

PLAY

much ado about nothing

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

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DO NOT COPY

Act 2, Scene 1

Original Text

Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO,
HERO, BEATRICE, URSULA and
MARGARET

LEONATO

Was not Count John here at
supper?

ANTONIO

I saw him not.

BEATRICE

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

HERO

5 He is of a very melancholy
disposition.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

10 Then half Signor Benedick's
tongue in Count John's
mouth, and half Count John's
melancholy in Signor
Benedick's face—

BEATRICE

15 With a good leg and a good foot,
uncle, and money enough
in his purse, such a man would
win any woman in the
world, if he could get her
goodwill.

LEONATO

By my troth, niece, thou wilt
never get thee a husband if
thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.

ANTONIO

In faith, she's too curst.

Modern Text

LEONATO, ANTONIO HERO BEATRICE
URSULA, and MARGARET enter.

LEONATO

Wasn't Don John at dinner tonight?

ANTONIO

I didn't see him.

BEATRICE

That man always looks so sour! Just looking at him
gives me heartburn.

HERO

He has a very gloomy attitude.

BEATRICE

It would be excellent if they could make a man
halfway between Don John and Benedick. One of
them is too much like a painting of a man—he
never speaks—and the other is too much like a
spoiled little boy, always chattering.

LEONATO

So, the man would talk half as much as Benedick
and be half as serious as Don John—

BEATRICE

And if he were handsome, agile, and rich, too, he
could have any woman in the world—all he'd need
was her good will.

LEONATO

Really, niece, you'll never get a husband if you keep
saying such harsh things about people.

ANTONIO

Honestly, she is too ill-tempered.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 2

Original Text

BEATRICE

Too curst is more than
curst. I shall lessen
God's sending
that way, for it is said,
20 "God sends a curst cow
short horns,"
but to a cow too curst,
he sends none.

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

Just, if he send me no
husband, for the which
blessing I am
at him upon my knees
every morning and
evening. Lord, I
25 could not endure a
husband with a beard on
his face! I had
rather lie in the woolen.

LEONATO

You may light on a
husband that hath no
beard.

BEATRICE

What should I do with
him? Dress him in my
apparel and
make him my waiting
gentlewoman? He that
hath a beard
30 is more than a youth,
and he that hath no
beard is less than
a man; and he that is
more than a youth is not well.
for me, and
he that is less than a
man, I am not for him.

Modern Text

BEATRICE

Being "too ill-tempered" is different from being simply "ill-tempered," right? So I suppose that means I can escape God's punishment, for in the old proverb, it is said that "God gives an ill-tempered cow short horns" so that she can't inflict damage on anyone. But it doesn't say anything about a cow that is *too* ill-tempered.

LEONATO

So then, for being too argumentative, God won't send you any horns?

BEATRICE

Exactly. I pray every morning and night that the Lord won't send me a husband. Really, I couldn't stand a husband with a beard. I'd rather be wrapped in scratchy blankets all night.

LEONATO

Maybe you will find a husband without a beard.

BEATRICE

And then what would I do with him? Dress him up in my clothes and pretend he's my lady servant? If he has a beard, he's more than a boy; if he doesn't have a beard, he's less than a man. If he's more than a boy, he's not the one for me, and if he's less than a man, I'm not the one for him. They say that women who die unmarried are destined to lead the apes to hell, and I suppose that'll be my fate as

Therefore I will
even take sixpence in
earnest of the bear
herd, and lead his
Apes into hell.

LEONATO

35 Well then, go you into
hell?

LEONATO

So you'll go to hell?

BEATRICE

No, but to the gate, and
there will the devil
meet me like an

old cuckold with horns
on his head, and say,

"Get you to

heaven, Beatrice, get

40 you to heaven; here's no
place for you

Maids." So deliver I up

my apes and away to

Saint Peter. For

the heavens, he shows

me where the bachelors

sit, and there

Live we as merry as the

day is long.

BEATRICE

No, just to the gates of hell, where the devil will meet me,
with the horns on his head like a cuckold, and say, "Go up to

heaven, Beatrice. Hell is no place for you virgins." So I'll fly

up to heaven (leaving the apes behind) where I'll be met by

Saint Peter guarding heaven's gates. He will show me the

part of heaven where the bachelors sit, and I'll have fun

there forever.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 3

Original Text

ANTONIO

(to HERO) Well, niece, I
trust you will be ruled
by your
Father.

BEATRICE

Yes, faith, it is my
cousin's duty to make
curtsy and say,

45 "Father, as it please
you." But yet for all
that, cousin, let
him be a handsome

Modern Text

ANTONIO

(to HERO) Well, niece, I trust that you will defer to your
father on these important decisions.

BEATRICE

Surely, my cousin has a duty to please her father. But if
the husband her father chooses isn't handsome, she should
sweetly tell her father that she will please herself—with
another one.

fellow, or else make
another curtsy and
say, "Father, as it please
me."

LEONATO

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

BEATRICE

Not till God make men
of some other metal
than earth.

Would it not grieve a
woman to be
overmastered with a
piece of valiant dust? To
50 make an account of her
life to a clod
of wayward marl? No,
uncle, I'll none. Adam's
sons are my
brethren, and truly I
hold it a sin to match in
my kindred.

LEONATO

(to HERO) Daughter,
remember what I told
you. If the
55 Prince do solicit you in
that kind, you know your
answer.

BEATRICE

The fault will be in the
music, cousin, if you be
not wooed
in good time. If the
Prince be too important,
tell him there
is measure in
60 everything, and so dance
out the answer. For
hear me, Hero, wooing,
wedding, and repenting
is as a
65 Scotch jig, a measure,
and a cinquepace. The
first suit is hot
and hasty like a Scotch

LEONATO

Well, niece, I hope that I will see you married one day.

BEATRICE

No, I won't take a husband until they make men out of
something other than dirt. What woman wouldn't be
distressed, being lorded over by a handful of dust? Can
you imagine being hitched to a lump of clay? No, uncle, I
won't be married. And anyhow, if [Adam](#) is the father of all
mankind, then his sons are my brothers, and really I
believe that incest is a sin.

LEONATO

(to HERO) Daughter, remember what I told you. If the
Prince asks for your hand in marriage, you know what to
tell him.

BEATRICE

But cousin, make sure he woos you properly and
appropriately. If he is too insistent, tell him that romance
is like a dance: it has its own rhythm and timing. Look, the
three stages of romance are like three different dances.

The wooing is like a Scottish jig: hot and fast and full of
whimsy and illusion. The wedding is a like a dance you would
do before the King: proper and decorous. Finally, you get
to the part where you regret having gotten married in the
first place. It is like the lively [cinquepace](#): it goes faster
and faster until you eventually topple over and die.

jig, and full as
fantastical; the
wedding, mannerly
modest as a measure,
full of state and
ancientry; and then
comes repentance, and
with his bad
legs falls into the
cinquepace faster and
faster till he sink
Into his grave.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 4

Original Text

LEONATO

Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

The revelers are entering, brother. Make good room.

Enter **DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA** and others, masked

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?
(They begin to dance)

Modern Text

LEONATO

Niece, you are exceptionally perceptive.

BEATRICE

I have a good eye, uncle. I can see what's in broad daylight.

LEONATO

The partygoers have arrived. Let's give them room.

DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHASAR, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA enter along with other partygoers. They're all wearing masks.

DON PEDRO

My lady, will you have a dance with me?
(They begin to dance.)

HERO
So you walk softly, and look sweetly, and
70 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 favor, for God defend
75 the lute should be
Like the case!

DON PEDRO
My visor is Philemon's roof; within the
house is Jove.

HERO
As long as you move gracefully, look
handsome, and say nothing, I'm yours
for the dance. And I'll even linger after
I've gone.

DON PEDRO
Will I be with you then?

HERO
Perhaps, if I decide to let you.

DON PEDRO
And when will that be?

HERO
When I like the way you look, for God
forbid your face be as ugly as your
mask!

DON PEDRO
My mask is like the roof of the poor
[Philemon's](#) humble cottage; underneath
the mask, I am as magnificent as the
glorious god Jove.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 5

Original Text

HERO
Why, then, your visor should be
thatched.

