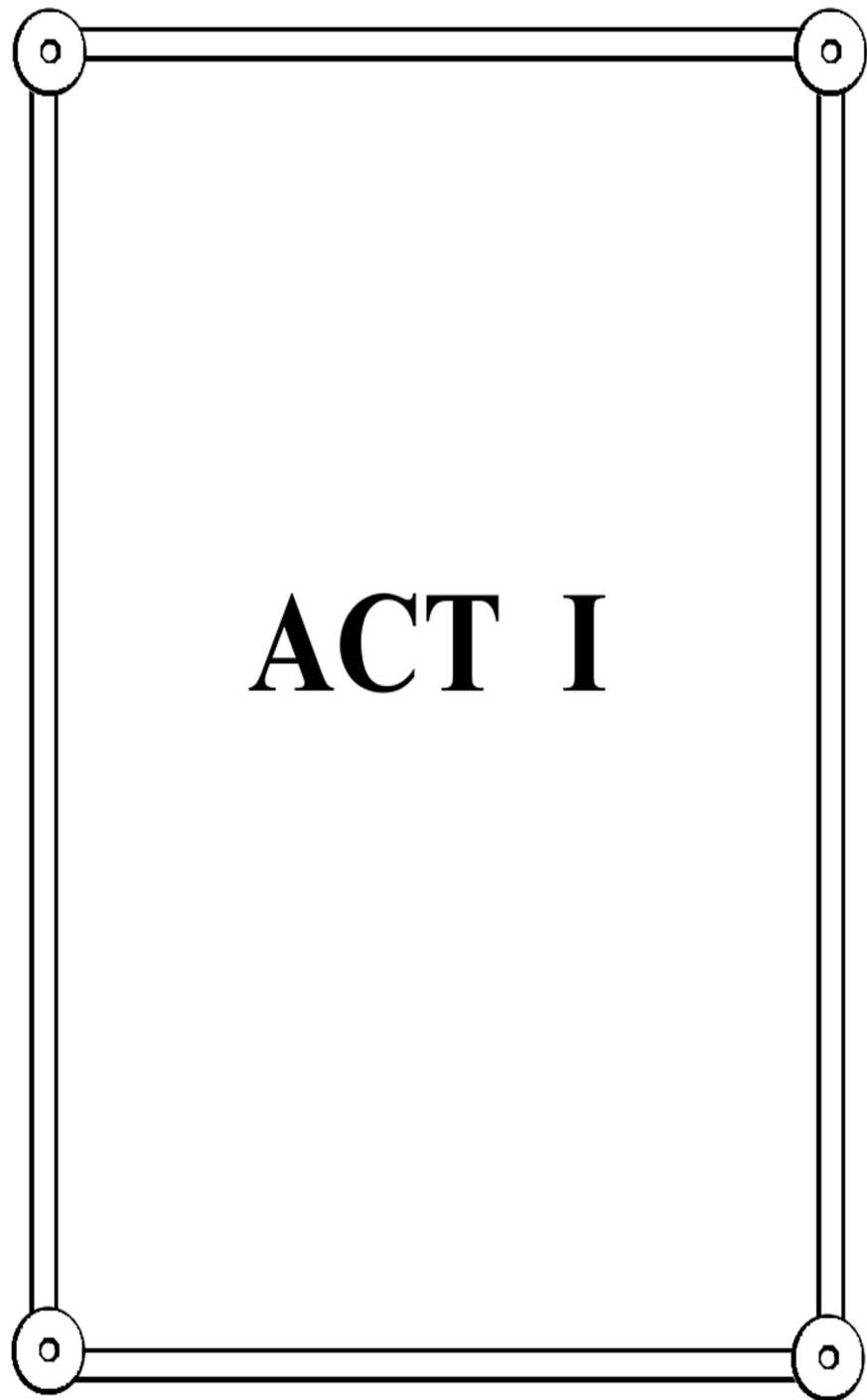
Margaret, Gentlewoman attending on Hero

Ursula, Gentlewoman attending on Hero

Much Ado About Nothing

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ACT I

have beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised and love my cousin.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

We'll have dancing afterward.

