

much ado about nothing

Act 3 Scene I II III IV V

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DO NOT COPY

Act 3, Scene 1

Original Text

Enter **HERO**, **MARGARET**,
and **URSULA**

HERO

Good Margaret, run thee to the
parlor.

There shalt thou find my
cousin Beatrice

Proposing with the Prince and
Claudio.

Whisper her ear and tell her I
and Ursula

Walk in the orchard, and our
whole discourse

5 Is all of her. Say that thou
overheardst us,

And bid her steal into the
pleachèd bower

Where honeysuckles ripened
by the sun

10 Forbid the sun to enter, like
favorites

Made proud by princes, that
advance their pride

Against that power that bred it.

There will she hide her

To listen our propose. This is
thy office.

Bear thee well in it and leave
us alone.

MARGARET

I'll make her come, I warrant
you, presently.

Exit

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice
doth come,

As we do trace this alley up
and down,

15 Our talk must only be of
Benedick.

When I do name him, let it be
thy part

20 To praise him more than ever
man did merit.

My talk to thee must be how
Benedick

Is sick in love with Beatrice.

Of this matter

Is little Cupid's crafty arrow
made,

That only wounds by hearsay.

Enter **BEATRICE**, behind

Modern Text

HERO, **MARGARET**, and **URSULA** enter.

HERO

Margaret, run into the sitting room. You'll find Beatrice there, talking to Claudio and the Prince. Whisper to her that Ursula and I are walking in the orchard and that we're talking all about her. Tell her you heard us, and that she should sneak into the arbor where the crisscrossing branches overhead keep the honeysuckles out of the sun. (The same honeysuckles that were once ripened in the sun; they're like courtiers who rise because the king favors them, then plot to overthrow his Majesty.) She can hide there and eavesdrop on our conversation. This is your job. Do it well, and then leave us.

MARGARET

I'll make her come right away, I promise you.

She exits.

HERO

All right Ursula, as Beatrice arrives, we'll be walking up and down this alley and speaking about nothing but Benedick. Whenever I mention him, praise him more than any man deserves. It'll be my job to talk about how Benedick is sick with love for Beatrice. We'll make our arrows the same way Cupid does: with gossip and rumor.

BEATRICE enters, behind.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 2

Original Text

Modern Text

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

Let's start. See, Beatrice has run over like a little bird, keeping close to the ground and trying to overhear us.

URSULA

(aside to HERO)

The pleasant'st angling
is to see the fish

Cut with her golden
oars the silver stream

And greedily devour
the treacherous bait.

30 So angle we for
Beatrice, who even
now

Is couchèd in the
woodbine coverture.

Fear you not my part of
the dialogue.

URSULA

(speaking so that only HERO can hear) The best part of fishing is watching the fish cut through the water and greedily take the bait. Now we're fishing for Beatrice, who's hiding right now in the honeysuckle arbor. Don't worry, I'll do my part.

HERO

(aside to URSULA)

Then go we near her,
that her ear lose
nothing

Of the false sweet bait

35 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.

HERO

(speaking so that only URSULA can hear) Then let's get closer, so she can hear all the false, sweet bait we're setting for her.— *(approaching the bower)* No, truly, Ursula, she's too scornful. She's as devious and fierce as the wild hawks on the rocks.

URSULA

40 But are you sure
That Benedick loves
Beatrice so entirely?

URSULA

But are you sure that Benedick loves Beatrice that much?

HERO

So says the Prince and
my new-trothèd lord.

HERO

That's what the Prince and my fiancé say.

URSULA

And did they bid you
tell her of it, madam?

URSULA

And did they ask you to tell Beatrice about this, madam?

HERO

They did entreat me to
acquaint her of it,

But I persuaded them,
if they loved Benedick,

45 To wish him wrestle
with affection

And never to let

Beatrice know of it.

HERO

They did want me to tell her, but I persuaded them that, if they truly loved Benedick, they would try to get him to battle his emotions and keep Beatrice in the dark.

URSULA

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

URSULA

Why did you do that? Doesn't Benedick deserve as much luck with a mate as he would have with Beatrice?

