

Much Ado about Nothing

Scene breakdown

- ~Act 1, Scene 1~ Before LEONATO'S house.
- ~Act 1, Scene 2~ A room in LEONATO's house.
- ~Act 1, Scene 3~ The same.

- ~Act 2, Scene 1~ A hall in LEONATO'S house.
- ~Act 2, Scene 2~ The same.
- ~Act 2, Scene 3~ LEONATO'S orchard.

- ~Act 3, Scene 1~ LEONATO'S garden.
- ~Act 3, Scene 2~ A room in LEONATO'S house
- ~Act 3, Scene 3~ A street.
- ~Act 3, Scene 4~ HERO's apartment.
- ~Act 3, Scene 5~ Another room in LEONATO'S house.

- ~Act 4, Scene 1~ A church.
- ~Act 4, Scene 2~ A prison.

- ~Act 5, Scene 1~ Before LEONATO'S house.
- ~Act 5, Scene 2~ LEONATO'S garden.
- ~Act 5, Scene 3~ A church.
- ~Act 5, Scene 4~ A room in LEONATO'S house.

Much Ado about Nothing
Character list (in order of appearance)

Leonato

Hero

Beatrice

Messenger/Leonato's Aide

Don Pedro

Don John

Claudio

Benedick

Balthasar

Antonio

Conrade

Borachio

Margaret

Ursula

Boy

Dogberry

Verges

First Watchman

Second Watchman

Other Watchmen***

Friar Francis

Attendants***

Sexton

Lord

Other nobles***

Character Descriptions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conrad - One of Don John's more intimate associates, entirely devoted to Don John.

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

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

Antonio - Leonato's elderly brother and Hero's uncle. He is Beatrice's father.

Balthasar - A waiting man in Leonato's household and a musician. Balthasar flirts with Margaret at the masked party and helps Leonato, Claudio, and Don Pedro trick Benedick into falling in love with Beatrice.

Ursula - One of Hero's waiting women.

~Act 1, Scene 1~

****In front of Leonato's house****

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

Leonato: I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Arragon comes this night to Messina.

Messenger: He is very near by this; he was not three leagues off when I left him.

Leonato: How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

Messenger: Few of any sort, and none of name.

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

Messenger: Much deserved on his part. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion.

Leonato: He hath an uncle here in Messina who will be very much glad of it.

Messenger: I have already delivered him letters, and there appears much joy in him; even so much that joy could not show itself modest enough without a badge of bitterness.

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

Messenger: I know none of that name, lady; there was none such in the army of any sort.

Leonato: What is he that you ask for, niece?

Hero: My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

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

Beatrice: Benedick once put up a public notice in Messina challenging Cupid to an archery match. My uncle's jester accepted the contest on Cupid's behalf but used toy arrows at the shooting match.

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

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

Beatrice: And I always win. The last time we fought, he was so dazed by the end he wasn't much smarter than his horse. So tell me, who is he hanging around with these days? Every month he has a new best friend.

Messenger: Is't possible?

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

Messenger: I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

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

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

Beatrice: Benedick will plague him like a disease! He is an infection that's easy to catch but hard to get rid of — and he'll drive you crazy once you've been infected.

Messenger: I will hold friends with you, lady.

Beatrice: Do, good friend.

Messenger: Don Pedro is approached.

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

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

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

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

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.

[DON PEDRO & LEONATO keep talking while the following conversation happens.]

Beatrice: I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick; nobody marks you.

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

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

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

Beatrice: Women are lucky, then. You would make a nasty suitor. Thankfully, I feel the same way you do. I would rather listen to my dog bark at a crow than hear a man swear that he loves me.

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

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

Benedick: Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

Beatrice: A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

Benedick: I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer. But keep your way; I have done.

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

[BEATRICE turns away.]

[DON PEDRO summons BENEDICK.]

Don Pedro: Claudio, Benedick — Leonato has invited you all to stay here at Messina. I told him we'll stay for at least a month, and he says he hopes we'll stay longer.

[LEONATO turns to DON JOHN.]

Leonato: 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.

[EXIT all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO]

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

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

Claudio: Is she not a sweet young lady?

Benedick: Do you want my true opinion? Or do you want me to criticize her like I do all women?

Claudio: No, please, speak seriously.

Benedick: Well, to be honest, I think she's too short to be praised highly, too ugly to be praised prettily, and too little to be praised greatly.

Claudio: You think I'm kidding. In my eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

Benedick: I'm still young enough to see without glasses, and I don't see what you're talking about. But, hey, this doesn't mean you're looking to get married, does it?

[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 (To CLAUDIO): Do you hear this, Count Claudio? I can keep secrets. But my allegiance is to Don Pedro.

Benedick (To DON PEDRO): Claudio is in love. With whom? That's what your Grace is supposed to ask. See how short the answer is: with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

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 I will still 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: Oh, you'll soften as time passes. While you're waiting for that to happen, though, hurry to Leonato's. Give him my respects, and tell him I'll definitely be there for dinner.

[BENEDICK EXITS]

Claudio: Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

Don Pedro: No child but Hero; she's his only heir. Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

Claudio: My lord, when we left to fight the war, I looked at Hero with the eyes of a soldier. I liked what I saw, but my mind was occupied with the rough, violent task ahead of me. Now that I'm back... I can't help but notice how beautiful Hero is.

Don Pedro: You will exhaust your friends with your endless chatter about your feelings. Look, if you really love Hero, enjoy it.

[DON PEDRO paces & ponders.]

Don Pedro: I know we shall have revelling to-night. I will disguise myself as you and confess "my" love to Hero. Then I'll go to her father as myself, break our engagement, and convince him to promise Hero to you. And she shall be yours.

