

Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare

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Cast of Characters

Leonato, *father of Hero and uncle of Beatrice*

Benedick, *a young lord*

Claudio, *a young lord*

Don Pedro, *commander of Claudio and Benedick*

Don John, *bastard brother to Don Pedro*

Borachio, *confidant to Don John*

Friar Francis

Beatrice, *niece to Leonato*

Hero, *daughter to Leonato*

Margaret, *attendant to Hero*

Dogberry, *a constable*

Conrade, *friend to Borachio*

A Judge/A Messenger

A Watchman

Act 1, Scene 1

Before LEONATO'S house. Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a MESSENGER.

LEONATO

I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Arragon comes here this night.

MESSENGER

He was not three leagues off when I left him.

LEONATO

I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honour on a young man called Claudio.

MESSENGER

He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion.

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

I know none of that name, lady.

HERO

My cousin means Benedick.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

He hath done good service. And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuffed man.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE
Do, good friend.

MESSENGER
Don Pedro is approached.

Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, and BENEDICK

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

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

DON PEDRO
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
Benedick, no.

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

BEATRICE
I wonder that you will still be talking: 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 Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

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

BEATRICE
A dear happiness to women. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

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

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

BENEDICK
I would my horse had the speed of your tongue. But keep your way, i' God's name; I have done.

DON PEDRO

Claudio and Benedick, my dear friend Leonato hath invited you all. I tell him we shall stay here at the least a month.

LEONATO

To DON JOHN

Let me bid you welcome, my lord: being reconciled to Don Pedro 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 you lead on?

DON PEDRO

We will go together.

Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of 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

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

CLAUDIO

Thou thinkest I am in sport: I pray thee tell me truly how thou likest her. In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

Is't come to this? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again?

Re-enter DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK
He is in love. With Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

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

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

DON PEDRO
By my troth, I speak my thought.

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

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

CLAUDIO
That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO
That she is worthy, I know.

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

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

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

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

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

DON PEDRO
Good Benedick, repair to Leonato's: commend me to him and tell him I will not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made great preparation.

Exit

CLAUDIO
My liege, your highness now may do me good.
Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

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

CLAUDIO
O, my lord,

When you went onward on this ended action,
I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye:
But now I am return'd and that war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars.

DON PEDRO

If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
I will break with her and thou shalt have her.
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:
Then after to her father will I break;
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
In practise let us put it presently.

Exeunt

Act 1, Scene 2

The same. Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE

CONRADE

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

CONRADE

Yea, but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace; where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself.

DON JOHN

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

CONRADE

Can you make no use of your discontent?

DON JOHN

I make all use of it, for I use it only.

Enter BORACHIO

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO

I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

DON JOHN

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

BORACHIO

Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN

Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he.

DON JOHN

How came you to this?

BORACHIO

I heard it agreed upon that the Don Pedro should woo Hero for himself, and having obtained her, give her to Claudio.

DON JOHN

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

CONRADE
To the death, my lord.

Exeunt

Act 2, Scene 1

A hall in LEONATO'S house. Enter LEONATO, HERO, BEATRICE, and others

LEONATO

Was not Don John at supper?

HERO

I saw him not.

BEATRICE

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

HERO

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband. The revelers are entering: make good room.

All put on their masks

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

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

Drawing HERO aside

BORACHIO

Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET

So would not I, for your own sake; for I have many ill-qualities.

BORACHIO

Which is one?

MARGARET

I say my prayers aloud. God match me with a good dancer!

BORACHIO

Amen!

Dance

BEATRICE
Will you not tell me who you are, Benedick?

BENEDICK
What's he?

BEATRICE
I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK
Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE
Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK
I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE
Why, he is Don Pedro's jester: a very dull fool; his only 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.

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

BEATRICE
Do, do.

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

DON JOHN
Are not you Benedick?

CLAUDIO
You know me well; I am he.

DON JOHN
Sir, you are very near my brother, Don Pedro, in his love: he is enamoured on Hero; I pray you, dissuade him from her: she is no equal for his birth.

CLAUDIO
How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN
I heard him swear his affection.

