

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter LEONATO, Governor of Messina; HERO, his daughter; and BEATRICE his niece, with a MESSENGER

LEONATO

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

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

5 How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

MESSENGER

But 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

Much deserved on his part, and equally remembered by Don Pedro. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion. He hath indeed better bettered expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how.

LEONATO

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

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

Did he break out into tears?

MESSENGER

In great measure.

LEONATO

A kind overflow of kindness. There are no faces truer than those that are so washed. How much better is it to weep at joy than to joy at weeping!

BEATRICE

I pray you, is Signor Montanto returned from the wars or no?

Shakesclare Translation

Governor LEONATO of Messina, his daughter HERO, his niece BEATRICE, and a MESSENGER enter.

LEONATO

[Holding a letter] This letter says that [Don Pedro of Aragon](#) is coming to Messina tonight.

¹ "Don" is "Sir" or "Lord" in both Spanish and Italian. Aragon was a kingdom in Spain.

MESSENGER

He must be very close by now. He was less than nine miles away when I left him.

LEONATO

How many men did you lose in this battle?

MESSENGER

Not many, and no one with any notable rank or reputation.

LEONATO

A victory is twice as great when the victor comes home without losing any soldiers. This letter also says that Don Pedro has given great honors to a young man from Florence named Claudio.

MESSENGER

The honors are well-deserved, and Don Pedro has bestowed them fairly. Claudio has achieved things that no one would expect from such a young man. He has the look of a lamb, but he fights like a lion. Indeed, he's surpassed all expectations by so much that you can't expect me to describe him properly.

LEONATO

He has an uncle here in Messina who will be very glad to hear about this.

MESSENGER

I've already delivered letters to him, and he seemed overjoyed. Indeed, he got so emotional that he couldn't restrain his tears.

LEONATO

Did he really start crying?

MESSENGER

Yes, heavily.

LEONATO

That's the result of a natural overflow of affection for family members. There's no face more honest than one washed by tears. And how much better it is to weep for joy than to laugh in sadness!

BEATRICE

Please, has [Sir Montanto](#) returned from the battle or not?

² "Montanto" is a fencing term meaning an upward thrust, but Beatrice is being sarcastic here, basically saying "a showy fighter."

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

30 What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO

My cousin means Signor Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

35 He set up his bills here in Messina and challenged Cupid at the flight, and my uncle's Fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for Cupid and challenged him at the bird-bolt. 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.

LEONATO

40 Faith, niece, you tax Signor Benedick too much, but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

You had musty victual, and he hath help to eat it. He is a very valiant trencherman. He hath an excellent stomach.

MESSENGER

45 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 honorable virtues.

BEATRICE

50 It is so indeed. He is no less than a stuffed man. But for the stuffing—well, we are all mortal.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

55 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, for it is all the wealth that he hath left to be known a reasonable creature. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

MESSENGER

Is 't possible?

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER


I don't know anyone by that name, my lady. There never was a Sir Montanto in our army.

LEONATO

Who is it you're asking about, niece?

HERO


My cousin means Sir  Benedick of Padua.


 In the original text, Hero uses the word "signior," an Italian term of address for a man.

MESSENGER

Oh, he's returned, and he's as witty and cheerful as ever.

BEATRICE

Benedick once put up signs here in Messina challenging Cupid to an archery contest . My uncle's jester read the challenge, accepted on Cupid's behalf, and challenged Benedick with blunt arrows. But please tell me, how many men has he killed and eaten in these battles? For I promised to eat any man he could kill.

 Beatrice either means that Benedick is so bad at archery that he could only beat the blind Cupid, or that Benedick boasts that he will never be struck by Cupid and fall in love.

LEONATO

Honestly, niece, you criticize Sir Benedick too much. But I don't doubt that he'll give as good as he gets.

MESSENGER

He served well in this war, my lady.

BEATRICE

You had stale food, and he helped you eat it. He's a very brave eater. He has an excellent stomach for eating.

MESSENGER

And a stomach for fighting too, my lady. He's a good soldier.

BEATRICE

A good soldier compared to a lady, but what is he compared to a lord?

MESSENGER

He's a lord to a lord and a man to a man. He's stuffed full of honorable virtues.

BEATRICE

Indeed he is. He's nothing more than a dummy—a stuffed man. But as for what he's stuffed with—well, we all have our faults.

LEONATO

Sir, you mustn't misunderstand my niece. There is a kind of cheerful war between her and Sir Benedick. Whenever they meet there's always a battle of wits.

BEATRICE

And he never gains anything from such battles. In our last encounter, all his wits but one went limping off, leaving him with only enough wit to keep himself warm and distinguish himself from his horse. But who is his companion now? Every month he has a new best friend.

MESSENGER

Is that possible?

BEATRICE

Entirely possible. He wears his loyalty like he wears his hats—always changing with the latest fashions.

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

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

BEATRICE

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

MESSENGER

75 I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE

Do, good friend.

LEONATO

You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE

No, not till a hot January.

MESSENGER

Don Pedro is approached.

Enter DON PEDRO, Prince of Aragon, with CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, and DON JOHN the bastard

DON PEDRO

80 Good Signor 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, for trouble being gone, comfort should remain, but
85 when you depart from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave.

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

90 Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK

Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

LEONATO

Signor Benedick, no, for then were you a child.

DON PEDRO

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

MESSENGER

I see that this gentleman isn't included in your good book, my lady.

BEATRICE

No. And if he were in my good book, I'd burn down my library. But please tell me, who is his friend now? Isn't there some quarrelsome young man who will go along with Benedick on his voyage to hell?

MESSENGER

He spends most of his time in the company of the most noble Claudio.

BEATRICE

Oh Lord, Benedick will cling to him like a disease! Benedick is easier to catch than the plague, and the person he's infected immediately goes insane. God help the noble Claudio! If he's caught the Benedick, he'll lose all his money before he can be cured.

MESSENGER

I'll make sure to stay on your good side, my lady.

BEATRICE

Do, good friend.

LEONATO

You will never "catch the Benedick," niece.

BEATRICE

No, not until there's a hot January.

MESSENGER

Don Pedro is here.

Prince DON PEDRO of Aragon, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, and DON JOHN ⁵ enter.

⁵ Don John is Don Pedro's illegitimate half-brother.

DON PEDRO

Good Sir Leonato, have you come to meet your burden—the burden of hosting me and all my followers? Most people avoid expense, but you welcome it.

LEONATO

You are never a burden to my house, your Grace ⁶. When a burden leaves, comfort should replace it. But when you leave, you take happiness with you and leave behind only sorrow.

⁶ "Your Grace" is an honorific title similar to "your Majesty" or "your Highness."

DON PEDRO

You welcome your troubles too cheerfully. [*Turning to HERO*] This must be your daughter.

LEONATO

That's what her mother keeps telling me.

BENEDICK

Sir, did you doubt that she was your daughter, since you had to ask?

LEONATO

No, Sir Benedick, for you were only a child then—not yet old enough to seduce my wife.

DON PEDRO

He got you back, Benedick! I can tell from this what kind of a man you are, and that you have a reputation with women. But seriously, the lady proves who her father is by her resemblance to him.

LEONATO and DON PEDRO move to one side, still talking

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

100 I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick. Nobody marks you.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

105 Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signor 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

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

BENEDICK

115 God keep your Ladyship still in that mind, so some gentle-man 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

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO and DON PEDRO come forward

DON PEDRO

125 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, and he heartily prays some occasion may detain us longer. I dare
130 swear he is no hypocrite but prays from his heart.

[To HERO] Be happy, my lady, for you resemble an honorable father.

LEONATO and DON PEDRO move to one side, still talking.

BENEDICK

Even if Sir Leonato is her father, she wouldn't want to resemble an old man, no matter how similar she is to him.

BEATRICE

I'm surprised that you're still talking, Sir Benedick. Nobody's paying attention to you.

BENEDICK

Oh, it's my dear Lady Scorn! Haven't you died from boredom yet?

BEATRICE

How could Scorn die when she has such a plentiful supply of food in the form of Sir Benedick? When you're around, even Lady Courtesy must transform into Lady Scorn.

BENEDICK

Then Lady Courtesy is a traitor. But, truly, all ladies love me, except you. And I wish I could say that I wasn't so hard-hearted, for I really don't love anyone.

BEATRICE

What a stroke of good fortune for women. Otherwise they would all be plagued by a terrible suitor. I thank God and my own cold blood that I feel the same way, and don't love anyone. I would rather hear my dog bark at a crow than hear a man swear that he loves me.

BENEDICK

Your Ladyship, may God preserve you in that state of mind forever, so that some poor gentleman will escape having his face scratched up.

BEATRICE

If it's a face like yours then scratching couldn't make it look any worse.

BENEDICK

You'd be great at teaching parrots—you say the same things over and over again.

BEATRICE

Better a bird that talks like me than a beast that talks like you—unable to say anything at all.

BENEDICK

I wish my horse were as fast as your tongue, and could go on and on in the same way. But have it your way, for God's sake. I'm done.

BEATRICE

You always drop out of the horse race before it's over. I know how you are.

LEONATO and DON PEDRO come forward.

DON PEDRO

And that's everything that's happened since we last saw each other, Leonato.

[To CLAUDIO and BENEDICK] Sir Claudio and Sir Benedick, my dear friend Leonato has invited you all to stay here. I told him we'll stay for at least a month, and he begged us to stay longer. I swear that he's not just being polite, but is

LEONATO

If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn. *[to DON JOHN]* Let me bid you welcome, my lord. Being reconciled to the Prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

DON JOHN

135 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. Manent BENEDICK and CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK

140 I noted her not, but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO

Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

No, I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

Would you buy her, that you enquire after her?

CLAUDIO

155 Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK

160 Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow? Or do you play the flouting jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder and Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in what key shall a man take you to go in the song?

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

165 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

sincere.

LEONATO

My lord, if you swear it, you won't be lying.

[To DON JOHN] Let me welcome you as well, my lord. Now that you and your brother are reconciled, I owe you the same allegiance I owe to Don Pedro.

DON JOHN

I thank you. I'm a man of few words, but I thank you.

LEONATO

Do you want to lead us all inside, your Grace?

DON PEDRO

Give me your hand, Leonato. We'll go together.

Everyone except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO exits.

CLAUDIO

Benedick, did you notice Sir Leonato's daughter?

BENEDICK

I saw her, but I didn't see anything worth noting.

CLAUDIO

Isn't she a well-mannered young lady?

BENEDICK

Are you asking me that honestly, and want my true opinion? Or do you want me to criticize her in the way that I'm known to criticize all women?

CLAUDIO

No, please speak honestly and seriously.

BENEDICK

Well, to be honest, I think she's too short to be praised highly, too ugly to be praised prettily, and too little to be praised greatly. The only compliment I can give her is this: if she were different than the way she is, she would be ugly. And since she can't be anything but herself, I do not like her.

CLAUDIO

You think I'm joking. Please tell me honestly what you think of her.


BENEDICK

Why are you asking about her—do you want to buy her?

CLAUDIO

Could anything in the world be enough to buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK


Yes, and a box to put it in. But are you saying this seriously? Or are you just playing the part of the mocking rascal, saying that blind Cupid is good at catching hares and Vulcan  is a good carpenter? Come, tell me what key you're singing in, so I can sing in harmony.

CLAUDIO

In my eyes, she seems like the sweetest lady I've ever seen.

BENEDICK

I can still see without glasses, and I don't see it. If her cousin Beatrice didn't have such a temper, she would exceed Hero in beauty more than spring does winter. But I hope you aren't looking to become a husband, are you?

 In ancient Roman mythology, Vulcan was the god of fire, typically depicted as a blacksmith.

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

170 Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Go to, i' faith, an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it, and sigh away Sundays. Look, Don
175 Pedro is returned to seek you.

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

180 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—*[to DON PEDRO]* he is in love. With who? Now, that is your Grace's part. Mark how short his answer is: with Hero, Leonato's short
185 daughter.

CLAUDIO

If this were so, so were it uttered.

BENEDICK

Like the old tale, my lord: "It is not so nor 'twas not so but, indeed, God forbid it should be so."

CLAUDIO

190 If my passion change not shortly, God forbid it should be otherwise.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

DON PEDRO

By my troth, I speak my thought.

CLAUDIO

195 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.

CLAUDIO

Even if I had sworn to never marry, I wouldn't trust myself if Hero said she would be my wife.

BENEDICK

Is this what the world's coming to? Honestly, isn't there one man left who can wear his hat without fearing to sprout horns ⁸? Will I never see a sixty-year-old bachelor again? Go ahead then, if you insist on putting your neck in the yoke of marriage like an ox, and throwing away your free time. Look, Don Pedro has returned to look for you.

DON PEDRO enters.

DON PEDRO

What secrets have you been telling that kept you from following us to Leonato's?

BENEDICK

Your Grace will have to command me to tell.

DON PEDRO

I command you by your allegiance to me. Tell me.

BENEDICK

Do you hear this, Count Claudio? I can keep secrets like a mute man, and I want you to know that. But my allegiance is to Don Pedro—look, I have to tell him because of my allegiance—

[To DON PEDRO] Claudio is in love. With whom? Now, that's what your Grace is supposed to ask next. See how short the answer is: with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO

If that were true, then that would be the thing to say.

BENEDICK

See how he denies his crime, my lord, like the man in the old tale "Mr. Fox." "It isn't true and it wasn't true, and God forbid that it should be true."

CLAUDIO

If my passions don't change very soon, God forbid that it should *not* be true.

DON PEDRO

If you really love Hero, then I approve. The lady is very deserving of love.

CLAUDIO

You're saying this to trick me into confessing, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Truthfully, I'm saying what I really think.

CLAUDIO

And honestly, my lord, I also said what I thought when I said that I loved her.

BENEDICK

And truthfully and honestly I swear, my lord, that I did the same when I said this was a bad idea.

CLAUDIO

I feel that I love her.

DON PEDRO

And I know that she is worthy.

⁸ *Cuckolds—men whose wives cheat on them—were said to sprout horns. In Benedick's description, husbands should fear growing horns due to their wives' infidelity.*

BENEDICK

200 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.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

210 That a woman conceived me, I thank her. That she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks. But that I will have a reheat winded in my forehead or hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick, 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, for the which I may go the finer, I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

215 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 mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen and hang me up at the door of a brothel house for the sign of blind Cupid.

DON PEDRO

220 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

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be horn-mad.

DON PEDRO

235 Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly.

BENEDICK

I look for an earthquake too, then.

DON PEDRO

Well, you temporize with the hours. In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's. Commend me

BENEDICK

And I neither feel how she could be loved nor know how she could be worthy. Even fire couldn't melt this opinion out of me. I'd say it even if you burned me at the stake for it.

DON PEDRO

You've always been a stubborn dissenter in the way you scorn beauty.

CLAUDIO

And you can't give any good reasons for your argument—just sheer willfulness.

BENEDICK

A woman conceived me, and I thank her for that. Then she brought me up, and I give her humble thanks for that, too. But all other women will have to pardon me if I don't want to be made a fool of by having [hunting horns grow from my forehead](#) ⁹. Because I don't want to insult any particular woman by mistrusting her, I'll just protect myself by avoiding and mistrusting them all. And the result of this is that I'll live as a bachelor, and have more money to spend on fine clothes.

⁹ Benedick again references the idea that cuckolds grow horns.

DON PEDRO

Before I die, I swear I'll see you turn pale with lovesickness.

BENEDICK

I'll turn pale with anger, with illness, or with hunger—but never with love, my lord. If you can show that I'll ever be so weak with love that I can't be strengthened by a few cups of wine, you can pluck out my eyes with a love-poet's pen and hang me up at the door of a brothel's house, where the sign of blind Cupid usually goes.

DON PEDRO

Well, if you ever do change your mind and fall in love, you'll become an extreme example for everyone to gossip about.

BENEDICK

If I do, you can use me for target practice. And if any man hits me, let him be patted on the back and called a hero.

DON PEDRO

Well, time will tell. Even the savage bull eventually wears the yoke.

BENEDICK

The savage bull may wear it. But if the sensible Benedick ever takes up the yoke of marriage, then pluck off the bull's horns and put them on *my* forehead—for I'll soon be a cuckold like the rest. And let me be painted gaudily, and hang a sign around my neck, with big letters. Instead of what the sign usually says, "Here is a good horse to hire," the sign will say, "Here is Benedick, the married man."

CLAUDIO

If that ever happened, you'd go [horn-mad](#) ¹⁰.

¹⁰ "Horn-mad" means "mad as a bull," but is also another reference to cuckolds' horns.

DON PEDRO

Well, if Cupid hasn't used up all his arrows in lustful Venice, then he'll soon have his revenge by making you shake with love.

BENEDICK

It's just as likely that there'll be an earthquake.

DON PEDRO

Well, you'll grow milder as time passes. But in the meantime hurry to Leonato's, good Sir Benedick. Give him

240 to him and tell him I will not fail him at supper, for indeed he hath made great preparation.

BENEDICK

I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassy, and so I commit you—

CLAUDIO

To the tuition of God. From my house, if I had it—

DON PEDRO

The sixth of July. Your loving friend, Benedick.

BENEDICK

245 Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is sometimes guarded with fragments and the guards are but slightly basted on neither. Ere you flout old ends any further, examine your conscience. And so I leave you.

Exit

CLAUDIO

250 My liege, your highness now may do me good.

DON PEDRO

My love is thine to teach. Teach it but how, And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

CLAUDIO

Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

Thou wilt be like a lover presently
And tire the hearer with a book of words.
If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
270 And I will break with her and with her father,
And thou shalt have her. Was 't not to this end
That thou began'st to twist so fine a story?

CLAUDIO

How sweetly you do minister to love,
That know love's grief by his complexion!
275 But lest my liking might too sudden seem,
I would have salved it with a longer treatise.

DON PEDRO


What need the bridge much broader than the flood?
The fairest grant is the necessity.
Look what will serve is fit. 'Tis once, thou lovest,
280 And I will fit thee with the remedy.
I know we shall have reveling tonight.
I will assume thy part in some disguise
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart

285

my compliments and tell him that I'll be there for dinner, since I know he's done a lot of preparation for it.

BENEDICK

I think I have enough wit left in me to handle such a mission. And so I commit you —

 Benedick starts to say goodbye with a cliched sign-off for letters. Claudio and Don Pedro mock him by extending the formal farewell.

CLAUDIO

—into God's hands. From my house—if I had a house—

DON PEDRO

The sixth of July. Your loving friend, Benedick.

BENEDICK

Now, don't make fun. Sometimes you two might decorate your conversation with little fragments of wit, but they don't hold together very well. Before you show off your witty scraps any longer, take a look at your conscience, and you'll see that I speak the truth. And with that I leave you.

He exits.

CLAUDIO

My lord, you can really help me now.

DON PEDRO

I'm eager to help. Just let me what I can do, and you'll see how good I am at learning even the hardest lesson.

CLAUDIO

Does Leonato have any sons, my lord?

DON PEDRO

He has no child but Hero, who is his only heir. Do you love her, Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Oh my lord, when we left to fight the war that's now over, I looked at Hero with a soldier's eyes. And I liked her, but my mind was too filled with the rough tasks ahead to change liking into loving. But now that I've returned and my thoughts of war are gone, they've been replaced with soft and delicate desires that all lead me to one thing: how beautiful young Hero is, and how I must have liked her even before I went off to war.

DON PEDRO

Soon you'll be a true lover, and wear out everyone who listens to you with endless speeches about your feelings. If you love the beautiful Hero, then enjoy it. I'll bring up the subject to her and to her father, and soon you'll have her as your wife. Isn't this the result you were looking for when you told me this story?

CLAUDIO

You can see how lovesick I am without even asking, and you take care of me so kindly! But I didn't want to seem to hasty in my feelings, so I was going to smooth them over with a longer explanation.

DON PEDRO

Why build a bridge wider than the river it's crossing? You don't have to say more than what gets the point across. The best gift is one that's needed most, and whatever gets the job done will work. You are in love, and that's that. I'll get you what you need to cure your sickness. I know we'll have a party tonight. I'll disguise myself and tell Hero that I am Claudio, and in private I'll tell her all about my feelings for her. When she hears, she'll be taken prisoner by the force of

And take her hearing prisoner with the force
And strong encounter of my amorous tale.
Then after to her father will I break,
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
In practice let us put it presently.

Exeunt

my tale of love. Then I'll talk to her father, and in the end
she'll be yours. Now let's put this plan into action right
away.

They exit.

Act 1, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO

LEONATO

How now, brother, where is my cousin, your son? Hath
he provided this music?

ANTONIO

He is very busy about it. But, brother, I can tell you
strange news that you yet dreamt not of.

LEONATO

5 Are they good?

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

15 Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

ANTONIO

A good sharp fellow. I will send for him, and question
him yourself.

LEONATO

No, no, we will hold it as a dream till it appear
itself. But I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she
20 may be the better prepared for an answer if
peradventure this be true. Go you and tell her of it.

Enter ANTONIO's son, with a musician and attendants

Cousins, you know what you have to do.—O, I cry
you mercy, friend. Go you with me and I will use your
skill.—Good cousin, have a care this busy time.

Exeunt

Shakescleare Translation

LEONATO and ANTONIO enter.

LEONATO

How are you, brother? Where is my nephew, your son? Has
he taken care of the music for tonight's party?

ANTONIO

He's working on it right now. But, brother, I have some
strange, surprising news to tell you.

LEONATO

Is it good news?

ANTONIO

Well, it seems good right now, but who knows how it will
unfold. A servant of mine overheard the Prince and Count
Claudio as they walked along an overgrown path in my
orchard. The Prince revealed to Claudio that he is in love
with my niece Hero—your daughter—and that he means to
tell her so at the dance tonight. If she seems agreeable to
the idea, he intends to seize the opportunity and
immediately ask you for permission to marry her.

LEONATO

Is the fellow who told you this a smart man?


ANTONIO


He's very sharp. I'll send for him, and you can question him
yourself.

LEONATO

No, no, we'll pretend it was just a dream until it makes itself
evident in reality. But my daughter should know about it, so
she can be better prepared with an answer if all this
happens to be true. Go and tell her about it.

ANTONIO's son, a musician, and attendants enter.

Men, you know what work you all have to do. Oh, I beg your
pardon, friend. Come with me and I can use your help. Dear
kinsman , be careful during this busy time.

 In Shakespeare's time, "cousin" was used as a term of address indicating kinship, not necessarily a blood relationship.

They all exit.

Act 1, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter DON JOHN and CONRAD

Shakescleare Translation

DON JOHN and CONRAD enter.

CONRAD

What the goodyear, my lord, why are you thus out of measure sad?

DON JOHN

There is no measure in the occasion that breeds. Therefore the sadness is without limit.

CONRAD

5 You should hear reason.

DON JOHN

And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it?

CONRAD

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

DON JOHN

I wonder that thou, being, as thou sayst thou art, born under Saturn, goest about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief. I cannot hide what I am. I must be sad when I have cause and smile at no man's jests, eat when I have stomach and wait for no man's leisure, sleep when I am drowsy and tend on no man's business, laugh when I am merry and claw no man in his humor.

CONRAD

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

DON JOHN

I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any. In this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking. In the meantime, let me be that I am, and seek not to alter me.

CONRAD

Can you make no use of your discontent?

DON JOHN

35 I make all use of it, for I use it only. Who comes here?

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

40 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.

CONRAD

Honestly, my lord, why are you so excessively sad?

DON JOHN

There is no measure to the things that cause my sadness. Therefore, the sadness itself is limitless.