BENEDICK

First, of my word; therefore play, music. Prince, thou art sad; get thee a wife, get thee a wife.

Enter Balthasar

BALTHASAR

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

BENEDICK

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

Dance

Exeunt

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. 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

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

Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a Messenger

LEONATO

I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Arragon
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 Pedro hath
bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.

Messenger

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

LEONATO

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.

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.

Messenger

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

BEATRICE

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

Messenger

And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE

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

Messenger

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

Messenger

Is't possible.

BEATRICE

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

Messenger

I see, lady, the gentlemen is not in your books.

HERO

And when I lived, I was your other wife:

Unmasking

And when you loved, you were my other husband.

CLAUDIO

Another Hero!

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

BENEDICK

Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Do not you love me?

BEATRICE

Why, no; no more than reason.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Do not you love me?

BENEDICK

Troth, no; no more than reason.

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:
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

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

CLAUDIO

I'll hold my mind, were she an Ethiope.

LEONATO

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

Re-enter ANTONIO, with the Ladies masked

CLAUDIO

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

ANTONIO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

BEATRICE

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

Messenger

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

BEATRICE

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

Messenger

I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE

Do, good friend.

LEONATO

You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE

No, not till a hot January.

Messenger

Don Pedro is approached.

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

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

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.

SCENE IV. A room in LEONATO'S house.

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

Well, I 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, brother: You must be father to your brother's daughter And give her to young Claudio.

ANTONIO

Which I will do with confirm'd countenance.

Exit ANTONIO

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.

SCENE III. A church.

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and three or four with
tapers*

CLAUDIO

Is this the monument of Leonato?

BALTHASAR

It is, my lord.

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, 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 uttered,

Heavily, heavily.

Now unto thy bones good night!

Yearly will I do this rite.

Exeunt

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.

LEONATO

[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?

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? Go to i' faith; an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck
into a yoke. 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

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.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Very ill.

BENEDICK

And how do you?

BEATRICE

Very ill too.

BENEDICK

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

Enter URSULA

URSULA

Madam, you must come to your uncle. Yonde's old
coil at home: it is proved my Lady Hero hath been
falsely accused, the prince and Claudio mightily
abused; and Don John is the author of all, who is
fled 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 II. LEONATO'S garden.*Enter BENEDICK***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 quondom carpet-managers, whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse, why, they were never so truly turned over and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme; I have tried: I can find out no rhyme to 'lady' but 'baby,' an innocent rhyme; for 'scorn,' 'horn,' a hard rhyme; for, 'school,' 'fool,' a babbling rhyme; very ominous endings: no, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

Enter BEATRICE

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

BEATRICE

Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK

O, stay but till then!

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Thou hast frighted 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?

BENEDICK

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

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 hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick, all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do Them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the Right to trust none; and the fine is, for the which I may go the finer, I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

Well, as time shall try: 'In time the savage bull
doth bear the yoke.'

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to
Leonato's: commend me to him and tell him I will
not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made
great preparation.

BENEDICK

I have almost matter enough in me for such an
embassage.

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?

ANTONIO

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

DON PEDRO

We will not fail.

CLAUDIO

To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

Exeunt, severally

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

To-morrow then I will expect your coming;
 To-night I take my leave. This naughty man
 Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
 Who I believe was pack'd in all this wrong,
 Hired to it by your brother.

BORACHIO

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

DOGBERRY

Moreover, sir, which indeed is not under white and
 black, this plaintiff here, the offender, did call
 me ass.

LEONATO

I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

There's for thy pains.

DOGBERRY

God save the foundation!

LEONATO

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

DOGBERRY

God keep your worship! I wish
 your worship well; God restore you to health! I
 humbly give you leave to depart; and if a merry
 meeting may be wished, God prohibit it! Come, neighbour.

Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES

LEONATO

Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

How sweetly you do minister to love.

