

Much Ado About Nothing

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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING SYNOPSIS

Before the play begins, Don Pedro and his troops have re-supplied with Leonato of Messina on their way to engage Don Pedro's rebellious brother Don John in battle. In Act 1, Scene 1, we learn they have been victorious with very few losses, and are once again invited by Leonato to stay with him before returning home. The sharp-witted Beatrice and Benedick renew their prickly relationship, while Leonato's daughter Hero and the much decorated Claudio fall in love. With Don Pedro's assistance, and despite Don John's meddling, a marriage date for Claudio and Hero is set. Don Pedro then plans that the week before the marriage is to be spent tricking Beatrice and Benedick into falling in love.

The nasty and disenchanted Don John hates Claudio and wants to ruin the intended marriage. With the help of Borachio, Claudio is led to believe that Hero has been unfaithful to him. Deeply hurt, he denounces her at the altar. Friar Francis hatches a plan that might restore Hero's virtue by pretending that she has died. Beatrice then persuades Benedick to challenge Claudio to a duel.

While bragging of receiving a thousand ducats from Don John for his part in the trickery, Borachio is arrested by the city watch. The self-important Constable Dogberry and his aged sidekick Verges examine Borachio and Conrade and uncover the deception. When informed he has wrongfully accused Hero, the repentant Claudio agrees to marry yet another of Leonato's nieces, who turns out, of course, to be the original Hero. Benedick and Beatrice are also finally cajoled into marriage. Don John is captured while attempting to flee and the play ends happily with a dance.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

NAMES OF THE CHARACTERS

DON PEDRO	Prince of Arragon
DON JOHN	His bastard brother
CLAUDIO	A young lord of Florence
BENEDICK	A young lord of Padua
BORACHIO	Follower of Don John
CONRADE	Follower of Don John
BALTHASAR	Attendant to Don Pedro
LEONATO	Governor of Messina
HERO	Daughter of Leonato
BEATRICE	Niece of Leonato
MARGARET	Waiting gentlewoman to Hero
URSULA	Waiting gentlewoman to Hero
NELL	Servant to Leonato
FRIAR FRANCIS	
DOGBERRY	A constable
VERGES	A headborough
GEORGE SEACOLE	Member of the watch
HUGH OATCAKE	Member of the watch
SIMPLE	Member of the watch
NYM	Member of the watch
A SEXTON	
SCENE	Messina

Act 1, Scene 1 Messina - before Leonato's house

(LEONATO, BEATRICE, HERO, URSULA, MARGARET, MESSENGER and NELL.)

LEONATO

I learn in this letter that Don Pedro 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 battle?

MESSENGER

Few of any sort, and none of name.

LEONATO

A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers.
I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honor on a young Florentine called Claudio.

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO

My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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.

league - about 3 miles

LEONATO

Faith niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much. But he'll be meet* with you, I doubt it not.
You must not sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war between Signior Benedick and her.
They never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

BEATRICE

Alas, he gets nothing by that.
In our last conflict four of his five wits went halting off,
and now is the whole man governed with one;
so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm,
let him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

No. And he were, I would burn my study.

MESSENGER

I will stay friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE

Do, good friend.

LEONATO

Don Pedro is approaching.

(Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, CONRADE, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR and soldiers.)

DON PEDRO

Good Signior Leonato, are you 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

You embrace your charge* too willingly.
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?

be meet - get even, *charge* - expense and responsibility

LEONATO

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

(LEONATO and DON PEDRO draw aside in private conversation.)

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

I wonder that you will always be talking, Signior Benedick; nobody marks you.

BENEDICK

My dear Lady Disdain. Are you yet living?

BEATRICE

Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet* food to feed her as Signior Benedick?

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

A dear happiness to women. They would else have been troubled with a pernicious* suitor.
I 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 escape a predestinate scratched face.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer.
But keep your way, in God's name! I have done.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

That is the sum of all, Leonato.

meet - suitable, *pernicious* - wicked; evil; fatal, *jade's trick* - horse joke

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

LEONATO

(To DON JOHN.) Let me bid you welcome, my lord.
Being reconciled to the Prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

DON JOHN

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

LEONATO

Please it your grace lead on?

DON PEDRO

Your hand Leonato; we will go together.

(Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO.)

CLAUDIO

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK

I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO

Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

Thou thinkst I am in sport. I pray thee, tell me how thou truly lik'st 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, and if 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 to the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

BENEDICK

Is it come to this? Hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion?*

Shall I never see a bachelor of threescore* again?

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 you on your allegiance.

BENEDICK

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 who? Mark how short his answer is; with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

You speak this to fetch me in my lord.

DON PEDRO

By my troth,* I speak my thought.

wear his cap with suspicion - for fear he has horns under it because his wife has made him a cuckold,
threescore - sixty, *constrain* - force, *troth* - truth

CLAUDIO

And in faith, my lord, I spoke mine.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO

That she is worthy, I know.

