Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare
adapted by Samantha Kaufman
for Maine South High School

Act 1 Scene 1

[*MUSIC* – MESSENGER enter with letter – MARGARET enter & exits with letter]

[LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, & MARGARET enter]

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

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

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

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

Leonato. I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honor on a young gentleman called Claudio.

Messenger. Much deserved on his part: he hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age.

Beatrice. I pray you, is Señor Mosquito returned from the wars or no?

Messenger. I know none of that name, lady.

Hero. My cousin means Señor Benedick.

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

Beatrice. I pray you, how many hath he killed in these wars? for indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

Messenger. He hath done good service. 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, stuffed with all honorable virtues.

Beatrice. It is so indeed, he is no less than a stuffed man.

Leonato. You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Señor Benedick and her.

Antonio. They never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

Beatrice. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother. Is there no young squire now that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

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

Beatrice. O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease. God help the noble Claudio! if he have caught the Benedick

Messenger. Don Pedro is approached.

[DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, CONRADE, DON JOHN, & BORACHIO enter]

Don Pedro. Good Señor Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble: the fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

Leonato. Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace.

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

Leonato. Her mother hath many times told me so.

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

[Leonato & Don Pedro withdraw to speak]

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

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

Beatrice. Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Señor Benedick?

Benedick. I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted, though truly, I love none.

Don Pedro. [stopping Benedick] Señor Benedick – my dear friend Leonato hath invited you all, we shall stay here at the least a month!

[Leonato gestures for Margaret to enter for preparations]

Leonato. Let me bid you welcome, Don John, being reconciled to the prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

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

Leonato. Please it your grace lead on?

Don Pedro. Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

[Exit all except BENEDICK & CLAUDIO, as Claudio stops him]

Claudio. Benedick – didst thou note the daughter of Señor Leonato? Is she not a modest young lady?

Benedick. Would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

Claudio. No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment. In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

Benedick. I can see yet without spectacles and I see no such matter. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

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

Benedick. Is't come to this? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again?

[Enter DON PEDRO & ANTONIO, Antonio withdraws]

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

Benedick. He is in love with Hero.

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

Claudio. That I love her, I feel.

Don Pedro. That she is worthy, I know.

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

Benedick. That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks 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. With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord, not with love.

Don Pedro. Well, 'In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.'

Benedick. The savage bull may; but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it, let me be vilely painted in such great letters, 'Here you may see Benedick the married man.'

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

Benedick. And so I leave you. [BENEDICK exit]

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

Don Pedro. My love is thine to teach:
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. No child but Hero; she's his only heir.
Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

Claudio. O, my lord,
When we went onward on this ended action,
I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
But now I am return'd, instead of war-thoughts
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fine young Hero is.

Don Pedro.
If thou dost love young Hero, cherish it,
And I will fit thee with the remedy.
I know we shall have reveling to-night:
I will assume thy part in some disguise
And in her bosom I'll unclasp thy heart
Then after to her father will I break;
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
In practice let us put it presently. [Exit]

Antonio. How now, such news that my brother Leonato dreamt not of! We will acquaint young Hero withal, that she may be the better prepared for an answer. [Exit]

Act 1 Scene 2

[DON JOHN & CONRADE enter]

Conrade. 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.

Conrade. You should hear reason.

Don John. What blessing brings it?

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

Don John. I cannot hide what I am: I must be sad when I have cause and smile at no man's jests. I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had 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.

Conrade. Can you make no use of your discontent?

Don John. I make all use of it, for I use it only. [BORACHIO enter] 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. Who?

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

Don John. The most exquisite Claudio?

Borachio. Even he.

Don John. A proper squire! Which way looks he?

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

Don John. How came you to this?

Borachio. As I was drinking in a musty room, comes me the prince and Claudio, in sad conference: I whipt me behind the arras; and there heard it agreed upon that the prince should woo Hero, and having obtained her, give her to Count Claudio.

Don John. This may prove food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow: if I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure, and will assist me?

Conrade. To the death, my lord.

Don John. Let us to the great supper: their cheer is the greater that I am subdued.

Borachio. We'll wait upon your lordship. [Exit]

Act 2 Scene 1

[LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, & BEATRICE enter]

Leonato. Was not Don John here at supper?

