MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

By William Shakespeare

Edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine

Folger Shakespeare Library

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From the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library

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Readers of the New Folger Editions are part of this ongoing process of “taking up Shakespeare,” finding our own thoughts and feelings in language that strikes us as old or unusual and, for that very reason, new. We still struggle to keep up with a writer who could think a mile a minute, whose words paint pictures that shift like clouds. These expertly edited texts are presented to the public as a resource for study, artistic adaptation, and enjoyment. By making the classic texts of the New Folger Editions available in electronic form as Folger Digital Texts, we place a trusted resource in the hands of anyone who wants them.

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I want to express my deep thanks to editors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine for creating these indispensable editions of Shakespeare’s works, which incorporate the best of textual scholarship with a richness of commentary that is both inspired and engaging. Readers who want to know more about Shakespeare and his plays can follow the paths these distinguished scholars have tread by visiting the Folger either in-person or online, where a range of physical and digital resources exist to supplement the material in these texts. I commend to you these words, and hope that they inspire.

Michael Witmore
Director, Folger Shakespeare Library
Until now, with the release of the Folger Digital Texts, readers in search of a free online text of Shakespeare’s plays had to be content primarily with using the Moby™ Text, which reproduces a late-nineteenth century version of the plays. What is the difference? Many ordinary readers assume that there is a single text for the plays: what Shakespeare wrote. But Shakespeare’s plays were not published the way modern novels or plays are published today: as a single, authoritative text. In some cases, the plays have come down to us in multiple published versions, represented by various Quartos (Qq) and by the great collection put together by his colleagues in 1623, called the First Folio (F). There are, for example, three very different versions of Hamlet, two of King Lear, Henry V, Romeo and Juliet, and others. Editors choose which version to use as their base text, and then amend that text with words, lines or speech prefixes from the other versions that, in their judgment, make for a better or more accurate text.

Other editorial decisions involve choices about whether an unfamiliar word could be understood in light of other writings of the period or whether it should be changed; decisions about words that made it into Shakespeare’s text by accident through four hundred years of printings and misprinting; and even decisions based on cultural preference and taste. When the Moby™ Text was created, for example, it was deemed “improper” and “indecent” for Miranda to chastise Caliban for having attempted to rape her. (See The Tempest, 1.2: “Abhorred slave,/Which any print of goodness wilt not take,/Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee…”). All Shakespeare editors at the time took the speech away from her and gave it to her father, Prospero.

The editors of the Moby™ Shakespeare produced their text long before scholars fully understood the proper grounds on which to make the thousands of decisions that Shakespeare editors face. The Folger Library Shakespeare Editions, on which the Folger Digital Texts depend, make this editorial process as nearly transparent as is possible, in contrast to older texts, like the Moby™, which hide editorial interventions. The reader of the Folger Shakespeare knows where the text has been altered because editorial interventions are signaled by square brackets (for example, from Othello: “[If she in chains of magic were not bound,]”), half-square brackets (for example, from Henry V: “With [blood] and sword and fire to win your...”)

Textual Introduction
By Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine
right,”), or angle brackets (for example, from Hamlet: “O farewell, honest <soldier> Who hath relieved/you?”). At any point in the text, you can hover your cursor over a bracket for more information.

Because the Folger Digital Texts are edited in accord with twenty-first century knowledge about Shakespeare’s texts, the Folger here provides them to readers, scholars, teachers, actors, directors, and students, free of charge, confident of their quality as texts of the plays and pleased to be able to make this contribution to the study and enjoyment of Shakespeare.
The primary plot of *Much Ado About Nothing* turns on the courtship and scandal involving young Hero and her suitor, Claudio, but the witty war of words between Claudio’s friend Benedick and Hero’s cousin Beatrice often takes center stage.

Set in Messina, the play begins as Don Pedro’s army returns after a victory. Benedick, a gentleman soldier, resumes a verbal duel with Beatrice, the niece of Messina’s governor, Leonato. Count Claudio is smitten by Leonato’s daughter, Hero. After Don Pedro woos her in disguise for Claudio, the two young lovers plan to marry in a week. To fill in the time until the wedding, Don Pedro and the others set about tricking Benedick and Beatrice into falling in love with each other. Meanwhile, Don Pedro’s disgruntled brother, Don John, plots to ruin Hero and halt her wedding. Claudio believes Don John’s deception, is convinced Hero has a lover, and, at the wedding, brutally rejects her.

With Hero in hiding and falsely reported dead, Beatrice persuades Benedick to fight Claudio. Tragedy is averted when the bumbling city watch, having discovered Don John’s treachery, arrives and clears Hero’s name. With Claudio forgiven, both couples are ready to get married.
Characters in the Play

LEONATO, Governor of Messina
HERO, his daughter
BEATRICE, his niece
LEONATO’S BROTHER
MARGARET
URSULA \{ waiting gentlewomen to Hero \}

DON PEDRO, Prince of Aragon
COUNT CLAUDIO, a young lord from Florence
SIGNIOR BENEDICK, a gentleman from Padua
BALTHASAR
SIGNIOR ANTONIO

DON JOHN, Don Pedro’s brother

BORACHIO
CONRADE \{ Don John’s followers \}

DOGGERY, Master Constable in Messina
VERGES, Dogberry’s partner
GEORGE SEACOAL, leader of the Watch
FIRST WATCHMAN
SECOND WATCHMAN
SEXTON
FRIAR FRANCIS

MESSENGER to Leonato
MESSENGER to Don Pedro
BOY

Musicians, Lords, Attendants, Son to Leonato’s brother
Enter Leonato, Governor of Messina, Hero his daughter, and Beatrice his niece, with a Messenger.

LEONATO, [with a letter] I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina.

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

LEONATO How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

MESSENGER But few of any sort, and none of name.

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

MESSENGER Much deserved on his part, and equally remembered by Don Pedro. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion. He hath indeed bettered expectation than you must 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, even so much that joy could not show itself modest enough without a badge of bitterness.
LEONATO Did he break out into tears?

MESSENGER In great measure.

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

BEATRICE 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 He set up his bills here in Messina and challenged Cupid at the flight, and my uncle’s Fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for Cupid and challenged him at the bird-bolt. I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? For indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

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

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

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

MESSENGER And a good soldier too, lady.

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

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

BEATRICE It is so indeed. He is no less than a stuffed man, but for the stuffing—well, we are all mortal.
LEONATO   You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is
a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and
her. They never meet but there’s a skirmish of wit
between them.

BEATRICE   Alas, he gets nothing by that. In our last
conflict, four of his five wits went halting off, and
now is the whole man governed with one, so that if
he have wit enough to keep himself warm, let him
bear it for a difference between himself and his
horse, for it is all the wealth that he hath left to
be known a reasonable creature. 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 gentleman is not in your
books.

BEATRICE   No. An he were, I would burn my study. But
I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no
young squarer now that 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 he 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, [Prince of Aragon, with] Claudio, Benedick, Balthasar, and John the Bastard.

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

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

PRINCE  You embrace your charge too willingly. [Turning to Hero.] 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.

PRINCE  You have it full, Benedick. We may guess by this what you are, being a man. Truly the lady fathers herself.—Be happy, lady, for you are like an honorable father.

[Leonato and the Prince move aside.]

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?

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.
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.

"Leonato and the Prince come forward."

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

LEONATO If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn. "To Don John." Let me bid you welcome, my lord, being reconciled to the Prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

DON JOHN I thank you. I am not of many words, but I thank you.

LEONATO Please it your Grace lead on?

PRINCE Your hand, Leonato. We will go together.

"All" exit 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 lik’st her.

BENEDICK: Would you buy her that you enquire after her?

CLAUDIO: Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK: Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow? Or do you play the flouting jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder and Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in what key shall a man take you to go in the song?

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

BENEDICK: 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 threescore
again? Go to, i’ faith, an thou wilt needs thrust
thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it, and sigh
away Sundays. Look, Don Pedro is returned to seek
you.

Enter Don Pedro, [Prince of Aragon.]

