

## 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?

## Shakescleare 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.

"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?

"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.

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**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 <sup>3</sup> Benedick of Padua.

**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 <sup>4</sup>. 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.

**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.

<sup>3</sup> In the original text, Hero uses the word "signior," an Italian term of address for a man.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

**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  
95 herself.—Be happy, lady, for you are like an honorable 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 enter.*

<sup>5</sup> 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 <sup>6</sup>. When a burden leaves, comfort should replace it. But when you leave, you take happiness with you and leave behind only sorrow.

<sup>6</sup> "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

**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

stay longer. I swear that he's not just being polite, but is 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 ancient Roman mythology, Vulcan was the god of fire, typically depicted as a blacksmith.

of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

**CLAUDIO**

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

**BENEDICK**

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.

in beauty more than spring does winter. But I hope you aren't looking to become a husband, are you?

**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? 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.

 *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 <sup>9</sup>. 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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 <sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> "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,

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

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

*Exeunt*

her. When she hears, she'll be taken prisoner by the force of 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  
20 itself. But I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she may be the better prepared for an answer if peradventure this be true. Go you and tell her of it.

*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**

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 anticthy; 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  descendants are my relatives, and I truly believe that marriage between relatives is a sin.

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

**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  —it looks humble on the outside, but the great god Jove is beneath it.

 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 , 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.

 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 toothpick 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?

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

**B** Atë was the ancient Greek goddess of destruction and folly.

**C** 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.

**D** 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.

**E** 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**

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?

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

**BEATRICE**

No, my lord, unless I might have another for working days. Your Grace is too costly to wear every day. But I beseech your Grace pardon me. I was born to speak all mirth and no matter.

**DON PEDRO**

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  
330 doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but

**BEATRICE**

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

minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

**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 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.

345

*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.

### 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**

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

**DON JOHN**

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

**BORACHIO**

The poison of that lies in you to temper. Go you to  
the Prince your brother. Spare not to tell him that he  
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*

**BORACHIO**

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

**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*

### Shakescleare Translation

*BENEDICK enters.*

**BENEDICK**

Boy!

*A BOY enters.*

**BOY**

Signior?

**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 mile afoot to see a good armor, and now will he lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier, and now is he

10 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

15 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;

20 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

25 of what color it please God. Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbor.

30

35

*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.

**BOY**

Sir?

**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.

 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.

**DON PEDRO**

It is the witness still of excellency  
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 sheeps' 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  
90 bode no mischief. I had as lief have heard the night  
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

**DON PEDRO**

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

**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**

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

**BENEDICK**

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

**CLAUDIO**

And she is exceptionally wise.

**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 <sup>2</sup>, 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.

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

**LEONATO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

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

*[aside to LEONATO]* Let there be the same net spread for  
210 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**

*[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 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  
230 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?

**LEONATO**

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

**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**

Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point and choke a daw withal. You have no stomach, Signior. Fare you well.

*Exit*

**BENEDICK**

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*

**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.

*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]*

30 The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish Cut with her golden oars the silver stream And greedily devour the treacherous bait. So angle we for Beatrice, who even now

### 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.

Is couchèd in the woodbine coverture.  
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

**HERO**

- 35 *[aside to URSULA]*  
Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing  
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.—  
*[approaching the bower]*  
No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful.
- 40 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

**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,  
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

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**

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**

100 He is the only man of Italy,  
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**

110 Why, every day, tomorrow. Come, go in.  
I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel  
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]*  
115 If it proves so, then loving goes by haps;  
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

*Exeunt HERO and URSULA*

**BEATRICE**

*[coming forward]*  
What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?  
Stand I 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*

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**

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  
 30 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  
 35 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**

40 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**

45 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**

50 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**

55 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**

60 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](#).

 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.

 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**.

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

**DOGBERRY**

Are you good and honest men?

**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 <sup>2</sup> of body and soul.

<sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup> in them when they were chosen to be the Prince's watchmen.

<sup>3</sup> Dogberry means "disloyalty" instead of "allegiance."

**VERGES**

Well, give them their instructions, Sir Dogberry.

**DOGBERRY**

First, who do you think is most undeserving <sup>4</sup> to be captain of the watch tonight?

<sup>4</sup> 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 <sup>5</sup> and able man here, so you'll carry the lantern and be constable of the watch. These are your instructions: you will comprehend <sup>6</sup> any vagrants you see. You will order all men to halt, in the Prince's name.