Antonio. I saw him not.

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

Hero. He is of a very melancholy disposition.

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

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.

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

Beatrice. 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.

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

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

Beatrice. Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. No, uncle, I'll none: Adam's sons are my brethren; and, truly, I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

Leonato. Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

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

(MUSIC – MARGARET enter)

Leonato. The revelers are entering, brother: make good room. Daughter, remember what I told you, if the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

[ALL put on masks. DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, CONRADE, & MESSENGER enter masked. Dance begins.]

Don Pedro. Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

Hero. I am yours for the walk; and especially when I walk away.

Don Pedro. With me in your company?

Hero. I may say so, when I please.

Don Pedro. And when please you to say so?

Hero. When I like your favour.

Don Pedro. Speak low, if you speak love. [Drawing her aside]

Margaret. I know you well enough; you are Señor Antonio.

Antonio. At a word, I am not.

Margaret. I know you by the waggling of your head.

Antonio. To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

Margaret. You could never do him so ill-well, unless you were the very man: you are he.

Antonio. At a word, I am not.

Margaret. Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? can virtue hide itself? You are he: and there's an end. [Moving aside]

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

Benedick. No, you shall pardon me.

Beatrice. Nor will you not tell me who you are?

Benedick. Not now.

Beatrice. That I was disdainful. Well, this was Señor Benedick that said so.

Benedick. I pray you, what is he?

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

Beatrice. Do, do: he'll but break a comparison or two on me. [moving aside]

Borachio. Well, I would you did like me.

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

Borachio. I love you the better.

Margaret. God match me with a good dancer!

Borachio. Amen.

[Champagne pop – All except DON JOHN, BORACHIO, & CLAUDIO exit]

Don John. But one visor remains.

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

Don John. Sure my brother is amorous on Hero and hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it. Are not you Señor Benedick?

Claudio. You know me well; I am he.

Don John. Señor, 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. 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. [DON JOHN & BORACHIO exit]

Claudio. Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
'Tis certain so; the prince woos for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love.

[BENEDICK enter]

Benedick. Count Claudio? Come, the prince hath got your Hero.

Claudio. I wish him joy of her. I pray you, leave me.

Benedick. Ho! You'll beat the post?

Claudio. If it will not be, I'll leave you. [Exit]

Benedick. But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The prince's fool! Ha? It may be I go under that title because I am merry. It is the bitter disposition of Beatrice that so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

[DON PEDRO enter]

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

Benedick. O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the prince's jester, huddling jest upon jest upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. I would not marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed. [BEATRICE, CLAUDIO HERO, MARGARET, LEONATO, & ANTONIO enter] She would infect to the north star.

Don Pedro. Look, here she comes.

Benedick. O God, sir, I cannot endure my Lady Tongue. [Exit]

Don Pedro. Come, lady, come; you have lost the heart of Señor Benedick.

Beatrice. Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile; and I gave him use for it, a double heart for his single one: 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.

Beatrice. So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools. I have brought Count Claudio.

Don Pedro. Why, how now, count! wherefore are you sad?

Claudio. Not sad, my lord.

Don Pedro. How then? sick?

Claudio. Neither, my lord.

Beatrice. The count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, nor well; but something of a jealous complexion.

Don Pedro. I' faith, lady, I'll be sworn, if he be so, his conceit is false. Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and young Hero is won: I have broke with her father, and his good will obtained: name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!

Leonato. Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his grace hath made the match.

Beatrice. Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

Claudio. Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: 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. [Hero & Claudio kiss and withdraw]

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

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

Claudio. And so she doth, cousin.

Beatrice. Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes everyone to the world but I. I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband!

Don Pedro. Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

Beatrice. I would rather have one of your father's getting. Hath your grace ne'er a brother like you? Your father got excellent husbands, if a maid could come by them.

Don Pedro. Will you have me, lady?

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

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

Beatrice. No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born. Cousins, God give you joy! By your grace's pardon. [Exit]

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

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

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

Leonato. O, by no means: she mocks all her wooers 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. 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 seven-night; and a time too brief, too, to have all things answer my mind.

Don Pedro. Come, I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us. I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labors; which is, to bring Señor Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of

affection the one with the other. I would fain have it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

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

Claudio. And I, my lord.