CONRAD

You should listen to reason.


DON JOHN

And when I've heard it, how will reason reward me?

CONRAD

If reason won't immediately cure your suffering, then at least reason will give you the patience to endure it.

DON JOHN

I'm surprised that you—being such a gloomy  man yourself—go about trying to cure a deadly disease with platitudes. I cannot hide who I am. I'll be sad when I have reason to be, and won't smile at any man's jokes. I'll eat when I'm hungry, and won't wait for any man's convenience. I'll sleep when I'm tired, and won't wake up for any man's business. I'll laugh when I'm happy, and won't flatter a man or humor him.

CONRAD

Yes, but you shouldn't act this way until you can do it without restraint or fear of endangering yourself. You rebelled against your brother, and he has only recently forgiven you and returned you to his favor. You won't stay there unless you further establish yourself in his good graces. You need to use this time to benefit yourself.

DON JOHN

I'd rather be a weed in a hedge than a rose in my brother's garden. And it suits my mood better to be hated by all than to put on an act and trick someone into loving me. I cannot be called a flattering, virtuous man, but you can't deny that at least I'm honest and straightforward about being a scoundrel. My brother trusts me like he trusts a muzzled dog, and gives me all the freedom of a horse with a block chained to its foot. If I had my mouth free, I would bite. If I had my liberty, I would do as I please. In the meantime, let me be who I am, and don't try to change me.

CONRAD

Can't you put your unhappiness to some use?

DON JOHN

I already make the most possible use of it, because it's the only thing I use. Who's that coming?

BORACHIO enters.

What's the news, Borachio?

BORACHIO


I just came from a great feast. Leonato is giving your brother, the Prince, entertainment fit for royalty. And I can give you some information about an intended marriage.

DON JOHN

Can I use this information to cause trouble? Who is this fool who wants the constant hassle of marriage?

BORACHIO

Well, it's your brother's right-hand man.

 In the original text, Don John refers to the astrological belief that those born at a time when the planet Saturn dominated the sky grew up to be sad and sarcastic people.

DON JOHN

Who? The most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he.

DON JOHN

45 A proper squire. And who, and who? Which way looks he?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

CONRAD

To the death, my lord.

DON JOHN

60 Let us to the great supper. Their cheer is the greater that I am subdued. Would the cook were o' my mind! Shall we go prove what's to be done?

BORACHIO

We'll wait upon your lordship.

Exeunt

DON JOHN

Who? The amazing Claudio?

BORACHIO

That's the one.

DON JOHN

A handsome young man. And who's the girl? Who's caught his eye?

BORACHIO

Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonato.

DON JOHN

A precocious young thing! How did you come to hear this?

BORACHIO

I was hired to perfume Leonato's house. While I was burning incense in one musty room, the Prince and Claudio came in, hand in hand, in the middle of a serious conversation. I hid myself behind a tapestry, and from there I heard them agree that the Prince would court Hero, and once he won her over, he would give her to Count Claudio.

DON JOHN

Come, come, let's go to the feast. This might be just the food I need to cure my unhappiness. That young upstart Claudio has gained honor and glory through my defeat. If I can injure him in any way, I'll rejoice. You'll both stay loyal and help me, won't you?

CONRAD

Until death, my lord.

DON JOHN

Then let's go to this great feast. They're all so happy because I have been defeated. If only the cook thought like me—then he could have poisoned their food! Now, should we go discover what must be done?

BORACHIO

We'll accompany your Lordship.

They all exit.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, URSULA and MARGARET

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 heartburned an hour after.

HERO

5 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

Shakescleare Translation

LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, URSULA, and MARGARET enter.

LEONATO

Wasn't Don John here at dinner?

ANTONIO

I didn't see him.

BEATRICE

That gentleman always looks so sour! I can't ever see him without getting heartburn afterwards.

HERO

He does have a very sad disposition.

BEATRICE

A man would be excellent if he were halfway between Don John and Benedick. One of them is like a statue, saying

an image and says nothing, and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

15 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 goodwill.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

In faith, she's too curst.

BEATRICE

20 Too curst is more than curst. I shall lessen God's sending that way, for it is said, "God sends a curst cow short horns," but to a cow too curst, he sends none.

LEONATO

So, by being too curst, God will send you no horns.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

BEATRICE

30 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 the bearherd, and lead his apes into hell.

LEONATO

35 Well then, go you into hell?

BEATRICE

40 No, but to the gate, and there will the devil meet me like an old cuckold with horns on his head, and say, "Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids." So deliver I up my apes 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.

ANTONIO

[to HERO] Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

BEATRICE

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

nothing, and the other is like a spoiled child, always babbling on.

LEONATO

Then you could put half of Sir Benedick's chatter in Don John's mouth, and put half of Don John's gloominess in Sir Benedick's face—

BEATRICE

And if he also had handsome legs and a full wallet, such a man could have any woman in the world, if he could win over her good will, uncle.

LEONATO

Niece, I swear you'll never get a husband if you keep such a sharp tongue in your mouth.

ANTONIO

Honestly, she's too mean.

BEATRICE

Too mean is better than just mean. In that respect, I'll escape God's punishment, for as the old proverb says: "God gives a mean cow short horns," so she can't cause as much damage. But he doesn't do anything to a cow that is *too* ill-tempered.

LEONATO

So by being too mean, God won't send you horns?

BEATRICE

Exactly, and if he won't send me horns then he won't send me a husband, for any husband of mine would be sure to grow cuckold's horns. And I thank God every morning and evening for sending me no husband. Lord, I couldn't stand a husband with a beard on his face! I'd rather sleep under scratchy wool blankets.

LEONATO

You might find a husband without a beard.

BEATRICE

And what would I do with him? Dress him up in my clothes and make him my serving woman? If he has a beard, he's more than a youth. And if he has no beard, he's less than a man. If he's older than a handsome youth, then he's not for me. But if he's less than a man, then he wouldn't be able to handle me. Therefore, I bet that I'll die an old maid, and lead apes and bears in hell, as they say unmarried women will.

LEONATO

Well then, does that mean you'll go to hell?

BEATRICE

No, just to its gates. There the devil will meet me, looking like an old cuckold with horns on his head, and say, "Go off to heaven, Beatrice, go off to heaven. Hell is no place for virgins." So, I'll leave my apes behind and fly up to Saint Peter at heaven's gates. Then he'll show me the part of heaven where the unmarried people live, and we'll all live together happily ever after.

ANTONIO

[To HERO] Well, niece, I trust that you at least will always defer to your father.

BEATRICE

Yes, of course, it's my cousin's duty to curtsy and say, "Father, I'll do whatever pleases you." But despite all that, cousin, if your father doesn't pick a handsome husband for you, you should curtsy again and say, "Father, I'll do whatever pleases *me*."

LEONATO

50 *[to HERO]* Daughter, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

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 an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none. Adam's
55 sons are my brethren, and truly I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

LEONATO

[to HERO] Daughter, remember what I told you. If the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

BEATRICE

60 The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time. If the Prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything, and so dance out the answer. For hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a
65 cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly modest as a measure, full of state and ancience; and then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the *cinqepace* faster and faster
70 till he sink into his grave.

LEONATO

Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

The revelers are entering, brother. Make good room.

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

DON PEDRO

75 Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?

They begin to dance

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

With me in your company?

HERO

80 I may say so when I please.

DON PEDRO

And when please you to say so?

HERO

When I like your favor, for God defend the lute should be like the case!

DON PEDRO

My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house is Jove.

LEONATO

[To HERO] Well, niece, I hope to see you with a husband one day.

BEATRICE

Not until God starts making men out of something other than dirt. Shouldn't it make a woman grieve, being ordered about by some brave clump of dust? Linking her life forever to a wandering piece of clay? No, uncle, I would rather not have a husband. All of Adam's
90 descendants are my relatives, and I truly believe that marriage between relatives is a sin.

LEONATO

[To HERO] Daughter, remember what I told you. If the Prince asks you about marriage, you know how to answer him.

BEATRICE

Cousin, if he doesn't court you properly and appropriately, the fault will be in his timing. If he presses you too hard, tell him that everything has its proper rhythm, and romance is like a dance. Listen, Hero, the three stages of romance are like three dances. The initial courtship is hot and hasty like a Scottish jig, and just as full of fantasy. Then the wedding is a slower, more solemn dance, full of dignity and tradition. And then comes the stage where you regret your marriage, and this stage is like the lively *cinqepace* dance, which keeps getting faster and faster until you fall into your grave.

LEONATO

Niece, you see things with unusual perceptiveness.

BEATRICE

I have a good eye, uncle. I can see obvious things in broad daylight.

LEONATO

The partygoers are coming in, brother. Give them room.

They all put on masks. DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA, and other partygoers enter, all wearing masks.

DON PEDRO

[To HERO] My lady, will you dance with me for a while?

They begin to dance.

HERO

As long as you move gently, look handsome, and say nothing, I'm yours for the dance, and especially when I dance away.

DON PEDRO

Will I be in your company then?

HERO

I'll tell you when I decide.

DON PEDRO


And when will you decide?


HERO

When I like your actual appearance, for God forbid that your face should look like your mask.

DON PEDRO

My mask is like the roof of Philemon's cottage
95 —it looks humble on the outside, but the great god Jove is beneath it.

 Adam was the first man created by God in the Bible, and was said to be formed from the dust of the earth.

 The mythological Philemon and Baucis were peasants who entertained the god Jove in their cottage, unaware of his true identity.

HERO

85 Why, then, your visor should be thatched.

DON PEDRO

Speak low if you speak love.

They move aside. BALTHASAR and MARGARET move forward

BALTHASAR

Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET

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

BALTHASAR

90 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

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

BALTHASAR

No more words. The clerk is answered.

They move aside. URSULA and ANTONIO move forward.

URSULA

I know you well enough. You are Signor Antonio.

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA

100 I know you by the wagging of your head.

ANTONIO

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA

You could never do him so ill-well unless you were the very man. Here's his dry hand up and down. You are he, you are he.

ANTONIO

105 At a word, I am not.

URSULA

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

They move aside. BENEDICK and BEATRICE move forward.

BEATRICE

110 Will you not tell me who told you so?

HERO

Why, then your mask should be thatched like a roof.

DON PEDRO

Speak softly if you'll speak about love.

They move aside. BALTHASAR and MARGARET move forward.

BALTHASAR

Well, I wish that you liked me.

MARGARET

For your sake, I don't wish it. Because I have many bad qualities.

BALTHASAR

Name one.

MARGARET

I say my prayers aloud.

BALTHASAR

I love you even more for that. Whoever hears you praying can then cry, "Amen."

MARGARET

May God pair me with a good dancer!

BALTHASAR

Amen. Here I am.

MARGARET

And may God take him away from me when the dance is done! Now say "amen," preacher.

BALTHASAR

No more words from me. I have my answer.

They move aside. URSULA and ANTONIO move forward.

URSULA

I know you well enough. You are Sir Antonio.

ANTONIO

In short, I am not.

URSULA

I recognize you by the way you move your head.

ANTONIO

To be honest, I'm only imitating Antonio.

URSULA

You could never imitate his bad qualities so well unless you were the man himself. See, you have his dry, aging hands exactly. You are he, you are he.

ANTONIO

In short, I am not.

URSULA

Come, come, do you think I can't recognize you by the excellent wit of your answers? Can virtue hide itself? Be quiet, for you are Antonio. Nobility will always make itself known, and there's nothing more to be said.

They move aside. BENEDICK and BEATRICE move forward.

BEATRICE

Won't you tell me who said that?

BENEDICK

No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE

Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK

Not now.

BEATRICE

115 That I was disdainful and that I had my good wit out
of The Hundred Merry Tales! Well this was Signor
Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK

What's he?

BEATRICE

I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK

Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE

120 Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK

I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE

125 Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool, only
his 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

130 Do, do. He'll but break a comparison or two on me,
which, peradventure not marked or not laughed at,
strikes him into melancholy, and then there's a
partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper
that night.

Music for the dance

135 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, then exeunt all except DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and CLAUDIO

DON JOHN

140 *[to BORACHIO]* Sure my brother is amorous on Hero, and
hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it.
The
ladies follow her, and but one visor remains.

BORACHIO

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

BENEDICK

No, you'll have to pardon me.

BEATRICE

And you won't tell me who you are either?

BENEDICK

Not now.

BEATRICE

To think, someone said that I was scornful, and that I got
my wit from an old joke book! Well, it must have been Sir
Benedick who said that.

BENEDICK

Who's he?

BEATRICE

I'm sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK

I don't, believe me.

BEATRICE

Didn't he ever make you laugh?

BENEDICK

Please tell me, who is he?

BEATRICE

Why, he's the Prince's jester—a very stupid fool, whose only
gift is coming up with outrageous insults. Only immoral
rascals enjoy his company, and they don't like his wit, but
only his rudeness. He both pleases and angers people; they
laugh at him and then beat him up. I'm sure he's in that
army of dancers out there. I wish he had been brave enough
to approach me for a battle.

BENEDICK

When I meet the gentleman, I'll tell him what you've said.

BEATRICE

Do that. He'll make a joke by comparing me to something
insulting, and if no one pays attention to him or laughs,
he'll get depressed. And that will save a partridge wing from
being eaten, for the fool will be too unhappy to eat any
dinner.

Music for the dance begins.

We must follow the leaders of the dance.

BENEDICK

We should follow them in every good thing.

BEATRICE

No, if they lead us the wrong way, I'll leave them at the next
song.

Everyone dances. After the dance, everyone except for DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and CLAUDIO exits.

DON JOHN

[To BORACHIO] My brother is surely in love with Hero, and
has now taken her father aside to ask him about marrying
her. The ladies have all followed Hero, but one masked man
remains.

BORACHIO

And that is Claudio. I recognize him by his posture.

DON JOHN

[to CLAUDIO] Are not you Signor Benedick?

CLAUDIO

145 You know me well. I am he.

DON JOHN

Signor, you are very near my brother in his love. He is enamored on Hero. I pray you, dissuade him from her. She is no equal for his birth. You may do the part of an honest man in it.

CLAUDIO

150 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 tonight.

DON JOHN

Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO

CLAUDIO

[unmasking]

155 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.
160 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.
This is an accident of hourly proof,
165 Which I mistrusted not. Farewell, therefore, Hero.

Enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Yea, the same.

BENEDICK

Come, will you go with me?

CLAUDIO

Whither?

BENEDICK

170 Even to the next willow, about your own business,
county. What fashion will you wear the garland of? About
your neck like an usurer's chain? Or under your arm
like a lieutenant's scarf? You must wear it one way, for
the Prince hath gat your Hero.

CLAUDIO

175 I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK

Why, that's spoken like an honest drover; so they
sell bullocks. But did you think the Prince would have
served you thus?

CLAUDIO

I pray you, leave me.

DON JOHN

[To CLAUDIO] Aren't you Sir Benedick?

CLAUDIO

You know me well. I am Benedick.

DON JOHN

Sir, you are a close friend of my brother's. He is in love with
Hero. Please, convince him to change his mind. Her social
rank is so low that it would be inappropriate for him to
marry her. You would be an honorable man if you did this
for me.

CLAUDIO

How do you know he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear it.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

Come, let's go to the banquet.

DON JOHN and BORACHIO exit.

CLAUDIO

[Taking off his mask] I answered to Benedick's name, but I
heard this bad news with Claudio's ears. So it's true: the
Prince wants Hero for himself. Friendship is loyal in all
things except for the business of love. Therefore all lovers
should speak only for themselves. Let everyone do their
own courting, and not trust any middle-men. Beauty is a
witch whose spells melt honor into passion. This is
something that happens all the time, but I never expected it
to happen to me. Farewell then, Hero.

BENEDICK enters.

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO

Yes, that's me.

BENEDICK

Will you come with me?

CLAUDIO

Where?

BENEDICK

Just to the nearest willow tree ³, to take care of your
business, Count. How do you want to wear your willow
garland? Around your neck, like a rich man's chain? Or
under your arm, like a lieutenant's sash? You must wear it
one way or another, for the Prince has won your Hero.

³ Willow trees were symbols of unrequited love.

CLAUDIO

I wish him happiness with her.

BENEDICK

Why, you sound like an honest cattle-dealer. That's how
they sell bulls. But did you really think the Prince would
trick you like that?

CLAUDIO

Please, leave me alone.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

Exit

BENEDICK

Alas, poor hurt fowl, now will he creep into sedges.
But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know
185 me! The Prince's fool! Ha, it may be I go under that
title because I am merry. Yea, but so I am apt to do
myself wrong. I am not so reputed! It is the base,
though bitter, disposition of Beatrice that puts the
world into her person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be
190 revenged as I may.

Enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

Now, Signior, where's the Count? Did you see him?

BENEDICK

Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame.
I found him here as melancholy as a lodge in a warren. I
told him, and I think I told him true, that your Grace
195 had got the goodwill of this young lady, and I offered
him my company to a willow tree, either to make him a
garland, as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as
being worthy to be whipped.

DON PEDRO

To be whipped? What's his fault?

BENEDICK

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

DON PEDRO

Will thou make a trust a transgression? The
transgression is in the stealer.

BENEDICK

205 Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been made, and
the garland too, for the garland he might have worn
himself and the rod he might have bestowed on you, who,
as I take it, have stolen his birds' nest.

DON PEDRO

210 I will but teach them to sing and restore them to the
owner.

BENEDICK

If their singing answer your saying, by my faith, you
say honestly.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

If you won't go away, I'll leave you.

He exits.

BENEDICK

Alas, that poor wounded bird. Now he'll crawl into the
bushes and hide. But how strange that Lady Beatrice should
seem to recognize me, and yet also not recognize me! "The
Prince's jester!" Ha, maybe they call me that because I am
cheerful. No, but I'm only insulting myself by thinking this. I
don't have that kind of a reputation! It's just Beatrice's
mean, sarcastic nature that causes her to think that
everyone in the world shares her opinion, and therefore
makes her describe me in this way. Well, I'll get my revenge
if I can.

DON PEDRO enters.

DON PEDRO

Now, Sir, where's Count Claudio? Did you see him?

BENEDICK

Truly, my lord, I played the part of Lady Rumor and relayed
the news to him. I found him here, as melancholy as a
rabbit in a burrow. I told him—and I think I told him the
truth—that you had won over the lady's goodwill. I then
offered to accompany him to a willow tree, to either help
him make a garland as a forsaken lover, or else to bind
willow switches into a whip to beat him.

DON PEDRO

To beat him? What's his crime?

BENEDICK

The simple crime of a schoolboy who finds a birds' nest and
joyfully shows it to his friend, who then steals it.

DON PEDRO

Will you turn trusting a friend into a crime? The criminal is
the thief.

BENEDICK

But it still would have been appropriate to make both the
whip and the garland. He could have worn the garland
himself, and used the whip on you, since you—as I
understand it—have stolen his birds' nest.

DON PEDRO

I only plan to teach the baby birds to sing, and then return
them to their rightful owner.

BENEDICK

If their singing corresponds with what you say—if Hero
really is ready to love Claudio, and not you—then you'll be
telling the truth.

DON PEDRO

The Lady Beatrice has a quarrel with you. The gentleman
she danced with told her that you had insulted her gravely.

BENEDICK

O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! An oak but with one green leaf on it would have answered her. My very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the Prince's jester, that I was duller than a great thaw, huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her; she would infect to the north star. I would not marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed. She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire, too. Come, talk not of her. You shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her, for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary, and people sin upon purpose because they would go thither. So indeed all disquiet, horror and perturbation follows her.

Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.

BENEDICK

Will your Grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on. I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester John's foot, fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard, do you any embassy to the Pygmies, 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

[*to BEATRICE*] Come, lady, come, you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

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

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

Why, how now, Count, wherefore are you sad?

BENEDICK

Oh, she's insulted me so badly that not even a block of wood could endure it! An oak tree with only one green leaf left would revive itself to respond to her abuse. Even my mask started to come to life and try to argue with her. She told me—not recognizing me as myself—that I was the Prince's jester, and duller than mud. She piled up mockery upon mockery until I stood paralyzed, like a man set up as a target with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks daggers, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her insults, she would stink up and kill everything from here to the North Star. I wouldn't marry her even if her dowry were Paradise. If Hercules were her husband, she'd make him cook for her, and chop up his club for firewood. Come on, don't talk about her. She's like Atë dressed up in fine clothes. I wish to God that some magician would exorcise her, for as long as she's here on earth, hell itself must be just as quiet as a church. People sin on purpose just so they can go to hell and escape her. Indeed, chaos, horror, and turmoil follow her everywhere.

CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO enter.

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.

BENEDICK

Will your Grace please send me on a mission to the ends of the earth? I'll go to the other side of the globe for any silly errand you can come up with. I'll fetch you a toothpick from the farthest reaches of Asia, or find out Prester John's shoe size, or bring you a hair from Cham's beard, or deliver any message you want to send to the Pygmies—anything rather than exchange three words with this man-eating vulture. Don't you have any work for me?

DON PEDRO

No work at all—all I desire is your good company.

BENEDICK

Oh God, sir, then here comes a meal I hate. I can't stand tongue!

He exits.

DON PEDRO

[*To BEATRICE*] Come, my lady, come. You have lost Signor Benedick's heart.

BEATRICE

It's true, my lord. He did lend it to me once, and I paid him back with interest: a double heart for his single one. But then he won it back from me in a game with loaded dice. So your Grace might be right in saying that I lost it.

DON PEDRO

You've defeated him, lady. You've put him down.

BEATRICE

And I hope that he won't put me down, or else my children will all be fools. Here, I've brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to find.

DON PEDRO

Why, what's going on, Count? Why are you sad?

⁴ Hercules was a hero in ancient Greek mythology, known for his strength and his completion of twelve tasks, known as the Labors.

⁵ Atë was the ancient Greek goddess of destruction and folly.

⁶ These are all examples of exotic and impossible tasks for Benedick to do. Prester John was a legendary Eastern emperor; Cham was a ruler of the Mongols; and the Pygmies were a mythical race from Greek mythology.

⁷ Beatrice seems to allude to a possible earlier romance with Benedick. Beatrice could mean that she loved Benedick twice as much as he loved her; or that she was interested in marriage and he wasn't; or that her heart was "double," meaning false.

⁸ Beatrice uses "put down" to mean "take to bed," and jokes that any child of Benedick's would be just as foolish as he is.

CLAUDIO

Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

How then, sick?

CLAUDIO

Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE

265 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

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

LEONATO

275 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

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

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

285 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

290 Good Lord for alliance! Thus goes everyone 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

295 Will you have me, lady?

BEATRICE

No, my lord, unless I might have another for working

CLAUDIO

I'm not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

What is it then? Are you sick?

CLAUDIO

Neither sad nor sick, my lord.

BEATRICE

The Count is neither sad, nor sick, nor happy, nor well—he's just civil, civil and orange like an orange from Seville, and with the same jealous, yellow complexion.

DON PEDRO

Truly, lady, I think your description is right, though I swear he has no reason to look so jealous.

[To CLAUDIO] Here, Claudio, I've courted Hero on your behalf, and beautiful Hero has been won. I asked her father, and he's given his permission. Name the day you want to get married, and may God give you joy.

LEONATO

Count Claudio, take my daughter, and take all my fortunes along with her. The Prince has made the match, and may God—the Prince of heaven—say "amen" to it.

BEATRICE

That's your cue to speak, Count.

CLAUDIO

Silence is the best announcer of joy. If I were only a little happy, I could say how much, but as it is I'm speechless.