DON PEDRO
Speak low if you speak love.
They move aside. **BALTHASAR**
and **MARGARET** move forward

BALTHASAR
80 Well, I would you did like me.

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

BALTHASAR
Which is one?

MARGARET
I say my prayers aloud.

BALTHASAR
I love you the better; the hearers
may cry "Amen."

MARGARET
85 God match me with a good dancer!

BALTHASAR

Modern Text

HERO
Well, then, since Philemon's roof was thatched
with straw, your mask should have a beard.

DON PEDRO
If you wish to speak of love, speak more softly.
They move aside. **BALTHASAR** and **MARGARET**
move forward.

BALTHASAR
Well, I wish you liked me.

MARGARET
I'm glad I don't, for your sake. I have many
awful qualities.

BALTHASAR
Tell me one.

MARGARET
I say my prayers out loud.

BALTHASAR
That makes me love you even more. Everyone
who hears you can shout, "Amen."

MARGARET
God give me a good dance partner!

BALTHASAR

Amen.

MARGARET

And God keep him out of my sight
when the dance is done!

Answer, clerk.

BALTHASAR

No more words. The clerk is
answered.

They move aside. **URSULA** and
ANTONIO move forward.

URSULA

90 I know you well enough. You are
Signor Antonio.

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA

I know you by the wagging of your
head.

Amen. That would be me.

MARGARET

And God take him away from me when we're
finished dancing! Go ahead—say "Amen."

BALTHASAR

No more talking. I've got my answer.

They move aside. **URSULA** and **ANTONIO**
move forward.

URSULA

I know who you are; you are Signior Antonio.

ANTONIO

No, really, I'm not.

URSULA

I can tell by the way you waggle your head.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 6

Original Text

ANTONIO

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA

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

ANTONIO

At a word, I am not.

URSULA

100 Come, come, do you think I do not
know you by your
Excellent wit? Can virtue hide
itself? Go to, mum, you are
He. Graces will appear, and there's
an end.

They move aside. **BENEDICK** and
BEATRICE move forward.

BEATRICE

Will you not tell me who told you
so?

BENEDICK

Modern Text

ANTONIO

Really, I'm only pretending to be him.

URSULA

You could only imitate his imperfections so
well if you were the man himself. Look, you've
got his wrinkled hands. You are Antonio, you
are he.

ANTONIO

In short, I'm not.

URSULA

Come on, do you think I can't recognize you by
your excellent wit? Can a good thing hide
itself? Be quiet, you are Antonio. A man's
virtues will always show themselves, and that's
the end of that.

They move aside. **BENEDICK** and **BEATRICE**
move forward.

BEATRICE

Won't you tell me who told you that?

BENEDICK

No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE

Nor 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
105 Hundred Merry Tales! Well this was Signor Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK

What's he?

BEATRICE

I am sure you know him well enough. I'm sure you know him.

BENEDICK

110 Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE

Did he never make you laugh?

No, you'll have to excuse me.

BEATRICE

And you won't tell me who you are?

BENEDICK

Not now.

BEATRICE

Who said that I was disdainful, and that I got all my best lines out of a bad joke book? Well, it must have been Signior Benedick.

BENEDICK

Who's that?

BEATRICE

I'm sure you know him.

BENEDICK

No I don't, believe me.

BEATRICE

What, he never made you laugh?

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 7

Original Text

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

115 delight in him, and the commendation is not in his wit but

in his villainy, for he both pleases men and angers them and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet. I would he had boarded me.

BENEDICK

When I know the gentleman, I'll tell

Modern Text

BENEDICK

Please tell me, who is this man?

BEATRICE

Why, he's the Prince's fool, and a very dull fool at that. His only talent is his capacity to come up with unbelievable slanders. Only the most immoral people enjoy his company, and they like him not for his wit but his outrageousness. He manages to both please and anger people; they laugh at him and then beat him up. I'm sure he's out there dancing. I could have sworn he trampled on me.

BENEDICK

When I meet this gentleman, I'll tell him

him what you say.

BEATRICE

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

Music for the dance

We must follow the leaders.

BENEDICK

125 In every good thing.

BEATRICE

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

Dance, then exeunt all except **DON
JOHN, BORACHIO,** and **CLAUDIO**

DON JOHN

(to BORACHIO) Sure my brother is
amorous on Hero, and hath withdrawn
her father to break with him about it.
130 The ladies follow her, and but one
visor remains.

what you've said.

BEATRICE

Oh, please do. He'll say a few nasty things
about me, and if nobody listens to him or
laughs, he'll be thrown into a funk. And that
will save a partridge wing from being eaten,
because he'll be too miserable for dinner.

Music for the dance begins.

Come on, we have to follow the leaders of
the dance.

BENEDICK

In every good thing they do.

BEATRICE

No, if they try to lead us to harm, I will
leave the dance floor at the next song.

There is a dance. Everyone exits except
DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and **CLAUDIO.**

DON JOHN

(to BORACHIO) My brother just wooed
Hero and now has taken her father inside
to tell him his feelings. The ladies have
followed Hero, but one masked man
remains.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 8

Original Text

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

(to CLAUDIO) Aren't you Signor Benedick?

Modern Text

BORACHIO

That's Claudio. I can tell by the way he
carries himself.

DON JOHN

(to CLAUDIO) Aren't you Signor Benedick?

CLAUDIO

You know me well. I am he.

DON JOHN

Signor, you are very near my brother in his love. He is

enamored on Hero. I pray you, dissuade
135 him from her. She

is no equal for his birth. You may do the part of an honest man in it.

CLAUDIO

How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO

140 So did I too, and he swore he would marry her tonight.

DON JOHN

Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt **DON JOHN** and **BORACHIO**

CLAUDIO

(unmasking)

Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio. 'Tis certain so, the Prince woos
145 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
150 itself And trust no agent, for beauty is a witch Against whose charms faith melteth into blood. This is an accident of hourly proof, Which I mistrusted not.

CLAUDIO

You know me too well. I am Benedick.

DON JOHN

Sir, my brother is very fond of you. He is in love with Hero. Please make him change his mind. She doesn't have the proper rank to marry the Prince. You would be doing a good service.

CLAUDIO

How do you know he loves her?

DON JOHN

I heard him swear he did.

BORACHIO

I did too, and he also swore he would marry her tonight.

DON JOHN

Come on, let's get to the banquet.

DON JOHN and **BORACHIO** exit.

CLAUDIO

(taking off his mask)

Though I said my name was Benedick, I heard this news with Claudio's ears. Of course the Prince wants Hero for himself. Friendship is enduring except when love is involved. Therefore, all lovers should speak for themselves. They should look for themselves, without asking someone else to get involved in their affairs. Beauty is a witch whose spells can turn loyalty into passion. This happens a lot, but it didn't occur to me that it would happen to me. Goodbye then, Hero.

Farewell, therefore, Hero.

Enter **BENEDICK**

BENEDICK enters.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 9

Original Text

Modern Text

BENEDICK

BENEDICK

Count Claudio?

Claudio?

CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

155

Yea, the same.

Yes, that's me.

BENEDICK

BENEDICK

Come, will you go with me?

Will you come with me?

CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

Whither?

Where?

BENEDICK

BENEDICK

160 Even to the next willow, about your own
business, county. What fashion will you
wear the garland of? About your Neck
like an usurer's chain? Or under your
arm like a Lieutenant's scarf? You must
wear it one way, for the Prince hath gat
your Hero.

Right over to that [willow tree](#) to see
about your business. How do you want to
wear your garland of willow leaves?
Around your neck, like a moneylender's
gold chain, or under your arm, like a
lieutenant's sash? You have to wear it
somehow, because the Prince has gotten
your Hero.

CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

I wish him joy of her.

I hope he enjoys her.

BENEDICK

BENEDICK

165 Why, that's spoken like an honest
drover; so they sell bullocks. But did you
think the Prince would have served you
thus?

You sound like a cattle dealer: that's the
way they sell bulls. But do you really think
the Prince would treat you that way?

CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

I pray you, leave me.

Please, leave me alone.

BENEDICK

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

CLAUDIO

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

Exit

BENEDICK

Look at you, thrashing about like a blind
man. A boy robbed you, but you'll beat up
the post instead.

CLAUDIO

If you won't leave, then *I'll* leave.

He exits.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 10**Original Text****BENEDICK**

Alas, poor hurt fowl, now will he creep into
sedges. But that my Lady Beatrice should
know me, and not know me! The Prince's
fool! Ha, it may be I go under that title
because I am merry. Yea, but so I am apt
to do myself wrong. I am not so reputed!
175 It is the base, though bitter, disposition
of Beatrice that puts the world into her
person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be
revenged as I may.

Enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

Now, Signior, where's the Count? Did you
see him?

BENEDICK

180 Troth, my lord, I have played the part of
Lady Fame. I Found him here as
melancholy as a lodge in a warren. I told
him, and I think I told him true, that your
Grace had got the goodwill of this young

Modern Text**BENEDICK**

Oh, the poor bird. Now he'll hide
himself in the bushes. But how strange
that Beatrice should seem to know who
I was and yet not know at the same
time. "The Prince's fool"! Maybe they
call me that because I am cheerful.
Yes, but I am insulting myself by
thinking this way. I don't have that kind
of reputation! Beatrice's mean,
sarcastic nature makes her believe that
the entire world shares her opinions;
that's why she describes me this way.
Well, I'll get my revenge.

DON PEDRO enters.

DON PEDRO

Now, sir, where is Claudio? Did you see
him?

BENEDICK

Yes, my lord, I played the part of a
gossip and brought him the news. I
found him here, [as sad as a rabbit in a
burrow](#). I told him—and I think I was
telling the truth—that you had won the

185 lady, and I offered him my company to a willow tree, either to make him a garland, as being for saken , or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipped.

DON PEDRO

To be whipped? What's his fault?

BENEDICK

The flat transgression of a schoolboy who, being overjoyed with finding a birds' nest, shows it his companion, and he steals it.

DON PEDRO

190 Wilt thou make a trust a transgression?
The transgression is in the stealer.

lady's heart. I offered to accompany him to the willow tree, where he could either make a garland—fit to be worn by an abandoned lover—or gather sticks into a bundle, ready for his beating.

DON PEDRO

Beating? Why, what did he do?

BENEDICK

He was like a schoolboy who finds a bird's nest and happily shows it to his friend, who then steals it from him.

DON PEDRO

What is trusting a friend such a crime?
The criminal is the one who stole the nest.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 11

Original Text

BENEDICK

Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been made, and the garland too, for the garland he might have worn himself and the rod he might have bestowed on you,
195 who, as I take it, have stolen his birds' nest.

DON PEDRO

I will but teach them to sing and restore them to the owner.

Modern Text

BENEDICK

It might have been appropriate to make both the rod and the garland. He could have worn the garland himself and beaten you with the rod, since you—as I understand it—have stolen his bird's nest.

DON PEDRO

I only want to teach the baby birds to sing; then I will return the nest to its rightful owner.

BENEDICK

If their singing answers your saying, by my faith, you say honestly.

DON PEDRO

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

BENEDICK

O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! An oak but with one green leaf on it would have answered her. My very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the Prince's jester that I was duller than a great thaw, huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I
 205 stood like a man at a mark with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near
 210 her; she would infect to the north star. I would not marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed. She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and
 215 have cleft his club to make the fire, too. Come, talk not of her. You shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her, for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary, and people sin upon purpose because they would go thither. So indeed all disquiet, horror and perturbation follows her.

BENEDICK

We'll wait and see; if the chicks follow your lead—if Hero is ready to love Claudio—then we'll know you're telling the truth.

DON PEDRO

Lady Beatrice is angry with you. The gentleman she danced with told her you insulted her.

BENEDICK

Not even a block of wood could handle her abuses! An oak tree barely clinging to life would have revived itself to fight her. Even my mask seemed to come to life in order to argue with her. She told me—not realizing it was me—that I was the Prince's jester and as dull as mud. She hurled mocking insults at me with such incredible speed that all I could do was stand there, paralyzed. She speaks daggers, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her words, she would kill every living thing from here to the furthest star. I wouldn't marry her, even if she were as blessed as paradise. If she were married to the great hero Hercules, she would have humiliated him with chores around the house and ordered him to chop up his famous club for firewood. Please, don't mention her. She's as wicked as [Ate](#), just disguised in pretty clothes. I wish to God that some wise man would conjure her away, because as long as she lives on earth, our lives are filled with turmoil. It's quieter in hell, where people, sinning on purpose, are eager to be sent just to get away from her. So chaos, horror, and sorrow follow her

wherever she goes.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 12

Original Text

Enter **CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO,** and
LEONATO

DON PEDRO

220 Look, here she comes.

BENEDICK

Will your grace command me any service to
the world's end? I will go on the slightest
errand now to the Antipodes that you can
devise to send me on. I will fetch you a tooth
picker now from the furthest inch of Asia,
bring you the length of Prester John's foot,
225 fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard,
do you any embassy to the Pygmies, rather
than hold three words' conference with this
harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO

None but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK

230 O God, sir, here's a dish I love not. I cannot
endure my Lady Tongue!

Exit

DON PEDRO

(to BEATRICE) Come, lady, come, you have
lost the heart of Signor Benedick.

Modern Text

CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and
LEONATO enter.

DON PEDRO

Look, here she comes.

BENEDICK

Your highness, could you send me on
a mission to the ends of the earth?
I'll go to the Antipodes for any
little errand you can think of. I'll
fetch you a toothpick from the
[farthest reaches of Asia](#), or find
out Prester John's shoe size, or
snatch a hair from Kublai Khan's
beard, or deliver any message you
wish to relay to the Pygmies—
anything rather than exchange
three words with this awful,
screeching woman. Isn't there
something you want from me?

DON PEDRO

Nothing but your good company.

BENEDICK

Oh, God, sir, here comes a dish I
hate. I can't stand tongue.

He exits.

DON PEDRO

(to BEATRICE) Lady, you have lost
Signior Benedick's heart.

BEATRICE

235 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

It's true, my lord. He lent it to me once, and I paid him back with interest: a double heart for his single one. Really, he won it from me once before in a dishonest game of dice. So I suppose your grace can truly say that I have lost it.

DON PEDRO

You've humiliated him, lady: you've put him down.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 13

Original Text

BEATRICE

So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools.
240 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

245 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.

Modern Text

BEATRICE

And I hope that he won't [put me down](#) or I'm sure to have fools for children. I've brought Claudio, who you sent me to find.

DON PEDRO

Why, what's wrong, count? Why are you so sad?

CLAUDIO

I'm not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO

What then, sick?

CLAUDIO

I'm neither, my lord.

BEATRICE

The count is neither sad nor sick nor cheerful nor well—he's just civil, as Seville as an orange, with the same jealous-yellow 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
 250 have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won. I have broke with her father and his goodwill obtained. Name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy.

LEONATO

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes. His grace hath made
 255 the match, and all 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
 260 yours. I give away myself for you and dote upon the exchange.

DON PEDRO

Truly, lady, I think your description is correct, though I swear he has no reason to look like that. Here, Claudio, I've wooed Hero for you, and she's agreed to marry you. I've told her father, and he's given his permission. Tell us when you wish to get married, and may God give you joy.

LEONATO

Claudio, take my daughter, and, with her, take my fortunes. The Prince has made the match, and may God bless it.

BEATRICE

Speak, Claudio, that's your cue.

CLAUDIO

Complete joy makes one speechless; if I were only a little happy, then I could say exactly how much. Lady, you are mine and I am yours. For you, I give myself away and I'm ecstatic about the exchange.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 14**Original Text****BEATRICE**

Speak, cousin, or if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss and let not him speak neither.

DON PEDRO

In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE**Modern Text****BEATRICE**

Say something, cousin. Or, if you can't say anything, stop his mouth with a kiss and don't let him speak, either.