[DON PEDRO claps his hands.]

Don Pedro: Let's get started!

[CLAUDIO and DON PEDRO EXIT]

~End of Act 1, Scene 1~

~Act 1, Scene 2~

****A room in Leonato's house****

[Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, meeting.]

Leonato: How now, brother!

Antonio: Brother, I can tell you strange news that you yet dreamt not of.

Leonato: Are they good?

Antonio: As the event stamps them, but they have a good cover; they show well outward. The prince and Count Claudio, walking in a thick-pleached alley in mine orchard, were thus much overheard by a man of mine - the prince discovered to Claudio that he loved my niece your daughter and meant to acknowledge it this night in a dance, and if he found her accordant, he meant to take the present time by the top and instantly break with you of it.

Leonato: I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she may be the better prepared for an answer, if peradventure this be true. Go you and tell her of it.

[Enter Attendants]

Leonato (each sentence to a different person): Cousin, you know what you have to do. O, I cry you mercy, friend; go you with me, and I will use your skill. Good cousin, have a care this busy time.

[ALL EXIT]

~End of Act 1, Scene 2~

~Act 1, Scene 3~

The same

[Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE]

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

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

Conrade: You should hear reason.

Don John: And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it?

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

Don John: I wonder that thou, being, as thou sayest thou art, born under Saturn, goest about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief. I cannot hide what I am; I must be sad when I have cause and smile at no man's jests, eat when I have stomach and wait for no man's leisure, sleep when I am drowsy and tend on no man's business, laugh when I am merry and claw no man in his 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, it is needful that you frame the season for your own harvest.

Don John: I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any; in this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my 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]

Don John: What news, Borachio?

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

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

Borachio: Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

Don John: Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

Borachio: Even he.

Don John: A proper squire! And who, and who? which way looks he?

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

Don John: A very forward March-chick! How came you to this?

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

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

Conrade: To the death, my lord.

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

Borachio: We'll wait upon your lordship.

[EXIT]

~End of Act 1, Scene 3~

~Act 2, Scene 1~

A hall in Leonato's house

[Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, and others]

Leonato: Was not Count John here at supper?

Antonio: I saw him not.

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

Hero: He is of a very melancholy disposition.

Beatrice: It would be excellent if there were a man halfway between Don John and Benedick. One is too much like a painting of a man and the other is too much like a spoiled boy, always chattering.

Leonato: Then half Signior Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth, and half Count John's melancholy in Signior Benedick's face —

Beatrice: And if he were handsome, agile, and rich, too, he could have any woman in the world — all he'd need was her good will.

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

Beatrice: What would I do with him? Dress him up in my clothes and pretend he's my lady servant? If he has a beard, he's more than a boy; if he doesn't have a beard, he's less than a man. If he's more than a boy, he's not the one for me, and if he's less than a man, I'm not the one for him.

[ANTONIO shakes his head.]

Antonio (To HERO): Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

Beatrice: Surely, my cousin has a duty to please her father. But if the husband her father chooses isn't handsome, she should sweetly tell her father that she will please herself — with another one.

Leonato (to HERO): Daughter, remember what I told you - if the prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

Leonato (to ANTONIO): The revellers are entering, brother; make good room.

[All put on their masks]

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

Don Pedro (to HERO): Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

Hero: I am yours for the walk; and especially when I walk away.

[DON PEDRO and HERO pull off to the side.]

Balthasar: Well, I would you did like me.

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

Balthasar: Which is one?

Margaret: I say my prayers aloud.

Balthasar: I love you the better; the hearers may cry, Amen.

Margaret: God match me with a good dancer!

Balthasar: Amen.

Margaret: And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done! Answer, clerk.

Balthasar: No more words; the clerk is answered.

Ursula: I know you well enough; you are Signior Antonio.

Antonio: At a word, I am not.

Ursula: I know you by the waggling 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. Here's his dry hand up and down; you are he, you are he.

Antonio: At a word, I am not.

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

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

Benedick (with a horrible accent): No, you shall pardon me.

Beatrice: Nor will you not tell me who you are?

Benedick: Not now.

Beatrice: That I was disdainful — well this was Signior Benedick that said so.

Benedick: What's he?

Beatrice: I am sure you know him well enough.

Benedick: Not I, believe me.

Beatrice: Did he never make you laugh?

Benedick: I pray you, what is he?

Beatrice: Why, he's the Prince's fool, and a very dull fool at that. His only talent is his capacity to come up with unbelievable slanders.

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

Beatrice: Oh, please do. He'll say a few nasty things about me, and if nobody listens to him or laughs, he'll be thrown into a funk.

[Music]

Beatrice: We must follow the leaders.

Benedick: In every good thing.

Beatrice: Nay, if they lead to any ill, I will leave them at the next turning.

[Dance line OFFSTAGE. ALL EXIT except DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and CLAUDIO]

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

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

Don John: Are not you Signior Benedick?

Claudio: You know me well; I am he.

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

Claudio: How know you he loves her?

Don John: I heard him swear his affection.

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

Don John: Come, let us to the banquet.

[EXIT DON JOHN and BORACHIO]

Claudio: Of course the Prince wants Hero for himself. Friendship is enduring except when love is involved. Beauty is a witch whose spells can turn loyalty into passion. Farewell, therefore, Hero!

[Re-enter BENEDICK]

Benedick: Count Claudio? Will you go with me?

Claudio: Whither?

Benedick: The prince hath got your Hero.

Claudio: I wish him joy of her.

Benedick: Did you think the prince would have served you thus?

Claudio: I pray you, leave me.

