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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING by **William Shakespeare**

slightly transformed and edited by Peter Gould

for

“Get Thee to the Funnery”

at the Sign of the Four
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Much Ado About Nothing
by Wm Shakespeare
lightly abridged (70%) by Peter Gould

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon.
Don John, his bastard brother.
Claudio, a young lord of Florence.
Benedick, a Young lord of Padua.
Leonato, Governor of Messina.
Antonio, an old man, his brother.
Balthasar, attendant on Don Pedro.
Borachio, follower of Don John.
Conrade, follower of Don John.
Friar Francis.
Dogberry, a Constable.
Verges, a Deputy
A Sexton.
Hero, daughter to Leonato.
Beatrice, niece to Leonato.
Margaret, waiting gentlewoman attending on Hero.
Ursula, waiting gentlewoman attending on Hero.
Messengers, Three Watchers, Attendants, Lords etc.

Scene 1.

An orchard before Leonato's house in Messina.

Enter Leonato, Hero (his Daughter), and Beatrice (his Niece), with a Messenger.

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

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

Leon. How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

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

Leon. A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers.

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

Mess. Much deserv'd on his part, and equally rememb'red by Don

Pedro. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion. He hath indeed better bett' red expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how.

Beat. I pray you, is Signior Benedick return'd from the wars or no?

Mess. O, he's return'd, and as pleasant as ever he was.

Beat. I pray you, how many hath he kill'd and eaten in these wars?

Leon. Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much---

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

Beat. But how many hath he kill'd? For indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

Leon. 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.

Beat. Alas, he gets nothing by that! In our last conflict four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man govern'd with one.

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

Is there no young squarer now that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

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

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

Mess. I will hold friends with you, lady.

Beat. Do, good friend.

Leon. You will never run mad, niece.

Beat. No, not till a hot January.

Mess. Don Pedro is approach'd.

Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, Balthasar, and John the Bastard.

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

Leon. 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.

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

Leon. Her mother hath many times told me so.

Bene. Were you in doubt, sir, that you ask'd her?

Leon. Signior Benedick, no; for then were you a child.

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

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

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

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

Beat. 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.

Bene. 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.

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

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

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

Pedro. Signior Benedick, Signior Claudio, my dear friend Leonato hath invited you all. I tell him we shall stay here at the least a month, and he heartily prays some occasion may detain us longer.

Leon. [To Don John] Let me bid you welcome, my lord. Being reconciled to the Prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

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

Leon. Please it your Grace lead on?

Pedro. Your hand, Leonato. We will go together.

Exeunt. Benedick and Claudio remain.

Claud. Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

Bene. I noted her not, but I look'd on her.

Claud. Is she not a modest young lady?

Bene. 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?

Claud. No. I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

Bene. 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.

Claud. Thou thinkest I am in sport. I pray thee tell me truly how thou lik'st her.

Bene: Would you buy her, that you enquire after her?

Claud. Can the world buy such a jewel? In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I look'd on.

Bene. I can see yet without spectacles, and I see no such matter.

There's her cousin, an she were not possess'd 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?

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

Bene. Is't come to this? Shall I never see a bachelor of threescore again?

Go to, i' faith! An thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it and sigh away Sundays.

Scene 2. Enter Don Pedro.

Bene. Look! Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

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

Bene. I would your Grace would constrain me to tell.

Pedro. I charge thee on thy allegiance.

Bene. You hear, Count Claudio. I can be secret as a dumb man, I would have you think so; but, on my allegiance--mark you this--on my allegiance! he is in love. With whom? With Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

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

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

Pedro. By my troth, I speak my thought.

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

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

Claud. That I love her, I feel.

Pedro. That she is worthy, I know.

Bene. 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.

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

Claud. And never could maintain his part but in the force of his will.

Bene. 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.

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

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

Pedro. Well, as time shall try.

'In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.'

Bene. 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.'

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

Bene. And so I leave you. *Exit.*

Claud. My liege, your Highness now may do me good.

Pedro. My love is thine to teach. Teach it but how.

And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn

Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

Claud. Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

Pedro. No child but Hero; she's his only heir.

Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

Claud. O my lord,

When you went onward on this ended action,
 I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
 That lik'd, 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 lik'd her ere I went to wars.

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. Wast not to this end
 That thou began'st to twist so fine a story?

Claud. How sweetly you do minister to love,
 That know love's grief by his complexion!

Pedro. Look, I will fit thee with the remedy.
 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 practice let us put it presently. *Exeunt.*

Scene 3

Enter Sir John the Bastard and Conrade, his companion.

Con. My lord! Why are you thus out of measure sad?

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

Con. You should hear reason.

John. And when I have heard it, what blessings brings it?

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

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

Con. 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.

John. I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace.

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.

Con. Can you make no use of your discontent?

John. I make all use of it, for I use it only. *Enter Borachio.*

Who comes here? What news, Borachio?

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

John. Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

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

Bora. Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

John. Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

Bora. Even he.

John. A proper squire! And who? and who? which way looks he?

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

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

Bora. I saw 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
obtain'd her, give her to Count Claudio.

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?

Con. To the death, my lord.

John. Let us to the great supper. Their cheer is the greater that I am subdued.

Would the cook were o' my mind!

Shall we go prove what's to be done?