BENEDICK

That I neither feel how she should be loved, nor know how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me. I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord, not with love. Prove that ever I lose more blood with love than I will get again with drinking, pick out my eyes with a ballad maker's pen and hang me up at the door of a tavern for the sign of blind Cupid.

DON PEDRO

Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou wilt prove a notable argument.*

BENEDICK

If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and shoot at me; and he that hits me, let him be clapped on the shoulder and called Adam.

DON PEDRO

Well, as time shall try.*
Good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's.
Commend me to him and tell him I will not fail him at supper.

BENEDICK

I leave you.

(Exit BENEDICK.)

CLAUDIO

Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO

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

ere - before, *notable argument* - famous example, *as time shall try* - we shall see, *affect* - desire

CLAUDIO

My lord, when you went to fight this battle, I looked upon her with a soldier's eye, that liked, but had a rougher task in hand* than to drive liking to the name of love. But now I am returned and war-thoughts having left their places vacant, in their rooms come thronging soft and delicate desires, all prompting me how fair young Hero is.

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. Was it not to this end that thou began'st to twist so fine a story?

CLAUDIO

How sweetly you do minister to love.

DON PEDRO

I know we shall have revelling tonight. I will assume thy part in some disguise and tell fair Hero I am Claudio, and in her bosom I'll unclasp your heart. Then after to her father will I break,* and the conclusion is, she shall be thine. In practice let us put it presently.

(Exeunt.)

rougher task in hand - the coming battle, *break* - broach the subject

Act 1, Scene 3 Leonato's house

(DON JOHN and CONRADE.)

CONRADE

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;

laugh when I am merry, and claw* no man in his humor.

And though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man,

it must not be denied that I am a plain-dealing villain.

CONRADE

Yea, but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment.*

You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath taken you newly into his grace, where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself.

DON JOHN

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

If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking;

in the meantime let me be that I am, and seek not to alter me.

(Enter BORACHIO.)

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO

I came yonder from a great supper, and I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

DON JOHN

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

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

BORACHIO

Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN

Who, the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he.

DON JOHN

And who? And who? Which way looks he?

out of measure - excessively, *claw* - flatter, *controlment* - restraint, *canker* - wild dog-rose (despised as a weed)

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

A very forward March-chick.*

This may prove food to my displeasure.

That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow.*

If I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way.

You are both sure, and will assist me?

CONRADE

To the death, my lord.

DON JOHN

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

Would the cook were of my mind.*

Shall we go prove what's to be done?

BORACHIO

We'll wait upon your lordship.

(Exeunt DON JOHN, BORACHIO and CONRADE.)

forward March chick - precocious youngster,
overthrow - the battle Don John just lost to his brother, Don Pedro,
would the cook were of my mind - (he'd poison their meal)

Act 2, Scene 1 Leonato's house

(LEONATO, HERO and BEATRICE.)

LEONATO

Was not Count John here at supper?

HERO

I saw him not.

BEATRICE

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

HERO

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

With a good leg, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world.

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.

LEONATO

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

lady's eldest...tattling - a spoiled first-born boy who talks too much,
in the wollen - between blankets with no sheets

BEATRICE

Not till God make men of some other metal than earth.
Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust,
to make account of her life to a clod of wayward marl?*

No, uncle, I'll none.

LEONATO

Niece, you apprehend shrewdly.

BEATRICE

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

HERO

The revellers are entering.

(All put on their masks.)

(Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA and others, masked. The dance begins.)

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

With me in your company?

HERO

I may say so when I please.

DON PEDRO

And when please you to say so?

HERO

When I like your face, for God defend the lute* should be like the case.*

DON PEDRO

Speak low if you speak love. *(Drawing her aside.)*

BORACHIO

Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET

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

marl - clay; earth, *lute* - an old stringed instrument like a guitar,
lute...case - your face should be like your mask

BORACHIO
Which is one?

MARGARET
I say my prayers aloud.

BORACHIO
I love you the better. The hearers may cry amen.

MARGARET
God match me with a good dancer.

BORACHIO
Amen.

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

BORACHIO
No more words. (*They step aside.*)

BEATRICE
Will you not tell me who told you so?

BENEDICK
No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE
Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK
Not now.

BEATRICE
That I was disdainful? Well this was Signior Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK
What's he?

BEATRICE
I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK
Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE
Did he never make you laugh?

clerk - the parish clerk read the responses in church services

BENEDICK

I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE

Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool.

His only gift is in devising impossible slanders.

None but libertines* delight in him;

and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy;

for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him.

I am sure he is in the fleet. I would he had boarded me.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Do, do. He'll but break a comparison* or two on me;

which peradventure, not marked or not laughed at, strikes him into a melancholy;

and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night.

We must follow the leaders.

BENEDICK

In every good thing.

BEATRICE

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

(Dance concludes.)

(All exit except DON JOHN, BORACHIO and CLAUDIO.)

DON JOHN

Are not you Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO *(still masked.)*

You know me well, I am he.

DON JOHN

Signior, you are very near my brother in love.

He is enamored of Hero. I pray you dissuade him from her as she is no equal to his birth.