[To HERO] Lady, you are mine, and I am yours. I give myself away for you, and I delight in the trade.

BEATRICE

Say something, cousin. Or if you can't, stop his mouth with a kiss and don't let him say anything either.

DON PEDRO

Truly, lady, you have a cheerful heart.

BEATRICE

Yes, my lord. I thank my heart, the poor fool, for it keeps itself safe from worries. Now my cousin is whispering to Claudio that she loves him.

CLAUDIO

And so she is, cousin.

BEATRICE

Thank the good Lord for alliances! And so everyone goes off into the world of marriage except for me. I stay in, sunburned and unattractive. I ought to sit in a corner and cry, "Heigh-ho for a husband!"

DON PEDRO

Lady Beatrice, I will get you a husband.

BEATRICE

I would rather have one your father got me ⁹. Don't you have any brothers like yourself, your Grace? Your father got excellent husbands, if only a young woman could find one.

DON PEDRO

Will you have me, my lady?

BEATRICE

No, my lord—not unless I could have another husband for

⁹ Beatrice puns on "get" to mean "beget," as in, "your father fathered excellent husbands."

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

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

BEATRICE

305 No, sure, my lord, my mother cried, but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born.—Cousins, God give you joy!

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

I cry you mercy, uncle.—By your Grace's pardon.

Exit

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

310 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

315 Oh, by no means. She mocks all her wooers out of suit.

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

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

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

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

325 *[to CLAUDIO]* Come, you shake the 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 Signor Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection, th' one with th' other. I would fain have it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

workdays. Your Grace is too expensive to wear every day. But please pardon me, your Grace. I was born to tell jokes, not to make sense.

DON PEDRO

I'd be more offended if you were silent, for being cheerful suits you best. You must have been born in a happy hour.

BEATRICE

No, my lord, my mother actually cried when she gave birth to me. But then a star danced overhead, and under that star I was born.

[To the partygoers] Friends and cousins, I must be off!

LEONATO

Niece, will you take care of those things I asked you about?

BEATRICE

Forgive me, uncle, I will.

[To DON PEDRO] If you'll excuse me, your Grace.

She exits.

DON PEDRO

By God, what a good-humored lady.

LEONATO

There's certainly not much gloominess in her, my lord. She's only sad when she sleeps, and even then Hero has told me that Beatrice can dream of misfortune but still wake herself up laughing.

DON PEDRO

She can't stand to hear about getting a husband.

LEONATO

Oh, certainly not. She mocks all her suitors until they give up courting her.

DON PEDRO

She would be an excellent wife for Benedick.

LEONATO

Oh Lord, if they were married, they'd talk each other into insanity within a week, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Count Claudio, when do you plan to get married?

CLAUDIO

Tomorrow, my lord. Time limps along slowly when love is waiting to be fulfilled.

LEONATO

Wait until Monday, my dear future son-in-law. It's only a week away, and even that is too short a time to put together all the arrangements I have planned.

DON PEDRO

[To CLAUDIO] Come, you shake your head at such a long wait. But I promise you, Claudio, the time won't be boring for us. While we wait, I intend to take on an impossible task, like one of the Labors of Hercules: I want to make Sir Benedick and Lady Beatrice fall totally in love with each other. I want to see them matched. And I'm sure I can arrange it, if you three will help me when I ask for it.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

335 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

340 And Benedick is not the unhopefulest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he 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
345 wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

Exeunt

LEONATO

My lord, I'll accept your proposal, even if I have to stay up for ten nights straight.

CLAUDIO

And me too, my lord.

DON PEDRO

And you too, dear Hero?

HERO

My lord, I'll perform any task if it will help my cousin get a good husband.

DON PEDRO

And Benedick isn't the worst husband I know. I can praise him this much at least: he is well-born, he's had his bravery tested in battle, and he is established as an honorable man. I'll teach you how to influence your cousin so that she falls in love with Benedick.

[To CLAUDIO and LEONATO] And we men will scheme against Benedick so that, despite his quick wit and fear of marriage, he will fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, then we'll steal all of Cupid's glory. He won't even be able to call himself an archer anymore—we will be the only gods of love! Now come inside with me, and I'll tell you my plan.

They all exit.

Act 2, Scene 2

Shakespeare

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

5 Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be med'cinable to me. I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

10 Show me briefly how.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

Shakescleare Translation

DON JOHN and BORACHIO enter.

DON JOHN

It's been decided. Count Claudio will marry Leonato's daughter.

BORACHIO

Yes, my lord, but I can still ruin it.

DON JOHN

Any obstacle or impediment to Claudio's marriage will be like medicine to me. I am sick with anger toward him, and whoever can spoil his happiness will improve my own happiness. How do you plan to stop this wedding?

BORACHIO

My lord, I can't do it without being dishonest, but I'll be so secretive that no one will suspect me.

DON JOHN

Quickly, tell me how.

BORACHIO

I think I told you about a year ago how much Hero's serving woman, Margaret, likes me.

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

I can arrange for her to meet me at Hero's bedroom window at some indecent hour of the night.

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
20 hath wronged his honor 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
25 undo Hero, and kill Leonato. Look you for any other issue?

DON JOHN

Only to despite them, I will endeavor anything.

BORACHIO

Go then, find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone. Tell them that you know that
30 Hero loves me. Intend a kind of zeal both to the Prince and Claudio, as in love of your brother's honor, 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
35 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
40 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
45 in practice. 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

50 I will presently go learn their day of marriage.

Exeunt

DON JOHN

How will that help to kill this marriage?

BORACHIO

It's up to you to brew the poison with these ingredients. Go to the Prince your brother. Tell him that he has wronged his own honor by matching the heroic Claudio—whose reputation you greatly admire—with a common prostitute like Hero.

DON JOHN

And how can I prove that?

BORACHIO

You'll have enough proof to deceive the Prince, torment Claudio, ruin Hero, and kill Leonato. What more could you want?

DON JOHN

I'll do anything to hurt them.

BORACHIO

Go then, find a suitable time to speak with Don Pedro and Count Claudio alone. Tell them that you know that Hero loves me. Pretend to be very passionate about preserving your brother's honor, which has been compromised by making this match, and also Claudio's reputation, which will be ruined by this woman, whom you've discovered is only pretending to be a virgin. They won't believe this without proof, of course—so give them examples. Tell them you've seen the two of us together at Hero's bedroom window, and on the night before the intended wedding, bring them to see for themselves. I'll arrange it so that Hero is away for the night, and Margaret and I will be at the window, with me calling her "Hero" and her calling me "Claudio 🗨️." This will seem like such convincing evidence of Hero's disloyalty that Claudio's suspicions will be confirmed, and he'll immediately call off the wedding preparations.

DON JOHN

Make this happen as you say, and I'll do my part. Arrange this cunningly, and I'll reward you with a thousand gold coins.

BORACHIO

If you can make your accusation of Hero convincing, then my cunning won't fail me.

DON JOHN

I'll go right now to learn the date of their wedding.

They exit.

🗨️ For their plan to work, Margaret (posing as Hero) should call Borachio by his name instead of Claudio's. This could be an error, or the servants Margaret and Borachio could simply be role-playing as the nobles.

Act 2, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter BENEDICK

BENEDICK

Boy!

Enter BOY

BOY

Signior?

Shakescleare Translation

BENEDICK enters.

BENEDICK

Boy!

A BOY enters.

BOY

Sir?

BENEDICK

In my chamber window lies a book. Bring it hither to me in the orchard.

BOY

5 I am here already, sir.

BENEDICK

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

Exit BOY

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 there was no music with him but the drum and the fife, and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe. I have known when he would have walked ten miles 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 are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not. I will not be sworn but love may transform me to an oyster, but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll ever look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what color it please God. Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbor.

He hides

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO, and BALTHASAR with music

DON PEDRO

Come, shall we hear this music?

CLAUDIO

Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is, As hushed on purpose to grace harmony!

DON PEDRO

40 *[aside to CLAUDIO]* See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO

[aside to DON PEDRO]
O, very well, my lord. The music ended,
We'll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth.

DON PEDRO

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

BALTHASAR

45 O, good my lord, tax not so bad a voice
To slander music anymore than once.

DON PEDRO

It is the witness still of excellency

BENEDICK

In my bedroom window there is a book. Go get it and bring it to me here in the garden.

BOY

But I am here already, sir.

BENEDICK

I know that, but I want you to go there and then come back here again.

The BOY exits.

I'm amazed that a man—after seeing another man fall in love and become a fool, and laughing at that foolishness—can then become the very thing he once scorned. Claudio is such a man. I knew him back when the only music he cared for was the drums of war, but now he would rather hear the sweet, delicate music of love. I knew him when he would have walked ten miles to see a good suit of armor, but now he'll lie awake ten nights in a row thinking about a fancy new jacket. He used to speak plainly and to the point, like an honest man and a soldier. But now his speech has become a collection of pretty words, like a fantastical banquet full of strange new dishes. Could I be transformed like this, and see everything through a lover's eyes? I can't be sure, but I don't think so. I can't promise that love won't change me. But until I have really fallen in love, I'll never act like such a fool. One woman is beautiful, but I don't care. Another woman is wise, but I don't care. Another is virtuous, but I don't care. I won't pay attention to anyone until all three of these qualities come together in one woman. She must be rich, that's for sure, and wise—or else I'll have nothing to do with her. She must be virtuous, or I won't consider her; beautiful, or I won't look at her; mild-mannered, or else she shouldn't come near me; noble, or I won't have her even if she's an angel. She must be well-spoken, an excellent musician, and her hair should be whatever color God wants it to be. Ha! Here come the Prince and Mister Love! I'll hide myself in the garden alcove.

He hides.

DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO enter. BALTHASAR and musicians enter.

DON PEDRO

Come, shall we hear some music?

CLAUDIO

Yes, my good lord. How still the evening is—as if it's purposefully being quiet to honor the music!

DON PEDRO

[To CLAUDIO so that only he can hear] Do you see where Benedick is hiding?

CLAUDIO

[To DON PEDRO so that only he can hear] Oh, very well, my lord. When the music is over, we'll give that hidden fox more than he bargained for!

DON PEDRO


Come, Balthasar, please play that song again.

BALTHASAR

Oh, my good lord, don't command me to insult music again with my awful voice.

DON PEDRO

It's a sure sign of excellence that your voice doesn't admit

 A noble and an angel were both coins; the noble was worth more. Benedick puns that a woman he would fall in love with must be well-born, no matter how virtuous she might be too.

To put a strange face on his own perfection.
I pray thee, sing, and let me woo no more.

BALTHASAR

50 Because you talk of wooing, I will sing,
Since many a wooer doth commence his suit
To her he thinks not worthy, yet he woos,
Yet will he swear he loves.

DON PEDRO

Nay, pray thee, come,
55 Or, if thou wilt hold longer argument,
Do it in notes.

BALTHASAR

Note this before my notes:
There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting.

DON PEDRO

Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks!
60 Note notes, forsooth, and nothing.

Music plays

BENEDICK

[aside] Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished. Is
it not strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out
of men's bodies? Well, a horn for my money, when all's
done.

BALTHASAR

65 *[singing]*
Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.
70 Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey, nonny nonny.
Sing no more ditties, sing no mo
75 Of dumps so dull and heavy.
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leavy.
Then sigh not so, but let them go
And be you blithe and bonny,
80 Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey, nonny nonny.

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a good song.

BALTHASAR

And an ill singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO

85 Ha, no, no, faith, thou sing'st well enough for a
shift.

BENEDICK

[aside] An he had been a dog that should have howled
thus, they would have hanged him. And I pray God his bad
voice
bode no mischief. I had as lief have heard the night
90 raven, come what plague could have come after it.

DON PEDRO

Yea, marry, dost thou hear, Balthasar? I pray thee,
get us some excellent music, for tomorrow night we would
have it at the Lady Hero's chamber window

to its own perfection. Please, sing for us, and don't make
me woo you anymore.

BALTHASAR

Since you talk of wooing, I'll sing. You're like a suitor who
starts to court a woman he doesn't really think is worthy,
but he still keeps courting her anyway, and will even swear
he loves her.

DON PEDRO

No, please, sing. Or if you want to keep arguing, do it
through song.

BALTHASAR

But note this before I play my notes: there's not a note I can
sing that's worthy of being noted.

DON PEDRO

Why, listen to him speaking his odd ideas in quarter notes!
Everyone take note: we will now hear notes.

Music plays.

BENEDICK

[To himself] Now that must be a divine song! Now their
souls are filled with passion. Isn't it strange that strings
made of sheep's guts can draw men's souls from their
bodies? Well, I'd rather listen to a plain hunting horn any
day, when all's said and done.

BALTHASAR

[Singing]
Cry no more, ladies, cry no more,
Men have always been deceivers,
With one foot on a ship and one on the shore,
Never faithful to anything.
So don't cry like that, but let them go,
And be carefree and happy,
Changing all your sad songs into "Hey, nonny nonny."
Sing no more laments, sing no more
Mournful tunes so sad and heavy.
Men have always been frauds
Since trees had leaves in summer.
So don't cry like that, but let them go,
And be carefree and happy,
Changing all your sad songs
into "Hey, nonny nonny."

DON PEDRO

I swear, that's good song.

BALTHASAR

And a bad singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Ha! No, no, really, you sing well enough to to be passable.

BENEDICK

[To himself] If a dog had howled like that they would have
killed it. I pray to God that his bad voice isn't an omen of
trouble. I would rather have heard a night raven shriek,
even if it does mean the plague is coming after it, as they
say.

DON PEDRO

Yes, well, do you hear me, Balthasar? Please, get us some
excellent music—for tomorrow night we want to serenade
Lady Hero at her bedroom window.

BALTHASAR

The best I can, my lord.

DON PEDRO

95 Do so. Farewell.

Exit BALTHASAR

Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of today, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signor Benedick?

CLAUDIO

100 Oh, ay. [*aside to DON PEDRO*] Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl sits.—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 Signor Benedick, whom she hath in all outward behaviors seemed ever to abhor.

BENEDICK

105 [*aside*] Is 't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

May be she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO

110 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

115 [*aside to LEONATO*] 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

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

LEONATO

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

BENEDICK

125 [*Aside*] I should think this a gull but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it. Knavery cannot, sure,

BALTHASAR

I'll do the best I can, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Do so. Farewell.

BALTHASAR exits.

Come here, Leonato. What was it you told me today—that your niece Beatrice was in love with Sir Benedick?

CLAUDIO

Oh, yes.

[*To DON PEDRO so that only he can hear*] Tread carefully: our prey is nearby.

[*Speaking louder so that all can hear*] Yes, and I never thought that that lady would ever love any man.

LEONATO

No, I didn't either. And it's especially amazing that she should fall in love with Sir Benedick, whom she's always seemed to hate, judging from all her outward behavior.

BENEDICK

[*To himself*] Is it possible? Is that the way the wind is blowing now?

LEONATO

Truly, my lord, I don't know what to think about it. But she loves him with such a wild passion that it's past all the boundaries of understanding.

DON PEDRO

Maybe she's only pretending.

CLAUDIO

Yes, that seems more likely.

LEONATO

Oh God! Pretending? Then pretend passion has never seemed so much like real passion, at least the way she displays it.

DON PEDRO

Why, what symptoms of love has she been showing?

CLAUDIO

[*To LEONATO so that only he can hear*] Bait the hook well; this fish is about to bite.

LEONATO

What symptoms, my lord? You know, she will sit—but you heard my daughter tell you about it.

CLAUDIO

She did indeed.

DON PEDRO

How, how? Please tell! You amaze me. I would have thought that her spirit would be invincible against any sudden attack of love.

LEONATO

I would have sworn that too, my lord—and especially against such an attack of love for Benedick.

BENEDICK

[*To himself*] I would think this was a joke if the white-bearded fellow weren't saying it. Mischief surely can't hide

hide himself in such reverence.

CLAUDIO

[aside to DON PEDRO] He hath ta'en th' infection. Hold it up.

DON PEDRO

130 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

135 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.

CLAUDIO

140 Now you talk of a sheet of paper, I remember a pretty jest your daughter told.

LEONATO

Oh, when she had writ it and was reading it over, she found "Benedick" and "Beatrice" between the sheet?

CLAUDIO

That.

LEONATO

145 O, 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. "I measure him," says she, "by my own spirit, for I should flout him if he writ to me, yea, though I love him, I should."

CLAUDIO

150 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

155 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. 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

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

CLAUDIO

And she is exceeding wise.

itself in such a respectable old man.

CLAUDIO

[To DON PEDRO so that only he can hear] He's taken the bait. Keep it up.

DON PEDRO

Has she revealed her feelings to Benedick?

LEONATO

No, and she swears she never will. That's what's been tormenting her.

CLAUDIO

That's the truth. Hero says so. Beatrice asks herself, "How can I write to him that I love him, when I've always treated him so scornfully?"

LEONATO

She says this when she's starting to write to him. And she's been getting up twenty times a night, sitting there in her nightgown until she's written a single page. My daughter told us everything.

CLAUDIO

Now that you speak of a page of paper, I remember a funny story Hero told.

LEONATO

Oh, you mean when Beatrice had written the letter and Hero was reading it over, and saw that it had "Benedick" and "Beatrice" written all over the page?

CLAUDIO

That was it.

LEONATO

Oh, Beatrice tore that letter into a thousand pieces, and got angry at herself for being so forward as to write to a man she knew would mock her. She said, "I can predict his response by comparing him to myself. For I would mock him if he wrote me a letter like this. Yes, even though I love him, I still would mock him!"

CLAUDIO

Then she fell down on her knees and wept, sobbed, beat at her chest, tore her hair, prayed, and cursed: "Oh, sweet Benedick! God give me patience!"

LEONATO

She did indeed; my daughter said so. And Beatrice is so overcome with passion that my daughter worries that she might do something violent to herself. It's true.

DON PEDRO

If Beatrice won't tell Benedick, then it would be good if someone else let him know.

CLAUDIO

What purpose would that serve? He would just turn it into a joke and torment the poor lady even more.

DON PEDRO

If he does that, it would be a good deed to hang him. She's an excellent, sweet lady, and there's no doubt that she's virtuous.

CLAUDIO

And she is exceptionally wise.

DON PEDRO

In every thing but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO

165 Oh, my lord, wisdom and blood combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one that blood hath the victory. I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

DON PEDRO

170 I would she had bestowed this dotage on me. I would have daffed all other respects and made her half myself. I pray you tell Benedick of it and hear what he will say.

LEONATO

Were it good, think you?

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

He is a very proper man.

DON PEDRO

He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

CLAUDIO

Before God, and in my mind, very wise.

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

And I take him to be valiant.

DON PEDRO

190 As Hector, I assure you, and in the managing of quarrels you may say he is wise, for either he avoids them with great discretion or undertakes them with a most Christian-like fear.

LEONATO

If he do fear God, he must necessarily keep peace. If he break the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

DON PEDRO

195 And so will he do, for the man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests he will make. 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

200 Nay, that's impossible. She may wear her heart out first.

DON PEDRO

In everything except for her love for Benedick.

LEONATO

Oh, my lord, when wisdom and emotion are at war within a tender young person, it's ten to one that emotion will be victorious. I am sorry for her, as I ought to be, being both her uncle and her guardian.

DON PEDRO

I wish she had bestowed her love on me instead. I would have put aside all other considerations and made her my wife. Please, tell Benedick about this and hear what he says.

LEONATO

Do you think that would be a good idea?

CLAUDIO

Hero thinks that Beatrice will surely die. For she says she'll die if Benedick doesn't love her; and she'll die before she tells him she loves him; and she'll die if he courts her too, rather than hold back even a breath of her usual mockery.

DON PEDRO

She's right. If she made him an offer of love, it's very possible that he'll scorn it—for that man has a contemptuous nature, as we all know.

CLAUDIO

He is a very handsome man, though.

DON PEDRO

He does indeed have a good outward appearance.

CLAUDIO

And I'll swear to God that he's very wise.

DON PEDRO

He does indeed show some sparks of something like wisdom.

CLAUDIO

And he seems very brave.

DON PEDRO

Brave as Hector ², I assure you. And you could also say that he's wise in managing quarrels, for he either avoids them discreetly, or else accepts them with proper Christian humility.

LEONATO

If he's a God-fearing man, then he must necessarily keep the peace as best he can. And if he breaks the peace, then he ought to enter into a quarrel with appropriate fear and trembling.

DON PEDRO

And so he will, for he is indeed a God-fearing man, even though some of his rude jokes make him seem otherwise. Well, I am sorry for your niece. Should we go find Benedick and tell him of her love?

CLAUDIO

Don't tell him, my lord. Let her get over her feelings through self-reflection and good advice.

LEONATO

No, that's impossible. Her heart might give out first.

² In ancient Greek mythology, Hector was the greatest of the Trojan warriors, and famous for his bravery.

DON PEDRO

205 Well, we will hear further of it by your daughter. Let it cool the while. I love Benedick well, and I could wish he would modestly examine himself to see how much he is unworthy so good a lady.

LEONATO

My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready.

CLAUDIO

[aside to DON PEDRO and LEONATO] If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation.

DON PEDRO

210 *[aside to LEONATO]* Let there be the same net spread for her, and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be when they hold one an opinion of another's dotage, and no such matter. That's the scene that I would see, which will be merely a dumb show. Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO

BENEDICK

215 *[coming forward]* 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 hear how I am censured. They say I will bear myself
220 proudly if I perceive the love come from her. They say, too, that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry. I must not seem proud. Happy are they that hear their detractions and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair; 'tis
225 a truth, I can bear them witness. And virtuous; 'tis so, I cannot reprove it. And wise, but for loving me; by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in
230 love with her! I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me because I have railed so long against marriage, but doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure
in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper
235 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

240 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

245 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.

DON PEDRO

Well, we'll hear more about this from your daughter. Let's leave it for a while. I am fond of Benedick, and I wish he would examine himself humbly and see how undeserving he is of that good lady.

LEONATO

My lord, will you go? Dinner is ready.

CLAUDIO

[To DON PEDRO and LEONATO so that only they can hear] If he doesn't fall in love with her after this, I'll never trust myself again.

DON PEDRO

[To LEONATO so that only he can hear] Make sure your daughter and her servants set the same trap for Beatrice. The real fun will be when they each believe the other is in love, when none of it is actually true. That's the scene I want to watch—it will be like some silent performance, since neither will have anything to say without their usual insults! Let's send Beatrice to call Benedick in to dinner.

Everyone except for BENEDICK exits.

BENEDICK

[Coming forward] This can't be a trick. Their discussion was serious, and they had Hero's words to back them up. They seem to pity the lady. It seems that her passion is stretched to the limit. She loves me? Why, her love must be returned! I hear how I am criticized. They say I will be arrogant if I find out about her love. They also say that she'd rather die than show any sign of affection. I never thought I would marry. I must not be too proud to change my ways. Only fortunate people can hear their own faults criticized and then go about fixing them. They say the lady is beautiful—it's true, I've witnessed it myself. And virtuous—it's so, I can't deny it. And wise, except for loving me—well, that might not be any great indication of her intelligence, but it won't be a sign of foolishness either, for I will be horribly in love with her! Some of my witty remarks about marriage might be thrown back at me here and there, but don't tastes change? In his youth, a man can love a dish that he can't stand in his old age. Will sarcastic remarks, old sayings, and verbal ammunition from books keep a man from pursuing his desire? No! The world must be populated. When I said I would die a bachelor, I didn't think that I would live long enough to get married. Here comes Beatrice. By God, she's a beautiful lady. I think I see some signs of love in her.