Bora. We'll wait upon your lordship. *Exeunt.*

Scene 4

A hall in Leonato's house.

Enter Leonato, Antonio, Hero, Beatrice, Margaret, and Ursula

Leon. Was not Count John here at supper?

Ant. I saw him not.

Beat. How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am
heart-burn'd an hour after.

Hero. He is of a very melancholy disposition.

Beat. 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.

Leon. Then half Signior Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth,
and half Count John's melancholy in Signior Benedick's face--

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

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

Beat. God send me no husband; for the which blessing I am at him upon my knees
every morning and evening. Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on
his face. I had rather lie in the woollen!

Leon. You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

Beat. 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.

Ant. [to Hero] Well, niece, I trust you will be rul'd by your father.

Beat. 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.'

Leon. Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

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

Leon. Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

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

Leon. The revellers are ent'ring, brother. Make good room.

Scene 5

*The same great hall. Enter, [masked,] Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, Balthasar, Antonio.
Enter Don John and Borachio (without masks), who stand aside & look on during the dance.
(We skip the dialogue between several of the dancers.)*

Pedro. Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?

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

Pedro. With me in your company?

Hero. I may say so when I please.

Pedro. And when please you to say so?

Hero. When I like your favour, for God defend the lute should be
like the case!

Pedro. Speak low if you speak love. *[Takes her aside.]*

Balth. Well, I would you did like me.

Marg. For your own sake, I would wish it not, for I have many ill qualities.

Balth. Which is one?

Marg. I say my prayers aloud.

Balth. I love you the better. The hearers may cry "Amen!"

Marg. God match me with a good dancer!

Balth. Amen.

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

Answer, clerk.

Balth. No more words. The clerk is answered.

[Beatrice & Benedick waltz to

the front. It is clear that Benedick knows it is Beatrice--not quite so clear that she knows him.]

Beat. Will you not tell me who told you so?

Bene. Tell you what, pray pardon me?

Beat. 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.

Bene. What's he?

Beat. I am sure you know him well enough.

Bene. Not I, believe me.

Beat. Did he never make you laugh?

Bene. I pray you, what is he?

Beat. Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool. None but libertines delight in him;
and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villany; 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.

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

Beat. Do, do. *[Music.]*

We must follow the leaders.

Bene. In every good thing.

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

Dance. Exeunt (all but Don John, Borachio, and Claudio).]

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.

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

John. Are you not Signior Benedick? *[John knows it is Claudio. He pretends not to know.]*

Claud. You know me well. I am he.

John. Signior, you are very near my brother in his love. He is
enamour'd 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.

Claud. How know you he loves her?

John. I heard him swear his affection.

Bora. So did I too, and he swore he would marry her tonight.

John. Come, let us to the banquet. *Exeunt. Claudio remains.*

Claud. Thus answer I in name of Benedick

But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio. *[Unmasks.]*

'Tis certain so. The Prince wooes for himself.

Friendship is constant in all other things

Save in the office and affairs of love.

Let every eye negotiate for itself

And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch

Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.

Farewell therefore Hero! *Enter Benedick [unmasked].*

Bene. Count Claudio?

Claud. Yea, the same.

Bene. Come, will you go with me?

Claud. Whither?

Bene. The Prince hath got your Hero.

Claud. I wish him joy of her.

Bene. Why, Boy. But did you think the Prince would have served you thus?

Claud. I pray you leave me.

Bene. Ho! now you strike like the blind man! 'Twas the boy that
stole your meat, and you'll beat the post.

Claud. If it will not be, I'll leave you. *Exit.*

Bene. Alas, poor hurt fowl! now will he creep into sedges.

But, that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me!

The Prince's fool! Ha! It may be I go under that title because I am merry.

Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong. I am not so reputed. It is the base
(though bitter) disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person
and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may. *Enter Don Pedro.*

Pedro. Now, signior, where's the Count? Did you see him?

Bene. Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame. I told him, and I
think I told him true, that your Grace had got the good will of this young lady.

I meant to offer him my company to a willow tree, either to make him a garland,
as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipt.

Pedro. To be whipt? What's his fault?

Bene. The flat transgression of a schoolboy who, being overjoyed with finding a bird's nest, shows it his companion, and he steals it.

Pedro. I will but teach the bird to sing and restore it to the owner.

Bene. By my faith I think you say honestly.

Pedro. The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you. The gentleman that danc'd with her told her she is much wrong'd by you.

Bene. O, she misus'd 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; she would infect to the North Star. I would not marry her though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgress'd. Come, talk not of her.

Enter Claudio and Beatrice, Leonato, Hero.

Pedro. Look, here she comes.

Bene. Will your Grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on; I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia; fetch you a hair off the great Chang's beard; do you any embassy to the Pygmies--rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

Pedro. None, but to desire your good company.

Bene. O God, sir, here's a dish I love not! I cannot endure my LadyTongue.

[Benedick exits with great show.]

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

Beat. 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.

Pedro. Why, how now, Count? Wherefore are you sad?

Claud. Not sad, my lord.

Pedro. How then? sick?

Claud. Neither, my lord.

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

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!

Leon. Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes. His
Grace hath made the match, and all grace say Amen to it!

Beat. Speak, Count, 'tis your cue.

