

Act five

Scene 1

Enter Leonato and his brother [Antonio].

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

Leonato I pray thee cease thy counsel,
Which falls into mine ears as profitless
5 As water in a sieve. Give not me counsel,
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear
But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine.
Bring me a father that so lov'd his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
10 And bid him speak of patience;
Measure his woe the length and breadth of mine,
And let it answer every strain for strain,
As thus for thus, and such a grief for such,
In every lineament, branch, shape, and form;
15 If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,
And, sorrow wag, cry "hem!" when he should groan,
Patch grief with proverbs, make misfortune drunk
With candle-wasters, bring him yet to me,
And I of him will gather patience.
20 But there is no such man, for, brother, men
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel, but tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion, which before
Would give preceptual med'cine to rage,
25 Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,
Charm ache with air, and agony with words.
No, no, 'tis all men's office to speak patience

Act five

Scene 1

Leonato and Antonio enter in front of Leonato's house.

Antonio If you go on like this, you're going to kill yourself.
Adding to your grief is not wise.

Leonato Please, stop advising me, which means as much
to me as water in a sieve. Don't advise me or try to comfort
me. The only person who can comfort me is someone
who has been wronged like I have. Bring me a father
who loved his child so much and whose joy of her
overwhelmed him like mine and ask him to be patient.
Compare his grief with the length and breadth of mine.
Compare his sadness, his complaints, and the intense
emotions running through our bodies. If this man smiles,
strokes his beard the way that you do, and says "ahem"
when he should be groaning or tries to mend sorrow with
proverbs, and bewilders misfortune with candle-wasters,
then bring him to me and I will gather patience from him.
But there is no such man. Brother, men can address grief
and try to comfort, but those who have not experienced
this pain cannot feel the depth of its passion. You cannot
confine insanity with silken threads or charm an ache
with hot air and agony with words. No, it is every man's
obligation to speak of patience

To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
 But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
 30 To be so moral when he shall endure
 The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel,
 My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

Antonio Therein do men from children nothing differ.

Leonato I pray thee, peace. I will be flesh and blood,
 35 For there was never yet philosopher
 That could endure the toothache patiently,
 However they have writ the style of gods,
 And made a push at chance and sufferance.

Antonio Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself;
 40 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,
 44 And all of them that thus dishonor her.

Enter Prince [Don Pedro] and Claudio.

Antonio Here comes the Prince and Claudio hastily.

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

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

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

to those that are writhing under the burden of sorrow, but
 no one has the strength or the ability to moralize in that
 manner unless he has endured the same thing. Do not give
 me advice. My sorrows are more painful than what can be
 soothed with instructions.

Antonio Then it seems that men are not at all different than
 children.

Leonato Please, leave me be. I intend to be human. There
 has never been a philosopher that could tolerate a
 toothache patiently, although they write in a style worthy of
 gods and make an attack on chance and suffering.

Antonio Don't endure all of the pain by yourself; make
 those that have wronged you suffer as well.

Leonato There, now you are making sense; of course I will
 do that. My soul tells me that Hero has been lied about.
 Claudio will hear about it and the Prince and anyone else
 that disgraces her.

Antonio Here come the Prince and Claudio in a hurry.

[Don Pedro and Claudio enter.]

Don Pedro Good day, good day.

Claudio Good day to both of you.

Leonato Have you heard, my lords—

Don Pedro We are in a hurry, Leonato.

Leonato In a hurry, my lord! Well, good-bye my lord. Are
 you in such a hurry because it does not matter?

Don Pedro Not at all, but do not argue with us, good
 old man.

Antonio If he could avenge himself with arguing, there are
 a few of us who would die.

Claudio Who wrongs him?

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

55 **Claudio** Marry, beshrew my hand,
If it should give your age such cause of fear.
In faith, my hand meant nothing to my sword.

Leonato Tush, tush, man, never fleer and jest at me;
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool,
60 As under privilege of age to brag
What I have done being young, or what would do
Were I not old. Know, Claudio, to thy head,
Thou hast so wrong'd mine innocent child and me
That I am forc'd to lay my reverence by,
65 And with grey hairs and bruise of many days,
Do challenge thee to trial of a man.
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child!
Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors—
70 O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
Save this of hers, fram'd 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,
75 Despite his nice fence and his active practice,
His May of youth and bloom of lustihood.

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

Claudio Who wrongs him?

Leonato Indeed, you wrong me, you fake—you. Go ahead
and try to frighten me by placing your hand on your sword;
I'm not afraid of you.

Claudio Excuse me, curse my hand if it would ever cause
such fear in someone your age. Truthfully, I wasn't going to
use my sword.

Leonato Hush up, man—don't ever jeer or mock me. I'm
not a weak-minded or foolish old man who has the privi-
lege to brag about what I did when I was young or what I
would do if I weren't so old. But I am telling you to your
face, Claudio, you have so wronged my innocent child and
me that I am forced to set aside my old man's respectabil-
ity, with all of my grey hairs and aches of old age, and chal-
lenge you to a duel. I tell you that you have lied about my
innocent child, and your insults have broken her heart. Now
she is buried with her ancestors in a tomb where there has
never been a scandal besides hers, all because of your
vicious actions!

Claudio My vicious actions?

Leonato Yours, Claudio; yours, I say.

Don Pedro You are wrong, old man.

Leonato My lord, my lord, I'll prove his guilt on his body if
he dares to accept my challenge, despite his elegant fencing
skills and swordplay, his youth and air of manliness.

Claudio Go away! I will have nothing to do with you.

