

Much Ado about Nothing

By William Shakespeare

Adapted for the Screen by Kenneth Branagh

ACT I

SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a Messenger

BEATRICE

[Reading]

Sigh no more, ladies sigh no more
Men were deceivers ever
One foot in sea and one on shore
To one thing constant never
Then sigh not so but let them go
And be you blithe and bonny
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny!
Sing no more ditties'
More, more, more!
Sing no more
Of dumps so dull and heavy
The fraud of men was ever so
Since summer first was leafy
Then sigh not so but let them go
And be you blithe and bonny
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny!

MESSENGER

My lord.

LEONATO

I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to
Messina.

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

MESSENGER

But few of any sort, and none of name.

LEONATO

I find here that Don Peter hath bestowed much honor on a young
Florentine called Claudio.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

I know none of that name, lady.

HERO

My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

He hath done good service, and a good soldier to, lady.

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

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

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

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE

Do, good friend.

LEONATO

You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE

No, not till a hot January.

MESSENGER

Don Pedro is approached.

*Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO,
BENEDICK, 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. My lord.

DON PEDRO

I think this is your daughter.

LEONATO

Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK

Were you in doubt, sir that you asked her?

LEONATO

Signior Benedick, no.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

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

DON JOHN

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

LEONATO

Please it your grace lead on?

DON PEDRO

Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK

I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO

Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

CLAUDIO

Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

He is in love. With who? that is your grace's part. Mark how short his answer is; – With Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

DON PEDRO

By my troth, I speak my thought.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO

That she is worthy, I know.

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

Benedick, repair to Leonato's tell him I will not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made great preparation.

BENEDICK

Examine your conscience: and so I leave you.

Exit

CLAUDIO

Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

O, my lord,
When you went onward on this ended action,
I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am return'd and that war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars.

DON PEDRO

Thou wilt be like a lover presently
And tire the hearer with a book of words.
If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
And I will break with her and with her father,
And thou shalt have her.
I know we shall have revelling to-night:
I will assume thy part in some disguise
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart
And take her hearing prisoner with the force
And strong encounter of my amorous tale:
Then after to her father will I break;
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
In practise let us put it presently.

Exeunt

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

CONRADE

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

DON JOHN

I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace. In this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking: in the meantime let me be that I am and seek not to alter me.

Enter BORACHIO

Borachio, What news?

BORACHIO

I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

DON JOHN

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

BORACHIO

Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN

Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he. I 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

Shall we go prove what's to be done?

BORACHIO

We'll wait upon your lordship.

Exeunt

ACT II

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

HERO

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

With a good leg and a good foot, uncle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world, if a' could get her good-will.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

BEATRICE

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

ANTONIO

In faith, she's too curst.

LEONATO

Well, then, go you into hell?

BEATRICE

No, but to the gate; and there will the devil meet me, like an old cuckold, with horns on his head, and say 'Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids:' so away to Saint Peter for the heavens; he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

ANTONIO

[To HERO] Well, niece, I hope you will be ruled by your father.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

The revellers are entering!

All put on their masks

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

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

Drawing her aside

URSULA

I know you well enough; you are Signior Antonio.

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA

I know you by the wagging of your head.

ANTONIO

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.

BORACHIO

Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET

So would not I, for I have many ill-qualities.

BORACHIO

Which is one?

MARGARET

I say my prayers aloud.

BEATRICE

Will you not tell me who told you so?

BENEDICK

No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE

Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK

Not now.

BEATRICE

That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the 'Hundred Merry Tales:'—well this was Signior Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK

What's he?

BEATRICE

I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK

Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE

Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK

I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE

Why, he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool; his only gift is in devising impossible slanders: none but libertines delight in him; for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet: I would he had boarded me.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Do, do.

Music

We must follow the leaders.

BENEDICK

In every good thing.

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

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 enamored on Hero; I pray you, dissuade him from her: she is no equal for his birth.

CLAUDIO

How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO

CLAUDIO

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

Re-enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Yea, the same.

BENEDICK

Come, will you go with me?

CLAUDIO

Whither?

BENEDICK

About your own business, the prince hath got your Hero.

CLAUDIO

I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

I pray you, leave me.