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

DON JOHN
Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO

CLAUDIO
Answer I in the name of Benedick,

But hear ill news with the ears of Claudio.
'Tis certain so; Don Pedro woos for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love:
This is an accident of hourly proof,
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell, Hero!

Re-enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK
Claudio?

CLAUDIO
Yea, the same.

BENEDICK
Come, will you go with me?

CLAUDIO
Whither?

BENEDICK
About your own business. Don Pedro hath got your Hero.

CLAUDIO
I wish him joy of her.

Exit

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO
Now, where's Claudio? did you see him?

BENEDICK
Troth, my lord. I found him here as melancholy as a lodge in a warren: I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the good will of this young lady.

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

BENEDICK
O, she misused me past endurance! She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was Don Pedro's jester; huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks, 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; so, indeed, all disquiet, horror and perturbation follows her.

DON PEDRO
Look, here she comes.

Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO

BENEDICK
Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on; fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard; do you any embassage to the Pigmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO
None, but to desire your good company.

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

Exit

DON PEDRO
Come, lady, come; you have lost the heart of Benedick. 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 Claudio, whom you sent me to seek.

DON PEDRO
Why, how now! wherefore are you sad?

CLAUDIO
Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO
How then? sick?

CLAUDIO
Neither, my lord.

DON PEDRO
Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won: I have broke with her father, and his good will obtained: name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!

LEONATO
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, Claudio, '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.

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

DON PEDRO
In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE
Yea, my lord; I thank it, poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care. Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes every one to the world but I; I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband! But, I beseech your grace, pardon me: I was born to speak all mirth and no matter.

DON PEDRO
To be merry best becomes you; for, out of question, you were born in a merry hour.

BEATRICE

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

Exit

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO

To-morrow, my lord.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us. I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labours; which is, to bring Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection the one with the other. If you three will but minister assistance I shall give you direction.

LEONATO

My lord, I am for you.

CLAUDIO

And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO

And you too, gentle Hero?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer: his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

Exeunt

Act 2, Scene 2

The same. Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO

DON JOHN

It is so; 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 medicinable to me: I am sick in displeasure to him. How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO

Not honestly, my lord; but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me. I think I told your lordship a year since, how much I am in the favour of Margaret, the waiting gentlewoman to Hero.

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

Find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and Claudio alone: tell them that you know that Hero loves me; 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; and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

DON JOHN

Grow this to what adverse issue it can, I will put it in practice.

Exeunt

Act 2, Scene 3

LEONATO'S orchard. Enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK

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

Withdraws

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO

O, very well, my lord.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

BENEDICK

Is't possible?

DON PEDRO

May be she doth but counterfeit.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

DON PEDRO

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

I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it.

DON PEDRO
Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO
No; and swears she never will: that's her torment. She'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper.

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: my daughter is sometime afeared she will do a desperate outrage to herself: it is very true.

DON PEDRO
It were good that Benedick knew of it.

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

LEONATO
I am sorry for her.

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

LEONATO
Were it good, think you?

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

DON PEDRO
If she should make tender of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it; for the man, as you know all, hath a contemptible spirit.

CLAUDIO
He is a very proper man.

DON PEDRO
He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

CLAUDIO
And I take him to be valiant.

DON PEDRO
Shall we go seek Benedick, and tell him of her love?

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

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

My lord, will you walk? dinner is ready.

Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

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

Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

You take pleasure then in the message?

BEATRICE

Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point. You have no stomach, sir: fare you well.

Exit

BENEDICK

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

Exit

Act 3, Scene 1

LEONATO'S garden. Enter HERO and MARGARET.

HERO

Now begin; for look where Beatrice comes.

MARGARET

Benedick loves Beatrice entirely?

HERO

So says Don Pedro and my new-trothed lord.

MARGARET

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.

MARGARET

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

HERO

O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man:
But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
All matter else seems weak: she cannot love
She is so self-ender'd.

MARGARET

Sure, I think so;
Yet tell her of it: hear what she will say.

HERO

No; rather I will go to Benedick
And counsel him to fight against his passion.

MARGARET

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 Benedick.