DON PEDRO

Truly, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE

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

CLAUDIO

And so she doth, cousin.

BEATRICE

Good Lord for alliance! Thus goes
everyone to the world

but I, and I am sunburnt. I may sit in a
270 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

275 Will you have me, lady?

BEATRICE

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

DON PEDRO

Your silence most offends me, and to
280 be merry best becomes you, for out o'
question you were born in a merry hour.

Yes, my lord. I thank my heart—the poor
fool—for it keeps away from seriousness.
Look, my cousin is whispering to Claudio
that she loves him.

CLAUDIO

Why, you're absolutely right, cousin.

BEATRICE

Thank the lord for alliances! So everyone
goes off into the world except me, who
stays in because I'm sunburned. I should
sit in the corner and sing that song,
"Heigh-Ho for a Husband!"

DON PEDRO

Lady Beatrice, I'll get you a husband.

BEATRICE

I'd rather get a husband from your
father. Don't you have any brothers like
you? Your father's sons would make
excellent husbands, if only a girl could
catch one for herself.

DON PEDRO

Will you take me, my lady?

BEATRICE

No, my lord, unless I could have another
husband for the work week. You are too
expensive to wear every day. But please,
forgive me, your highness. I was born to
speak cleverly, not seriously.

DON PEDRO

I'd be more offended if you were silent,
for being lively and cheerful suits you
best. Surely, you must have been born at
a happy time.

Original Text

BEATRICE

No, sure, my lord, my mother cried, but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born.—Cousins, God give you joy!

LEONATO

Niece, will you look to those things I told you of?

BEATRICE

I cry you mercy, uncle.—By your Grace's pardon.

Exit

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO

There's little of the melancholy element in her, my lord. She is never sad but when she sleeps, and not ever sad then, for I have heard my daughter say she hath often dreamed of unhappiness and waked herself with laughing.

DON PEDRO

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO

Oh, by no means. She mocks all her wooers out of suit.

DON PEDRO

She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

Modern Text

BEATRICE

Actually, my lord, my mother cried when she was giving birth to me. But then a star danced in the sky, and that's the moment I was born.—Kinsmen, I'm off.

LEONATO

Niece, will you take care of those things I mentioned?

BEATRICE

Oh, yes, I'm sorry, uncle.—If you'll excuse me, your grace.

She exits.

DON PEDRO

I swear, she's a very good-natured lady.

LEONATO

There's very little about her that's gloomy, my lord. She's only sad when she sleeps—and not even then. Hero told me that Beatrice has often had dreams about being unhappy, and managed to wake herself from them by laughing.

DON PEDRO

She can't stand to hear about getting a husband.

LEONATO

No, not at all. She mocks all her suitors so severely that they drop the suit.

DON PEDRO

She would make a good wife for Benedick.

LEONATO

O Lord, my lord, if they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad.

DON PEDRO

County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO

300 Tomorrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

LEONATO

Oh, Lord, if they were married, they'd drive themselves crazy within a week.

DON PEDRO

Count Claudio, when do you plan to go to church and be married?

CLAUDIO

Tomorrow, my lord. Time will move as slowly as an old man until our love receives its proper ceremony.

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 16

Original Text

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

(to CLAUDIO) Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing, but I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully
305 by us. I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labors, which is to bring Signor Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection, th' one with th' other. I would fain have it a match,
310 and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

Modern Text

LEONATO

Wait till Monday, my dear son, which is only a week away. Even that is too short a time to plan things the way I would like.

DON PEDRO

(to CLAUDIO) Oh, don't look so frustrated at having to wait so long. I promise you, Claudio, the time will go by quickly. While we're waiting for the wedding, I'm going to take on an impossible task: to make Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice fall in love with each other. I aim to see them matched, and with all of your help, I'm sure we can make it happen.

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO

315 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 unhopefulest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble strain, of approved valor, and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humor your cousin
320 that she shall fall in love with Benedick.—
And I, with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he
325 shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

Exeunt

Act 2, Scene 2

Original Text

Enter **DON JOHN** and **BORACHIO**

LEONATO

My lord, I will help you, even if it means I have to stay awake for ten nights straight.

CLAUDIO

Me too, my lord.

DON PEDRO

And you, sweet Hero?

HERO

I'll do any decent thing, my lord, to help my cousin get a good husband.

DON PEDRO

And Benedick is not the worst husband I can think of. This much I can say about him: he is well-born, has proven his bravery in battle, and has established his good character. Hero, I'll show you how to influence your cousin so she falls in love with Benedick. We men will trick Benedick so that, despite his quick wit and his queasiness about marriage, he will fall in love with her. If we can do this, then we will steal Cupid's glory. We will be the supreme love gods! Come inside with me, and I will tell you my plan.

They all exit.

Modern Text

Enter **DON JOHN** and **BORACHIO**

DON JOHN

It is so. The Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

BORACHIO

Yea, my lord, but I can cross it.

DON JOHN

Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be med'cinable to me. I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes
5 athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

10 Show me briefly how.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

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

DON JOHN

It's arranged. The Count Claudio will marry Leonato's daughter.

BORACHIO

Yes, my lord, but I can spoil it.

DON JOHN

Any obstacle or barrier to Claudio's happiness will be like medicine to me. I hate him so much it makes me sick, and whoever can ruin his happiness will make me happy. How will you wreck this marriage?

BORACHIO

I can only do it by lying, my lord, but I can do it so secretly that no one will suspect me.

DON JOHN

Quickly, tell me how.

BORACHIO

I think it was a year ago that I told you how much Margaret, Hero's servant woman, likes me.

DON JOHN

I remember.

BORACHIO

I can arrange it so that at some indecent hour of the night, she looks out Hero's bedroom window.

DON JOHN

How will that kill this marriage?

BORACHIO

²⁰The poison of that lies in you to temper.
Go you to the Prince your brother. Spare
not to tell him that he hath wronged his
honor in marrying the renowned Claudio,
whose estimation do you mightily hold up,
to a contaminated stale, such a one as
Hero.

BORACHIO

That part is up to you. Go to the Prince,
your brother, and tell him that he has
done a terrible thing by matching the
renowned Claudio—whom you greatly
admire—with such a tainted whore as
Hero.

Act 2, Scene 2, Page 2**Original Text****DON JOHN**

What proof shall I make of that?

BORACHIO

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

DON JOHN

²⁵Only to despite them, I will endeavor
anything.

BORACHIO

Go then, find me a meet hour to draw
Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone.
Tell them that you know that Hero loves
me. Intend a kind of zeal both to the
³⁰Prince and Claudio, as in love of your
brother's honor, who hath made this
match, and his friend's reputation, who
is thus like to be cozened with the
semblance of a maid, that you have
³⁵discovered thus. 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
⁴⁰"Hero," hear Margaret term me

Modern Text**DON JOHN**

What will be my evidence?

BORACHIO

Evidence enough to deceive the Prince,
anger Claudio, ruin Hero, and kill Leonato.
Is there anything else you wish?

DON JOHN

That's all I want, and I'll do anything to
accomplish it.

BORACHIO

Find a time to speak with Don Pedro and
Claudio alone. Tell them you know that
Hero loves me. Pretend to be very
concerned about both the Prince, who has
compromised his honor by making the
match, and Claudio, whose reputation will
be ruined by this woman who's pretending
to be a virgin. Of course, they won't
believe you without proof. Tell them you've
seen the two of us at Hero's bedroom
window, and then bring them to see for
themselves on the night before the
wedding. I'll arrange it so that Hero is
away for the night, so what they'll actually
see is Margaret and me at the window,

"Claudio,"

and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, for in the meantime I will so fashion the matter that Hero shall be absent, and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

DON JOHN

Grow this to what adverse issue it can, I will put it in practice. Be cunning in the working this, and thy fee is a thousand ducats.

BORACHIO

Be you constant in the accusation, and
45 my cunning shall not shame me.

DON JOHN

I will presently go learn their day of marriage.

Exeunt

calling each other "Hero" and "[Claudio.](#)"

It'll be such blatant evidence of Hero's disloyalty that Claudio's jealousy will quickly turn to certainty, and the wedding will be instantly called off.