BEATRICE enters.

BEATRICE

I've been sent against my will to tell you to come in to dinner.

BENEDICK

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for making the effort to do that for me.

BEATRICE

I made no more effort in doing this task for your thanks than you made an effort in thanking me for it. If it had been a hard task, I wouldn't have come.

BENEDICK

So you took pleasure in delivering the message then?

BEATRICE

Yes, just as much pleasure as choking a bird with a knife. So you have no appetite for our battle of wits, sir? Farewell then.


*Exit***BENEDICK**

250 Ha! "Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner." There's a double meaning in that. "I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me." That's as much as to say, "Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks." If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain. If I do not love her, I am a Jew. I will go get her picture.

*Exit**She exits.***BENEDICK**

Ha! "I've been sent against my will to tell you to come in to dinner." There's a double meaning in that. "I made no more effort in doing this task for your thanks than you made an effort in thanking me for it." That's as much as to say, "Any effort I make for you is as easy as saying 'thank you.'" If I don't take pity on her, I'm a villain. If I don't love her, I'm totally hard-hearted. I'll go get a picture of her.

He exits.

 In the original text, Benedick uses an anti-Semitic stereotype that Jews were callous and hard-hearted, lacking in "Christian charity."

Act 3, Scene 1

Shakespeare

*Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA***HERO**

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor.
There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice
Proposing with the Prince and Claudio.
Whisper her ear and tell her I and Ursula
5 Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse
Is all of her. Say that thou overheardst us,
And bid her steal into the pleachèd bower
Where honeysuckles ripened by the sun
Forbid the sun to enter, like favorites
10 Made proud by princes, that advance their pride
Against that power that bred it. There will she hide
her
To listen our propose. This is thy office.
Bear thee well in it and leave us alone.

MARGARET

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

*Exit***HERO**

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
As we do trace this alley up and down,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
20 To praise him more than ever man did merit.
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay.

Enter BEATRICE, behind

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

URSULA*[aside to HERO]*

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

HERO*[aside to URSULA]*

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

Shakescleare Translation

*HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA enter.***HERO**

Good Margaret, run to the parlor. You'll find my cousin Beatrice talking to the Prince and Claudio there. Whisper in her ear, and tell her that Ursula and I are walking in the garden and talking about her. Say that you overheard us, and tell her to sneak into the leafy arbor where the honeysuckles, brought to full bloom by the sun, now block the sunlight from entering—like men promoted by princes who then turn against their masters. Beatrice can hide there and listen to our conversation. This is your job. Do it well, and then leave the rest to us.

MARGARET

I'll make her come right away, I promise you.

*She exits.***HERO**

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice shows up, we must walk back and forth on this garden path and talk about nothing but Benedick. When I mention him, you should praise him more than any man ever deserved. And I'll talk to you about how Benedick is sick with love for Beatrice. This is how Cupid makes his crafty arrows: out of rumor and hearsay.

BEATRICE enters, behind them.

Let's begin, because Beatrice is running here now like a little bird—keeping close to the ground—to come eavesdrop on our discussion.

URSULA

[To HERO so that only she can hear] The best part of fishing is when you can see the fish cut through the water and greedily devour the treacherous bait. We're fishing for Beatrice, who is hiding even now in the honeysuckle arbor. Don't worry about my part in our conversation.

HERO

[To URSULA so that only she can hear] Then let's get closer to her, so she won't miss any of the false, sweet bait we're putting out for her. *[Approaching the arbor]* No, truly,

[approaching the bower]

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

URSULA

But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO

So says the Prince and my new-trothèd lord.

URSULA

45 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

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

HERO

O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man,
55 But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice.
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprizing what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
60 All matter else seems weak. She cannot love
Nor take no shape nor project of affection
She is so self-endearèd.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA

Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO

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

Ursula, she is too scornful. I know that she's as shy and
untameable as a wild hawk in the mountains.

URSULA

But are you sure that Benedick is so completely in love with
Beatrice?

HERO

That's what the Prince and my new fiancé say.

URSULA

And did they ask you to tell Beatrice about it, madam?

HERO

They did want me to make her aware of it. But I persuaded
them that—if they really cared for Benedick—they would
advise him to wrestle with his feelings, and never let
Beatrice know about them.

URSULA

Why did you say that? Doesn't Benedick deserve at least as
good a wife as Beatrice would ever be?

HERO

Oh, by the god of love! I know he deserves as much as any
man could be given, but Nature never made a woman's
heart prouder than Beatrice's. Disdain and scorn sparkle in
her eyes, and make her undervalue everything she looks
upon. She prizes her wit so highly that other people's words
seem weak by comparison. She's so full of self-love that she
cannot love anyone else, or even imagine what love is.

URSULA

Yes, I think you're right. It certainly wouldn't be good if she
learned about Benedick's love and made a joke of it.

HERO

Indeed, you speak the truth. No matter how wise, noble,
young, and handsome a man is, she always manages to
turn his merits into faults. If he's pale and delicate, she'll
say the gentleman should be her sister, not her husband. If
he has a dark complexion, she'll say that Nature must have
spilled some ink while drawing his ugly portrait. If he's tall,
she'll call him a spear with a bad head. If he's small, she'll
say that he's a badly carved statue. If he's talkative, she'll
say he's a weather vane blown around by the wind; and if
he's silent, why, she'll call him a block that can't be moved
by anything at all. And so she turns every man inside out,
and never acknowledges the virtue that integrity and
sincerity deserve.

URSULA

Surely, surely, such fussy nitpicking is not to be praised.

HERO

No, it's certainly not praiseworthy to be as odd and willfully
eccentric as Beatrice is. But who would dare to tell her that?
If I spoke to her, she would mock me into thin air. Oh, she
would laugh me right out of my body and press me to death
with her wit, as witches are pressed to death with stones.
So Benedick should keep his feelings hidden, like a covered
fire, and consume himself with his passionate sighs and
waste away. This will be a better death than to die from
mockery, which is as bad as being killed by tickling.

URSULA

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

HERO

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

URSULA

O, do not do your cousin such a wrong!
 95 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,
 100 Always excepted my dear Claudio.

URSULA

I pray you, be not angry with me, madam,
 Speaking my fancy. Signor Benedick,
 For shape, for bearing, argument and valor,
 Goes foremost in report through Italy.

HERO

105 Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA

His excellence did earn it, ere he had it.
 When are you married, madam?

HERO

Why, every day, tomorrow. Come, go in.
 I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel
 110 Which is the best to furnish me tomorrow.

They move aside from the bower

URSULA

[aside to HERO]
 She's limed, I warrant you. We have caught her, madam.

HERO

[aside to URSULA]
 If it proves so, then loving goes by haps;
 115 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 condemned for pride and scorn so much?
 Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu!
 120 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.
 125 For others say thou dost deserve, and I
 Believe it better than reportingly.

Exit

URSULA

But you should tell her, and hear how she responds.

HERO

No, I would rather go to Benedick and advise him to fight
 against his passion. I'll even make up some harmless
 slanders against my cousin to make her seem less
 attractive. You don't know how a single unkind word can
 poison love.

URSULA

Oh, don't do your cousin wrong like that! If she really has
 the quick and excellent wit she's known for, then she can't
 be so unwise as to refuse an exceptional gentleman like Sir
 Benedick.

HERO

He's the best man in Italy, except for my dear Claudio, of
 course.

URSULA

Madam, please don't be angry with me for speaking my
 mind, but throughout Italy Sir Benedick is known as the
 best in looks, bearing, wit, and bravery.

HERO

Indeed, he does have an excellent reputation.

URSULA

And he was excellent before he had the reputation, too.
 When are you getting married, madam?

HERO

Why, tomorrow and every day after. Come, let's go inside. I
 want to show you some outfits and have you advise me on
 what I should wear tomorrow for the wedding.

They move away from the arbor.

URSULA

[To HERO so that only she can hear] She's trapped, I
 promise you. We have caught her, madam.

HERO

[To URSULA so that only she can hear] If you're right, then
 love comes by chance. Cupid gets some lovers with arrows,
 but some with traps.

HERO and URSULA exit.

BEATRICE

[Coming forward] My ears are burning! Can this be true? Do
 people really condemn me so much for being proud and
 scornful? Then farewell to contempt, and farewell to my
 pride in being unmarried! No one speaks well of a person
 with such qualities. And Benedick, keep on loving; I will
 return your love. I'll tame my fierce heart, which will be
 trained like a wild hawk to come to your loving hand. If you
 really love me, I'll be kind to you from now on, and inspire
 you to bind our love together in marriage. Other people say
 that you deserve my love, and I believe it—on better
 evidence than mere rumors.

She exits.

Act 3, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

I do but stay till your marriage be consummate, and then go I toward Aragon.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

5 Nay, that would be as great a soil in the new gloss of your marriage as to show a child his new coat and forbid him to wear it. I will only be bold with Benedick for his company, for from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot he is all mirth. He hath twice or thrice cut
10 Cupid's bow-string, and the little hangman dare not shoot at him. He hath a heart as sound as a bell, and his tongue is the clapper, for what his heart thinks, his tongue speaks.

BENEDICK

Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO

15 So say I. Methinks you are sadder.

CLAUDIO

I hope he be in love.

DON PEDRO

Hang him, truant! There's no true drop of blood in him to be truly touched with love. If he be sad, he wants money.

BENEDICK

20 I have the toothache.

DON PEDRO

Draw it.

BENEDICK

Hang it!

CLAUDIO

You must hang it first, and draw it afterwards.

DON PEDRO

What, sigh for the toothache?

LEONATO

25 Where is but a humor or a worm.

BENEDICK

Well, everyone can master a grief but he that has it.

Shakescleare Translation

DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO enter.

DON PEDRO

I'll only stay in Messina until your marriage is official, and then I'll go on to Aragon.

CLAUDIO

My lord, I'll escort you there if you'll allow me.

DON PEDRO

No, that would be throwing a blot on your shiny new marriage, like showing a child his new coat and then not letting him wear it. I'll only take the liberty of asking Benedick to come with me, for he's a true joker from head to toe. He's evaded love two or three times and cut Cupid's bow-string—and since then Cupid doesn't dare to shoot at him. Benedick's heart is like a bell, and his tongue is the clapper that makes it ring—whatever his heart thinks, his tongue speaks.

BENEDICK

Gentlemen, I am not the same man I used to be.

LEONATO

I agree. You seem more serious.


CLAUDIO

I hope he's in love.

DON PEDRO

There's no way in hell! Benedick doesn't have a drop of emotion in his blood that could be affected by love. If he looks serious, then he needs money.

BENEDICK

I have a [toothache](#) .

DON PEDRO

Draw it.

BENEDICK

Hang it!


CLAUDIO

You must hang it first, and then draw it afterwards.

DON PEDRO


What, are you re so depressed about a toothache?


LEONATO

It's nothing but a [humor or worm](#) .

BENEDICK

Well, everyone knows how to cure a pain except the person actually feeling it.

 A toothache was an ailment associated with lovers. In the exchange that follows, Don Pedro and Benedick will pun on dental advice to extract the tooth, while Claudio puns on the meaning of "draw" in the sense of "execute."

 Most diseases were thought to be caused by an imbalance in bodily fluids, or "humors." Toothaches were also thought to be caused by small worms in the teeth.

CLAUDIO

Yet say I, he is in love.

DON PEDRO

There is no appearance of fancy in him, unless it be a fancy that he hath to strange disguises, as to be a Dutchman today, a Frenchman tomorrow, or in the shape of two countries at once, as a German from the waist downward, all stops, and a Spaniard from the hip upward, no doublet. Unless he have a fancy to this foolery, as it appears he hath, he is no fool for fancy, as you would have it appear he is.

CLAUDIO

If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs. He brushes his hat o' mornings. What should that bode?

DON PEDRO

Hath any man seen him at the barber's?

CLAUDIO

No, but the barber's man hath been seen with him, and the old ornament of his cheek hath already stuffed tennis balls.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Nay, he rubs himself with civet. Can you smell him out by that?

CLAUDIO

That's as much as to say, the sweet youth's in love.

DON PEDRO

The greatest note of it is his melancholy.

CLAUDIO

And when was he wont to wash his face?

DON PEDRO

Yea, or to paint himself? For the which I hear what they say of him.

CLAUDIO

Nay, but his jesting spirit, which is now crept into a lute string and now governed by stops—

DON PEDRO

Indeed, that tells a heavy tale for him. Conclude, conclude, he is in love.

CLAUDIO

Nay, but I know who loves him.

DON PEDRO

That would I know too. I warrant, one that knows him not.

CLAUDIO

Yes, and his ill conditions, and, in despite of all, dies for him.

DON PEDRO

She shall be buried with her face upwards.

CLAUDIO

I still say he's in love.

DON PEDRO

There's no signs of love in him, unless it's his love for strange costumes. He's like a Dutchman today, a Frenchman tomorrow, or even in clothes from two countries at once—like a German from the waist down, with his baggy pants, and a Spaniard from the waist up, with his cloak and no jacket. Unless he has a love for this kind of foolishness—which it seems that he does—he is no fool for love, as you would have it seem.

CLAUDIO

All the traditional symptoms point to him being in love. He brushes his hat in the mornings. What does that imply?

DON PEDRO

Has any man seen him at the barber's?

CLAUDIO

No, but the barber's assistant has been seen with him. Benedick's old beard is now just [stuffing for tennis balls](#).

³ Tennis balls used to be stuffed with curly hair.

LEONATO

Indeed, the loss of his beard does make him look younger.

DON PEDRO

And he's rubbed himself with perfume. Can you sniff out his secret now?

CLAUDIO

You might as well say that the sweet-smelling youth's in love.

DON PEDRO

The greatest sign of it is his melancholy behavior.

CLAUDIO

And when has he ever been in the habit of washing his face?

DON PEDRO

Yes, or wearing makeup? I hear he's been doing that, too.

CLAUDIO

And his mocking spirit is gone. It's crawled into a lute string to play love songs—

DON PEDRO

Indeed, this all adds up to a serious tale for Benedick. To conclude: he is in love

CLAUDIO

Oh, and I know who loves him.

DON PEDRO

I want to know too. It must be someone who doesn't know him well.

CLAUDIO

But she *does* know him, and all his bad qualities. Yet, despite all this, she's dying for him.

DON PEDRO

She'll be buried with her face upwards.

⁴ Don Pedro puns on the fact that "to die" was a euphemism for orgasm. Beatrice is dying with love for Benedick, but also wants to "die" for him when they make love face to face.

BENEDICK

65 Yet is this no charm for the toothache.—Old Signior, walk aside with me. I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak to you, which these hobbyhorses must not hear.

Exeunt BENEDICK and LEONATO

DON PEDRO

For my life, to break with him about Beatrice!

CLAUDIO

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

Enter DON JOHN

DON JOHN

70 My lord and brother, God save you.

DON PEDRO

Good e'en, brother.

DON JOHN

If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO

In private?

DON JOHN

75 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

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

CLAUDIO

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

DON JOHN

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

DON PEDRO

Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

Who, Hero?

BENEDICK

But all this talk won't cure a toothache.

[To LEONATO] Old sir, walk with me a while. I have eight or nine wise words to say to you, and I don't want these buffoons to hear them.

BENEDICK and LEONATO exit.

DON PEDRO

I'd bet my life he wants to talk to Leonato about marrying Beatrice!

CLAUDIO

It must be that. By now Hero and Margaret ought to have played their parts and tricked Beatrice too. These two bears won't bite each other the next time they meet.

DON JOHN enters.

DON JOHN

My lord and brother, God bless you.

DON PEDRO

Good evening, brother.

DON JOHN

If you have time, I'd like to speak with you.

DON PEDRO

In private?

DON JOHN

If you like. But Count Claudio should stay and listen, for what I have to say concerns him as well.

DON PEDRO

What's the matter?

DON JOHN

[To CLAUDIO] Do you plan on getting married tomorrow, my lord?

DON PEDRO

You know he does.

DON JOHN

I can't be sure of that, once he learns what I know.

CLAUDIO

If there's any obstacle to the marriage, please reveal it.

DON JOHN

You might think that I don't like you, Claudio. I hope that you will think better of me after I reveal this news. I think my brother holds you in high regard, and has affectionately helped you to arrange this marriage—but that was an unfortunate courtship and a waste of labor.

DON PEDRO

Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN

I came here to tell you, and, without any unnecessary details—for we've already wasted too many words on her—the lady is unfaithful.

CLAUDIO

Who, Hero?

DON JOHN

Even she: Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

CLAUDIO

Disloyal?

DON JOHN

95 The word is too good to paint out her wickedness. I
could say she were worse. Think you of a worse title,
and I will fit her to it. Wonder not till further
warrant. Go but with me tonight, you shall see her
chamber window entered, even the night before her
wedding day. If you love her then, tomorrow wed her. But
100 it would better fit your honor to
change your mind.

CLAUDIO

[to DON PEDRO] May this be so?

DON PEDRO

I will not think it.

DON JOHN

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

CLAUDIO

110 If I see anything 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

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

DON PEDRO

O day untowardly turned!

CLAUDIO

O mischief strangely thwarting!

DON JOHN

O plague right well prevented! So will you say when
you have seen the sequel.

Exeunt

DON JOHN

The same: Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

CLAUDIO

Unfaithful?

DON JOHN

That word is too good to properly describe her wickedness.
I would call her something worse. Come up with a worse
word for her, and I'll show you how she deserves it. But
restrain your disbelief until you've seen proof. Go with me
tonight, and you'll see a man enter her bedroom
window—even tonight, the night before her wedding day. If
you still love her after that, then go through with the
marriage tomorrow. But it would suit your honor better if
you changed your mind.

CLAUDIO

[To DON PEDRO] Can this be so?

DON PEDRO

I refuse to believe it.

DON JOHN

If you don't have the courage to see the truth for yourself,
then don't claim to know anything. If you follow me, I'll
show you plenty of proof. And once you've seen more and
heard more, you can act accordingly.

CLAUDIO

If I see anything tonight that convinces me not to marry her,
then tomorrow I'll shame her in front of the same
congregation where I would have married her.

DON PEDRO

And since I courted her for you, I will join you in disgracing
her.

DON JOHN

I won't criticize her any more until you can bear witness to
my accusations. Keep calm until midnight, and then you'll
see for yourself.

DON PEDRO

Oh, what a day horribly ruined!

CLAUDIO

Oh, unexpected unfaithfulness ruining my hopes!

DON JOHN

Oh, what a curse prevented! That's what you'll say when
you've seen what comes next.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES with the Watch

DOGBERRY


Are you good men and true?

Shakescleare Translation

DOGBERRY and VERGES enter with several WATCHMEN.

DOGBERRY

Are you good and honest men?

 Watchmen were officers who patrolled cities at night in Shakespeare's day.

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

Well, give them their charge, neighbor Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

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

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

Come hither, neighbor Seacole. God hath blessed you with a good name. To be a well-favored man is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature.

SEACOLE

15 Both which, Master Constable—

DOGBERRY

You have. I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favor, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it, and for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit 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 stand, in the Prince's name.

SECOND WATCHMAN

25 How if he will not stand?

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

30 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

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

DOGBERRY

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

VERGES

They must be, or else they should suffer [salvation](#) ² of body and soul.

² Verges means "damnation," not "salvation." Dogberry and Verges are comic characters who continually say the opposite of what they mean.

DOGBERRY

No, that punishment would be too good for them, if they had any [allegiance](#) ³ in them when they were chosen to be the Prince's watchmen.

³ Dogberry means "disloyalty" instead of "allegiance."

VERGES

Well, give them their instructions, Sir Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

First, who do you think is most [undeserving](#) ⁴ to be captain of the watch tonight?

⁴ Dogberry means "deserving," not "undeserving."

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

Come here, Sir Seacole. God has blessed you with a good name. To be a good-looking man is a gift of luck, but to know how to read and write comes by nature.

SEACOLE

Both of which, Master Constable—

DOGBERRY

You have. I knew that would be your answer. Well, sir, thank God for your good looks, and don't boast about this. And as for your reading and writing, only use that when you can't use your looks. You're considered the most [senseless](#) ⁵ and able man here, so you'll carry the lantern and be constable of the watch. These are your instructions: you will [comprehend](#) ⁶ any vagrants you see. You will order all men to halt, in the Prince's name.

⁵ Dogberry means "sensible," not "senseless."

⁶ Dogberry means "apprehend" instead of "comprehend."

SECOND WATCHMAN

What if a man won't stop?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, don't bother with him. Let him go, and then call the rest of the watch together, and all of you can thank God that you've gotten rid of a villain.

VERGES

If he won't stop when ordered to, then he's not one of the Prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY

True, and you are only supposed to deal with the Prince's subjects.

[To all of the watchmen] You also will be quiet in the streets. For a watchman to babble on and talk is [tolerable](#) ⁷ and not to be endured.

⁷ Dogberry means "intolerable" instead of "tolerable."

WATCHMAN

We'll sleep instead of talk. We know what the duties of a watchman are.

DOGBERRY

Why, you speak like an old and quiet watchman, for I don't see how sleeping could offend anyone. Just be careful that your weapons don't get stolen. Also, you are to visit all the bars and tell those who are drunk to go to bed.

WATCHMAN

How if they will not?

DOGBERRY

45 Why, then, let them alone till they are sober. If they make you not then the better answer, you may say they are not the men you took them for.

WATCHMAN

Well, sir.

DOGBERRY

50 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.

WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

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

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

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

WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

65 Why then, depart in peace and let the child wake her with crying, for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baas will never answer a calf when he bleats.

VERGES

'Tis very true.

DOGBERRY

This is the end of the charge. You, constable, are to present the Prince's own person. If you meet the Prince in the night, you may stay him.

VERGES

70 Nay, by 'r Lady, that I think he cannot.

DOGBERRY

75 Five shillings to one on 't, with any man that knows the statutes, he may stay him — marry, not without the Prince be willing, for indeed the watch ought to offend no man, and it is an offense to stay a man against his will.

VERGES

By 'r lady, I think it be so.

WATCHMAN

What if they won't?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, leave them alone until they're sober. If they don't agree to go home even then, you can say that they aren't the men you thought they were.

WATCHMAN

Very well, sir.

DOGBERRY

If you meet a thief, you can suspect him—as a watchman—of being dishonest. And the less you have to do with that kind of man, the more honest you will remain.

WATCHMAN

If we know he's a thief, then shouldn't we arrest him?

DOGBERRY

Truly, your position allows you to, but personally I think that those who touch tar will become unclean themselves. If you do find a thief, the most peaceable thing to do is to let him prove himself a thief by stealing away from your presence.

VERGES

You've always been known as a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY

Truly, I wouldn't even hang a dog, much more a man with any honesty in him.

VERGES

[To the WATCHMEN] If you hear a child crying in the night, you must call to the nurse and tell her to quiet it.

WATCHMAN

What if the nurse is asleep and won't listen to us?

DOGBERRY

Why then, leave quietly and let the child wake up the nurse with its crying. The ewe that won't listen to her lamb when it bleats will never listen to a calf.

VERGES

It's very true.

DOGBERRY

This is the end of your instructions. You, constable, are representing the Prince himself. If you meet the Prince in the night, you can detain him.

VERGES

No, by the Virgin Mary, I don't think he can.

DOGBERRY

I'd bet five to one that he can—ask any man who knows the acts of Parliament. Although, you can't stop the Prince unless the Prince is willing to stop, for the watch shouldn't offend anyone—and it's an offense to detain a man against his will.

VERGES

By the Virgin Mary, I think that's true.

