

# Much Ado About Nothing

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Friar + narrator  
Balthasar + narrator  
Ursula + narrator  
Don Pedro  
Leonato  
Don John  
Borachio  
Conrade  
Hero  
Margaret (dance captain)  
Claudio  
Beatrice  
Benedick

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1. Introductions by the narrators
2. Opening dance

Beatrice: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

Benedick: I will live a bachelor. In faith, hath not the world one man, but he will wear his cap...

3. Beatrice vs Benedick

**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? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

**BENEDICK**

Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

**BEATRICE**

Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were.

**BENEDICK**

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

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

## 4. Firm friends

**CLAUDIO**

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

**BENEDICK**

I noted her not; but I looked on her.

**CLAUDIO**

Is she not a modest young lady?

**BENEDICK**

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

**CLAUDIO**

Thou thinkest I am in sport: I pray thee tell me truly how thou likest her.

**BENEDICK**

Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

**CLAUDIO**

Can the world buy such a jewel?

**BENEDICK**

Yea, and a case to put it into.

**CLAUDIO**

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**

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

**BENEDICK**

Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Look Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

**DON PEDRO**

What secret hath held you here?

**BENEDICK**

He is in love. With who? now that is your grace's part. Mark how short his answer is;--With Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

**CLAUDIO**

If this were so, so were it uttered.

**DON PEDRO**

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

*Benedick scowls*

**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:

## 5. Don John, Balthazar and Conrad evil scene

**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.

**BORACHIO**

You should hear reason.

**DON JOHN**

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

**CONRADE**

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

**DON JOHN**

I cannot hide what I am: I must be sad when I have cause and smile at no man's jests, eat when I have stomach and wait for no man's leisure, sleep when I am drowsy and tend on no man's business, laugh when I am merry and claw no man in his humour.

**CONRADE**

Yea, but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace.

**DON JOHN**

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

**CONRADE**

Can you make no use of your discontent?

**DON JOHN**

I make all use of it, for I use it only.

Well Borachio?

**BORACHIO**

I came yonder from a great supper: the prince your brother is royally entertained by Leonato: and I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

**DON JOHN**

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

**BORACHIO**

Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

**DON JOHN**

Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

**BORACHIO**

Even he.

**DON JOHN**

A proper squire! And who, and who? which way looks he?

**BORACHIO**

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

**CONRADE**

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

**BORACHIO**

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

**DON JOHN**

Come, come, let us thither: this may prove food to my displeasure. If I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure, and will assist me?

**CONRADE**

To the death, my lord.

**DON JOHN**

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

**BORACHIO**

We'll wait upon your lordship.

6. MASKED BALL. dance and small scenes

*Group dance*

**DON PEDRO**

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

**HERO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

With me in your company?

**HERO**

I may say so, when I please.

**DON PEDRO**

And when please you to say so?

**HERO**

When I like your favour; for God defend the lute should be like the case!

**DON PEDRO**

Speak low, if you speak love.

*Drawing her aside*

**FRIAR**

Well, I would you did like me.

**MARGARET**

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

**FRIAR**

Which is one?

**MARGARET**

I say my prayers aloud.

**FRIAR**

I love you the better: the hearers may cry, Amen.

**MARGARET**

God match me with a good dancer!

**FRIAR**

Amen.

**MARGARET**

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

**FRIAR**

No more words: the clerk is answered.

*They dance*

**URSULA**

I know you well enough; you are Signior Balthasar.

**BALTHASAR**

At a word, I am not.

**URSULA**

I know you by the waggling of your head.

**BALTHASAR**

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

**URSULA**

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

**BALTHASAR**

At a word, I am not.

**URSULA**

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

*They dance*

**BEATRICE**

Will you not tell me who you are?

**BENEDICK**

Not now.

**BEATRICE**

That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the 'Hundred Merry Tales:'--well this was Signior Benedick that said so.

**BENEDICK**

What's he?

**BEATRICE**

I am sure you know him well enough.

**BENEDICK**

Not I, believe me.

