



Much adoe about Nothing.

*As it hath been sundrie times publikely
acted by the right honourable, the Lord
Chamberlaine his seruants.*

Written by William Shakespeare.



L O N D O N
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1600.

Much Ado About Nothing, William Shakespeare
Adapted by M. Kuhlman for RFHS Drama Production

Time And Place Written · 1598, England

Date Of First Publication · 1600

Setting (Time) · The sixteenth century

Setting (Place) · Messina, Sicily, on and around Governor Leonato's estate

Plot Summary: *Adapted from SparkNotes

Leonato, a kindly, respectable nobleman, lives in the idyllic Italian town of Messina. Leonato shares his house with his lovely young daughter, Hero, his playful, clever niece, Beatrice, and his elderly brother, Antonio (who is Beatrice's mother). As the play begins, Leonato prepares to welcome some friends home from a war. The friends include Don Pedro, a prince who is a close friend of Leonato, and two fellow soldiers: Claudio, a well-respected young nobleman, and Benedick, a clever man who constantly makes witty jokes, often at the expense of his friends. Don John, Don Pedro's illegitimate brother, is part of the crowd as well. Don John is sullen and bitter and makes trouble for the others. When the soldiers arrive at Leonato's home, Claudio quickly falls in love with Hero. Meanwhile, Benedick and Beatrice resume the war of witty insults that they have carried on with each other in the past. Claudio and Hero pledge their love to one another and decide to be married. To pass the time in the week before the wedding, the lovers and their friends decide to play a game. They want to get Beatrice and Benedick, who are clearly meant for each other, to stop arguing and fall in love. Their tricks prove successful, and Beatrice and Benedick soon fall secretly in love with each other. But Don John has decided to disrupt everyone's happiness. He has his companion Borachio make love to Margaret, Hero's serving woman, at Hero's window in the darkness of the night, and he brings Don Pedro and Claudio to watch. Believing that he has seen Hero being unfaithful to him, the enraged Claudio humiliates Hero by suddenly accusing her of lechery on the day of their wedding and abandoning her at the altar. Hero's stricken family members decide to pretend that she died suddenly of shock and grief and to hide her away while they wait for the truth about her innocence to come to light. In the aftermath of the rejection, Benedick and Beatrice finally confess their love to one another. Fortunately, the night watchmen overhear Borachio bragging about his crime. Dogberry and Verges, the heads of the local police, ultimately arrest both Borachio and Conrad, another of Don John's followers. Everyone learns that Hero is really innocent, and Claudio, who believes she is dead, grieves for her. Leonato tells Claudio that, as punishment, he wants Claudio to tell everybody in the city how innocent Hero was. He also wants Claudio to marry Leonato's "niece"—a girl who, he says, looks much like the dead Hero. Claudio goes to church with the others, preparing to marry the mysterious, masked woman he thinks is Hero's cousin. When Hero reveals herself as the masked woman, Claudio is overwhelmed with joy. Benedick then asks Beatrice if she will marry him, and after some arguing they agree. The joyful lovers all have a merry dance before they celebrate their double wedding.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: Outside the estate, in front of the villa

Scene 2: A small room in Leonato's villa

Scene 3: A small room in Leonato's villa

ACT II

Scene 1: Masked ball / Hall at the estate.

Scene 2: Masked ball / Hall at the estate.

Scene 3: In the orchard of the estate.

ACT III

Scene 1: Outside the estate, in a garden.

Scene 2: Outside the estate/On a street

Scene 3: At night, outside the wall of the estate.

Scene 5: A small room in Leonato's villa

ACT IV

Scene 1: Outside the estate, in front of the villa

Scene 2: In a prison

ACT V

Scene 1: Outside the estate, in front of the villa

Scene 2: Outside the estate, in a garden.

Scene 3: A Church

Scene 4: Masked ball / Hall at the estate.

CHARACTER LIST:

Beatrice - Leonato's niece and Hero's cousin. Beatrice is "a pleasant-spirited lady" with a very sharp tongue. She is generous and loving, but, like Benedick, continually mocks other people with elaborately tooled jokes and puns. She wages a war of wits against Benedick and often wins the battles. At the outset of the play, she appears content never to marry.