Antonio. My lord.

Margaret. Indeed.

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

Don Pedro. And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. I will teach you how to humor your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your three 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. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift. [Exit]

Act 2 Scene 2

[DON JOHN & BORACHIO enter]

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

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

Don John. How canst thou cross this marriage?

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

Don John. Show me briefly how.

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

Don John. I remember.

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

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

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

Don John. What proof shall I make of that?

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

Don John. Only to 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 Hero loves me. They will scarcely believe this: offer them instances; to see me at her chamber-window, hear me call Margaret “Hero” – and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, where there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance, and all the preparation overthrown.

Don John. I will put it 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. I will presently go learn their day of marriage. [DON JOHN exit, BORACHIO]

Act 2 Scene 3

[BENEDICK enter]

Benedick. I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armor. Now is he turned orthography, his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I think not. One woman is fine, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll

never cheapen her; mild, or come not near me; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what color it please God.

Claudio. [within] M'lord—

Benedick. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the audience. [withdraws]

[ANTONIO, DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, & LEONATO enter]

Antonio. Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl sits.

Don Pedro. Leonato, what was it you told me of today, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Señor Benedick?

Claudio. I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

Leonato. No, nor I neither; but most wonderful that she should so dote on Señor Benedick, whom she hath in all outward behaviors seemed ever to abhor.

Benedick. Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

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

Leonato. It is past the infinite of thought.

Don Pedro. Maybe she doth but counterfeit.

Claudio. Faith, like enough.

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

Don Pedro. You amaze me: I would have thought her spirit had been invincible against all assaults of affection.

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

Don Pedro. Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

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

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

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

Antonio. It is very true.

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

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

Don Pedro. She's an excellent sweet lady.

Claudio. And she is exceeding wise.

Don Pedro. In everything but in loving Benedick.

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

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

Antonio. Were it good, think you?

Claudio. Hero thinks surely 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. 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. Never tell him, my lord.

Don Pedro. Well, I am sorry for your niece. I love Benedick well; and I could wish he would modestly examine himself, to see how much he is unworthy so good a lady.

Leonato. My lord, will you walk? dinner is ready.

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

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

[DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, ANTONIO, & LEONATO exit]

Benedick. This can be no trick: the conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady: Love me? Why? It must be requited. I did never think to marry. 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? Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor? No. The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. [BEATRICE enter] Here comes Beatrice. By this day! she's a fine lady.

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

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

Beatrice. I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me: if it had been painful, I would not have come.

Benedick. You take pleasure then in the message.

Beatrice. Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point. You have no stomach, señor: fare you well. [Exit]

Benedick. Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come into 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 lost. I will go get her picture. [Exit]

Act 3 Scene 1

[HERO, MARGARET, & ANTONIO enter]

Hero. Good Antonio, run thee to the parlor;
There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice.
Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Margaret
Walk in the orchard and our whole discourse
Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us;
And bid her steal into the pleached bower,

To listen our purpose. This is thy office;
Bear thee well in it and leave us alone.

Antonio. I'll make her come, I warrant you, presently. [Exit]

Hero. Now, Margaret, when Beatrice doth come,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit:
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. [BEATRICE enter]
Now begin.

Margaret.
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

Hero. No, truly, Margaret, she is too disdainful;
I know her spirits are as coy and wild
As haggerds of the rock.

Margaret. But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

Beatrice. What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?

Hero. So says the prince and my new-trothèd lord.

Margaret. 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.

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

Hero. O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man:
But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice.

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

Hero. Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
But she would spell him backward.

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

Hero. But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.

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

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

Margaret. O, do not do your cousin such a wrong.
She cannot be so much without true judgment—
Having so swift and excellent a wit
As she is prized to have—as to refuse
So rare a gentleman as Señor Benedick.

Hero. Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

Margaret. His excellence did earn it, ere he had it.
He is the only man of Messina.
When are you married, madam?

Hero. 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.

Margaret. She's limed, I warrant you: we have caught her, madam.

Hero. Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps. [HERO & MARGARET exit]

Beatrice. They'll council him to fight against his passion?
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?
Tis true I never yet saw man
But I would spell him backward.
So turn I Benedick the wrong side out.
Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!
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.
How much an ill word may impoison liking.