<sup>5</sup> Dogberry means "sensible," not "senseless."

<sup>6</sup> 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 <sup>7</sup> and not to be endured.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Dogberry means "less" instead of "more."

<sup>9</sup> 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 <sup>10</sup>, 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 <sup>11</sup>, my elbow itched, and I thought I felt a scab <sup>12</sup> 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 <sup>13</sup>.

**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.

<sup>10</sup> Dogberry means "vigilant." "Vigilant" is not a word.

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

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

<sup>13</sup> 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**

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

**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 <sup>14</sup> 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 Baal <sup>15</sup>, and sometimes like the picture of Hercules in that dusty, worm-eaten tapestry, where his codpiece <sup>16</sup> 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

<sup>14</sup> 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.

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

<sup>16</sup> 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.

145 night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my  
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*

were also tricked by the dark, deceiving night, but it was  
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 <sup>17</sup> that  
was ever seen in this country.

<sup>17</sup> 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 <sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

### Shakescleare 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, pray thee, good Meg, I'll wear this.

**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**

15 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.

**HERO**

Oh, that exceeds, they say.

**MARGARET**

20 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.

**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**

30 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.

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.

**HERO**

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

**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**

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

**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

**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.

**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."

**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.

**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.

**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.

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

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

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

 Margaret talks about "*carduus benedictus*," or "holy thistle," a medicinal herb.

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 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**

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*

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 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**

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

**DOGBERRY**

Marry, this it is, sir.

**VERGES**

Yes, in truth it is, sir.

**LEONATO**

What is it, my good friends?

**DOGBERRY**

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

**VERGES**

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

### Shakesclare 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 you greatly.

 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 Verges tends to ramble on a little. He's an old man, sir, and his wits aren't as blunt as I wish they were, God help him. But I swear he's as honest as the skin between his eyebrows.

 "Goodman" was a form of address for men in Shakespeare's time.

 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**

15 Comparisons are odorous. *Palabras*, neighbor Verges.

**LEONATO**

Neighbors, you are tedious.

**DOGBERRY**

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

**LEONATO**

All thy tediousness on me, ah?

**DOGBERRY**

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**

Marry, sir, our watch tonight, excepting your Worship's presence, ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

**DOGBERRY**

A good old man, sir. He will be talking. As they say, "When the age is in, the wit is out." 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 aspicuous 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.

**DOGBERRY**

Making comparisons is odorous <sup>4</sup>, neighbor Verges. Use fewer words and get to the point, please.

<sup>4</sup> Dogberry means "odious" (hateful), not "odorous" (smelly).

**LEONATO**

Neighbors, you're becoming tedious.

**DOGBERRY**

You can say that if you like, your Worship <sup>5</sup>, but we're only the poor duke's officers. But truly, if I were as tedious <sup>6</sup> as a king, I would find it in my heart to give it all to you, your Worship.

<sup>5</sup> "Your Worship" is an honorific title for high-ranking people.

<sup>6</sup> Dogberry mistakes "tedious" to mean something like "rich."

**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 <sup>7</sup> as any man in the city, your Worship, and though I'm only a poor man, I'm glad to hear it.

<sup>7</sup> Dogberry means "acclaimed," or something more complimentary. "Exclaimed" could mean "accused."

**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 <sup>8</sup> your presence, your Worship.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

**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" <sup>9</sup>. . . God help us, it's a wonder to see!

<sup>9</sup> The actual proverb is "when ale comes in, wit goes out."

[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 aspicuous <sup>10</sup> persons, and we'd like for you to examine them this morning, your Worship.

<sup>10</sup> Dogberry means "apprehended," not "comprehended," and "suspicious" instead of the made-up word "aspicuous."

**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 <sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Dogberry means "sufficient" instead of the made-up word "suffigance."

**LEONATO**

Drink some wine ere you go. Fare you well.

*Enter a MESSENGER*

**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*

**LEONATO**

Drink some wine before you go. Farewell.

*A MESSENGER enters.*

**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](#) <sup>12</sup> these men.

**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](#) <sup>13</sup>, and meet me at the jail.

*They exit.*

<sup>12</sup> Dogberry means to use the verb "examine" instead of the noun "examination."

