

Much Ado About Nothing

Note: I directed Much Ado styling the characters after the “pirate ride” in Disneyland, if you know what I mean. The set was an open piazza with a docked ship on one side and the back side of an Italian mansion on the other. Off to the side of the piazza was a working water fountain. We had a lot of fun with that. I’ll attach some pictures to the site.

Cast List

In Messina

Leonato, Governor of Messina, owner of the house

Hero, His Daughter

Beatrice, his neice, an orphan

Anthonio, his brother

A Messenger

Margaret, a waiting gentlewoman to Hero

Ursula, a waiting gentlewoman to Hero

Friar Francis

The Guests

Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon

Benedick of Padua, companion of the Prince

Claudio of Florence, companion of the Prince

Balthasar, attendant to the Prince, a singer

A Boy, serving Benedick

Other Valiants back from “the war”

The Locals

Dogberry, The Constable in charge of The Watch

Verges, the Headborough, Dogberry’s partner

Watchmen (we used two or three others)

A Sexton

SCENE I. Before (behind) LEONATO'S house.

Enter All from the house, LEONATO, HERO, and
BEATRICE, with a Messenger .

BIG OPENING DANCE (use pirate music)

LEONATO

I learn in this letter that Don Peter of Arragon comes this
night to Messina.

Messenger

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 honour on a
young Florentine called Claudio.

BEATRICE

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

Messenger

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

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, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE

He is a very valiant trencherman; he hath an excellent stomach.

Messenger

And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE

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

Messenger

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt 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: 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.

(They all laugh, Beatrice shakes hands with the messenger. Approaching pirates)

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:

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?

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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.

DON PEDRO

That is the sum of all, Leonato. 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.

(Enter Don John and his comrades. The crowd is quiet)

LEONATO

(To DON JOHN)

Let me bid you welcome, my lord:

DON JOHN

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

LEONATO

Please it your grace lead on?

DON PEDRO

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, 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: 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.

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? Go to, i' faith; an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke. Look Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

(Re-enter DON PEDRO)

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

I would your grace would constrain me to tell.

DON PEDRO

I charge thee on thy allegiance.

BENEDICK

Count Claudio! He is in love. With who? With Hero,
Leonato's short daughter.

DON PEDRO

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

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 all
women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the
wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust
none; and the fine is, I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and shoot at me. With
anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord, not with
love:

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

And so I leave you.

(Exit)

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

O, my lord, when we went onward on this ended action, I
look'd upon her with a soldier's eye, but now I am return'd .

..

DON PEDRO

If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it, and I will break with her and
with her father, and thou shalt have her. We shall have revelling
to-night: I will assume thy part in some disguise and tell fair Hero I
am Claudio, and in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart. Then after to
her father will I break; And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.

Exeunt

SCENE II.

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, meeting)

LEONATO

How now, brother!

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

Are they good?

ANTONIO

The prince hath just now discovered to Claudio that he loved my niece your daughter and meant to acknowledge it this night and if he found her accordant, he meant to take the present time by the top and instantly break with you of it.

LEONATO

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

(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

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.

CONRADE

You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath taken you newly into his grace.

DON JOHN

I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all. I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my liberty, I would do my liking: in the meantime let me be that I am.

(Enter BORACHIO) What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

BORACHIO

Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN

Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he.

DON JOHN

And who, and who?

BORACHIO

Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonato.

DON JOHN

How came you to this?

BORACHIO

I o're heard it agreed upon that the prince should woo Hero
for himself, and having
obtained her, give her to Count Claudio.

DON JOHN

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. We'll wait upon your lordship.

Exeunt

ACT II

SCENE I. LEONATO'S house.

**(Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE,
and others)**

LEONATO

Was not Count John here at supper?

ANTONIO

I saw him not.

BEATRICE

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

HERO

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE

He were an excellent man that were made just in the midway between him and Benedick: 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.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

For the which blessing I am 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.

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: therefore, I will even take sixpence in earnest of him, and lead him into hell.

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:' and 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.

LEONATO

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

LEONATO

Daughter, remember what I told you: if the prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

LEONATO

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

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

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

Speak low, if you speak love.

(Drawing her aside)

BALTHASAR

Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET

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

BALTHASAR

Which is one?

MARGARET

I say my prayers aloud.

BALTHASAR

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

MARGARET

God match me with a good dancer!

BALTHASAR

Amen.

MARGARET

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

URSULA

I know you well enough; you are Signior Antonio.

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA

I know you by the wagging of your head.

ANTONIO

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA

You are he, you are he.

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA

Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? can virtue hide itself?

BEATRICE

Will you not tell me who told you I was disdainful?

BENEDICK

No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE

Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK

Not now.

BEATRICE

That I was disdainful, well this was Signior Benedick that

said so.

BENEDICK

What's he?