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

80 **Antonio** He shall kill two of us, and men indeed;
But that's no matter, let him kill one first.
Win me and wear me, let him answer me.
Come, follow me, boy; come, sir boy, come follow me.
Sir boy, I'll whip you from your foining fence,
85 Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

Leonato Brother—

Antonio Content yourself. God knows I lov'd my niece,
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villains,
That dare as well answer a man indeed
90 As I dare take a serpent by the tongue.
Boys, apes, braggarts, Jacks, milksops!

Leonato Brother Anthony—

Antonio Hold you content. What, man! I know them, yea,
And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple—
Scrambling, outfacing, fashion-monging boys,
95 That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander,
Go anticly, and show outward hideousness,
And speak [off] half a dozen dang'rous words,
How they might hurt their enemies—if they durst—
And this is all.

Leonato But, brother Anthony—

Antonio Come, 'tis no matter;
101 Do not you meddle, let me deal in this.

Don Pedro Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience.
My heart is sorry for your daughter's death;
But on my honor she was charg'd with nothing
105 But what was true, and very full of proof.

Leonato Do you think you can be rid of me that easily? You
have killed my child. If you kill me, boy, then you will have
killed a man.

Antonio He'll have to kill both of us, both men indeed. But
that doesn't matter, let him kill one first, defeat one and
then boast about it, and then let him fight with me. Come
on boy, follow me—come, sir boy, come follow me. Sir boy,
I'll whip you from your sword's thrust, indeed, as I am a
gentleman, I will.

Leonato Brother—

Antonio Quiet. God knows I loved my niece and now she is
dead, slandered to death by villains that would be just as
likely to fight a real man as I would grab a poisonous snake
by the tongue—boys, liars, braggarts, scoundrels, and
wimps.

Leonato Brother Anthony—

Antonio Hold your comments. What kind of men are these?
I know exactly who they are, and what they are made of
down to the last ounce. They are contentious, brazen,
fashion-following boys that lie, cheat, flout, vilify, and
slander. They are dressed grotesquely, look terrifying, and
talk only of how they might hurt their enemies if they dare
to, and this is all.

Leonato But, brother Anthony—

Antonio Come on, it's not a big deal. Don't interfere, let me
deal with this.

Don Pedro Both of you gentlemen, we will not add to your
troubles any longer. I am very sorry for your daughter's
death, but on my honor, she was accused of nothing that
was untrue or unproven.

Leonato My lord, my lord—

Don Pedro I will not hear you.

Leonato No? Come, brother, away! I will be heard.

Antonio And shall, or some of us will smart for it.

Exeunt ambo [Leonato and Antonio].

Enter Benedick.

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

Claudio Now, signior, what news?

Benedick Good day, my lord.

Don Pedro Welcome, signior, you are almost come
114 to part almost a fray.

Claudio We had lik'd to have had our two noses
snapp'd off with two old men without teeth.

Don Pedro Leonato and his brother. What think'st
thou? Had we fought, I doubt we should have been
too young for them.

Benedick In a false quarrel there is no true valor.
121 I came to seek you both.

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

125 **Benedick** It is in my scabbard, shall I draw it?

Don Pedro Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

Claudio Never any did so, though very many have
been beside their wit. I will bid thee draw, as we do
the minstrels, draw to pleasure us.

Leonato My lord, my lord—

Don Pedro I will not listen to you.

Leonato No? Come, brother; let's go! I will be heard.

Antonio And you shall be heard or the two of you will
suffer because of it.

[Leonato and Antonio exit.]

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

[Enter Benedick.]

Claudio Now, Signior, what's the news?

Benedick Good day, my lord.

Don Pedro Welcome, Signior, you almost had to separate
a fight.

Claudio We just about had our two noses snapped off by
two old men without teeth.

Don Pedro Leonato and his brother. What do you think? If
we had fought, I suspect that we would have been too
young for them.

Benedick In an unfair fight there is no true heroism. I came
to find you both.

Claudio We have been up and down looking for you
because we are downhearted and would gladly have it
chased away. Will you use your wit to help?

Benedick It is in my scabbard. Shall I pull it out?

Don Pedro Are you wearing your humor on your side?

Claudio No one carries their wit on their side, although
some have been beside their wit. Please, draw your wit as
the musicians draw their bows. Make us happy.

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

Claudio What, courage, man! What though care
kill'd a cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill
care.

Benedick Sir, I shall meet your wit in the career, and
you charge it against me. I pray you choose another
137 subject.

Claudio Nay then give him another staff, this last
was broke cross.

Don Pedro By this light, he changes more and
more. I think he be angry indeed.

Claudio If he be, he knows how to turn his girdle.

Benedick Shall I speak a word in your ear?

144 **Claudio** God bless me from a challenge!

Benedick [*Aside to Claudio.*] You are a villain. I jest
not; I will make it good how you dare, with what you
dare, and when you dare. Do me right; or I will pro-
test your cowardice. You have kill'd a sweet lady,
and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear
150 from you.

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

Don Pedro What, a feast, a feast?

Claudio I' faith, I thank him, he hath bid me to a
calve's-head and a capon, the which if I do not carve
most curiously, say my knife's naught. Shall I not
157 find a woodcock too?

Benedick Sir, your wit ambles well, it goes easily.

Don Pedro Honestly, he looks pale. Are you sick or angry?

Claudio Come on, step up, man! Care may have killed the
cat, but you are strong enough to kill care.

Benedick Sir, I will meet your wit at full speed if you use it
as a weapon against me. Choose another person to attack.

Claudio Give him another spear; this last one broke in half.

Don Pedro By looking at him, he seems to be growing
more and more pale. I think he really is angry.

Claudio If he is, he knows what to do about it.

Benedick Can I speak with you privately?

Claudio God forbid, he wants to challenge me!