DON JOHN

Make the arrangements, and I'll do it. Do this carefully, and I will reward you with a thousand gold coins.

BORACHIO

If you make the accusation convincingly, then my cunning won't fail me.

DON JOHN

I'll go now to find out the date of the wedding.

They exit.

Act 2, Scene 3

Original Text

Enter **BENEDICK**

BENEDICK

Boy!

Enter **BOY**

BOY

Signior?

BENEDICK

In my chamber window lies a book. Bring it hither to me in

Modern Text

BENEDICK enters.

BENEDICK

Boy!

A **BOY** enters.

BOY

Yes Signior?

BENEDICK

In my bedroom window there is a book. Go get it and bring it to me here in the

the orchard.

BOY

5 I am here already, sir.

BENEDICK

I know that, but I would have thee hence
and here again.

Exit **BOY**

I do much wonder that one man, seeing
how much another man is a fool when he
dedicates his behaviors to love, will, after
he hath laughed at such shallow follies in
others, become the argument of his own
scorn by falling in love— and such a man is
10 Claudio. I have known when there was no
music with him but the drum and the fife,
and now had he rather hear the tabor and
the pipe. I have known when he would have
walked ten mile afoot to see a good armor,
15 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
20 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.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 2

Original Text

I will not be sworn but love may transform
me to an oyster, but I'll take my oath on it,
till he have made an oyster of me, he shall
never make me such a fool. One woman is
25 fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am
well; another virtuous,

orchard.

BOY

I'm already here, sir.

BENEDICK

I see that you are here, but I'd like you
to go there and then come back again.

The **BOY** exits.

I'm amazed that a man, after watching
romance turns another man into a fool
and laughing at that man, can turn right
around and becomes the thing he's
scorned. That's the kind of man Claudio
is. I knew him when he listened to
nothing but the military drum and fife;
now he would rather hear the sweet and
refined music of the tabor and pipe. I
knew him when he would've walked ten
miles to see a well-crafted suit of
armor; now he spends ten nights awake
in his room designing himself a fancy new
jacket. He used to speak plainly and to
the point, like an honorable man and
soldier; now his speech is elaborate and
flowery. His words are like a miraculous
banquet, full of strange new dishes. Will
I be changed like that, and see the world
through a lover's eyes? I'm not sure, but
I don't think so.

Modern Text

I can't promise that love won't
transform me, but I can promise you
this: until I truly fall in love, a woman
will never make me act like such a fool.
A beautiful woman comes along, but I'm
unmoved. A wise woman turns up, but

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; 30 wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll ever look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what color it please God. Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbor.

He hides

Enter **DON PEDRO**, **CLAUDIO**, and **LEONATO**, and **BALTHASAR** with music

DON PEDRO

Come, shall we hear this music?

CLAUDIO

Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,
35 As hushed on purpose to grace harmony!

DON PEDRO

(aside to CLAUDIO)

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO

(aside to DON PEDRO)

O, very well, my lord. The music ended,
40 We'll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth.

I'm unmoved. A virtuous woman appears, but I'm unmoved. I refuse to fall in love until all three qualities unite in a single woman. She must be rich, certainly, and smart, or I'll have nothing to do with her. She has to be virtuous, or I'll never bid on her; beautiful, or I won't bother to look at her. Mild-mannered, or else she should stay away from me. Noble, or I won't have her even if she's an angel. She must be well spoken, an excellent musician, and her hair should be—well, I suppose the color doesn't matter. Ha! Look, it's the Prince and Mr. Love. I'll hide in the arbor.

He hides.

DON PEDRO, **CLAUDIO**, and **LEONATO** enter. **BALTHASAR** enters with music.

DON PEDRO

Well, should we hear some music?

CLAUDIO

Yes, my lord. Listen to how quiet the evening is, as if it's purposefully setting the stage for a song.

DON PEDRO

(speaking so that only CLAUDIO can hear) Do you see where Benedick is hiding?

CLAUDIO

(speaking so that only DON PEDRO can hear) Yes, very well, my lord. Once the music has ended, we'll give him more than he bargained for.

DON PEDRO

Come, Balthasar, we'll hear that song again.

DON PEDRO

Come on, Balthasar, let's hear that song again.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 3

Original Text

BALTHASAR

O, good my lord, tax not so bad a voice To slander music any more than once.

DON PEDRO

It is the witness still of excellency To put a strange face on his own perfection.

45

I pray thee, sing, and let me woo no more.

BALTHASAR

Because you talk of wooing, I will sing, Since many a wooer doth commence his suit To her he thinks not worthy, yet he woos, Yet will he swear he loves.

50

DON PEDRO

Nay, pray thee, come, Or, if thou wilt hold longer argument, Do it in notes.

BALTHASAR

Note this before my notes: There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting.

DON PEDRO

Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks! Note notes, forsooth, and nothing.

55

(Music plays)

Modern Text

BALTHASAR

Oh, my good lord, don't make me insult music again with my awful singing.

DON PEDRO

You can tell an artist is excellent when he denies his own perfection. Please, sing for us; don't make me woo you anymore!

BALTHASAR

Since you put it that way, I'll sing. You're like a suitor who courts a woman insincerely, swearing that he loves her even though he really doesn't find her worthy.

DON PEDRO

Come on, please sing. If you'd like to continue this discussion, at least do so with music.

BALTHASAR

Just know this before I begin: I can't play a single note that's worthy of note.

DON PEDRO

Listen to him speaking in quarter notes! Get on with your note-playing now.

(Music plays.)

BENEDICK

BENEDICK

(aside) Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished. Is it not strange that sheeps' guts should hale souls out of men's bodies? Well, a horn for my money, when all's done.

(to himself) That music must be divine,

Isn't it strange that strings made of sheep's

guts are capable of drawing men's souls out of their bodies? Well, *I'd* rather listen to a plain old hunting horn than this music, when all is said and done.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 4

Original Text

BALTHASAR

(singing)

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,

Men were deceivers ever, One foot in sea and one on shore,

To one thing constant never. Then sigh not so, but let them go, And be you blithe and bonny,

Converting all your sounds of woe Into Hey, nonny nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no mo Of dumps so dull and heavy.

The fraud of men was ever so, Since summer first was leavy.

Then sigh not so, but let them go

And be you blithe and bonny,

Converting all your sounds of woe

Into Hey, nonny nonny.

Modern Text

BALTHASAR

(singing)

Don't cry anymore, ladies, don't cry anymore

Men have always been deceivers,

One foot on a ship and one on the shore,

Never devoted to anything.

So don't cry like that, just let them go

And be happy and carefree forever,

Turning all your sad sounds around

When you sing "Hey, nonny nonny" instead.

Don't sing more sad songs

About being down in the dumps

For men have been committing this kind of fraud

Ever since the first summer trees had leaves.

So don't cry like that, just let them go

And be happy and carefree forever,

Turning all your sad sounds around

When you sing "Hey, nonny nonny" instead.

DON PEDRO

60 By my troth, a good song.

BALTHASAR

And an ill singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Ha, no, no, faith, thou sing'st well
enough for a shift.

BENEDICK

(aside) An he had been a dog that
should have howled thus,

they would have hanged him. And
I pray God his bad voice

65 bode no mischief. I had as lief
have heard the night raven,
come what plague could have
come after it.

DON PEDRO

Yea, marry, dost thou hear,
Balthasar? I pray thee, get us
some excellent music, for
tomorrow night we would have it
at the Lady Hero's chamber
window

DON PEDRO

That's a good song.

BALTHASAR

And a bad singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Ha! No, no, really, your voice is good enough in a
pinch.

BENEDICK

(to himself) If a dog had howled like that, I
would have hung it. I hope his horrible singing
doesn't have any ill effects. I would've rather
listened to the night raven screech, even if the
bird's noise does give me the plague, as they say
it will.

DON PEDRO

Yes, do you hear me, Balthasar? Please, get some
excellent music, because tomorrow we want to
serenade Lady Hero at her bedroom window.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 5

Original Text

Modern Text

BALTHASAR

BALTHASAR

70 The best I can, my lord.

I'll do the best I can, my lord.

DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

Do so. Farewell.

Please do. Goodbye.

Exit **BALTHASAR**

BALTHASAR exits.

Come hither, Leonato.

Come here, Leonato. What was it that you told me

What was it you told me of today—
today, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO

Oh, ay. (*aside to DON PEDRO*) Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl

75 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

80 (*aside*) Is 't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

May be she doth but

CLAUDIO

Oh yes. (*speaking so that only DON PEDRO can hear*)

Go on, keep walking: our prey is in sight.—I never thought that woman would love any man.

LEONATO

I didn't, either. But how wonderful that she should be so fond of Signior Benedick, whom she has always appeared to hate.

BENEDICK

(*to himself*) Is it possible? Is that the way the wind is blowing?

LEONATO

Really, my lord, I don't know what to make of it, but she loves him with such a passion that it's past all understanding.

DON PEDRO

Maybe she's just pretending.

counterfeit.

CLAUDIO

85 Faith, like enough.

LEONATO

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

DON PEDRO

Why, what effects of passion shows she?

CLAUDIO

(aside to LEONATO) Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

CLAUDIO

Yes, that's quite likely.

LEONATO

Oh God! Pretending? No one has ever faked passion as skillfully as this, then.

DON PEDRO

Why, what symptoms of love does she exhibit?

CLAUDIO

(speaking so that only LEONATO can hear) Bait the hook well; this fish is going to bite.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 6

Original Text

LEONATO

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

CLAUDIO

She did indeed.

DON PEDRO

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

LEONATO

95 I would have sworn it had, my lord,

Modern Text

LEONATO

What symptoms, my lord? She will have a
seat—you heard my daughter tell you how.

CLAUDIO

Yes, she did tell us.

DON PEDRO

Please, please tell me! This is amazing. I
would have thought she was invincible against
any assault of love.

LEONATO

I would have sworn that, too, my lord,

especially against

Benedick.

BENEDICK

(aside) I should think this a gull but that the white-bearded Fellow speaks it. Knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

CLAUDIO

100 *(aside to DON PEDRO)* He hath ta'en th' 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,

105 "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

110 Now you talk of a sheet of paper, I remember a pretty jest

especially against Benedick.

BENEDICK

(to himself) I would take this as a joke if the old man weren't saying it. Mischief surely can't be hiding in such a respectable man.

CLAUDIO

(speaking so that only DON PEDRO can hear) We've infected him! Keep it up.

DON PEDRO

Has she told Benedick how she feels?

LEONATO

No, and she swears she never will. That's what's driving her crazy.

CLAUDIO

It's true, Hero says so. Beatrice asks, "Does it make any sense to write and tell him I love him when I have always treated him with scorn?"

LEONATO

She says this as she begins to write the letter. She'll be getting up twenty times in a night, sitting there in her slip until she's written a page. My daughter told me everything.

CLAUDIO

Now that you speak of paper, I remember a funny story of Hero's.

your daughter told.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 7

Original Text

LEONATO

Oh, 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
115 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,
120 curses: "O sweet Benedick! God
give me patience!"

Modern Text

LEONATO

Oh, you mean when Beatrice writes a letter and
Hero sees that it has "Benedick" and "Beatrice"
written all over it?

CLAUDIO

Yes, that's the one.

LEONATO

Oh, she tears that letter into a thousand small
pieces and berates herself for being so forward
as to write a letter to a man she knows would mock
her. "I compare him," she says, "to myself, and I
know that I would mock him if he wrote me such a
letter. Yes, even though I love him, I would mock
him."

CLAUDIO

Then she falls down to her knees, weeps, sobs,
beats her breast, tears her hair, prays, and
curses: "Oh sweet Benedick! God give me
patience!"

LEONATO

She doth indeed, my daughter
says so, and the ecstasy hath
so much overborne her that my
125 daughter is sometime a feared
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
130 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

135 In everything but in loving
Benedick.

LEONATO

She did indeed, my daughter says so. She worries
that Beatrice is so overwrought that she might do
herself harm someday. It's true.

DON PEDRO

If she won't tell Benedick, someone else should.

CLAUDIO

And what would that accomplish? He'll just turn it
into a joke and torment the poor woman even
more.

DON PEDRO

If he did that, it would be a charitable deed to
hang him. She's an excellent, sweet woman, and
there's no doubt that she is virtuous.

CLAUDIO

And she is very smart.

DON PEDRO

Except for the fact that she loves Benedick.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 8

Original Text

Modern Text

LEONATO

Oh, my lord, wisdom
and blood combating in
so tender a

body, we have ten
proofs to one that
blood hath the victory.

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

her guardian.

DON PEDRO

I would she had
bestowed this dotage
on me. I would have

daffed all other
140 respects and made her
half myself. I pray

you tell Benedick of it
and hear what he will
say.

LEONATO

Were it good, think
you?

CLAUDIO

Hero thinks surely she
will die, for she says
she will die if he

145 love her not, and she
will die ere she make
her love known,

and she will die if he
woo her rather than

LEONATO

Oh, my lord, when wisdom and passion are in one body, it's
ten to one that the passion will win. I am sorry for her, as
I should be, since I am both her uncle and her guardian.

DON PEDRO

I wish she were in love with me instead. I would have
thrown away all other considerations and made her my
wife. Please, tell Benedick about her feelings and see what
he has to say.

LEONATO

Is that a good idea, do you think?

CLAUDIO

Hero thinks Beatrice will surely die, for she says she'll die
if he doesn't love her, and that she'll die before she tells
him, and she'll die if he woos her and she's made to hold
back even one of her usual insults.

she will bate one
breath of her
accustomed crossness.

DON PEDRO

She doth well. If she
should make tender of
her love, 'tis

150 very possible he'll scorn
it, for the man, as you
know all,

hath a contemptible
spirit.

CLAUDIO

He is a very proper
man.

DON PEDRO

He hath indeed a good
outward happiness.

CLAUDIO

Before God, and in my
mind, very wise.

DON PEDRO

He doth indeed show
some sparks that are
like wit.

CLAUDIO

155 And I take him to be
valiant.

DON PEDRO

As Hector, I assure
you, and in the
managing of quarrels
you may say he is wise,
for either he avoids

DON PEDRO

She's probably right. If she offers him her love, it's very possible that he'll scorn it, since, as we all know, he tends to be contemptuous.

CLAUDIO

He's a very proper man.

DON PEDRO

Indeed, he is good-looking and carries himself well.

CLAUDIO

And I swear to God he's very smart.

DON PEDRO

He does indeed show sparks of something like wit.

CLAUDIO

And I believe him to be brave.

DON PEDRO

As brave as [Hector](#), surely. And you could say that he is wise in managing fights, for he either avoids them discreetly or enters into them timidly.

them with great
discretion or
undertakes them with a
most Christian-like
fear.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 9

Original Text

Modern Text

LEONATO

If he do fear God, he must
necessarily keep peace. If
he

LEONATO

If he fears God, he must necessarily keep the peace.

160 break the peace, he ought
to enter into a quarrel with
fear

If he breaks the peace, he ought to enter into a
quarrel with fear and trembling.

and trembling.

DON PEDRO

And so will he do, for the
man doth fear God,
howsoever it

seems not in him by some
large jests he will make.

165 Well, I
am sorry for your niece.

Shall we go seek Benedick
and tell

him of her love?

DON PEDRO

And he'll do that, because he's a God-fearing man, even
though his joking makes it seem otherwise. Well, I'm
sorry for your niece. Should we go find Benedick and
tell him about Beatrice's 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

(aside to DON PEDRO and LEONATO) If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation.

DON PEDRO

(aside to LEONATO) Let there be the same net spread for her, and that must your daughter and her

CLAUDIO

No, don't ever tell him, my lord. Let her get over it, with the help of good advice.

LEONATO

No, that's impossible. Her heart will break first.

DON PEDRO

Well, we'll hear more about it from your daughter. Let it sit for a while. I am very fond of Benedick, and I just wish he would take a look at himself and realize how unfairly he's treating this good woman.