Yet others say thou dost deserve, and I
Believe it better than reportingly. [Exit]

Act 3 Scene 2

[DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, & BENEDICK enter]

Don Pedro. I do but stay til your marriage be consummate, and then go I toward Arragon.

Claudio. I'll bring you thither my lord.

Don Pedro. 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 he is all mirth.

Benedick. Gallants, I am not as I have been.

[DON JOHN enter]

Don John. My lord and brother, God save you!

Don Pedro. Good den, brother.

Don John. If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

Don Pedro. In private?

Don John. If it please you: [CLAUDIO & BENEDICK go to exit] yet Count Claudio may hear; for what I would speak of concerns him. [BENEDICK exit]

Don Pedro. What's the matter?

Don John. Means your lordship to be married tomorrow?

Don Pedro. You know he does.

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

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

Don John. 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 holp to effect your ensuing marriage;—surely suit ill spent and labour ill bestowed.

Don Pedro. Why, what's the matter?

Don John. I came hither to tell you; and, circumstances shortened, the lady is disloyal.

Claudio. Who, Hero?

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

Claudio. Disloyal?

Don John. The word is too good to paint out her wickedness. Wonder not till further warrant: Here 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 it would better fit your honor to change your mind.

Claudio. May this be so?

Don Pedro. I will not think it.

[enter BORRACHIO & MARGARET in the balcony with Hero's wedding veil]

Don John. If you dare not trust that you see, confess not that you know.

[BORRACHIO calls MARGARET "Hero" in an embrace in the balcony – they exit]

Claudio. 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. Bear it coldly but till tomorrow.

Don Pedro. O day untowardly turned!

Claudio. O mischief strangely thwarting!

Don John. O plague right well prevented! [Exit]

Act 3 Scene 3

[VERGES, SEACOAL, & OATCAKE enter, DOGBERRY enter]

Dogberry. Are you good men and true?

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

Dogberry. Nay, that were a punishment too good for them, being chosen for the prince's watch.

Verges. Well, give them their charge, neighbor Dogberry.

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

Seacole. Hugh Oatcake, sir.

Oatcake. George Seacole; for he 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. Both which, master constable,—

Dogberry. You have. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch; This is your charge: you shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the prince's name.

Oatcake. How if he will not stand?

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

Verges. If he will not 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.

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

Dogberry. Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman; for I cannot see how sleeping should offend. Well, you are to call at all the alehouses, and bid them that are drunk get them to bed.

Oatcake. How if they will not?

Dogberry. Why then let them be alone til they are sober. Well, masters, good night: keep your fellows' counsels and your own; Come, neighbor.

Seacole. Well, master--

Dogberry. One word more, honest neighbors. I pray you watch about Señor Leonato's door; for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is a great coil tonight. Adieu: be vigitant, I beseech you. [DOGBERRY & VERGES exit]

Seacole. We hear our charge: let us sit here upon the church-bench till two, and then all to bed. [sit]

[BORACHIO & CONRADE enter]

Borachio. What, Conrade!

Oatcake. Peace! stir not.

Conrade. Here, man; I am at thy elbow.

Borachio. Stand thee close then, and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.

Seacole. [Aside] Some treason, master: yet stay close.

Conrade. Forward with thy tale.

Borachio. I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats.

Conrade. Is it possible that any villany should be so dear?

I wonder at it.

Oatcake. I remember his name.

Borachio. Didst thou not hear somebody?

Conrade. No; 'twas the vane on the house.

Borachio. 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 Don Pedro, Claudio and my master, Don John, saw this amiable encounter.

Conrade. And thought they Margaret was Hero?

Borachio. Two of them did, the prince and Claudio. The devil my master 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, next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'er night and send her home again without a husband.

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

Conrade. Masters, masters,—

Seacole. Call up the right master constable. We have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery.

Conrade. Masters—

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

Conrade. Come, we'll obey you. [Exit]

Act 3 Scene 4

[HERO & MARGARET enter with the wedding veil]

Margaret. Troth, I think your other were better. Your other is worth ten on't.

Hero. No, pray thee, good Margaret, I'll wear this.

I'll wear none but this. God give me joy to wear it, for my heart is exceeding heavy.

