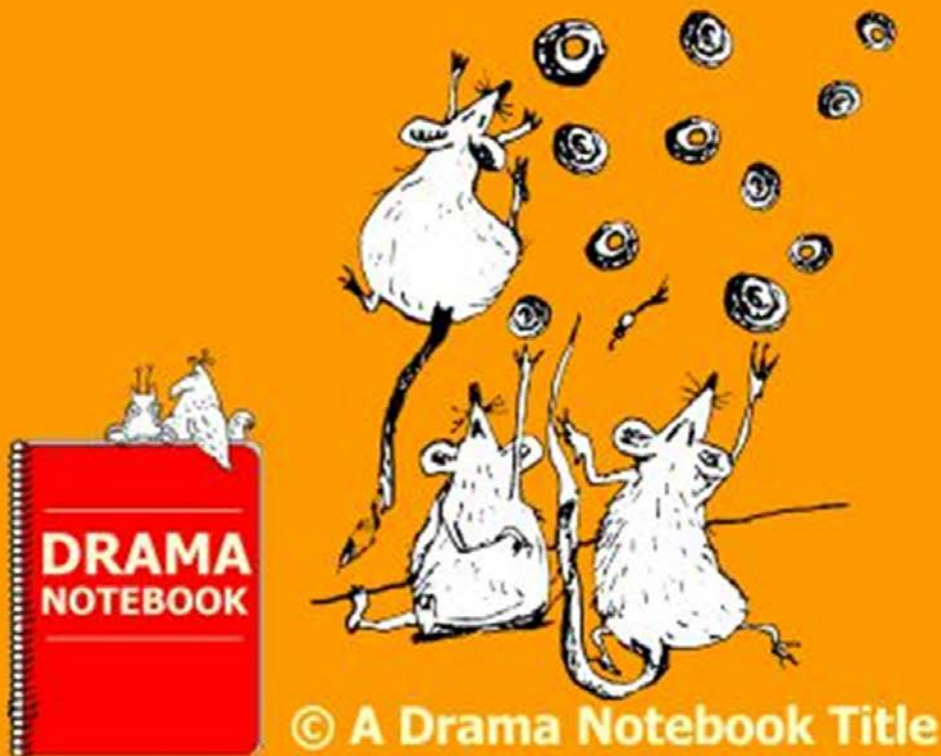


Much Ado About Nothing

THE PLAY IN ONE HOUR



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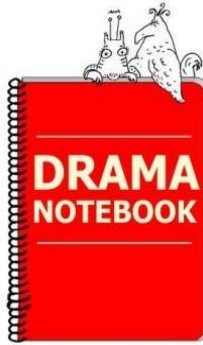
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Much Ado About Nothing

By William Shakespeare
Edited by Orion Bradshaw

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

BALTHASAR, The Narrator and a worker on Leonato's estate
LEONATO, Estate owner
BEATRICE, Leonato's niece
HERO, Leonato's daughter
ANTONIO, Leonato's brother
DON PEDRO, General in the Italian army
BENEDICK, A senior officer in Don Pedro's troupe
CLAUDIUS, A young officer in Don Pedro's troupe
DON JOHN, Don Pedro's brother and a soldier
CONRADE, A soldier and a follower of Don John
BORACHIO, a worker on Leonato's estate and a friend of Don John
MARGARET, Hero's friend and attendant
URSULA, Hero's friend and attendant
DOGBERRY, A Constable
VERGES, Dogberry's partner
FIRST WATCHMAN
SECOND WATCHMAN
FRIAR FRANCES
SEXTON, A judge

Act I

Scene 1

Before Leonato's house.

(Enter BALTHASAR, followed by LEONATO, BEATRICE, and HERO. BALTHASAR takes center stage, while the others stay off to one side.)

BALTHASAR

Buongiorno!

Welcome to Messina, in the picturesque, rolling hills of the Italian wine country!

Today is a very important day: in a mere moment, brave Italian soldiers will be returning from war, having lost zero men in battle! And here, on the beautiful estate of Senior Leonato...

(LEONATO steps forward and waves hello to audience.)

... Old flames will be sparked...

(BEATRICE "psha"s and rolls her eyes.)

... New flames will be ignited...

(HERO giggles and blushes.)

... And evill plots will be laid...

(As BALTHASAR exits, enter from another side of the stage: DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, DON JOHN, and CONRADE)

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

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

(They shakes hands and embrace.)

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

Her mother hath many times told me so. *(General laughter from the crowd.)*

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

Signior Benedick, no; for then were you a child. *(All laugh again.)*

DON PEDRO

Be happy, lady; for you are like an honourable father.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

(DON PEDRO decides to break this game of wits 'tween old flames up, before it gets too heated.)