LEONATO

My lord, will you come with me? Dinner is ready.

CLAUDIO

(speaking so that only DON PEDRO and LEONATO can hear) If he doesn't fall in love with her now, I'll never trust my intuition again.

DON PEDRO

(speaking so that only LEONATO can hear) The same trap must be set for her; that's your daughter's and servants' job. The real fun will be when they both believe the other to be in love, without any of it being true. I can't wait to watch that drama—it'll be a pantomime, since both of them will be totally

gentlewomen carry. speechless! Let's send Beatrice to call Benedick in to
 The sport will be when they ^{dinner}
 hold one an opinion of
 another's dotage, and no
 such matter. That's the
 scene that
 I would see, which will be
 merely a dumb show. Let us
 send
 her to call him in to dinner.

Exeunt **DON**

PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and Everyone except **BENEDICK** exits.
LEONATO

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 10

Original Text

Modern Text

BENEDICK

BENEDICK

(coming forward) This
 can be no trick. The
 185 conference was
 sadly borne; they have
 the truth of this from
 Hero; they
 190 seem to pity the lady.
 It seems her
 affections have their
 full
 bent. Love me? Why, it
 195 must be requited! I
 hear how I am
 censured. They say I
 will bear myself
 200 proudly if I perceive
 the love come from

(coming forward) This can't be a trick. They spoke with
 great seriousness, and they have Hero's testimony. They
 seem to pity the lady. It seems her love is stretched to
 the limit. She loves me? Well, that love must be returned!
 I hear how I'm criticized. They say I'll be smug if I find
 out she loves me. They also say she'd rather die than give
 any sign of her feelings. I never thought I'd marry. I can't
 appear to be proud. People who discover their faults and
 can then change them are lucky indeed. They say the lady
 is beautiful; it's true, I've seen it myself. And virtuous;
 that's true, I can't disprove that. And smart, except that
 she loves me. That may not be any proof of her
 intelligence, but I swear it won't be evidence of her
 stupidity—for I'm going to be horribly in love with her!
 People might tease me here and there, since I attacked
 marriage for so long. But don't tastes change? A man can
 love a dish when he is young that he hates when he turns
 old. Will quips and clever remarks and scathing written
 words keep a man from getting what his heart desires? No!

her. They say, too,
that she will rather
die than give any sign
205 of affection. I did
never think to
marry. I must not
seem proud. Happy are
they that hear
their detractions and
can put them to
mending. They say
the lady is fair; 'tis a
truth, I can bear them
witness. And
virtuous; 'tis so, I
cannot reprove it. And
wise, but for
loving me; by my troth,
it is no addition to her
wit, nor no
great argument of her
folly, for I will be
horribly in love
with her! I may chance
have some odd quirks
and remnants
of wit broken on me
because I have railed
so long against
marriage, but doth not
the appetite alter? A
man loves the
meat in his youth that
he cannot endure in his
age. Shall
quips and sentences
and these paper

The world needs to be populated. When I said that I'd die
as a bachelor, I just meant that I didn't think I'd live until
I got married. Here comes Beatrice. By God! She's a
beautiful lady. I think I sense some signs of love in her.

bullets of the

brain awe a man from
the career of his
humor?

No! The world must be
peopled. When I said I
would die a

bachelor, I did not
think I should live till I
were married.

Here comes Beatrice.
By this day, she's a
fair lady. I do spy
some marks of love in
her.

Enter **BEATRICE** **BEATRICE** enters.

BEATRICE

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

BEATRICE

Against my will, I've been told to bring you in to dinner.

BENEDICK

Fair Beatrice, I thank
you for your pains.

BENEDICK

Lovely Beatrice, I thank you for taking the pains to tell me
that.

Act 2, Scene 3, Page 11

Original Text

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.

Modern Text

BEATRICE

I didn't take any more pains bringing this message
than you took pains in thanking me. If the job had
been painful, I would not have come.

BENEDICK

210 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 in to dinner." There's a double meaning in that. "I took no more

215 pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me."

That's as much as to say, "Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks." If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain. If I do not love her, I am a Jew. I will go get her picture.

Exit

BENEDICK

So you took pleasure in bringing me this message?

BEATRICE

Yes, as much pleasure as one might take in choking a bird at knifepoint. You don't want to eat, sir? Goodbye, then.

She exits.

BENEDICK

Ha! "Against my will, I've been told to bring you in to dinner." There's a double meaning in that. "I didn't take any more pains bringing this message than you took pains in thanking me." That's like saying, "Any thing I do for you is as easy as saying 'thank you.'" If this doesn't move me to take pity on her, I'm a horrible person. If I don't love her, I'm completely hard-hearted. I will go get her picture.

He exits.

Act II, scene i

[H]e that is more than a youth is not for me, and he that is less than a man, I am not for him.

Summary

While Hero, Beatrice, Leonato, and Antonio wait for the evening's masked ball to begin, Hero and Beatrice discuss their idea of the perfect man—a happy medium between Don John, who never talks, and Benedick, who engages himself in constant banter. This exchange leads into a conversation about whether or not Beatrice will ever get a husband, and Beatrice laughingly claims that she will not. Leonato and Antonio also remind Hero about their belief that Don Pedro plans to propose to her that evening. The other partygoers enter, and the men put on masks. Supposedly, the women now cannot tell who the men are. The music begins, and the dancers pair off and hold conversations while they dance. Don Pedro's musician, Balthasar, dances with Hero's servant Margaret and old Antonio dances with Hero's other servant, Ursula. Meanwhile, Don Pedro dances with Hero and begins to flirt with her. Benedick dances with Beatrice, who either does not recognize him or pretends not to. She insults Benedick thoroughly to her dancing partner, saying that while Benedick thinks that he is witty others find him completely boring.

The music leads many of the dancers away into corners of the stage, creating various couplings. Don John, who has seen his brother Don Pedro courting Hero, decides to make Claudio jealous by making him think that Don Pedro has decided to win and keep Hero for himself instead of giving her to Claudio as he had promised. Pretending not to recognize Claudio behind his mask, Don John addresses him as if he were Benedick, mentioning to him that, contrary to their plan, Don Pedro actually courts Hero for himself and means to marry her that very night.

Claudio believes Don John, and, when the real Benedick enters a few moments later, the angry and miserable Claudio rushes out. But when Don Pedro comes in along with Hero and Leonato, Benedick learns that Don Pedro has been true to his word after all; he has courted and won Hero for Claudio, not for himself, just as he promised. Benedick still remains bitter about the nasty things Beatrice said to him during the dance, so when Beatrice approaches with Claudio, he begs Don Pedro to send him on some extremely arduous errand rather than be forced to endure her company. Don Pedro laughingly insists that he stay, but Benedick leaves anyway.

When Claudio returns, Don Pedro tells him that Hero has agreed to marry him (Claudio), and Leonato supports him. Claudio, overwhelmed, can barely speak, but he and Hero privately make their promises to one another. Beatrice half-seriously remarks that she will never have a husband, and Don Pedro offers himself to her. Beatrice, comparing him to fancy clothes, replies that she wishes she could have him but that he would be too lavish and valuable for her to wear every day. After Beatrice

and Benedick leave, Leonato and Claudio discuss when Claudio will marry Hero. Claudio wants the wedding to occur the next day, but Leonato decides on the coming Monday, only a week away. Claudio regrets that the wait will be so long, but Don Pedro comes up with a good way to pass the time: with the help of all his friends, he will design a plan to get Beatrice and Benedick to stop arguing and fall in love with one another. He secures the promises of Leonato, Claudio, and Hero to help him in the plan he will devise.

Analysis

This long scene resolves the first of the play's important questions: whether Claudio will receive Hero's consent to love and marry her. When the two lovers are finally brought together, Claudio is too overwhelmed with joy to profess his love in elevated language, saying to Hero simply, "Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but little happy if I could say how much" (II.i.267-268). While Claudio can find few words to express his joy, Hero can find none. Indeed, it is Beatrice who formalizes Hero's return of Claudio's love, commenting to Claudio, "My cousin [Hero] tells him [Claudio] in his ear that he is in her heart" (II.i.275-276). We never hear Hero's acceptance of Claudio, but nonetheless we know what occurs.