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 3

Original Text

Modern Text

HERO

O god of love! I know
he doth deserve
As much as may be
yielded to a man,
But Nature never framed
50 a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than
that of Beatrice.
Disdain and scorn ride
sparkling in her eyes,
55 Misprizing what they
look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly
that to her
All matter else seems
weak. She cannot love
Nor take no shape nor
project of affection
She is so self-endear'd.

HERO

By the god of love, I know that he deserves all that a man might possess. But Nature never made a woman's heart as proud and tough as Beatrice's. There is scorn and disdain in her eyes, and those sparkling eyes despise everything they look upon. She values her wit more highly than anything else, which looks weak by comparison. She's so in love with herself, she's incapable of loving anyone else. She can't even imagine what "love" is.

URSULA

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

URSULA

Yes, you're right. It would be bad if she knew about Benedick's love and teased him about 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,
65 She would swear the
gentleman should be her
sister;
If black, why, Nature,
drawing of an antic,
Made a foul blot; if tall,
70 a lance ill-headed;
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

HERO

It's true. Whenever she meets a man—no matter how wise, noble, young, handsome—she rearranges all his good qualities so they end up looking bad. If he has a fair complexion, she'll say the pretty man should be her sister, not her husband. If he's dark-skinned, Nature must have spilled some ink while drawing his foolish face. If he's tall, she'll say he's a spear topped by an odd head; if he's short, she says he looks like a badly carved miniature. If he's talkative, he's a weathervane, moving in all directions at once; if he's silent, he's a block that can't be moved at all. And so she turns men inside out and never acknowledges the integrity and merit that a man has.

the wrong side out
And never gives to truth
and virtue that
Which simpleness and
merit purchaseth.

URSULA

Sure, sure, such carping
is not commendable.

URSULA

It's true, her nitpicking is hardly admirable.

HERO

No, not to be so odd and
from all fashions

As Beatrice is, cannot be
75 commendable.

But who dare tell her
so? If I should speak,
She would mock me into
air. O, she would laugh
me

Out of myself, press me
to death with wit.

HERO

No, it certainly is not admirable to be so perverse and eccentric. But who would dare
tell her? If I said something, she'd mock me so mercilessly that I'd probably
disintegrate into air. She'd laugh me right out of my body and kill me with her wit.

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 4

Original Text

Therefore let
Benedick, like
covered fire,

80 Consume away in
sighs, waste inwardly.
It were a better death
than die with mocks,
Which is as bad as die
with tickling?

Modern Text

So Benedick should conceal his emotions. Like a fire that gets covered up, Benedick
should smother his love and waste away. It would be better to die that way than to die
from being mocked, which is as bad as being killed by tickling.

URSULA

Yet tell her of it. Hear
what she will say.

URSULA

But you should tell her about this, and hear what she has to say.

HERO

No, rather I will go to
Benedick

85 And counsel him to
fight against his
passion;
And truly I'll devise
some honest slanders
To stain my cousin
with. One doth not
know

How much an ill word
may empoison liking.

HERO

No, instead I'll go to Benedick and advise him to fight his emotions. I'll make up some
awful things about my cousin and ruin her reputation. You don't know how quickly
affection can be killed with a single nasty word.

URSULA

O, do not do your
cousin such a wrong!

90 She cannot be so
much without true
judgment,
Having so swift and
excellent a wit
As she is prized to

URSULA

Oh, don't injure your cousin like that! With the quick, intelligent wit she's rumored to
have, she can't really be such a bad judge of character that she'd refuse a man as
exceptional as Signior Benedick.

have, as to refuse
So rare a gentleman as
Signior Benedick.

HERO

He is the only man of **HERO**
95 Italy, He's the only worthy man in Italy, aside from my dear Claudio.
Always excepted my
dear Claudio.

URSULA

I pray you, be not
angry with me,
madam,
Speaking my fancy. **URSULA**
100 Signor Benedick, Don't be angry with me for speaking my mind, but throughout Italy, Benedick is
considered the best man in looks, bearing, intelligence, and bravery.
For shape, for bearing,
argument and valor,
Goes foremost in
report through Italy.

HERO

Indeed, he hath an
excellent good name.

HERO

True, he has an excellent reputation.