CLAUDIO

How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear his affection.

libertines - loose livers, *break a comparison* - attempt a joke

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Come, let us to the banquet.

(Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO.)

CLAUDIO

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

'Tis certain so. The Prince woos for himself.

Friendship is constant in all other things save in the office and affairs of love.

Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues; 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.

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Yea, the same.

BENEDICK

Come, will you go with me?

CLAUDIO

Whither?

BENEDICK

About your own business, for the Prince hath got your Hero.

CLAUDIO

I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK

Did you think the Prince would have served you thus?

CLAUDIO

I pray you, leave me.

BENEDICK

Ho! Now you strike like the blind man.

CLAUDIO

If you'll not leave me, I'll leave you.

(Exit CLAUDIO.)

BENEDICK

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.
 Nay, I am not so reputed. It is the bitter disposition of Beatrice that so gives me out.
 Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

(Enter DON PEDRO.)

DON PEDRO

The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel with 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, that I stood like a man at a mark,* with a whole army shooting at me.
 She speaks poniards,* and every word stabs.
 If her breath were as terrible as her terminations,* there were no living near her;
 she would infect to the north star.

(Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO and LEONATO.)

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.

BENEDICK

Will your grace command me to any service to the world's end?
 I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes;*
 I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia;
 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 BENEDICK.)

DON PEDRO

Come lady, come; you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.
 You have put him down lady, you have put him down.

sedges - reeds, *great thaw* - (during which, one must stay at home because the roads are impassable), *at a mark* - beside a target, *poniards* - daggers, *terminations* - name-calling, *Antipodes* - Australia, *Great Cham* - ruler of the Mongols, *harpy* - a predatory mythological creature with the head of a woman and body of a bird

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

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

If he be so, his conceit is false.
Here Claudio, I have wooed in thy name and fair Hero is won.
I have broke with her father and his good will obtained.
Name the day of marriage and God give thee joy.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

Speak count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO

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

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

In faith lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE

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

CLAUDIO

And so she doth, cousin.

BEATRICE

Good Lord, for alliance. Thus goes every one to the world but I.
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.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

I cry you mercy, uncle.
Cousins, God give you joy.
By your grace's pardon.

(Exit BEATRICE.)

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

There's little of the melancholy element in her, my lord.

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO

O by no means. She mocks all her wooers.

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

got - fathered

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Count Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO

tomorrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO

And you too, gentle Hero?

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

And Benedick is of a noble strain, of approved valor and confirmed honesty.
I will teach you how to humor your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick;
and I, with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick,
that in despite of his quick wit and 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.)

fain - gladly

Act 2, Scene 2 Leonato's house

(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

How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO

I think I told your lordship how much I am in the favor of Margaret, the waiting gentlewoman to Hero.

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

Go, find Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone.

Tell them that you know that Hero loves me. 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.

DON JOHN

Be cunning in the working of 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.)

cross - ruin; prevent

Act 2, Scene 3 Leonato's garden

(*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 falling in love;
and such a man is Claudio.

I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armor;
and now will he lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a new doublet.
He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier;
and now is he turned orthography;* his words 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 color it please God.
Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love. I will hide me in the arbor.

(*BENEDICK hides.*)

(*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, LEONATO and BALTHASAR.*)

DON PEDRO

Come, shall we hear this music?
See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO

Very well, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Come Balthasar, we'll hear that song again.

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,
Coverting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

orthography - overly precise in his choice and pronunciation of words

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

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a good song.

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

Balthazar, I pray thee get us some excellent music;
for tomorrow night we would have it at the lady Hero's chamber window.

BALTHASAR

The best I can my lord.

DON PEDRO

Do so, farewell.

(Exit BALTHASAR.)

DON PEDRO

Come hither, Leonato.

What was it you told me of today, 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 it possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

DON PEDRO

Why, what effects of passion shows she?

LEONATO

What effects, my lord? She will sit you—*(To CLAUDIO.)* you heard my daughter tell you how.

CLAUDIO

She did, indeed.

DON PEDRO

How, how, I pray you?
Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

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

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

CLAUDIO

Never tell him, my lord.

DON PEDRO

I love Benedick well, and could wish he would modestly examine himself
to see how much he is unworthy so good a lady.

NELL

Dinner!

LEONATO

My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready.

flout - scorn

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

(Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO and LEONATO. BENEDICK comes forward.)

BENEDICK

This can be no trick.

The conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady.
It seems her affections have their full bent.

Love me? Why, it must be requited!*

I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me,
because I have railed so long against marriage. But doth not the appetite alter?

A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age.

Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe* a man from the career of his humor?*

No! The world must be peopled!

When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.

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

(Enter BEATRICE.)

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

BEATRICE

I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me.

If it had been painful, I would not have come.

BENEDICK

You take pleasure then in the message?

BEATRICE

Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point, and choke a daw* withal.

You have no stomach,* signor? Fare you well.

(Exit BEATRICE.)

BENEDICK

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

'I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me.'