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

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

Pedro. In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

Beat. 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.

Claud. And so she doth, cousin.

Beat. 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!'

Pedro. Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

Beat. 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.

Pedro. Will you have me, lady?

Beat. 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.

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

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

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

Beat. I cry you mercy, uncle, By your Grace's pardon. *Exit.*

Pedro. By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

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

Pedro. She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

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

Pedro. She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

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

Pedro. Come, Let us undertake one of Hercules' labours, which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection th' one with th' other. I would fain have it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

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

Claud. And I, my lord.

Pedro. And you too, gentle Hero?

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

Pedro. And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble strain, of approved valour, and confirm'd honesty. You shall humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your three helps, will so practise on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

Exeunt.

Scene 6 *A hall in Leonato's house. Enter [Don] John and Borachio.*

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

Bora. Yea, my lord; but I can cross it.

John. Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be med'cinable to me.

I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage?

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

John. Show me briefly how.

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

John. I remember.

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

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

Bora. 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.

John. What proof shall I make of that?

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

John. Only to despite them I will endeavour anything.

Bora. 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, that you have discover'd 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, and Margaret call me love, 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 call'd assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

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

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

John. I will presently go learn their day of marriage. *Exeunt.*

Scene 7 Leonato's orchard. Enter Benedick alone.

Bene: I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laugh'd at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love; and such a man is Claudio. I have known when he would have walk'd ten mile afoot to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now 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. 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 colour it please God. Ha, the Prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour. [*Hides.*]

***Scene 8 Leonato's orchard
Enter Don Pedro, Leonato, Antonio, Claudio. Music [within].***

Pedro. Come, shall we hear this music?

Claud. Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,
As hush'd on purpose to grace harmony!

Pedro. See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

Claud. O, very well, my lord. The music ended,
We'll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth. *Enter Balthasar with Music.*

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

Balth. O, good my lord, sing with me-- *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.

Bene. [aside] Now divine air! Now is his soul ravish'd! Is it not
 strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?

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

Pedro. By my troth, a good song.

Balth. And an ill singer, my lord.

Pedro. Ha, no, no, faith! Thou sing'st well enough.

Bene. [aside] If he had been a dog that should have howl'd thus,
 they would have hang'd him;

Pedro. I pray thee, Balthasar, get us some excellent music; for to-morrow night
 we would have it at the Lady Hero's chamber window.

Balth. The best I can, my lord.

Pedro. Do so. Farewell. *Exit Balthasar [with Musicians].*

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

Claud. O, ay!-[*Aside to Pedro*] Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl sits.
 --I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

Leon. No, nor I neither; but most wonderful that she should so dote on Signior Benedick, whom she hath in all outward behaviours seem'd ever to abhor.

Bene. [aside] Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

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

Pedro. May be she doth but counterfeit.

Claud. Faith, like enough.

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

Pedro. Why, what effects of passion shows she?

Claud. [aside] Bait the hook well! This fish will bite.

Leon. What effects, my lord? She will sit you--you heard my daughter tell you how.

Claud. She did indeed.

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

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

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

Claud. [aside] He hath ta'en th' infection. Hold it up.

Pedro. Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

Leon. No, and swears she never will. That's her torment.

Claud. 'Tis true indeed. So Hero says. "Shall I," says Beatrice, "that have so oft encount'ed him with scorn, write to him that I love him?"

Ant. 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. Hero tells us all!

Leon. Aye, she tears the letter into a thousand halfpence, rails at herself that she should be so immodest to write to one that she knows would flout her.

'I measure him,' says she, 'by my own spirit; for I should flout him if he writ to me. Yea, though I love him, I should.'

Claud. Then--so tells me Hero-- down upon her knees she falls, weeps, sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses--

'O sweet Benedick! God give me patience!'

Leon. She doth indeed; my daughter says so. And the ecstasy hath so much overborne her that my daughter is sometime afeard she will do a desperate outrage to herself. It is very true.

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

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

Pedro. An he should, it were an alms to hang him! She's an excellent sweet lady, and (out of all suspicion) she is virtuous.

Claud. And she is exceeding wise.

Pedro. In everything but in loving Benedick.

Leon. I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

Pedro. I would she had bestowed this dotage on me.

I pray you tell Benedick of it and hear what he will say.

Leon. Were it good, think you?

Claud. Hero thinks surely she will die; for she says she will die if he love her not, and she will die ere she make her love known, and she will die, if he woo her, rather than she will bate one breath of her accustomed crossness.

Pedro. She doth well. 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.

Ant. He is a very proper man.

Pedro. He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

Ant. Before God! and in my mind, very wise.

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

Claud. And I take him to be valiant.

Pedro. As Hector, I assure you. Well, I am sorry for your niece.

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

Claud. Never tell him, my lord. Let her wear it out with good counsel.

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

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.

Leon. My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready.

[They walk away.]

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

Pedro. Let there be the same net spread for her, and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be, when they hold one an opinion of another's dotage, and no such matter. That's the scene that I would see! Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

Exeunt [Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato].

Scene 9

Leonato's orchard

[Benedick advances from the arbour.]

Bene. 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 censur'd. 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.

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.

Enter Beatrice.

Here comes Beatrice. By this day, she's a fair lady! I do spy some marks of love in her.