Benedick: Hey, now you're lashing out in the dark. Someone else robbed you, but you'll beat up the messenger.

Claudio: If it will not be, I'll leave you.

[CLAUDIO EXITS]

Benedick: Alas, that poor wounded bird. But how strange that Lady Beatrice should seem to recognize me, and yet also not recognize me! "The Prince's jester!" Well, I'll get my revenge if I can.

[Re-enter DON PEDRO]

Don Pedro: Signior, where's the count? did you see him?

Benedick: Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame. I found him here melancholy; I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the good will of this young lady.

Don Pedro: Lady Beatrice is angry with you. The gentleman she danced with told her you insulted her.

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. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs; if her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her.

[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, 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: Sir, here's a dish I love not; I cannot endure my Lady Tongue.

[BENEDICK Exit]

Don Pedro: Come, 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 - therefore your grace may well say I have lost it. 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.

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 think your description is correct, though I swear he has no reason. Here, Claudio, I've wooed Hero for you, and she's agreed to marry you. Her father has given his permission.

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

Beatrice: Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

[CLAUDIO beams at HERO, smiling; then shakes his head.]

Claudio: Complete joy makes one speechless. Lady, as you are mine, I am yours.

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

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

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

Don Pedro: Will you have me, lady?

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

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

Beatrice: No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born. 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 EXITS.]

Don Pedro: She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

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

Don Pedro: Count Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

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

Leonato: Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence a just seven-night; and a time too brief, too.

Don Pedro (to CLAUDIO): I promise you, the time will go by quickly. While we're waiting for the wedding, I'm going to take on an impossible task - to make Benedick and Lady Beatrice fall in love

with each other. I aim to see them matched, and with all of your help, I'm sure we can make it happen.

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

Claudio: And I, my lord.

Don Pedro: And you too, gentle Hero?

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

Don Pedro (to HERO): I'll show you how to influence your cousin so she falls in love with Benedick.

[DON PEDRO looks to men.]

Don Pedro: We will trick Benedick so he will fall in love with her. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Come inside with me, and I will tell you my plan.

[ALL EXIT]

~End of Act 2, Scene 1~

~Act 2, Scene 2~

The same hall

[Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO]

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

Borachio: Yea, my lord; but I can cross it.

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

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

Don John: Show me briefly how.

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

Don John: I remember.

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

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

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

Don John: What proof shall I make of that?

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

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

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

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

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

[EXIT]

~End of Act 2, Scene 2~

~Act 2, Scene 3~
Leonato's orchard

[Enter BENEDICK]

Benedick: Boy!

[Enter Boy]

Boy: Signior?

Benedick: In my chamber-window lies a book; bring it hitherto me in the orchard.

Boy: I am here already, sir.

Benedick: I know that; but I would have thee hence, and here again.

[Exit Boy]

Benedick: I do wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will become the argument of his own scorn by failing in love; and such a man is Claudio. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? 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. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

[BENEDICK hides on stage.]

[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 to-day, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

Claudio (aside to DON PEDRO): O, ay; stalk on. stalk on; the fowl sits.

Claudio: I didn' ever think that lady would have loved any man.

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

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

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

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.

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

Claudio (aside): Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

Leonato: What effects, my lord? You heard my daughter tell you how.

Claudio: She did, indeed.

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

Leonato: I would have sworn it had, my lord; especially against Benedick.

Benedick: I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it; knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

Claudio (aside): He hath ta'en the infection; hold it up.

Don Pedro: Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

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

Claudio: 'Tis true, indeed; so your daughter says; 'Shall I,' says she, 'that have so oft encountered him with scorn, write to him that I love him?'

Leonato: This says she now when she is beginning to write to him; for she'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper; my daughter tells us all. Then she tore the letter into a thousand half pence; railed at herself, that she should be so immodest to write to one she knew would flout her.

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

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

Claudio: To what end?

Don Pedro: She's an excellent sweet lady; and, out of all suspicion, she is virtuous.

Claudio: And she is exceeding wise.

Don Pedro: In every thing but in loving Benedick.

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

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 a' will say.

Leonato: Were it good, think you?

Claudio: Hero thinks Beatrice will surely die, for she says she'll die if he doesn't love her, she'll die before she tells him, and she'll die if he woos her.

Don Pedro: Well, I'm sorry for your niece. Should we go find Benedick and tell him about Beatrice's 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 (aside): If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation.

[DON PEDRO motions to CLAUDIO and LEONATO. They both lean in, and the next line is said in a "whisper".]

Don Pedro: The same trap must be set for her. The real fun will be when they both believe the other to be in love, without any of it being true. I can't wait to watch that drama! Let's send Beatrice to call Benedick in to dinner.

[EXIT DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO]

[BENEDICK steps forward.]

Benedick: This can't be a trick. Their discussion was serious, and they had Hero's words to back them up. She loves me? Why, her love must be returned! They say the lady is beautiful — it's true, I've witnessed it myself. And virtuous — it's so, I can't deny it. And wise, except for loving me — well, that might not be any great indication of her intelligence, but it won't be a sign of foolishness either, for I will be horribly in love with her! Some of my witty remarks about marriage might be thrown back at me here and there, but don't tastes change? When I said I would die a bachelor, I didn't think that I would live long enough to get married. Here comes Beatrice. By God, she's a beautiful lady. I think I see some signs 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: Yes, as much pleasure as one might take in choking a bird at knifepoint. You don't want to eat, sir? Goodbye, then.

[Exit]

Benedick: Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come into 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.

[Exit]

~End of Act 2, Scene 3~

~Act 3, 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 Proposing 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; And bid her steal into the pleached bower, Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun, Forbid the sun to enter, like favourites, Made proud by princes, that advance their pride Against that power that bred it; there will she hide her, To listen our purpose. This is thy office; Bear thee well in it and leave us alone.