Margaret. Twill be heavier soon, by the weight of a man.

Hero. Fie upon thee, are not ashamed?

Margaret. Of what lady? Of speaking honorably? Is not marriage honorable? Is not your lord honorable? I'll offend nobody. Is there any harm in the heavier for a husband? and it be the right husband and the right wife. [BEATRICE enter] Ask my lady Beatrice; here she comes.

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. By my troth, I am exceeding ill: heigh-ho!

Margaret. God send everyone their heart's desire!

Beatrice. You have some moral in this?

Margaret. Moral? No, by my troth, I have no moral meaning. 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. How you may be converted, I know not.

Beatrice. What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

Margaret. Not a false gallop.

[ANTONIO enter]

Antonio. Niece, withdraw: Don Pedro, Claudio, Señor Benedick, and Don John are come to fetch you to church.

Hero. Help to dress me, good coz, good Margaret. [Exit]

Act 3 Scene 5

[DOGBERRY, & VERGES enter, LEONATO enter]

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, 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 no honester than I.

Leonato. Neighbors, you are tedious.

Dogberry. It pleases your worship to say so.

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. If I were as tedious as a King I could find in my heart to bestow it all of your worship.

Leonato. All thy tediousness on me, ah?

Dogberry. Yeah, and were a thousand times more.

Leonato. I must leave you.

Dogberry. One word, sir: our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two aspicious persons, and we would have them this morning examined before your worship.

Leonato. Take their examination yourself and bring it me: I am now in great haste. [Exit]

Dogberry. It shall be suffigance. Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacole; bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the jail: we are now to examination those men.

Verges. And we must do it wisely.

Dogberry. We will spare for no wit, I warrant you; only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication and meet me at the jail. [VERGES exit, DOGBERRY exit]

Act 4 Scene 1

[DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, & DON JOHN enter, LEONATO, ANTONIO, FRIAR FRANCIS, HERO, & BEATRICE enter]

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

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

Claudio. No.

Leonato. To be married *to* her: friar, you come to marry her.

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

Hero. I do.

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

Claudio. Know you any, Hero?

Hero. None, my lord.

Friar Francis. Know you any, count?

Leonato. I dare make his answer, none.

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

Benedick. How now!

Claudio. Stand thee by, friar. Father, by your leave:
Will you with free and unconstrainéd soul
Give me this maid, your daughter?

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

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

Don Pedro. Nothing, unless you render her again.

Claudio. Sweet prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.
There, Leonato, take her back again:
Give not this rotten orange to your friend;

She's but the sign and semblance of her honor.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none:
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

Leonato. What do you mean, my lord?

Claudio. Not to be married,
Not to knit my soul to an approvéd wanton.

Leonato. Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof,
Have made defeat of her virginity,—

Claudio. I know what you would say: if I have known her,
You will say she did embrace me as a husband,
No, Leonato,
I never tempted her with word too large;
But, as a brother to his sister, show'd
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

Hero. And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

Claudio. 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.

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

Leonato. Sweet prince, why speak not you?

Don Pedro. What should I speak?
I stand dishonour'd, that have gone about
To link my dear friend to a common stale.

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

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

Benedick. This looks not like a nuptial.

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

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

Hero. O, God defend me! how am I beset!
What kind of catechizing call you this?

Claudio. To make you answer truly to your name.

Hero. Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name
With any just reproach?

Claudio. Marry, that can Hero;
Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.
What man was he talk'd with you yesternight
Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?
Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

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

Don Pedro. Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear: upon mine honor,
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,
Confess'd the vile encounters they have had
A thousand times in secret.

Don John. Fie, fie! they are not to be named, my lord,
Not to be spoke of;
There is not chastity enough in language
Without offence to utter them. Thus, pretty lady,
I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

Claudio. O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been,
If half thy outward graces had been placed
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! farewell,
Thou pure impiety and impious purity!
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,
And never shall it more be gracious.

Leonato. 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.

[DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, & CLAUDIO exit]

Benedick. How doth the lady?

Beatrice. Dead, I think. Help, uncle!

Leonato. Death is the fairest cover for her shame
That may be wish'd for.

Beatrice. How now, cousin Hero!

Friar Francis. Have comfort, lady.