Benedick - An aristocratic soldier who has recently been fighting under Don Pedro, and a friend of Don Pedro and Claudio. Benedick is very witty, always making jokes and puns. He carries on a "merry war" of wits with Beatrice, but at the beginning of the play he swears he will never fall in love or marry.

Claudio - A young soldier who has won great acclaim fighting under Don Pedro during the recent wars. Claudio falls in love with Hero upon his return to Messina. His unfortunately suspicious nature makes him quick to believe evil rumors and hasty to despair and take revenge.

Hero - The beautiful young daughter of Leonato and the cousin of Beatrice. Hero is lovely, gentle, and kind. She falls in love with Claudio when he falls for her, but when Don John slanders her and Claudio rashly takes revenge, she suffers terribly.

Don Pedro - An important nobleman from Aragon, sometimes referred to as "Prince." Don Pedro is a longtime friend of Leonato, Hero's father, and is also close to the soldiers who have been fighting under him—the younger Benedick and the very young Claudio. Don Pedro is generous, courteous, intelligent, and loving to his friends, but he is also quick to believe evil of others and hasty to take revenge. He is the most politically and socially powerful character in the play.

Leonato/Leonata - A respected, well-to-do, elderly noble at whose home, in Messina, Italy, the action is set. Leonato is the father/mother of Hero and the uncle of Beatrice. As governor of Messina, he/she is second in social power only to Don Pedro.

Don John - The illegitimate brother of Don Pedro; sometimes called "the Bastard." Don John is melancholy and sullen by nature, and he creates a dark scheme to ruin the happiness of Hero and Claudio. He is the villain of the play; his evil actions are motivated by his envy of his brother's social authority.

Margaret - Hero's serving woman, who unwittingly helps Borachio and Don John deceive Claudio into thinking that Hero is unfaithful. Unlike Ursula, Hero's other lady-in-waiting, Margaret is lower class. Though she is honest, she does have some dealings with the villainous world of Don John: her lover is the mistrustful and easily bribed Borachio. Also unlike Ursula, Margaret loves to break decorum, especially with bawdy jokes and teases.

Borachio - An associate of Don John. Borachio is the lover of Margaret, Hero's serving woman. He conspires with Don John to trick Claudio and Don Pedro into thinking that Hero is unfaithful to Claudio. His name means "drunkard" in Italian, which might serve as a subtle direction to the actor playing him.

Dogberry - The constable in charge of the Watch, or chief policeman, of Messina. Dogberry is very sincere and takes his job seriously, but he has a habit of using exactly the wrong word to convey his meaning. Dogberry is one of the few "middling sort," or middle-class characters, in the play, though his desire to speak formally and elaborately like the noblemen becomes an occasion for parody.

Verges - The deputy to Dogberry, chief policeman of Messina.

Antonia - Leonato's elderly brother and Hero's aunt. She is Beatrice's mother.

Ursula - One of Hero's waiting women.

Sexton - The judge who concludes Don John & Borachio's guilt.

Act I, Scene 1- Before LEONATO'S house/in front of the estate

At rise, all are in the garden, enjoying picnics, chatting, etc.

[Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a Messenger]

Messenger. My lord!

Leonato. I learn in this letter that Don Peter 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. I find *here* that Don Peter hath bestowed much honor on a young Florentine called Claudio.

Messenger. 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.

Messenger. I have already delivered him letters, and there appears much joy in him; there are no faces truer than those that are so washed. How much better is it to weep at joy than to joy at weeping!

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

Messenger. I know none of that name, lady.

Hero. (laughing) 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, and a good soldier too, lady.

Beatrice. (mockingly) 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. 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. (*throws arms around Hero*) 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 keep 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*]

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. (*They hug*)

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.

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

Don Pedro. 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.
(*everyone rejoices*)

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?

Don Pedro. Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

[*Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO*]

Claudio. Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

Benedick. I noted her not; but I looked on her.

Claudio. Is she not a modest young lady?

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

Claudio. No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

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

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

Benedick. Would you *buy* her, that you inquire after her?

Claudio. Can the world buy such a jewel?

Benedick. Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow?

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? In faith, hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap
with suspicion? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again?