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

[Exit]

Hero: Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come, As we do trace this alley up and down, 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. Of this matter Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made, That only wounds by hearsay.

[Enter BEATRICE, behind]

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

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

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

[HERO approaches the bower.]

Hero: No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful; I know her spirits are as coy and wild As haggards of the rock.

Ursula: But are you sure that Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

Hero: So says the prince and my new-trothed lord.

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

Hero: They did entreat me to acquaint her of it; But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick, To wish him wrestle with affection, And never to let Beatrice know of it.

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

Hero: O god of love! I know he doth deserve As much as may be yielded to a man; But Nature never framed a woman's heart Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice; Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her

eyes, Misprising what they look on, and her wit Values itself so highly that to her All matter else seems weak; she cannot love, Nor take no shape nor project of affection, 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 sport at it.

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

Ursula: Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

Hero: No, not to be so odd and from all fashions As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable; But who dare tell her so? If I should speak, She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me Out of myself, press me to death with wit. Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire, Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly; It were a better death than die with mocks, Which is as bad as die with tickling.

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

Hero: No; rather I will go to Benedick And counsel him to fight against his passion. And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders To stain my cousin with; one doth not know How much an ill word may empoison liking.

Ursula: O, do not do your cousin such a wrong. She cannot be so much without true judgment— Having so swift and excellent a wit As she is prized to have—as to refuse So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

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

Ursula: I pray you, be not angry with me, madam, Speaking my fancy; 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: She's limed, I warrant you; we have caught her, madam.

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

[EXIT HERO and URSULA]

[BEATRICE steps forward.]

Beatrice: I'm burning up with shame! Can this be true? Benedick, keep on loving me and I will return your love. I'll be kind to you from now on, and that will encourage you to seal our love with a wedding band.

[Exit]

~End of Act 3, Scene 1~

~Act 3, Scene 2~

****A room in Leonato's house****

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

Don Pedro: I do but stay till your marriage be consummate, and then go I toward Arragon.

Claudio: I'll bring you thither, my lord, if you'll vouchsafe me.

Don Pedro: No, taking you away from your new marriage would be like showing a child a new coat and then not letting him wear it. I'll ask only Benedick to come with me, for from the top of his head to the soles of his feet he's a joker.

Benedick: Gallants, I am not as I have been. I have the toothache.

Don Pedro: What! sigh for the toothache?

Leonato: Where is but a humour or a worm.

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

Claudio: Yet say I, he is in love.

Leonato: Indeed, he looks younger than he did, by the loss of a beard.

Don Pedro: Nay, a' rubs himself with civet; can you smell him out by that?

Benedick: Yet is this no charm for the toothache. Old signior, walk aside with me; I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak to you, which these hobby-horses must not hear.

[EXIT BENEDICK and LEONATO]

Don Pedro: For my life, to break with him about Beatrice.

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

[Enter DON JOHN]

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

Don Pedro: Good den, brother.

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

Don Pedro: In private?

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

Don Pedro: What's the matter?

Don John (To CLAUDIO): Means your lordship to be married to-morrow?

Don Pedro: You know he does.

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

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

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

Don Pedro: Why, what's the matter?

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

Claudio: Who, Hero?

Don John: Even she.

Claudio: Disloyal?

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

Claudio: May this be so?

Don Pedro: I will not think it.

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

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

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

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

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.

[EXIT]

~End of Act 3, Scene 2~

~Act 3, Scene 3~

A street

[Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES with the Watch]

Dogberry: Are you good men and true?

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

Dogberry: If they had any allegiance when they were chosen for the Prince's watch, a punishment like that would be too good for them.

Verges: Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

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

First Watchman: Hugh Otecake, sir, or George Seacole; for they can write and read.

Dogberry: Come here, Sir Seacole. To be good-looking is a matter of luck, but to read and write is a natural gift.

Second Watchman: Both which, master constable,—

Dogberry: You're the most senseless and fit man here, so you will carry the lantern and be constable. You will comprehend any vagrant men you see. You are to order all men to stop, in the Prince's name.

Second Watchman: How if a' will not stand?

Dogberry: Well then, don't bother with him and let him go. Then call the rest of the watch and thank God that you've gotten rid of such a criminal.

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

Dogberry: True, and you shouldn't meddle with any but the Prince's subjects. You will also stay quiet in the streets, for a babbling watch is most tolerable and will not be endured.

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

Dogberry: Sleeping shouldn't be a problem; just make sure your weapons don't get stolen. Also, you're supposed to visit all the bars and tell anyone who's drunk to go home and go to bed.

Watchman: How if they will not?

Dogberry: Leave them alone until they're sober. If they still don't answer to your satisfaction, you can say they're not the men you thought they were.

Watchman: Well, sir.

Dogberry: If you meet a thief, you can expect him to be dishonest. The less you have to do with that kind of man, the more honest you will be.

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

Dogberry: I think that those who stick their hands in pitch get their hands dirty. If you encounter a thief, I think the most peaceable thing to do is to let him be himself — and steal away.

Verges: You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

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

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

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

Dogberry: Well then, leave quietly. The ewe that doesn't go to her lamb when it baas will never tend to another animal's child.

Verges: 'Tis very true.

Dogberry: You are representing the Prince himself. If you meet the Prince in the night, you can order him to stop.

Verges: Nay, by'r our lady, that I think a' cannot.

Dogberry: Truly, you can't stop the Prince without the Prince's consent, for the watch shouldn't offend anyone, and it's an offense to keep a man without his consent.