DON PEDRO

And I will fit thee with the remedy.
 I know we shall have revelling to-night:
 I will assume thy part in some disguise
 And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
 And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart
 And take her hearing prisoner with the force
 And strong encounter of my amorous tale:
 Then after to her father will I break;
 And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
 In practise let us put it presently.

Exeunt

SCENE III. A room in LEONATO'S HOUSE.*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

I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in
his grace: and it better fits my blood to be
disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob
love from any: in this, though I cannot be said to
be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied
but I am a plain-dealing villain. 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

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO

No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself:
Here stand a pair of honourable men;
A third is fled, that had a hand in it.
I thank you, princes, for my daughter's death:
Record it with your high and worthy deeds:
'Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

By my soul, nor I.
And yet, to satisfy this good 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.

DON PEDRO

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

BORACHIO

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

DON PEDRO

Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO

I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

DON PEDRO

But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

Re-enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, with the Sexton

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

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

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

CONRADE

To the death, my lord.

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

We'll wait upon your lordship.

Exeunt



ACT II

CLAUDIO

Well, I will meet you, so I may have good cheer.

BENEDICK

Fare you well, boy: you know my mind. My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you: I must discontinue your company: your brother the bastard is fled from Messina: you have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet: and, till then, peace be with him.

Exit

DON PEDRO

He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO

In most profound earnest; and, I'll warrant you.

DON PEDRO

And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO

Most sincerely.

DON PEDRO

Did he not say, my brother was fled?

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

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!

CLAUDIO

Hearken after their offence, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Officers, what offence have these men done?

DOGBERRY

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

BENEDICK

Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

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 it 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?

BENEDICK

I pray you choose another subject.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

Shall I speak a word in your ear?

[Aside to CLAUDIO] You are a villain; I jest not: I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you.

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

Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, and others

LEONATO

Was not Count John here at supper?

ANTONIO

I saw him not.

BEATRICE

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

HERO

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

In faith, she's too curst.

BEATRICE

Too curst is more than curst: 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: therefore, I will even take
sixpence in earnest of the bear-ward, and lead his
apes into hell.

LEONATO

Well, then, go you into hell?

BEATRICE

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

ANTONIO

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

Not till God make men of some other metal than
earth. 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.

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 every thing
and so dance out the answer.

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

Brother,--

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

Brother Antony,--

ANTONIO

Hold you content. What, man! I know them.

LEONATO

But, brother Antony,--

ANTONIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

My lord, my lord,--

DON PEDRO

I will not hear you.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

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

Exeunt LEONATO and ANTONIO

DON PEDRO

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

Enter BENEDICK

CLAUDIO

Now, signior, what news?

LEONATO

Some haste, my lord! well, fare you well, my lord:
Are you so hasty now?

DON PEDRO

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

ANTONIO

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

CLAUDIO

Who wrongs him?

LEONATO

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

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,
Know, Claudio, Thou hast so wrong'd mine innocent child
and me I say thou hast belied mine innocent child;
Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors;
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
Save this of hers, framed by thy villany!

CLAUDIO

My villany?

LEONATO

Thine, Claudio; thine, I say.

DON PEDRO

You say not right, old man.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO

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

LEONATO

Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

The revellers are entering, brother: make good room.
All put on their masks

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

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

With me in your company?

HERO

I may so, when I please.

Music & Dance

BEATRICE

Will you not tell me who told you so?

BENEDICK

No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE

Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK

Not now.

BEATRICE

That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit
out of the 'Hundred Merry Tales:'--well this was
Signior Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK

What's he?

BEATRICE

I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK

Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE

Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK

I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE

Why, he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool;
only his gift is in devising impossible slanders:
none but libertines delight in him; and the
commendation is not in his wit, but in his 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.

Music

We must follow the leaders.

BENEDICK

In every good thing.

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

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.

ACT V

SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO

ANTONIO

If you go on thus, you will kill yourself:
And 'tis not wisdom thus to second grief
Against yourself.

LEONATO

I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
Which falls into mine ears as profitless
As water in a sieve
Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid him speak of patience;
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;
For there was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently.

