**MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**

Lovingly adapted and shamelessly pillaged by Anne Donnelly

**ACT I**

**SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.**

*Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a Messenger*

**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.

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

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

**HERO** My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

**Messenger** O, he's returned; and as pleasant as ever he was. 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** 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 Signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

**Messenger** 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 now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

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

**BEATRICE** O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease: God help the noble Claudio! If he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere he be cured.

*Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, and BENEDICK*

**DON PEDRO** Good Signior Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble: the fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

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

**DON PEDRO** 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?

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

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

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

**BENEDICK** Well you are a rare parrot teacher.

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

**BENEDICK** I would my horse had the speed of your tongue. 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.

**DON PEDRO** That is the sum of all, Leonato. I tell him we shall stay here at the least a month; and he heartily prays some occasion may detain us longer.

**LEONATO** *To DON JOHN* Let me bid you welcome, my lord: being reconciled to the prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

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

**DON PEDRO** Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

*Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO*

**CLAUDIO** Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato? Is she not a modest young lady? 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: there's her cousin, an she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

**CLAUDIO** If Hero would be my wife…

*Re-enter DON PEDRO*

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

**BENEDICK** He is in love. With who? now that is your grace's part—With Hero, Leonato's daughter.

**DON PEDRO** Amen, for the lady is very well worthy.

**CLAUDIO** That I love her, I feel.

**DON PEDRO** That she is worthy, I know.

**BENEDICK** That I neither feel how she should be loved nor know how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me: I will die in it at the stake.

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

**BENEDICK** That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: but 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, as time shall try: 'In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.'

**BENEDICK** The savage bull may; but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns and set them in my forehead: let them signify under my sign 'Here you may see Benedick the married man.'

**DON PEDRO** In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's.

*Exit BENEDICK*

**DON PEDRO** Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

**CLAUDIO** O, my lord,

**DON PEDRO** Thou wilt be like a lover presently

And I will fit thee with the remedy.  
I know we shall have revelling tonight:  
I will assume thy part in some disguise  
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,  
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart

And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.  
In practice let us put it presently.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. A room in LEONATO’s house**

*Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE*

**CONRADE** What the good-year, 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 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.

**DON JOHN** I am trusted with a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage.

*Enter BORACHIO*

What news, Borachio?

**BORACHIO** I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

**DON JOHN** Will it serve for any model to build mischief on? What is he for a fool that betroths himself to unquietness?

**BORACHIO** Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

**DON JOHN** The most exquisite Claudio? And who, and who? Which way looks he?

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

**DON JOHN** 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. Let us to the great supper. Would the cook were of my mind!

*Exeunt*

**ACT II**

**SCENE I. A hall in LEONATO'S house.**

*All put on their masks. Dance! Don Pedro woos Hero… Claudio becomes jealous. There is some sort of disagreement between Benedick and Beatrice. Maybe he has just stepped on her foot while dancing. Maybe it’s more serious. He Exits.*

**DON PEDRO** Come, lady, come; you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.

**BEATRICE** Indeed, my lord. He lent it me awhile; and I gave him use for it, a double heart for his single one: marry, once before he won it of me with false dice,  
therefore your grace may well say I have lost it. I have brought Count Claudio.

**DON PEDRO** Why, how now count. Wherefore are you sad?

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

**DON PEDRO** Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won.

*HERO and LEONATO appear. As if guests at Claudio’s surprise party.*

**LEONATO** Name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!

**BEATRICE** Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

**CLAUDIO** Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: I were but little happy, if I could say how much.

**BEATRICE** Speak, cousin; or, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss.

**DON PEDRO** In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

**BEATRICE** Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes every one to the world but I, and I am sunburnt; I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband!