Benedick [*aside to Claudio*] You are a villain; I am not
kidding. I will prove my accusation however and with
whatever you choose, and when you choose. Give me the
satisfaction or I will announce your cowardice. You have
killed a sweet lady and her death will fall heavy on your
conscience. What do you say?

Claudio Well, I will duel with you so that I can be
entertained.

Don Pedro What, are we having a feast?

Claudio I thank him. He has invited me to carve a calf's
head and a capon, and if I do not carve exquisitely, then I
can say my knife is worthless. Will there be a woodcock
too?

Benedick Sir, you have a slow wit that wanders off easily.

Don Pedro I'll tell thee how Beatrice prais'd thy
 160 wit the other day. I said thou hadst a fine wit.
 "True," said she, "a fine little one." "No," said I,
 "a great wit." "Right," says she, "a great gross
 one." "Nay," said I, "a good wit." "Just," said
 she, "it hurts nobody." "Nay," said I, "the gentle-
 165 man is wise." "Certain," said she, "a wise
 gentleman." "Nay," said I, "he hath the tongues."
 "That I believe," said she, "for he swore a thing to
 me on Monday night, which he forswore on Tuesday
 morning. There's a double tongue, there's two
 170 tongues." Thus did she an hour together trans-
 shape thy particular virtues, yet at last she con-
 cluded with a sigh, thou wast the proper'st man in
 Italy.

Claudio For the which she wept heartily and said
 175 she car'd not.

Don Pedro Yea, that she did, but yet for all that,
 and if she did not hate him deadly, she would love
 him dearly. The old man's daughter told us all.

Claudio All, all, and, moreover, God saw him
 180 when he was hid in the garden.

Don Pedro But when shall we set the savage bull's
 horns on the sensible Benedick's head?

Claudio Yea, and text underneath, "Here dwells
 184 Benedick the married man"?

Don Pedro Let me tell you how Beatrice praised your wit
 the other day. I said that you had a fine wit. "True," she said,
 "he has a fine little wit." "No," I said, you have "a great
 wit." "Right," she says, "a huge and ugly one." Of course I
 say, "a good wit." "It's a just wit," she said, "it doesn't hurt
 anybody." "No," I said, "the gentleman is wise." "Of
 course," she said, "a wise gentleman." "No," I said, "he can
 speak many languages." "That I can believe," said she,
 "because he swore one thing to me on Monday night, and
 took it back on Tuesday morning; there's a double tongue,
 there's two languages." During an hour together she altered
 all your assets, but at last she came to the conclusion, with a
 sigh, that you were the finest man in Italy.

Claudio With that she cried excessively and said she didn't
 care.

Don Pedro Yes, she did that. But yet after all that, she said
 that if she didn't hate him to death, she would love him too
 much. The old man's daughter told us everything.

Claudio Everything, everything, and furthermore, God saw
 Benedick when he was hiding in the garden.

Don Pedro But when will we see Benedick a married man?

Claudio Yes, and with a sign underneath him that reads,
 "Here dwells Benedick, the married man?"

Benedick Fare you well, boy, you know my mind. I will leave you now to your gossip-like humor. You break jests as braggards do their blades, which God be thank'd, hurt not. My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you. I must discontinue your company. Your brother the bastard is fled from Messina. You have among you kill'd a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lack-beard there, he and I shall meet, and till then peace be with him.

[*Exit.*]

194 **Don Pedro** He is in earnest.

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

Don Pedro And hath challeng'd thee?

198 **Claudio** Most sincerely.

Don Pedro What a pretty thing man is when he goes in his doublet and hose and leaves off his wit!

Enter Constables [Dogberry and Verges, and the Watch with] Conrade and Borachio.

202 **Claudio** He is then a giant to an ape, but then is an ape a doctor to such a man.

205 **Don Pedro** But soft you, let me be. Pluck up, my heart, and be sad. Did he not say my brother was fled?

209 **Dogberry** Come you, sir. If justice cannot tame you, she shall ne'er weigh more reasons in her balance. Nay, and you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be look'd to.

Don Pedro How now? two of my brother's men bound? Borachio one!

Benedick Good-bye, boy, you know what my intentions are. I will leave you now to your gossiping mood. You make jokes as braggarts break their blades, which, thank God, don't hurt. My lord, for your many kindnesses, I thank you, but I must leave your court. Your brother the bastard has fled from Messina, and you have among the three of you killed a sweet and innocent lady. But as for my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I will meet. Until then, peace be with him.

[*Benedick exits.*]

Don Pedro He is serious.

Claudio Extremely serious, and I promise you that it is for the love of Beatrice.

Don Pedro And he has challenged you.

Claudio Yes, he has, most sincerely.

Don Pedro What a pretty thing man is when he wears his fancy clothes and forgets to wear his intelligence.

[*Enter Dogberry, Verges, and the Watch, with Conrade and Borachio.*]

Claudio He is bigger in the eyes of an ape; but then an ape is a doctor to such a man because he is smarter.

Don Pedro Listen, let me take courage to heart and be serious. Didn't he say that my brother has fled?

Dogberry Come here, you; if justice is not served she will never be able to weigh more reasons in her balance—because you are a cursing hypocrite and we have to look after you.

Don Pedro What's going on? Two of my brother's men tied up! Borachio for one!

Claudio Hearken after their offense, my lord.

214 **Don Pedro** Officers, what offense have these men
done?

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

220 **Don Pedro** First, I ask thee what they have
done; thirdly, I ask thee what's their offense; sixt
and lastly, why they are committed; and to conclude,
what you lay to their charge.

225 **Claudio** Rightly reason'd, and in his own division,
and by my troth there's one meaning well suited.