Leonato. Dost thou look up?

Friar Francis. Yea, wherefore should she not?

Leonato. Wherefore! Why, doth not every earthly thing
Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny
The story that is printed in her blood?

Benedick. Sir, sir, be patient.

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

Benedick. Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

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

Leonato. Confirm'd, confirm'd! O, that is stronger made!
Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie,
Who loved her so, that, speaking of her foulness,
Wash'd it with tears? Hence from her! let her die.

Friar Francis. Hear me a little;
For I have only been silent so long
And given way unto this course of fortune,
By noting of the lady: I have mark'd

A thousand blushing apparitions
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes;
And in her eye there hath appear'd a fire,
To burn the errors that these princes hold
Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool;
Trust not my reading nor my observations,
My reverence, calling, nor divinity,
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
Under some biting error.

Leonato. Friar, it cannot be.

Friar Francis. Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

Hero. They know that do accuse me; I know none:
If I know more of any man alive
Than that which maiden modesty doth warrant,
Let all my sins lack mercy! O my father,
Prove you that any man with me conversed
At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight
Maintain'd the change of words with any creature,
Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death!

Friar Francis. There is some strange misprision in the princes.

Benedick. And if their wisdoms be misled in this,
The practice of it lives in John the bastard.

Leonato. I know not. If they speak but truth of her,
These hands shall tear her; if they wrong her honor,
The proudest of them shall well hear of it.

Friar Francis. Pause awhile,
And let my counsel sway you in this case.
Your daughter here the princes left for dead:
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,
And publish it that she is dead indeed;
Maintain a mourning ostentation
And on your family's old monument
Hang mournful epitaphs and do all rites
That appertain unto a burial.

Leonato. What shall become of this? what will this do?

Friar Francis. Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse; So will it fare with Claudio:
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination,
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,
Than when she lived indeed; then shall he mourn,
And wish he had not so accused her;
Let this be so, and doubt not but success.

Benedick. Señor 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
Both secretly and justly.

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

Friar Francis. 'Tis well consented: presently away;
Come, lady, die to live: this wedding-day
Perhaps is but prolong'd: have patience and endure.

[All exit but BENEDICK & BEATRICE]

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

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

Benedick. I will not desire that.

Beatrice. You have no reason; I do it freely.

Benedick. Surely, I do believe your cousin is wronged.

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

Benedick. Is there any way to show such friendship?

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

Benedick. May a man do it?

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

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

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

Benedick. By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

Beatrice. 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. With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.

Beatrice. Why, then, God forgive me!

Benedick. What offence, sweet Beatrice?

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

Benedick. And do it with all thy heart.

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

Benedick. Come, bid me do anything for thee.

Beatrice. Kill Claudio.

Benedick. Ha! not for the wide world.

Beatrice. You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

Benedick. Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

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

Benedick. Beatrice,—

Beatrice. In faith, I will go.

Benedick. We'll be friends first.

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

Benedick. Is Claudio thine enemy?

Beatrice. Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonored my kinswoman? O 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 market-place.

Benedick. Hear me, Beatrice,—

Beatrice. Talk with a man out at a window! A proper saying!

Benedick. Nay, but, Beatrice,—

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

Benedick. Beat—

Beatrice. O that I were a man for his sake! or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into courtesies. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

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

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

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

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

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

Act 4 Scene 2

[DOGBERRY, VERGES, SEXTON, SEACOLE, OATCAKE, CONRADE, & BORACHIO enter]

Dogberry. Is our whole dissembly appeared?

Sexton. Which be the malefactors?

Dogberry. Marry, that am I and my partner.

Verges. Nay, that's certain; we have the exhibition to examine.

Sexton. But which are the offenders that are to be examined? let them come before master constable.

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

Borachio. Borachio.

Dogberry. Pray, write down, Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

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

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

Borachio. Yea, sir.

Conrade. We hope.

Dogberry. Write down, that they hope they serve God. Masters, it is proved already that you are little better than false knaves. How answer you for yourselves?

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

Dogberry. A marvelous witty fellow, but I will go about with him. Sir, I say to you, it is thought you are false knaves.

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

Dogberry. 'Fore God, they are both in a tale. Have you writ down that they are none?