<sup>13</sup> He means "examination," or some kind of official communication. "Excommunication" means to be excluded from a church.

## 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.

### Shakesclare 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**

Know you 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

**CLAUDIO**

Do you know of any, Hero?

**HERO**

None, my lord.

**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!"

Here, Benedick quotes from a popular book of Latin grammar in Shakespeare's day, referencing "interjections that indicate laughter."

**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

Bashful sincerity and comely love.

**HERO**

And seemed I ever otherwise to you?

**CLAUDIO**

55 Out on thee, seeming! I will write against it.  
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**

70 Leonato, stand I here?  
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**

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

**LEONATO**

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

**HERO**

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**

85 Marry, that can Hero!  
Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.  
What man was he talked with you yesternight

treat his sister, showing her nothing but bashful sincerity  
and modest love.

**HERO**

And have I ever showed anything else to you?

**CLAUDIO**

Shame on you, false appearance! I will argue against you.  
To me you still seem like Diana , 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.

 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

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.

**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.

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 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  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.

 In Greek mythology, Hero died for  
her lover Leander, and was considered  
an ideal of virtuous love.

**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] Dost thou look up?

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Yea, wherefore should she not?

**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 ope 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 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  
 155 Which was before barred up with ribs of iron!  
 Would the two princes lie and Claudio lie,  
 Who loved her so that, speaking of her foulness,  
 Washed it with tears? Hence from her. Let her die.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Hear me a little,  
 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**

[To HERO] Do you dare to look up?

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Well, why shouldn't she?

**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, 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?

**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  
 200 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,

**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 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 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.  
 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.

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  
 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**

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

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

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—

**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 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**

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.

**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 turned into tongues, and trim ones too. He is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it.  
325 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.

**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 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.

Exeunt

They exit.

## Act 4, Scene 2

## Shakespeare

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**

Write down that they hope they serve God; and write God first, for God defend but God should go before

## Shakescleare Translation

DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the SEXTON enter in official robes, along with the WATCHMEN, CONRAD, and BORACHIO.

**DOGBERRY**

Is our whole dissembly <sup>1</sup> here now?

<sup>1</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup> to examine this case.

<sup>3</sup> 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 the CONRAD] And yours, sir <sup>4</sup>?

<sup>4</sup> 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 the 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

20

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**

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?

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 <sup>5</sup>, sir, that we aren't villains.

**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 <sup>6</sup>, to call a prince's brother a villain.

**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 <sup>7</sup> if anything ever was.

**VERGES**

Yes, by God, it is.

**SEXTON**

And what else, man?

<sup>5</sup> Conrad uses the mild oath "marry"—derived from the Virgin Mary's name—in the original text.

<sup>6</sup> Dogberry mixes up "perjury" and "slander."

<sup>7</sup> Dogberry may be mixing up "burglary" with "perjury," which he already mixed up with "slander."

**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.

**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  
60 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  
75 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  
80 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*

**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 <sup>8</sup> for this!

<sup>8</sup> Dogberry means "damnation" instead of "redemption."

**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 <sup>9</sup> them.

<sup>9</sup> 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 <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Dogberry means "respect" instead of "suspect."

[*To CONRAD*] No, you villain, you are full of piety <sup>11</sup>, 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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  
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.

## 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.

**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 cliched 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**

Hear you, my lords—

**DON PEDRO**

50 We have some haste, Leonato.

**LEONATO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

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

**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 flee 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.

**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  
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**

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.

**LEONATO**

Brother—

**ANTONIO**

Content yourself. God knows I loved my niece,  
 95 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?

**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**

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, 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.

**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

**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 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

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?

**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*

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**

Indeed, I thank Benedick. He's asked me to have a calf's head and a capon , and says that if I don't carve them carefully he'll mock my skill with a knife. Should I bring a woodcock too?

 A calf's head and a capon were symbols of stupidity, as were the woodcocks Claudio mentions later in this same comment.

**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 .

"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.

 A "wise gentlemen" was a phrase to describe a foolish old man.

**CLAUDIO**

Then she cried because of it, and said she didn't care.

**DON PEDRO**

Yea, 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  on the head of the once-sensible Benedick?

 Don Pedro jokes that Benedick is in love, will soon be married, and then will be cuckolded, or wear the "savage bull's horns."

**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 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.

**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

**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.

**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. 

**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

 Don Pedro mimics Dogberry's incoherent and redundant way of speaking to mock him.