[*Re-enter DON PEDRO*]

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

Benedick. You hear, Count Claudio: 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.

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.

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!

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

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

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

Don Pedro. Prepare to Leonardos. Tell him I will not fail him at supper for indeed he hath made great preparation.

Benedick. Examine your conscience!

[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. 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]

Act I, Scene II - A room in Leonato's villa.

[Enter LEONATO and ANTONIA, meeting]

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

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

Leonato. Are they good?

Antonia. Indeed! The prince and Count Claudio, walking in an alley in mine orchard, were thus much overheard by a man of mine: the prince discovered to Claudio that he loved my niece your daughter and meant to acknowledge it this night in a dance: 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. [Enter Attendants] Cousins, you know what you have to do.

[Exeunt]

Act I, Scene 3 - The same

Don John. [On stage already] Who comes here? [Enter BORACHIO] What news, Borachio?

Borachio. I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage!

Don John. Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

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. How came you to this?

Borachio. While out walking I hath 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 sure, and will assist me?

Borachio. To the death, my lord.

Don John. Shall we go prove what's to be done?

Borachio. I'll wait upon your lordship.

[*Exeunt*]

Act II, Scene 1 - A hall in LEONATO'S villa.

[*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.

Beatrice. Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face: I had rather lie in the woolen.

Leonato. You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

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

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.

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. [To HERO] Daughter, remember what I told you: if the prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer. [To BEATRICE] Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

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

Leonato. Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

Beatrice. I have a good eye, uncle; I can see a church by daylight [*all laugh*]

Leonato. The revellers are entering: 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?

[*ALL begin to dance & enjoy music – Choreographed round dance...*]

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

Hero. Why, then, your visor should be thatched.

Don Pedro. Speak low, if you speak love.

[*Drawing her aside*]

Ursula. I know you well enough; you are Signiora Antonia.

Antonia. At a word, I am not.

Ursula. I know you by the waggling of your head.

Antonia. To tell you true, I counterfeit her.

Ursula. You could never do her so ill-well, unless you were the very woman.
Here's her dry hand up and down: you are she, you are she.

Antonia. At a word, I am not.

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

[*Drawing her aside*]

Beatrice. Will you not tell me who told you so?

Benedick. [*In a thick accent*] 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. [*mocking his accent*] 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; 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! [*Following the dancers & 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.

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: 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. Farewell, therefore, Hero!

[Re-enter BENEDICK]

Benedick. Count Claudio?

Claudio. Yea, the same.

Benedick. Come, will you go with me?

Claudio. Whither?

Benedick. About your own business!

Claudio. I wish him joy of her.

Benedick. But did you think the prince would have served you thus?

Claudio. I pray you, leave me. [Exit]

Benedick. Alas, poor hurt fowl! 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.

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

Benedick. O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the prince's jester, that I was duller than a great thaw; huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs: if her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her; she would infect to the north star!

I would to God some scholar would conjure her; for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary; and people sin upon purpose, because they would go thither; so, indeed, all disquiet, horror and perturbation follows her.

Don Pedro. Look, here she comes.

[Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO]

Benedick. Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on; I will fetch you a tooth-picker now from the furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester John's foot, fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard, do you any embassy to the Pigmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

Don Pedro. None, but to desire your good company.

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

[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.

[They kiss & all applaud]

Don Pedro. In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

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

Claudio. And so she doth, cousin.

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

Don Pedro. Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

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

Don Pedro. Will you have me, lady?

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

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

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

Don Pedro. By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

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

Don Pedro. She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

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

Don Pedro. She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

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

Don Pedro. County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

Claudio. Tomorrow, my lord: time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

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

Don Pedro. 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. *[All laugh]* 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 unhopfullest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him; he is of a noble strain, of approved valour and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will so practise on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer: his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

[Exeunt]

Act II, Scene 2 – (the same) A hall in LEONATO'S villa.

[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?

Don John. Only to despise them, I will endeavour anything.

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

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

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

Don John. I will presently go learn their day of marriage.

[Exeunt]

Act II, Scene 3 – LEONATO'S Orchard

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 tabour and the pipe: 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 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. See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

Claudio. O, very well, my lord:

Don Pedro. *[clearly to bait Benedick]* 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?