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PRINCE What secret hath held you here that you followed
not to Leonato’s?

BENEDICK I would your Grace would constrain me to
tell.

PRINCE I charge thee on thy allegiance.

BENEDICK You hear, Count Claudio, I can be secret as
a dumb man, I would have you think so, but on my
allegiance—mark you this, on my allegiance—he
is in love. With who? Now, that is your Grace’s part.
Mark how short his answer is: with Hero, Leonato’s
short daughter.

CLAUDIO If this were so, so were it uttered.

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.

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

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

PRINCE 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.

PRINCE 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.
Prince  Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the
despite of beauty.
Claudio  And never could maintain his part but in the
force of his will.
Benedick  That a woman conceived me, I thank her;
that she brought me up, I likewise give her most
humble thanks. But that I will have a recheat
winded in my forehead or hang my bugle in an
invisible 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.
Prince  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.
Prince  Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou
wilt prove a notable argument.
Benedick  If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and
shoot at me, and he that hits me, let him be clapped
on the shoulder and called Adam.
Prince  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.
BENEDICK  I look for an earthquake too, then.

PRINCE  Well, you will temporize with the hours. In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato’s.

BENEDICK  I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassage, and so I commit you—

CLAUDIO  To the tuition of God. From my house, if I had it—

PRINCE  The sixth of July. Your loving friend, Benedick.

BENEDICK  Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is sometimes guarded with fragments, and the guards are but slightly basted on neither.

CLAUDIO  Ere you flout old ends any further, examine your conscience. And so I leave you.  

He exits.

FTLN 0284  My liege, your Highness now may do me good.

PRINCE  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?

PRINCE  No child but Hero; she’s his only heir.

CLAUDIO  O, my lord, when you went onward on this ended action, I looked upon her with a soldier’s eye, that liked, but had a rougher task in hand than to drive liking to the name of love. But now I am returned and that war thoughts
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.

PRINCE

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. Was ’t not to this end
That thou began’st to twist so fine a story?

CLAUDIO

How sweetly you do minister to love,
That know love’s grief by his complexion!
But lest my liking might too sudden seem,
I would have salved it with a longer treatise.

PRINCE

What need the bridge much broader than the flood?
The fairest grant is the necessity.
Look what will serve is fit. ’Tis once, thou lovest,
And I will fit thee with the remedy.
I know we shall have reveling tonight.
I will assume thy part in some disguise
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 practice let us put it presently.

They exit.
Scene 2

Enter Leonato, meeting an old man, brother to Leonato.

LEONATO How now, brother, where is my cousin, your son? Hath he provided this music?

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

Are they good?

LEONATO'S BROTHER As the events stamps them, but they have a good cover; they show well outward. The Prince and Count Claudio, walking in a thick-pleached alley in mine orchard, were thus much overheard by a man of mine: the Prince 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.

Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

LEONATO'S BROTHER 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 Antonio's son, with a Musician and Attendants.

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

They exit.
Enter Sir John the Bastard, and Conrade, his companion.

CONRADE What the goodyear, my lord, why are you thus out of measure sad?

DON JOHN There is no measure in the occasion that breeds. Therefore the sadness is without limit.

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 wonder that thou, being, as thou sayst thou art, born under Saturn, goest about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief. I cannot hide what I am. I must be sad when I have cause, and smile at no man’s jests; eat when I have stomach, and wait for no man’s leisure; sleep when I am drowsy, and tend on no man’s business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humor.

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, where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself. It is needful that you frame the season for your own harvest.

DON JOHN I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any. In this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my
Much Ado About Nothing

CONRADE

DON JOHN

BORACHIO

DON JOHN

BORACHIO

DON JOHN

BORACHIO

CONRADE

DON JOHN

BORACHIO

DON JOHN

BORACHIO

DON JOHN

Enter Borachio.

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO

I came yonder from a great supper. The Prince your brother is royally entertained by Leonato, and I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

Marry, it is your brother’s right hand.

DON JOHN

Who, the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he.

DON JOHN

A proper squire. And who, and who? Which way looks he?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

Being entertained for a perfumer, as I was smoking a musty room, comes me the Prince and Claudio, hand in hand, in sad conference. I whipped me behind the arras, and there heard it agreed upon that the Prince should woo Hero for himself, and having obtained her, give her to Count Claudio.

DON JOHN

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

To the death, my lord.

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

We’ll wait upon your Lordship.

«They» exit.
Enter Leonato, his brother, Hero his daughter, and Beatrice his niece, with Ursula and Margaret.

LEONATO Was not Count John here at supper?

LEONATO’S BROTHER I saw him not.

BEATRICE How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am heartburned 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 goodwill.

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

LEONATO’S BROTHER 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 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. Therefore I will even take sixpence in earnest of the bearherd, and lead his apes into hell.

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.

LEONATO’S BROTHER, [to Hero]  Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

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

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

LEONATO, [to Hero] Daughter, remember what I told you. If the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

BEATRICE The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time. If the Prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything, and so dance out the answer. For hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly modest as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster till he sink into his grave.

Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

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

The revelers are entering, brother. Make good room.

Enter, [with a Drum,] Prince Pedro, Claudio, and Benedick, [Signior Antonio,] and Balthasar, [all in masks, with Borachio and Don] John.

PRINCE, [to Hero] Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend? [They begin to dance.]

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

PRINCE With me in your company?

HERO I may say so when I please.
FTLN 0514  PRINCE   And when please you to say so?
FTLN 0515  HERO   When I like your favor, for God defend the lute
FTLN 0516   should be like the case.
FTLN 0517  PRINCE   My visor is Philemon’s roof; within the house
FTLN 0518   is Jove.
FTLN 0519  HERO   Why, then, your visor should be thatched.
FTLN 0520  PRINCE   Speak low if you speak love.
FTLN 0521  BENEDICK,  [to Margaret]  Well, I would you did like me.
FTLN 0522  MARGARET  So would not I for your own sake, for I have
FTLN 0523   many ill qualities.
FTLN 0524  BENEDICK  Which is one?
FTLN 0525  MARGARET  I say my prayers aloud.
FTLN 0526  BENEDICK  I love you the better; the hearers may cry
FTLN 0527    “Amen.”
FTLN 0528  MARGARET  God match me with a good dancer.
FTLN 0529  BALTHASAR  Amen.
FTLN 0530  MARGARET  And God keep him out of my sight when the
FTLN 0531    dance is done. Answer, clerk.
FTLN 0532  BALTHASAR  No more words. The clerk is answered.
FTLN 0533  URSULA   I know you well enough. You are Signior
FTLN 0534   Antonio.
FTLN 0535  ANTONIO  At a word, I am not.
FTLN 0536  URSULA   I know you by the wagging of your head.
FTLN 0537  ANTONIO  To tell you true, I counterfeit him.
FTLN 0538  URSULA   You could never do him so ill-well unless you
FTLN 0539    were the very man. Here’s his dry hand up and
FTLN 0540    down. You are he, you are he.
FTLN 0541  ANTONIO  At a word, I am not.
FTLN 0542  URSULA   Come, come, do you think I do not know you
FTLN 0543    by your excellent wit? Can virtue hide itself? Go to,
mum, you are he. Graces will appear, and there’s an end.

"They move aside; Benedick and Beatrice move forward."

BEATRICE Will you not tell me who told you so?
BENEDICK No, you shall pardon me.
BEATRICE Nor will you not tell me who you are? Not now.
BENEDICK 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.
BEATRICE What’s he? 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 villainy, for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet. I would he had boarded me.
BENEDICK When I know the gentleman, I’ll tell him what you say.
BEATRICE Do, do. He’ll but break a comparison or two on me, which peradventure not marked or not laughed at strikes him into melancholy, and then there’s a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night. "Music for the dance." We must follow the leaders.
BENEDICK In every good thing.
BEATRICE Nay, if they lead to any ill, I will leave them at the next turning.