Verges: By'r lady, I think it be so.

Dogberry: Well, gentlemen, good night. And if anything important happens, find me and let me know. Keep each other's secrets and your own. Good night. Come, friend.

[EXIT DOGBERRY and VERGES]

Watchman: Well gentlemen. Let's sit here on the church bench until two and then go off to bed.

[WATCHMEN sit on bench and ground. ALL lean back and fall asleep.]

[Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE]

Borachio: What Conrade!

[This wakes the WATCHMEN, who stir.]

Watchman (To WATCHMEN): Peace! stir not.

Borachio: Conrade, I say!

Conrade: Here, man; I am at thy elbow.

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

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

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

Watchman (to fellow WATCHMEN): Some treason, masters; yet stand close.

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

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

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

Conrade: I wonder at it.

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

Conrade: Yes, it is apparel.

Borachio: I mean, the fashion.

Conrade: Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

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

Watchman (to AUDIENCE): I know that Deformed; a' has been a vile thief this seven year; a' goes up and down like a gentleman; I remember his name.

Borachio: Didst thou not hear somebody?

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

Borachio: Seest thou not, I say, what a deformed thief this fashion is? how giddily a' turns about all the hot bloods between fourteen and five-and-thirty? sometimes fashioning them like Pharaoh's soldiers in the reeky painting, sometime like god Bel's priests in the old church-window, sometime like the shaven Hercules in the smirched worm-eaten tapestry, where his codpiece seems as massy as his club?

Conrade: All this I see; and I see that the fashion wears out more apparel than the man. But art not thou thyself giddy with the fashion too, that thou hast shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the fashion?

Borachio: Not so, neither; but know that I have to-night wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero; she leans me out at her mistress' chamber-window, bids me a thousand times good night,—I tell this tale vilely; —I should first tell thee how the prince, Claudio and my master, planted and placed and possessed by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter.

Conrade: And thought they Margaret was Hero?

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

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

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

First Watchman: And one Deformed is one of them; I know him; a' wears a lock.

Conrade: Masters, masters,—

Second Watchman: You'll be made bring Deformed forth, I warrant you.

Conrade: Masters,—

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

Borachio: We are like to prove a goodly commodity, being taken up of these men's bills.

Conrade: A commodity in question, I warrant you. Come, we'll obey you.

[EXIT]

~End of Act 3, Scene 3~

~Act 3, Scene 4~
****Hero's apartment****

[Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA]

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

Ursula: I will, lady.

Hero: And bid her come hither.

Ursula: Well.

[Exit]

Margaret: Troth, I think your other rabato were better.

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

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

Hero: My cousin's a fool, and thou art another; I'll wear none but this.

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

Hero: O, that exceeds, they say.

Margaret: By my troth, 's but a night-gown in respect of yours; cloth o' gold, and cuts, and laced with silver, set with pearls, down sleeves, side sleeves, and skirts, round underborne with a bluish tinsel; but for a fine, quaint, graceful and excellent fashion, yours is worth ten on 't.

Hero: God give me joy to wear it! for my heart is exceeding heavy.

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

Hero: Fie upon thee! art not ashamed?

Margaret: Of what, lady? of speaking honourably? Is not marriage honourable in a beggar? Is not your lord honourable without marriage? I think you would have me say, 'saving your reverence, a husband,' and bad thinking do not wrest true speaking, I'll offend nobody; is there any harm in 'the heavier for a husband'? None, I think, and it be the right husband and the right wife; otherwise 'tis light, and not heavy; ask my Lady Beatrice else; here she comes.

[Enter BEATRICE]

Hero: Good morrow, coz.

Beatrice: Good morrow, sweet Hero.

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

Beatrice: I am out of all other tune, methinks.

Margaret: Clap's into 'Light o' love;' that goes without a burden; do you sing it, and I'll dance it.

Beatrice: Ye light o' love, with your heels! then, if your husband have stables enough, you'll see he shall lack no barns.

Margaret: O illegitimate construction! I scorn that with my heels.

Beatrice: 'Tis almost five o'clock, cousin; tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceeding ill; heigh-ho!

Margaret: For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

Beatrice: For the letter that begins them all, H.

Margaret: Well, and you be not turned Turk, there's no more sailing by the star.

Beatrice: What means the fool, trow?

Margaret: Nothing I; but God send every one their heart's desire!

Hero: These gloves the count sent me; they are an excellent perfume.

Beatrice: I am stuffed, cousin; I cannot smell.

Margaret: A maid, and stuffed! there's goodly catching of cold.

Beatrice: O, God help me! God help me! how long have you professed apprehension?

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

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

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

Hero: There thou prickest her with a thistle.

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

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

Beatrice: What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

Margaret: Not a false gallop.

[Re-enter URSULA]

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

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

[EXIT]

~End of Act 3, Scene 4~

~Act 3, Scene 5~

Another room in Leonato's house

[Enter LEONATO, with DOGBERRY and VERGES]

Leonato: What would you with me, honest neighbour?

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

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

Dogberry: Marry, this it is, sir.

Verges: Yes, in truth it is, sir.

Leonato: What is it, my good friends?

Dogberry: Sorry, sir, Verges tends to ramble. He's an old man, and his wits are not as blunt as I wish they were. But he's as honest as the skin between his brows.

Verges: Yes, I thank God I am as honest as any man living that is an old man and no honestier than I. Our watch to-night, excepting your worship's presence, ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

Dogberry (to LEONATO): Verges is a good old man, sir, but he's always babbling. Like they say, "When age comes, wit goes." Our watch has comprehended two auspicious persons. We'd like for you to examine them this morning.