Don Pedro. Maybe she doth but counterfeit.

Claudio. Faith, like enough.

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

Don Pedro. Why, what effects of passion shows she?

Claudio. *[Leaning in to whisper]* Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

Leonato. What effects, my lord? 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 trick, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Claudio. And she is exceeding wise.

Don Pedro. In everything but in loving Benedick!

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

Don Pedro. I pray you, tell Benedick of it, and hear what a' will say.

Leonato. Were it good, think you?

Claudio. Hero thinks surely she will die; for she says she will die, if he love her not, and she will die, ere she make her love known, and she will die, if he woo her!

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

[Benedick shouts "Ohhh!" from his hidden spot and all men look as he hides. BENEDICK makes a bird noise to cover up his misstep. The men mock him without him seeing...]

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.

Don Pedro. I love Benedick well; and I could wish he would modestly examine himself, to see how much he is unworthy so good a lady.

Leonato. My lord, will you walk? dinner is ready.

[They rise to exit and speak to one another]

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 Beatrice 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. 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. You have no stomach, signior: fare you well.

[BEATRICE Exit]

Benedick. Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner;' there's a double meaning in that!

[BENEDICK Exit]

Act III, Scene 1: LEONATO'S garden.

[Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA – BEATRICE is on the opposite side of the garden to overhear]

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!

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

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. 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]

Act III, Scene 2: A room in LEONATO'S house

[Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO – mocking BENEDICK]

Benedick. Gallants, I am not as I have been.

Leonato. So say I. methinks you are sadder.

Claudio. I hope he be in love. That's as much as to say, the sweet youth's in love.

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.

Benedick. 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 – All snicker*]

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 hi

Don Pedro. What's the matter?

Don John. [*To CLAUDIO – pulls them aside*] Means your lordship to be married to-morrow?

Don Pedro. You know he does.

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

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

Don John. You may think I love you not: let that appear hereafter, and aim better at me by that I now will manifest. For my brother, I think he holds you well, and in dearness of heart hath help to effect your ensuing marriage;—surely suit ill spent and labour ill bestowed.

Don Pedro. Why, what's the matter?

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

Claudio. Who, Hero?

Don 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. [*Astonished & appalled*] May this be so?

Don Pedro. I will not think it.

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

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

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

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

Don Pedro. O day untowardly turned!

Claudio. O mischief strangely thwarting!

Don John. O plague right well prevented! so will you say when you have seen the sequel.
[*ALL Exeunt*]

Act III, Scene 3: A street/ Outside the villa

[*Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES with the Watchmen*]

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 shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the prince's name.

Second Watchman. How if he will not stand?

Dogberry. Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go.

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.

Watchman. We will rather sleep than talk.

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. 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.

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. 'Tis very true.

Dogberry. Ha, ha, ha! 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.

[*Dogberry & Verges begin to exit*]

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

[Dogberry & Verges reenter to startle the Watchmen]

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 CONRADE]

Borachio. What Conrade!

Watchman. *[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.

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

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

Conrade. Is it possible that any villany should be so dear?

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

Conrade. I wonder at it.

Borachio. That shows thou art unconfirmed. Thou knowest that the fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a cloak, is nothing to a man.

Conrade. Yes, it is apparel.

Borachio. I mean, the fashion.

Conrade. Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

Borachio. Tush! I may as well say the fool's the fool. But seest thou not what a deformed thief this fashion is? Didst thou not hear somebody?

Conrade. No; 'twas the vane on the house.

Borachio. Not so, neither: 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.

Conrade. And thought they Margaret was Hero?

Borachio. Two of them did, the prince and Claudio; but the devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his oaths, which first possessed them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my villany, which did confirm any slander that Don John had made, away went Claudio enraged; swore he would meet her, as he was appointed, next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'er night and send her home again without a husband.

[*Jumping out to arrest them!*]

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*]

Act III, Scene 5: *Another room in LEONATO'S house. (Scene 4 cut)*

[*Enter LEONATO, with DOGBERRY and VERGES*]

Leonato. What would you with me, honest neighbours?

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

Leonato. What is it, my good friends? I would fain know what you have to say.

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: Well said, i' faith, neighbor.