⁸ Dogberry means "less" instead of "more."

⁹ This is probably an old proverb, which Dogberry takes to mean that "there's nothing to be done about a crying child." By using it, he also refers to the watchmen as "calves," which was a term for "idiot."

DOGBERRY

80 Ha, ha, ha! 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, neighbor.

WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

85 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

Enter BORACHIO and CONRAD

BORACHIO

What Conrad!

SEACOALE

[aside] Peace! Stir not.

BORACHIO

Conrad, I say!

CONRAD

90 Here, man. I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO

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

CONRAD

I will owe thee an answer for that. And now forward with thy tale.

BORACHIO

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

WATCHMAN

[aside] Some treason, masters. Yet stand close.

BORACHIO

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

CONRAD

Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear?

BORACHIO

105 Thou shouldst rather ask if it were possible any villainy should be so rich. For when rich villains have need of poor ones, poor ones may make what price they will.

CONRAD

I wonder at it.

DOGBERRY

Ha, ha, ha! Well, sirs, goodnight. If anything important comes up, call on me. Keep each other's advice, and your own. Good night.

[To VERGES] Come, friend.

WATCHMAN

Well, sirs, we've heard our instructions. Let's sit here on the church bench until two o'clock, and then all go to bed.

DOGBERRY

One more thing, honest sirs. Please watch over Sir Leonato's house. The wedding will be there tomorrow, and there's a lot happening there tonight. Farewell, and be vigilant ¹⁰, I beg you.

DOGBERRY and VERGES exit.

BORACHIO and CONRAD enter.

BORACHIO

Hey, Conrad!

SEACOALE

[To himself] Quiet! Don't move.

BORACHIO

Conrad, I say!

CONRAD

Here, man, I'm at your elbow.

BORACHIO

Christ ¹¹, my elbow itched, and I thought I felt a scab ¹² there.

CONRAD

I'll get you back for that later. Now continue with your story.

BORACHIO

Stand close, then, under this overhang—it's drizzling. Like a true drunkard, I'll tell you everything ¹³.

WATCHMAN

[To the other WATCHMEN so that only they can hear] There's some villainy going on here, gentlemen. Keep hidden.

BORACHIO

You should know that I've earned a thousand gold pieces from Don John.

CONRAD

Is it possible that any villainy could be so expensive?

BORACHIO

Instead you should ask if it's possible that any villain could be so rich. For when rich villains need poor ones, then the poor villains can name their price.

CONRAD

I'm amazed.

¹⁰ Dogberry means "vigilant." "Vigilant" is not a word.

¹¹ In the original text, Borachio uses the Elizabethan oath "mass," which refers to the church service.

¹² Borachio puns on the word "scab," which was slang for a lowborn, villainous fellow.

¹³ This is a pun on Borachio's name, which is similar to the Spanish for "drunkard," and also refers to a proverb, "The drunkard tells all."

BORACHIO

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

CONRAD

110 Yes, it is apparel.

BORACHIO

I mean the fashion.

CONRAD

Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

BORACHIO

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

WATCHMAN

115 *[aside]* I know that Deformed. He has been a vile thief this seven year. He goes up and down like a gentleman. I remember his name.

BORACHIO

Didst thou not hear somebody?

CONRAD

No, 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO

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

CONRAD

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

BORACHIO

135 Not so, neither. But 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.

CONRAD

140 And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

145 Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio, but the devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his oaths, which first possessed them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my

BORACHIO

That shows that you're inexperienced. You know that the style of a man's jacket, hat, or cloak doesn't make the man, right?

CONRAD

Yes, it's just clothing.

BORACHIO

No, I mean the fashion of the clothing.

CONRAD

Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

BORACHIO

Pshaw, I might as well say that the fool's the fool. But don't you see what a [deformed thief](#)¹⁴ fashion is?

WATCHMAN

[To the other WATCHMEN so that only they can hear] I know that man Deformed. He's been a terrible thief for the last seven years. He walks about like he's a gentleman. I remember his name.

BORACHIO

Did you hear somebody?

CONRAD

No, it was just the weathervane on the house.

BORACHIO

As I was saying, don't you see what a deformed thief fashion is? It makes all the hot-blooded young men go crazy, sometimes dressing up like the Pharaoh's soldiers in that dirty old painting, sometimes like the pictures in old church windows of the priests of the god Baal¹⁵, and sometimes like the picture of Hercules in that dusty, worm-eaten tapestry, where his [codpiece](#)¹⁶ is as big as a club!

CONRAD

I understand all this, and I can see that clothes are discarded because of changing fashions before they can get worn out. But aren't you crazy about fashion, too, since you've changed out of your story to start going on about fashion?

BORACHIO

No, I'm not. But you should know that tonight I seduced Margaret, Lady Hero's serving woman, and called her "Hero" the whole time. She leaned out of her mistress's bedroom window and told me goodnight a thousand times. But I'm telling this story badly. I should first tell you how my master Don John filled the Prince and Claudio with suspicion about Hero's virtue, and arranged that they should witness this lovers' meeting from the garden.

CONRAD

And they thought that Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

Two of them did—the Prince and Claudio—but the devil, my master, knew it was Margaret. It was partly because of his testimony that they suspected Hero in the first place. They were also tricked by the dark, deceiving night, but it was

¹⁴ Fashion is a "deformed thief" because it steals people's true "forms" by making them wear different styles of clothing. In the next line, the watchman thinks that "Deformed" is the name of a criminal.

¹⁵ Baal was an ancient fertility god whose priests distracted the ancient Israelites, mentioned in the biblical Books of Kings.

¹⁶ A codpiece was a pouch used to cover men's genitals, and was often stuffed and decorated. By the time "Much Ado About Nothing" was performed, codpieces were out of style and subjects of mockery.

villainy, which did confirm any slander that Don John had made, away went Claudio enraged, swore he would meet her as he was appointed next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'ernight
 150 and send her home again without a husband.

SECOND WATCHMAN

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

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

SECOND WATCHMAN

155 And one Deformed is one of them. I know him; he wears a lock.

CONRAD

Masters, masters—

SECOND WATCHMAN

[*to BORACHIO*] You'll be made bring Deformed forth, I warrant you.

FIRST WATCHMAN

160 Masters, never speak, we charge you, let us obey you go with us.

BORACHIO

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

CONRAD

165 A commodity in question, I warrant you.—Come, we'll obey you.

Exeunt

mostly my villainy, which confirmed all of Don John's slander against Hero. Claudio went away enraged, swearing that he would meet Hero at the temple the next day as planned, and there, before the whole congregation, would shame her with his testimony and send her home again without a husband.

SECOND WATCHMAN

In the Prince's name, we command you to halt!

FIRST WATCHMAN

Call up the reverend Master Constable Dogberry. We have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery ¹⁷ that was ever seen in this country.

¹⁷ The First Watchman means "discovered," not "recovered," and "treachery," not "lechery."

SECOND WATCHMAN

And the criminal Deformed is one of them. I know him; he has a long lock of hair.

CONRAD

Gentlemen, gentlemen—

SECOND WATCHMAN

[*to BORACHIO*] You'll be forced to bring Deformed forward, I promise you.

FIRST WATCHMAN

Sirs, don't speak. We order you, let us obey you to come with us ¹⁸.

¹⁸ The First Watchman means to say "we order you to obey us and come with us."

BORACHIO

We're probably a valuable catch for these fools.

CONRAD

Well, our value is about to be judged, I'll bet.

[*To the FIRST WATCHMAN*] All right, we'll obey you.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA

HERO

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

URSULA

I will, lady.

HERO

And bid her come hither.

URSULA

5 Well.

Exit

MARGARET

Troth, I think your other rebato were better.

HERO

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

Shakesclare Translation

HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA enter.

HERO

Good Ursula, wake my cousin Beatrice and ask her to get up.

URSULA

I will, my lady.

HERO

And tell her to come here.

URSULA

Very well.

She exits.

MARGARET

Honestly, I think your other collar looks better.

HERO

No, please, good Meg, I'll wear this one.

MARGARET

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

HERO

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

MARGARET

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

15

HERO

Oh, that exceeds, they say.

MARGARET

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

20

HERO

God give me joy to wear it, for my heart is exceeding heavy.

MARGARET

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

HERO

Fie upon thee! Art not ashamed?

MARGARET

Of what, lady? Of speaking honorably? Is not marriage honorable in a beggar? Is not your lord honorable without marriage? I think you would have me say, "Saving your reverence, a husband." An bad thinking do not wrest true speaking, I'll offend nobody. Is there any harm in "the heavier for a husband?" None, I think, an it be the right husband and the right wife. Otherwise, 'tis light and not heavy. Ask my Lady Beatrice else. Here she comes.

30

35

Enter BEATRICE

HERO

Good morrow, coz.

BEATRICE

Good morrow, sweet Hero.

HERO

Why, how now? Do you speak in the sick tune?

BEATRICE

I am out of all other tune, methinks.

MARGARET

40 Clap 's into "Light o' love." That goes without a burden. Do you sing it, and I'll dance it.

BEATRICE

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

MARGARET

I swear it's not as good as the other one, and I bet your cousin will say so too.

HERO

My cousin's a fool, and so are you. I'll wear this one and no other.

MARGARET

I like the new wig and headdress a lot, though I wish the hair was a shade browner. Your gown is very stylish indeed. I saw the Duchess of Milan's gown, the one that everyone goes on about.

HERO

Oh, that dress is beyond comparison, they say.

MARGARET

I swear, it's just a nightgown compared to your dress. On that dress the cloth is of golden thread, with slashes in it to show the fabric underneath. It's embroidered with silver and adorned with pearls, has two sets of sleeves, and has skirts trimmed with blue tinsel. But for a fine, elegant, graceful, and excellent dress, yours is worth ten times more than that one.

HERO

May God give me joy in wearing it, for my heart is very heavy.

MARGARET

It will be even heavier soon, with the weight of a man on top of it.

HERO

Watch your tongue! Aren't you ashamed?

MARGARET

Of what, lady? Of speaking honorably? Sex and marriage are honorable things even for a beggar, aren't they? Isn't your new husband honorable? Maybe you would prefer it if I had said, "I beg your pardon, a *husband*, not just a man." If dirty minds don't twist my honest words, then I'll offend no one. Is there any harm in saying that your husband will lie on top of you? No, I think not, as long it's the right husband and the right wife. Otherwise it would be frivolous and immoral. Ask my Lady Beatrice if this isn't true. Here she comes.

BEATRICE enters.

HERO

Good morning, cousin.

BEATRICE

Good morning, sweet Hero.

HERO

Why, what's going on? You sound sad, or sick.

BEATRICE


It's the only way I *can* sound, I think.

MARGARET

Let's change your tune, then, and sing "Light of Love." That song doesn't need any man to sing harmony. You sing it, and I'll dance.

BEATRICE

You're the "light of love," with your heels in the air! If your husband is rich enough, you'll give him plenty of children.

 To have one's heels in the air meant to be sexually wanton. Margaret responds by scolding "with her heels," which meant

MARGARET
45 O illegitimate construction! I scorn that with my heels.

BEATRICE
'Tis almost five o'clock, cousin. 'Tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceeding ill. Heigh-ho!

MARGARET
For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

BEATRICE
50 For the letter that begins them all, H.

MARGARET
Well, an you be not turned Turk, there's no more sailing by the star.

BEATRICE
What means the fool, trow?

MARGARET
55 Nothing, I; but God send everyone their heart's desire.

HERO
These gloves the Count sent me, they are an excellent perfume.

BEATRICE
I am stuffed, cousin. I cannot smell.

MARGARET
A maid, and stuffed! There's goodly catching of cold.

BEATRICE
60 Oh, God help me, God help me! How long have you professed apprehension?

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

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

MARGARET
Get you some of this distilled *carduus benedictus* and lay it to your heart. It is the only thing for a qualm.

HERO
There thou prick'st her with a thistle.

BEATRICE
70 Benedictus! Why benedictus? You have some moral in this *benedictus*?


MARGARET
Moral! No, by my troth, I have no moral meaning. I meant plain holy thistle. You may think perchance that I think you are in love. Nay, by 'r Lady, I am not such a fool to think what I list, nor I list not to think what I can, nor indeed I cannot think, if I would think my heart out of thinking, that you are in love or that you


"contemptuously."

MARGARET
Oh, your dirty jokes! I kick them away with my heels.

BEATRICE
It's almost five o'clock, cousin. It's time to get ready. I swear, I really don't feel well. Heigh-ho!

MARGARET
Are you sighing for a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

BEATRICE
For the letter that starts them all, "H .

 Beatrice means "ache," which in Shakespeare's day was pronounced "aitch," like the letter "H."


MARGARET
Well, if you haven't yet renounced your old belief that you'd never marry, then we can't trust anything anymore.


BEATRICE
What is this fool trying to say, I wonder?

MARGARET
Nothing—only that God sends everyone their heart's desire.

HERO
The Count sent me these gloves, and they're perfumed excellently.

BEATRICE
I'm all stuffed up, cousin. I can't smell anything.


MARGARET
A virgin, and stuffed ! That's a good way to catch a cold.


 Margaret makes a bawdy joke, twisting the meaning of the word "stuffed."

BEATRICE
Oh, God help me, God help me! How long have you claimed to have such a wit?

MARGARET
Ever since you left yours behind. Doesn't my wit suit me excellently?

BEATRICE
It doesn't show itself enough—you should wear it in your fool's cap. I swear, I'm really sick.

MARGARET
Get some distilled *carduus benedictus*  and put it over your heart. It's the only thing for a sudden sickness.

 Margaret talks about "*carduus benedictus*," or "holy thistle," a medicinal herb.

HERO
With that joke you've pricked her with a thistle.

BEATRICE
Benedictus! Why *benedictus*? Is there some hidden meaning in this *benedictus*?

MARGARET
Hidden meaning? No, I swear, I intended no hidden meaning. I just mean that you should use plain holy thistle. Perhaps you think that I think that you're in love. No, by the Virgin Mary, I'm not such a fool to think whatever I want. And I don't want to think what I can—nor can I even think at all—even if I want to think my heart out of thinking, that

80 will be in love or that you can be in love. Yet Benedick was such another, and now is he become a man. He swore he would never marry, and yet now, in despite of his heart, he eats his meat without grudging. And how you may be converted I know not, but methinks you look with your eyes as other women do.

BEATRICE

What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

MARGARET

Not a false gallop.

Enter URSULA

URSULA

85 Madam, withdraw: the Prince, the Count, Signor Benedick, Don John, and all the gallants of the town are come to fetch you to church.

HERO

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

Exeunt

you are in love or that you will be in love or that you even *can* be in love. Yet Benedick was like you once, and now he has become like other men. He swore that he would never marry. But now, despite his old self, he has an ungrudging appetite for love. I don't know how you can be converted like he was, but I know that you still look through your eyes just as every woman does.

BEATRICE

Why are you talking so quickly?

MARGARET

I'm not running on untruthfully.

URSULA enters.

URSULA

Madam, come with me: the Prince, the Count, Sir Benedick, Don John, and all the gentlemen of the town have come to bring you to the church.

HERO

Help to dress me, good cousin, good Meg, good Ursula.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 5

Shakespeare

Enter LEONATO with DOGBERRY and VERGES

LEONATO

What would you with me, honest neighbor?

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

5 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

10 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 honestier than I.

DOGBERRY

15 Comparisons are odorous. *Palabras*, neighbor Verges.

Shakescleare Translation

LEONATO enters with DOGBERRY and VERGES.

LEONATO

What do you want from me, honorable neighbor?

DOGBERRY

Well, sir, I would like to have some confidence with you about something that decerns ¹ you greatly.

¹ Dogberry means "conference," not "confidence," and "concerns," not "decerns."

LEONATO

Be brief, please, for as you can see this is a busy time for me.

DOGBERRY

Well, it certainly seems to be, sir.

VERGES

Yes, it truly is, sir.

LEONATO

What is this news, my friend?

DOGBERRY

Sorry, sir, Goodman ² Verges tends to ramble on a little. He's an old man, sir, and his wits aren't as blunt ³ as I wish they were, God help him. But I swear he's as honest as the skin between his eyebrows.

² "Goodman" was a form of address for men in Shakespeare's time.

³ Dogberry means "sharp," not "blunt."

VERGES

Yes, I thank God that I'm as honest as any man alive who is also old and is no more honest than I am.

DOGBERRY

Making comparisons is odorous ⁴, neighbor Verges. Use fewer words and get to the point, please.

⁴ Dogberry means "odious" (hateful), not "odorous" (smelly).

LEONATO

Neighbors, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

All thy tediousness on me, ah?

DOGBERRY

25 Yea, an 'twere a thousand pound more than 'tis, 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

30 Marry, sir, our watch tonight, excepting your Worship's presence, ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY

35 A good old man, sir. He will be talking. As they say, "When the age is in, the wit is out." God help us, it is a world to see! Well said, i' faith, neighbor Verges. —Well, God's a good man. An two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. An honest soul, i' faith, sir, by my troth he is, as ever broke bread, but God is to be worshipped, all men are not alike, alas, good neighbor!

LEONATO

Indeed, neighbor, he comes too short of you.

DOGBERRY

Gifts that God gives.

LEONATO

40 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

45 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 a MESSENGER

LEONATO

Neighbors, you're becoming tedious.

DOGBERRY

You can say that if you like, [your Worship](#) ⁵, but we're only the poor duke's officers. But truly, if I were as tedious ⁶ as a king, I would find it in my heart to give it all to you, your Worship.

LEONATO

You'd give all your tediousness to me, huh?

DOGBERRY

Yes, even if it were a thousand pounds more than it is, for I hear that you are as well [exclaimed](#) ⁷ as any man in the city, your Worship, and though I'm only a poor man, I'm glad to hear it.

VERGES

And so am I.

LEONATO

I want to hear your news.

VERGES

Well, sir, last night our watch captured two of the worst villains in Messina, [excepting](#) ⁸ your presence, your Worship.

DOGBERRY

[To LEONATO] He's a good old man, sir, but he always has to be talking. As they say, "[When age comes in, wit goes out](#)" ⁹. God help us, it's a wonder to see!

[To VERGES] Well said, honestly, neighbor Verges.

[To LEONATO] Well, God is good, and he works in mysterious ways. If two men will ride a horse, one must ride behind. Verges is as honest a soul as any that ever broke bread, sir. But, alas, not all men are created equal!

LEONATO

Indeed, my friend, you're certainly his superior.

DOGBERRY

It's only God's gifts.

LEONATO

I must leave you now.

DOGBERRY

One more thing, sir. Our watch, sir, has indeed [comprehended two aspicious](#) ¹⁰ persons, and we'd like for you to examine them this morning, your Worship.

LEONATO

Examine them yourself, and then bring me the results. I'm in a great hurry right now, as you can see.

DOGBERRY

That will be [suffigance](#) ¹¹.

LEONATO

Drink some wine before you go. Farewell.

A MESSENGER enters.

⁵ "Your Worship" is an honorific title for high-ranking people.

⁶ Dogberry mistakes "tedious" to mean something like "rich."

⁷ Dogberry means "acclaimed," or something more complimentary. "Exclaimed" could mean "accused."

⁸ Dogberry means "respecting." He intends to apologize for speaking of criminals in Leonato's presence, but actually ends up calling Leonato one of the worst criminals in Messina.

⁹ The actual proverb is "when ale comes in, wit goes out."

¹⁰ Dogberry means "apprehended," not "comprehended," and "suspicious" instead of the made-up word "aspicious."

¹¹ Dogberry means "sufficient" instead of the made-up word "suffigance."

MESSENGER

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

LEONATO

50 I'll wait upon them. I am ready.

Exeunt LEONATO and MESSENGER

DOGBERRY

Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacole. 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

55 We will spare for no wit, I warrant you. Here's that shall drive some of them to a noncome. Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication and meet me at the jail.

Exeunt

MESSENGER

My lord, they're waiting for you to give your daughter away to her husband.

LEONATO

I'll attend to them. I am ready.

LEONATO and the MESSENGER exit.

DOGBERRY

Go, good partner. Go to Francis Seacole, the constable of the watch. Tell him to bring pen and ink to the jail. We'll now go to [examination](#) ¹² these men.

¹² Dogberry means to use the verb "examine" instead of the noun "examination."

VERGES

And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY

We won't hold back our wit, I promise you. We'll drive them crazy with our intelligence. Just get that educated writer to record our [excommunication](#) ¹³, and meet me at the jail.

¹³ He means "examination," or some kind of official communication. "Excommunication" means to be excluded from a church.

They exit.

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

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

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

5 *[to CLAUDIO]* 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

10 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.

Shakescleare Translation

DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, LEONATO, FRIAR FRANCIS, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, HERO, BEATRICE, and attendants enter.

LEONATO

All right, Friar Francis, be brief. Just do a simple ceremony now, and you can list all the particular duties of marriage afterwards.

FRIAR FRANCIS

[To CLAUDIO] My lord, have you come here to marry this lady?

CLAUDIO

No.

LEONATO

He means he's here to be married to her. Friar, you're the one who's come to marry her.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, do you come here to be married to this count?

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

If either of you knows of any secret reason why you should not be married, then I command you, by your souls, to say it now.

CLAUDIO

Do you know of any, Hero?

HERO

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

15 Know you any, count?

LEONATO

I dare make his answer, none.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

20 How now, interjections? Why, then, some be of laughing, as, ah, ha, he!

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

25 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.
30 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!
Oh, what authority and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!
35 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.
40 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
45 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,
And so extenuate the forehead sin. No, Leonato,
50 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?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Do you know of any, Count?

LEONATO

I'll dare to answer for him—none.

CLAUDIO

Oh, what men will dare to do! What men are allowed to do!
What men do daily, not aware of what they're doing!

BENEDICK

What's this, such bitter interjections at a wedding? Let's add some better ones, like "ah," "ha," and "he!"

CLAUDIO

Step aside, Friar.

[He steps forward and addresses LEONATO] Father, will you freely and without reservations give me this maiden, your daughter?

LEONATO

As freely, son, as God gave her to me.

CLAUDIO

And what can I give you back that would balance out this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO

Nothing, unless you should give her back.

CLAUDIO

Sweet Prince, you teach me how to accept things nobly.

[To LEONATO] There, Leonato. Take your daughter back again. Don't give this rotten orange to your friend. She has only the outward appearance of honor. See how she blushes like a virgin now! Oh, how masterfully sin can disguise itself! Doesn't her blush seem like natural evidence of simple virtue?

[To the others] Wouldn't you swear, all of you who see her now, that she's a virgin, based on her exterior? But she is no virgin. She has known the heat of a lustful bed. Her blush is from guilt, not modesty.

LEONATO

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO

I mean to not be married. I won't join my soul with such a proven whore.

LEONATO


My dear lord, if your proof is yourself—if you are the one who conquered her in her youthfulness and took her virginity—

CLAUDIO

I know what you will say: if I were the one who slept with her, you'll say that she was accepting me as her future husband, and the anticipation of our marriage would make it less of a sin. No, Leonato, I never tempted her with indecent words, but only treated her like a brother would treat his sister, showing her nothing but bashful sincerity and modest love.

HERO

And have I ever showed anything else to you?

 Here, Benedick quotes from a popular book of Latin grammar in Shakespeare's day, referencing "interjections that indicate laughter."

CLAUDIO

Out on thee, seeming! I will write against it.
 55 You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
 As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown.
 But you are more intemperate in your blood
 Than Venus, or those pampered animals
 That rage in savage sensuality.

HERO

60 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 dishonored, that have gone about
 To link my dear friend to a common stale.