Sexton. Master constable, you go not the way to examine: you must call forth the watch that are their accusers.

Dogberry. Yea, marry, that's the eftest way. Let the watch come forth. Masters, I charge you, in the prince's name, accuse these men.

Seacole. This man said, sir, that Don John, the prince's brother, was a villain.

Dogberry. Why, this is flat perjury, to call a prince's brother villain.

Conrade. Master constable,—

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

Sexton. What heard you him say else?

Oatcake. 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?

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

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

Sexton. What else?

Oatcake. This is all.

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

Dogberry. Come, let them be opinioned.

Verges. Let them be in the hands--

Conrade. Away! You're an ass. You *are* an ass.

Dogberry. Dost thou not suspect my place? dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget

not that I am an ass. Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass! [Exit]

Act 5 Scene 1

[LEONATO & ANTONIO enter]

Antonio. If you go on thus, you will kill yourself:
And 'tis not wisdom thus to second grief
Against yourself.

Leonato. I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine
And I of him will gather patience.

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

Leonato. There thou speak'st reason: nay, I will do so.
My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;
And that shall Claudio know; so shall the prince
And all of them that thus dishonour her.

Antonio. Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

[DON PEDRO & CLAUDIO enter]

Don Pedro. Good den, good den.

Claudio. Good day to both of you.

Leonato. Hear you. my lords,—

Don Pedro. We have some haste, Leonato

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

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

Antonio. If he could right himself with quarreling,
Some of us would lie low.

Claudio. Who wrongs him?

Leonato. Marry, thou dost wrong me; thou dissembler, thou:—
Nay, never lay thy hand upon thy weapon;
I fear thee not.

Claudio. Marry, beshrew my hand,
In faith, my hand meant nothing to my weapon.

Leonato. Tush, tush, man; never fleer and jest at me:
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child;
Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors;
framed by thy villainy!

Claudio. My villainy?

Leonato. Thine, Claudio; thine, I say.

Don Pedro. You say not right, old man.

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

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

Leonato. Canst thou so doff me? Thou hast kill'd my child:
If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.

Antonio. He shall kill two of us, and men indeed:
Come, follow me, boy; come, sir boy, come, follow me:
Sir boy! I'll whip you from your foining fence.

Leonato. Brother Antonio,—

Antonio. Content yourself. God knows I loved my niece;
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villains,

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. 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.

[LEONATO & ANTONIO exit]

Don Pedro. See, see; here comes the man we went to seek.

[BENEDICK enter]

Claudio. Now, Señor, what news?

Benedick. Good day, my lord.

Don Pedro. Welcome, Señor: you are almost come to part almost a fray.

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

Benedick. 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. Wilt thou use thy wit?

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

Benedick. You are a villain; I jest not: I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you.

Claudio. Well, I will meet you.

Benedick. Fare you well, boy: you know my mind. 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. [Exit]

Don Pedro. He is in earnest. But, soft you, did he not say, my brother was fled?

[DOGBERRY, VERGES, SEACOLE, OATCAKE, CONRADE & BORACHIO enter]

Dogberry. Come you, sir! An you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be looked to.

Don Pedro. How now? two of my brother's men bound! Officers, what offence have these men done?

Dogberry. Marry, sir, they have committed false report; moreover, they have spoken untruths; secondarily, they are slanders; sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady; thirdly, they have verified unjust things; and, to conclude, they are lying knaves.

Don Pedro. Who have you offended, masters, that you are thus bound to your answer? this learnéd constable is too cunning to be understood: what's your offence?

Borachio. Sweet prince, let me go no farther to mine answer: do you hear me, and let this count kill me. I have deceived even your very eyes: what your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light: who in the night overheard me confessing how Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero, how you saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments, how you disgraced her, when you should marry her: The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation.

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

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

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

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

Don Pedro. He is composed and framed of treachery:
And fled he is upon this villainy.

Dogberry. Come, bring away the plaintiffs: by this time our sexton hath reformed Señor Leonato of the matter: and, masters, do not forget to specify, when time and place shall serve, that I am an ass.

Verges. Here, here comes master Señor Leonato.

[LEONATO & ANTONIO enter]

Leonato. Which is the villain? let me see his eyes,
That, when I note another man like him,
I may avoid him: which of these is he?