That's as much to say, 'any pains I take for you is as easy as thanks.'

requited - repaid, *awe* - frighten, *career of his humor* - action he fancies, *daw* - jackdaw (a bird), *stomach* - appetite

If I do not take pity on her, I am a villain; if I do not love her, I am a knave.
I will go get her picture.

(Exit BENEDICK.)

Act 3, Scene 1 Leonato's orchard

(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 Ursley walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse is all of her.

MARGARET

I'll make her come, I warrant you.

(Exit MARGARET.)

HERO

Now Ursula, when Beatrice doth come, our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part to praise him more than ever man did merit.
My talk to thee must be how Benedick is sick in love with Beatrice.

(Enter BEATRICE.)

Look where Beatrice like a lapwing* runs close by the ground, to hear our conference.

URSULA

The pleasantest angling is to see the fish cut with her golden oars the silver stream
and greedily devour the treacherous bait.
So angle we for Beatrice, who even now is couched in the woodbine coverture.*
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

HERO

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

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 worthy a companion as Beatrice?

lapwing - small bird:(a kind of plover), *woodbine coverture* - honeysuckle concealment

HERO

O God of love! I know he doth deserve as much as may be yielded to a man;
but Nature never framed a woman's heart of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice.

URSULA

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

HERO

Why you speak truth.

I never yet saw man, how wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured, but she would spell him backward:
if fair-faced, she would swear the gentleman should be her sister;
if 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.

URSULA

Sure sure, such carping* is not commendable.

HERO

But who dare tell her so?

If I should speak, she would mock me into air, she would laugh me out of myself, press me to death with wit.
Therefore let Benedick, like covered fire, consume away in sighs, waste inwardly.
It were a better death than die with mocks, which is as bad as die with tickling.

URSULA

Yet tell her of it. Hear what she will say.

HERO

No; rather I will go to Benedick and counsel him to fight against his passion.
And truly, I'll devise some honest slanders to stain my cousin with.
One doth not know how much an ill word may empoison liking.
Go in with me. I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel which is the best to furnish* me tomorrow.

URSULA

She's hooked, 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

What fire is in mine ears?
Can this be true? Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?
Contempt farewell, and maiden pride adieu. And Benedick, love on!
I will requite* thee, taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.
For others say thou dost deserve, and I believe it better than reported. *(Exit BEATRICE.)*

vane - weathervane, *carping* - faultfinding, *furnish* - dress, *haps* - chance, *requite* - repay

Act 3, Scene 2 Leonato's garden

(DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, then enters DON JOHN.)

DON JOHN
My lord and brother, God save you.

DON PEDRO
Good den,* brother.

DON JOHN
If your leisure serve, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO
In private?

DON JOHN
If it please you. Yet count Claudio may hear, for what I would speak of concerns him.

DON PEDRO
What's the matter?

DON JOHN
(To CLAUDIO.) Means your lordship to be married tomorrow?

DON PEDRO
You know he does.

DON JOHN
I know not that when he knows what I know.

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

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

CLAUDIO
Who? Hero?

DON JOHN
Even she—Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero!

CLAUDIO
Disloyal?

Good den - Good evening

DON JOHN

The word is too good to paint out her wickedness.

I could say she were worse; think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it.

Go but with me tonight, and you shall see her chamber-window entered,
even the night before her wedding-day.

If you love her then, tomorrow wed her. But it would better fit your honor to change your mind.

CLAUDIO

May this be so?

DON PEDRO

I will not think it.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

DON JOHN

I will disparage her no farther till you are my witnesses.

Bear it coldly but till midnight, and let the issue show itself.

(Exeunt.)

Act 3, Scene 3 The town square

(Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, SIMPLE, NYM, HUGH OATCAKE and GEORGE SEACOLE.)

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

VERGES

Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation.*

DOGBERRY

Nay, that were a punishment too good for them.

VERGES

Well, give them their charge,* neighbor Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

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

NYM

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

DOGBERRY

Come hither, neighbor Seacole.

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

This is your charge.

You shall comprehend* all vagrom* men.

You are to bid any man stop, in the Prince's name.

SEACOLE

How if he will not stop?

DOGBERRY

Why then, take no note of him, but let him go, and thank God you are rid of a knave.

VERGES

If he will not stop 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 the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable,* and not to be endured.

SIMPLE

We will rather sleep than talk.

salvation - he means damnation, *charge* - orders, *desertless* - he means deserving, *senseless* - he means sensible, *comprehend* - he means apprehend, *vagrom* - vagrant, *tolerable* - he means intolerable

DOGBERRY

Why you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I cannot see how sleeping should offend.
Only have a care your pikes be not stolen.
You are to call at all the ale-houses and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

SEACOLE

How if they will not?

DOGBERRY

Why then, let them alone till they are sober.

SEACOLE

Well, sir.

DOGBERRY

If you meet a thief, you may suspect him to be no true man;
and the less you meddle with him the more is for your honesty.

SIMPLE

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

DOGBERRY

Truly you may, but I think they that touch pitch shall be defiled.
The most peaceable way for you, if you do meet a thief,
is to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company.