**BEATRICE**

Did he never make you laugh?

**BENEDICK**

I pray you, what is he?

**BEATRICE**

Why, he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool; only his gift is in devising impossible slanders: none but libertines delight in him; and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villany; for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him.

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

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

*Music*

We must follow the leaders.

**BENEDICK**

In every good thing.

**BEATRICE**

Nay, if they lead to any ill, I will leave them at the next turning.

*Group Dance. Don John whispers to Claudio.*

**DON JOHN**

Signior, you are very near my brother in his love: he is enamoured on Hero.

**CLAUDIO**

How know you he loves her?

**DON JOHN**

I heard him swear his affection.

**BORACHIO**

So did I too; and he swore he would marry her to-night.

**CLAUDIO**

'Tis certain so; the prince wooes for himself.

Friendship is constant in all other things

Save in the office and affairs of love:

Therefore, all hearts in love use their own tongues;

Let every eye negotiate for itself

And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch  
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.  
Farewell, therefore, Hero!

*Re-enter BENEDICK*

**BENEDICK**

Count Claudio?

**CLAUDIO**

Yea, the same.

**BENEDICK**

Come, will you go with me? The prince hath got your Hero.

**CLAUDIO**

I wish him joy of her.

**BENEDICK**

But did you think the prince would have served you thus?

**CLAUDIO**

I pray you, leave me.

**BENEDICK**

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

**CLAUDIO**

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

*Benedick turns, sees Beatrice and scowls.*

**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.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**BEATRICE**

So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools. I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband!

**DON PEDRO**

Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

**BEATRICE**

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

**DON PEDRO**

Will you have me, lady?

**BEATRICE**

No, my lord, unless I might have another for working-days: your grace is too costly to wear every day.

*Dance*

**BEATRICE**

I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seek.

**DON PEDRO**

Why, how now, count! wherefore are you sad?

**CLAUDIO**

Not sad, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

How then? sick?

**CLAUDIO**

Neither, my lord.

**BEATRICE**

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

**DON PEDRO**

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

**LEONATO**

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his grace hath made the match, and an grace say Amen to it.

**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. Lady, as you are mine, I am yours:

*Final dance, leading to a moment between Beatrice and Benedick.*

**DON PEDRO**

Come, 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, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

**LEONATO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

And I, my lord.

**DON PEDRO**

And you too, gentle Hero?

**HERO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know.

*Music*

## 7. Gulling Benedick

**BENEDICK**

I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by failing in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthography; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not, but I'll take my oath on it, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

*Withdraws*

*Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO*

**DON PEDRO**

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

**CLAUDIO**

O, very well, my lord:

**DON PEDRO**

Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of to-day, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

**CLAUDIO**

O, ay: stalk on; stalk on; the fowl sits. I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

**LEONATO**

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

**BENEDICK**

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

**LEONATO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

Why, what effects of passion shows she?

**CLAUDIO**

Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

**LEONATO**

What effects, my lord? She will sit you, you heard my daughter tell you how.

**CLAUDIO**

She did, indeed.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**LEONATO**

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

**BENEDICK**

I should think this a gull, but that the old fellow speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

**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.

**CLAUDIO**

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

**LEONATO**

This says she now when she is beginning to write to him; for she'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper: my daughter tells us all.

**CLAUDIO**

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

**LEONATO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

That.

**LEONATO**

O, she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence; railed at herself, that she should be so immodest to write to one that she knew would flout her; 'I measure him,' says she, 'by my own spirit; for I should flout him, if he writ to me; yea, though I love him, I should.'

**CLAUDIO**

Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps, sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses; 'O sweet Benedick! God give me patience!'

**LEONATO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

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

**DON PEDRO**



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

**CLAUDIO**

And she is exceeding wise.

**DON PEDRO**

In every thing but in loving Benedick.

**CLAUDIO**

He is a very proper man.

**DON PEDRO**

He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

**CLAUDIO**

Before God! and, in my mind, very wise.

**DON PEDRO**

He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

**CLAUDIO**

And I take him to be valiant.