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

Bene. Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

Beat. 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.

Bene. You take pleasure then in the message?

Beat. Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knives point.

Fare you well. *Exit.*

Bene. Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.'

There's a double meaning in that. 'I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me.' That's as much as to say, 'Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks.' If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain. *Exit.*

Scene 10

Leonato's orchard.

Enter Hero and two Gentlewomen, Margaret and Ursula.

Hero. Now, Margaret, Ursula, when Beatrice comes,
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.]*

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

[Beatrice hides in the arbour].

Marg. 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 speak we louder, that her ear lose nothing
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.

[They exaggerate their voices.]

Urs. But are you sure

That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

Hero. So says the Prince, and my new-trothed lord.

Urs. 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 lov'd Benedick,

To wish him wrestle with affection

And never to let Beatrice know of it.

Marg. 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 fram'd a woman's heart

Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice.

She cannot love,

Nor take no shape nor project of affection,

She is so self-endear'd.

Urs. Sure I think so;

And therefore certainly it were not good

She knew his love, lest she'll make sport at it.

Hero. Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,

How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featur'd,

But she would spell him backward.

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

Urs. Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

Marg. No, no; to be so odd, and from all fashions,

As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable.

Hero. 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.

Marg. 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.

Urs. 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 priz'd 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.

Urs. 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.

Urs. His excellence did earn it ere he had it.

Marg. 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. *[She walks away.]*

Urs. She's lim'd, I warrant you! We have caught her, madam.

Marg. If it prove so, then loving goes by haps;
 Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

Exeunt Margaret and Ursula. Beatrice advances from the arbour.

Beat. 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 11

*A room in Leonato's house.
 Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato, jesting with Benedick.*

Bene. Gallants, I am not as I have been.
Leon. So say I. Methinks you are sadder.
Claud. I hope he be in love.
Pedro. Hang him, truant! There's no true drop of blood in him to be
 truly touch'd with love. If he be sad, he wants money.
Bene. I have the toothache.
Claud. Yet say I he is in love. If he be not in love with some woman,
 there is no believing old signs.
 He brushes his hat o' mornings. What should that bode?
Pedro. Hath any man seen him at the barber's?
Claud. No, but the barber's man hath been seen with him, and the
 old ornament of his cheek hath already stuff'd tennis balls.
Leon. Indeed he looks younger than he did, by the loss of a beard.
Pedro. Nay, he rubs himself with musk. Can you smell him out by that?
 The youth is in love.
Claud. Nay, but I know who loves him.
Pedro. That would I know too. I warrant, one that knows him not.
Claud. Yes, and his ill conditions; and in despite of all, dies for him.
Pedro. She shall be buried with her face upwards.

Bene. 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.

[Exeunt Benedick and Leonato.]

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

Claud. 'Tis even so. Hero and Margaret have by this time played their parts with Beatrice, and then the two bears will not bite one another when they meet. *Enter John the Bastard.*

John. My lord and brother, God save you.

Pedro. Good den, brother.

John. If your leisure serv'd, I would speak with you.

Pedro. In private?

John. If it please you. Yet Count Claudio may hear, for what I would speak of concerns him.

Pedro. What's the matter?

John. *[to Claudio]* Means your lordship to be married tomorrow?

Pedro. You know he does.

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

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

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

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

Claud. Who? Hero?

John. Even she--Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

Claud. Disloyal?

John. The word is too good to paint out her wickedness. 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 ent'red, even the night before her wedding day. If you love her then, to-morrow wed her.

But it would better fit your honour to change your mind.

Claud. May this be so?

Pedro. I will not think it.

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.

Claud. If I see anything to-night why I should not marry her to-morrow, in the congregation where I should wed, there will I shame her.

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

John. I will disparage her no farther till you are my witnesses.
Let the issue show itself.

It is here that a dumbshow of Borachio and Margaret-as-Hero may be shown, to the reaction of the three.

Pedro. O day untowardly turned!

Claud. O mischief strangely thwarting!

John. O plague right well prevented!

So will you say when you have seen the Sequel. *Exeunt.*

Scene 12 *A street.*

Enter Dogberry and his Partner Verges. Three watchmen are already placed.

Dog. Where be the watchmen?

Verg. Where be the watchmen? *(repeat this exchange several times)*

Watch 1, 2, & 3. Here, Sirs.

Dog. Are you good men and true?

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

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

Verg. Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

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

Verg. Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacoal; for they can write and read.

Dog. Come hither, neighbour Seacoal. God hath bless'd you with a good name.

To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature.

I Watch. Master Constable--

Dog. Why, give God thanks and make no boast of it; and for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit men for the constable of the watch. Therefore bear you the lant-horn.

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

2 *Watch*. How if he will not stand?

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

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

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

3. *Watch*. We will rather sleep than talk. We know what belongs to a watch.

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

1. *Watch*. Well, sir. *Dogberry sleeps. Then wakes.*

Dog. 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 your honesty.

2. *Watch*. If we know him to be a thief, Sir, shall we not lay hands on him?

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

Verg. You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

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

Verg. 'Tis very true.

Dog. Well, masters, good night..... An there be any matter of weight chances, call up me..... Keep your fellows' counsels and your own, and good night..... Come, neighbour.