URSULA

His excellence did
earn it, ere he had it.
When are you
married, madam?

URSULA

And he deserves it, having been excellent before he had a reputation for it. When are
you getting married, madam?

Act 3, Scene 1, Page 5

Original Text

HERO

Why, every day,
tomorrow. Come, go in.
I'll show thee some
attires, and have thy
105 counsel
Which is the best to
furnish me tomorrow?
They move aside from
the bower

Modern Text

HERO

Tomorrow and then every day after that. Come on, let's go inside. I want to show you
some clothing, so you can tell me what I should wear tomorrow.

They move away from the bower.

URSULA

(aside to HERO)
She's limed, I warrant
you. We have caught
her, madam.

URSULA

(speaking so that only HERO can hear) We caught her in our trap, madam, I'm sure
of it.

HERO

(aside to URSULA)
If it proves so, then
110 loving goes by haps;
Some Cupid kills with
arrows, some with traps.

HERO

(speaking so that only URSULA can hear) If so, then you never know where love will
come from. Cupid gets some lovers with arrows, but some he lays traps for!

Exeunt **HERO** and
URSULA

Everyone but **BEATRICE** exits.

BEATRICE

(coming forward)

What fire is in mine
ears? Can this be true?
Stand I condemned for
pride and scorn so
much?

Contempt, farewell, and
maiden pride, adieu!

115 No glory lives behind
the back of such.

And Benedick, love on;
I will requite thee,
Taming my wild heart to
thy loving hand.

120 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.

BEATRICE

(coming forward) I'm burning up with shame! Can this be true? Do people criticize me this much for being proud and scornful? Then I'll say goodbye to my contempt and my pride in being unmarried! No good is spoken of such a person as me behind her back. Benedick, keep on loving me and I will return your love, like a wild hawk being tamed by her handler. I'll be kind to you from now on, and if you really do love me, that kindness will encourage you to seal our love with a wedding band. People say that you deserve my love, and I believe it—not just because they've said so.

Exit

She exits.

Act 3, Scene 2

Original Text

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

DON PEDRO

I do but stay till your
marriage be consummate,
and then go
I toward Aragon.

CLAUDIO

I'll bring you thither, my
lord, if you'll vouchsafe
me.

DON PEDRO

Nay, that would be as
great a soil in the new
gloss of your
marriage as to show a
child his new coat and
forbid him to
wear it. I will only be
bold with Benedick for
his company,

5 for from the crown of his
head to the sole of his
foot he is all
mirth. He hath twice or
thrice cut Cupid's bow-
10 string, and
the little hangman dare
not shoot at him. He hath
a heart as
sound as a bell, and his
tongue is the clapper, for
what his
heart thinks, his tongue
speaks.

BENEDICK

Gallants, I am not as I
have been.

LEONATO

So say I. Methinks you
are sadder.

CLAUDIO

I hope he be in love.

DON PEDRO

Hang him, truant! There's
no true drop of blood in
15 him to
be truly touched with
love. If he be sad, he
wants money.

BENEDICK

I have the toothache.

DON PEDRO

Draw it.

BENEDICK

Hang it!

CLAUDIO

20 You must hang it first,
and draw it afterwards.

Modern Text

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

DON PEDRO

I'll stay in Messina until you're married, and then I'll go to Aragon.

CLAUDIO

I'll go with you, my lord, if you'll allow me.

DON PEDRO

No, taking you away from your new marriage would be like showing a child a new coat and then not letting him wear it. I'll ask only Benedick to come with me, for from the top of his head to the soles of his feet he's a joker. He's evaded love once or twice, and since then Cupid doesn't dare to shoot at him. Benedick's heart is like a bell, with his tongue as the clapper: everything his heart thinks, his tongue speaks.

BENEDICK

Gentleman, I am not the same man I was before.

LEONATO

I agree. I think you seem more serious.

CLAUDIO

I hope he's in love.

DON PEDRO

Come off it, man! There isn't a single drop of sincerity in him that could be touched with love. If he looks serious, he must need money.

BENEDICK

I have a [toothache](#).

DON PEDRO

[Draw it](#).

BENEDICK

[Hang it!](#)

CLAUDIO

You have to hang it first. Then you can [draw](#) it.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 2

Original Text

DON PEDRO

What, sigh for the
toothache?