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

There thou speak'st reason: nay, I will do so.
My soul doth tell me Hero is bellied;
And that shall Claudio know; so shall the prince
And all of them that thus dishonour her.

ANTONIO

Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO

DON PEDRO

Good den, good den.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO

Hear you. my lords,--

DON PEDRO

We have some haste, Leonato.



ACT V

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO

CLAUDIO

Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
'Tis certain so; the prince wooes for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love:

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. 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! Now will he creep into sedges. But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The prince's fool! Ha? It may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong; I am not so reputed: it is the base, though bitter, disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

I found him here as melancholy as a lodge in a warren: I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the 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

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

Sexton

What else?

First Watchman

This is all.

Sexton

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

Exit

DOGBERRY

Come, let them be opinioned.

VERGES

Let them be in the hands--

CONRADE

Off, coxcomb!

DOGBERRY

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

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

Dost thou not suspect my place? dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass. No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow, and, which is more, an officer, and, which is more, a householder, and, which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina, Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass!

Exeunt

BORACHIO

Sir, I say to you we are none.

DOGBERRY

Have you writ down, that they are none?

Sexton

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

DOGBERRY

Let the watch come forth. Masters, I charge you, in the
prince's name, accuse these men.

First Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

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

BORACHIO

Master constable,--

DOGBERRY

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

Sexton

What heard you him say else?

Second Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

Flat burglary as ever was committed.

VERGES

Yea, by mass, that it is.

Sexton

What else, fellow?

First Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

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

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!
My very visor began to assume life and
scold with her. She told me, not thinking I had been
myself, that I was the prince's jester, that I was
duller than a great thaw; huddling jest upon jest
with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood
like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at
me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. I would not
marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam had
left him before he transgressed.

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;
Fetch you a hair off the great
Cham's beard, do you any embassy to the Pigmies,
rather than hold three words' conference with this
harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO

None, but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK

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

Exit

DON PEDRO

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

BEATRICE

Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile; and I gave
him use for it, a double heart for his single one:
marry, once before he won it of me with false dice,
therefore your grace may well say I have lost it.

DON PEDRO

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

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

How then? sick?

CLAUDIO

Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

I' faith, lady, I think your blazon to be true;
though, I'll be sworn, if he be so, his conceit is
false. Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and
fair Hero is won: I have broke with her father,
and his good will obtained: name the day of
marriage, and God give thee joy!

LEONATO

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my
fortunes: his grace hath made the match, and 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.

SCENE II. A prison.

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

DOGBERRY

Is our whole dissembly appeared?

Sexton

Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY

Marry, that am I and my partner.

Sexton

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

DOGBERRY

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

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

Pray, write down, Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

CONRAD

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

DOGBERRY

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

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

Exeunt

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.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

Exit

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for 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

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

And I, my lord.

BEATRICE

In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK

We'll be friends first.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Hear me, Beatrice,--

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Nay, but, Beatrice,--

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Beatrice--

BEATRICE

Princes and counties! Surely, a princely testimony, a goodly count, Count Comfekt; a sweet gallant, surely! O that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

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,--

DON PEDRO

And you too, gentle Hero?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

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

Exeunt

SCENE II. The same.*Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO***DON JOHN**

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

BORACHIO

Yea, my lord; but I can cross it.

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Show me briefly how.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

What proof shall I make of that?

BORACHIO

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

BENEDICK

Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

*Exeunt all but BENEDICK and BEATRICE***BENEDICK**

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE

You have no reason; I do it freely.

BENEDICK

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Is there any way to show such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK

May a man do it?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

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 practice 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;
Maintain a mourning ostentation
And on your family's old monument
Hang mournful epitaphs and do all rites
That appertain unto a burial.

LEONATO

What shall become of this? what will this do?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse; that is some good:
She dying, as it must so be maintain'd,
Upon the instant that she was accused,
Shall be lamented, pitied and excused
So will it fare with Claudio:
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination,
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come apparel'd 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.

DON JOHN

Only to despite them, I will endeavour any thing.