3. *Watch*. Well, masters, we hear our charge. Let us go sit here upon the church bench till two, and then all to bed.

Dog. One word more, honest neighbours. I pray you watch about Signior Leonato's door; for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is a great coil to-night. Adieu. Be vigilant, I beseech you. *Exeunt Dogberry & Verges.*

*Scene 13**The same street. Enter Borachio and Conrade.**Bora.* What, Conrade!*1. Watch. [aside]* Peace! stir not!*Bora.* Conrade, I say!*Con.* Here, man. I am at thy elbow.*Bora.* Mass, and my elbow itch'd! I thought there would a scab follow.*Con.* I will owe thee an answer for that; and now forward with thy tale.*Bora.* Stand thee close, and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.*1. Watch. [aside]* Some treason, masters. Yet stand close.*Bora.* Therefore know I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats.*Con.* Is it possible that any villany should be so dear?*Bora.* 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.*2. Watch. [aside]* I know that man. He has been a vile thief this seven year; but he goes up and down like a gentleman. I remember his name.*Bora.* Didst thou not hear somebody?*Con.* No; 'twas the vane on the house.*Bora.* 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 from afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter.*Con.* And thought they Margaret was Hero?*Bora.* Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio; but the devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his oaths, which first possess'd 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 enrag'd; swore he would meet her, as he was appointed, next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'ernight and send her home again without a husband.

2. *Watch*. We charge you in the Prince's name stand!

1. *Watch*. Call up the right Master Constable.

Con. Masters, masters--

3. *Watch*. Never speak, we charge you. Let us obey you to go with us.

We have here recover'd the most dangerous piece of lechery
that ever was known in the commonwealth. *Exeunt*.

Scene 14

The hall in Leonato's house.

Enter Leonato and the Constable [Dogberry] and Verges

Leon. What would you with me, honest neighbour?

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

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

Dog. Marry, this it is, sir.

Verg. Yes, in truth it is, sir.

Leon. What is it, my good friends?

Dog. Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little off the matter--an old man, sir, and his wits are not so blunt as, God help, I would desire they were; but, in faith, honest as the skin between his brows.

Verg. Yes, I thank God I am as honest as any man living that is an old man and no honestier than I.

Dog. Comparisons are odorous.

Leon. Neighbours, you are tedious.

Dog. I am glad to hear it.

Verg. And so am I.

Leon. I would fain know what you have to say.

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

Dog. A good old man, sir; he will be talking. As they say, 'When the age is in, the wit is out.' But well said, i' faith, neighbour Verges. Our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two aspicious persons, and we would have them this morning examined before your worship.

Leon. Take their examination yourself and bring it me. I am now in great haste, as it may appear unto you.

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

Verg. And we must do it wisely.

Dog. We will spare for no wit, I warrant you. Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication, and meet me at the jail. *Exit Verges. Enter Messenger.*

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

Leon. I am ready. *(to Dogberry)* Drink some wine ere you go. Fare you well.

[Exeunt Leonato and Messenger.]

Scene 15 *A church.*

Enter Don Pedro, [John the] Bastard, Leonato, Friar [Francis], Claudio, Benedick, Hero, Beatrice, [and Attendants].

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

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

Claud. No.

Leon. To be married to her. Friar, you come to marry her.

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

Hero. I do.

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

Claud. Know you any, Hero?

Hero. None, my lord.

Friar. Know you any, Count?

Leon. I dare make his answer--none.

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

Bene. How now? interjections?

Claud. Stand thee by, friar. Father, by your leave:

Will you with free and unconstrained soul

Give me this maid your daughter?

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

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

Pedro. Nothing, unless you render her again.

Claud. 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!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence
To witness simple virtue, Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid
By these exterior shows? But she is none:
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

Leon. What do you mean, my lord?

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

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

Claud. I know what you would say. If I have known her,
You will say she did embrace me as a husband,
And so extenuate the forehead sin.

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?

Claud. Out on the seeming! I will write against it.
You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus, or those pamp'ring animals

That rage in savage sensuality.

Hero. Is my lord well that he doth speak so wide?

Leon. Sweet Prince, why speak not you?

Pedro. What should I speak?

I stand dishonour'd that have gone about

To link my dear friend to a common stale.

Leon. Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

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

Hero. 'True!' O God!

Bene. This looks not like a nuptial.

Claud. Leonato,

Let me but move one question to your daughter,

And by that fatherly and kindly power

That you have in her, bid her answer truly.

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

Hero. O, God defend me! How am I beset!

What kind of catechising call you this?

Claud. To make you answer truly to your name.

Hero. Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name

With any just reproach?

Claud. Marry, that can Hero!

Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.

What man was he talk'd with you yesternight,

Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?

Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

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

Pedro. Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,

I am sorry you must hear. Upon my 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.

John. Fie, fie! they are not to be nam'd, 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.

Claud. O Hero! what a Hero hadst thou been

If half thy outward graces had been plac'd

About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!

But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! Farewell,

Thou pure impiety and impious purity!

For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,

And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang,

To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,

And never shall it more be gracious.

Leon. Hath no man's dagger here a point for me? *[Hero swoons.]*

Beat. Why, how now, cousin? Wherefore sink you down?