Dance. "Then" exit "all except Don John, Borachio, and Claudio."
Much Ado About Nothing

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ACT 2. SC. 1

BORACHIO

DON JOHN

CLAUDIO

DON JOHN

CLAUDIO

DON JOHN

CLAUDIO

BENEDICK

DON JOHN

CLAUDIO

BENEDICK

DON JOHN

BENEDICK

FTLN 0576 DON JOHN, [to Borachio] 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.

FTLN 0580 BORACHIO And that is Claudio. I know him by his bearing.

FTLN 0582 DON JOHN, [to Claudio] Are not you Signior Benedick?

FTLN 0584 CLAUDIO You know me well. I am he.

FTLN 0589 DON JOHN Signior, you are very near my brother in his love. He is enamored on Hero. I pray you dissuade him from her. She is no equal for his birth. You may do the part of an honest man in it.

FTLN 0592 DON JOHN Come, let us to the banquet. They exit. Claudio remains.

FTLN 0593 CLAUDIO, [unmasking] Thus answer I in name of Benedick, But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio. 'Tis certain so. The Prince woos for himself. Friendship is constant in all other things Save in the office and affairs of love. Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues. Let every eye negociate for itself And trust no agent, for beauty is a witch Against whose charms faith melteth into blood. This is an accident of hourly proof, Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore, Hero.

Enter Benedick.

FTLN 0600 BENEDICK Count Claudio?

FTLN 0605 CLAUDIO Yea, the same.

FTLN 0606 BENEDICK Come, will you go with me?

FTLN 0607 CLAUDIO Whither?
Much Ado About Nothing  

ACT 2. SC. 1  

CLAUDIO  He exits.

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. I wish him joy of her. Why, that’s spoken like an honest drover; so they sell bullocks. But did you think the Prince would have served you thus? I pray you, leave me. Ho, now you strike like the blind man. ’Twas the boy that stole your meat, and you’ll beat the post. If it will not be, I’ll leave you. 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.  

Enter the Prince, Hero, and Leonato.

PRINCE   Now, signior, where’s the Count? Did you see him?

BENEDICK    Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame. 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 goodwill of this young lady, and I offered him my company to a willow tree, either to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipped.

PRINCE    To be whipped? What’s his fault?
PRINCE Wilt thou make a trust a transgression? The transgression is in the stealer.

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

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

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

PRINCE 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! An oak but with one green leaf on it would have answered her. My very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the Prince’s 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 not marry her though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed. She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire, too. Come, talk not of her. You shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her, for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet
in hell as in a sanctuary, and people sin upon
purpose because they would go thither. So indeed
all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follows her.

Enter Claudio and Beatrice.

PRINCE    Look, here she comes.
BENEDICK  Will your Grace command me any service
to the world’s end? I will go on the slightest errand
now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send
me on. I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the
furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester
John’s foot, fetch you a hair off the great Cham’s
beard, do you any embassage to the Pygmies, rather
than hold three words’ conference with this harpy.
You have no employment for me?

PRINCE    None but to desire your good company.
BENEDICK  O God, sir, here’s a dish I love not! I cannot
endure my Lady Tongue.

He exits.

PRINCE    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.

PRINCE    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.

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

CLAUDIO   Not sad, my lord.

PRINCE    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.

PRINCE 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 goodwill 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
all 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.

PRINCE 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!”

PRINCE 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.

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

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

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

BEATRICE  I cry you mercy, uncle.—By your Grace’s 
         pardon. 

PRINCE  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 dreamt of unhappiness and 
         waked herself with laughing.

PRINCE  She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

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

PRINCE  She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

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

PRINCE  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 sevennight, and a time too brief, too, to have 
         all things answer my mind.

PRINCE, [to Claudio]  Come, you shake the head at so 
         long a breathing, but I warrant thee, Claudio, the 
         time shall not go dully by us. I will in the interim 
         undertake one of Hercules’ labors, which is to bring 
         Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a 
         mountain of affection, th’ one with th’ other. I 
         would fain have it a match, and I doubt not but to
fashion 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.

PRINCE And you too, gentle Hero?

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

PRINCE And Benedick is not the unhopeflestest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble strain, of approved valor, and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humor your cousin that she shall fall in love with Benedick.—And I, with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no 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.

They exit.

[Scene 2]

Enter Don John and Borachio.

DON JOHN It is so. The Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

BORACHIO Yea, my lord, but I can cross it.

DON JOHN Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be med’cinable 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.
Much Ado About Nothing

ACT 2. SC. 2

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

DON JOHN I remember.

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

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

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

DON JOHN What proof shall I make of that?

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

DON JOHN Only to despite them I will endeavor anything.

BORACHIO Go then, find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone. Tell them that you know that Hero loves me; intend a kind of zeal both to the Prince and Claudio, as in love of your brother’s honor, who hath made 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
Much Ado About Nothing

ACT 2. SC. 3

Much Ado About Nothing

FTLN 0849

of Hero’s disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

FTLN 0850

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

FTLN 0851

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

FTLN 0852

DON JOHN I will presently go learn their day of marriage.

FTLN 0853

They exit.

FTLN 0854

Scene 3

Enter Benedick alone.

FTLN 0855

BENEDICK Boy!

FTLN 0856

Enter Boy.

FTLN 0857

BOY Signor?

FTLN 0858

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

FTLN 0859

BOY I am here already, sir.

FTLN 0860

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

FTLN 0861

Boy exits.

FTLN 0862

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 falling in love—and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife, and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe; I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot 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 color it please God. Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbor.

(He hides.)

Enter Prince, Leonato, Claudio, and Balthasar with music.

PRINCE Come, shall we hear this music?
CLAUDIO Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is, As hushed on purpose to grace harmony!
PRINCE, aside to Claudio See you where Benedick hath hid himself?
CLAUDIO, aside to Prince O, very well my lord. The music ended, We’ll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth.
PRINCE Come, Balthasar, we’ll hear that song again.
BALTHASAR O, good my lord, tax not so bad a voice To slander music any more than once.
PRINCE  
It is the witness still of excellency
To put a strange face on his own perfection.
I pray thee, sing, and let me woo no more.

BALTHASAR
Because you talk of wooing, I will sing,
Since many a wooer doth commence his suit
To her he thinks not worthy, yet he woos,
Yet will he swear he loves.

PRINCE  Nay, pray thee, come,
Or if thou wilt hold longer argument,
Do it in notes.

BALTHASAR  Note this before my notes:
There’s not a note of mine that’s worth the noting.

PRINCE
Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks!
Note notes, forsooth, and nothing.
[Music plays.]

BENEDICK, [aside] Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished. 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.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey, nonny nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no mo,
Of dumps so dull and heavy.
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leavy.
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey, nonny nonny.

By my troth, a good song.

And an ill singer, my lord.

Ha, no, no, faith, thou sing’st well enough for a shift.

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

Yea, marry, dost thou hear, Balthasar? I pray thee get us some excellent music, for tomorrow night we would have it at the Lady Hero’s chamber window.

The best I can, my lord.

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

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

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.

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

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.

Maybe she doth but counterfeit.

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

PRINCE  Why, what effects of passion shows she?

CLAUDIO, [aside to Leonato]  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.

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

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

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

CLAUDIO, [aside to Prince]  He hath ta’en th’ infection.

Hath it up.

PRINCE  Hath she made her affection known to
Benedick?

LEONATO  No, and swears she never will. That’s her
torment.

CLAUDIO  ’Tis true indeed, so your daughter says. “Shall
I,” says she, “that have so oft encountered him with
scorn, write to him that I love him?”

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

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

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

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

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

Leonato  She doth indeed, my daughter says so, and  
the ecstasy hath so much overborne her that my  
daughter is sometimes afeared she will do a desperate  
outrage to herself. It is very true.

Prince  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.

Prince  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.

Prince  In everything but in loving Benedick.

Leonato  O, my lord, wisdom and blood combating in  
so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one that  
blood hath the victory. I am sorry for her, as I have  
just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

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

Leonato  Were it good, think you?