HERO

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

Exeunt HERO and MARGARET

BEATRICE

[Coming forward]

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?

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

Exit

Act 3, Scene 2

A room in LEONATO'S house. Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO

So say I; methinks you are sadder.

CLAUDIO

I hope he be in love.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Yet say I, he is in love.

BENEDICK

Walk aside with me: I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak to you, which these hobby-horses must not hear.

Exeunt BENEDICK and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

For my life, to break with him about Beatrice.

CLAUDIO

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

Enter DON JOHN

DON JOHN

My lord and brother, God save you! If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO

In private?

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

What's the matter?

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

You know he does.

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO
Who, Hero?

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

CLAUDIO
Disloyal?

DON JOHN
The word is too good to paint out her wickedness; I could say she were worse. Go with me, you shall see her chamber-window entered, even the night before her wedding-day: if you love her then, to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honour to change your mind.

CLAUDIO
May this be so?

DON PEDRO
I will not think it.

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

CLAUDIO, DON PEDRO, DON JOHN approach window. MARGARET, dressed as HERO, is leaning out, being seduced by BORACHIO.

CLAUDIO
To-morrow in the congregation, where I should wed, there will I shame her.

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

Exeunt

INTERMISSION

Act 3, Scene 3

A street. Enter DOGBERRY with the Watch

DOGBERRY

Are you a good man and true?

WATCHMAN

Yea.

DOGBERRY

This is your charge: you are to bid any man stand, in Don Pedro's name.

WATCHMAN

How if a' will not stand?

DOGBERRY

If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none of Don Pedro's men, and you are to meddle with none but the Don Pedro's men. You shall also make no noise in the streets; for the watch to babble and to talk is not to be endured.

WATCHMAN

I would rather sleep than talk.

DOGBERRY

Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman; for I cannot see how sleeping should offend. 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.

WATCHMAN

You have been always called a merciful man.

DOGBERRY

Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, much more a man who hath any honesty in him. Well, master, good night: an there be any matter of weight chances, call up me. One word more, honest neighbour. I pray you watch about Leonato's door; for the wedding being there to-morrow, there is a great coil to-night. Adieu: be vigilant, I beseech you.

Exeunt DOGBERRY

Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE

BORACHIO

What Conrade! Conrade, I say!

CONRADE

Here, man; I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO

I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats.

CONRADE

Is it possible that any villany should be so dear?

BORACHIO

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

CONRADE

And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

Two of them did, Don Pedro and Claudio; but the devil my master knew she was Margaret; away went Claudio enraged; swore he would meet her, as he was appointed, next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'er night and send her home again without a husband.

WATCHMAN

I charge you, in Don Pedro's name, stand!

CONRADE

Master,--

WATCHMAN

Never speak: I charge you to go with me.

Exeunt

Act 4, Scene 1

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

No.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

Know you any, Hero?

HERO

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Know you any, sir?

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO

There, Leonato, take her back again:
Give not this rotten orange to your friend;
She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
O, what authority and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence
To witness simple virtue? 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

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

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear: upon mine honour,
Myself, my brother and griev'd Claudio
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber-window
Who confess'd the vile encounters they had
A thousand times in secret.

HERO swoons

BEATRICE

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

DON JOHN

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

Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO

BENEDICK

How doth the lady?

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO

Do not live, Hero; do not open thine eyes:
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?

BEATRICE

O! on my soul, my cousin is belied!

BENEDICK

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

Confirm'd, confirm'd! Hence from her! let her die.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Hear me a little;
Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

They know that do accuse me; I know none!

FRIAR FRANCIS

There is some strange misprision in Don Pedro.

BENEDICK

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

LEONATO

What shall become of this? What will this do?

FRIAR FRANCIS

She dying, as it must so be maintain'd,
Upon the instant that she was accused,
Shall be lamented, pitied and excused
Of every hearer: so with Claudio:
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination,
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,
Than when she lived indeed; then shall he mourn,
And wish he had not so accused her.

BENEDICK

Leonato, let the friar advise you.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

Exeunt all but BENEDICK and BEATRICE

BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE

You have no reason; I do it freely.