*Exit*

**DON PEDRO** By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady. 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** Count Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

**CLAUDIO** To-morrow, my lord.

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

**LEONATO** My lord, I am for you.

**CLAUDIO** And I, my lord.

**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. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer: his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE II. The same.**

*Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO who have been eavesdropping.*

**DON JOHN** It is so; the Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

**BORACHIO** Yea, my lord; but I can cross it.

**DON JOHN** Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinable to me. How canst thou cross this marriage?

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

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

**BORACHIO** Enough to misuse the prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero and kill Leonato. Look you for any other issue? Tell them that you know that Hero loves me. They will scarcely believe this without trial. Offer them instances, which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber-window, hear me call Margaret Hero, and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

**DON JOHN** Be cunning in the working this, and thy fee is a thousand ducats. I will presently go learn their day of marriage.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. LEONATO'S orchard.**

*Enter BENEDICK*

**BENEDICK** I do much wonder that one man 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. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none, fair, or I'll never look on her, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO*

**DON PEDRO** Come, shall we hear this music?

**CLAUDIO** Yea, my good lord.

**DON PEDRO** See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

**CLAUDIO** O, very well, my lord.

**DON PEDRO** What was it you told me of to-day, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

**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** Why, what effects of passion shows she?

**LEONATO** What effects, my lord? You heard my daughter tell you how.

**CLAUDIO** She did, indeed.

**DON PEDRO** How, how, 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.

**CLAUDIO** He hath ta'en the infection: hold it up.

**DON PEDRO** Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

**LEONATO** No; and swears she never will: that's her torment. 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** She's an excellent sweet lady; and, out of all suspicion, she is virtuous.

**CLAUDIO** And she is exceeding wise.

**DON PEDRO** In every thing but in loving Benedick.

**CLAUDIO** 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.

**LEONATO** 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** He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

**CLAUDIO** And I take him to be valiant.

**DON PEDRO** Well I am sorry for your niece.

**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 us send her to call him in to dinner.

*Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO*

**BENEDICK** This can be no trick. Love me! Why, it must be requited. I did never think to marry. A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour? 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. I do spy some marks of love in her.

*Enter BEATRICE*

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

**BENEDICK** Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

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

**BENEDICK** Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner;' there's a double meaning in that 'I took no more pains for those thanks than you 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 fool. I will go get her picture. *Exit*

**ACT III**

**SCENE I. LEONATO'S garden.**

*Enter HERO, MARGARET*

**HERO** Now, Margaret, when Beatrice doth come,  
Our talk 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*

Now begin;

**MARGARET** But are you sure  
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

**HERO** So says the prince and my new-trothed 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.  
And therefore certainly it were not good  
She knew his love, lest she make sport at it.

**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.

Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire,  
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:  
It were a better death than die with mocks,  
Which is as bad as die with tickling.

**MARGARET** O, do not do your cousin such a wrong.  
She cannot be so much without true judgment as to refuse  
So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

**HERO** Come, go in:  
I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel  
Which is the best to furnish me to-morrow.

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

**HERO** If it proves so, then loving goes by haps:  
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

*Exeunt HERO and MARGARET*

**BEATRIC****E** What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?  
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.

*Exit*

**SCENE II. A room in LEONATO'S house**

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO.*

**BENEDICK** Gallants, I am not as I have been.

**LEONATO** 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** I have the toothache.

**DON PEDRO** What! sigh for the toothache?

**BENEDICK** Well, every one can master a grief but he that has it.

**CLAUDIO** Yet say I, he is in love.

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

**CLAUDIO** That’s as much to say the sweet youth’s in love!

**DON PEDRO** The greatest note of it is his melancholy. Indeed, that tells a heavy tale for him: conclude, conclude he is in love.

**CLAUDIO** Nay, but I know who loves him.

**DON PEDRO** I warrant, one that knows him not.

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

**BENEDICK** Old signior, walk aside with me: I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak to you, which these hobby-horses must not hear.