Don Pedro Who have you offended, masters,
that you are thus bound to your answer? This
learned constable is too cunning to be understood.
229 What's your offense?

Borachio Sweet Prince, let me go no farther to mine
answer: do you hear me, and let this count kill me.
I have deceiv'd even your very eyes. What your wis-
doms could not discover, these shallow fools have
brought to light, who in the night overheard me
235 confessing to this man how Don John your
brother incens'd me to slander the Lady Hero,
how you were brought into the orchard, and saw me
court Margaret in Hero's garments, how you dis-
grac'd her when you should marry her. My villainy
240 they have upon record, which I had rather seal
with my death than repeat over to my shame. The
lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusa-
tion; and briefly, I desire nothing but the reward of
a villain.

Claudio Ask them what they have done, my lord.

Don Pedro Officers, what offense have these men
committed?

Dogberry Well, sir, they have made a false report; more-
over, they have lied; secondarily, they are liars; sixt and
lastly, they have lied about a lady; thirdly they have verified
unjust things; and in conclusion, they are lying rascals.

Don Pedro First, let me ask you what they have done;
thirdly, I ask you what's their offense; sixt and lastly, why
are they arrested; and, to conclude, what charges do you
lay at them?

Claudio Well done and in a way only he would understand.
And in truth, he was able to say the same thing many differ-
ent ways.

Don Pedro What have you done to be bound in such a
way? This learned constable is too clever to be understood.
What did you do?

Borachio Sweet Prince, don't let me go any farther to
answer, listen to me and then let this count kill me. I have
deceived your eyes, and what your wisdoms could not dis-
cover, these fools have brought to light. They overheard me
telling this man how your brother Don John incited me to
slander Lady Hero. You were brought into the orchard and
you saw me court Margaret in Hero's clothes. You have dis-
graced her, when you should have married her. The record
of my crime is true, and I would rather guarantee it with my
death than repeat my shame. The lady is dead upon mine
and my master's false accusations. I desire nothing but the
reward of a criminal.

Don Pedro Runs not this speech like iron through
245 your blood?
Claudio I have drunk poison while 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 compos'd and fram'd of treachery,
250 and fled he is upon this villainy.

Claudio Sweet Hero, now thy image doth appear
in the rare semblance that I lov'd it first.

Dogberry Come, bring away the plaintiffs. By this
time our sexton hath reform'd Signior Leonato of
255 the matter; and, masters, do not forget to specify,
when time and place shall serve, that I am an ass.

Verges Here, here comes Master Signior Leonato,
and the Sexton too.

Enter Leonato, his brother [Antonio], and the Sexton.

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

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

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

Borachio Yea, even I alone.

265 **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.
270 'Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it.

Don Pedro Doesn't this speech make your blood run cold
like iron?

Claudio I have drunk poison while he told it.

Don Pedro But did my brother put you up to this?

Borachio Yes, and he paid me well for putting it into play.

Don Pedro He is built and created from treachery, and he
has escaped as a result of this villainy.

Claudio Sweet Hero! Now your image appears in the rare
form of that when I first loved it.

Dogberry Come, bring the plaintiffs [*he means*
"defendants"]. By now our sexton has reformed [*he means*
to say "informed"] Signior Leonato of the matter, and,
gentlemen, do not forget to state when it is convenient,
that I am an ass.

Verges Here comes Master Signior Leonato, and the sexton
too.

[Re-enter Leonato and Antonio, with the Sexton.]

Leonato Who is the villain? Let me see his eyes so that
when I see another man that looks like him, I can avoid him.
Which of these is he?

Borachio If you want to know your deceiver, look at me.

Leonato Are you the slave that killed my innocent child
with your slanderous words?

Borachio Yes, I alone.

Leonato No, that's not true, villain. You're lying to yourself
because here is a pair of honorable men; the third has fled
who also helped you. I thank you, princes, for my daugh-
ter's death. Make note of it on your list of noble and worthy
deeds. It was bravely done if you think 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.

275 **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—
 280 That were impossible—but I pray you both,
 Possess the people in Messina here
 How innocent she died, and if your love
 Can labor aught in sad invention,
 Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb,
 285 And sing it to her bones, sing it to-night.
 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,
 290 And she alone is heir to both of us.
 Give her the right you should have giv'n her cousin,
 And so dies my revenge.

Claudio O noble sir,
 Your overkindness doth wring tears from me.
 I do embrace your offer, and dispose
 295 For henceforth of poor Claudio.

Leonato To-morrow then I will expect your coming,
 To-night I take my leave. This naughty man
 Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
 299 Who I believe was pack'd in all this wrong,
 Hir'd to it by your brother.

Claudio I do not know how to beg for your patience, but I
 have to say something. Choose your revenge and impose
 any punishment that you can think of for my sins, but even
 though I have sinned, it was a mistake.

Don Pedro From my soul, me too. To appease this good
 old man I would endure any punishment that he would
 command.

Leonato I cannot ask you to allow my daughter to live, that
 is impossible. But I beg you both to explain to the people in
 Messina that she was innocent when she died. If your love
 can construct something from its sadness then hang an
 epitaph for her on her tomb and sing it to her bones
 tonight. Tomorrow morning, come to my house and,
 though you could not be my son-in-law, you can be my
 nephew. My brother has a daughter who looks almost the
 same as my child who is dead. She is the only heir to the
 both of us; give to her what you should have given her
 cousin. And with that, my revenge will die.

Claudio Oh noble sir, your extreme kindness brings tears to
 my eyes. I will accept your offer with open arms and from
 now on, I am at your disposal.

Leonato Tomorrow then I will expect your arrival, and now
 I will leave. This naughty man will have to face Margaret,
 who I believe was an accomplice to all of this wrong and
 hired 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
 303 In any thing that I do know by her.