LEONATO

Where is but a humor or
a worm.

BENEDICK

Well, everyone can
master a grief but he that
has it.

CLAUDIO

Yet say I, he is in love.

DON PEDRO

There is no appearance of
fancy in him, unless it be
a fancy
that he hath to strange
disguises, as to be a
Dutchman

today, a Frenchman
25 tomorrow, or in the shape
of two
countries at once, as a
German from the waist
downward,

30 all slops, and a Spaniard
from the hip upward, no
doublet.

Unless he have a fancy to
this foolery, as it appears
he hath,
he is no fool for fancy, as
you would have it appear
he is.

CLAUDIO

If he be not in love with
some woman, there is no
believing
old signs. He brushes his
hat o' mornings. What
should
that bode?

DON PEDRO

35 Hath any man seen him at
the barber's?

CLAUDIO

No, but the barber's man
hath been seen with him,
and the
old ornament of his cheek
hath already stuffed
tennis balls.

LEONATO

Indeed, he looks younger
than he did, by the loss of
a beard.

Modern Text

DON PEDRO

What, are you moaning on about your toothache?

LEONATO

It could only have been caused by some humor or [worm](#).

BENEDICK

Well, everyone knows how to overcome an injury except the one who actually has one.

CLAUDIO

I repeat, he's in love.

DON PEDRO

No, there's no love in him, unless you mean his love for strange costumes. He's a Dutchman today, a Frenchman tomorrow, and sometimes wears the clothing of two countries at once: a German from the waist down, with his baggy pants, and a Spaniard from the hips up, with a cloak and no jacket. Unless you're talking about his love for this kind of foolishness—which, judging from his appearance, he has—he is no fool for love, as you pretend.

CLAUDIO

If he's not in love with a woman, then you can't trust the usual symptoms. He brushes his hat in the mornings. What do you think that means?

DON PEDRO

Has any man seen him at the barber's?

CLAUDIO

No, but the barber's assistant has been seen with him. The beard that used to decorate Benedick's cheeks has been shaved off and is now stuffing [tennis balls](#).

LEONATO

Getting rid of the beard definitely makes him look younger.

DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

Nay, he rubs himself with civet. Can you smell him out by that? And he's rubbed himself with perfume. Can you smell out his secret now?

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 3

Original Text

CLAUDIO

That's as much as to say, the sweet youth's in love.

DON PEDRO

The greatest note of it is his melancholy.

CLAUDIO

And when was he wont to wash his face?

DON PEDRO

Yea, or to paint himself? For the which I hear what they say of him.

CLAUDIO

Nay, but his jesting spirit, which is now crept into a lute string and now governed by stops—

DON PEDRO

Indeed, that tells a heavy tale for him. Conclude, conclude, he is in love.

CLAUDIO

Nay, but I know who loves him.

DON PEDRO

That would I know too. I warrant, one that knows him not.

CLAUDIO

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

DON PEDRO

She shall be buried with her face upwards.

Modern Text

CLAUDIO

That's as good as proof that the sweet young man's in love.

DON PEDRO

The biggest clue is his seriousness.

CLAUDIO

And when has he ever been known to wash his face?

DON PEDRO

Yes, or to wear cosmetics? I hear what they say about him for doing that.

CLAUDIO

Indeed, his mocking spirit has now crawled into a [lute](#), and he can be played like an instrument—

DON PEDRO

Truly, it all adds up to a serious story for Benedick. A conclusion, a conclusion: he is in love.

CLAUDIO

Oh, and I know who loves him.

DON PEDRO

I bet I know, too: someone who clearly doesn't know him at all.

CLAUDIO

No, she does know him, and she also knows all his bad qualities—and in spite of all this, she still dies for him.

DON PEDRO

She'll be buried with her face upwards, then.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 4

Original Text

BENEDICK

Yet is this no charm for the
toothache.—Old Signior, walk
55 aside with me. I have studied
eight or nine wise words to
speak to you, which these
hobbyhorses must not hear.

Exeunt **BENEDICK** and
LEONATO

DON PEDRO

For my life, to break with him
about Beatrice!