DON PEDRO

That is the sum of all!
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!

LEONATO *(To Don John)*

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

DON JOHN

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

LEONATO

Please it your grace lead on?

DON PEDRO

Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

(Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO.)

CLAUDIO

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK

I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO

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?

*(*Her cousin is Beatrice.)*

CLAUDIO

... If Hero would be my wife.

BENEDICK

Is't come to this?!

Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Ugh!

O look, Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

(Re-enter DON PEDRO)

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

I would your grace would constrain me to tell...

DON PEDRO

I charge thee on thy allegiance.

BENEDICK

You hear, Count Claudio:

on my allegiance, mark you, on my allegiance!

Sir, he is in love. With who?

With Hero!... Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO

If this were so, so were it uttered.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

DON PEDRO

By my troth, I speak my thought.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO

That she is worthy, I know.

BENEDICK

That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks; but 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; 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

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

BENEDICK

I look for an earthquake too, then.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassy: and so I leave you.
(Exit *BENEDICK*)

DON PEDRO

Dost thou affect Hero?

CLAUDIO

O, my lord... (*He is lost for words.*)

DON PEDRO

Ha! Thou wilt be like a lover presently
And tire the hearer with a book of words.
If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it;
And I will break with her and with her father,
And thou shalt have her!
I know we shall have revelling to-night:
I will assume thy part in some disguise
And tell fair Hero I am "Claudio,"
And in her bosom I'll unclasp "my" heart.
Then after to her father will I break;
And the conclusion is: she shall be thine!
In practice let us put it presently.
(*Exeunt, joyously.*)

Scene 2

The same.

(*Enter BALTHASAR*)

BALTHASAR

Ah, Love... what a many-splendored thing it is!
(*Suddenly, sniffs the air and looks around suspiciously.*)
Uh oh. Don't breathe too deeply, folks. I smell villainy in the air.
(*Exits.*)

(*Enter DON JOHN, followed by CONRADE.*)

CONRADE

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

DON JOHN

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

CONRADE

You should hear reason.

DON JOHN

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

CONRADE

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

DON JOHN

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

CONRADE

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

DON JOHN

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

CONRADE

Can you make no use of your discontent?

DON JOHN

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

Who comes here?

(Enter BORACHIO)

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

What is he for a fool that betroths himself to unquietness?

BORACHIO

It is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN

Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he.

DON JOHN

A proper squire! Which way looks he?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Ha! How came you to this?

BORACHIO

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

*(*The Prince = Don Pedro)*

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 will both assist me?

CONRADE

To the death, my lord.

BORACHIO

We'll wait upon your lordship.

DON JOHN

Let us to the great supper!
(Exeunt)

Act II

Scene 1

A hall in Leonato's house.

(Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, and BEATRICE)

LEONATO

Was not Count John here at supper?

ANTONIO

I saw him not.

BEATRICE

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

HERO

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue; I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

BEATRICE

In faith, not till God make men of some other metal than earth!

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.

LEONATO

Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

(Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, CONRADE, MARGARET, URSULA and others, all masked. They dance in one large group for a beat, and then begin to pair up and dance into the foreground as their duo dialogue happens...)

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

With me in your company?

HERO

I may say so, when I please.

DON PEDRO

And when please you to say so?

HERO

When I like your favour.

DON PEDRO

Ow! Speak low, if you speak love...
(Drawing her 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.

BORACHIO

I love you the better.

MARGARET

God match me with a good dancer!

BORACHIO

Amen!

MARGARET

And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done!

BORACHIO

Ha!

(She walks away flirtatiously and he pursues her.)

URSULA

I know you well enough; you are Signior Antonio.

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA

I know you by the wagging of your head.

ANTONIO

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA

You could never do him so ill-well, unless you were the very man. You are he, you are he.

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA *(Sarcastically.)*

Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? can virtue hide itself? Go to, you are he!
(They dance to the side.)

BEATRICE

Will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK

No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE

Signior 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 the prince's jester: a very dull fool;
His only gift is in devising impossible slanders:
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 danced with me.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Do. Do.

(She curtsies and then walks away. He is dumbstruck at her words. Sick burn, indeed. He takes off his mask, gives the audience a look, and then rejoins the group of revellers. The dance/ music winds down for a quick beat, and then exeunt all except DON JOHN, CONRADE, and CLAUDIO)

DON JOHN *(Aside to Conrade, as they take their masks off.)*

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.

CONRADE

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

DON JOHN

Hmm... Are not you "Signior Benedick"?

CLAUDIO

Uh, ahem... You know me well; I am he.

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO *(As Benedick)*

How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear his affection.

CONRADE

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 CONRADE, shaking hands.)