Dogberry Moreover, sir, which indeed is not under
 white and black, this plaintiff here, the offender,
 did call me ass. I beseech you let it be remem-
 b'rd in his punishment. And also, the watch heard
 them talk of one Deformed. They say he wears a key
 309 in his ear and a lock hanging by it, and borrows
 money in God's name, the which he hath us'd
 so long and never paid that now men grow hard-hearted
 and will lend nothing for God's sake. Pray you
 313 examine him upon that point.

Leonato I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

Dogberry Your worship speaks like a most thankful
 and reverent youth, and I praise God for you.

Leonato There's for thy pains.

Dogberry God save the foundation!

Leonato Go, I discharge thee of thy prisoner, and I
 320 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! I
 wish your worship well. God restore you to health!
 325 I humbly give you leave to depart, and if a merry
 meeting may be wish'd, God prohibit it! Come,
 neighbor.

[*Exeunt Dogberry and Verges.*]

Borachio No, by my soul, she was not involved and did not
 know what she did when she was speaking to me. She has
 always been fair and honorable in everything that I know
 of her.

Dogberry Moreover, sir, this is not written down in white
 and black, but this plaintiff [*he means "defendant"*], the
 offender, did call me an ass. I beg you let it be remembered
 in his punishment. And also, the watch heard them talk of
 someone named Deformed; they say he wears a key in his
 ear with a lock hanging from it. He borrows money from
 people in the name of God and never pays it back. And
 now, people have grown hard-hearted and will not lend
 anything in God's name. Please, ask him about that.

Leonato I thank you for your care and honest efforts.

Dogberry You speak like a thankful and respectful boy, and
 may God bless you.

Leonato [*giving Dogberry some money*] This is for your
 efforts.

Dogberry God save the foundation [*he means "God bless
 the founder"*]!

Leonato Go, I will take your prisoner from you, and I thank
 you again.

Dogberry I leave a complete rascal with you, who beg you
 to punish and to make an example of for others. God bless
 you. I wish you well. God restore your health! I will humbly
 leave and if we should meet in the future, may God prohibit
 [*he means "permit"*] it! Come, neighbor.

[*Dogberry and Verges exit.*]

Leonato Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

Antonio Farewell, my lords, we look for you to-morrow.

Don Pedro We will not fail.

Claudio To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

Leonato [*To the Watch.*] Bring you these fellows on.—

331 We'll talk with Margaret,
How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.

Exeunt [severally].

Scene 2

Enter Benedick and Margaret, [meeting].

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leonato Until tomorrow morning, lords, good-bye.

Antonio Good-bye, my lords, we will look for you tomorrow.

Don Pedro We will be there.

Claudio Tonight I'll mourn Hero.

Leonato [*to the Watch*] Bring these fellows along. We'll talk with Margaret and learn how she became acquainted with this vulgar fellow.

[They all exit.]

Scene 2

Enter Benedick and Margaret, meeting in Leonato's garden.

Benedick Please, sweet Miss Margaret, give me a hand and help me write a poem about Beatrice.

Margaret Will you write a sonnet praising my beauty afterwards?

Benedick I'll write a poem in such an elegant style, Margaret, that no man living could come over [*exceed*] it, and truthfully, you deserve it.

Margaret No man come over me! Will I always be kept downstairs in the servants' quarters?

Benedick Your wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth—it catches everything it chases.

Margaret And yours as blunt as the fencer's sword with a dull tip—they hit, but don't hurt anyone.

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

Margaret Give us the swords, we have bucklers of
19 our own.

Benedick If you use them, Margaret, you must put in the pikes with a vice, and they are dangerous weapons for maids.

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

Exit Margaret.

25 **Benedick** And therefore will come.

[Sings.]

“The god of love,
That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
29 How pitiful I deserve”—

I mean in singing; but in loving, Leander the good swimmer, Troilus the first employer of pandars, and a whole bookful of these quondam carpet-mongers, whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse, why, they were never
35 so truly turn'd over and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme; I have tried. I can find out no rhyme to “lady” but “baby,” an innocent rhyme; for “scorn,” “horn,” a hard rhyme; for “school,” “fool,” a babbling rhyme: very ominous endings. No, I was not born under a rhyming planet,
41 nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

Enter Beatrice.

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I call'd thee?

Benedick It is a gentlemanly wit, Margaret, not intended to hurt a woman. Please go get Beatrice; I give up on this duel of wits.

Margaret Give us women the swords, we have our own shields.

Benedick If you use them, Margaret, you must add spikes with a vice and know that they are dangerous weapons for virgins.

Margaret Well, I'll call Beatrice for you, but she can get here on her own—she has legs.

[Margaret exits.]

Benedick And that means that she will come.

[Benedick sings.]

*The god of love,
That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve,—*

I am horrible at singing, but in loving, that's something else. Leander and Troilus or an entire book full of these legendary lover types whose names sound so smooth in a line of blank verse, not one of them has been as completely captivated or as anxiously in love as I am. Certainly, I cannot show my love in a rhyme, I have tried. The only rhyming word that I can find for “lady” is “baby,” which is childish; the only word I can find to rhyme with “scorn” is “horn” and that is a harsh-sounding rhyme; and the only word that I can find that rhymes with “school” is “fool,” which is an absurd rhyme. They all have ill-conceived endings. No, I was not born to be a poet nor can I woo a lady with joyful words.

[Enter Beatrice.]

Sweet Beatrice, did you come because I called you?

Beatrice Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

45 **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 pass’d between you
and Claudio.

Benedick Only foul words—and thereupon I will
51 kiss thee.

Beatrice Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind
is but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome; therefore
54 I will depart un-kiss’d.