Leonato: Take their examination yourself and bring it me; I am now in great haste, as it may appear unto you. Oh, and drink some wine ere you go; fare you well.

[Enter a Messenger]

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

Leonato: I'll wait upon them; I am ready.

[EXIT LEONATO and MESSENGER]

Dogberry: Go to Francis Seacole, the constable of the watch. Tell him to bring his pen and his inkwell to the jail. We will now go to examination these men.

Verges: And we must do it wisely.

Dogberry: We won't hold back any of our wisdom. Go get the educated writer to record our excommunication, and I'll meet you at the jail.

[EXIT]

~End of Act 3, Scene 5~

~Act 4, Scene 1~

A church

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

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

Friar Francis: You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady.

Claudio: No.

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

Friar Francis: Lady, you come hither to be married to this count.

Hero: I do.

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

Claudio: Know you any, Hero?

Hero: None, my lord.

Friar Francis: Know you any, count?

Leonato: I dare make his answer, none.

Claudio: 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: Leonato, take your daughter back. Don't insult a friend by giving him a beautiful orange that rots inside. She only appears honorable from the outside. She blushes from guilt, not modesty. What man was he talk'd with you yesternight Out at your window betwixt twelve and one? Now, if you are innocent, answer to this.

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

Don Pedro: Leonato, I'm sorry you have to hear this. I swear on my honor that we saw and heard Hero talking to a brute at her window last night. And he confessed at length how they have secretly met thousands of times.

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

Claudio: Oh Hero, you could have equaled the mythical Hero if only half your outward beauty matched your inner thoughts and desires!

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

[HERO swoons]

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

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

[EXIT DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO]

Benedick: How doth the lady?

Beatrice: Dead, I think. Help, uncle! Hero! why, Hero! Uncle! Signior Benedick! Friar!

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

Beatrice: How now, cousin Hero!

Friar Francis: Have comfort, lady.

Leonato: Dost thou look up?

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?

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

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

Benedick: Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

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

Leonato: Confirm'd, confirm'd! O, that is stronger made Which was before barr'd up with ribs of iron! Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie? 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, Which with experimental seal doth warrant The tenor of my book; trust not my age, My reverence, calling, nor divinity, If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here Under some biting error.

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

Friar Francis: Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

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

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

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

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

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

Leonato: What shall become of this? what will this do?

Friar Francis: Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf Change slander to remorse; that is some good; But not for that dream I on this strange course, But on this travail look for greater birth. 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; for it so falls out That what we have we prize not to the worth Whiles we enjoy it, but being lack'd and lost, Why, then we rack the value, 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, The idea of her life shall sweetly creep Into his study of imagination, And every lovely organ of her life Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit, More moving-delicate and full of life, Into the eye and prospect of his soul, Than when she lived indeed; then shall he mourn, If ever love had interest in his liver, And wish he had not so accused her, No, though he thought his accusation true. Let this be so, and doubt not but success Will fashion the event in better shape Than I can lay it down in likelihood. But if all aim but this be levell'd false, The supposition of the lady's death Will quench the wonder of her infamy; And if it sort not well, you may conceal her, As best befits her wounded reputation, In some reclusive and religious life, Out of all eyes, tongues, minds and injuries.

Benedick: Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you; And though you know my inwardness and love Is very much unto the prince and Claudio, Yet, by mine 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; For to strange sores strangely they strain the cure. Come, lady, die to live; this wedding-day Perhaps is but prolong'd; have patience and endure.

[EXIT 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: It's as strange as this other thing which I don't understand. I could just as easily say that there is nothing in the world I love as much as you. I confess nothing, and I deny nothing.

Benedick: By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

Beatrice: Do not swear, and eat it.

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

Beatrice: Will you not eat your word?

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

Beatrice: Why, then, God forgive me!

Benedick: What offence, sweet Beatrice?

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

Benedick: And do it with all thy heart.

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

Benedick: Come, bid me do any thing for thee.

Beatrice: Kill Claudio.

Benedick: 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: Hasn't he proven himself to be a villain? Oh, I wish I were a man! He pretended everything was fine until the moment they were exchanging vows, and then — Oh God, if only I were a man! I would rip his heart out in public and eat it.

Benedick: Hear me, Beatrice,—

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

Benedick: Nay, but, Beatrice,—

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

Benedick: Beat—

Beatrice: Oh, of course, it was all so proper and ceremonious — they gave a truly princely testimony. He's a proper count, that Count Sugarplum, a sweet gentleman, for sure! Oh, if only I were a man! Or had a friend who would be a man for me! But there are no real men left. I can't make myself a man by wishing I were, so as a woman I'll die, from 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 will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio will pay dearly. Go, comfort your cousin; I must say she is dead; and so, farewell.

[EXIT]

~End of Act 4, Scene 1~

~Act 4, Scene 2~

****A prison****

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

Dogberry: Is our whole dissembly appeared?

Verges: O, a stool and a cushion for the sexton.

Sexton: Which be the malefactors?

Dogberry: Marry, that am I and my partner.

Verges: Nay, that's certain; we have the exhibition to examine.

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

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

Borachio: Borachio.

Dogberry: Pray, write down, Borachio; Yours, sirrah?

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

Dogberry: Write down, master gentleman Conrade; Masters, do you serve God?

Conrade & Borachio: Yea, sir, we hope.

Dogberry: Gentlemen, it's already been proven that you aren't much better than lying criminals, and soon we'll know almost for certain. How do you both plead?

Conrade: Marry, sir, we say we are none.

Dogberry (To VERGES): He's a marvelously witty fellow, no doubt, but I'll outmaneuver him.

Dogberry (To CONRADE): Sir, I tell you we believe you're both lying criminals.