CLAUDIO *(Takes mask off.)*

Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
'Tis certain so; the prince wooes for himself!
Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love.
Therefore, all hearts in love use their own tongues;
Let every eye negotiate for itself
And trust no agent.
Farewell, therefore, Hero!
(Re-enter BENEDICK.)

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Yea, the same.

BENEDICK

Come, will you go with me?

CLAUDIO

Whither?

BENEDICK

Even to the next room;
for the prince hath got your Hero!

CLAUDIO

I wish him joy of her.
I pray you, leave me.

BENEDICK

Whoa! now you strike like the blind man;
Did you think the prince would
have served you thus?

CLAUDIO

If it will not be, I'll leave *you*.
(Exits.)

BENEDICK

Alas, poor hurt fowl...
(Turns to audience:)
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.
I am not so reputed!
It is the base, bitter disposition of Beatrice
that so gives me out!
(Re-enter DON PEDRO.)

DON PEDRO

Now, signior, where's the count? 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

By my faith, you say honestly.
But, the Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you:
the gentleman that danced with her told her she is
much wronged by you.

BENEDICK

O, she misused me past the endurance of a block!
She told me, not thinking I had been
myself, that I was the prince's jester, that I was
duller than a great thaw!
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. Talk not of her!
Indeed, all disquiet, horror and perturbation follows her.

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.
(Enter BEATRICE, leading CLAUDIO, followed by HERO and LEONATO.)

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

Good lady, you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

How then? sick?

CLAUDIO

Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his grace hath made the match, and grace say Amen to it.
(CLAUDIO and HERO join hands, and are speechless.)

BEATRICE

Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO

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

BEATRICE

Speak, cousin! or, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak neither.
(They embrace and/or kiss. ALL others applaud and cheer.)

DON PEDRO

In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

BEATRICE

I would rather have one of your father's getting.
Hath your grace ne'er a brother like you? Ha!

DON PEDRO

Will you have me, lady?

BEATRICE *(Completely caught off-guard; her joke has backfired. She blushes.)*

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

DON PEDRO

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

BEATRICE

No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there
was a star danced, and under that was I born.
(To Hero and Claudio)
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.
(BEATRICE curtsies to the Prince, and Exits-- still completely embarrassed.)

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

LEONATO

O Lord, my lord, if they were but a week married,
they would talk themselves mad.
(*ALL laugh.*)

DON PEDRO

County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

Not till Monday, my dear son!

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

My lord, I am with 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

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

Scene 2

The same.

(As the others exit, DON JOHN, CONRADE, and BORACHIO appear from behind a wall.)

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

Yea, my lord; but I can cross it.

DON JOHN

Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinal to me: I am sick in displeasure to him. How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Show me, briefly, how.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

The poison of that lies in you to temper. Go you to the Prince, your brother; spare not to tell him that he hath wronged his honour in marrying the renowned Claudio to the contaminated Hero.

DON JOHN

What proof shall I make of that?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Only to despise them, I will endeavour any-thing.

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.

CONRADE

They will scarcely believe this without trial.

BORACHIO

So, offer them instances, which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber-window-- hear me call Margaret "Hero", hear Margaret term me "Claudio"; and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding,—for in the meantime I will so fashion the matter that Hero shall be absent,—and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance and all the preparation overthrown!

DON JOHN

Ha! I will put it into practise.
Be cunning in the working this, and
thy fee is a thousand ducats.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

I will presently go learn their day of marriage!
(Exeunt DON JOHN and CONRADE one way, BORACHIO another.)

Scene 3

Leonato's orchard.
(Enter BALTHASAR)

BALTHASAR

The wedding of Claudio and Hero is just a few days away, so all of Leonato's estate is scrambling to make speedy preparations for this happy event. But as you have seen, the conniving and villainous Don John will do everything (s)he can to turn their nuptial into a dark day. Borachio's plan is to have a romantic night with Hero's attendant, Margaret, while Hero is not there. If this plan is successfully carried out in front of Hero's second-story window, then Claudio and the Prince will think Hero is being unfaithful -- the very night before the wedding! Meanwhile...

(Enter BENEDICK)

BENEDICK

Boy!

BALTHASAR *(Saluting.)*

Signior?

BENEDICK

In my chamber-window lies a book: bring it hither to me in the orchard.

BOY

I am here already, sir.

BENEDICK

I know that -- but I would have thee hence, and here again.
(BALTHASAR gives him a sassy look, and Exits. BENEDICK turns to audience:)
I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to Love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by "failing" in love: and such a man is Claudio I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; I have known when he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armour; he used 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 *those* eyes? I think not: I will not be such a fool.

DON PEDRO *(Offstage.)*

Come hither, gentlemen!

BENEDICK

Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love!

I will hide me...