Exit

BENEDICK

Alas, poor hurt fowl! But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The prince's fool! Ha? I am not so reputed: it is the base, though bitter, disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

Re-enter DON PEDRO and HERO

DON PEDRO

Now, signior, where's the count?

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.

Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

None, but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK

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

Exit

DON PEDRO

Come, lady, come; you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

How then? sick?

CLAUDIO

Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his grace hath made the match, and all grace say Amen to it.

BEATRICE

Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO

Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: I were but little happy, if I could say how much. Lady, as you are mine, I am yours.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE

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

CLAUDIO

And so she doth, cousin.

BEATRICE

Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes 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!

Exit

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO

O, by no means.

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

LEONATO

If they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad.

DON PEDRO

County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO

To-morrow, my lord.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO

And you too, gentle Hero?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

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

Exeunt

SCENE III. LEONATO'S orchard.

Enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK

I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by failing in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe: I have known when he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armor; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthography; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what color it please God. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me.

Withdraws

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO

O, very well, my lord.

Enter BALTHASAR with Music

DON PEDRO

Come, Balthasar, we'll hear that song again.

BENEDICK

Is it not strange that sheeps' guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?

BALTHASAR

Sings

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never:
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.
Sing no more ditties, sing no more,
Of dumps so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leafy:
Then sigh not so, & c.

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a good song.

BALTHASAR

And an ill singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO

No, no, faith; thou singest well enough for a shift.

BENEDICK

An' he had been a dog that should have howled thus, they would have hanged him.

Exit BALTHASAR

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

BENEDICK

Is't possible?

DON PEDRO

May be she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO

Faith, like enough.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Why, what effects of passion shows she?

CLAUDIO

Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

She did, indeed.

DON PEDRO

How, how, pray you? You amaze me!

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

She doth indeed; my daughter says so: My daughter is sometime afeared she will do a desperate outrage to herself: it is very true.

DON PEDRO

It were good that Benedick knew of it.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

I am sorry for her.

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

Were it good, think you?

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

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

DON PEDRO

Let there be the same net spread for her; and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. Let us send Beatrice to call him in to dinner.

Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

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

Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

You take pleasure then in the message?

BEATRICE

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

Exit BEATRICE

BENEDICK

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

Exit

ACT III

SCENE I. LEONATO'S garden.

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA

URSULA

But are you sure that Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO

So says the prince and my new-trothed lord.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA

When are you married, madam?

HERO

Why, every day, to-morrow.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

Exeunt HERO and URSULA

BEATRICE

[Coming forward]

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

Exit

SCENE III. A street.

Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES with the Watch

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true? Being chosen for the prince's watch, this is your charge: you are to bid any man stand, in the prince's name.

SECOND WATCHMAN

How if a' will not stand?

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

True, and they are to meddle with none but the prince's subjects. You shall also make no noise in the streets.

WATCHMAN

We will rather sleep than talk.

DOGBERRY

Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman; for I cannot see how sleeping should offend. If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true man; and, for such kind of men, the less you meddle or make with them, why the more is for your honesty.

VERGES

You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

'Tis very true.

DOGBERRY

Well, masters, good night: and if there be any matter of weight chances, call up me. Come, neighbor.

WATCHMAN

We hear our charge: let us go sit here upon the bench till two, and then all to bed.

DOGBERRY

One word more, honest neighbors. I pray you watch about Signior Leonato's door; for the wedding being there to-morrow, there is a great coil to-night. Adieu: be vigilant, I beseech you.

Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES

[ACT II SCENE II] A room in LEONATO'S house.

Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

Yea, my lord, but I can cross it.

DON JOHN

Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinable 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 favor of Margaret the waiting gentlewoman to Hero.

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

Well, the poison of that lies in you to temper.

SCENE II. A room in LEONATO'S house.

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO

So say I methinks you are sadder.

CLAUDIO

I hope he be in love.

BENEDICK

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

Exeunt BENEDICK and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

For my life, to break with him about Beatrice.

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

You may think I love you not: let that appear hereafter, and aim better at me by that I now will manifest.

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. The lady is disloyal. If you love her then, to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honor to change your mind.

Exeunt

SCENE III. A Street. (Continued)

Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE

BORACHIO

What Conrade! 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

Sit close then.

FIRST WATCHMAN

Some treason, masters.

SECOND WATCHMAN

I know him!