Verges: Well, God's a good man; an two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. All men are not alike; alas, good neighbour!

Leonato. Indeed, neighbour, he comes too short of you.

Dogberry. Gifts that God gives.

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. I would fain know what you have to say.

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. Drink some wine ere you go: fare you well.

[*Exeunt LEONATO*]

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

Verges. And we must do it wisely.

[*Exeunt*]

Act IV, Scene 1: A church.

[*Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, LEONATO, FRIAR FRANCIS,*
[*In place - CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, HERO, BEATRICE, and Attendants*]

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

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

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

Don Pedro. Nothing, unless you render her again.

Claudio. Sweet prince, you learn me noble thankfulness. There, Leonato, take her back again: Give not this rotten orange to your friend; She's but the sign and semblance of her honour. Behold how like a maid she blushes here! O, what authority and show of truth Can cunning sin cover itself withal! Comes not that blood as modest evidence To witness simple virtue? She knows the heat of a luxurious bed; Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

Leonato. What do you mean, my lord?

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

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

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

Hero. And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

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

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

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

Claudio. To make you answer truly to your name.

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

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

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

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

Don John. Fie, fie! they are not to be named, my lord, Not to be spoke of;
There is not chastity enough in language Without offence to utter them.

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

[HERO swoons & faints]

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]

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

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!

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 open thine eyes: For, did I think thou wouldst not quickly
die, Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames, Myself would,
on the rearward of reproaches, Strike at thy life. Grieved I, I had but one?
Child I for that at frugal nature's frame? O, one too much by thee! Why
had I one? Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?

This shame derives itself from unknown loins? But mine and mine I loved
and mine I praised And mine that I was proud on, mine so much That I
myself was to myself not mine, Valuing of her,—why, she, O, she is fallen
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea Hath drops too few to wash her clean
again And salt too little which may season give To her foul-tainted flesh!

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

Beatrice. O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

Benedick. Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

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

Leonato. 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 [—] Trust not my reading nor my observations,
Which with experimental seal doth warrant The tenor of my book; trust not my
age, My reverence, calling, nor divinity, If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
Under some biting error. Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

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

Friar Francis. There is some strange misprision in the princes.

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

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: Upon the instant that she was accused, Shall be lamented, pitied and excused Of every hearer: for it so falls out, 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 apparell'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, And wish he had not so accused her. The supposition of the lady's death Will quench the wonder of her infamy: And if it sort not well, you may conceal her, As best befits her wounded reputation, In some reclusive and religious life, Out of all eyes, tongues, minds and injuries.

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

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

Friar Francis. 'Tis well consented: presently away; [*To HERO*] 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. 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. [*They kiss*]

Benedick. Come, bid me do anything for thee.

Beatrice. Kill Claudio.

Benedick. Ha! not for the wide world.

Beatrice. You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

Benedick. Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

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

Benedick. Beatrice,—

Beatrice. In faith, I will go.

Benedick. We'll be friends first.

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

Benedick. Is Claudio thine enemy?

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

Benedick. Hear me, Beatrice,—

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

Benedick. Nay, but, Beatrice,—

Beatrice. Sweet Hero! She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone. He is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

Benedick. 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. Go, comfort your cousin: I must say she is dead: and so, farewell.

[*Exeunt*]

Act IV, Scene 2 - A prison.

[Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and Sexton, in gowns; and] [p]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.

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

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

Borachio. Borachio.

Dogberry. Pray, write down, Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

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

Dogberry. Write down, master gentleman Conrade. Masters, it is proved already that you are little better than false knaves; 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.

Borachio. Sir, I say to you we are none.

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

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

Dogberry. Yea, 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.

Sexton. What else?

Watchman. This is all.

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

[Exit]

Dogberry. Come, let them be opinioned.

Verges. Let them be in the hands—

Conrade. Off, coxcomb!

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

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

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

[Exeunt]

Act V, Scene 1 - 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, Which falls into mine ears as profitless As water in a sieve: give not me counsel; Nor let no comforter delight mine ear But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine. Bring me a father that so loved his child, Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine, And bid him speak of patience; But there is no such man: for, brother, men Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it, Their counsel turns to passion, which Charm ache with air and agony with words: For there was never yet philosopher That could endure the toothache patiently,

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. My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;
And that shall Claudio know; so shall the prince And all of them that thus dishonour her.