*(Hides, somewhere onstage. *Throughout this scene, he may move from one hiding place to another, either to escape the other men onstage if they get too close to him, or to hear their conference better, as they talk "in secret.")*
(Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO)

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

O, I did never think that lady would have loved any man!

LEONATO

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

BENEDICK *(Aside.)*

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Maybe she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO

Totally!

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO *(Whispering to them, so that Benedick can't hear it.)*

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 trick, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide itself in such reverence.

CLAUDIO *(Whispering again.)*

He hath ta'en the infection: hold it up!

DON PEDRO

Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

'Tis true, indeed; so your daughter says. 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.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

If he should, it were an alms to beat him.
She's an excellent sweet lady; and, she is virtuous.

CLAUDIO

And she is exceeding wise.

DON PEDRO

In every thing but in loving Benedick!
(The three of them laugh. BENEDICK gives the audience a look.)

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

I would she had bestowed this dotage on me: I would have daffed all other respects and made her half myself. I pray you, tell Benedick of it, and hear what 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 her, rather than she will bate one breath of her accustomed crossness.

DON PEDRO

She doth well: if she should tell him of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it; for that man, as you know, hath a contemptible spirit.

CLAUDIO

He is a very proper man.
And, in my mind, very wise.

DON PEDRO

He doth indeed show some sparks that are *like* wit.

CLAUDIO

And I take him to be valiant.

DON PEDRO

As Hector, I assure you!
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.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

My lord, will you walk? dinner is ready.

CLAUDIO (*Whispering to them, secretly.*)

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

DON PEDRO (*Also whispering.*)

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: 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.
(*Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO-- shaking hands, congratulating each other.*)

BENEDICK (*Coming forward... He is dumbstruck, and looks bewilderedly for a beat, as he digests all this new information...*)

This can be no trick!
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.
But, I did never think to marry.
They say the lady is fair; 'tis a truth,
I can bear them witness -- and virtuous; 'tis
so, I cannot reprove it -- and wise, but for loving
me... by my troth, 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. BENEDICK strikes some sort of manly, or romantic pose.)

BEATRICE *(Totally unamused.)*
Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.

BENEDICK
Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

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

BENEDICK
You take pleasure then, in the message?

BEATRICE
Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's
point, and choke withal. You have no stomach,
signior? Fare you well.
(She Exits.)

BENEDICK *(To audience.)*
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 fool. I will go get her picture!
(Exits, in a dash.)

Act III

Scene 1

Leonato's garden.

(Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA)

HERO

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor;
There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice
Talking with the Prince and Claudio:
Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Ursula
Walk in the orchard and our whole discourse
Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us!

MARGARET

Presently. Woo-hoo!
(Exits.)

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit:
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice!
(Enter BEATRICE, and quickly hides herself behind something, as she has probably overheard Hero's last line. She may shift hiding spots a couple times throughout the scene.)

HERO *(Whispering.)*

Ooh! Now begin;
For look you where Beatrice, runs
Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

URSULA *(Whispering.)*

Fear you not my part of the dialogue!
(HERO and URSULA get closer to BEATRICE's hiding place, and start speaking louder, so that she can hear them.)

URSULA

But are you sure that Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO

So says the Prince and my Claudio.

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?

HERO

Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes.
She cannot love; she is so self-endear'd.

URSULA

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

HERO

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured;
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.
Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire, 1155
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:
It were a better death than die with mocks,
Which is as bad as die with tickling.

URSULA

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

HERO

No! rather I will go to Benedick
And counsel him to fight against his passion.
He is the only man of Italy --
Always excepted my dear Claudio.

URSULA

Signior Benedick,
For shape, for bearing, argument and valour,
Goes foremost in report through Italy.

HERO

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA *(Whispering.)*

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

HERO *(Whispering.)*

If it proves so, then loving goes by haps:
Some Cupids kill with arrows, some with traps.
(Exeunt HERO and URSULA, high-fiving.)

BEATRICE *(Coming forward, to audience.)*

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!
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!
(Exits, excitedly.)

Scene 2

A room in Leonato's house.

(Enter BENEDICK, pursued by DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO - who are teasing him.)

LEONATO

I hope he be in love!

CLAUDIO

Say I, he is in love!

DON PEDRO

The greatest note of it is his melancholy.

CLAUDIO

And when was he wont to wash his face?

DON PEDRO

Conclude, conclude he is in love!

BENEDICK

Old signior, walk aside with me: I have studied eight
or nine wise words to speak to you, which these
hobby-horses must not hear.
(Exeunt BENEDICK and LEONATO.)

DON PEDRO

For my life, to break with him about Beatrice!

CLAUDIO

'Tis even so!

(Enter DON JOHN.)

DON JOHN

My lord and brother, God save you!

DON PEDRO

Good day, brother.