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
either I must shortly hear from him, or I will sub-
scribe him a coward. And I pray thee now tell me,
61 for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love
with me?

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

Benedick Suffer love! a good epithite! I do suffer
love indeed, 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
71 hates.

Benedick Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.

Beatrice Yes, Signior, and I will leave when you ask me to.

Benedick Oh, well, stay until then!

Beatrice Since you just said “then” I will leave you now,
but before I go, let me ask you what I came to find out,
which is to know what happened between you and Claudio.

Benedick I spoke only foul words to him, and with that I
will kiss you.

Beatrice If you had foul words in your mouth, you must
have foul breath, and foul breath is foul-smelling; and with
that, I will leave without being kissed.

Benedick With your strong wit, you frightened the mean-
ings right out of your words. But, I will tell you simply that I
have challenged Claudio, and he must either accept the
challenge soon or I’ll write him down as a coward. And
now, please tell me, which of my bad traits did you fall in
love with first?

Beatrice All of them together, because they are so well
maintained in a state of evilness that it would be impossible
to allow any good traits to mix with them. But, from which
of my good traits did you first suffer the pains of love?

Benedick Suffer love! That’s a good expression. Of course I
do suffer love, because I love you against my will.

Beatrice You love me in spite of your heart I think—oh,
poor heart! If you spite your heart for my sake, then I will
spite my heart for yours, because I will never love some-
thing that my friend hates.

Benedick You and I are too clever to woo peaceably.

Beatrice It appears not in this confession; there's
not one wise man among twenty that will praise
75 himself.

Benedick An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that
liv'd in the time of good neighbors. If a man do
not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he
shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings
80 and the widow weeps.

Beatrice And how long is that, think you?

Benedick Question: why, an hour in clamor and
83 a quarter in rheum; therefore is it most expedient
for the wise, if Don Worm (his conscience) find no
impediment to the contrary, to be the trumpet of
his own virtues, as I am to myself. So much for
praising myself, who I myself will bear witness is
praiseworthy. And now tell me, how doth your
89 cousin?

Beatrice Very ill.

Benedick And how do you?

Beatrice Very ill too.

Benedick Serve God, love me, and mend. There
94 will I leave you too, for here comes one in haste.

Enter Ursula.

Ursula Madam, you must come to your uncle,
yonder's old coil at home. It is prov'd my Lady
Hero hath been falsely accus'd, the Prince and
98 Claudio mightily abus'd, and Don John is the
author of all, who is fled and gone. Will you come
presently?

Beatrice Not a single wise man in twenty will praise
himself, but from what you just said, you are not wise.

Benedick That's an old saying, Beatrice, from a time when
neighbors spoke kindly of one another. As it is now, if a
man doesn't build his own tomb before he dies, he will not
be remembered longer than the bells ringing and the
widows weeping.

Beatrice And how long is that, do you think?

Benedick That's a good question—probably an hour for the
bell ringing and about a quarter of an hour for the weeping.
Because of that, it is practical if a man's conscience and the
worms that gnaw in it avoid obstacles to the contrary and
proclaim his own virtues as I do and, with me as my
witness, find quite praiseworthy. But now, tell me, how is
your cousin?

Beatrice She is very ill.

Benedick And how are you?

Beatrice Very ill as well.

Benedick Praise God, love me and get better—and that's
where I'll leave you too, because here comes someone in
a hurry.

[Enter Ursula.]

Ursula Madam, you must go see your uncle. There's all
kinds of turmoil at home. It has been proven that my Lady
Hero has been accused falsely. The Prince and Claudio have
been greatly deceived, and Don John, the cause all of these
troubles, has up and left. Will you come now?

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
104 thy uncle's.

Exeunt.

Scene 3

*Enter Claudio, Prince [Don Pedro], and three or four
with tapers.*

Claudio Is this the monument of Leonato?

[A] Lord It is, my lord.

[Claudio reading out of a scroll.]

EPITAPH

“Done to death by slanderous tongues
Was the Hero that here lies.
5 Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,
Gives her fame which never dies.
So the life that died with shame
Lives in death with glorious fame.”

Hang thou there upon the tomb,

[Hangs up the scroll.]

10 Praising her when I am [dumb].
Now, music, sound, and sing your solemn hymn.

Beatrice Will you go with me to hear this news, Signior?

Benedick I will live in your heart, die in your lap, and be
buried in your eyes, and with that I will go with you to
your uncle's.

[They exit.]

Scene 3

*Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, and three or four others with
candles in a church yard.*

Claudio Is this the tomb of Leonato's family?

Lord Yes, it is, my lord.

Claudio *[reading out of a scroll]*

Dead because of slanderous words,
It is here that Hero lies.
Death, in repayment for being wronged,
Gives her fame, which never dies.
So the life that died with shame
Lives in death with celebrated fame.

[He hangs the scroll on the tomb.]

This epitaph will hang upon the tomb praising her long
after I am dead. Now, play the music and sing your solemn
hymn.

SONG.

Pardon, goddess of the night,
 Those that slew thy virgin knight,
 For the which, with songs of woe,
 15 Round about her tomb they go.
 Midnight, assist our moan,
 Help us to sigh and groan,
 Heavily, heavily.
 Graves, yawn and yield your dead,
 20 Till death be uttered,
 Heavily, heavily.

[*Claudio*]

Now, unto thy bones good night!
 Yearly will I do this rite.

Don Pedro Good morrow, masters, put your torches out.
 25 The wolves have preyed, and look, the gentle day,
 Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
 Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.
 Thanks to you all, and leave us. Fare you well.

Claudio Good morrow, masters—each his several way.

30 **Don Pedro** Come let us hence, and put on other weeds,
 And then to Leonato's we will go.