Antonia. Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

[Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO]

Don Pedro. Good den, good den.

Claudio. Good day to both of you.

Leonato. Hear you. my lords,—

Don Pedro. We have some haste, Leonato.

Leonato. Some haste, my lord! 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:—
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 flear and jest at me: I speak not like a dotard nor a fool,
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.

Antonia. He shall kill two of us, and men indeed: But that's no matter; let him kill one first;
I'll whip you from your foining fence; Nay, as I am a gentlewoman, I will.

Leonato. Sister,—

Antonia. Content yourself. God knows I loved my niece; And she is dead, slander'd to death
by villains, Scrambling, out-facing, fashion-monging boys, That lie and cog and flout,
deprave and slander. 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.

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

[*Exeunt LEONATO and ANTONIA*]

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

[*Enter BENEDICK*]

Claudio. Now, signior, what news?

Benedick. Good day, my lord.

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

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

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. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Fare you well, boy: you know my mind. [*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.

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

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

Claudio. Hearken after their offence, my lord.

Don Pedro. Officers, what offence have these men done?

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

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

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

Don Pedro. Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

Claudio. I have drunk poison while 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 villainy.

Claudio. Sweet Hero!

Dogberry. Come, bring away the plaintiffs: by this time our sexton hath informed 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 ANTONIA, with the Sexton]

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

Borachio. If you would know your wronger, look on me.

Leonato. Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast kill'd mine innocent child?

Borachio. Yea, even I alone.

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

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

Don Pedro. By my soul, nor I:

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

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

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

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

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

Leonato. I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

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

Leonato. There's for thy pains. [*hands him a coin*]

Dogberry. God save the foundation!

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

Dogberry. I leave an arrant knave with your worship; which I beseech your worship to correct yourself, for the example of others. God 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.

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

Don Pedro. We will not fail.

Claudio. To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

Leonato. [*To the Watch*] Bring you these fellows on. We'll talk with Margaret, How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.

[*Exeunt, severally*]

Act V, Scene 2 - LEONATO'S garden.

[*Enter BENEDICK*]

Benedick. [*Writing on a piece of paper and singing badly to himself.*]

The god of love, That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me, How pitiful I deserve,—
[*speaking*] 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 '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. [*she interrupts the kiss*]

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?

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! 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. So much for praising myself, who, I myself will bear witness, is praiseworthy: and now tell me, how doth your cousin?

Beatrice. Very ill.

Benedick. And how do you?

Beatrice. Very ill too.

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

[*Enter URSULA*]

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

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*]

Act V, Scene 3 – a church/tomb

[*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and Friar*]

Claudio. Is this the monument of Leonato?

Friar. 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.
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.

Don Pedro. Good morrow, masters; put your torches out: The wolves have prey'd; and look, the gentle day, Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey. Thanks to you all, and leave us: fare you well.

Claudio. Good morrow, masters: each his several way.

Don Pedro. Come, let us hence; And then to Leonato's we will go.

[Exeunt]

Act V, Scene 4 – The hall of LEONATO'S house.

[Enter LEONATO, ANTONIA, BENEDICK, BEATRICE,
[p]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.

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, 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.

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. 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.

[Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, and two or three others]

Friar Francis. And my help. Here comes the prince and Claudio.

Don Pedro. Good morrow to this fair assembly.

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

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.

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

Benedick. Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

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

Benedick. Do not you love me?

Beatrice. Why, no; no more than reason.

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

Beatrice. Do not you love me?

Benedick. Troth, no; no more than reason.

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

Benedick. They swore that you were almost sick for me.

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

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

Beatrice. No, truly, but in friendly recompense. *[they shake hands]*

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. [*they each read one another's letters*]

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; and therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it; for man
is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion. [*they kiss*]

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.

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

Leonato. We'll have dancing afterward.

Benedick. First, of my word; therefore play, music. Prince, thou art sad; get thee a
wife, get thee a wife: there is no staff more reverend than one tipped with horn.

[*Enter a Messenger*]

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

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

[*Dance & Celebrate*]

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