Claudio  Hero thinks surely she will die, for she says  
she will die if he love her not, and she will die ere  
she make her love known, and she will die if he woo  
hers rather than she will bate one breath of her  
accustomed crossness.
PRINCE   She doth well. If she should make tender of
    her love, ’tis very possible he’l scorn it, for the man,
    as you know all, hath a contemptible spirit.  
CLAUDIO  He is a very proper man.
PRINCE   He hath indeed a good outward happiness.
CLAUDIO  Before God, and in my mind, very wise.
PRINCE   He doth indeed show some sparks that are like
    wit.
CLAUDIO  And I take him to be valiant.
PRINCE   As Hector, I assure you, and in the managing
    of quarrels you may say he is wise, for either he
    avoids them with great discretion or undertakes
    them with a most Christianlike fear.
LEONATO  If he do fear God, he must necessarily keep
    peace. If he break the peace, he ought to enter into
    a quarrel with fear and trembling.
PRINCE   And so will he do, for the man doth fear God,
    howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests
    he will make. Well, I am sorry for your niece. Shall
    we go seek Benedick and tell him of her love?
CLAUDIO  Never tell him, my lord, let her wear it out
    with good counsel.
Nay, that’s impossible; she may wear her
    heart out first.
PRINCE   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.
    [Leonato, Prince, and Claudio begin to exit.]
CLAUDIO, [aside to Prince and Leonato]  If he do not
    dote on her upon this, I will never trust my
    expectation.
PRINCE,  [aside to Leonato]  Let there be the same net
    spread for her, and that must your daughter and her
    gentlewomen carry. The sport will be when they
hold one an opinion of another’s dotage, and no
such matter. That’s the scene that I would see,
which will be merely a dumb show. Let us send her
to call him in to dinner.

"Prince, Leonato, and Claudio exit."

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

BEATRICE: Ha! “Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.” There’s a double meaning in that. “I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me.” That’s as much as to say “Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks.” If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain; if I do not love her, I am a Jew. I will go get her picture.

**She exits.**

**He exits.**
Scene 1

*Enter Hero and two gentlewomen, Margaret and Ursula.*

**HERO**

FTLN 1123  
**HERO**

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor.

FTLN 1124  
**HERO**

There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice

FTLN 1125  
**HERO**

Proposing with the Prince and Claudio.

FTLN 1126  
**HERO**

Whisper her ear and tell her I and Ursula

FTLN 1127  
**HERO**

Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse

FTLN 1128  
**HERO**

Is all of her. Say that thou overheardst us,

FTLN 1129  
**HERO**

And bid her steal into the pleachèd bower

FTLN 1130  
**HERO**

Where honeysuckles ripened by the sun

FTLN 1131  
**HERO**

Forbid the sun to enter, like favorites

FTLN 1132  
**HERO**

Made proud by princes, that advance their pride

FTLN 1133  
**HERO**

Against that power that bred it. There will she hide

FTLN 1134  
**HERO**

her

FTLN 1135  
**HERO**

To listen our propose. This is thy office.

FTLN 1136  
**HERO**

Bear thee well in it, and leave us alone.

**MARGARET**

FTLN 1137  
**MARGARET**

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

FTLN 1138  
**MARGARET**

*She exits.*

FTLN 1139  
**HERO**

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,

FTLN 1140  
**HERO**

As we do trace this alley up and down,

FTLN 1141  
**HERO**

Our talk must only be of Benedick.

FTLN 1142  
**HERO**

When I do name him, let it be thy part

FTLN 1143  
**HERO**

To praise him more than ever man did merit.
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid’s crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay. Now begin,
For look where Beatrice like a lapwing runs
Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

Enter Beatrice, ’who hides in the bower.’

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

HERO, ’aside to Ursula’
Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.—
’They walk near the bower.’

No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful.
I know her spirits are as coy and wild
As haggards of the rock.
But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO
So says the Prince and my new-trothèd lord.

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

HERO
They did entreat me to acquaint her of it,
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,
Misprizing what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endeared.

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

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,
But she would spell him backward. If fair-faced,
She would swear the gentleman should be her
sister;
If black, why, Nature, drawing of an antic,
Made a foul blot; if tall, a lance ill-headed;
If low, an agate very vilely cut;
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moved with none.
So turns she every man the wrong side out,
And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

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

Out of myself, press me to death with wit. Therefore let Benedick, like covered fire, Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly. It were a better death than die with mocks, Which is as bad as die with tickling.

She would mock me into air. O, she would laugh me Out of myself, press me to death with wit. Therefore let Benedick, like covered fire, Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly. It were a better death than die with mocks, Which is as bad as die with tickling.

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

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

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.

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.

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

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

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

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

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

“They move away from the bower.”

URSULA, aside to Hero
She’s limed, I warrant you. We have caught her,
madam.

HERO, aside to Ursula
If it prove so, then loving goes by haps;
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

“Hero and Ursula exit.”

BEATRICE, coming forward
What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?

Stand I condemned 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.

She exits.

Scene 2

Enter Prince, Claudio, Benedick, and Leonato.

PRINCE I do but stay till your marriage be consummate,

and then go I toward Aragon.

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

PRINCE Nay, that would be as great a soil in the new gloss of your marriage as to show a child his new coat and forbid him to wear it. I will only be bold with Benedick for his company, for from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot he is all mirth. He
hath twice or thrice cut Cupid’s bowstring, and the
little hangman dare not shoot at him. He hath a
heart as sound as a bell, and his tongue is the
clapper, for what his heart thinks, his tongue
speaks.

BENEDICK Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO So say I. Methinks you are sadder.

CLAUDIO I hope he be in love.

PRINCE Hang him, truant! There’s no true drop of
blood in him to be truly touched with love. If he be
sad, he wants money.

BENEDICK I have the toothache.

PRINCE Draw it.

BENEDICK Hang it!

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

PRINCE What, sigh for the toothache?

LEONATO Where is but a humor or a worm.

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

CLAUDIO Yet say I, he is in love.

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

CLAUDIO If he be not in love with some woman, there
is no believing old signs. He brushes his hat o’
mornings. What should that bode?

PRINCE Hath any man seen him at the barber’s?

CLAUDIO No, but the barber’s man hath been seen
with him, and the old ornament of his cheek hath
already stuffed tennis balls.
Leonato: Indeed he looks younger than he did, by the loss of a beard.

Prince: Nay, he rubs himself with civet. Can you smell him out by that?

Claudio: That’s as much as to say, the sweet youth’s in love.

Prince: The greatest note of it is his melancholy.

Claudio: And when was he wont to wash his face?

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

Claudio: Nay, but his jesting spirit, which is now crept into a lute string and now governed by stops—Indeed, that tells a heavy tale for him. Conclude, conclude, he is in love.

Claudio: Nay, but I know who loves him.

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

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

Prince: She shall be buried with her face upwards.

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.

[Enter John the Bastard.]

Prince: 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 John the Bastard.

Don John: My lord and brother, God save you.

Prince: Good e’en, brother.

Don John: If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

Prince: In private?
DON JOHN: If it please you. Yet Count Claudio may hear, for what I would speak of concerns him.

PRINCE: What’s the matter?

DON JOHN: "to Claudio" Means your Lordship to be married tomorrow?

PRINCE: You know he does.

DON JOHN: I know not that, when he knows what I know.

PRINCE: To Claudio

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

PRINCE: 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 JOHN: Even she: Leonato’s Hero, your Hero, every man’s Hero.

CLAUDIO: Disloyal?

DON JOHN: The word is too good to paint out her wickedness. I could say she were worse. Think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it. Wonder not till further warrant. Go but with me tonight, you shall see her chamber window entered, even the night before her wedding day. If you love her then, tomorrow wed her. But it would better fit your honor to change your mind.

CLAUDIO, "to Prince" May this be so?

PRINCE: 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 anything tonight why I should not
marry her, tomorrow in the congregation, where I
should wed, there will I shame her.

PRINCE 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.

PRINCE 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.

"They exit."

Scene 3

Enter Dogberry and his compter Verges
with the Watch.

DOGGERY Are you good men and true?

VERGES Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer
great punishment, body and soul.