LEONATO

65 Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN

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

BENEDICK

This looks not like a nuptial.

HERO

True! O God!

CLAUDIO

Leonato, stand I here?
 70 Is this the Prince? Is this the Prince's brother?
 Is this face Hero's? Are our eyes our own?

LEONATO

All this is so, but what of this, my lord?

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

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

HERO

Oh, God defend me! how am I beset!—
 What kind of catechizing call you this?

CLAUDIO

To make you answer truly to your name.

HERO

80 Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name
 With any just reproach?

CLAUDIO

Marry, that can Hero!
 Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.
 What man was he talked with you yesternight
 85 Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?
 Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

HERO

I talked with no man at that hour, my lord.

CLAUDIO

Shame on you, false appearance! I will argue against you.
 To me you still seem like Diana ², as innocent as the bud
 before it blooms. But you are more hot-blooded than
 Venus, or an animal left to run wild in its lust.

² Diana was the ancient Roman goddess of the moon and virginity. Claudio next mentions Venus, the ancient Roman goddess of love.

HERO

My lord, are you ill? Is that what's making you speak so wildly?

LEONATO

[To DON PEDRO] Sweet Prince, why don't you say something?

DON PEDRO

What should I say? I stand here dishonored. I've arranged to join my dear friend to a common prostitute.

LEONATO

Are these things really being said, or am I dreaming?

DON JOHN

Sir, they are spoken, and they are true.

BENEDICK

This doesn't look like a wedding.

HERO

He says they're true! Oh God!

CLAUDIO

Leonato, am I standing here? Is this the Prince? Is this the Prince's brother? Is this face Hero's? Are our eyes our own eyes?

LEONATO

All this is true. But what do you mean by it, my lord?

CLAUDIO

Let me just ask your daughter one question. By your natural authority over her as her father, tell her to answer truthfully.

LEONATO

[To HERO] As you are my child, I order you to do so.

HERO

Oh, God defend me! How I am attacked from all sides!

[To CLAUDIO] What kind of interrogation is this?

CLAUDIO

We want you to answer to your true name and show who you truly are.

HERO

Isn't my name Hero? Who can stain that name with any honest accusation?

CLAUDIO

Well, Hero can do that! The word "Hero" itself—which I heard spoken last night—can stain Hero's virtue. What man talked with you last night at your window, between midnight and one? Now, if you are a virgin, answer this.

HERO

I didn't talk to any man at that hour, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Why, then are you no maiden. —Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honor,
90 Myself, my brother, and this grievèd count
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window
Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,
Confessed the vile encounters they have had
95 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 offense, to utter them. —Thus, pretty lady,
100 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,
105 Thou pure impiety and impious purity.
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,
And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang,
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,
And never shall it more be gracious.

LEONATO

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

HERO swoons

BEATRICE

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

DON JOHN

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

Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO

BENEDICK

How doth the lady?

BEATRICE

115 Dead, I think.—Help, uncle!—
Hero, why, Hero! Uncle! Signor 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

120 How now, cousin Hero!

HERO stirs

FRIAR FRANCIS

[to HERO] Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO

[to HERO] Dost thou look up?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Yea, wherefore should she not?

DON PEDRO

Why, then you are no virgin.

[To LEONATO] I'm sorry you must hear this, Leonato. I swear on my honor that I, my brother, and this wronged count saw and heard Hero last night, talking to some brute at her bedroom window. And that man, the lustful villain, confessed to a thousand secret, immoral encounters that they've had.

DON JOHN

Shame, shame! Those sins are not to be named, my lord—not to be spoken of! Language itself is not innocent enough to describe them without offending everyone here.

[To HERO] So, pretty lady, I'm sorry about your great wickedness.

CLAUDIO

Oh, Hero, you could have lived up to your name ³ if only half of your outward beauty and apparent innocence had influence over the secret thoughts and desires of your heart! Farewell, you who are most foul, and yet look most beautiful! Farewell, you pure wickedness and you wicked purity. Because of you, I'll lock up my heart against all love. Suspicion will weigh down my eyelids, and turn all thoughts of beauty into thoughts of danger, so that nothing is beautiful ever again.

LEONATO

Does any man here have a dagger for me to stab myself?

HERO faints.

BEATRICE

Why, how are you doing, cousin? Why are you collapsing now?

DON JOHN

Come on, let's go. These secrets being brought to light have overwhelmed her spirit.

DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO exit.

BENEDICK

How is the lady?

BEATRICE

Dead, I think.

[To LEONATO] Help, uncle!

[To the others] Hero, why Hero! Uncle! Sir Benedick! Friar!

LEONATO

Oh, Fate, don't spare your heavy hand of punishment! The best thing I could wish for to cover up her shame is death.

BEATRICE

How are you, cousin Hero?

HERO stirs.

FRIAR FRANCIS

[To HERO] Take comfort, lady.

LEONATO

[To HERO] Do you dare to look up?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Well, why shouldn't she?

³ In Greek mythology, Hero died for her lover Leander, and was considered an ideal of virtuous love.

LEONATO

Wherefore! Why, doth not every earthly thing
 125 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,
 For, did I think thou wouldst not quickly die,
 Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames,
 130 Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches,
 Strike at thy life. Grieved I had but one?
 Chid I for that at frugal Nature's frame?
 O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?
 Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?
 135 Why had I not with charitable hand
 Took up a beggar's issue at my gates,
 Who, smirched thus, and mired with infamy,
 I might have said, "No part of it is mine;
 This shame derives itself from unknown loins?"
 140 But mine, and mine I loved, and mine I praised,
 And mine that I was proud on, mine so much
 That I myself was to myself not mine,
 Valuing of her— why, she, O she is fall'n
 Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
 145 Hath drops too few to wash her clean again
 And salt too little which may season give
 To her foul tainted flesh!

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Oh, 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! Oh, 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

160 Hear me a little,
 For I have only silent been so long,
 And given way unto this course of fortune,
 By noting of the lady. I have marked
 A thousand blushing apparitions
 165 To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
 In angel whiteness beat away those blushes,
 And in her eye there hath appeared a fire
 To burn the errors that these princes hold
 Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool,
 170 Trust not my reading nor my observations,
 Which with experimental seal doth warrant
 The tenor of my book; trust not my age,
 My reverence, calling, nor divinity,
 If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
 175 Under some biting error.

LEONATO

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

LEONATO

Why shouldn't she look up? Why, isn't everything on earth
 condemning her? Can she deny the story that is written in
 her guilty blush?

[To HERO] Do not live, Hero. Do not open your eyes. If I
 didn't think that you were about to die—if I thought that
 your spirits were stronger than your shame—then I would
 condemn you and kill you myself. Was I sorry that I only had
 one child? Did I scold Nature for being so thrifty with me?
 Oh, now one child is too many! Why did I even have one?
 Why did you ever seem lovely to my eyes? Why didn't I just
 take in a beggar's child left at my gates? Then—if she were
 shamed and ruined like this—I might have said, "No part of
 her is mine; this shame comes from an unknown father!"
 But you were mine, and I loved you and praised you for
 being mine, and I was proud that you were mine. I valued
 you so highly that I lived only for you, and considered
 myself worthless. Oh, but now you have fallen into a pit of
 ink, and even the wide sea doesn't have enough water to
 wash you clean again, or enough salt to preserve your
 rotting flesh!

BENEDICK

Sir, sir, calm down. For my part, I'm so filled with
 amazement that I don't know what to say.

BEATRICE

Oh, I swear on my soul, my cousin has been slandered!

BENEDICK

Lady, did you sleep in her room last night?

BEATRICE

No, truly I didn't. But until last night I've slept there every
 night for the last year.

LEONATO

Then it's confirmed, confirmed! Oh, that has added even
 more evidence to what is already a strong case against her!
 Would the two princes lie? And would Claudio—who loved
 her so much that speaking of her foulness made him
 weep—lie too? Leave her. Let her die.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Hear me for a moment. I've only kept silent this long, and
 let these events unfold as they did, because I've been
 watching Hero carefully. I've noticed a thousand blushes
 start to rush on her face, and then a thousand feelings of
 innocent shame—as white as angels—drive those blushes
 away. In her eyes I've seen a fire appear that would seem to
 burn away these lies the princes told about her virginity.
 Call me a fool if you want, and don't trust my observations
 or interpretations of her face, which are backed up by my
 years of experience. Don't trust my age, my respected
 position, my calling as a priest, or my holiness, if in fact this
 sweet lady here isn't innocent, and the victim of some cruel
 mistake.

LEONATO

Friar, this cannot be. You see that the only virtue she has left
 prevents her from adding perjury to her sins—she won't
 deny the accusations. Why are you trying to excuse her
 crimes, now that they've been exposed?

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

185 Than that which maiden modesty doth warrant,
Let all my sins lack mercy! —O my father,
Prove you that any man with me conversed
At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight
Maintained the change of words with any creature,
190 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 John the Bastard,

195 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.

Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine
Nor age so eat up my invention
Nor fortune made such havoc of my means
Nor my bad life left me so much of friends
But they shall find, awaked in such a kind,
Both strength of limb and policy of mind,
205 Ability in means and choice of friends,
To quit me of them throughly.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Pause awhile,
And let my counsel sway you in this case.
Your daughter here the princes left for dead.

210 Let her awhile be secretly kept in
And publish it that she is dead indeed.
Maintain a mourning ostentation,
And on your family's old monument
Hang mournful epitaphs and do all rites
215 That appertain unto a burial.

LEONATO

What shall become of this? What will this do?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Marry, this, well carried, shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse. That is some good.
But not for that dream I on this strange course,

220 But on this travail look for greater birth.
She, dying, as it must so be maintained,
Upon the instant that she was accused,
Shall be lamented, pitied and excused
Of every hearer. For it so falls out
225 That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost,
Why then we rack the value, then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio.
230 When he shall hear she died upon his words,
The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination,
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,
235 More moving, delicate and full of life,
Into the eye and prospect of his soul
Than when she lived indeed. Then shall he mourn,
If ever love had interest in his liver,
And wish he had not so accused her,
240 No, though he thought his accusation true.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, what man is it you're accused of meeting with?

HERO

Ask the ones who accuse me. I don't know. If I've been with
any man alive in a way that's inappropriate for a proper,
modest virgin, then let all my sins be punished!

[To LEONATO] Oh my father, if you can prove that any man
talked to me at an indecent hour—or that last night I spoke
to anyone at all—then disown me, hate me, and torture me
to death!

FRIAR FRANCIS

The princes have had some strange misunderstanding.

BENEDICK

Two of them have perfectly honorable dispositions. And if
they've been misled in this affair, the culprit must be John
the Bastard, whose nature makes him plot wickedness.

LEONATO

I don't know. If they're telling the truth about Hero, then I'll
tear her apart with my own hands. But if they have
slandered her honor falsely, then even the greatest of them
will hear from me. Time hasn't dried up all my courage, old
age hasn't ruined my mind, fortune hasn't stolen all my
money, and my bad life hasn't left me without friends.
Those who have wronged my daughter will find me strong
in body and mind, and with money and friends at my
disposal—and ready to take thorough revenge.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Pause a moment, and hear my advice about this. The
princes have left your daughter for dead here. Let her be
hidden secretly in your house for a while, and make it
publicly known that she is, indeed, dead. Keep up a show of
mourning, hang sad epitaphs at your family's old tomb, and
perform all the usual burial rites.

LEONATO

What will result from this? What will this accomplish?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Well, if we can carry this out correctly, it will move Hero's
accusers from slander to feelings of remorse. That will be
one good thing. But I haven't decided on this strange plan
for that reason alone—I have an even greater goal for this
business. We must maintain that she died the instant she
was accused. Whoever hears this will mourn her, pity her,
and excuse her. For that's how it is: we don't value the
things we have until we lose them. Once they're gone, we
exaggerate their value and see all the virtues we couldn't
see when the thing itself was with us. That's how it will be
with Claudio. When he hears that Hero died because of his
words, thoughts of her will creep into his imagination.
Every aspect of her lovely life will seem to be dressed up
more beautifully, and in his mind's eye she'll seem more
moving, more delicate, and more lively than she was even
in life. Then if he ever truly felt love for her, he will mourn,
and wish that he hadn't accused her—even though he
thought his accusations were true. If my prediction is right,
then everything will turn out even better than I can
describe it. But even if everything else fails, at least Hero's
supposed death will overshadow the shameful rumors
about her. And if it doesn't turn out well, you can hide her
away as a nun or a religious recluse—this will be the best
place for someone with her wounded reputation. Then

Let this be so, and doubt not but success
 Will fashion the event in better shape
 Than I can lay it down in likelihood.
 But if all aim but this be leveled false,
 245 The supposition of the lady's death
 Will quench the wonder of her infamy.
 And if it sort not well, you may conceal her,
 As best befits her wounded reputation,
 In some reclusive and religious life,
 250 Out of all eyes, tongues, minds, and injuries.

BENEDICK

Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you.
 And though you know my inwardness and love
 Is very much unto the Prince and Claudio,
 Yet, by mine honor, I will deal in this
 255 As secretly and justly as your soul
 Should with your body.

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

'Tis well consented. Presently away,
 260 For to strange sores strangely they strain the cure.—
 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

265 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

270 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
 275 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,

she'll be out of reach of all other eyes, tongues, minds, and
 insults.

BENEDICK

Sir Leonato, listen to the friar's advice. And although you
 know that I'm close friends with the Prince and Claudio, I
 swear by my honor that I'll deal with this business secretly
 and honorably.

LEONATO

I am carried away by a river of grief, so I will cling to the
 smallest piece of string offered to me.

FRIAR FRANCIS

It's a good agreement. Let's go immediately. Strange
 diseases require strange cures.

[To HERO] Come, lady, you will die so that you might live.
 This wedding may only be postponed. Have patience and
 endure.

Everyone except for BENEDICK and BEATRICE exits.

BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you been weeping this whole time?

BEATRICE

Yes, and I will weep for a while longer.

BENEDICK

I wish you wouldn't.

BEATRICE

You have no reason to wish that. I do it willingly.

BENEDICK

I do truly believe that your beautiful cousin was wronged.

BEATRICE

Ah, I would give anything to any man who made this right!

BENEDICK

Is there any way I could show you such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very clear way, but there is no such friend to do it.

BENEDICK

Can a man do it?

BEATRICE

It is a man's job, but not a job for you.

BENEDICK

There's nothing in the world I love as much as you. Isn't
 that strange?

BEATRICE

As strange as my own confusion. It would also be possible
 for me to say that there's nothing I love as much as you. But
 don't believe me when I say it—and yet I'm not lying. I

nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.

BENEDICK

280 By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

BEATRICE

Do not swear, and eat it.

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Will you not eat your word?

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

Why then, God forgive me.

BENEDICK

What offense, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE

290 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

295 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.

BEATRICE begins to exit

BENEDICK

Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE

300 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

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

confess nothing, and I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.

BENEDICK

Beatrice, I swear by my sword that you love me.

BEATRICE

Don't swear. You might have to eat your words later.

BENEDICK

I'll swear by my sword that you love me, and if any man says I don't love you, I'll make him eat my sword.

BEATRICE

But you won't eat your words?

BENEDICK

Not with any sauce that could be invented for them. I declare that I love you.

BEATRICE

Why, then, God forgive me.

BENEDICK

Forgive you for what offense, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE

You've stopped me at just the right moment. I was about to declare that I loved you too.

BENEDICK

Then declare it with all your heart.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Come, ask me to do anything for you.

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK

Ha! Not for the whole wide world.

BEATRICE

Then you kill me by refusing. Farewell.

BEATRICE begins to exit.

BENEDICK

Wait, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE

My spirits have left, though my body is still here. There is no true love in you. Please, let me go.

BENEDICK

Beatrice—

BEATRICE

I swear, I will go.

BENEDICK

We must part on friendly terms.

BEATRICE

You would dare to be my friend when you won't fight my enemies?

BENEDICK

Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Hear me, Beatrice—

BEATRICE

315 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

320 Princes and counties! Surely, a princely testimony, a
goodly count, Count Comfect, a sweet gallant, surely!
Oh, 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, valor into compliment, and men are only
325 turned into tongue, and trim ones too. 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

330 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

335 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

BENEDICK

Is Claudio your enemy?

BEATRICE

Hasn't he proved to be the worst kind of villain by
slandering, scorning, and dishonoring my cousin? Oh, if
only I were a man! What, he just leads her on until the
moment they were exchanging vows, and then, with public
accusation, open slander, pure hatred—Oh God, if only I
were a man! I would rip out his heart and eat it in the
marketplace.

BENEDICK

Listen to me, Beatrice—

BEATRICE

Talking with a man at her bedroom window! That's a likely
story!

BENEDICK

No, but Beatrice—

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

Beat—

BEATRICE

Princes and counts! Sure, what a princely testimony they
gave—an excellent conviction! Count Sweetmeat, that
sweet gentleman, for sure! Oh, if only I were a man, I would
deal with him! Or even if I had a friend who would be a man
for my sake! But manliness and bravery have been melted
into curtsies and compliments, and all men have become
nothing but tongues, fancy tongues. The man who tells a lie
and swears that it's true is now considered as brave as
Hercules. I can't become a man by wishing, so I'll die as a
woman, from grieving.

BENEDICK

Wait, good Beatrice. I swear by this hand, I love you.

BEATRICE

Then use it for something other than swearing, and prove
your love for me.

BENEDICK

Do you really think in your soul that Count Claudio has
wronged Hero?

BEATRICE

Yes, as sure as I have a mind or a soul.

BENEDICK

That's enough for me—I am bound by my pledge of love. I
will challenge him. I'll kiss your hand, and so I leave you. I
swear by this hand, Claudio will pay dearly for what he's
done. Listen for news of me, and keep me in your thoughts.
Go comfort your cousin. I'll go tell them that she is dead.
Farewell.

They exit.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and SEXTON, in gowns; and the Watch, with CONRAD and BORACHIO

DOGBERRY

Is our whole dissembly appeared?

VERGES

Oh, a stool and a cushion for the Sexton.

A stool is brought in. SEXTON sits.

SEXTON

Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY

Marry, that am I and my partner.

VERGES

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

SEXTON

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

DOGBERRY

10 Yea, marry, let them come before me.

BORACHIO and CONRAD come forward

What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

Pray, write down, "Borachio."—Yours, sirrah?

CONRAD

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

DOGBERRY

15 Write down "Master Gentleman Conrad."—Masters, do you serve God?

CONRAD, BORACHIO

Yea, sir, we hope.

DOGBERRY

20 Write down that they hope they serve God; and write God first, for God defend but God should go before such villains!—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?

CONRAD

Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the SEXTON enter in official robes, along with the WATCHMEN, CONRAD, and BORACHIO.

DOGBERRY

Is our whole [dissembly](#) ¹ here now?

¹ Dogberry means "assembly," not the made-up word "dissembly."

VERGES

Oh, but we need a stool and a cushion for the sexton.

A stool is brought in. The SEXTON sits.

SEXTON

Which ones are the malefactors?

DOGBERRY

Well, [that would be me and my partner](#) ².

² Dogberry and Verges seem to mistake "malefactors" for something like "officials of the court," instead of "criminals."

VERGES

Yes, that's certain—we've been [exhibitioned](#) ³ to examine this case.

³ Verges means "commissioned," not "exhibitioned."

SEXTON

But which ones are the criminals to be examined? Let them come before the Master Constable.

DOGBERRY

Yes, well, bring them before me.

BORACHIO and CONRAD come forward.

What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO

Borachio.

DOGBERRY

[To the SEXTON] Please, write down "Borachio."

[To CONRAD] And yours, sir [4](#)?

⁴ In the original text, Dogberry uses the familiar term of address "sirrah," sometimes used for men of a low social rank. Conrad protests by confirming his status as a gentleman in the next line.

CONRAD

I am a gentleman, sir. And my name is Conrad.

DOGBERRY

[To the SEXTON] Write down "Master Gentleman Conrad."

[To CONRAD and BORACHIO] Sirs, do you obey God's laws?

CONRAD, BORACHIO

Yes sir, we hope we do.

DOGBERRY

[To the SEXTON] Write down that they hope they obey God's laws. And write "God" first, for God forbid that such villains should come before God!

[To CONRAD and BORACHIO] Sirs, it has already been proven that you're no better than lying villains—and soon we'll suspect you of it too. What do you have to say for yourselves?

CONRAD

Indeed [5](#), sir, that we aren't villains.

⁵ Conrad uses the mild oath "marry"—derived from the Virgin Mary's name—in the original text.

DOGBERRY

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

BORACHIO

Sir, I say to you we are none.

DOGBERRY

30 Well, stand aside.—'Fore God, they are both in a ale. 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

35 Yea, marry, that's the efast way.—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

40 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

[to Watch] What heard you him say else?

SECOND WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

Flat burglary as ever was committed.

VERGES

Yea, by Mass, that it is.

SEXTON

What else, fellow?

FIRST WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

[to BORACHIO] O villain! Thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this.

DOGBERRY

He's a marvelously witty fellow, I assure you, but I'll get the better of him.

[To BORACHIO] Come here, sir, and I'll whisper a word in your ear. Sir, I say that you are both suspected of being lying villains.

BORACHIO

And I say that we are not, sir.

DOGBERRY

Well, step aside then.

[To the SEXTON] By God, they've both agreed to the same lie. Have you written that down, that they aren't lying villains?

SEXTON

Master Constable, this isn't the right way to conduct an examination. First you must call forth the watchmen who accused them.

DOGBERRY

Yes, well, that's the easiest way.

[To the WATCHMEN] Let the watchmen step forward. Sirs, I order you in the Prince's name to accuse these men.

FIRST WATCHMAN

Sir, this man said that Don John, the Prince's brother, was a villain.

DOGBERRY

Write down that Prince John was a villain. Why, that's flat-out perjury ⁶, to call a prince's brother a villain.

⁶ Dogberry mixes up "perjury" and "slander."

BORACHIO

Master Constable—

DOGBERRY

Please, man, be quiet. I don't like the look of you, I promise you that.

SEXTON

[To the WATCHMEN] What else did you hear him say?

SECOND WATCHMAN

Well, that he had received a thousand gold pieces from Don John for wrongfully accusing the Lady Hero.

DOGBERRY

That's burglary ⁷ if anything ever was.

⁷ Dogberry may be mixing up "burglary" with "perjury," which he already mixed up with "slander."

VERGES

Yes, by God, it is.

SEXTON

And what else, man?

FIRST WATCHMAN

And that Count Claudio—based on Don John's accusation—was going to disgrace Hero before the whole wedding assembly, and refuse to marry her.

DOGBERRY

[To BORACHIO] Oh, you villain! You'll be condemned to everlasting redemption ⁸ for this!

⁸ Dogberry means "damnation" instead of "redemption."

SEXTON

55 What else?

FIRST WATCHMAN

This is all.

SEXTON

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

Exit

DOGBERRY

Come, let them be opinioned.

VERGES

Let them be in the hands—

CONRAD

65 Off, coxcomb!

DOGBERRY

God's my life, where's the Sexton? Let him write down the Prince's officer "coxcomb." Come, bind them.—Thou naughty varlet!

CONRAD

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

DOGBERRY

Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years? Oh, 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.—Oh, that I had been writ down an ass!

Exeunt

SEXTON

What else?

FIRST WATCHMAN

That's all.

SEXTON

[*To BORACHIO and CONRAD*] And all this is more than you can deny, sirs. This morning Prince John secretly fled Messina. Hero was accused and refused by Claudio just as the watchman reported, and she died from her sudden grief.