John. Come let us go. These things, come thus to light,

Smother her spirits up. *[Exeunt Don Pedro, Don Juan, and Claudio.]*

Bene. How doth the lady?

Beat. Dead, I think. Help, Uncle!

Hero! why, Hero! Uncle! Signior Benedick! Friar!

Leon. O Fate, take not away thy heavy hand!

Death is the fairest cover for her shame

That may be wish'd for.

Beat. How now, cousin Hero?

Friar. Have comfort, lady.

Leon. Dost thou look up?

Friar. Yea, wherefore should she not?

Leon. Wherefore? Why, doth not every earthly thing

Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny

The story that is printed in her blood?

Do not live, Hero; do not ope thine eyes;

I had but one child--
 O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?
 Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?
 Why had I not with charitable hand
 Took up a beggar's issue at my gates,
 Who smirched thus and mir'd with infamy,
 I might have said, 'No part of it is mine;
 This shame derives itself from unknown loins'?
 But mine, and mine I lov'd, and mine I prais'd,
 And mine that I was proud on--mine so much
 That I myself was to myself not mine,
 Valuing of her--why, she, O, she is fall'n
 Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
 Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,
 And salt too little which may season give
 To her foul tainted flesh!

Bene. Sir, sir, be patient.

For my part, I am so attir'd in wonder,
 I know not what to say.

Beat. O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

Friar. 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,
 If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
 Under some biting error.

Leon. Friar, it cannot be.

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

Friar. Lady, what man is he you are accus'd 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 convers'd
 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. There is some strange misprision in the princes.

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

Leon. 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. 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.

Leon. What shall become of this? What will this do?

Friar. Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse.

She dying, as it must be so maintain'd,
Upon the instant that she was accus'd,
Shall be lamented, pitied, and excus'd
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,
Th' 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 liv'd indeed. Then shall he mourn
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.

Bene. 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!

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

Friar. '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.

Scene 16 The church

Bene. Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

Beat. Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

Bene. I will not desire that.

Beat. You have no reason. I do it freely.

Bene. Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

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

Bene. Is there any way to show such friendship?

Beat. A very even way, but no such friend.

Bene. May a man do it?

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

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

Beat. 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.

Bene. I protest I love thee.

Beat. Why then, God forgive me!

Bene. What offence, sweet Beatrice?

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

Bene. And do it with all thy heart.

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

Bene. Come, bid me do anything for thee.

Beat. Kill Claudio.

Bene. Ha! not for the wide world!

Beat. You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

Bene. Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

Beat. I am gone, though I am here. There is no love in you. [*he stops her*]

Nay, I pray you let me go.

Bene. Beatrice--

Beat. In faith, I will go.

Bene. We'll be friends first.

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

Bene. Is Claudio thine enemy?

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

Bene. Hear me, Beatrice!

Beat. Sweet Hero! she is wrong'd, she is sland'ed, she is undone.

Bene. Beat--

Beat. O that I were a man--
or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake!
But manhood is melted into cursies, valour into compliment,
and men are only turn'd into tongue, and trim ones too. I cannot be
a man with wishing; therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

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

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

Bene. Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath wrong'd Hero?

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

Bene. Enough, I am engag'd, I will challenge him. I will kiss your
hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall render me a
dear account. Go comfort your cousin. I must say she is dead-
and so farewell. *[Exeunt.]*

Scene 17 *A prison.*

*Enter the Constables [Dogberry and Verges] and the Sexton, in gowns,
[and the Watch, with Conrade and] Borachio.*

Verg. A stool and a cushion for the sexton.

Sex. Which be the malefactors?

Dog. Marry, that am I and my partner.

Verg. Nay, that's certain. We have the exhibition to examine.

Sex. But which are the offenders that are to be examined? let them
come before Master Constable.

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

Bor. Borachio.

Dog. Pray write down Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

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

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

Con. Marry, sir, we say we are none.

Dog. A marvellous witty fellow, I assure you; but I will go about with him. Come you hither, sirrah. A word in your ear. Sir, I say to you, it is thought you are false knaves.

Bora. Sir, I say to you we are none.

Dog. Well, stand aside.

Have you writ down that they are none?

Sex. Master Constable, you go not the way to examine. You must call forth the watch that are their accusers.

Dog. Yea, marry, that's the efast way. Let the watch come forth.

Verg. Masters, I charge you in the Prince's name accuse these men.

1. *Watch.* This man said, sir....

2. *Watch.* that Don John the Prince's brother was a villain.

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

Bora. Master Constable--

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

Sex. What heard you him say else?

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

Dog. Flat burglary as ever was committed.

Verg. Yea, by th' mass, that it is.

Sex. What else, fellow?

3. *Watch.* That Count Claudio did mean, upon his words, to disgrace Hero before the whole assembly, and not marry her.

Dog. O villain! thou wilt be condemn'd into everlasting redemption for this.

Sex. What else?

Watchmen. This is all.

Sex. And this is more, masters, than you can deny. Prince John is this morning secretly stol'n away. Hero was in this manner accus'd, in this manner refus'd, 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.]*

Dog. Come, bind them.--Thou naughty varlet!