DON JOHN

If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO

In private?

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

What's the matter?

DON JOHN *(To CLAUDIO.)*

Means your lordship to be married tomorrow?

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 hesitates.)

DON PEDRO

John, what's the matter?

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

Who, Hero?

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Disloyal?!

DON JOHN

The word is too good to paint out her wickedness.
Wonder not till further warrant:
go 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 honour
to change your mind.

CLAUDIO

May this be so?

DON PEDRO

I will not think it.

DON JOHN

If you will follow me, I will show
you enough; and when you have seen more and heard
more, proceed accordingly.

CLAUDIO

If I see any thing tonight, why I shall not marry
her tomorrow in the congregation -- where I should
wed, there will I shame her.

DON PEDRO

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

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

O day untowardly turned!

CLAUDIO

O mischief strangely thwarting!

DON JOHN

O plague right well prevented!
So will you say when you have seen the sequel.
(*Exeunt.*)

Intermission

Scene 3

A street.

(Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES, with TWO WATCHMEN.)

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

Come hither, neighbour Seacole. *(FIRST WATCHMAN steps toward DOGBERRY.)*

God hath blessed you with a good name:

to be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune;

but to write and read comes by nature.

You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch; therefore bear you the lantern.

(DOGBERRY hands FIRST WATCHMAN a lantern or flashlight.)

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

SECOND WATCHMAN

How if he will not stand?

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

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

FIRST WATCHMAN

We will rather sleep than talk.

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.

SECOND WATCHMAN

Yes, 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 with them, the more is for your honesty.

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

SECOND WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

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

This is the end of the charge.

Well, masters, good night: an there be any matter of weight chances, call up me.

Good night.

(Salutes all around. DOGBERRY and VERGES begin to exit. The WATCHMEN sit up against a lamp post, bench, or wall -- and close their eyes to go to sleep.)

DOGBERRY

Oh, one word more, honest neighbours:

(The WATCHMEN quickly rise to their feet and salute.)

I pray you watch

about Signior Leonato's door; for the wedding being there to-morrow, there is a great coil to-night.

Be vigilant, I beseech you. Adieu.

(Salutes. Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES. The WATCHMEN attempt to go back to sleep.)

(Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE, laughing. They have been partying.)

BORACHIO

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

FIRST WATCHMAN *(Whispering.)*

Some treason! Stand close.

(The WATCHMEN hide behind something, and listen to the story BORACHIO unfolds.)

BORACHIO

I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats!
For 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 good
night,—I tell this tale vilely;—I should first
tell thee how the Prince 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, the Prince and Claudio; but the
devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly
by his oaths, which first possessed them, partly by
the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly
by my villainy, which did confirm any slander that
Don John had made, away went Claudio enraged; swore
he would meet her, as he was appointed, next morning
at the temple, and there, before the whole
congregation, shame her with what he saw o'er night
and send Hero home again without a husband!
(The WATCHMEN whip out from their hiding spot, to arrest the villains.)

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

SECOND WATCHMAN

Call up constable Dogberry; we have here
recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery that
ever was known in the commonwealth!

CONRADE

Masters, masters,—

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

CONRADE

Ugh. Come, we'll obey you. *(Exeunt.)*

Scene 4

(A moment of transition. Movement fills the stage. Perhaps music plays.

On one side, MARGARET, URSULA, and BEATRICE help to dress HERO into her wedding gown; they are having an awesome time.

On the opposite side, the men are getting ready: DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, DON JOHN and BENEDICK are straightening their ties, putting on jackets, applying cologne, etc. -- BENEDICK is joyful; DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO and DON JOHN are somber.

Center stage, LEONATO, ANTONIO, and FRIAR FRANCIS are setting up for the wedding; hanging decorations, arranging flowers, etc.)

Act IV

Scene 1

A church.

(FRIAR takes his place center stage, Bible in hand. LEONATO and ANTONIO stand on either side of him. The group of ladies and gentlemen from either end of the stage group toward the center as well -- HERO and CLAUDIO in front of FRIAR; the groomsmen flank one side of center, the bridesmaids mirror them on the opposite side.)

LEONATO

Begin, Friar Francis.

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. Ha!

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

Know you any, Hero?

HERO

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Know you any, count?

LEONATO

I dare make his answer: none.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

How now! interjections?

CLAUDIO

Stand thee by, Friar. Father, by your leave:
Will you with free and unconstrain-ed soul
Give me this maid, your daughter?

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

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

LEONATO

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO What should I speak?

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

LEONATO

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN

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

BENEDICK

This looks not like a nuptial.

HERO

True? O God!

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

HERO

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

CLAUDIO

To make you answer truly to your name.

HERO

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

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear: upon mine honour,
Myself, my brother and this griev-ed count
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber-window.