BEATRICE

I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK

Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE

Why, he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool; his only gift is in devising impossible slanders: 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 enamoured on Hero; I pray you, dissuade him from her: she is no equal for his birth.

CLAUDIO

How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Come, let us to the banquet.

(Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO)

CLAUDIO

Thus answer I in the name of Benedick, but hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.

'Tis certain so; the prince wooes for himself. Friendship is constant in all other things

Save in the office and affairs of love: Thus, farewell Hero.

(Re-enter BENEDICK)

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Yea, the same.

BENEDICK

The prince hath got your Hero.

CLAUDIO

I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK

Why, that's spoken like an honest drovier: But did you think the prince would have served you thus?

CLAUDIO

I pray you, leave me. If it will not be, I'll leave you.

Exit Re-enter DON PEDRO

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. 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 the north star.

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.

(Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO)

BENEDICK

Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on; I would 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:

DON PEDRO

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

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

How then? sick?

CLAUDIO

Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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 an 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.

(They kiss. They exit)

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. 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!

(She exits)

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

Not till Monday, the time is too brief to have all things
answer my mind.

DON PEDRO

Come, I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully
by us. I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules'
labours; which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady
Beatrice into a mountain of affection the one with the other.
I would fain have it a match, 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..

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

I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall
fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will
so practise on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and
his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. Go
in with me and I will tell you my drift.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The same.

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 favour of Margaret, the waiting
gentlewoman to Hero.

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

What proof shall I make of that?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Only to despise them, I will endeavour any thing.

BORACHIO

Go, then; find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and
the Count Claudio alone: tell them that you know
that Hero loves me; intend a kind of zeal both to the

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

I will presently go learn their day of marriage.
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 tabour and the pipe: I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; I'll take my oath on it!.

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 gooddiscourse, 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.

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO. Enter BALTHASAR with Music

DON PEDRO

Come, shall we hear this music?

CLAUDIO

Yea, my good lord.

DON PEDRO

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO

O, very well, my lord:

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

Now, divine air! now is his soul ravished! Is it not strange that sheeps' guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?

The Song

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a good song.

BALTHASAR

And an ill singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Ha, no, no, faith; thou singest well enough.

BENEDICK

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

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?

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

May be she doth but counterfeit.

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? She will sit you, you heard my daughter tell you how.

CLAUDIO

She did, indeed.

DON PEDRO

How, how, pray you? You amaze me.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

'Tis true, indeed; so your daughter, my Hero says: she'll be up twenty times a night saying 'Shall I write to him that I love him?' Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps, sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses; 'O sweet Benedick! God give me patience!'

LEONATO

She doth indeed; my daughter says so: it is very true.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

And she is exceeding wise.

DON PEDRO

In every thing but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

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.

DON PEDRO

'Tis very possible he'll scorn it; for the man, as you know all, hath a contemptible spirit. Well I am sorry for your

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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.

(They walk away from Benedick)

CLAUDIO

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

Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

[Coming forward] This can be no trick: 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. 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; for I will be horribly in love with her! I may chance have some remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railed so long against marriage: but doth not the appetite alter? 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 and choke a daw withal. You have no stomach, signior: fare you well.

Exit

BENEDICK

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

ACT III

SCENE I. LEONATO'S garden.

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA

HERO

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor; There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice. Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Ursula walk in the orchard and our whole discourse is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us speak ought of her and the Count Benedick.

MARGARET

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

Exit

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come, as we do trace this alley up and down, my talk to thee must be how Benedick is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter is little Cupid's crafty arrow

(Enter BEATRICE, behind)

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

But Nature never framed a woman's heart of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice; Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes, she cannot love.

URSULA

Sure, I think so; And therefore certainly it were not good she knew his love, lest she make sport at it.

HERO

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man, how wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured, but she would spell him backward: So turns she every man the wrong side out

URSULA

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.

HERO

Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire, consume away in sighs, waste inwardly: It were a better death than die with mocks.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

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

Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedick, for shape, for bearing, argument and valour, goes foremost in report through Italy.

HERO

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA

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 II. A room in LEONATO'S house

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and
LEONATO on BENEDICK writing and reciting poetry.
ALL LAUGH

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

I have the toothache.

DON PEDRO

Draw it.

BENEDICK

Hang it!

DON PEDRO

What! sigh for the toothache?

CLAUDIO

Yet say I, he is in love.

DON PEDRO

Hath any man seen him at the barber's?

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Nay, a' rubs himself with civet: can you smell him?

CLAUDIO

The sweet youth's in love.

DON PEDRO

Conclude, conclude he is in love!

CLAUDIO

Nay, but I know who loves him.

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

Enter DON JOHN

DON JOHN

My lord and brother, God save you!

DON PEDRO

Good den, brother.

DON JOHN

If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO

In private?

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

What's the matter?