Claudio And Hymen now with luckier issue speed's
 Than this for whom we rend' red up this woe.

Exeunt.[*Singing.*]

Pardon, goddess of the night,
 Those that slew your virgin knight;
 These men sing songs of woe,
 Around her tomb they go.
 Midnight, help our moans;
 Help us to sigh and groan,
 Heavily, heavily:
 Graves, open and release your dead,
 Until death is fully expressed,
 Heavily, heavily.

Claudio For now I will say good-night to your bones, but I
 will perform this ceremony every year.

Don Pedro Good morning, sirs; put out your torches. The
 wolves have finished hunting, and look, the gentle dawn
 has arrived; before the sun fully illuminates, it mottles the
 drowsy eastern sky with spots of grey. Thanks to all of you,
 you may go, good-bye.

Claudio Good morning, gentlemen, we will go our separate
 ways.

Don Pedro Come on, let's get going. We'll change our
 clothes and then go to Leonato's.

Claudio And hopefully, the god of love will favor us with
 better results than for Hero, for whom we caused this
 sadness.

[*They exit.*]

Scene 4

Enter Leonato, Benedick, [Beatrice,] Margaret, Ursula, old man [Antonio], Friar [Francis], Hero.

Friar Did I not tell you she was innocent?

Leonato So are the Prince and Claudio, who accus'd her
Upon the error that you heard debated.
But Margaret was in some fault for this,
5 Although against her will, as it appears
In the true course of all the question.

Antonio Well, I am glad that all things sort so well.

Benedick And so am I, being else by faith enforc'd
9 To call young Claudio to a reckoning for it.

Leonato Well, daughter, and you gentlewomen all,
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
And when I send for you, come hither masked.
The Prince and Claudio promis'd by this hour
To visit me. You know your office, brother:
15 You must be father to your brother's daughter,
And give her to young Claudio.

Exeunt Ladies.

Antonio Which I will do with confirm'd countenance.

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

Friar To do what, signior?

20 **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 favor.

Scene 4

Enter Leonato, Antonio, Benedick, Beatrice, Margaret, Ursula, Friar Francis, and Hero in a room in Leonato's house.

Friar Francis Didn't I tell you that she was innocent?

Leonato The Prince and Claudio who accused her erroneously are innocent too, because they were deceived as you have heard discussed. But Margaret is guilty in part for this, although after an investigation, her participation was not deliberate.

Antonio Well, I am glad that everything has been sorted out so well.

Benedick And so am I, otherwise I would have been forced to keep my promise and make Claudio account for his behavior.

Leonato Well, daughter, and all of you ladies, isolate yourselves in a room and when I send for you, come here with your masks.

[The ladies exit.]

The Prince and Claudio promised to be here with me by now. Brother, you know your job: to be a father to your niece and give her in marriage to young Claudio.

Antonio Which I will do with a serious expression on my face.

Benedick Friar, I must ask for your help, I think.

Friar Francis To do what, Signior?

Benedick Well, to tie me up, or to destroy me, one of the two. Signior Leonato, the truth is, good Signior, your niece is quite fond of me.

Leonato That eye my daughter lent her, 'tis most true.

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

25 **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
30 In the state of honorable 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 Prince [Don Pedro] and Claudio and two or three other.

Don Pedro Good morrow to this fair assembly.

35 **Leonato** Good morrow, Prince; good morrow, Claudio;
We here attend you. Are you yet determined
To-day to marry with my brother's daughter?

Claudio I'll hold my mind were she an Ethiope.

Leonato Call her forth, brother, here's the friar ready.

[Exit Antonio.]

40 **Don Pedro** Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what's the matter,
That you have such a February face,
So full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness?

Leonato She sees through the same eyes of love as my
daughter, that is very true.

Benedick And with the same eyes of love, I return her
feelings.

Leonato I believe your vision was enhanced by me,
Claudio, and the Prince, but what do you want?

Benedick Your answer, sir, is perplexing, but as for what I
want, I want your best wishes and blessings to be united in
an honorable marriage, in which, good Friar, I will need
your help.

Leonato My blessings are as you would like.

Friar Francis And my help as well. Here come the Prince
and Claudio.

[Don Pedro and Claudio and two or three others enter.]

Don Pedro Good morning to all of you.

Leonato Good morning, Prince, good morning, Claudio. We
were waiting for you. Are you still determined to marry my
brother's daughter today?

Claudio I would not change my mind if she were an
Ethiopian with dark skin.

Leonato Brother, ask her to come out, the Friar is ready.

[Antonio exits.]

Don Pedro Good morning, Benedick. What's the matter?
Your face looks like the month of February, all full of frost,
storms, and clouds.

Claudio I think he thinks upon the savage bull.
Tush, fear not, man, we'll tip thy horns with gold,
45 And all Europa shall rejoice at thee,
As once Europa did at lusty Jove,
When he would play the noble beast in love.

Benedick Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low,
And some such strange bull leapt your father's cow,
50 And got a calf in that same noble feat
Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.

*Enter Brother [Antonio], Hero, Beatrice, Margaret,
Ursula, [the ladies masked].*

Claudio For this I owe you: here comes other reck'nings.
Which is the lady I must seize upon?

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

55 **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—
59 I am your husband if you like of me.

Hero [*Unmasking.*] And when I liv'd, I was your other wife,
And when you lov'd, you were my other husband.

Claudio Another Hero!

Hero Nothing certainer:
One Hero died defil'd, but I do live,
64 And surely as I live, I am a maid.

Don Pedro The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

Leonato She died, my lord, but whiles her slander liv'd.