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

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

Borachio. Yea, even I alone.

Leonato. No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself:
Here stand a pair of 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:
'Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it.

Claudio. I know not how to pray your patience
Yet I must speak. Choose your revenge yourself;
Impose me to what penance your invention
Can lay upon my sin: yet sinn'd I not
But in mistaking.

Don Pedro. By my soul, nor I:
And yet, to satisfy this good old man,
I would bend under any heavy weight
That he'll enjoin me to.

Leonato. I cannot bid you bid my daughter live;
That were impossible: but, I pray you both,
Possess the people how innocent she died;
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,
Almost the copy of my child that's dead,
And she alone is heir to both of us:
Give her the right you should have given her cousin,
And so dies my revenge.

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

Leonato. Tomorrow then I will expect your coming;
Tonight I take my leave. This guilty man
Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,

Who I believe was pack'd in all this wrong,
Hired to it by your brother.

Borachio. No, by my soul, she was not,
Nor knew not what she did when she spoke to me,
But always hath been just and virtuous.

Dogberry. Moreover, sir, which indeed is not under white and black, this plaintiff here, the offender, did call me ass: 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 reverend youth; and I praise God for you.

Leonato. There's for thy pains.

Dogberry. God save the foundation!

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

Dogberry. I leave an arrant knave with your worship; which I beseech your worship to correct yourself, for the example of others. God keep your worship! Come, neighbor. [DOGBERRY & VERGES exit]

Leonato. Until tomorrow morning, lords, farewell. Bring you these fellows on.

Antonio. Farewell, my lords: we look for you tomorrow. [Exit]

Don Pedro. We will not fail.

Claudio. Tonight I'll mourn with Hero. [Exit]

Act 5 Scene 2

[LEONATO, ANTONIO, BENEDICK, BEATRICE, MARGARET, HERO, & FRIAR FRANCIS enter]

Friar Francis. Did I not tell you she was innocent?

Leonato. So are the prince and Claudio, who accused her
Upon the error that you heard debated.

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. Well, daughter, and you gentle-women all,
come hither mask'd. [Ladies veil their faces]
The prince and Claudio promised by this hour
To visit me. You know your office, brother:
You must be father to your brother's daughter
And give her to young Claudio.

Antonio. Which I will do with confirm'd countenance.

Benedick. Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

Friar Francis. To do what, señor?

Benedick. To bind me, or undo me; one of them--

Friar Francis. Here comes the prince and Claudio.

[DON PEDRO & CLAUDIO enter]

Don Pedro. Good morrow to this fair assembly.

Leonato. Good morrow, prince; good morrow, Claudio:
We here attend you. Are you yet determined
Today to marry with my brother's daughter?

Claudio. I'll hold my mind.

[Ladies step forward, veiled]

Claudio. Which is the lady I must seize upon?

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

Claudio. Why, then she's mine.
Give me your hand: before this holy friar,
I am your husband, if you like of me.

Hero. And when I lived, I was your other wife: [Unmasking]
And when you loved, you were my other husband.

Claudio. Another Hero!

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

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

Friar Francis. All this amazement can I qualify:
Meantime let wonder seem familiar,
And to the chapel let us presently.

Benedick. Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

Beatrice. I answer to that name. What is your will?

Benedick. Do not you love me?

Beatrice. Why, no; no more than reason.

Benedick. Why, then your family 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 and Margaret
Are much deceived; for they did swear you did.

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

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

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

Beatrice. No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

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

Claudio. And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her;
For here's a paper written in his hand,
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
Fashion'd to Beatrice.

Hero. And here's another
Writ in my cousin's hand, stolen from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto Benedick.

Benedick. A miracle! here's our own hands against our hearts.

Beatrice. “Suffer love…” a good epithet. We do suffer love indeed. Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.

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

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

Benedick. Peace! I will stop your mouth. [Kissing her]

Don Pedro. How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

Benedick. I'll tell thee what, prince: since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it; for man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion. Prince, thou art sad; get thee a wife, get thee a wife.

[MESSENGER enter]

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

Benedick. Think not on him till tomorrow:
I'll devise thee brave punishments for him.

Beatrice. Let’s have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts and our husband’s heels. [Song & Dance]