**DON PEDRO**

Shall we go seek Benedick, and tell him of her love?

**CLAUDIO**

Never tell him, my lord: let her wear it out with good counsel.

**LEONATO**

Nay, that's impossible: she may wear her heart out first.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**LEONATO**

My lord, will you walk? dinner is ready.

**CLAUDIO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

Let there be the same net spread for her; and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry.

Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

*Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO*

**BENEDICK**

[Coming forward] This can be no trick: the conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady: it seems her affections have their full bent. Love me! why, it must be requited. Yes, the world must be peopled! When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. Here comes Beatrice. By this day! she's a fair lady: I do spy some marks of love in her.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

You take pleasure then in the message?

**BEATRICE**

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

*Exit*

**BENEDICK**

Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come I to dinner;' there's a double meaning in that...If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain. I will go get her picture.

#### 8. Gulling Beatrice

##### **HERO**

Now, Ursula, Margaret: when Beatrice doth come, as we do trace this alley up and down,  
Our talk must only be of Benedick.  
When I do name him, let it be thy part  
To praise him more than ever man did merit:  
My talk to thee must be how Benedick  
Is sick in love with Beatrice.

*Enter BEATRICE, behind*

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

##### **URSULA**

The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish  
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream,  
And greedily devour the treacherous bait:

##### **MARGARET**

So angle we for Beatrice;  
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

##### **HERO**

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

*Approaching the bower*

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

##### **URSULA**

But are you sure  
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

##### **HERO**

So says the prince and my new-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; she cannot love,  
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,  
She is so self-endear'd.

**URSULA**

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

**HERO**

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,  
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,  
But she would spell him backward: if fair-faced,  
She would swear the gentleman should be her sister;  
If low, an agate very vilely cut;  
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;  
If silent, why, a block moved with none.  
So turns she every man the wrong side out.

**URSULA**

Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

**HERO**

If I should speak,  
She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me  
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.  
Therefore let Benedick, like 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**

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

**HERO**

No; rather I will go to Benedick  
And counsel him to fight against his passion.  
And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders  
To stain my cousin with.

**MARGARET**

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

**HERO**

He is the only man of Italy.  
Always excepted my dear Claudio.

**URSULA**

When are you married, madam?

**HERO**

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

**URSULA**

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

**MARGARET**

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

*Exit*

**BEATRICE**

[Coming forward]

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?  
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?  
Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!  
No glory lives behind the back of such.

And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,  
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand:  
If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee  
To bind our loves up in a holy band;  
For others say thou dost deserve, and I  
Believe it better than reportingly.

*Music – getting ready for the wedding.*

#### 9. Deceiving Claudio

**DON JOHN**

My lord and brother, God save you!

**DON PEDRO**

Good den, brother.

**DON JOHN**

If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

**DON PEDRO**

In private?

**DON JOHN**

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

**DON PEDRO**

What's the matter?

**DON JOHN**

[To CLAUDIO] Means your lordship to be married  
to-morrow?

**DON PEDRO**

You know he does.

**DON JOHN**

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

**CLAUDIO**

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

**DON JOHN**

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

**CLAUDIO**

Who, Hero?

**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; I  
could say she were worse: think you of a worse  
title, and I will fit her to it. If you love her then,  
to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honour  
to change your mind.

*Shows photo*

**CLAUDIO**

May this be so?

**DON PEDRO**

I will not think it.

**DON JOHN**

If you dare not trust that you see, confess not  
that you know: if you will follow me, I will show

you enough; and when you have seen more and heard more, proceed accordingly.

**DON PEDRO**

And, as I wooed for thee to obtain her, I will join with thee to disgrace her. O day untowardly turned!

**CLAUDIO**

O mischief strangely thwarting!

**DON JOHN**

O plague right well prevented!

#### 10. Wedding scene

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

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

**CLAUDIO**

No.

**LEONATO**

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

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

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

**HERO**

I do.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

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

**CLAUDIO**

Know you any, Hero?