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

Dogberry (To BORACHIO): Well, okay.

Dogberry (To VERGES): I swear, both their stories match.

Dogberry (To SEXTON): Have you written that down, that they aren't criminals?

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

Dogberry: Yes, good idea; that's the efastest way. Bring the watchmen forward. Gentlemen, I order you in the Prince's name to accuse these men.

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

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

Borachio: Master constable,—

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

Sexton: What heard you him say else?

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

Dogberry: Flat burglary as ever was committed.

Verges: Yea, by mass, that it is.

Sexton: What else, fellow?

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

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

Sexton: What else?

Watchman: This is all.

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

[Exit]

Dogberry: Come, let them be opinioned.

Verges: Let them be in the hands—

[WATCHMEN attempt to handcuff CONRADE and BORACHIO.]

[CONRADE and BORACHIO shrug them off.]

Conrade: Off, coxcomb!

[DOGBERRY looks around wildly.]

Dogberry: Where's the sexton? He should write down that the Prince's officer was called a fool.

Dogberry (To WATCHMEN): Come on, tie them up.

Dogberry (to CONRADE): You're a nasty little stinker!

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

[WATCHMEN succeed in tying up CONRADE and BORACHIO.]

Dogberry (To CONRADE): How can you call me that? Don't you suspect my office? Don't you suspect my age?

Dogberry (To VERGES): Oh, if only the sexton were here to write down that I'm an ass!

Dogberry (To WATCHMEN): Gentlemen, remember that I am an ass; even though it's not written down, don't forget that I'm an ass.

[DOGBERRY dramatically counts on his fingers as he says the next line.]

Dogberry (To CONRADE): I'm a wise man and, what's more, I'm an officer of the law and, what's more, I'm a householder and, what's more, I'm as handsome a hunk of meat as any in Messina. And I know the law, and I'm rich enough, and I used to have more, but I still have two robes and lots of lovely things.

Dogberry (To WATCHMEN): Take him away!

[WATCHMEN EXIT with CONRADE and BORACHIO.]

Dogberry (To VERGES): Oh, if only the sexton had recorded that I'm an ass!

[EXIT]

~End of Act 4, Scene 2~

~Act 5, 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; give not me counsel; Nor let no comforter delight mine ear But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine.

Antonio: Therein do men from children nothing differ.

Leonato: I pray thee, peace. I will be flesh and blood; For there was never yet philosopher That could endure the toothache patiently, However they have writ the style of gods And made a push at chance and sufferance.

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

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

Antonio: Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

[Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO]

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.

Don Pedro: Nay, do not quarrel with us, good old man.

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

Claudio: Who wrongs him?

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

Claudio: Marry, beshrew my hand, If it should give your age such cause of fear; In faith, my hand meant nothing to my sword.

Leonato: Tush, tush, man; I speak not like a dotard nor a fool, As under privilege of age to brag What I have done being young, or what would do Were I not old. Know, Claudio, to thy head, Thou hast so wrong'd mine innocent child and me That she lies buried with her ancestors; O, in a tomb where never scandal slept, Save this of hers, framed by thy villany!

Claudio: My villany?

Leonato: Thine, Claudio; thine, I say.

Don Pedro: You say not right, old man.

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

Antonio: He shall kill two of us, and men indeed; But that's no matter; let him kill one first; Win me and wear me; let him answer me. Come, follow me, boy; come, sir boy, come, follow me; Sir boy, I'll whip you from your foining fence; Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

Leonato: Brother, —

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

Leonato: Brother Antony, —

Antonio: Hold you content. What, man! I know them, yea, And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple, — Scrambling, out-facing, fashion-monging boys, That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander, Go anticly, show outward hideousness, And speak off half a dozen dangerous words, How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst; And this is all.

Leonato: But, brother Antony, —

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

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

Leonato: My lord, my lord, —

Don Pedro: I will not hear you.

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

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

[EXIT LEONATO and ANTONIO]

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

[Enter BENEDICK]

Claudio: Now, signior, what news?

Benedick: Good day, my lord.

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

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

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

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

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

Benedick: It is in my scabbard; shall I draw it?

Don Pedro: Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

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

Don Pedro: As I am an honest man, he looks pale. Art thou sick, or angry?

Claudio: What, courage, man! What though care killed a cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.

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

Claudio: Nay, then, give him another staff; this last was broke cross.

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

Claudio: If he be, he knows how to turn his girdle.

Benedick: Shall I speak a word in your ear?

Claudio: God bless me from a challenge!

Benedick (to CLAUDIO): You are a villain; I jest not; I challenge you in whatever way you prefer, with what you dare, and when you dare. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Say something.

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

Benedick (To CLAUDIO): 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 God be thanked, hurt not.

Benedick (To DON PEDRO): My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you; I must leave your company; your brother the knave is fled from Messina; you have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet; and, till then, peace be with him.

[BENEDICK EXITS.]

Don Pedro: He is in earnest.

Claudio: In most profound earnest.

Don Pedro: Did he not say my brother was fled?

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

Dogberry: Come on, you. If they let you off, we'll have to assume that Lady Justice has lost all her power.

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: Well sir, they've lied; moreover, they have said things that were not true; secondarily, they are slanderers; sixth and lastly, they have falsely accused a lady; thirdly, they have confirmed things that did not in fact happen; and, in conclusion, they are lying scoundrels.

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, and in his own division; and, by my troth, there's one meaning well suited.

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

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

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

Claudio: I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

Don Pedro: But did my brother set thee on to this?

Borachio: Yea, and paid me richly for the practise of it.

Don Pedro: He is composed and framed of treachery; And fled he is upon this villany.