DON JOHN

Fie, fie! This is not to be named, my lord,
Not to be spoke of!
There is not chastity enough in language
Without offence to utter them. Thus, pretty lady,
I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

CLAUDIO

O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been,
If half thy outward graces had been placed
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair!
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love.

LEONATO

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

(HERO faints.)

BEATRICE *(Going to HERO.)*

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!

LEONATO

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

(HERO wakes up.)

BEATRICE

How now, cousin Hero!

FRIAR FRANCIS

Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO

Dost thou look up?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Yea, wherefore should she not?

LEONATO

Wherefore! Why, doth not every earthly thing
Cry "shame" upon her? Could she here deny
The story that is printed in her blood?
Do not live, Hero; do not ope thine eyes.
Griev-ed I, why had I one?
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?
Mine I loved and mine I praised
And mine that I was proud on -- why, she is fallen
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again!

BENEDICK

Sir, sir, be patient!

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

BEATRICE

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

BENEDICK

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

Confirm'd, confirm'd!
Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie,
Who loved her so, that, speaking of her foulness,
Wash'd it with tears? Hence from her! let her die.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Hear me a little! for I have only been
Silent so long and given way unto
This course of fortune, by noting of the lady;
I have mark'd a thousand blushing apparitions
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes;
And in her eye there hath appear'd 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,
trust not my age, reverence, calling, nor divinity,
If this sweet lady lie not *guiltless* here
Under some biting error.

LEONATO

Friar, it cannot be.
A sin of perjury: she denies it not!

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

There is some strange misprision in these men.

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

Pause awhile,
And let my counsel sway you in this case.
Your daughter here the princes left for dead:
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,
And publish it that she is dead indeed;
Maintain a mourning ostentation
And on your family's old monument
Hang mournful epitaphs and do all rites
That appertain unto a burial.

LEONATO

What shall become of this? what will this do?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse; that is some good.
For it so falls out
That what we have, we prize not to the worth
but being lack'd and lost -- then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio:
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
then shall he mourn,
And wish he had not so accused her,
No, though he thought his accusation true.
Let this be so.
And if it sort not well, you may conceal her,
(As best befits her wounded reputation)
In some reclusive and religious life --
Out of all eyes, tongues, minds and injuries.

BENEDICK

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

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 BEATRICE; FRIAR leads the way, ANTONIO walks alongside LEONATO, and BENEDICK escorts HERO. BEATRICE remains knelt on the floor, crying. Enter BALTHASAR.)

BALTHASAR

Whew. Intense stuff, right? So far, the villains have won the day; Borachio's plan and Don John's trickery have worked, just as planned. And now, a lot of hearts are broken.
To recap: Claudio has shamed Hero at the wedding altar, thinking that she has been unfaithful to him. Friar Francis' plan is to keep Hero hidden for a few days, and have the word spread throughout the estate that she died of grief because of Claudio and the Prince's accusations, combined with her father's shame. The Friar hopes that this plan will cause Hero's slanderers to grieve over her "death" and repent their public shaming of her. Meanwhile, this matter can be investigated further and perhaps Hero's innocence can be revealed.
You know, this whole thing reminds me of one of my favorite songs--
(Re-enter BENEDICK.)
Oops, gotta go.
(Exit BALTHASAR.)

BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE

You have no reason; I do it freely.

BENEDICK

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Is there any way to show such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK

May a man do it?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me!

BEATRICE

Do not swear, and eat it.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Will you not eat your word?

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK

What offence, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

And do it with all thy heart.

BEATRICE

I love you with so much of my heart that none is
left to protest!
(They embrace, or lock hands, etc.)

BENEDICK

Come, bid me do anything for thee!

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK

Ha! not for the wide world.

BEATRICE

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK

Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

We'll be friends first.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Hear me, Beatrice,—

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Nay, but, Beatrice,—

BEATRICE

Sweet Hero! She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone. 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 courtesies, valour 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.
(Exeunt, separately.)

Scene 2

A prison-house.

(Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, SEXTON, and the WATCHMEN, leading in CONRADE and BORACHIO.)

DOGBERRY

Is our whole dissembly appeared?

SEXTON

Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY

Marry, that am I and my partner.

SEXTON

Nay, but which are the offenders that are to be examined?

(Dogberry brings Conrade and Borachio in front of SEXTON.)

DOGBERRY

What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

Yours, sirrah?

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

Masters, it is proved already
that you are little better than false knaves.
How answer you for yourselves?

CONRADE

Sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY

A marvellous witty fellow, I assure you!
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.

SEXTON

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

DOGBERRY

Yea, marry, that's the efiest 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.

DOGBERRY

Why, this is flat perjury, to call a prince's brother villain!