VERGES

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

SEACOLE

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

DOGBERRY

Why then, depart in peace and let the child wake her with crying.
Well masters, good night. If there be any matter of weight chances, call up me.
Come, neighbor.

SEACOLE

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

DOGBERRY

One word more, honest neighbors. I pray you watch about Signior Leonato's door;
for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is a great coil* tonight.
Adieu. Be vigilant,* I beseech you.

(Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES.)

coil - confusion; bustle, *vigilant* - he means vigilant

(Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE.)

BORACHIO
Conrade!

CONRADE
Here man. I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO
Stand thee close; and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.

SEACOLE
(*Aside.*) Some treason masters. Stand close.

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

CONRADE
Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear?*

BORACHIO
Didst thou not hear somebody?

CONRADE
No; 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO
Know that I have tonight wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero. She leans me out at her mistress' chamber-window, bids me a thousand times good night—I tell this tale vilely—I should first tell thee how the Prince, Claudio and my master, planted and placed and possessed* by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter.

CONRADE
And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO
Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio; but the devil my master knew she was Margaret. Away went Claudio enraged; swore he would meet her, as he was appointed, next morning at the temple, and there before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw overnight and send her home again without a husband.

SEACOLE
We charge you in the Prince's name, stand!

dear - expensive, *possessed* - deluded

OATCAKE

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—

NYM

Never speak! We charge you let us obey you* to go with us.

(Exeunt.)

Act 3, Scene 5 The street in front of Leonato's house

(LEONATO, DOGBERRY and VERGES.)

LEONATO

What would you with me, honest neighbor?

DOGBERRY

Marry, sir, I would have some confidence* with you that discerns* you nearly.

LEONATO

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

DOGBERRY

Marry, this it is sir.

VERGES

Yes, in truth it is, sir.

LEONATO

What is it, my good friends?

DOGBERRY

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.

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

Comparisons are odorous.*

LEONATO

Neighbors, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

All thy tediousness on me, ah?

confidence - he means conference, *discerns* - he means concerns,
blunt - he means sharp, *odorous* - he means odious

DOGBERRY

Yea, for I hear as good exclamation* on your worship as of any man in the city, and though I be but a poor man, I am glad to hear it.

VERGES

And so am I.

LEONATO

I would fain* know what you have to say.

VERGES

Marry sir, our watch tonight have taken a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY

A good old man, sir; he will be talking. As they say, 'When the age is in the wit is out.' And two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. All men are not alike, alas, good neighbor.

LEONATO

Indeed neighbor, he comes too short of you.

DOGBERRY

Gifts that God gives.

LEONATO

I must leave you.

DOGBERRY

One word, sir.

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

LEONATO

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

DOGBERRY

It shall be suffigance.*

LEONATO

Drink some wine ere you go. Fare you well.

(Enter NELL.)

NELL

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

exclamation - he means acclamation, *fain* - be eager to, *comprehended* - he means apprehended, *aspicious* - he means suspicious, *suffigance* - he means sufficient

LEONATO

I'll wait upon them. I am ready.

(Exeunt LEONATO and NELL.)

DOGBERRY

Go good partner, go! Get you the Sexton. Bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the jail.
We are now to examination* these men.

VERGES

And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY

We will spare for no wit, I warrant you.
Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication.*
Go!

(Exeunt.)

examination - he means examine, *excommunication* - he means examination

Act 4, Scene 1 A Church

(DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, LEONATO, FRIAR FRANCIS, BALTHASAR, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, HERO, BEATRICE, URSULA, MARGARET, NELL and attendants.)

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

CLAUDIO

No.

LEONATO

To be married to her Friar. You come to marry her.

FRIAR FRANCIS

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

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

If either of you know any inward impediment why you should not be conjoined,
I 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

What men dare do, what men may do, what men daily do, not knowing what they do.

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 honor.

Behold how like a maid she blushes here.

O what authority and show of truth can cunning sin cover itself withal.

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.

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 vanquished the resistance of her youth, and made defeat of her virginity—

CLAUDIO

I know what you would say. If I have known her, you will say she did embrace me as a husband.

No, Leonato, I never tempted her with word too large,

but as a brother to his sister, showed bashful sincerity and comely love.

HERO

And seemed I ever otherwise to you?

CLAUDIO

Out on thee! Seeming! You seemed to me as Dian* in her orb,* as chaste as is the bud ere it be blown;*

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

or those pampered animals that rage in savage sensuality.

HERO

Is my lord well that he doth speak so wide?

LEONATO

Sweet Prince, why speak not you?

render - give back, *approved wanton* - proven whore, *Dian* - Diana, the Goddess of chastity, *orb* - the moon, *blown* - in blossom, *intemperate* - ungoverned

DON PEDRO

What should I speak?

I stand dishonored 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.

HERO

True? O God!

CLAUDIO

Let me but move one question to your daughter,
and by that fatherly and kindly power that you have in her, bid her answer truly.

LEONATO

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

HERO

O God defend me! How am I beset!*

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

I talked 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 honor 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 confessed the vile encounters they have had a thousand times in secret.