*Exeunt BENEDICK and LEONATO*

**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** My lord and brother, God save you! If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

**DON PEDRO** In private?

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

**DON PEDRO** What's the matter?

**DON JOHN** Means your lordship to be married to-morrow?

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

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

**CLAUDIO** Who, Hero?

**DON PEDRO** 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. 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 it would better fit your honor to change your mind.

**DON PEDRO** May this be so?

**CLAUDIO** If I see any thing to-night why I should not marry her to-morrow in the congregation where I should wed, there will I shame her.

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

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. A street.**

*Enter DOGBERRY with flashlights and some indication that they are the PRINCE’S WATCH.*

**DOGBERRY** Be vigitant, I beseech you. Watch about Signior Leonato's door, for the wedding being there to-morrow, there is a great coil tonight.

*“Funny Business” occurs between BORACHIO and MARGARET at Hero’s window with DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO looking on, while CONRADE keeps watch.*

**BORACHIO** What Conrade!

**CONRADE** Here, man; I am at thy elbow.

**BORACHIO** I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats. *(Lots of high fiving etc)*

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

**BORACHIO** Thou shouldst rather ask if it were possible any villany should be so rich;

**DOGBERRY** We charge you, in the prince's name, stand! Call up the right master constable. We have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery that ever was known in the commonwealth.

*They are captured! Exeunt.*

**SCENE IV. HERO's apartment.**

*Enter HERO, MARGARET* *and* *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. Tis almost five o'clock, cousin. Tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceeding ill: heigh-ho!

**MARGARET** Get you some of this distilled Carduus Benedictus, and lay it to your heart: it is the only thing for a qualm.

**BEATRICE** 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. Yet Benedick was such another, and now is he become a man. Methinks you look with your eyes as other women do.

**LEONATO** Madam, withdraw: the prince, Don John, Signior Benedick, and all the gallants of the town, are come to fetch you to church.

*Exeunt*

**ACT IV**

**SCENE I. A church.**

*Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, LEONATO, FRIAR FRANCIS, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, HERO, BEATRICE, and Attendants*

**FRIAR** You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady.

**CLAUDIO** No.

**LEONATO** To be married to her. Friar, you come to marry her.

**FRIAR** Lady, you come hither to be married to this count.

**HERO** I do.

**FRIAR** 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.

**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**There, Leonato, take her back again.  
Give not this rotten orange to your friend.

**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--

**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?

**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.

What man was he talk'd with you yesternight  
Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?

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

**DON PEDRO** Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,  
I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honour,  
Myself, my brother and this grieved count  
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night  
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber-window.

**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!

*HERO swoons. Not in the happy romantic way.*

**BEATRICE** Why, how now, cousin! wherefore sink you down?

**DON JOHN** Come, let us go. These things, come thus to light,  
Smother her spirits up.

*Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO*

**BENEDICK** How doth the lady?

**BEATRICE** Dead, I think. Help, uncle!  
Hero! why, Hero! Uncle! Signior Benedick! Friar!

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

**BEATRICE** How now, cousin Hero!

**LEONATO** Dost thou look up?

**FRIAR** Yea, wherefore should she not?

**LEONATO** Wherefore! Why, doth not every earthly thing  
Cry shame upon her? Why, she, she is fallen  
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea  
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again.

**BENEDICK** Sir, sir, be patient.

**BEATRICE** O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

**LEONATO** Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie?  
Hence from her! Let her die.

**FRIAR** Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

**HERO** They know that do accuse me; I know none.

**FRIAR** Your daughter here the princes left for dead:  
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,  
And publish it that she is dead indeed;

**LEONATO** What shall become of this? what will this do?

**FRIAR** Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf  
Change slander to remorse; that is some good.

For 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 wish he had not so accused her.

**BENEDICK** Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you:

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

**FRIAR** 'Tis well consented: presently away.  
Come, lady, die to live. This wedding-day  
Perhaps is but prolong'd. Have patience and endure.