BORACHIO

Master constable,—

DOGBERRY

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

SEXTON

What heard you him say else?

SECOND WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

Flat burglary as ever was committed.

VERGES

Yea!

SEXTON

What else, fellow?

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

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

SEXTON

What else?

SECOND WATCHMAN

This is all.

SEXTON

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

DOGBERRY (*Attempting to push CONRADE and BORACHIO back to the WATCHMEN.*)
Come, let them be opinioned,--

CONRADE

Off, coxcomb!

DOGBERRY

Come, bind them.
Thou naughty varlet!

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY (*Gasps.*)

Dost thou not suspect my place? dost thou not
suspect my years? O, that the Sexton 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:

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, too!
Bring him away.

(*VERGES and the WATCHMEN lead CONRADE and BORACHIO out.*)

...O, that I had been writ down an ass!
(Exit DOGBERRY.)

Act V

Scene 1

Before Leonato's house.
(Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO.)

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
Which falls into mine ears as profitless
As water in a sieve.
Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid him speak of patience.
There is no such man, brother!
Therefore give me no counsel:
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

ANTONIO

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATO

I pray thee, peace!
My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;
And that shall Claudio know; so shall the Prince
And all of them that thus dishonour her.

ANTONIO

Well, here come the Prince and Claudio hastily.
(Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, in a hurry; they are getting ready to leave the estate.)

DON PEDRO

Good day, good day.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO

Hear you. my lords,—

DON PEDRO

We have some haste, Leonato.

LEONATO *(Blocking their path.)*
Are you so hasty now?

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

My villainy?

DON PEDRO

You say not right, old man.

LEONATO

Thou hast kill'd my child;
If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man!

ANTONIO (*Shoving CLAUDIO.*)

He shall kill two of us, and men indeed:
But that's no matter; let him kill one first;
Let him answer me!
Sir boy, I'll whip you -- as I am a gentleman, I will!

LEONATO (*Trying to break them up.*)

Brother,—

ANTONIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

My lord, my lord,—

DON PEDRO

I will not hear you.

LEONATO

No? Brother, come away! I will be heard.

ANTONIO

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

(Exeunt LEONATO and ANTONIO. Enter BENEDICK, from other side of stage.)

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Now, signior, what news?

BENEDICK

Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

It is in my scabbard: shall I draw it?

DON PEDRO

Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?
(BENEDICK is silent. Stays focused on CLAUDIO.)

DON PEDRO

As I am an honest man, he looks pale. Art thou
sick, or angry?
(BENEDICK still silent; burning a hole into CLAUDIO with his eyes.)
I think he be angry indeed.

BENEDICK

Shall I speak a word in your ear?

CLAUDIO

God bless me from a challenge!

BENEDICK *(Grabs CLAUDIO and pulls him aside.)*

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!
(He laughs, thinking Benedick is joking.)

BENEDICK

Fare you well, boy: you know my mind. I will leave you now to your gossip-like humour: you break jests as braggarts do their blades, which hurt not.
(To DON PEDRO.)

My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you: I must discontinue your company. Your brother the bastard is fled from Messina; you have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady.

(Pointing at Claudio.)

For my Lord "Lackbeard" there, he and I shall meet-- Till then, peace be with him.
(Exits.)

DON PEDRO

He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO

Most sincerely.

DON PEDRO

But, soft you:
Did he not say, my brother was fled?...

(Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the WATCHMEN, leading CONRADE and BORACHIO.)

DOGBERRY

Come on, sirs: if justice cannot tame you, she shall ne'er weigh more reasons in her balance!

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Hearken after their offence, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Officers, what offence have these men done?

DOGBERRY

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

DON PEDRO

First, I ask thee what they have done -- thirdly, I ask thee what's their offence -- sixth and lastly, why they are committed -- and, to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

CLAUDIO

Rightly reasoned, sir.

DON PEDRO

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

BORACHIO

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

DON PEDRO *(To Claudio.)*

Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO

I have drunk poison whiles he uttered it.

DON PEDRO

But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO

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

DON PEDRO

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.

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

(Re-enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, with the SEXTON.)

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

I cannot bid you bid my daughter live;
That were impossible: but, I pray you both,
Possess the people in Messina here
How innocent she died;
and hang an epitaph upon her tomb
And sing it to her bones, sing it to-night.
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 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.

LEONATO

Tomorrow then, I will expect you.
Tonight I take my leave. This naughty man
Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
Who I believe was pack'd in all this wrong,
Hired to it by your brother.

BORACHIO

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

DOGBERRY

Moreover, sir, this plaintiff here 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 (*Giving him some money.*)

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.
I wish your worship well!
Come, neighbour!
(*Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES.*)

LEONATO

Until tomorrow morning, lords, farewell.