DON JOHN

Fie, fie! They are not to be named my lord, not to be spoke of.

There is not chastity enough in language without offence to utter them.

Thus, pretty lady, I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.*

CLAUDIO

O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been,
if half thy outward graces had been placed about thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart.
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair. Farewell. Thou pure impiety* and impious purity.

stale - harlot, *beset* - attacked, *misgovernment* - misconduct, *impiety* - lack of reverence for God

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.

LEONATO

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

(HERO faints.)

BEATRICE

Why, how now, cousin! Wherefore sink you down?

DON JOHN

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

(Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN and CLAUDIO.)

BENEDICK

How doth the lady?

BEATRICE

Dead, I think. Help, uncle! Hero! Why Hero? Uncle! Signior Benedick! Friar!

LEONATO

O Fate, take not away thy heavy hand!

Death is the fairest cover for her shame that may be wished for.

BEATRICE

How now, cousin Hero?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO

Dost thou look up?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Yea, wherefore should she not?

LEONATO

Wherefore? Why, doth not every earthly thing cry shame upon her?

Could she here deny the story that is printed in her blood?*

Do not live Hero; do not open thine eyes.

BENEDICK

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

conjecture - suspicion, *printed in her blood* - proven by her blushes

BEATRICE

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

Confirmed, confirmed! That is stronger made which was before barred up with ribs of iron. Would the two Princes lie, and Claudio lie, who loved her so, that speaking of her foulness, washed it with tears? Hence from her! Let her die!

FRIAR FRANCIS

Hear me a little. Trust not my age, my reverence, calling, nor divinity, if this sweet lady lie not guiltless here under some biting error.

LEONATO

Friar, it cannot be.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

They know that do accuse me; I know none.

O my father, prove that any man with me conversed at hours unmeet,* refuse me, hate me, torture me to death.

FRIAR FRANCIS

There is some strange misprision* in the Princes.

BENEDICK

Two of them have the very bent* of honor; and if their wisdoms be misled in this, the practice of it lives in Don John, whose spirits toil in frame of* villainies.

LEONATO

I know not. If they speak but truth of her, these hands shall tear her.

If they wrong her honor, the proudest of them shall well hear of it.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Pause awhile. Your daughter here the Princes left for dead.

Let her awhile be secretly kept in, and publish it that she is dead indeed.

LEONATO

What shall become of this? What will this do?

belied - lied about, *unmeet* - improper, *misprision* - misunderstanding,
bent - shape, *frame of* - inventing

FRIAR FRANCIS

You may conceal her, as best befits her wounded reputation,
out of all eyes, tongues and minds till these wrongs may be put to right.

BENEDICK

Signior Leonato, let the Friar advise you.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

'Tis well consented. Presently away.

Come lady, die to live. This wedding-day perhaps is but prolonged. 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.

flow - am afloat (hence easily pulled)

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

I was about to protest I loved you.

BENEDICK

Then 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 anything for thee.

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio!

BENEDICK

Ha! Not for the wide world.

BEATRICE

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK

Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Is Claudio not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonored my kinswoman?
O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place!

BENEDICK

Nay, but Beatrice—

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Beat—

BEATRICE

Count Claudio, a sweet gallant surely. O that I were a man for his sake,
or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake.
But manhood is melted into curtsies, and valor into compliments.
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.)

Act 4, Scene 2 The jail

(*DOGBERRY, VERGES, SEXTON, CONRADE, BORACHIO and the WATCH.*)

DOGBERRY

Is our whole dissembly* appeared?

SEXTON

Which be the malefactors?*

DOGBERRY

Marry, that am I and my partner.

VERGES

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

SEXTON

But which are the offenders that are to be examined?

VERGES

There!

DOGBERRY

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

CONRADE

Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY

A marvellous witty fellow, I assure you.
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. 'Fore God, they are both in a tale.*
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

Yea marry, that's the efast* way. Accuse these men!

dissembly - he means assembly, *malefactors* - criminals, *exhibition* - he means commission,
both in a tale - both telling the same story, *efest* - easiest

SEACOLE

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.

SEXTON

What heard you him say else?

SEACOLE

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

DOGBERRY

Flat burglary* as ever was committed.

VERGES

Yea, by the mass, that it is.

SEXTON

What else fellow?

SEACOLE

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

DOGBERRY

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

SEXTON

What else?

SEACOLE

This is all.

SEXTON

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

(Exit SEXTON.)

DOGBERRY

Come, let them be opinioned.*

burglary - he probably means perjury, **redemption** - he means damnation,
opinioned - he means pinioned; tied up

CONRADE

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

DOGBERRY

Dost thou not suspect* my place? Dost thou not suspect my years?

O that he were here to write me down an ass!

But masters, remember that I am an ass!

Though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass!

No thou villain, thou art full of piety* as shall be proved upon thee by good witness.

I am a wise fellow, and which is more an officer, and which is more a householder,
and which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina!

And one that knows the law, go to! And a rich fellow enough, go to!