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  
 240 record, which I had rather seal with my death than repeat over to my shame. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation. And, briefly, I desire nothing but the reward of a villain.

**DON PEDRO**

[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**

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  
 255 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**

Which is the villain? Let me see his eyes, That, when I note another man like him,  
 260 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.

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**

[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 <sup>6</sup> Sir Leonato about all this. And sirs, don't forget to specify, when the time is right, that I am an ass.

<sup>6</sup> 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 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  
275 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.

**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  
310 remembered in his punishment. And also the watch heard  
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!

**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**

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 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. 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!

 Once again, Dogberry means "defendant," not "plaintiff."

 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."

**LEONATO**

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

**DOGBERRY**

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

*Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES*

**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.

*Exeunt*

**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 <sup>9</sup> 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!

<sup>10</sup>

*[To VERGES]* Come on, neighbor.

*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.

*They all exit.*

<sup>9</sup> Dogberry asks Leonato to correct Borachio personally, but his phrasing makes it sound like Leonato is a complete scoundrel who needs to correct himself.

<sup>10</sup> 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 leaving. Finally, he says "prohibits" instead of "permits."

## 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.

### 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 <sup>9</sup>. Truly, your beauty deserves it.

**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.

<sup>9</sup> 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**

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

**BENEDICK**

A most manly wit, Margaret, it will not hurt a woman. And so, I pray thee, call Beatrice. I give thee the bucklers.

15

**MARGARET**

Give us the swords; we 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**

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

20

**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 names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank

30

verse, why, they were never so truly turned over and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme. I have tried. I can find out no rhyme to "lady" but "baby"—an innocent rhyme; for "scorn," "horn"—a hard rhyme; for, "school," "fool"—a babbling rhyme; very ominous endings. No, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

35

*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.

**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.

**MARGARET**

Give us the swords—we women have bucklers of our own.

**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.

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.

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.

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

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  
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  
75 contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am  
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*

**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.

**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 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**

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

*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.

### Shakescleare Translation

*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 ' chariot, and dapples the drowsy

eastern sky with spots of light. Thanks to you all. Now leave

us. Farewell.

 Claudio addresses Diana, goddess  
of virginity and the moon. Her  
"knight" would be Hero, a young  
virgin.

 Phoebus was another name for  
the god Apollo when he was  
associated with the sun.

**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 Hymen now with luckier issue speed 's  
35 Than this for whom we rendered up this woe.

*Exeunt*

**CLAUDIO**

And may Hymen  give us better luck with this wedding  
than poor Hero had.

 *Hymen was the ancient Greek god of marriage.*

*They exit.*

## Act 5, Scene 4

## Shakespeare

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

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

**LEONATO**

So are the Prince and Claudio, who accused her  
Upon the error that you heard debated.  
But Margaret was in some fault for this,  
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?

## Shakescleare Translation

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

**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 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.

**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 Ethiope.

**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.

**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 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 🗨️.

**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 🗨️

**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.

🗨️ In the original text, Claudio claims he will marry Antonio's daughter even if her skin is dark—the term "Ethiope" refers to those with dark skin, not the nationality. The standards of beauty in Shakespeare's England emphasized fair skin.

🗨️ 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."

**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 un.masks]*

**CLAUDIO**

Another Hero!

**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**

80 Why then, your uncle and the Prince and Claudio  
Have been deceived. They swore you did.

**BEATRICE**

Do not you love me?

**BENEDICK**

Troth, no, no more than reason.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

85 They swore that you were almost sick for me.

**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!

**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 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,  
Writ in my cousin's hand, stol'n from her pocket,  
Containing her affection unto Benedick.  
*[shows a paper]*

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

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**

120 I had well hoped thou wouldst have denied Beatrice,  
that I might have cudged thee out of thy single life,  
to make thee a double-dealer, which out of question,  
thou wilt be, if my cousin do not look exceedingly  
narrowly to thee.

**BENEDICK**

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

**LEONATO**

We'll have dancing afterward.

**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  
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.

**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.

 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**

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**

135 *[to DON PEDRO]* Think not on him till tomorrow. I'll devise thee brave punishments for him.—Strike up, pipers.

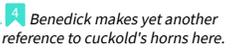
*Dance*

*Exeunt*

**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!

*They all dance.*

*They all exit.*

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