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

You know he does.

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

Who, Hero?

DON PEDRO

Even she; Leonato's Hero, your Hero.

CLAUDIO

Disloyal?

DON JOHN

Think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it. Go but with me to-night, you shall see her chamber-window entered, even the night before her wedding-day: if you love her then, to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honour to change your mind.

CLAUDIO

May this be so?

DON PEDRO

I will not think it.

DON JOHN

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

Exeunt

SCENE III. A street.

Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES with the Watch

DOGBERRY

Ye are the Prince's watch. Are you good men and true?

VERGES

Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation, body and soul. Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

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

Second Watchman

How if a' will not stand?

VERGES

If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none

of the prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY

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

Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman; Well, you are to call at all the ale-houses, and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

Watchman

How if they will not?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, let them alone till they are sober:

Watchman

Well, sir.

DOGBERRY

If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true man; and, for such kind of men, the less you meddle 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

By'r lady, I think it be so.

DOGBERRY

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.

Watchman

Well, masters, we hear our charge: let us go sit here upon the [] till two, and then all to bed.

DOGBERRY

One word more, honest neighbours. 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

Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE

BORACHIO

What Conrade!

Watchman

[Aside] Peace! stir not.

BORACHIO

Conrade, I say!

CONRADE

Here, man; I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO

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

Watchman

[Aside] Some treason, masters: yet stand close.

BORACHIO

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

CONRADE

Is it possible that any villany should be so dear?

Watchman

[Aside] I know that villian, a' has been a vile thief this seven year; a' goes up and down like a gentleman: I remember his name.

BORACHIO

Didst thou not hear somebody?

BORACHIO

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. The prince, Claudio and my

master, planted and placed and possessed by my master
Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable
encounter.

CONRADE

And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

Away went Claudio enraged; swore he would meet her, as
he was appointed, next morning at the wedding, and there,
before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw
o'er night and send her home again without a husband.

First Watchman

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

Second Watchman

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

CONRADE

Masters, masters,--

First Watchman

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

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; Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATO

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO

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

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, but you are more
intemperate in your blood than Venus 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.

LEONATO

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato, I am sorry you
must hear: upon mine honour,
Myself, my brother and this grieved count did see her, hear

her, with a certain Borachio at her chamber-window who
hath confess'd vile encounters they have had a thousand
times in secret. Fare thee well, most foul, most fair!
farewell.

LEONATO

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

HERO swoons

DON JOHN

Come, let us go.

Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO

BEATRICE

Help, uncle! Hero! why, Hero! Uncle!

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

How now, cousin Hero!

LEONATO

Could she here deny the story that is printed in her blood.
Do not live, Hero; do not ope thine eyes: why, she, O, she
is fallen into a pit of ink, foul-tainted flesh!

BEATRICE

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

BENEDICK

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

Hear me a little; For I have only been silent so long. In her
eye there hath appear'd a fire,
To burn the errors that these princes hold against her

maiden truth. Call me a fool;
Trust not my reading nor my observations . . .

LEONATO

Friar, it cannot be.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

They know that do accuse me; I know none: If I know more
of any man alive than that which maiden modesty doth
warrant, let all my sins lack mercy! Refuse me, hate me,
torture me to death!

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, a very villian.

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;
And on your family's old monument hang mournful
epitaphs and do all rites that appertain unto a burial.

LEONATO

What shall become of this? what will this do?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Marry, this well carried shall change slander to remorse;
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 word. Then shall he mourn, and
wish he had not so accused her, no, though he thought his
accusation true. And if it sort not well, you may conceal
her, as best befits her wounded reputation, in some
reclusive and religious life, out of all eyes, tongues, minds
and injuries.

BENEDICK

Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you:

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

'Tis well consented: presently away; for to strange sores
strangely they strain the cure.

Come, lady, die to live: this wedding-day perhaps is but
prolong'd: have patience and endure.

Exeunt all but BENEDICK and BEATRICE

BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE

You have no reason; I do it freely.

BENEDICK

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Is there any way to show such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK

May a man do it?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

I am sorry for my cousin.

BENEDICK

By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

BEATRICE

Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK

What offence, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

And do it with all thy heart.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Come, bid me do any thing for thee.

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK

Ha! not for the wide world.

BEATRICE

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK

Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Beatrice,--

BEATRICE

In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK

We'll be friends first.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE

Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until they come to take hands; and then, with public accusation . . . O 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

Beat--

BEATRICE

O that I were a man for his sake! or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! He is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Enough, I am engaged; I will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account. As you hear of me, so think of me. Go, comfort your cousin: I must say she is dead: and so, farewell.

Exeunt

SCENE II. A prison.

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

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? let them come before master constable.

DOGBERRY

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

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

Pray, write down, Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

Write down, master gentleman Conrade. Masters, do you serve God?