BORACHIO

I have to-night wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero. I should first tell thee how the prince, Claudio and my master, planted by my master Don John, saw this amiable encounter.

CONRADE

And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

Aye, away went Claudio enraged.

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

SECOND WATCHMAN

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

CONRADE

Masters, masters,--

FIRST WATCHMAN

Speak.

Exeunt

SCENE V. Another room in LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, with DOGBERRY and VERGES

LEONATO

What would you with me, honest neighbour?

VERGES

Marry, sir, our watch to-night, excepting your worship's presence, ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY

A good old man, sir; he will be talking; as they say, when the age is in, the wit is out. Well said, i' faith, neighbor Verges: well, God's a good man; an two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. All men are not alike; alas, good neighbor!

LEONATO

Indeed, neighbor, he comes too short of you.

DOGBERRY

Gifts that God gives.

LEONATO

Neighbors, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY

It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor duke's officers; but truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find it in my heart to bestow it all of your worship.

LEONATO

All thy tediousness on me, ah? I would fain know what you have to say.

DOGBERRY

Our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two auspicious persons, and we would have them this morning examined before your worship.

LEONATO

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

Exeunt LEONATO

DOGBERRY

We are now to examination these men. Meet me at the jail.

Exeunt

ACT IV
SCENE I. A church.

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

No.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

Know you any, Hero?

HERO

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Know you any, count?

LEONATO

I dare make his answer, none.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

CLAUDIO

You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown;
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus, or those pamper'd animals
That rage in savage sensuality.

HERO

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

LEONATO

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

What man was he talk'd with you yesternight
Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

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

HERO swoons

BEATRICE

How now, cousin!

DON JOHN

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

BEATRICE

Cousin, wherefore sink you down?

Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO

LEONATO

Hath no man's dagger here a point for me? Do not live, Hero; do not
open thine eyes: Grieved I, I had but one? Why had I one? She – she is
fallen into a pit of ink.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

BENEDICK

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

Confirm'd, confirm'd! Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie,
Hence from her! let her die.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

HERO

They know that do accuse me; I know none!

FRIAR FRANCIS

There is some strange misprision in 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.

LEONATO

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;

LEONATO

What shall become of this?

FRIAR FRANCIS

She dying, as it must so be maintain'd. Upon the instant that she was
accused, shall be lamented, pitied and excused of every hearer: So 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, than when she lived indeed; then shall he mourn, and wish he
had not so accused her.

BENEDICK

Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

Exeunt all but BENEDICK and BEATRICE

BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE

You have no reason; I do it freely.

BENEDICK

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE

How much might the man deserve of me that would right her!

BENEDICK

Is there any way to show such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK

May a man do it?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

BEATRICE

Do not swear, and eat it.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK

What offence, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

And do it with all thy heart.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Come, bid me do any thing for thee.

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK

Ah, 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?

SCENE II. A prison.

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Hear me, Beatrice,--

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Nay, but, Beatrice,--

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Beatrice!

BEATRICE

He is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

BENEDICK

By this hand, I love thee.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Enough, I am engaged; I will challenge him. Go, comfort your cousin: I must say she is dead: and so, farewell.

Exeunt

DOGBERRY

Is our whole dissembly appeared?

SEXTON

Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY

Marry, that am I and my partner.

SEXTON

But which are the offenders that are to be examined?

DOGBERRY

What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

Write down, Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

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

CONRADE

Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY

You?

BORACHIO

Sir, I say to you we are none.

DOGBERRY

Have you writ down, that they are none?

SEXTON

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

DOGBERRY

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

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

Write down Prince John a villain.

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

Thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this.

SEXTON

What else?

WATCHMAN

This is all.

SEXTON

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.

Exit

DOGBERRY

Come, let them be opinioned.

VERGES

Let them be in the hands—

CONRADE

Off, coxcomb!

DOGBERRY

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

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass.

Exeunt

ACT V

SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO

ANTONIO

If you go on thus, you will kill yourself.

LEONATO

Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid him speak of patience;
But there is no such man: for, brother, men
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion.
I pray thee, peace. I will be flesh and blood;
For there was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently.

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

DON PEDRO

Good e'en, good e'en.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO

Hear you. my lords—

DON PEDRO

We have some haste.