[*To DOGBERRY*] Master Constable, tie these men up and bring them to Leonato's. I'll go ahead of you and show him the written report of this examination.

He exits.

DOGBERRY

Come, let's [opinion](#) ⁹ them.

⁹ Dogberry means to "pinion" them—to bind up their arms—not "opinion" them.

VERGES

Let them be handcuffed.

CONRAD

Get off of me, you fool!

DOGBERRY

God save me, where's the sexton? He ought to write down that the Prince's officer was called "fool." Come on, bind them.

[*To CONRAD*] You wicked rascal!

CONRAD

Get away from me! You are an ass, you are an ass!

DOGBERRY

How dare you! Don't you [suspect](#) ¹⁰ my position? Don't you suspect my age? Oh, if only the sexton were here to write down that I'm an ass! But sirs, remember that I am an ass, even though it wasn't written down—don't forget that I am an ass.

¹⁰ Dogberry means "respect" instead of "suspect."

[*To CONRAD*] No, you villain, you are full of [piety](#) ¹¹, as witnesses will prove. I'm a wise fellow and—what's more—an officer and—what's more—a homeowner and—what's more—as fine a mortal man as any in Messina. And I know the law, damn you, and I'm rich enough, damn you! And I've known hardships, and I have two pairs of robes, and everything about me is impressive.

¹¹ Dogberry means "impiety." Piety is religious obedience and zeal, while impiety is breaking God's laws.

[*To the WATCHMEN*] Take him away!

Oh, if only it had been written down that I'm an ass!

They all exit.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO

ANTONIO

If you go on thus, you will kill yourself,
And 'tis not wisdom thus to second grief

Shakescleare Translation

LEONATO and ANTONIO enter.

ANTONIO

If you go on like this, you'll kill yourself. There's no point in adding to the grief that's destroying you.

Against yourself.

LEONATO

I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
 5 Which falls into mine ears as profitless
 As water in a sieve. Give not me counsel,
 Nor let no comforter delight mine ear
 But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine.
 Bring me a father that so loved his child,
 10 Whose joy of her is overwhelmed like mine,
 And bid him speak of patience.
 Measure his woe the length and breadth of mine,
 And let it answer every strain for strain,
 As thus for thus and such a grief for such,
 15 In every lineament, branch, shape, and form.
 If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,
 Bid sorrow wag, cry "hem" when he should groan,
 Patch grief with proverbs, make misfortune drunk
 With candle-wasters, bring him yet to me
 20 And I of him will gather patience.
 But there is no such man. For, brother, men
 Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
 Which they themselves not feel, but, tasting it,
 Their counsel turns to passion which before
 25 Would give preceptual med'cine to rage,
 Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,
 Charm ache with air, and agony with words.
 No, no, 'tis all men's office to speak patience
 To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
 30 But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
 To be so moral when he shall endure
 The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel.
 My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

ANTONIO

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

40 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
 45 And all of them that thus dishonor her.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO

ANTONIO

Here comes the Prince and Claudio hastily.

DON PEDRO

Good e'en, good e'en.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO

Hear you, my lords—

DON PEDRO

50 We have some haste, Leonato.

LEONATO

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

LEONATO

Please, stop giving me advice. Your words pass uselessly through my ears like water through a sieve. Don't give me advice, and don't let anyone try to comfort or please me except someone whose injuries match my own. Find me a father who loved his child as I loved Hero—and whose joy in her has been crushed like mine has—and ask *him* to tell me about patience. Let his suffering be as big and deep as mine, and let it reflect all of my mental strain—with each sadness matching up in every way, shape, and form. If such a man will act like you—smiling and stroking his beard, telling sorrow to run away, saying "keep going" instead of mourning with me, patching up grief with clichéd sayings, and forgetting misfortune by poring over books—if you find such a person, bring him to me. I'll share in his strength and patience. But there is no such man. Brother, it's easy for men to comfort and advise about sorrows that they themselves don't feel. But once they taste them too, their advice turns into passion. You can't cure rage with advice, bind up madness with silk thread, treat aches with hot air, or fix agony with words. No, no, every man thinks it's his duty to advise patience to those who bear the burden of sorrow, but no man has the ability or power to live up to his own advice when he's in the same situation. So don't give me advice. My griefs drown out whatever you have to say.

ANTONIO

You're behaving no better than a child by acting like this.

LEONATO

Please, be quiet. I will be flesh and blood, not just words. There has never been a philosopher who could endure a toothache patiently, even though they all write as if they're gods who have pushed aside human suffering and misfortune.

ANTONIO

But don't take up the burden of all this pain on your own. Make those responsible suffer too.

LEONATO

Now you're speaking reasonably. I'll do that. My soul tells me that Hero has been wronged. I'll make sure that Claudio, the Prince, and all those who dishonored her will know about this.

DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO enter.

ANTONIO

Here comes the Prince and Claudio in a hurry.

DON PEDRO

Good evening, good evening.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO

Listen to me, my lords—

DON PEDRO

We're in a bit of a hurry, Leonato.

LEONATO

A bit of a hurry, my lord! Well, farewell then, my lord. Are

Are you so hasty now? Well, all is one.

DON PEDRO

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

ANTONIO

55 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

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

LEONATO

Tush, tush, man, never fleer and jest at me.
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool,
65 As under privilege of age to brag
What I have done being young, or what would do
Were I not old. Know, Claudio, to thy head,
Thou hast so wronged mine innocent child and me
That I am forced to lay my reverence by,
70 And with gray 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,
75 Oh, in a tomb where never scandal slept
Save this of hers, framed by thy villainy.

CLAUDIO

My villainy?

LEONATO

Thine, Claudio, thine, I say.

DON PEDRO

You say not right, old man.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

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

you in such a hurry now that my daughter is dead? Well, it doesn't matter to me.

DON PEDRO

Don't fight with us now, good old man.

ANTONIO

If he could right his wrongs by fighting, *some* of us here would be smart to run off and hide.

CLAUDIO

Who has wronged him?

LEONATO

Indeed, you have wronged me, you hypocrite. No, don't lay your hand on your sword. I'm not afraid of you.

CLAUDIO

Indeed, curse my hand if it should ever frighten an old man like you. I swear, my hand had no intention of using my sword.

LEONATO

Shame on you, man. Don't mock and sneer at me. I'm not a foolish old man who is protected by his age and brags about the deeds of his youth, or what he would do now if he weren't so old. Know this, Claudio, for I declare it to your face: you have wronged me and my innocent child. I am forced to lay aside the respectability of my age, and with my gray hairs and aching body, I challenge you to a test worthy of a man: a duel. I say that you have slandered my innocent child. Your lies have pierced her heart, and now she lies buried with her ancestors, oh, in a tomb that was never stained by scandal until you caused *this* scandal with your villainy.

CLAUDIO

My villainy?

LEONATO

Yours, Claudio, yours, I say.

DON PEDRO

Then you don't speak the truth, old man.

LEONATO

My lord, my lord, I'll prove it over his dead body if he dares to fight me. I'll beat him despite his fancy fencing techniques, his recent practice in battle, his youth, and his vigor.

CLAUDIO

Enough! I won't have anything to do with you.

LEONATO

You think you can push me aside just like that? You have killed my child. Boy, if you want to kill a man, then dare to kill me.

ANTONIO

We're both real men, and he'll have to kill both of us. But that's no matter. Let him try to kill one of us first. If he can beat me then he can brag about it! Let him accept my challenge.

[To **CLAUDIO**] Come on, come and get me, boy. Come on, sir boy, come and get me. Sir boy, I'll whip you despite all your fancy fencing—I swear as a gentleman I will.

LEONATO

Brother—

ANTONIO

95 Content yourself. God knows I loved my niece,
And she is dead, slandered to death by villains
That dare as well answer a man indeed
As I dare take a serpent by the tongue. —
Boys, apes, braggarts, jacks, milksops!

LEONATO

Brother Anthony—

ANTONIO

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

LEONATO

But brother Anthony—

ANTONIO

Come, 'tis no matter.
110 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 honor, she was charged with nothing
But what was true and very full of proof.

LEONATO

115 My lord, my lord—

DON PEDRO

I will not hear you.

LEONATO

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

ANTONIO

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

Exeunt LEONATO and ANTONIO

Enter BENEDICK

DON PEDRO

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

CLAUDIO

120 Now, Signior, what news?

BENEDICK

[to DON PEDRO] Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Welcome, Signior. You are almost come to part almost
a fray.

CLAUDIO

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

LEONATO

Brother—

ANTONIO

Don't try to stop me. God knows I loved my niece, and now
she's dead. She was slandered to death by villains who are
as likely to accept a fight with a real man as I am to grab a
snake by the tongue.

[To CLAUDIO and DON PEDRO] Boys, monkeys, braggarts,
fools, pampered children!

LEONATO

Brother Antonio—

ANTONIO

Don't stop me. Yes, I know their kind, and I know what
they're really worth. They're just fighting, swaggering,
fashionably-dressed boys who lie and cheat and show off.
They defame and slander people, walk around in
extravagant clothes, put on a scary show and say a few
threatening words about how they'll hurt their enemies—if
they dare. And that's all they'll do.

LEONATO

But, brother Antonio—

ANTONIO

Don't worry about it. Let me deal with this.

DON PEDRO

Gentlemen, we won't stay and test your patience any
further. I'm sorry for your daughter's death, but I swear on
my honor that the charges were true and backed up by
proof.

LEONATO

My lord, my lord—

DON PEDRO

I'm not listening to you.

LEONATO

No? Come on, then, brother, let's go! I want somebody to
listen to me.

ANTONIO

And somebody will listen to you, or certain people will
suffer for it.

LEONATO and ANTONIO exit.

BENEDICK enters.

DON PEDRO

See, here comes the man we were looking for.

CLAUDIO

Now, sir, what's new?

BENEDICK

[To DON PEDRO] Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Welcome, sir. You almost arrived in time to break up what
was almost a fight.

CLAUDIO

We were about to have our noses snapped off by two old
men without teeth.

DON PEDRO

Leonato and his brother. What think'st thou? Had we fought, I doubt we should have been too young for them.

BENEDICK

130

In a false quarrel there is no true valor. 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

135

Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

140

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

CLAUDIO

[to BENEDICK] What, courage, man! What though care killed a cat? Thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.

BENEDICK

145

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

CLAUDIO

[to DON PEDRO] Nay, then, give him another staff. This last was broke 'cross.

DON PEDRO

150

By this light, he changes more and more. I think he be angry indeed.

CLAUDIO

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

BENEDICK

Shall I speak a word in your ear?

CLAUDIO

God bless me from a challenge!

BENEDICK

155

[aside to CLAUDIO] You are a villain. I jest not. I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

160

What, a feast, a feast?

DON PEDRO

Leonato and his brother. What do you think of that? If we had fought, I fear that we should have been too inexperienced for them.

BENEDICK

There's no real bravery in an unfair fight. I came to find you both.

CLAUDIO

We've been looking everywhere for you too. We're feeling very depressed and we want to have our sadness beaten away. Will you use your wit to do it?


BENEDICK

My wit's in my sword's scabbard. Should I unsheathe it?

DON PEDRO

Do you wear your wit by your side?

CLAUDIO

No one wears their wit by their side, though many are beside their wit . Now I'll ask you to draw your wit, as you draw your sword—or as musicians draw their bows across their fiddles. Draw in order to please us.

 "Beside their wit" means "out of their minds."

DON PEDRO

I swear, Benedick looks pale.

[To BENEDICK] Are you sick, or angry?

CLAUDIO

[To BENEDICK] What, cheer up, man! What does it matter that worry killed the cat? You have enough liveliness in you to kill worry.

BENEDICK

Sir, if you try to use your wit to attack me, I'll knock you down with my own wit. Please, choose another method.

CLAUDIO

[To DON PEDRO] Give him another lance. He broke that last one in half with a poor hit.

DON PEDRO

I swear, his face keeps getting paler. I think he really is angry.

CLAUDIO

If he is, it's up to him to change his own attitude.

BENEDICK

[To CLAUDIO] Can I have a word with you?

CLAUDIO

God forbid that he wants to challenge me!

BENEDICK

[To CLAUDIO so that only he can hear] You're a villain. I'm not joking. I challenge you in whatever way you prefer, with whatever weapon you prefer, and whenever you prefer. Accept the challenge, or I will proclaim you a coward. You've killed an innocent girl, and your punishment for killing her will be steep. Say something.

CLAUDIO

I accept your challenge, and will enjoy it.

DON PEDRO

What, are we having a feast?

CLAUDIO

I' faith, I thank him. He hath bid me to a calf's head and a capon, the which if I do not carve most curiously, say my knife's naught. Shall I not find a woodcock too?

BENEDICK

165 Sir, your wit ambles well; it goes easily.

DON PEDRO

I'll tell thee how Beatrice praised thy wit he other day. I said thou hadst a fine wit. "True," said she, "a fine little one." "No," said I, "a great wit." "Right," says she, "a great gross one." "Nay," said I, "a good wit." "Just," said she, "it hurts nobody." "Nay," said I, "the gentleman is wise." "Certain," said she, "a wise gentleman." "Nay," said I, "he hath the tongues." "That I believe," said she, "for he swore a thing to me on Monday night, which he forswore on Tuesday morning; there's a double tongue, there's two tongues." Thus did she an hour together transshape thy particular virtues. Yet at last she concluded with a sigh, thou wast the proper'st man in Italy.

CLAUDIO

180 For the which she wept heartily and said she cared not.

DON PEDRO

Yea, that she did. But yet for all that, an if she did not hate him deadly, she would love him dearly. The old man's daughter told us all.

CLAUDIO

185 All, all. And, moreover, God saw him when he was hid in the garden.

DON PEDRO

But when shall we set the savage bull's horns on the sensible Benedick's head?

CLAUDIO

Yea, and text underneath: "Here dwells Benedick the married man?"

BENEDICK

190 Fare you well, boy. You know my mind. I will leave you now to your gossip-like humor. You break jests as braggarts do their blades, which, God be thanked, hurt not. —My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you. I must discontinue your company. Your brother the Bastard is fled from Messina. You have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet, and till then peace be with him.

Exit

DON PEDRO

He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

And hath challenged thee?

CLAUDIO

Most sincerely.

CLAUDIO

Indeed, I thank Benedick. He's asked me to have a calf's head and a capon ², and says that if I don't carve them carefully he'll mock my skill with a knife. Should I bring a woodcock too?

BENEDICK

Sir, your wit is slow and rambling

DON PEDRO

[*To BENEDICK*] I'll tell you how Beatrice praised your wit the other day. I said that you had a fine wit. "True," she said, "a fine little one." "No," I said, "a large wit." "Right," she said, "a large, coarse one." "No," I said, "a good wit." "Exactly," she said, "it doesn't hurt anybody." "No," I said, "the gentleman is wise." "Certainly," she said, "he's a wise gentleman ³." "No," I said, "he knows foreign languages." "I believe that," she said, "for he swore one thing to me on Monday night, and then took it back on Tuesday morning. There's two different languages for you." And so she turned your virtues inside out for a whole hour. But at last she sighed and concluded that you were the handsomest man in Italy.

CLAUDIO

Then she cried because of it, and said she didn't care.

DON PEDRO

Yes, she did. And yet, for all that, if she didn't hate him completely, she'd love him totally. Leonato's daughter told us everything.

CLAUDIO

Everything. Everything. And, moreover, God saw Benedick when he was hiding in the garden.

DON PEDRO

So when should we put the savage bull's horns ⁴ on the head of the once-sensible Benedick?

CLAUDIO

Yea, and make the sign underneath him that says: "Here is Benedick, the married man?"

BENEDICK

See you later, boy. You know what I plan. I'll leave you now to your silly gossip. Your jokes are like the swords of cowardly braggarts—thank God, they don't hurt at all.

[*To DON PEDRO*] My lord, I thank you for your many kindnesses to me. I can no longer remain with you. Your brother Don John the Bastard has fled from Messina. The three of you have killed a pure and innocent girl. As for Lord Beardless over there, he and I will duel. May he know peace until then.

BENEDICK exits.

DON PEDRO

He's serious.

CLAUDIO

He is absolutely serious. And, I bet you, he's said all of this because he loves Beatrice.

DON PEDRO

And has he challenged you?

CLAUDIO

He has challenged me, completely seriously.

² A calf's head and a capon were symbols of stupidity, as were the woodcocks Claudio mentions later in this same comment.

³ A "wise gentleman" was a phrase to describe a foolish old man.

⁴ Don Pedro jokes that Benedick is in love, will soon be married, and then will be cuckolded, or wear the "savage bull's horns."

DON PEDRO

What a pretty thing man is when he goes in his doublet and hose and leaves off his wit!

CLAUDIO

205 He is then a giant to an ape; but then is an ape a doctor to such a man.

DON PEDRO

But soft you, let me be. Pluck up, my heart, and be sad. Did he not say my brother was fled?

Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the Watch, with CONRAD and BORACHIO

DOGBERRY

210 Come you, sir. If justice cannot tame you, she shall ne'er weigh more reasons in her balance. Nay, 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!

CLAUDIO

Hearken after their offense, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Officers, what offense have these men done?

DOGBERRY

215 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

220 First, I ask thee what they have done; thirdly, I ask thee what's their offense; sixth and lastly, why they are committed; and, to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

[to BORACHIO and CONRAD] Who have you offended, masters, that you are thus bound to your answer? This learned constable is too cunning to be understood. What's your offense?

BORACHIO

230 Sweet Prince, let me go no farther to mine answer. Do you hear me, and let this count kill me. I have deceived even your very eyes. What your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light, who in the night overheard me confessing to this man how
235 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 villainy they have upon record, which I had rather seal with my death than
240 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

What a silly thing a man looks like when he's gotten dressed but left his brain behind!

CLAUDIO

He's like a giant compared to a monkey, but a monkey could be his doctor—that's how much smarter it is than a man like him.

DON PEDRO

But wait a minute, let me think. I must consider this and get serious. Didn't he say that my brother has run away?

DOGBERRY, VERGES, and Watchmen enter, along with CONRAD and BORACHIO.

DOGBERRY

Come here, sir. If you don't feel the sting of justice, then Justice no longer has any power. Since you are a damned hypocrite, we must deal with you.

DON PEDRO

What's going on? Two of my brother's men in handcuffs? And Borachio is one of them?

CLAUDIO

Listen to their crime, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Officers, what have these men done?

DOGBERRY

Well, sir, they have lied. In addition, they have said things that weren't true. Second, they are slanderers. Sixth and last, they have falsely accused a lady. And thirdly, they have confirmed as true things that were false. And, finally, they are lying fools.

DON PEDRO

First, I ask you what they've done. Thirdly, I ask what's their crime. Sixth and lastly, I want to know why they are in jail. And, to conclude, I want to know with what they are charged. ⁵

CLAUDIO


Well put, and in the same order he used. By God, that's one simple question and answer dressed up in many different ways.

DON PEDRO

[To BORACHIO and CONRAD] Who have you wronged, men, to be in custody and forced to answer? This knowledgeable policeman is too smart to be understood. What was your crime?

BORACHIO

Sweet Prince, don't wait for the trial, but let me give my answer here. Listen to me, and let this count kill me. I have deceived your very eyes. These shallow fools have discovered what you in your wisdom could not. In the night they overheard me confessing to this man, Conrad, that your brother Don John incited me to slander the Lady Hero. I explained how you were brought to the garden and saw me courting Margaret, who was wearing Hero's clothes. And then you disgraced Hero when you should have married her. They have my villainy on record, and I'd rather seal it up with my death than have to retell the story of my shame. The lady is dead because of my and my master's false accusation. In short, I desire nothing now but the proper punishment for a villain.

 Don Pedro mimics Dogberry's incoherent and redundant way of speaking to mock him.

DON PEDRO

[to CLAUDIO] Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO

245 I have drunk poison while he uttered it.

DON PEDRO

[to BORACHIO] But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO

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

DON PEDRO

He is composed and framed of treachery,
And fled he is upon this villainy.

CLAUDIO

250 Sweet Hero, now thy image doth appear
In the rare semblance that I loved it first.

DOGBERRY

255 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.

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, with the SEXTON

LEONATO

260 Which is the villain? Let me see his eyes,
That, when I note another man like him,
I may avoid him. Which of these is he?

BORACHIO

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

LEONATO

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

BORACHIO

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO

265 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.
270 'Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it.

CLAUDIO

275 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.

DON PEDRO

By my soul, nor I,
And yet to satisfy this good old man
I would bend under any heavy weight
That he'll enjoin me to.

DON PEDRO

[To CLAUDIO] Doesn't this make ice run through your veins?

CLAUDIO

I feel as if I've drunk poison while he was talking.

DON PEDRO

[To BORACHIO] But did my brother tell you to do all this?

BORACHIO

Yes, and he paid me a lot to do it.

DON PEDRO

He is made entirely of treachery. He's run away because of
this crime.

CLAUDIO

Sweet Hero, when I imagine you now, you seem as beautiful
and exceptional as you were when I first loved you.

DOGBERRY

Come, take away the plaintiffs. By now the sexton will have
reformed ⁶ Sir Leonato about all this. And sirs, don't
forget to specify, when the time is right, that I am an ass.

⁶ Dogberry means "defendants," not "plaintiffs," and "informed," not "reformed."

VERGES

Here, here comes Master Sir Leonato, and the sexton too.

LEONATO, ANTONIO, and the SEXTON enter.

LEONATO

Which one is the villain? Let me look into his eyes so that,
when I see another man like him, I can avoid him. Which of
these men is he?

BORACHIO

If you want to know who has wronged you, then look at me.

LEONATO

Are you the villain that has killed my innocent child with
your words?

BORACHIO

Yes, I alone.

LEONATO

No, not so, villain, you weren't the only one. [Pointing to
CLAUDIO and DON PEDRO] Here stand a pair of "honorable
men"—the third has fled—who also had a hand in this
crime.

[To CLAUDIO and DON PEDRO] I thank you, princes, for my
daughter's death. Record it in the list of your great and
noble deeds. It was bravely done.

CLAUDIO

I don't know how to ask you for patience, but I must speak.
Choose your revenge against me. Do whatever you want
with me to punish my sin. But my only sin was in making a
mistake.

DON PEDRO

Mine too. But to satisfy this good old man, I would bear any
burden he might place on me.

LEONATO

280 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 ought in sad invention,
285 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. My brother hath a daughter,
290 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!
295 Your overkindness doth wring tears from me.
I do embrace your offer; and dispose
For henceforth of poor Claudio.

LEONATO

Tomorrow then I will expect your coming.
Tonight I take my leave. This naughty man
300 Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
Who I believe was packed 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,
305 But always hath been just and virtuous
In any thing that I do know by her.

DOGBERRY

[*to LEONATO*] Moreover, sir, which indeed is not
under white and black, this plaintiff here, the
offender, did call me ass. I beseech you, let it be
remembered in his punishment. And also the watch heard
310 them talk of one Deformed. They say he wears a key in
his ear and a lock hanging by it and borrows money in
God's name, the which he hath used so long and never
paid that now men grow hard-hearted and will lend
315 nothing for God's sake. Pray you, examine him upon that
point.

LEONATO

I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

320 [*giving him money*] There's for thy pains.

DOGBERRY

God save the foundation!