DOGBERY 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, neighbor
Dogberry.

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

FIRST WATCHMAN Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacoal,
for they can write and read.

DOGGERY Come hither, neighbor Seacoal. ‘Seacoal
steps forward.’ God hath blessed you with a good
name. To be a well-favored man is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature.

Seacoal: Both which, master constable—

Dogberry: You have. I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favor, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it, and for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch; 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.

Seacoal: How if he will not stand?

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

Verges: If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none of the Prince’s subjects.

Dogberry: True, and they are to meddle with none but the Prince’s subjects.—You shall also make no noise in the streets; for, for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable and not to be endured.

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

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

Seacoal: How if they will not?

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

If they make you not then the better answer, you may say they are not the men you took them for.

Seacoal: 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.

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

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.

You have been always called a merciful man,
partner.

Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will,
much more a man who hath any honesty in him.

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

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

Why, then depart in peace, and let the
child wake her with crying, for the ewe that will
not hear her lamb when it baas will never answer a
calf when he bleats.

'Tis very true.

This is the end of the charge. You, constable,
are to present the Prince’s own person. If you
meet the Prince in the night, you may stay him.

Nay, by 'r Lady, that I think he cannot.

Five shillings to one on 't, with any man that
knows the statutes, he may stay him—marry, not
without the Prince be willing, for indeed the watch
ought to offend no man, and it is an offense to stay a
man against his will.

By 'r Lady, I think it be so.

Ha, ah ha!—Well, masters, goodnight. An
there be any matter of weight chances, call up me.
Keep your fellows’ counsels and your own, and
goodnight.—Come, neighbor.

Dogberry and Verges begin to exit.
[SEACOAL:]  Well, masters, we hear our charge. Let us go sit here upon the church bench till two, and then all to bed.

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

[Dogberry and Verges] exit.

Enter Borachio and Conrade.

BORACHIO  What, Conrade!

[SEACOAL, aside] Peace, stir not.

BORACHIO  Conrade, I say!

CONRADE  Here, man, I am at thy elbow.

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

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

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


BORACHIO  Therefore know, I have earned of [Don] John a thousand ducats.

CONRADE  Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear?

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

CONRADE  I wonder at it.

BORACHIO  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.
CONRADE But seest thou not what a deformed thief this
fashion is?
FIRST WATCHMAN, aside I know that Deformed. He
has been a vile thief this seven year. He goes up and
down like a gentleman. I remember his name.
BORACHIO Didst thou not hear somebody?
CONRADE No, ’twas the vane on the house.
BORACHIO Seest thou not, I say, what a deformed thief
this fashion is, how giddily he turns about all the
hot bloods between fourteen and five-and-thirty,
sometimes fashioning them like Pharaoh’s soldiers
in the reechy painting, sometimes like god Bel’s
priests in the old church window, sometimes like
the shaven Hercules in the smirched worm-eaten
tapestry, where his codpiece seems as massy as his
club?
CONRADE All this I see, and I see that the fashion wears
out more apparel than the man. But art not thou
shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the
fashion?
BORACHIO Not so, neither. But know that I have tonight
wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero’s gentlewoman,
by the name of Hero. She leans me out at
her mistress’ chamber window, bids me a thousand
times goodnight. 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
amiable encounter.
CONRADE And thought they Margaret was Hero?
BORACHIO Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio,
but the devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his oaths, which first possessed them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my villainy, which did confirm any slander that Don John had made, away went Claudio enraged, swore he would meet her as he was appointed next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o’ernight and send her home again without a husband.

FIRST WATCHMAN  We charge you in the Prince’s name stand!

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

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

Enter Dogberry, Verges, and Second Watchman.

DOGBerry  Masters, masters—

FIRST WATCHMAN, to Borachio You’ll be made bring Deformed forth, I warrant you.

DOGBerry, to Borachio and Conrade  Masters, never speak, we charge you, let us obey you to go with us.

BORACHIO, to Conrade  We are like to prove a goodly commodity, being taken up of these men’s bills.

CONRADE  A commodity in question, I warrant you.—

Come, we’ll obey you.

They exit.
Scene 4

Enter Hero, and 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.  

MARGARET  Troth, I think your other rebato were better.

HERO  No, pray thee, good Meg, I’ll wear this.

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

HERO  My cousin’s a fool, and thou art another. I’ll wear none but this.

MARGARET  I like the new tire within excellently, if the hair were a thought browner; and your gown’s a most rare fashion, i’ faith. I saw the Duchess of Milan’s gown that they praise so.

HERO  O, that exceeds, they say.

MARGARET  By my troth, ’s but a nightgown respect of yours—cloth o’ gold, and cuts, and laced with silver, set with pearls, down sleeves, side sleeves, and skirts round underborne with a bluish tinsel. But for a fine, quaint, graceful, and excellent fashion, yours is worth ten on ’t.

HERO  God give me joy to wear it, for my heart is exceeding heavy.

MARGARET  ’Twill be heavier soon by the weight of a man.

HERO  Fie upon thee! Art not ashamed?

MARGARET  Of what, lady? Of speaking honorably? Is not marriage honorable in a beggar? Is not your lord honorable without marriage? I think you would have me say “Saving your reverence, a husband.” An bad thinking do not wrest true speaking,
I’ll offend nobody. Is there any harm in “the heavier for a husband”? None, I think, an it be the right husband and the right wife. Otherwise, ’tis light and not heavy. Ask my lady Beatrice else. Here she comes.

Enter Beatrice.

HERO Good morrow, coz.
BEATRICE Good morrow, sweet Hero.
HERO Why, how now? Do you speak in the sick tune?
BEATRICE I am out of all other tune, methinks.
MARGARET Clap ’s into “Light o’ love.” That goes without a burden. Do you sing it, and I’ll dance it.
BEATRICE You light o’ love with your heels! Then, if your husband have stables enough, you’ll see he shall lack no barns.
MARGARET O, illegitimate construction! I scorn that with my heels.
BEATRICE ’Tis almost five o’clock, cousin. ’Tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceeding ill. Heigh-ho!
MARGARET For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?
BEATRICE For the letter that begins them all, H.
MARGARET Well, an you be not turned Turk, there’s no more sailing by the star.
BEATRICE What means the fool, trow?
MARGARET Nothing, I; but God send everyone their heart’s desire.
HERO These gloves the Count sent me, they are an excellent 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 Ever 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.

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.

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.

"They exit."
[Scene 5]

Enter Leonato, and Dogberry, the Constable, and Verges, the Headborough.

LEONATO What would you with me, honest neighbor?

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

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

DOGBERRY 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.

DOGBERRY Comparisons are odorous. Palabras, neighbor Verges.

LEONATO Neighbors, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY It pleases your Worship to say so, but we are the poor duke’s officers. But truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find 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.

VERGES Marry, sir, our watch tonight, excepting your Worship’s presence, ha’ ta’en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY A good old man, sir. He will be talking. As
they say, “When the age is in, the wit is out.” God help us, it is a world to see!—Well said, i’ faith, neighbor Verges.—Well, God’s a good man. An two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. An honest soul, i’ faith, sir, by my troth he is, as ever broke bread, but God is to be worshiped, all men are not alike, alas, good neighbor.

LEONATO Indeed, neighbor, he comes too short of you.

DOGBerry Gifts that God gives.

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.

He exits, with the Messenger.

DOGBerry Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacoal. Bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the jail. We are now to examination these men.

VERGES And we must do it wisely.

DOGBerry We will spare for no wit, I warrant you.

Here’s that shall drive some of them to a noncome.

Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication and meet me at the jail.

They exit.
Enter Prince, John the Bastard, Leonato, Friar, Claudio, Benedick, Hero, and Beatrice, with Attendants.

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

FRIAR, to Claudio You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?

CLAUDIO No.

LEONATO To be married to her.—Friar, you come to marry her.

FRIAR Lady, you come hither to be married to this count?

HERO I do.

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

CLAUDIO Know you any, Hero?

HERO None, my lord.