*Exeunt all but BENEDICK and BEATRICE*

**BENEDICK** Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

**BEATRICE** Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

**BENEDICK** I will not desire that.

**BEATRICE** You have no reason; I do it freely.

**BENEDICK** Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

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

**BENEDICK** Is there any way to show such friendship?

**BEATRICE** A very even way, but no such friend.

**BENEDICK** May a man do it?

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

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

**BEATRICE** As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you: but believe me not; and yet I lie not. I am sorry for my cousin.

**BENEDICK** By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me. And do it with all thy heart.

**BEATRICE** I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest. *(They kiss)*

**BENEDICK** Come, bid me do any thing for thee.

**BEATRICE** Kill Claudio.

**BENEDICK** Ha! not for the wide world.

**BEATRICE** You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

**BENEDICK** Tarry, good Beatrice. Is Claudio thine enemy?

**BEATRICE** Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? 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** 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, and men are only turned into tongue. He is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

**BENEDICK** Tarry, sweet 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. Go, comfort your cousin. And so, farewell.

*Exeunt*

**ACT V**

**SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.**

*Enter LEONATO, DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO*

**DON PEDRO** Good e’en, good e’en.

**CLAUDIO** Good day to both of you.

**LEONATO** Hear you. my lords,--

**DON PEDRO** We have some haste, Leonato.

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

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

**LEONATO** Marry, thou dost wrong me, thou dissembler, thou.  
Know, Claudio, to thy head

Thou hast so wronged mine innocent child and me.

Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,  
And she lies buried with her ancestors;  
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,  
Save this of hers, framed by thy villany!

**CLAUDIO** My villany?

**LEONATO** Thine, Claudio; thine, I say.

**DON PEDRO** You say not right, old man.

**LEONATO** Canst thou so daff me? Thou hast kill'd my child.  
If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.

**DON PEDRO** Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience.  
My heart is sorry for your daughter's death.  
But, on my honour, she was charged with nothing  
But what was true and very full of proof.

**LEONAT****O** My lord, my lord,--

**DON PEDRO** I will not hear you.

**LEONATO** No? I will be heard or some of us will smart for it.

*Exeunt LEONATO*, *Enter BENEDICK*

**CLAUDIO** Now, signior, what news?

**BENEDICK** Good day, my lord.

**DON PEDRO** Welcome, signior: you are almost come to part almost a fray. What thinkest thou? Had we fought, I doubt we should have been too young for them.

**BENEDICK** In a false quarrel there is no true valour. *To CLAUDIO* Shall I speak a word in your ear? You are a villain; I jest not. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you.

**CLAUDIO** Well, I will meet you, so I may have good cheer.

**BENEDICK** Fare you well, boy: you know my mind.

*Exit*. *Enter DOGBERRY, with CONRADE and BORACHIO*

**DOGBERRY** Come you, sir: if justice cannot tame you, she shall ne'er weigh more reasons in her balance.

**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** First, I ask thee what they have done; thirdly, I ask thee what's their offence; sixth and lastly, why they are committed; and, to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

**BORACHIO** Sweet prince, I have deceived even your very eyes. What your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light: who in the night overheard me confessing to this man how Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero, how you saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation, and I desire nothing but the reward of a villain.

**DON PEDRO** Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

**CLAUDIO** I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

Sweet Hero! now thy image doth appear  
In the rare semblance that I loved it first.

*Re-enter LEONATO*

**LEONATO** Which is the villain

**BORACHI****O** If you would know your wronger, look on me.

**LEONATO** Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast kill'd  
Mine innocent child?

**BORACHIO** Yea, even I alone.

**LEONATO** No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself:  
Here stand a pair of honourable men;  
A third is fled, that had a hand in it.  
I thank you, princes, for my daughter's death:

**CLAUDIO** I know not how to pray your patience;  
Impose me to what penance your invention  
Can lay upon my sin: yet sinn'd I not  
But in mistaking.