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

Dogberry (to CLAUDIO and DON PEDRO): Gentlemen, please do not forget to specify that I am an ass.

Verges: 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.

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, Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb And sing it to her bones, to-night; To-morrow morning come to my house, And since you could not be my son-in-law, Be my nephew; my brother hath a daughter, Almost the copy of my child that's dead, And she alone is heir to both of us; Give her the right you should have given her cousin, And so dies my revenge.

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

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

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

Dogberry (to LEONATO): Also, this hasn't been put down in writing, but I should let you know that this plaintiff here, did in fact call me an ass. Please remember that when you're punishing him.

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 (To LEONATO): I leave a slimy knave with you, for you to punish and make an example of. I will humbly let you go now, God prohibiting we will meet again in the future.

Dogberry (To VERGES): Come on, man.

[EXIT DOGBERRY and VERGES]

Leonato: Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

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

Don Pedro: We will not fail.

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

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

[EXIT, severally]

~End of Act 5, Scene 1~

~Act 5, Scene 2~
LEONATO'S garden

[Enter BENEDICK and MARGARET, meeting]

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

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

Benedick: In so high a style, Margaret, that no man living shall come over it; for, in most comely truth, thou deservest it.

Margaret: To have no man come over me! why, shall I always keep below stairs?

Benedick: Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth; it catches.

Margaret: And yours as blunt as the fencer's foils, which hit, but hurt not.

Benedick: A most manly wit, Margaret; it will not hurt a woman; and so, I pray thee, call Beatrice; I give thee the bucklers.

Margaret: Give us the swords; we have bucklers of our own.

Benedick: If you use them, Margaret, you must put in the pikes with a vice; and they are dangerous weapons for maids.

Margaret: Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I think hath legs.

Benedick: And therefore will come.

[Exit MARGARET]

[Enter BEATRICE]

Benedick: Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

Beatrice: Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

Benedick: O, stay but till then!

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

Benedick: Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

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

Benedick: I must tell thee plainly, Claudio undergoes my challenge; and either I must shortly hear from him, or I will call 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. Now tell me, how doth your cousin?

Beatrice: Very ill.

Benedick: And how do you?

Beatrice: Very ill too.

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

[Enter URSULA]

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

Beatrice: Will you go hear this news, signior?

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

[EXIT]

~End of Act 5, Scene 2~

~Act 5, Scene 3~

****A church****

[Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, LORD, and three or four with tapers]

Claudio: Is this the monument of Leonato?

Lord: It is, my lord.

[CLAUDIO reads from a scroll.]

Claudio: Here lies Hero, The heroic maiden killed by slanderous words. To repay her for her troubles, Death Gives her undying fame. So the life that died with shame Lives on with fame.

[CLAUDIO kneels in sorrow in front of her tombstone.]

Don Pedro: Good morrow, masters; put your torches out. Thanks to you all, and leave us; fare you well.

[CLAUDIO waves at the other mourners.]

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

[DON PEDRO puts his hand out to CLAUDIO.]

Don Pedro: Come, let us hence, and put on other weeds; And then to Leonato's we will go.

[CLAUDIO takes DON PEDRO'S hand, rises, and they EXIT, supporting each other in their guilt and grief.]

~End of Act 5, Scene 3~

~Act 5, Scene 4~

A room in LEONATO'S house

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

Friar Francis: Did I not tell you she was innocent?

Leonato: So are the prince and Claudio, who accused her Upon the error that you heard debated.

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

Benedick: And so am I, being else by faith enforced To call young Claudio to a reckoning for it.

Leonato: Well, daughter, and you gentle-women all, Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves, And when I send for you, come hither mask'd.

[EXIT Ladies]

Leonato: 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: That eye my daughter lent her; 'tis most true.

Benedick: And I do with an eye of love requite her.

Leonato: The sight whereof I think you had from me, From Claudio and the prince; but what's your will?

Benedick: Your answer, sir, is enigmatical; But my will is your good will may stand with ours, this day to be conjoin'd In the state of honourable marriage; In which, good friar, I shall desire your help.

Leonato: My heart is with your liking.

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

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

Don Pedro: Good morrow to this fair assembly.

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

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

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's nervous — he's about to become the savage bull who got domesticated.

Benedick: Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low; And some such strange bull leap'd your father's cow,
And got a calf in that same noble feat Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.

Claudio: For this I owe you; here comes other reckonings.

[Re-enter ANTONIO, with the Ladies masked]

Claudio: Which is the lady I must seize upon?

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

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

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

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

Hero: And when I lived, I was your other wife;

[HERO unmask.]

Hero: 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 while 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 unmask, steps forward.]

Beatrice: I answer to that name. What is your will?

Benedick: Do not you love me?

Beatrice: Why, no; no more than reason.

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

Beatrice: Do not you love me?

Benedick: Troth, no; no more than reason.

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

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

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

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

Beatrice: No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

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

Claudio: And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her; For here's a paper written in his hand, A halting sonnet of his own pure brain, 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 (To DON PEDRO): I'll tell you what, Prince: a whole assembly of wisecrackers couldn't ruin my mood. Do you think I care about mockery and name-calling? No. In short, since I intend to marry, I won't hear anything the world has to say against marriage. So don't mock me for what I said against it before. Man is a fickle creature, and that's my conclusion.

Benedick (To CLAUDIO): And as for you, Claudio, I think I would have beaten you in our duel. But now that you're going to become my cousin, I'll let you go uninjured, and love you and my new cousin Hero.

Leonato: We'll have dancing afterward.

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

[Enter a Messenger]

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

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

[Dance]

[EXIT]

~End of Act 5, Scene 4~

~The End~