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

Dog. God's my life, where's the sexton? Let him write down the Prince's officer an ass. Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years? Why I am as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina, and one that knows the law, go to! O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass. Though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass. No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be prov'd upon thee by good witness. Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass! *Exeunt.*

Scene 18

*The street, near Leonato's house.
Enter Leonato and his brother [Antonio].*

Ant. If you go on thus, you will kill yourself,

Leon. I pray thee cease thy counsel,
Which falls into mine ears as profitless
As water in a sieve.

Ant. Brother--

Leon. Give not me counsel!
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

Ant. Therein do men from children nothing differ.

Leon. I pray thee peace. I will be flesh and blood!

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

Leon. 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.

Enter Don Pedro and Claudio.

Ant. Here comes the Prince and Claudio hastily.

Pedro. Good den, Good den.

Claud. Good day to both of you.

Leon. Hear you, my lords!

Pedro. We have some haste, Leonato.

Leon. Some haste, my lord! well, fare you well, my lord.

Are you so hasty now?

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

Ant. If he could right himself with quarrelling,

Some of us would lie low.

Claud. Who wrongs him?

Leon. Marry, thou dost wrong me, thou dissembler, thou!

Nay, never lay thy hand upon thy sword;

I fear thee not.

Claud. Marry, beshrew my hand

If it should give your age such cause of fear.

In faith, my hand meant nothing to my sword.

Leon. Tush, tush, man! never fleer and jest at me

I speak not like a dotard nor a fool.

Claudio,

I challenge thee to trial of a man.

I say thou hast belied mine innocent child;

Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,

And she lies buried with her ancestors-

O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,

Save this of hers, fram'd by thy villany!

Claud. My villany?

Leon. Thine, Claudio; thine I say.

Pedro. You say not right, old man.

Leon. My lord, my lord,

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

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

Leon. Canst thou so daff me? Thou hast kill'd my child.

If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.

Ant. He shall kill two of us, and men indeed

But that's no matter; let him kill one first.

Let him answer me.

Come, Sir boy, come follow me, boy--

Leon. Brother--

Ant. Content yourself. God knows I lov'd my niece,

And she is dead, slander'd to death by villains,

Boys, apes, braggarts, jacks, milksops!

Leon. Brother Anthony--

Ant. Scambling, outfacing, fashion-monging boys,

That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander--

Leon. But, brother Anthony--

Ant. Do not you meddle; let me deal in this.

Pedro. Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience.

My heart is sorry for your daughter's death;

But, on my honour, she was charg'd with nothing

But what was true, and very full of proof.

Leon. My lord, my lord--

Pedro. I will not hear you.

Leon. No? Come, brother, away!--I will be heard.

Ant. And shall, or some of us will smart for it. *Exeunt ambo.*

*Scene 19**The same street. Enter Benedick.**Pedro.* See, see! Here comes the man we went to seek.*Claud.* Now, signior, what news?*Bene.* Good day, my lord.*Pedro.* Welcome, signior. You are almost come to part almost a fray.*Claud.* We had lik'd to have had our two noses snapp'd off with two old men without teeth.*Pedro.* Leonato and his brother. What think'st thou?*Bene.* In a false quarrel there is no true valour. I came to seek you both.*Claud.* 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?*Bene.* Sir, I shall meet your wit in the career an you charge it against me. I pray you choose another subject.*Pedro.* By this light, he changes more and more. I think he be angry.*Bene.* Shall I speak a word in your ear?*Claud.* God bless me from a challenge!*Bene.* [*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 kill'd a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you. 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 kill'd a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet; and till then peace be with him. [*Exit.*]*Pedro.* He is in earnest.*Claud.* In most profound earnest.*Pedro.* And hath challeng'd thee.*Claud.* Most sincerely.*Pedro.* What a pretty thing man is when he goes in his doublet and hose and leaves off his wit!

Scene 20 The street
Enter Constables [Dogberry and Verges, with the Watch,
leading Conrade and Borachio.

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

Claud. Hearken after their offence, my lord.

Pedro. Officers, what offence have these men done?

Dog. 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.

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.

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

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?

Bora. 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 disgrac'd 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.

Pedro. Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

Claud. I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

Pedro. But did my brother set thee on to this?

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

Pedro. He is compos'd and fram'd of treachery,
And fled he is upon this villany.

Claud. Sweet Hero, now thy image doth appear
In the rare semblance that I lov'd it first.

Dog. 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.

Verg. Here, here comes Master Signior Leonato, and the sexton too.

Enter Leonato, his brother [Antonio], and the Sexton.

Leon. 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?

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

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

Bora. Yea, even I alone.

Ant. No, not so, villain! thou beliest thyself.

Here stand a pair of honourable men--
A third is fled--that had a hand in it.

Leon. I thank you princes for my daughter's death.

Record it with your high and worthy deeds.

Claud. 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.

Leon. 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 aught 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--

Ant. Almost the copy of his child that's dead--

And she alone is heir to both of us.

Leon. Give her the right you should have giv'n her cousin,
 And so dies my revenge.

Claud. O noble sir!

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

Leon. To-morrow then we will expect your coming;
 To-night we take our leave.

Dog. 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 rememb'red in his punishment.

Leon. I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

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

Leon. There's for thy pains.

[Gives money.]

Dog. God save the foundation!

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

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

Exeunt [Dogberry and Verges].

Leon. Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

Ant. Farewell, my lords. We look for you to-morrow.