BORACHIO

Go, then; find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and
the Count Claudio alone: 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,--and there shall appear such
seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be
Called assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

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

Exeunt

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

I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by failing in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe: I have known when he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armor; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthography; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. Ha! The prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

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

Come, shall we hear this music?

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

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:

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;
For I have only been silent so long
And given way unto this course of fortune.
...
By noting of the lady I have mark'd
A thousand blushing apparitions
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
Call me a fool;
Trust not my reading nor my observations,
My reverence, calling, nor divinity,
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
Under some biting error.

LEONATO

Friar, it cannot be.
Thou seest that all the grace that she had left
Is that she will not add to her damnation
A sin of perjury; she not denies it:

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

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

CLAUDIO

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

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?

CLAUDIO

O, very well, my lord: the music ended,
 We'll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth.

Enter BALTHASAR with Music

DON PEDRO

Come, Balthasar, we'll hear that song.

Air

BENEDICK

Is it not strange that sheeps' guts should hale souls out
 of men's bodies? Well, a horn for my money, when
 all's done.

The Song

BALTHASAR

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

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a good song.

BALTHASAR

And an ill singer, my lord.

BENEDICK

An he had been a dog that should have howled thus,
 they would have hanged him.

DON PEDRO

I pray thee, get us some excellent music; for to-morrow night
 we would have it at the Lady Hero's chamber-window.

BALTHASAR

The best I can, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Do so: farewell.

Exit BALTHASAR

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

CLAUDIO

I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

LEONATO

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

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

May be she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO

Faith, like enough.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Why, what effects of passion shows she?

CLAUDIO

Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

She did, indeed.

DON PEDRO

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

DON PEDRO

What should I speak?

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

LEONATO

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN

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

BENEDICK

This looks not like a nuptial.

HERO

True! O God!

CLAUDIO

Leonato, stand I here?

Is this the prince? is this the prince's brother?

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

HERO

O, God defend me! how am I beset! What kind of catechising call you this?

CLAUDIO

To make you answer truly to your name.

HERO

Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name With any just reproach?

CLAUDIO

Marry, that can Hero; Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue. What man was he talk'd with you yesternight Out at your window betwixt twelve and one? Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

HERO

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

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;

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 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!: 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.

HERO

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

LEONATO

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

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.
O, she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence;
railed at herself, that she should be so immodest
to write to one that she knew would flout her.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

And she is exceeding wise.

DON PEDRO

In every thing but in loving Benedick.
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.

CLAUDIO

He is a very proper man.

DON PEDRO

He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

CLAUDIO

Before God! and, in my mind, very wise.

DON PEDRO

He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

CLAUDIO

And I take him to be valiant.

DON PEDRO

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.

ACT IV**SCENE I. A church.**

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

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

No.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

Know you any, Hero?

HERO

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Know you any, count?

LEONATO

I dare make his answer, none.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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



ACT IV

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. The
sport will be, when they hold one an opinion of
another's dotage, and no such matter. 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. Love me!

why, it must be requited. They say too that she will
Rather die than give any sign of affection. I did
never think to marry: They say the lady is fair; 'tis a
truth, I can bear them witness; and virtuous; 'tis
so, I cannot reprove it; and wise, but for loving
me; by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor
no great argument of her folly, for I will be
horribly in love with her. I may chance have some
odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me,
because I have railed so long against marriage: but
doth not the appetite alter? a man loves the meat
in his youth that he cannot endure in his age.

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. 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 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.

Exit

VERGES

Marry, sir, our watch to-night, excepting your worship's presence, ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY

A good old man, sir; he will be talking: as they say, when the age is in, the wit is out: an two men Ride of a horse, one must ride behind.

LEONATO

I must leave you.

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

Take their examination yourself and bring it me: I am now in great haste, as it may appear unto you.

DOGBERRY

It shall be suffigance.

LEONATO

Drink some wine ere you go: fare you well.

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

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

LEONATO

I'll wait upon them: I am ready.