FRIAR 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!
Much Ado About Nothing  

ACT 4. SC. 1

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

PRINCE

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 honor.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
O, what authority and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none.
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed.
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATO

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

Dear my lord, if you in your own proof
Have vanquished the resistance of her youth,
And made defeat of her virginity—

CLAUDIO

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

HERO
And seemed I ever otherwise to you?

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

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

LEONATO
Sweet prince, why speak not you?

PRINCE
What should I speak?
I stand dishonored that have gone about
To link my dear friend to a common stale.

LEONATO
Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHNN
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 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?

CLMRY, that can Hero!
Hero itself can blot out Hero’s virtue.

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

I talked with no man at that hour, my lord.

PRINCE

Why, then, are you no maiden.—Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honor,
Myself, my brother, and this grievèd count
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window,
Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,
Confessed 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 offense, to utter them.—Thus, pretty lady,
I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO
Hath no man’s dagger here a point for me?

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

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

BENEDICK
How doth the lady?

BEATRICE
Dead, I think.—Help, uncle!—

LEONATO
O Fate, take not away thy heavy hand!

Death is the fairest cover for her shame
That may be wished for.

BEATRICE
How now, cousin Hero?

FRIAR, [to Hero]
Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO, [to Hero]
Dost thou look up?

FRIAR
Yea, wherefore should she not?

LEONATO
Wherefore? Why, doth not every earthly thing
Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny
The story that is printed in her blood?—

Do not live, Hero, do not ope thine eyes,
For, did I think thou 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?
Chid I for that at frugal Nature’s frame?
O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?
Why had I not with charitable hand
Took up a beggar’s issue at my gates,
Who, smirched thus, and mired with infamy,
I might have said “No part of it is mine;
This shame derives itself from unknown loins”?
But mine, and mine I loved, and mine I praised,
And mine that I was proud on, mine so much
That I myself was to myself not mine,
Valuing of her—why she, O she, is fall’n
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,
And salt too little which may season give
To her foul tainted flesh!

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

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

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

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

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

Confirmed, confirmed! O, that is stronger made
Which was before barred up with ribs of iron!
Would the two princes lie and Claudio lie,
Who loved her so that, speaking of her foulness,
Washed it with tears? Hence from her. Let her die!

Hear me a little,
For I have only "silent been" so long,
And given way unto this course of fortune,
By noting of the lady. I have marked
A thousand blushing apparitions
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes,
And in her eye there hath appeared a fire
To burn the errors that these princes hold
Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool,
Trust not my reading nor my observations,
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.

Friar, it cannot be.
Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left
Is that she will not add to her damnation
A sin of perjury. She not denies it.
Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse
That which appears in proper nakedness?

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

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
Maintained the change of words with any creature,
Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death!

There is some strange misprision in the princes.

Two of them have the very bent of honor,
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,
The practice of it lives in John the Bastard,
Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies.

LEONATO

I know not. If they speak but truth of her,
These hands shall tear her. If they wrong her honor,
The proudest of them shall well hear of it.
Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,
Nor age so eat up my invention,
Nor fortune made such havoc of my means,
Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends,
But they shall find, awakened in such a kind,
Both strength of limb and policy of mind,
Ability in means and choice of friends,
To quit me of them throughly.

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.

What shall become of this? What will this do?
Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse. That is some good.
But not for that dream I on this strange course,
But on this travail look for greater birth.
She, dying, as it must be so maintained,
Upon the instant that she was accused,
Shall be lamented, pitied, and excused
Of every hearer. For it so falls out
That what we have we prize not to the worth
While we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost,
Why then we rack the value, then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
While it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio.
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
Th’ idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination,
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come appareled 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,
If ever love had interest in his liver,
And wish he had not so accused her,
No, though he thought his accusation true.
Let this be so, and doubt not but success
Will fashion the event in better shape
Than I can lay it down in likelihood.
But if all aim but this be leveled false,
The supposition of the lady’s death
Will quench the wonder of her infamy.
And if it sort not well, you may conceal her,
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 honor, I will deal in this
As secretly and justly as your soul
Should with your body.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR

’Tis well consented. Presently away,
For to strange sores strangely they strain the cure.—

Come, lady, die to live. This wedding day
Perhaps is but prolonged. Have patience and endure.

"All but Beatrice and Benedick" exit.

BENEDICK Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?
BEATRICE Yea, and I will weep a while longer.
BENEDICK I will not desire that.
BEATRICE You have no reason. I do it freely.
BENEDICK Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.
BEATRICE Ah, how much might the man deserve of me that would right her!
BENEDICK Is there any way to show such friendship?
BEATRICE A very even way, but no such friend.
BENEDICK May a man do it?
BEATRICE It is a man’s office, but not yours.
BENEDICK I do love nothing in the world so well as you. Is not that strange?
BEATRICE As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you, but believe me not, and yet I lie not, I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.
BENEDICK By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me!
BEATRICE Do not swear and eat it.
BENEDICK I will swear by it that you love me, and I will make him eat it that says I love not you.
BEATRICE Will you not eat your word?
BENEDICK With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.
BEATRICE Why then, God forgive me.
BENEDICK What offense, 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 anything for thee.

BEATRICE  Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK  Ha! Not for the wide world.

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

I am gone, though I am here. There is no love in you. Nay, I pray you let me go.

Beatrice—

In faith, I will go.

We’ll be friends first.

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, dishonored 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 rancor—O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the marketplace.

Hear me, Beatrice—

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

Nay, but Beatrice—

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

Beat—

Princes and counties! Surely a princely testimony, a goodly count, Count Comfect, a sweet gallant, surely! O, that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake!

But manhood is melted into curtsies, valor into
compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones, too. He is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing; therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

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

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

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

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

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

"They exit."

Enter the Constables Dogberry and Verges, and the Town Clerk, or Sexton, in gowns, with the Watch, Conrade, and Borachio.

DOG Berry Is our whole dissembly appeared?

VERGES O, a stool and a cushion for the Sexton. "A stool is brought in; the Sexton sits."

SEXTON Which be the malefactors?

DOG Berry Marry, that am I, and my partner.

VERGES Nay, that’s certain, we have the exhibition to examine.

SEXTON But which are the offenders that are to be examined? Let them come before Master Constable.
Much Ado About Nothing

ACT 4. SC. 2

[DOGEBERRY] Yea, marry, let them come before me.

What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO Borachio.

[DOGEBERRY] Pray, write down “Borachio.”—Yours, sirrah?

CONRADE I am a gentleman, sir, and my name is

Conrade.

[DOGEBERRY] Write down “Master Gentleman Conrade.”—Masters, do you serve God?

BORACHIO/CONRADE Yea, sir, we hope.

[DOGEBERRY] 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.

[DOGEBERRY] A marvelous 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.

[DOGEBERRY] 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.

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

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

[DOGEBERRY] 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, to Watch What heard you him say else?

SEACOAL 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, to Borachio O, villain! Thou wilt be condemned
into everlasting redemption for this!

SEXTON What else?

SEACOAL 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. 

He exits.

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 everything
handsome about him.—Bring him away.—O, that I
had been writ down an ass!

「They」exit.
Enter Leonato and his brother.

LEONATO'S BROTHER

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 overwhelmed like mine,
And bid him speak of patience.

Measure his woe the length and breadth of mine,
And let it answer every strain for strain,
As thus for thus, and such a grief for such,
In every lineament, branch, shape, and form.
If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,
Bid sorrow wag, cry “hem” when he should groan,
Patch grief with proverbs, make misfortune drunk
With candle-wasters, bring him yet to me,
And I of him will gather patience.

But there is no such man. For, brother, men
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel, but tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion, which before
Would give preceptial med’cine to rage,
Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,
Charm ache with air and agony with words.
No, no, ’tis all men’s office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
But no man’s virtue nor sufficiency
To be so moral when he shall endure
The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel.
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

LEONATO’S BROTHER

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,
However they have writ the style of gods
And made a push at chance and sufferance.

LEONATO’S BROTHER

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 dishonor her.

Enter Prince and Claudio.