LEONATO

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

DOGBERRY

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

LEONATO

I cannot make you make my daughter live—that would be
impossible. But please, both of you, inform the people of
Messina that she died innocently. And if your love for Hero
can inspire any creativity, then write a tribute to her. Hang it
on her tomb, and sing it to her bones. Sing it tonight. Then
come to my house tomorrow morning, and since you could
not be my son-in-law, be my nephew instead. My brother
has a daughter who is the spitting image of dead Hero, and
she is heir to both of us. Give her what you should have
given her cousin—the right and rite of marriage—and my
thirst for revenge will die.

CLAUDIO

Oh, noble sir! Your kindness is making me cry. I gladly
accept your offer. From now on, demand whatever you like
of poor Claudio.

LEONATO

I will expect you tomorrow then, and say goodbye for
tonight. This wicked man will be brought face to face with
Margaret, whom I believe was a conspirator in all this, and
hired by Don John.

BORACHIO

No, I swear she was not. She didn't know what she was
doing when she spoke to me. All I've ever heard about her is
that she is honest and virtuous.

DOGBERRY

[*To LEONATO*] Another thing, sir, which hasn't been written
down—this plaintiff ⁷ here, the criminal, called me an ass.
Please remember this when you're handing out his
punishment. Also the watchmen heard these two talking
about a criminal named Deformed ⁸. They say that he
wears a key in his ear with a lock hanging from it. He
borrows money in God's name and never pays it back, and
now everyone is so hard-hearted about it that no one will
fund anything in God's name anymore. Please, interrogate
them about this.

LEONATO

I thank you for your hard work and honest efforts.

DOGBERRY

Your Worship speaks like a very thankful and respectful
youth, and I thank God for you.

LEONATO

[*Giving him money*] That's for your trouble.

DOGBERRY

God save the charity!

LEONATO

Go. I'll relieve you of your prisoner. Thank you.

DOGBERRY

I leave a complete scoundrel with you, your Worship, whom
I ask your Worship to correct yourself ⁹ for the example of
others. God bless your Worship! I wish your Worship well.
May God restore you to health! I now humbly allow you to
leave, and may we meet again in the future, if God prohibits
it!

¹⁰
[*To VERGES*] Come on, neighbor.

⁷ Once again, Dogberry means "defendant," not "plaintiff."

⁸ Dogberry is garbling the events of Act 3, Scene 3 (the lock of hair becomes a lock and key), though it's unclear where he got the rest of his information about "Deformed."

⁹ Dogberry asks Leonato to correct Borachio personally, but his phrasing makes it sound like Leonato is a complete scoundrel who needs to correct himself.

¹⁰ Dogberry asks God to "restore" Leonato's health, when he probably means "God keep you in good health." He then "allows" Leonato to leave, when Dogberry is the one actually

Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES

leaving. Finally, he says "prohibits" instead of "permits."

LEONATO

330 Until tomorrow morning, lords, farewell.

ANTONIO

Farewell, my lords. We look for you tomorrow.

DON PEDRO

We will not fail.

CLAUDIO

Tonight I'll mourn with Hero.

LEONATO

[to the Watch]

335 Bring you these fellows on.—We'll talk with Margaret,
How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.

DOGBERRY and VERGES exit.

LEONATO

Farewell until tomorrow morning, my lords.

ANTONIO

Farewell, my lords. We'll expect you tomorrow.

DON PEDRO

We will be there without fail.

CLAUDIO

I'll mourn for Hero tonight.

LEONATO

[To the WATCHMEN] Bring these criminals along. We'll talk with Margaret, and find out how she became friends with this wicked fellow.

Exeunt

They all exit.

Act 5, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter BENEDICK and MARGARET

BENEDICK

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

MARGARET

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

BENEDICK

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

MARGARET

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

BENEDICK

10 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

15 A most manly wit, Margaret, it will not hurt a woman. And so, I pray thee, call Beatrice. I give thee the bucklers.

MARGARET

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

Shakescleare Translation

BENEDICK and MARGARET enter.

BENEDICK

Please, sweet Mistress Margaret, do me a favor by calling Beatrice to speak with me.

MARGARET

Will you write me a sonnet praising my beauty in exchange?

BENEDICK

I'll write you a sonnet in such a [high style](#) that no man will ever be able to come over it [1](#). Truly, your beauty deserves it.

[1](#) By "high style" he means an epic style, but Benedick also puns on "stile" (a fence), which is why no one will be able to "come over it" (climb it). To "come over" means to "exceed," but in the next line Margaret interprets it as "to have sex."

MARGARET

No man will come over me! Why, will I always be a servant, and never a mistress of the house?

BENEDICK

Your wit is as quick as a greyhound's mouth—it catches whatever it wants.

MARGARET

And your wit is as blunt as a fencer's practice sword—it hits, but doesn't hurt.

BENEDICK

My wit is gentlemanly, Margaret, and it won't hurt a woman. And so, please call Beatrice. [I give you the bucklers](#) [2](#).

[2](#) By this phrase, Benedick means "I give up." Bucklers were small shields with spikes in the center. Margaret will then interpret bucklers as vaginas, and swords as penises.

MARGARET

Give us the swords—we women have bucklers of our own.

BENEDICK

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

MARGARET

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

BENEDICK

And therefore will come.

Exit MARGARET

[sings]

*The god of love,
That sits above,*

25 *And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve—*

I mean in singing. But in loving, Leander the good swimmer, Troilus the first employer of panders, and a whole bookful of these quondam carpetmongers, whose

30 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
35 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

40 Oh, 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

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BENEDICK

But, Margaret, if you're going to use your bucklers, you must screw the spikes in the center. They're dangerous weapons for virgins.

MARGARET

Well, I'll call Beatrice to come to you. She has legs, and can walk here herself.

BENEDICK

And so she will come.

MARGARET exits.

[Singing]

*The god of love,
Who sits above,*

*And knows me, and knows me,
How much pity I deserve—*

How pitiful my singing is. But as for loving, take Leander, Troilus, or a whole book full of those ancient carpetmongers ³, whose names sound so smooth in verse. Why, none of them were driven as crazy by love as I have been. But, alas, I can't show my feelings in a poem. I have tried. I can't come up with any rhyme for "lady" but "baby"—which is too silly; for "scorn" I can only find "horn"—which is too harsh ⁴; for "school," I can only find "fool"—a rhyme that will babble on like a fool. These are all very ominous endings for describing a relationship. No, I wasn't destined to be a poet. I can't court a lady with fancy language.

BEATRICE enters.

Sweet Beatrice, did you come because I called you?

BEATRICE

Yes, sir, and I'll leave when you command.

BENEDICK

Oh, stay until then!

BEATRICE

Well, you've said "then." So farewell. But before I go, let me get what I came for—the knowledge of what happened between you and Claudio.

BENEDICK

Only foul, angry words passed between us, and with that I'll kiss you.

BEATRICE

Foul words are foul air, and foul air is foul breath, and foul breath is nauseating. Therefore I will leave unknissed.

BENEDICK

Your wit is so forceful that it's frightened the words out of their proper meanings. But I must tell you this plainly: Claudio has heard my challenge. He'll either accept it soon, or I will publicly proclaim him a coward. And now, please tell me, which of my bad qualities did you first fall in love with?

BEATRICE

With all of them together: they are so wholly united that they create a perfectly bad person, and won't let any good qualities mix in with them. But which of my good qualities first made you suffer love for me?

BENEDICK

Suffer love! That's a good expression. I do suffer love indeed, for I love you against my will.

³ *Leander and Troilus were both famous examples of lovers in ancient myths. "Carpetmongers" is a word for "carpet-knights," or nobles who gained their knighthood by kneeling on carpets and flattering royalty, not fighting.*

⁴ *Once again, we see the association between horns and being cuckolded. This rhyme is "harsh" because it implies that after winning over the "scornful" lady, the lover will only be rewarded with cuckold's horns.*

BEATRICE

60 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.

BEATRICE

65 It appears not in this confession. There's not one wise
man among twenty that will praise himself.

BENEDICK

An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that lived in the
time of good neighbors. If a man do not erect in this
age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in
monument than
70 the bell rings and the widow weeps.

BEATRICE

And how long is that, think you?

BENEDICK

Question: why, an hour in clamor and a quarter in
rheum. Therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if
Don Worm, his conscience, find no impediment to the
contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am
75 to myself. So much for praising myself, who, I myself
will bear witness, is praiseworthy. An now tell me, how
doth your cousin?

BEATRICE

Very ill.

BENEDICK

80 And how do you?

BEATRICE

Very ill, too.

BENEDICK

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

Enter URSULA

URSULA

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

Exit

BEATRICE

Will you go hear this news, Signior?

BENEDICK

90 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

BEATRICE

You love me in spite of your heart, I think. Alas, if you spite
your poor heart for my sake, then I will spite it for your sake.
I will never love something that my friend hates.

BENEDICK

You and I are too wise to woo each other peacefully.

BEATRICE

You don't show your wisdom by declaring yourself wise,
though. It's said that a wise man won't praise himself.

BENEDICK

Beatrice, that's an old, old proverb, from the good old days
when neighbors would praise each other. Nowadays, if a
man doesn't erect a monument to himself before he dies,
his memory won't last any longer than the church bell
ringing and his widow's weeping.

BEATRICE

And how long is that, do you think?

BENEDICK

That's the question: why, an hour of ringing and fifteen
minutes of crying. Therefore it's best for a wise man—if his
conscience permits it—to trumpet his own virtues, like I do.
So that's why I praise myself, for—I'll bear witness to it
myself—I'm quite praiseworthy. Now tell me, how is your
cousin doing?

BEATRICE

She's very sick.

BENEDICK

And how are you doing?

BEATRICE

I'm very sick, too.

BENEDICK

Serve God, love me, and feel better. I'll leave you with that,
for someone is hurrying this way.

URSULA enters.

URSULA


Madam, you must go to your uncle's. There's a great to-do
at home. It's been proved that my Lady Hero was falsely
accused, the Prince and Claudio were greatly deceived, and
Don John—who has fled and gone—is responsible for
everything. Will you come right away?


She exits.

BEATRICE

Will you come with me to hear this news, sir?

BENEDICK

I will live in your heart, die in your lap , and be buried in
your eyes—and what's more, I'll go with you to your uncle's.

 Benedick puns on the meaning of
"die" as slang for "orgasm."

They exit.

Act 5, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Shakesclare Translation

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

CLAUDIO

Is this the monument of Leonato?

FIRST LORD

It is, my lord.

CLAUDIO

[reading an epitaph]

Done to death by slanderous tongues

5 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.

Hangs the scroll

10 Hang thou there upon the tomb,

Praising her when I am dumb.

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

[sings]

Pardon, goddess of the night,

15 *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

20 *Heavily, heavily.*

Graves, yawn and yield your dead,

Till death be utterèd,

Heavily, heavily.

Now, unto thy bones good night!

25 Yearly will I do this rite.

DON PEDRO

Good morrow, masters. Put your torches out.

The wolves have preyed, and look, the gentle day,

Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about

Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.

30 Thanks to you all, and leave us. Fare you well.

CLAUDIO

Good morrow, masters. Each his several way.

Exeunt LORDS and Musicians

DON PEDRO

Come, let us hence, and put on other weeds,

And then to Leonato's we will go.

CLAUDIO

And Hymen now with luckier issue speed 's

35 Than this for whom we rendered up this woe.

Exeunt

DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, musicians, and three or four LORDS carrying candles enter.

CLAUDIO

Is this Leonato's family tomb?

FIRST LORD

It is, my lord.

CLAUDIO

[Reading an epitaph]

Here lies Hero,

A hero killed by slanderous tongues.

To repay her for her wrongs,

Death gives her fame, which never dies.

So the life that died with shame

Lives in death with glorious fame.

He hangs the scroll on the monument.

Stay there on the tomb, scroll, and keep praising Hero even when I can no longer speak.

[To the musicians] Now start the music, and sing your solemn hymn.

[Singing]

Pardon, goddess of the night,

We who killed your virgin knight.

Now singing songs of woe

Around about her tomb we go.

Oh, midnight, assist our grief.

Help us to sigh and groan

Mournfully, mournfully.

Oh, graves, open wide and release your dead,

Until her death is fully lamented,

Mournfully, mournfully.

Goodnight to your bones for now, Hero! I will perform this ceremony every year.

DON PEDRO

Good morning, sirs. Put your torches out. The wolves have

finished their night's hunting, and look—the gentle dawn

precedes Phoebus ² ' chariot, and dapples the drowsy

eastern sky with spots of light. Thanks to you all. Now leave

us. Farewell.

CLAUDIO

Good morning, sirs. Let each of us go his separate ways.

LORDS and musicians exit.

DON PEDRO

Come, let's go and put on different clothes, and then we'll

go to Leonato's.

CLAUDIO

And may Hymen ³ give us better luck with this wedding

than poor Hero had.

They exit.

¹ Claudio addresses Diana, goddess of virginity and the moon. Her "knight" would be Hero, a young virgin.

² Phoebus was another name for the god Apollo when he was associated with the sun.

³ Hymen was the ancient Greek god of marriage.

Act 5, Scene 4

Shakespeare

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

Shakescleare Translation

LEONATO, ANTONIO, BENEDICK, BEATRICE, MARGARET, URSULA, FRIAR FRANCIS, and HERO enter.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

LEONATO

So are the Prince and Claudio, who accused her
Upon the error that you heard debated.
But Margaret was in some fault for this,
5 Although against her will, as it appears
In the true course of all the question.

ANTONIO

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

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

10 Well, daughter, and you gentlewomen all,
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
And when I send for you, come hither masked.
The Prince and Claudio promised by this hour
To visit me.—You know your office, brother.
15 You must be father to your brother's daughter,
And give her to young Claudio.

Exeunt Ladies

ANTONIO

Which I will do with confirmed countenance.

BENEDICK

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS

To do what, Signior?

BENEDICK

20 To bind me or undo me, one of them.—
Signior Leonato, truth it 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

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

BENEDICK

Your answer, sir, is enigmatical.
But for my will, my will is your goodwill
May stand with ours, this day to be conjoined
30 In the state of honorable marriage—
In which, good Friar, I shall desire your help.

LEONATO

My heart is with your liking.

FRIAR FRANCIS

And my help.
Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, and two or three others

DON PEDRO

35 Good morrow to this fair assembly.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Didn't I tell you that she was innocent?

LEONATO

And so are the Prince and Claudio, who accused her
because they themselves were deceived. Margaret was
partly at fault for this. Yet our examination has shown that
she didn't know about the plot, even though she played a
role in it.

ANTONIO

Well, I am glad that things have turned out so well.

BENEDICK

And so am I, or else my own promise would have made me
fight Claudio.

LEONATO

Well, daughter, and all you gentlewomen, retreat to a room
by yourselves. When I send for you, come out wearing
masks. The Prince and Claudio promised me they would be
here by now.

[To ANTONIO] You know your job, brother. You must be the
father to my daughter, and give her away to young Claudio.

The ladies exit.

ANTONIO

I'll do it with a straight, serious face.

BENEDICK

Friar, I must ask you for a favor, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS

To do what, sir?

BENEDICK

To tie me up, or to undo me—one or the other.

[To LEONATO] Sir Leonato, the truth is, good sir, that your
niece Beatrice has been looking at me favorably.

LEONATO

She sees you with eyes my daughter lent her, that's true.

BENEDICK

And I look back at her with eyes of love.

LEONATO

I think you got such sight from me, Claudio, and the Prince.
But what do you want?

BENEDICK

Your words are puzzling to me, sir. But as for what I
want—what I want is your blessing, so your niece and I can
be honorably married today.

[To FRIAR FRANCIS] And that, good Friar, is where I need
your help.

LEONATO

I am pleased with your desire, and I give you my blessing.

FRIAR FRANCIS

And I offer you my help. Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and two or three others enter.

DON PEDRO

Good morning to this fair gathering.

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

40 Call her forth, brother. Here's the friar ready.

Exit ANTONIO

DON PEDRO

Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what's the matter
That you have such a February face,
So full of frost, of storm and cloudiness?

CLAUDIO

I think he thinks upon the savage bull.
45 Tush, fear not, man. We'll tip thy horns with gold,
And all Europa shall rejoice at thee
As once Europa did at lusty Jove
When he would play the noble beast in love.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

For this I owe you. Here comes other reck'nings.

*Enter ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, MARGARET, URSULA, the ladies
masked*

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

LEONATO

55 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

[to HERO] Give me your hand before this holy friar.
60 I am your husband, if you like of me.

HERO

And when I lived, I was your other wife,
And when you loved, you were my other husband.
[she unmask]

CLAUDIO

Another Hero!

LEONATO

Good morning, Prince. Good morning, Claudio. We've been
expecting you. Are you still determined to marry my
brother's daughter today?

CLAUDIO

I would stick to my promise even if her complexion was
dark ¹.

LEONATO

Bring her out, brother. The friar's ready.

ANTONIO exits.

DON PEDRO

Good morning, Benedick. Why, what's the matter? Why do
you have such a February face—so full of frost, storms, and
cloudiness?

CLAUDIO

I think he's remembering how the free, savage bull must
wear the yoke of marriage. Oh, don't be afraid, man. We'll
coat your horns with gold, and all of Europe will love you,
just as Europa once loved lustful Jove when he was the bull ²

BENEDICK

Bull Jove, sir, came mooing for love, and some strange bull
like him mated with one of your father's cows, who then
gave birth to a calf like you. You have the same bleat.

CLAUDIO

I'll get you back for that. But here come other accounts I
must settle first.

*ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, MARGARET, and URSULA enter.
The ladies wear masks.*

Which is the lady I'm going to marry?

LEONATO

This one here, and I now give her to you.

CLAUDIO

Why then, she's mine.

[To HERO] Sweet one, let me see your face.

LEONATO

No, you won't see her face until you take her hand and
swear to marry her in front of this friar.

CLAUDIO

[To HERO] Give me your hand before this holy friar. I am
your husband, if you want me to be.

HERO

And when I lived, I was your other wife. And when you loved
me, you were my other husband. *[She takes off her mask]*

CLAUDIO

Another Hero!

¹ In the original text, Claudio claims he will marry Antonio's daughter even if her skin is dark—the term "Ethiophe" refers to those with dark skin, not the nationality. The standards of beauty in Shakespeare's England emphasized fair skin.

² This is yet another joke about cuckolds' horns. It's also a reference to the mythological Jove, who transformed himself into a bull to court the maiden Europa. In the next lines Benedick will mock Claudio by calling him a "calf," which meant "fool."

HERO

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

DON PEDRO

The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

LEONATO

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

FRIAR FRANCIS

70 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

75 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
80 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

85 They swore that you were almost sick for me.

BEATRICE

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

BENEDICK

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

BEATRICE

No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

90 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,
Fashioned to Beatrice.
[shows a paper]

HERO

95 And here's another,

HERO

It's true. One Hero died disgraced. But I am still alive, and as surely as I'm alive, I am a virgin.

DON PEDRO

The former Hero! Hero that was dead!

LEONATO

She was only dead while her slander lived, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

I can explain all these surprises. After the wedding ceremony is over, I'll tell you in full detail about fair Hero's supposed "death." In the meantime, let's accept these amazing events as natural, and go straight to the chapel.

BENEDICK

Wait a moment, Friar.

[To the masked ladies] Which one is Beatrice?

BEATRICE

[Taking off her mask] I answer to that name. What do you want?

BENEDICK

Do you love me?

BEATRICE

Why no, no more than is reasonable.

BENEDICK

Why then, your uncle and the Prince and Claudio have been
deceived. They swore that you did.

BEATRICE

Do you love me?

BENEDICK

Truly, no, no more than is reasonable.

BEATRICE

Why then, my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula have been
greatly deceived, for they swore that you did.

BENEDICK

They swore that you were almost sick with love for me.

BEATRICE

They swore that you were almost dead with love for me.

BENEDICK

Well then. You don't love me?

BEATRICE

No, truly—just as a friend.

LEONATO

Come, niece, I am sure that you love this gentleman.

CLAUDIO

And I'll swear that he loves her, for here's a paper in his handwriting—a clumsy sonnet that he composed himself, dedicated to Beatrice. *[He shows a piece of paper]*

HERO

And here's another, stolen from my cousin's

Writ in my cousin's hand, stol'n from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto Benedick.
[shows a paper]

BENEDICK

A miracle! Here's our own hands against our hearts.
100 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

105 Peace! I will stop your mouth.

They kiss

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. If a man will be beaten
110 with brains, he shall wear nothing handsome about him.
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
115 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.

CLAUDIO

I had well hoped thou wouldst have denied Beatrice,
that I might have cudged thee out of thy single life,
120 to make thee a double-dealer, which out of question,
thou wilt be, if my cousin do not look exceedingly
narrowly to thee.

BENEDICK

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

LEONATO

We'll have dancing afterward.

BENEDICK

First, of my word! Therefore play, music.—Prince, thou
art sad. Get thee a wife, get thee a wife. There is no
staff more reverend than one tipped with horn.

Enter a MESSENGER

MESSENGER

130 *[to DON PEDRO]* My lord, your brother John is ta'en in
flight
And brought with armed men back to Messina.

BENEDICK

[to DON PEDRO] Think not on him till tomorrow. I'll
135 devise thee brave punishments for him.—Strike up,
pipers.

pocket—written in her handwriting, and full of her affection
for Benedick. *[She shows a piece of paper]*

BENEDICK

A miracle! Our own handwriting gives evidence against our
guilty hearts. Come, I'll take you then, but I swear I'm only
doing it out of pity.

BEATRICE

I won't refuse you. But, to be clear, I'm only doing this
because everyone persuaded me, and partly to save your
life—for I heard you were wasting away with love for me.

BENEDICK

Enough talking! I'll stop your mouth with a kiss.

They kiss.

DON PEDRO


How are you now, Benedick, the Married Man?


BENEDICK

I'll tell you what, Prince: a whole assembly of wisecrackers
couldn't ruin my mood. Do you think I care about mockery
and name-calling? No. If a man is always afraid of being
ridiculed, he'll never dare to wear something nice. In short,
since I intend to marry, I won't hear anything the world has
to say against marriage. So don't mock me for what I said
against it before. Man is a fickle creature, and that's my
conclusion.

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

CLAUDIO

I had almost hoped that you would deny Beatrice, just so I
might have beaten you out of your single life and made you
a double-dealer . But you'll probably become one
anyway, if my new cousin Beatrice doesn't keep a close eye
on you.

 By "double-dealer," Claudio
jokingly refers both to someone who
breaks his word—because Benedick
had sworn to never marry—and also
to an unfaithful husband.

BENEDICK


Come, come, we're all friends here. Let's have a dance
before we're married to cheer ourselves up.


LEONATO

We'll have dancing after the wedding.

BENEDICK

No, we'll have it first! Play a song, musicians.

[To DON PEDRO] Prince, you look serious. Get yourself a
wife, get yourself a wife! Your royal staff would be more
impressive if it were tipped with horn .

 Benedick makes yet another
reference to cuckold's horns here.

A MESSENGER enters.

MESSENGER

[To DON PEDRO] My lord, your brother John has been
captured, and armed men have brought him back to
Messina.

BENEDICK

[To DON PEDRO] Don't worry about him until tomorrow. For
your sake, I'll come up with a suitable punishment for him.

[To the musicians] Now, play, musicians!

Dance

They all dance.

Exeunt

They all exit.

How to Cite

To cite this Shakescleare translation:

MLA

Cosby, Matt. "Much Ado About Nothing: A Shakescleare Translation." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 11 May 2014. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

Chicago Manual

Cosby, Matt. "Much Ado About Nothing: A Shakescleare Translation." *LitCharts* LLC, May 11, 2014. Retrieved April 21, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/much-ado-about-nothing>.