And a fellow that hath had losses; and one that hath two gowns and everything handsome about him.

Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass!

(Exeunt.)

suspect - he means respect, *piety* - he means impiety

Act 5, Scene 1 A street in Messina

(Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, then LEONATO by a separate entrance.)

DON PEDRO
Good den,* Leonato.

CLAUDIO
Good day to you, sir.

LEONATO
Hear you my lords—

DON PEDRO
We have some haste, Leonato.

LEONATO
Some haste, my lord? Well fare you well, my lord. Are you so hasty now? Well, all is one.

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

LEONATO
Nay, never lay thy hand upon thy sword; I fear thee not.

CLAUDIO
Beshrew* my hand, if it should give your age such cause of fear.
In faith, my hand meant nothing to my sword.

LEONATO
Tush tush, man; never fleer* and jest at me. I speak not like a dotard* nor a fool.
Know Claudio, thou hast so wronged mine innocent child and me
that I am forced to lay my reverence by and, with grey hairs and bruise of many days,
do challenge thee to trial of a man!*
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child. Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,
and she lies buried with her ancestors, in a tomb where never scandal slept, save this of hers,
framed* by thy villany!

CLAUDIO
My villany?

LEONATO
Thine Claudio; thine I say.

DON PEDRO
You say not right, old man.

Good den - good evening, *beshrew* - mildly curse, *fleer* - jeer,
dotard - foolish old person, *trial of a man* - a duel, *framed* - caused

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

Away. I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO

Canst thou so daff* me? Thou hast killed my child. If thou killest me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.

DON PEDRO

Leonato, my heart is sorry for your daughter's death;
but on my honor, she was charged with nothing but what was true, and very full of proof.

LEONATO

My lord, my lord—

DON PEDRO

I will not hear you.

LEONATO

No? I will be heard!

(Exit LEONATO.)

(Enter BENEDICK.)

DON PEDRO

See, see. Here comes the man we went to seek.

CLAUDIO

Now signior, what news?

BENEDICK

Good day, my lord. I came to seek you both.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

It is in my scabbard. Shall I draw it?

DON PEDRO

Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

prove - (by winning the duel), *daff* - put aside

BENEDICK

Shall I speak a word in your ear?

CLAUDIO

God bless me from a challenge.

BENEDICK

You are a villain; I jest not.

I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare and when you dare.

Do me right, or I will protest* your cowardice.

You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you.

CLAUDIO

Well, I will meet you.

BENEDICK

My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you. I must discontinue your company.

Your brother is fled from Messina. You have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady.

(To CLAUDIO.) Fare you well boy; you know my mind.

(Exit BENEDICK.)

DON PEDRO

He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO

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

(Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES and the WATCH, with CONRADE and BORACHIO.)

DON PEDRO

But soft, did he not say my brother was fled?

How now? Two of my brother's men bound?

CLAUDIO

Hearken after their offence, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Officers, what offence have these men done?

DOGBERRY

Marry sir, they have committed false report; moreover, they have spoken untruths;

secondarily, they are slanders; sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady;

thirdly, they have verified unjust things; and to conclude, they are lying knaves.

protest - declaim

DON PEDRO

First, I ask thee what they have done; thirdly, ask thee what's their offence;
sixth and lastly, why they are committed; and to conclude, what you lay to their charge?
This learned constable is too cunning to be understood. What's your offence?

BORACHIO

Sweet Prince, I have deceived even your very eyes.
What your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light.
Don John brought you into the orchard where you saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments.

DON PEDRO

Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO

Sweet Hero. Now thy image doth appear in the rare semblance that I loved at first.

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!

(Enter LEONATO with SEXTON.)

LEONATO

Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast killed mine innocent child?

BORACHIO

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO

No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself.
Here stand a pair of honorable 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 sinned I not but in mistaking.

LEONATO

I cannot bid you bid my daughter live—that were impossible;
but I pray you both, possess* the people in Messina here how innocent she died;
and if your love can labor in sad invention, hang her an epitaph upon her tomb,
and sing it to her bones—sing it tonight.
Tomorrow morning come you to my house,
and since you could not be my son-in-law, be yet my nephew.

plaintiffs - he means defendants, *reformed* - he means informed, *possess* - inform

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! I do embrace your offer; and dispose for henceforth of poor Claudio.

LEONATO

Tomorrow then I will expect your coming.

This naughty man shall face-to-face be brought to Margaret, who I believe was packed* in all this wrong.

BORACHIO

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

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO (*Giving DOGBERRY money.*)

There's for thy pains.*

DOGBERRY

God save the foundation!

LEONATO

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

DOGBERRY

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 wished, God prohibit* it! Come, neighbor.

(*Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES.*)

LEONATO

Until tomorrow morning lords, farewell. Bring you these fellows on. We'll talk with Margaret, how her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.

(*Exeunt.*)

packed - an accomplice, *pains* - efforts, *prohibit* - he means grant

Act 5, Scene 2 Leonato's garden

(BENEDICK and MARGARET.)