LEONATO’S BROTHER

Here comes the Prince and Claudio hastily.

PRINCE

Good e’en, good e’en.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.
LEONATO
Hear you, my lords—
PRINCE
We have some haste,
Leonato.
LEONATO
Some haste, my lord! Well, fare you well, my lord.
Are you so hasty now? Well, all is one.
PRINCE
Nay, do not quarrel with us, good old man.
LEONATO'S BROTHER
If he could right himself with quarrelling,
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,
As under privilege of age to brag
What I have done being young, or what would do
Were I not old. Know, Claudio, to thy head,
Thou hast so wronged mine innocent child and me
That I am forced to lay my reverence by,
And with gray hairs and bruise of many days
do challenge thee to trial of a man.
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child.
Thy slander hath gone through and through her
heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors,
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
Save this of hers, framed by thy villainy.
CLAUDIO
   My villainy?

LEONATO    Thine, Claudio, thine, I say.

PRINCE
   You say not right, old man.

LEONATO    My lord, my lord,
   I’ll prove it on his body if he dare,
   Despite his nice fence and his active practice,
   His May of youth and bloom of lustihood.

CLAUDIO
   Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO
   Canst thou so daff me? Thou hast killed my child.
   If thou kill’st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.

LEONATO’S BROTHER
   He shall kill two of us, and men indeed,
   But that’s no matter. Let him kill one first.
   Win me and wear me! Let him answer me.—
   Come, follow me, boy. Come, sir boy, come, follow me.
   Sir boy, I’ll whip you from your foining fence,
   Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

LEONATO    Brother—

LEONATO’S BROTHER
   Content yourself. God knows I loved my niece,
   And she is dead, slandered to death by villains
   That dare as well answer a man indeed
   As I dare take a serpent by the tongue.—
   Boys, apes, braggarts, jacks, milksops!

LEONATO    Brother Anthony—

LEONATO’S BROTHER
   Hold you content. What, man! I know them, yea,
   And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple—
   Scambling, outfacing, fashionmonging boys,
   That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander,
   Go anticely and show outward hideousness,
And speak off half a dozen dang’rous words
How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst,
And this is all.

LEONATO But brother Anthony—
LEONATO’S BROTHER Come, ’tis no matter.
Do not you meddle. Let me deal in this.

PRINCE

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

LEONATO My lord, my lord—
PRINCE I will not hear you.

LEONATO No? Come, brother, away. I will be heard.

LEONATO’S BROTHER

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

[Leonato and his brother] exit.

Enter Benedick.

PRINCE

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

CLAUDIO Now, signior, what news?

BENEDICK, to Prince Good day, my lord.

PRINCE 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.

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

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

CLAUDIO We have been up and down to seek thee, for
we are high-proof melancholy and would fain have
it beaten away. Wilt thou use thy wit?
BENEDICK  It is in my scabbard. Shall I draw it?
PRINCE   Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

CLAUDIO  Never any did so, though very many have been beside their wit. I will bid thee draw, as we do the minstrels: draw to pleasure us.

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


BENEDICK  Sir, I shall meet your wit in the career, an you charge it against me. I pray you, choose another subject.

CLAUDIO, [to Prince] Nay, then, give him another staff. This last was broke 'cross.

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

CLAUDIO  If he be, he knows how to turn his girdle.

BENEDICK  Shall I speak a word in your ear?
CLAUDIO  God bless me from a challenge!

BENEDICK, [aside to Claudio]  You are a villain. I jest not. I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you.

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

PRINCE   What, a feast, a feast?
CLAUDIO  I' faith, I thank him. He hath bid me to a calf's head and a capon, the which if I do not carve most curiously, say my knife's naught. Shall I not find a woodcock too?

BENEDICK  Sir, your wit ambles well; it goes easily.

PRINCE   I'll tell thee how Beatrice praised thy wit the other day. I said thou hadst a fine wit. "True," said
Much Ado About Nothing

ACT 5. SC. 1

CLAUDIO

she, “a fine little one.” “No,” said I, “a great wit.”

“Right,” says she, “a great gross one.” “Nay,” said I,

“a good wit.” “Just,” said she, “it hurts nobody.”

“Nay,” said I, “the gentleman is wise.” “Certain,”

said she, “a wise gentleman.” “Nay,” said I, “he

hath the tongues.” “That I believe,” said she, “for he

swore a thing to me on Monday night which he

forswore on Tuesday morning; there’s a double

tongue, there’s two tongues.” Thus did she an hour

together transshape thy particular virtues. Yet at

last she concluded with a sigh, thou wast the

proper’est man in Italy.

CLAUDIO For the which she wept heartily and said she

cared not.

PRINCE Yea, that she did. But yet for all that, an if she

did not hate him deadly, she would love him
dearly. The old man’s daughter told us all.

CLAUDIO All, all. And, moreover, God saw him when

he was hid in the garden.

PRINCE But when shall we set the savage bull’s horns

on the sensible Benedick’s head?

CLAUDIO Yea, and text underneath: “Here dwells Benedick,

the married man”?

BENEDICK Fare you well, boy. You know my mind. I

will leave you now to your gossip-like humor. You

break jests as braggarts do their blades, which, God

be thanked, hurt not.—My lord, for your many

courtesies I thank you. I must discontinue 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.

[Benedick exits.]

PRINCE He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO In most profound earnest, and, I’ll warrant

you, for the love of Beatrice.
Much Ado About Nothing  

ACT 5. SC. 1

PRINCE And hath challenged thee?

CLAUDIO Most sincerely.

PRINCE What a pretty thing man is when he goes in his doublet and hose and leaves off his wit!

CLAUDIO He is then a giant to an ape; but then is an ape a doctor to such a man.

PRINCE But soft you, let me be. Pluck up, my heart, and be sad. Did he not say my brother was fled?

Enter Constables Dogberry and 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.

PRINCE How now, two of my brother’s men bound? Borachio one!

CLAUDIO Hearken after their offense, my lord.

PRINCE Officers, what offense have these men done?

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

PRINCE First, I ask thee what they have done; thirdly, I ask thee what’s their offense; sixth and lastly, why they are committed; and, to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

CLAUDIO Rightly reasoned, and in his own division; and, by my troth, there’s one meaning well suited.

PRINCE, to Borachio and Conrade Who have you offended, masters, that you are thus bound to your answer? This learned constable is too cunning to be understood. What’s your offense?

BORACHIO Sweet prince, let me go no farther to mine answer. Do you hear me, and let this count kill me.
I have deceived even your very eyes. What your
wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools
have brought to light, who in the night 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.

PRINCE, [to Claudio]
Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO
I have drunk poison whiles he uttered it.

PRINCE, [to Borachio]
But did my brother set thee on to this?

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

PRINCE
He is composed and framed of treachery,
And fled he is upon this villainy.

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

DOGGERY 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.

Enter Leonato, his brother, and 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 killed
Mine innocent child?

BORACHIO
Yea, even I alone.

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

CLAUDIO
I know not how to pray your patience,
Yet I must speak. Choose your revenge yourself.
Impose me to what penance your invention
Can lay upon my sin. Yet sinned I not
But in mistaking.

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

LEONATO
I cannot bid you bid my daughter live—
That were impossible—but, I pray you both,
Possess the people in Messina here
How innocent she died. And if your love
Can labor aught in sad invention,
Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb
And sing it to her bones. Sing it tonight.
Tomorrow morning come you to my house,
And since you could not be my son-in-law,
Be yet my nephew. My brother hath a daughter,
Almost the copy of my child that’s dead,
And she alone is heir to both of us.
Give her the right you should have giv’n her cousin,
And so dies my revenge.

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

LEONATO

Tomorrow then I will expect your coming.
Tonight I take my leave. This naughty man
Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
Who I believe was packed in all this wrong,
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 anything that I do know by her.

DOGGERY, to Leonato
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. And also the watch
heard them talk of one Deformed. They say he
wears a key in his ear and a lock hanging by it and
borrows money in God’s name, the which he hath
used so long and never paid that now men grow
hardhearted and will lend nothing for God’s sake.
Pray you, examine him upon that point.