**HERO**

None, my lord.

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

Know you any, count?

**LEONATO**

I dare make his answer, none.

**CLAUDIO**

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

**BENEDICK**

How now! interjections? Why, then, some be of laughing, as, ah, ha, he!

**CLAUDIO**

Stand thee by, friar. Father, by your leave:

Will you with free and unconstrained soul

Give me this maid, your daughter?

**LEONATO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

And what have I to give you back, whose worth

May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

**DON PEDRO**

Nothing, unless you render her again.

**CLAUDIO**

Sweet prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.

There, Leonato, take her back again:

Give not this rotten orange to your friend;

She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.

Behold how like a maid she blushes here!

O, what authority and show of truth

Can cunning sin cover itself withal!  
Comes not that blood as modest evidence  
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,  
All you that see her, that she were a maid,  
By these exterior shows? But she is none:  
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;  
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

**LEONATO**

What do you mean, my lord?

**CLAUDIO**

Not to be married,  
Not to knit my soul to an approved wanton.

**HERO**

And seem'd I ever so to you?

**CLAUDIO**

Out on thee! Seeming! I will write against it:  
You seem to me as Dian in her orb,  
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown;  
But you are more intemperate in your blood  
Than Venus, or those pamper'd animals  
That rage in savage sensuality.

**HERO**

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

**LEONATO**

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

**DON PEDRO**

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

**LEONATO**

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

**DON JOHN**

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

**HERO**

True! O God!

**CLAUDIO**

Leonato, stand I here?  
Is this the prince? is this the prince's brother?  
Is this face Hero's? are our eyes our own?

**LEONATO**

All this is so: but what of this, my lord?

**CLAUDIO**

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

**LEONATO**

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

**HERO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

To make you answer truly to your name.

**HERO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

Marry, that can Hero;  
Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.  
What man was he talk'd with you yesternight

Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?  
Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

**HERO**

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

**DON PEDRO**

Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,  
I am sorry you must hear: upon mine 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.

**DON JOHN**

Thus, pretty lady,  
I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

**CLAUDIO**

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

**LEONATO**

Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?

*HERO swoons*

**BEATRICE**

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

**DON JOHN**

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

*Exit*

## 11. Kill Claudio

**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**

Why, then, God forgive me!

**BENEDICK**

What offence, sweet Beatrice?

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

And do it with all thy heart.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Come, bid me do any thing for thee.

**BEATRICE**

Kill Claudio.

**BENEDICK**

Ha! not for the wide world.

**BEATRICE**

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

**BENEDICK**

Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Beatrice,--

**BEATRICE**

In faith, I will go.

**BENEDICK**

We'll be friends first.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Is Claudio thine enemy?

**BEATRICE**

Is he not approved in the height a villain, that --O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place.

**BENEDICK**

Hear me, Beatrice,--

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Nay, but, Beatrice,--

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Beat--

**BEATRICE**

I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

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



**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

Enough, I am engaged; I will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you.

*Music. Visual altercation between Benedick and Claudio/Don Pedro*

## 12. Realisation

**BORACHIO**

Sweet prince, I have deceived even your very eyes: Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero, when you saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments, how you disgraced her, when you should marry her: my villainy they have upon record; which I had rather seal with my death than repeat over to my shame. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation; and, briefly, I desire nothing but the reward of a villain.

**DON PEDRO**

Runs not this speech like iron through 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 practise of it.

**DON PEDRO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

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

## 13. Masked dance and resolution

**CLAUDIO**

Another Hero!

**HERO**

Nothing certainer:

One Hero died defiled, but I do live,  
And surely as I live, I am a maid.

**DON PEDRO**

The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

**LEONATO**

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

**FRIAR FRANCIS**

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.

**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.

**HERO**

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

**BENEDICK**

They swore that you were almost sick for me.

**BEATRICE**

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

**BENEDICK**

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

**BEATRICE**

No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

**LEONATO**

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

**CLAUDIO**

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

**HERO**

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

**BENEDICK**

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

*Music*