BENEDICK

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

MARGARET

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

BENEDICK

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

MARGARET

To have no man come over me. Why, shall I always keep below stairs?*

BENEDICK

Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth—it catches.

MARGARET

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

BENEDICK

A most manly wit Margaret; it will not hurt a woman. And so I pray thee call Beatrice.

MARGARET

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

(Exit MARGARET.)

BENEDICK

And therefore will come.

(Sings.) The god of love,

That sits above

And knows me, and knows me,

How pitiful I deserve—

I mean in singing.

I think there was never any so turned over and over as my poor self in love.

Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme. I have tried.

I can find 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.)

BENEDICK

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

below stairs - (with the servants) *foils* - long thin fencing swords with button on the end to prevent injury

BEATRICE

Yea signor, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK

O, stay but till then.

BEATRICE

'Then' is spoken. Fare you well.

And yet ere I go, let me go with that I came for,
which is with knowing what hath passed between you and Claudio.

BENEDICK

Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE

Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome.*
Therefore I will depart unknissed.

BENEDICK

Thou hast frightened the word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit.
I 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 altogether,
which maintained so politic* a state of evil that they will not admit any good part to intermingle with them.
But for which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?

BENEDICK

Suffer love? A good epithet.* I do suffer love indeed, for I love you 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?

noisome - bad smelling, *politic* - well organized, *good epithet* - a good phrase describing Benedick

BEATRICE

Very ill too.

BENEDICK

Serve God, love me and mend.

(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?

BEATRICE

Will you go hear this news, signor?

BENEDICK

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

(Exeunt.)

Act 5, Scene 3 A church graveyard

(Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, with other MOURNERS.)

CLAUDIO *(Reading 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,
Praising her when I am dumb.

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

(Song sung by mourners.)
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.

(Exeunt.)

guerdon - reward

Act 5, Scene 4 Leonato's house

(LEONATO, BENEDICK, BEATRICE, MARGARET, URSULA, FRIAR FRANCIS, HERO and NELL.)

FRIAR FRANCIS

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

LEONATO

So are the Prince and Claudio, who accused her.

Margaret was in some fault for this, although against her will* as it appears.

Well, daughter, and you gentle-women all, withdraw into a chamber by yourselves, and when I send for you, come hither masked.

(*Exeunt ladies.*)

BENEDICK

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS

To do what, signior?

BENEDICK

To bind me, or undo me—one of them.

Signior Leonato, truth is good signior, your niece regards me with an eye of favor.

LEONATO

That eye my daughter lent her. 'Tis most true.

BENEDICK

And I do with an eye of love requite* her.

LEONATO

The sight whereof I think you had from me, from Claudio, and the Prince. But what's your will?

BENEDICK

Your answer, sir, is enigmatical.*

But my will is to be conjoined in the state of honorable marriage, in which, good Friar, I shall desire your help.

LEONATO

My heart is with your liking.

FRIAR FRANCIS

And my help. Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

(*Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO.*)

against her will - unintentionally, *requite* - repay, *enigmatical* - perplexing

DON PEDRO

Good morrow to this fair assembly.

LEONATO

Good morrow, Prince; good morrow, Claudio. We here attend you.
Are you yet determined today to marry with my brother's daughter?

CLAUDIO

I'll hold my mind, were she an Ethiopie.*

LEONATO

Call her forth. Here's the Friar ready.

DON PEDRO

Good morrow Benedick.

Why, what's the matter that you have such a February face, so full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness?

(Enter HERO, BEATRICE, MARGARET and URSULA [all masked].)

CLAUDIO

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

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

HERO

And when I lived, I was your other wife;

(Unmasking.)

and when you loved, you were my other husband.

CLAUDIO

Another Hero!

HERO

Nothing certainer. One Hero died defiled; but I do live, and surely as I live, I am yours.

Ethiophe - black, and therefore unattractive in an age which admired blondes

DON PEDRO

The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

Let us to the chapel 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.*

LEONATO

Come cousin, I am sure you love the gentleman.

well-nigh - almost, *recompense* - repayment

CLAUDIO

And I'll be sworn upon it that he loves her; for here's a paper written in his hand,
a halting sonnet of his own pure brain, fashioned to Beatrice.

(BEATRICE grabs the sonnet.)

HERO

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

(BENEDICK grabs BEATRICE'S sonnet.)

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. *(BEATRICE and BENEDICK kiss.)*

(Enter a MESSENGER.)

MESSENGER

My lord, your brother John is taken in flight, and brought with armed men back to Messina.

BENEDICK

Think not on him till tomorrow. I'll devise brave punishments for him.
For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee; but in that thou art like to be my kinsman,
live unbruised, and love my cousin.
Come come, we are friends.

DON PEDRO

How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK

I'll tell thee what Prince; a college of wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humor.
Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram?

No!

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

consumption - a disease that causes a wasting away

LEONATO

We'll have dancing afterward!

BENEDICK

First, on my word.

Prince, thou art sad. Get thee a wife, get thee a wife!

Strike up, pipers!

(Dance.)

(The end.)