Exeunt LEONATO and Messenger

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY

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

Exeunt

SCENE V. Another room in LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, with DOGBERRY and VERGES

LEONATO

What would you with me, honest neighbour?

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

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

DOGBERRY

Marry, this it is, sir.

VERGES

Yes, in truth it is, sir.

LEONATO

What is it, my good friends?

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

LEONATO

Neighbours, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY

It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the
poor duke's officers; but truly, for mine own part,
if I were as tedious as a king, I could find it in
my heart to bestow it all of your worship.

LEONATO

All thy tediousness on me, ah?

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

And so am I.

LEONATO

I would fain know what you have to say.



ACT III

MARGARET

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

BEATRICE

What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

MARGARET

Not a false gallop.

Re-enter URSULA

URSULA

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

HERO

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

Exeunt

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

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! How long have you
professed apprehension?

MARGARET

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

BEATRICE

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

MARGARET

Get you some of this distilled Carduus Benedictus,
and lay it to your heart: it is the only thing for a qualm.

HERO

There thou prickest her with a thistle.

BEATRICE

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

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;
This is thy office;
Bear thee well in it and leave us alone.

MARGARET

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

Exit

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit:
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice.

Enter BEATRICE, behind

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

URSULA

Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

HERO

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

Approaching the bower

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;
All matter else seems weak: she cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

When are you married, madam?

SCENE IV. HERO's apartment.

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA

HERO

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

URSULA

I will, lady.

HERO

And bid her come hither.

URSULA

Well.

Exit

MARGARET

Troth, I think your other rabato were better.

HERO

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

MARGARET

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

HERO

My cousin's a fool, and thou art another: I'll wear
none but this.
God give me joy to wear it! for my heart is
exceeding heavy.

MARGARET

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

Enter BEATRICE

HERO

Good morrow, coz.

BEATRICE

Good morrow, sweet Hero.

HERO

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

First Watchman

[Aside] I know that Man; 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?

CONRAD

No; 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO

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

CONRAD

And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

Two of them did, the prince and Claudio; Away went Claudio enraged; swore he would meet her, as he was Appointed, next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'er night and send her home again without a husband.

First Watchman

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

Second Watchman

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

CONRADE

Masters, masters,--

First Watchman

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

Exeunt

HERO

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

URSULA

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

HERO

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

Exeunt HERO and URSULA

BEATRICE

[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*

BENEDICK

Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO

So say I methinks you are sadder.

CLAUDIO

I hope he be in love.

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?

LEONATO

Where is but a humour or a worm.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

Yet say I, he is in love.

DON PEDRO

Hath any man seen him at the barber's?

CLAUDIO

No, but the barber's man hath been seen with him.

DON PEDRO

A' rubs himself with civet: can you smell him

Out by that?

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

The greatest note of it is his melancholy.

DOGBERRY

One word more, honest neighbours. I pray you watch
about Signior Leonato's door; for the wedding being
there to-morrow, there is a great coil to-night.

Adieu: be vigilant, I beseech you.

Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES

Enter BORACHIO and CONRAD

BORACHIO

What Conrad!

First Watchman

[Aside] Peace! stir not.

BORACHIO

Conrad, I say!

CONRAD

Here, man; I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO

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

CONRAD

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

BORACHIO

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

First Watchman

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

BORACHIO

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

CONRAD

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.

CONRAD

I wonder at it.

Second Watchman

How if they will not?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, let them alone till they are sober.

Second 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.

First 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.

VERGES

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

Third Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

Why, then, depart in peace, and let the child wake her with crying.

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.

First Watchman

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

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.

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.

DON PEDRO

In private?

DON JOHN

If it please you: yet Count Claudio may hear; for what I would speak of concerns him.

DON PEDRO

What's the matter?

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

You know he does.

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

Who, Hero?

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Disloyal?

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

May this be so?

DON PEDRO

I will not think it.

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

DON JOHN

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

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

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 are to bid any man stand, in the prince's name.

Second Watchman

How if a' will not stand?

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

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

First 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. Well, you are to call at all the
ale-houses, and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.