ANTONIO

Farewell, my lords: we look for you tomorrow.

DON PEDRO

We will not fail.

CLAUDIO

Tonight I'll mourn with Hero.

LEONATO (*To the Watchmen.*)

Bring you these fellows on.
We'll talk with Margaret,
how her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.
(*Exeunt, severally.*)

Scene 2

Leonato's garden.
(*Enter BALTHASAR.*)

BALTHASAR

So, the plot thickens, as we tumble headlong toward the conclusion of our story. Don John, the mastermind behind all of the villainous deception has fled; his cronies are in custody, and the truth behind their lies hath been revealed. Everyone, except for a select few, now thinks that Hero indeed died from her grief. Leonato has told Claudio that, to atone for his public slandering of Hero, tonight he must sing a funeral song at her supposed tomb: "Done to death by slanderous tongues was the Hero that here lies." Claudio promises to do this. He also promises that tomorrow, he will marry Antonio's daughter -- who just so happens to "look exactly like Hero." What are the odds, right? Clever plan, old man Leonato. Won't Claudio be surprised? And hopefully, he has learned how *not* to treat a lady. Then, there's the whole thing between Benedick and Beatrice: how's that going to turn out, you think?...
(*Enter BENEDICK.*)

BENEDICK

Balthasar! I pray thee, call Beatrice.

BALTHASAR (*To Audience.*)

... I guess we'll find out soon enough.
(*To Benedick.*)
I will.

(*Exit BALTHASAR. BENEDICK looks around suspiciously; pulls out a paper from his pocket, unfolds it, and then nervously reads from it: it's a love poem he has written for BEATRICE.*)

BENEDICK (*Sings*)

"The god of love,
That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve,—"
Ugh. Singing. Love... I cannot show it in rhyme.
(*Enter BEATRICE.*)
Sweet Beatrice!
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.
(*They laugh.*)
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.
(*Enter URSULA, in a hurry.*)

URSULA

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

BEATRICE

Will you go hear this news, signior?

BENEDICK

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

(Exeunt.)

Scene 3

A church.

(Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, MARGARET, FRIAR FRANCIS, and HERO.)

FRIAR FRANCIS

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

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

(Enter URSULA, BEATRICE, and BENEDICK Relieved shaking of hands and hugs all around.)

LEONATO

Well, daughter, and you gentle-women all,
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
And when I send for you, come hither masked.
(Exeunt Ladies.)

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

ANTONIO

Which I will do with confirm'd countenance.

BENEDICK

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS

To do what, signior?

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

Ha! 'Tis most true.

BENEDICK

And I do with an eye of love requite her.

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. *(He has to catch his breath after saying that word.)*

In which, good Friar, I shall desire your help.

LEONATO

My heart is with your liking.

FRIAR FRANCIS

And my help!

(Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO.)

DON PEDRO

Good morrow to this fair assembly.

LEONATO

Good morrow, Prince; good morrow, Claudio:

We here attend you. Are you yet determined

Today to marry with my brother's daughter?

CLAUDIO

I'll hold my mind. *(They shake hands.)*

LEONATO

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

(Exit ANTONIO.)

DON PEDRO

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!

BENEDICK

For this I owe you.

(BENEDICK shakes hands with CLAUDIO and DON PEDRO.

Re-enter ANTONIO, with the Ladies masked or veiled.)

CLAUDIO *(To Benedick.)*

Here comes other reckonings.

(To Antonio.)

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

ANTONIO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

Before this friar and swear to marry her.

CLAUDIO

Give me your hand: before this holy friar,

I am your husband, if you like of me.

HERO

And when I lived, I was your other wife: *(Unveiling.)*

And when you loved, you were my other husband.

CLAUDIO *(Gasping.)*

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

Uh, Friar... Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE *(Unveiling.)*

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

Sweet 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! (*Hands love letter to BEATRICE.*)

HERO

And here's another
Writ in my cousin's hand, stolen from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto Benedick! (*Hands love letter to 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!

(Kisses her. ALL cheer.)

DON PEDRO

How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK

I'll tell thee what, Prince: a college of
wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humour,
since I do purpose to marry!

For thy part, Claudio: we are friends.

Prince: get thee a wife, get thee a wife!

(Enter BALTHASAR.)

BALTHASAR

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

BENEDICK

Think not on him till tomorrow.

For now, we shall have dancing;

Strike up music!

(Music starts. There is general merriment: dancing, galavanting, hugging, etc.

*Perhaps it takes Hero an extra beat to warm up to Claudio during this joyous moment, given
the other day's events; perhaps not. Either way, Love hath conquered evil!)*

BALTHASAR

The end! Buona notte, folks!

~ CURTAIN ~

Need more plays?



Have a play to share?