**LEONATO** I cannot bid you bid my daughter live;  
That were impossible: but, I pray you both, if your love  
Can labour ought in sad invention,  
To-morrow morning come you to my house,  
And since you could not be my son-in-law,  
Be yet my nephew: my brother hath a daughter,  
Almost the copy of my child that's dead,  
And she alone is heir to both of us.  
Give her the right you should have given her cousin,  
And so dies my revenge.

**CLAUDIO** I do embrace your offer.

**LEONATO** To-morrow then I will expect your coming;  
I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

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

*Exeunt, severally*

**SCENE II. LEONATO'S garden.**

*Enter BENEDICK composing embarrassing songs.*

**BENEDICK***[singing]* The god of love,  
 That sits above…  
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.

*Enter BEATRICE*

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

**BEATRICE** Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

**BENEDICK** O, stay but till then!

**BEATRICE** 'Then' is spoken. Fare you well now. And yet, ere I go, let me go with that I came. Which is, with knowing what hath passed between you and Claudio.

**BENEDICK** Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

**BEATRICE** Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome; therefore I will depart unkissed.

**BENEDICK** Thou hast frighted the word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit. But I must tell thee plainly, Claudio undergoes my challenge. And, I pray thee now, tell me for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?

**BEATRICE** For them all together. But for which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?

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

**BEATRICE** In spite of your heart, I think; alas, poor heart! If you spite it for my sake, I will spite it for yours; for I will never love that which my friend hates.

**BENEDICK** Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably. And now tell me, how doth your cousin?

**BEATRIC****E** Very ill.

**BENEDICK** 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 MARGARET*

**MARGARET** Madam, you must come to your uncle. It is proved my Lady Hero hath been falsely accused, and Don John is the author of all, who is fled and gone.

**BEATRICE** Will you go hear this news, signior?

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

*Exeunt*

**SCENE IV. A room in LEONATO'S house.**

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

**FRIAR** Did I not tell you she was innocent?

**LEONATO** Well, daughter, and you gentle-women all,  
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,  
And when I send for you, come hither mask'd.

*Exeunt Ladies*

The prince and Claudio promised by this hour  
To visit me.

**BENEDICK** Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

**FRIAR** To do what, signior?

**BENEDICK** To bind me, or undo me; one of them.  
Signior Leonato, truth it is, good signior,  
Your niece regards me with an eye of favour.

And I do with an eye of love requite her.

**LEONATO** The sight whereof I think you had from me,  
From Claudio and the prince: but what's your will?

**BENEDICK** Your answer, sir, is enigmatical:  
But, for my will, my will is your good will  
May stand with ours, this day to be conjoin'd  
In the state of honourable marriage:  
In which, good friar, I shall desire your help.

**LEONATO** My heart is with your liking.

**FRIAR** And my help.  
Here comes the prince and Claudio.

*Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO*

**DON PEDRO** Good morrow to this fair assembly.

**LEONAT****O** Good morrow, prince; good morrow, Claudio:  
We here attend you. Are you yet determined  
To-day to marry with my brother's daughter?

*Re-enter the Ladies, masked*

**CLAUDIO** Which is the lady I must seize upon?

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

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

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

**CLAUDIO** Give me your hand. Before this holy friar,  
I am your husband, if you like of me.

**HERO** And when I lived, I was your other wife.

And when you loved, you were my other husband.

**CLAUDIO** Another Hero!

**HER****O** 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!

**LEONAT****O** She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived.

**FRIAR** All this amazement can I qualify:  
When after that the holy rites are ended,  
I'll tell you largely of fair Hero's death.

**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 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 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.

**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.  
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.

**DON PEDRO** How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

**BENEDICK** I'll tell thee what, prince. A college of wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humour. And therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it. For man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion. Come, come, we are friends. Let's have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts. Strike up, pipers!

*Dance! Sigh No More.* *Exeunt.*