LEONATO    I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

DOGGERY    Your Worship speaks like a most thankful
and reverent youth, and I praise God for you.

LEONATO, giving him money  There’s for thy pains.

DOGGERY    God save the foundation.
LEONATO   Go, I discharge thee of thy prisoner, and I thank thee.

DOG Berry   I leave an arrant knave with your Worship, which I beseech your Worship to correct yourself, for the example of others. God keep your Worship! I wish your Worship well. God restore you to health. I humbly give you leave to depart, and if a merry meeting may be wished, God prohibit it.—Come, neighbor. "Dogberry and Verges exit."

LEONATO   Until tomorrow morning, lords, farewell.

LEONATO'S BROTHER   Farewell, my lords. We look for you tomorrow.

PRINCE   We will not fail.

CLAUDIO   Tonight I’ll mourn with Hero.

LEONATO, "to Watch"   Bring you these fellows on.—We’ll talk with Margaret,

How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow. They exit.

Scene 2
Enter Benedick and Margaret.

BENEDICK   Pray thee, sweet Mistress Margaret, deserve well at my hands by helping me to the speech of Beatrice.

MARGARET   Will you then write me a sonnet in praise of my beauty?

BENEDICK   In so high a style, Margaret, that no man living shall come over it, for in most comely truth thou dost deserve it.

MARGARET   To have no man come over me? Why, shall I always keep below stairs?
BENEDICK   Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound’s mouth; it catches.
MARGARET   And yours as blunt as the fencer’s foils, which hit but hurt not.
BENEDICK   A most manly wit, Margaret; it will not hurt a woman. And so, I pray thee, call Beatrice. I give thee the bucklers.
MARGARET   Give us the swords; we have bucklers of our own.
BENEDICK   If you use them, Margaret, you must put in the pikes with a vice, and they are dangerous weapons for maids.
MARGARET   Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I think hath legs.
BENEDICK   And therefore will come.

Margaret exits.

[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 book full of these quondam carpetmongers, whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse, why, they were never so truly turned over and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme. I have tried. I can find out no rhyme to “lady” but “baby”—an innocent rhyme; for “scorn,” “horn”—a hard rhyme; for “school,” “fool”—a babbling rhyme; very ominous endings. No, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

Enter Beatrice.

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?
BENEDICK Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

BEATRICE 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 un kissed.

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

BEATRICE In spite of your heart, I think. Alas, poor heart, if you spite it for my sake, I will spite it for yours, for I will never love that which my friend hates.

BENEDICK Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.

BEATRICE It appears not in this confession. There’s not one wise man among twenty that will praise himself.

BENEDICK An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that lived in the time of good neighbors. If a man do not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow weeps.
BEATRICE  And how long is that, think you?

BENEDICK  Question: why, an hour in clamor and a quarter in rheum. Therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if Don Worm, his conscience, find no impediment to the contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am to myself. So much for praising myself, who, I myself will bear witness, is praiseworthy. 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 fled and gone. Will you come presently?

["Ursula exits."]

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.

["They exit."]

Scene 3

Enter Claudio, Prince, and three or four Lords with tapers, and Musicians.

CLAUDIO  Is this the monument of Leonato?

FIRST LORD  It is, my lord.
CLAUDIO, reading an Epitaph.

Done to death by slanderous tongues
Was the Hero that here lies.

Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,
Gives her fame which never dies.

So the life that died with shame
Lives in death with glorious fame.

[He hangs up the scroll.]

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 utterèd,
Heavily, heavily.

[CLAUDIO]

Now, unto thy bones, goodnight.
Yearly will I do this rite.

PRINCE

Good morrow, masters. Put your torches out.
The wolves have preyed, and look, the gentle day
Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
Dapples the drowsy east with spots of gray.
Thanks to you all, and leave us. Fare you well.

CLAUDIO

Good morrow, masters. Each his several way.

[Lords and Musicians exit.]
PRINCE
   Come, let us hence, and put on other weeds,
   And then to Leonato’s we will go.

CLAUDIO
   And Hymen now with luckier issue speed’s,
   Than this for whom we rendered up this woe.

   They exit.

[Scene 4]

Enter Leonato, Benedick, Beatrice, Margaret, Ursula,
Leonato’s brother, Friar, Hero.

FRIAR
   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.

LEONATO’S BROTHER
   Well, I am glad that all things sorts 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 gentlewomen all,
   Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
   And when I send for you, come hither masked.
   The Prince and Claudio promised by this hour
   To visit me.—You know your office, brother.
   You must be father to your brother’s daughter,
   And give her to young Claudio. The ladies exit.
LEONATO’S BROTHER
   Which I will do with confirmed countenance.

BENEDICK
   Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.
   To do what, signior?

FRIAR    To bind me, or undo me, one of them.—

BENEDICK
   Signior Leonato, truth it is, good signior,
   Your niece regards me with an eye of favor.

LEONATO
   That eye my daughter lent her; ’tis most true.

BENEDICK
   And I do with an eye of love requite her.

LEONATO
   The sight whereof I think you had from me,
   From Claudio, and the Prince. But what’s your will?

BENEDICK
   Your answer, sir, is enigmatical.
   But for my will, my will is your goodwill
   May stand with ours, this day to be conjoined
   In the state of honorable marriage—
   In which, good friar, I shall desire your help.

LEONATO
   My heart is with your liking.

FRIAR    And my help.

FTLN 2668 Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

   Enter Prince, and Claudio, and two or three other.

PRINCE    Good morrow to this fair assembly.

LEONATO
   Good morrow, prince; good morrow, Claudio.
   We here attend you. Are you yet determined
   Today to marry with my brother’s daughter?

CLAUDIO
   I’ll hold my mind were she an Ethiope.
LEONATO
   Call her forth, brother. Here’s the Friar ready.
               ![Leonato’s brother exits.]

PRINCE
   Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what’s the matter
   That you have such a February face,
   So full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness?

CLAUDIO
   I think he thinks upon the savage bull.
   Tush, fear not, man. We’ll tip thy horns with gold,
   And all Europa shall rejoice at thee,
   As once Europa did at lusty Jove
   When he would play the noble beast in love.

BENEDICK
   Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low,
   And some such strange bull leapt your father’s cow
   And got a calf in that same noble feat
   Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.

CLAUDIO
   For this I owe you. Here comes other reck’nings.

   ![Enter Leonato’s brother, Hero, Beatrice, Margaret, Ursula, the ladies masked.]

FTLN 2688
   Which is the lady I must seize upon?

LEONATO
   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, ![to Hero]
   Give me your hand before this holy friar.
               ![They take hands.]

FTLN 2694
   I am your husband, if you like of me.
HERO
   And when I lived, I was your other wife,
   And when you loved, you were my other husband.
   \[\text{She unmasks.}\]

CLAUDIO
   Another Hero!

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

PRINCE
   The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

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

FRIAR
   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, \text{unmasking}
   I answer to that name. What is your will?

BENEDICK
   Do not you love me?

BEATRICE
   Why no, no more than reason.

BENEDICK
   Why then, your uncle and the Prince and Claudio
   Have been deceived. They swore you did.

BEATRICE
   Do not you love me?

BENEDICK
   Troth, no, no more than reason.

BEATRICE
   Why then, my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula
   Are much deceived, for they did swear you did.
BENEDICK
    They swore that you were almost sick for me.

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

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

BEATRICE
    No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

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

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

[He shows a paper.]

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

[She shows a paper.]

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.

[Peace! I will stop your mouth.  

They kiss.]

PRINCE
    How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK
    I'll tell thee what, prince: a college of wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humor.
    Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram?
    No. If a man will be beaten with brains, he shall wear nothing handsome about him. In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it, and
Therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it. For man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion.—For thy part, Claudio, I did think to 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 exceeding 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. There is no staff more reverend than one tipped with horn.

Enter Messenger.

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

Benedick, to Prince Think not on him till tomorrow. I’ll devise thee brave punishments for him.—Strike up, pipers! Music plays. They dance.

They exit.