CONRADE /BORACHIO

Yea, sir, we hope.

DOGBERRY

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

CONRADE

Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY

Come you hither, sirrah; a word in your ear: sir, I say to you, it is thought you are false knaves.

BORACHIO

Sir, I say to you we are none.

DOGBERRY

Well, stand aside. 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. Why, this is flat perjury, to call a prince's brother villain.

BORACHIO

Master constable,--

DOGBERRY

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

Sexton

What heard you him say else?

Second Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

Flat burglary as ever was committed.

VERGES

Yea, that it is.

Sexton

What else, fellow?

First Watchman

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

DOGBERRY

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

Sexton

What else?

Watchman

This is all.

Sexton

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

DOGBERRY

Come, let them be opinioned.

VERGES

Let them be in the hands--

DOGBERRY

Come, bind them. Thou naughty varlet!

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

O write me down an ass! Masters, remember that I am an
ass; I am a wise fellow, and, which is more, an officer, and
which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in
Messina, and one that knows the law, go to; 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: and 'tis not
wisdom thus to second grief
against yourself.

LEONATO

I pray thee, cease thy counsel, bring me a father that so
loved his child, whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
and bid him speak of patience;

ANTONIO

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATO

I pray thee, peace.

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 den, good den.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO

Hear you. my lords,--

DON PEDRO

We have some haste, Leonato.

LEONATO

Some haste, my lord!

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, In faith, my hand meant nothing to my sword.

LEONATO

Know, Claudio, to thy head, thou hast so wrong'd mine innocent child and me that I am forced to lay my reverence by. Thy slander hath gone through her heart, and she lies buried with her ancestors; O, in a tomb where never scandal slept, framed by thy villany!

CLAUDIO

My villany?

LEONATO

Thine, Claudio; thine, I say.

DON PEDRO

You say not right, old man.

CLAUDIO

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO

Canst thou so daff me? Thou hast kill'd my child: and thou kill'st me, boy,

ANTONIO

He shall kill two of us, and men indeed: let him answer me. boy, I'll whip you from your foiling 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! Boys, apes, braggarts, Jacks, milksops!

LEONATO

Brother Antony,--

ANTONIO

And this is all. 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. I will not hear you.

LEONATO

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

(Both exit)

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 away a fray.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Leonato and his brother.

BENEDICK

I came to seek you both.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

It is in my scabbard: shall I draw it?

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

Sir, I pray you choose another subject.

DON PEDRO

By this light, he changes more and more:

CLAUDIO

I think he be angry indeed.

BENEDICK

Shall I speak a word in your ear?

BENEDICK

You are a villain; I jest not: I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. 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. Fare you well, boy: you know my mind.

(Exit)

DON PEDRO

He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO

Most sincerely.

(Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the Watch, with
CONRADE and BORACHIO)

DOGBERRY

Come you, sir: if justice cannot tame you, an you be a
cursing hypocrite once, you must be looked to.

DON PEDRO

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

BORACHIO

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

DON PEDRO

Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO

I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

DON PEDRO

But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO

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

DON PEDRO

He is made of treachery: And fled he is upon this villany.

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, which of these is he?

BORACHIO

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO

No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself, here stand a pair of honourable men;

A third is fled, that had a hand in it. I thank you, princes, for my daughter's death:

Record it with your high and worthy deeds.

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: and yet, to satisfy good Leonato, I would
bend under any heavy weight
That he'll enjoin me to.

LEONATO

I cannot bid you bid my daughter live; That were
impossible: but, I pray you both,
Possess the people in Messina here how innocent she died;
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.

LEONATO

To-morrow then I will expect your coming; to-night I take
my leave. This man shall face to face be brought to
Margaret, who I believe was pack'd in all this wrong, hired
to it by your brother.

BORACHIO

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

DOGBERRY

Moreover, sir, 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

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; God keep your worship! Come, neighbour.

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 II. LEONATO'S garden.

Enter BENEDICK

Sings

The god of love,
That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve,--
I mean in singing; but in loving, Leander the
goodswimmer, 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 unkissed.

BENEDICK

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

SCENE III. A church

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

CLAUDIO

Is this the monument of Leonato?

Lord

It is, my lord.

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.(SONG)

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:
Graves, yawn and yield your dead,
Till death be uttered,
Heavily, heavily.

SCENE IV. The Piazza

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

(Re-enter ANTONIO, with the Ladies masked)

CLAUDIO

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

ANTONIO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

(She unmaskes)

Hero, that is dead?

HERO

Nothing certainer: One Hero died defiled, but I do live, and
surely as I live, I am a maid.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

BENEDICK

Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Do not you love me?

BEATRICE

Why, no; no more than reason.

BENEDICK

Why, then your uncle and 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.

HERO

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 humour. In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it; and therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it; for man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion. For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised and love my cousin.

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