These two quiet characters—Claudio and Hero—seem well matched, and Claudio's addressing of Beatrice as "cousin" confirms that he will soon marry into her family (II.i.277). Nonetheless, a troubling element of Claudio's character comes to light in this scene. Don John's attempt to thwart the match has come to nothing; although he does manage to trick Claudio into believing that Don Pedro has betrayed him and is going to marry Hero himself, Claudio learns the truth before anything bad can happen. But here we see that Claudio is prone to making rash decisions. He is very quick to believe that his friend has betrayed him, not even questioning Don John's claims. Acknowledging that Don Pedro seems to be wooing Hero for himself, Claudio declares that

Friendship is constant . . .
Save in the office and affairs of love.
. . .
. . . Farewell, therefore, Hero.
(II.i.153-160)

Claudio's readiness to believe that his friend would betray him is disturbing, and Don John's plotting coupled with Claudio's gullibility ominously foreshadows worse things to follow.

Beatrice and Benedick continue their "merry war" of wits with one another, but it seems to veer off course and turn into a much more hurtful competition. This time, Beatrice gets the better of Benedick while Benedick cannot defend himself. Dancing with him during the ball, while masked, she insults Benedick by mocking his "wittiness"

and declaring his jokes boring. Beatrice's jabs at Benedick are psychologically astute. We see how apt her comments are when Benedick cannot stop repeating her words to himself later in the scene. Moreover, the fact that Benedick begs Don Pedro frantically to let him leave so he will not have to talk to Beatrice suggests that he finds her company not simply annoying but also damaging.

Though Beatrice repeats in this scene her intention never to marry, her attitude seems a little changed. A certain wistfulness marks her words as she watches the betrothal of Hero to Claudio: "Good Lord, for alliance! There goes everyone to the world but I, and I am sunburnt. I may sit in a corner and cry 'Heigh-ho for a husband!'" (II.i.278-280). Beatrice jests, as always, but it is hard to tell how seriously she takes this matter. Don Pedro's sudden offer of himself to her in marriage also seems both lighthearted and serious, and Beatrice's gentle rejection of him compels us to wonder whether she really does want to get married.

Act II, scenes ii-iii

By my troth it is no addition to her wit—nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her.

Summary: Act II, scene ii

The bitter and wicked Don John has learned of the upcoming marriage of Claudio and Hero, and he wishes that he could find a way to prevent it. Don John's servant Borachio devises a plan. Borachio is currently the lover of one of Hero's serving women, Margaret. He suggests that Don John go to Claudio and Don Pedro and tell them that Hero is not a virgin but a whore, a woman who has willingly corrupted her own innocence before her marriage and at the same time chosen to be unfaithful to the man she loves. In order to prove this accusation, Don John will bring Don Pedro and Claudio below the window of Hero's room on the night before the wedding, where they should hide and watch. On the balcony outside Hero's room, Borachio will make love to Margaret—whom he will have convinced to dress up in Hero's clothing. The

watchers will then see a woman who resembles Hero making love with Borachio, and will thus believe Don John's claim that Hero has been false to Claudio. Very pleased with the plan, Don John promises Borachio a large reward if he can pull it off and prevent the planned wedding.

Meanwhile, ignorant of the evil that Don John stealthily plots, Benedick's friends enact their own benign trick to get Benedick and Beatrice to fall in love. They know that Benedick is currently wandering around in the garden, wondering aloud to himself how, although he knows that love makes men into idiots, any intelligent man can fall in love. He ponders how Claudio can have turned from a plain-speaking, practical soldier into a moony-eyed lover. Benedick thinks it unlikely that he himself will ever become a lover.

Suddenly, Benedick hears Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato approaching, and he decides to hide among the trees in the arbor and eavesdrop. Don Pedro and Claudio, noticing him there, confer quietly with each other and decide it's time to put their scheme into effect. They begin to talk loudly, pretending that they have just learned that Beatrice has fallen in love with Benedick. Benedick, hidden in the arbor, asks himself in shock whether this can possibly be true. But Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio embellish the story, talking about how passionately Beatrice adores Benedick, and how they are afraid that her passion will drive her insane or spur her to suicide. She dares not tell Benedick, they say, for fear that he would make fun of her for it—since everyone knows what his mocking personality would do. They all agree that Benedick would be a fool to turn her away, for he currently seems unworthy of so fine a woman as Beatrice.

The others go in to have dinner, and the amazed Benedick, emerging from the arbor, plunges himself into profound thought. Don Pedro's plan has worked: Benedick decides that he will "take pity" upon the beautiful, witty, and virtuous Beatrice by loving her in return. He has changed his mind, and far from wanting to remain an eternal bachelor, he now desires to win and marry Beatrice. Beatrice appears, having been sent out to fetch Benedick in to dinner. She deals as scornfully as usual with him, but he treats her with unusual flattery and courtesy. Confused and suspicious, Beatrice mocks him again before departing, but the infatuated Benedick interprets her words as containing hidden messages of love, and he happily runs off to have a portrait made of her so that he can carry it around with him.

Analysis: Act II, scenes ii-iii

Don John's malice resurfaces in Act II, scene ii, as we see him plotting to split Hero and Claudio. Once again, we must wonder about his motives, as his desire to hurt others so badly is inconsistent with his claim to be a low-grade villain. Borachio's statement that his plan, if it succeeds, is sure "to misuse the Prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero, and kill Leonato" makes it clear that Don John's schemes have some darker purpose in mind (II.ii.24-25).

In the Renaissance, the virginity of an upper-class woman at the time of her marriage carried a great deal of importance for not only her own reputation but also for that of her family and her prospective husband. Adultery, unchaste behavior, or premarital sex in a noblewoman could be a fighting matter—one that could spur a parent to disown or even kill a daughter, a betrayed husband to murder his wife or rival, or a defender to challenge a woman's accuser to a duel to the death in order to clear her name. If the entire community were to believe Hero unchaste, then her honor, name, and reputation would suffer permanently; Claudio would suffer considerably more than simple vexation; and the stress might well "kill" Leonato. This plot is far more than a merely troublesome game.

Meanwhile, a different kind of trick occurs in the garden, as Leonato, Claudio, and Don Pedro work together to try to convince Benedick that Beatrice is in love with him. Benedick, of course, unknowingly finds himself caught in the position of being the one deceived. He believes that he is eavesdropping upon his friends, but, because they are aware of his presence, they deliberately speak louder so that he will hear them. It is not difficult to imagine the speakers—Leonato, Don Pedro, and Claudio—trying hard to stifle their laughter as they speak in serious voices of Beatrice falling upon her knees, weeping, tearing her hair, and crying, "O sweet Benedick, God give me patience" (II.iii.134-135).

Don Pedro understands Benedick's psychology so precisely that his trick works on his friend just as he hoped it would—upon hearing that Beatrice is in love with him and that other people think he will be foolish enough to turn her down, Benedick realizes that it is not so difficult for him to find it in his heart to love Beatrice after all. In a speech memorable for both its humor and its emotional glimpse into Benedick's genuinely generous and compassionate heart, Benedick decides that there is no shame in changing his mind about marriage, and declares, "I will be horribly in love with her. . . . The world must be peopled. When I said I could die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married" (II.iii.207-215).

By the time Beatrice herself appears to order him in to dinner, Benedick is so far gone that he is able to reinterpret all her words and actions as professions of her love for him—doubtless a hilarious scene for the audience, since Beatrice is hostile to Benedick, and the audience knows that she is not at all in love with him. But the buoyant Benedick can hardly wait to "go get her picture"—that is, to go and get a miniature portrait of her (II.iii.232). Later on, Benedick even tries his hand at writing a sonnet to Beatrice. Sonnets and miniature portraits were the typical accoutrements of the Renaissance lover, male or female. By carrying around these objects, Benedick becomes a cliché of Renaissance courtship.