Pedro. We will not fall.

Claud. To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

[Exeunt Don Pedro and Claudio.]

Leon. *[to the Watch]* Bring you these fellows on. *Exeunt.*

Scene 21

Leonato's orchard. Enter Benedick

Bene. Sweet Beatrice! *[Enter Beatrice.]* Wouldst thou come when I call'd thee?

Beat. Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

Bene. O, stay but till then!

Beat. 'Then' is spoken. Fare you well now. And yet, ere I go, let me go with that I came for, which is, with knowing what hath pass'd between you and Claudio.

Bene. Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

Beat. Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome. Therefore I will depart unkiss'd.

Bene. 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?

Beat. For them all together, which maintain'd 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?

Bene. Suffer love!--a good epithet. I do suffer love indeed, for I love thee against my will.

Beat. 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.

Bene. Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably. And now tell me, how doth your cousin?

Beat. Very ill.

Bene. And how do you?

Beat. Very ill too.

Bene. Serve God, love me, and mend. There will I leave you too, for
here comes one in haste. *Enter Ursula.*

Urs. Madam, you must come to your uncle.

It is proved my Lady Hero hath been falsely accus'd,
the Prince and Claudio mightily abus'd,
and Don John is the author of all,
who is fled and gone. Will you come presently?

Beat. Will you go hear this news, signior?

Bene. 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 22

A churchyard.

Enter Claudio, Pedro, and three or four with tapers

Claud. Is this the monument of Leonato?

Lord. It is, my lord.

Claud. [*reads from 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.

Hang thou there upon the tomb,

[Hangs up the scroll.]

Praising her when I am dumb.

Now, music, sound, and sing your solemn hymn.

Music

Claud. Now unto thy bones good night!

Yearly will I do this rite.

Pedro. Good morrow, masters. Put your torches out.

The wolves have prey'd, and look, the gentle day,
 Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
 Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.
 Thanks to you all, and leave us. Fare you well.

Claud. Good morrow, masters. Each his several way.

Pedro. Come, let us hence to Leonato's.

Scene 23

The hall in Leonato's house.

Enter Leonato, Benedick, [Beatrice,] Margaret, Ursula, Antonio, Friar, Hero.

Friar. Did I not tell you she was innocent?

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

Bene. And so am I, being else by faith enforc'd
 To call young Claudio to a reckoning for it.

Leon. Well, daughter, and you gentlewomen all,
 Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,

And when I send for you, come hither mask'd. *Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, others.*

Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

Pedro. Good morrow to this fair assembly.

Leon. Good morrow, Prince; good morrow, Claudio.

We here attend you. Are you yet determin'd
 To-day to marry with my brother's daughter?

Claud. I am.

Leon. Call her forth, brother. Here's the friar ready. *[Exit Antonio.]*

Enter Antonio, Hero, Beatrice, Margaret, Ursula, all the ladies wearing masks.

Claud. Which is the lady I must seize upon?

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

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

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

Claud. Give me your hand before this holy friar.

I am your husband if you like of me.

Hero. And when I liv'd I was your other wife; *[Unmasks.]*

And when you lov'd you were my other husband.

Claud. Another Hero!

Hero. Nothing certainer.

One Hero died defil'd; but I do live,

And surely as I live, I am a maid.

Pedro. The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

Leon. She died, my lord, but whiles her slander liv'd.

Friar. All this amazement can I qualify,

When, after that the holy rites are ended,

I'll tell you largely of fair Hero's death.

Meantime let wonder seem familiar,

And to the chapel let us presently.

Bene. Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice? *All the ladies unmask in succession.*

Each Lady. I answer to that name.

Beat. *[unmasks last]* I answer to that name. What is your will?

Bene. Do not you love me?

Beat. Why, no; no more than reason.

Bene. Why, then your uncle, and the Prince, and Claudio

Have been deceived; for they swore you did.

Beat. Do not you love me?

Bene. Troth, no; no more than reason.

Beat. Why, then my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula

Are much deceiv'd; for they did swear you did.

Bene. They swore that you were almost sick for me.

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

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

Beat. No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

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

Claud. 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, stol'n from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto Benedick.

Bene. A miracle! Here's our own hands against our hearts.

Come, I will have thee; but, by this light, I take thee for pity.

Beat. 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.

Bene. Peace! I will stop your mouth. *[Kisses her.]*

Beat. I'll tell thee what, Prince: a college of wit-crackers cannot
flout me out of my humour. Dost thou think I care for a satire or
an epigram? No. In brief, since I do purpose to marry,

I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against marriage!

Bene. And never flout at me for what I have said against it, neither;
for man is a giddy thing, and woman, too, and this is my conclusion.

Bene. And now, if your good will
will stand with mine, this day we'll be conjoin'd
In honourable marriage;
In which, good friar, we shall desire your help.

Leon. My heart is with your liking.

Friar. And my help.

Bene. For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee; but in
that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruis'd, and love my cousin.

Claud. Come, come, we are friends.

Bene. Let's have a dance ere we are married,
that we may lighten our own hearts and our wives' heels. *Music begins*

Enter Messenger.

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

Pedro. Think not on him till to-morrow. I'll devise thee brave
punishments for him. Strike up, pipers! *Dance.*

The Song.

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 leavy.

Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.