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; never flear and jest at me:
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool.
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child.

DON PEDRO

You say not right, old man.

LEONATO

My lord, my lord,
I'll prove it on his body, if he dare.

CLAUDIO

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

Brother, –

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

But, brother Antonio,—

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.

Exeunt 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.

BENEDICK

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

Exit

DON PEDRO

He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO

In most profound earnest.

DON PEDRO

And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO

Most sincerely.

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

DON PEDRO

Officers, what offence have these men done?

DOGBERRY

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

DON PEDRO

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

BORACHIO

I have deceived even your very eyes: what your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light: who in the night overheard me confessing to this man how Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero, how you saw me court Margaret, how you disgraced her, when you should marry her. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation.

CLAUDIO

Sweet Hero!

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

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

Re-enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, with the Sexton

LEONATO

Which is the villain? let me see his eyes,

BORACHIO

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

By my soul, nor I.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

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

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

There's for thy pains.

DOGBERRY

God save the foundation!

LEONATO

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

DOGBERRY

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

Exeunt 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.

Exeunt, severally

SCENE III. A church.

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and three or four with tapers

CLAUDIO

[Reading out of a scroll]

Done to death by slanderous tongues
Was the Hero that here lies:
Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,
Gives her fame which never dies.
So the life that died with shame
Lives in death with glorious fame.

BALTHASAR

Sings

Pardon, goddess of the night,
Those that slew thy virgin knight;
For the which, with songs of woe,
Round about her tomb they go.
Midnight, assist our moan;
Help us to sigh and groan,
Heavily, heavily:

SCENE II. LEONATO'S garden.

Enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK

Sings

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

Speaks

I mean in singing; but in loving, Leander the good swimmer, Troilus
the first employer of panders, and a whole bookful of these quondam
carpet-mangers, whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a
blank verse, why, they were never so truly turned over and over as my
poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme; I have tried: I can
find out no rhyme to 'lady' but 'baby,' an innocent rhyme; for 'scorn,'
'horn,' a hard rhyme; for, 'school,' 'fool,' a babbling rhyme; very
ominous endings: no, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I
cannot woo in festival terms.

Enter BEATRICE

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

BEATRICE

Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK

O, stay but till then!

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Thou hast frighted the word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit. But I must tell thee plainly, Claudio undergoes my challenge; and either I must shortly hear from him, or I will subscribe him a coward. And, I pray thee now, tell me for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?

BEATRICE

For them all together; which maintained so politic a state of evil that they will not admit any good part to intermingle with them. But for which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?

BENEDICK

Suffer love! 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.

BENEDICK

And now tell me, how doth your cousin?

BEATRICE

Very ill.

BENEDICK

And how do you?

BEATRICE

Very ill too.

BENEDICK

Serve God, love me and mend. Here comes one in haste.

Enter URSULA

URSULA

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

BEATRICE

Will you go hear this news, signior?

BENEDICK

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

Exeunt

SCENE IV. 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: But Margaret was in some fault for this.

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

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

Exeunt Ladies

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

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

BENEDICK

Your answer, sir, is enigmatical:
But, for my will, my will is your good will
May stand with ours, this day to be conjoin'd
In the state of honorable 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 with my brother's daughter?
Call her forth, brother; here's the friar ready.

Exit ANTONIO

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

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 Unmasks

DON PEDRO

Hero that is dead!

LEONATO

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

HERO

And when I lived, I was your other wife:
And when you loved, you were my other husband.
One Hero died defiled, but I do live,
And surely as I live, I am a maid.

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:

BENEDICK

Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Do not you love me?

BEATRICE

Why, no; no more than reason.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Do not you love me?

BENEDICK

Troth, no; no more than reason.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

They swore that you were almost sick for me.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Peace! I will stop your mouth.

Kissing her

DON PEDRO

How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK

I'll tell thee what, prince; a college of wit-crackers cannot flout me out
of my humor. Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram? No:
Since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that
the world can say against it; and therefore never flout at me for what I
have said against it; for man is a giddy thing, and this is my
conclusion. [*kisses BEATRICE*] For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have
beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised
and love my cousin. Come, come, we are friends: let's have a dance ere
we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts and our wives'
heels.

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

Exeunt