BENEDICK

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Is there any way to show such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK

May a man do it?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

BEATRICE

Do not swear, and eat it.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK
What offence, sweet Beatrice?

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

BENEDICK
And do it with all thy heart.

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

BENEDICK
Come, bid me do any thing for thee.

BEATRICE
Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK
Ha! not for the wide world.

BEATRICE
You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK
Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

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

BENEDICK
Beatrice,--

BEATRICE
In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK
We'll be friends first.

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

BENEDICK
Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE
Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place.

BENEDICK
Hear me, Beatrice,--

BEATRICE
Sweet Hero! She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone. 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 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. Go, comfort your cousin: I must say she is dead: and so, farewell.

Exeunt

Act 4, Scene 2

A prison. Enter DOGBERRY and JUDGE, in gowns; and the WATCH, with CONRADE and BORACHIO

DOGBERRY

Is our whole dissembly appeared?

JUDGE

Which are the offenders that are to be examined?

DOGBERRY

What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

Pray, write down, Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

Write down, master gentleman Conrade. Masters, it is proved already that you are little better than false knaves; and it will go near to be thought so shortly. How answer you for yourselves?

CONRADE

Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY

Have you writ down, that they are none?

JUDGE

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

DOGBERRY

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

WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

Write down Don John a villain.

BORACHIO

Master constable,--

DOGBERRY

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

JUDGE

What heard you him say else?

WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

Flat burglary as ever was committed.

JUDGE
What else, fellow?

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

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

JUDGE
What else?

WATCHMAN
This is all.

JUDGE
Don 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.

Exit

DOGBERRY
Come, let them be in the hands--

CONRADE
Off, coxcomb!

DOGBERRY
God's my life, where's the Judge? let him write down Don Pedro's officer coxcomb. Come, bind them. Thou naughty varlet!

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

DOGBERRY
O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass.

Exeunt

Act 5, Scene 1

FRIAR FRANCIS enters. She erects a monument to HERO, uncovering it with a cloth. She prays a few words, and then exits.

Enter MARGARET in a cloak carrying a taper, followed closely behind by CLAUDIO in mourning, carrying a taper and a bouquet of roses tied in a black ribbon.

CLAUDIO

Is this the monument to fair Hero?

MARGARET

It is, my lord.

CLAUDIO momentarily breaks into tears. He lays the flowers on at the monument.

CLAUDIO

Reading from a scrap of paper

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.

CLAUDIO silently prays over the monument.

Now, unto thy bones good night!

Yearly will I do this rite.

HE exits, leaving MARGARET. MARGARET walks to the monument, revealing herself to have traded places with HERO, dressed in an identical cloak. HERO leans down, picks up the flowers, looks after CLAUDIO, then exits opposite.

Act 5, Scene 2

Before LEONATO'S house. Enter LEONATO.

LEONATO

Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid him speak of patience;
But there is no such man: no man: for, men
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to heated passion.
My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;
And that shall Claudio know; so shall Don Pedro
And all of them that thus dishonour her.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO

LEONATO

Hear you, my lords,--

DON PEDRO

We have some haste, Leonato.

LEONATO

Some haste, my lord! well, fare you well, my lord:
Are you so hasty now? well, all is one.
Thou dost wrong me; thou dissembler, thou:
Tush, tush, man; never flear and jest at me:
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool.

CLAUDIO

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO

Canst thou so daff me? Thou hast kill'd my child:
If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.
My Hero is dead, slander'd to death by villains,
Scrambling, out-facing, fashion-monging boys,
That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander.

DON PEDRO

My heart is sorry for your daughter's death:
But, on my honour, she was charged with nothing
But what was true and very full of proof.

LEONATO

My lord, my lord,--

DON PEDRO

Nay, I will not hear you.

LEONATO

No? I shall be heard, or some will smart for't.

Exit LEONATO

DON PEDRO

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

Enter BENEDICK

CLAUDIO
Now, what news?

BENEDICK
Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO
Welcome, Benedick: you are almost come to part almost a fray.

CLAUDIO
We had like to have had our two noses snapped off with an old man without teeth.