Claudio I think he is thinking about the savage bull that is
about to become tamed. Hey, don't be afraid, we will dress
you up by tipping your horns with gold and all of Europe
will express joy with you, just like Europa [*daughter of a
Phoenician king*] did with the lively Jove [*Roman god of
the sky*] when he turned himself into a bull in love.

Benedick Jove the bull, sir, bellowed for love. And a similar
strange bull mated with your father's cow and had a calf in
the same way, just like you, for you have his moan.

Claudio I'll pay you back for that, but here come other
matters to be dealt with.

[Antonio re-enters with the ladies wearing masks]

Which is the lady that I am supposed to take hold of?

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

Claudio So, then she is mine. Sweet lady, can I see your
face?

Leonato No, you cannot see her until you take her hand
and, in front of this friar, promise to marry her.

Claudio Give me your hand and before this holy friar, if you
want me, I am your husband.

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 more certain. One Hero died dishonored, but I
do live, and as surely as I live, I am a virgin.

Don Pedro Another Hero! Just like the Hero that is dead!

Leonato She was dead, my lord, only as long as her
slander was alive.

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:
 70 Mean time let wonder seem familiar,
 And to the chapel let us presently.

Benedick Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

Beatrice [*Unmasking.*] I answer to that name. What
 is your will?

Benedick Do not you love me?

Beatrice Why, no, no more than reason.

75 **Benedick** Why then your uncle and the Prince and Claudio
 Have been deceived. They swore you did.

Beatrice Do not you love me?

Benedick Troth, no, no more than reason.

Beatrice Why then my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula
 Are much deceiv'd, for they did swear you did.

80 **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,
 86 For here's a paper written in his hand,
 A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
 Fashion'd to Beatrice.

Friar Francis All this is shocking, and I will explain every-
 thing after the holy rites are finished. I will tell you about
 fair Hero's death. In the meantime, accept these miraculous
 events as though they were everyday occurrences. Let's go
 to the chapel now.

Benedick Wait a moment, friar. Which one is Beatrice?

Beatrice [*unmasking*] I answer to that name. What would
 you like?

Benedick Do you love me?

Beatrice Why, no: no more than is reasonable.

Benedick Well, then your uncle and the Prince and Claudio
 have been deceived; they swore that you loved me.

Beatrice Do you love me?

Benedick Honestly, no; no more than is reasonable.

Beatrice Well, then my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula were
 greatly deceived because they swore that you did.

Benedick They swore that you were almost lovesick for me.

Beatrice They swore that you were nearly dead in love
 for me.

Benedick Then it isn't true, you don't love me?

Beatrice Truly, no, only in a friendly manner.

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

Claudio And I'll swear that he loves her because here is a
 paper in his handwriting. [*holding up a piece of paper*] It is
 an awkward sonnet produced entirely from his brain and it
 is addressed to Beatrice.

Hero And here's another
Writ in my cousin's hand, stol'n from her pocket,
90 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
95 day, I yield upon great persuasion, and partly
to save your life, for I was told you were in a con-
sumption.

Benedick Peace, I will stop your mouth.

[*Kissing her.*]

99 **Don Pedro** How dost thou, Benedick the married man?

Benedick I'll tell thee what, Prince: a college of
wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humor.
Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram?
104 No, if a man will be beaten with brains, 'a shall
wear nothing handsome about him. In brief,
since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to
any purpose that the world can say against it, and
therefore never flout at me for what I have said
against it; for man is a giddy thing, and this is my
109 conclusion. For thy part, Claudio, I did think
to have beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be
my kinsman, live unbruise'd, and love my cousin.

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

Hero And here's another one written in my cousin's hand-
writing and stolen from her pocket. It admits her affection
for Benedick.

Benedick A miracle! Our own handwritings confirm what
our hearts feel. Come on, I will marry you, but only out of
pity for you.

Beatrice I wouldn't deny you, but I surrender under a great
deal of persuasion and partly to save your life, because I
was told you were lovesick and wasting away.

Benedick Peace! I will stop your mouth with a kiss.

[*Kisses her.*]

Don Pedro How do you feel being Benedick, the married
man?

Benedick I'll tell you what, Prince: An entire company of
jokesters could not mock me out of my state of mind. Do
you think I am bothered by name-calling? No. If a man is
afraid of what he is called, there wouldn't be anything
attractive about him. In short, since I do plan to marry, I
won't care if anyone says something against it. Therefore,
don't mock me for what I have said against it in the past,
because man is a flighty thing and that is my answer. As for
you, Claudio, although I know I would have beaten you in
our duel, since you are about to become my kinsman, I will
let you go without injuries to love my cousin.

Claudio I was hoping you would have said no to Beatrice,
and that way I could have clobbered you out of your
unmarried life to make you an unfaithful husband, which
without a doubt you will be if my cousin does not keep a
close watch on you.

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

120 **Leonato** We'll have dancing afterward.

Benedick First, of my word; therefore play, music. Prince, thou art sad, get thee a wife, get thee a wife. There is no staff more reverent than one tipp'd with horn.

Enter Messenger.

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

Benedick Think not on him till to-morrow. I'll devise thee brave punishments for him. Strike up, pipers.

Dance.

[Exeunt.]

Benedick Come on, come on, we are friends; let's have a dance before we are married so that we can lighten our hearts and our wives' heels.

Leonato We'll dance after the weddings.

Benedick First, on my word! Let the music play. Prince, you are sad—get a wife, get a wife. Your royal staff would be far more worthy if it had a horned tip.

[A Messenger enters.]

Messenger My lord, your brother John has been caught and is being brought back to Messina by armed men.

Benedick Don't think about him until tomorrow. I'll help you invent some imposing punishments for him. Let the music play.

[Dance]

[Everyone exits.]