BENEDICK
Shall I speak a word in your ear?
[Aside to CLAUDIO]
You are a villain; I jest not: I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Fare you well, boy: you know my mind. My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you: I must discontinue your company: your brother the bastard is fled: you have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet: and, till then, peace be with him.

Exit

DON PEDRO
He is in earnest.

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

DON PEDRO
And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO
Most sincerely.

Enter DOGBERRY and the Watch, with CONRADE and BORACHIO

DON PEDRO
Officers, what offence have these men done?

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

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

BORACHIO
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.

CLAUDIO
Sweet Hero!

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

WATCHMAN
Here, here comes master Leonato, and the Judge too.

Re-enter LEONATO, with the Judge

LEONATO
Which is the villain? let me see his eyes.

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

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

BORACHIO
Yea, even I alone.

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

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

DON PEDRO
By my soul, nor I.

LEONATO
I cannot bid you bid my daughter live;
That were impossible: but, I pray you both,
Possess the people here in this town
How innocent and virginal she died:
To-morrow morning come you to my house,
And since you could not be my son-in-law,
Be yet my nephew: my brother hath a daughter,
Almost the copy of my child that's dead,
And she alone is heir to both of us:
Give her the right you should have given her cousin,
And so dies my revenge.

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

I do embrace your offer; and dispose
For henceforth of poor Claudio.

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

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

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

There's for thy pains.

DOGBERRY

God save the foundation!

LEONATO

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

DOGBERRY

I leave an arrant knave with your worship; which I beseech your worship to correct yourself, for the example of others. God keep your worship! I wish your worship well; God restore you to health! I humbly give you leave to depart; and if a merry meeting may be wished, God prohibit it! Come, neighbour.

Exeunt DOGBERRY and WATCHMAN

LEONATO

Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

DON PEDRO

We will not fail.

CLAUDIO

To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

Exeunt, severally

Act 5, Scene 3

LEONATO'S garden. Enter BENEDICK.

BENEDICK

Sings

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

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: no, I was not born under a rhyming planet.

Enter BEATRICE

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

BEATRICE

Yea, sir, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK

O, stay but till then!

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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. 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. 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 MARGARET

MARGARET

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

BEATRICE

Will you go hear this news?

BENEDICK

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

Exeunt

Act 5, Scene 4

A room in LEONATO'S house. Enter LEONATO, BENEDICK, BEATRICE, MARGARET, FRIAR FRANCIS, and HERO

FRIAR FRANCIS

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

LEONATO

So are Don Pedro and Claudio, who accused her
Upon the error that you heard debated.
Well, daughter, and you gentle-women all,
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
And when I send for you, come hither mask'd.

Exeunt Ladies

BENEDICK

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS

To do what, sir?

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

What's your will?

BENEDICK

My will is your good will
May stand with ours, this day to be conjoin'd
In the state of honourable marriage:
In which, good friar, I shall desire your help.

LEONATO

My heart is with your liking.

FRIAR FRANCIS

And my help.
Here comes Don Pedro and Claudio.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, and two or three others

DON PEDRO

Good morrow to this fair assembly.

LEONATO

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

LEONATO motions. Re-enter the Ladies masked.

CLAUDIO

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

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

HERO

And when I lived, I was your other wife:

Unmasking

And when you loved, you were my other husband.

CLAUDIO

Another Hero!

HERO

Nothing certainer:

One Hero died defiled, but I do live,
And surely as I live, I am a maid.

DON PEDRO

The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

BENEDICK

Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE

[Unmasking]

I answer to that name. What is your will?

BENEDICK

Do not you love me?

BEATRICE

Why, no; no more than reason.

BENEDICK

Why, then your uncle and Don Pedro 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 Hero
Are much deceived; for they did swear you did.

BENEDICK

They swore that you were almost sick for me.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Peace! I will stop your mouth.
Kissing her

DON PEDRO

How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK

I'll tell thee what, Don Pedro; a college of wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humour. 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. 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. Play, music. Don Pedro, thou art sad; get thee a wife, get thee a wife.

Dance

Exeunt.