CLAUDIO

'Tis even so. Hero and Margaret
have by this played their
60 parts with Beatrice, and then
the two bears will not bite one
another when they meet.

Enter **DON JOHN**

DON JOHN

My lord and brother, God save
you.

DON PEDRO

Good e'en, brother.

DON JOHN

If your leisure served, I would
speak with you.

DON PEDRO

65 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
tomorrow?

70 DON PEDRO

You know he does.

DON JOHN

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

Modern Text

BENEDICK

This chatter is no cure for my toothache. (to **LEONATO**) Old sir, please walk with me a bit. I have eight or nine well-considered words to say to you, and I don't want these fools to hear.

BENEDICK and **LEONATO** exit.

DON PEDRO

I bet my life he's gone to speak with Leonato about Beatrice!

CLAUDIO

It must be. By now, Hero and Margaret have done their part with Beatrice. The two bears won't bite each other the next time they meet.

DON JOHN enters.

DON JOHN

My lord and brother, God save you.

DON PEDRO

Good evening, brother.

DON JOHN

If you don't mind, I'd like to speak with you.

DON PEDRO

In private?

DON JOHN

If you wish. But Count Claudio can stay, for what I'm about to say concerns him.

DON PEDRO

What's the matter?

DON JOHN

(to **CLAUDIO**) Do you plan on getting married tomorrow?

DON PEDRO

You know that he does.

DON JOHN

I don't know that, once he knows what I know.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 5

Original Text

CLAUDIO

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

DON JOHN

You may think I love you
not. Let that appear
hereafter, and

aim better at me by that I
now will manifest. For my

75 brother, I think he holds
you well, and in dearness
of heart

hath help to effect your
ensuing marriage—surely
suit ill

spent and labor ill
bestowed.

DON PEDRO

Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN

I came hither to tell you;
and, circumstances
shortened, for

80 she has been too long a-
talking of, the lady is
disloyal.

CLAUDIO

Who, Hero?

DON JOHN

Even she: Leonato's Hero,
your Hero, every man's
Hero.

CLAUDIO

Disloyal?

DON JOHN

The word is too good to
paint out her wickedness.

I could

say she were worse. Think
you of a worse title, and I
will fit

85 her to it. Wonder not till
further warrant. Go but
with me

tonight, you shall see her
chamber window entered,
even

90 the night before her
wedding day. If you love
her then,

tomorrow wed her. But it
would better fit your
honor to

change your mind.

CLAUDIO

(to DON PEDRO) May
this be so?

Modern Text

CLAUDIO

If there's any reason we shouldn't get married, I urge you to tell me.

DON JOHN

You may think that I don't love you. I hope that, after I tell you my news, you will think better of me. My brother thinks highly of you, and because of his affection, has helped arrange your marriage—but that was definitely a waste of his time and energy.

DON PEDRO

Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN

I came here to tell you—I'll make this short, since she's already been talked about for too long—the lady is unfaithful.

CLAUDIO

Who, Hero?

DON JOHN

That's the one: Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

CLAUDIO

Unfaithful?

DON JOHN

The word is too good to represent her wickedness. She is worse than wicked. If you can think of a more awful title, I'll call her that. But don't keep wondering without more proof. Come with me tonight, and you'll see a man enter her bedroom chamber—even tonight, the night before her wedding. If you still love her after that, then marry her tomorrow. But you would be more honorable if you changed your mind.

CLAUDIO

(to DON PEDRO) Is this possible?

DON PEDRO
I will not think it.

DON PEDRO
I won't consider it.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 6

Original Text

DON JOHN

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

95 If you will follow me, I will
show you enough, and when
you have seen more and
heard more, proceed
accordingly.

CLAUDIO

If I see anything tonight why
I should not marry her,
tomorrow in the
congregation, where
I should wed, there
Will I shame her.

DON PEDRO

100 And as I wooed for thee to
obtain her, I will join with
thee
to disgrace her.

DON JOHN

I will disparage her no
farther till you are my
witnesses.
Bear it coldly but till
midnight and let the issue
show itself.

DON PEDRO

O day untowardly turned!

CLAUDIO

O mischief strangely
thwarting!

DON JOHN

105 O plague right well
prevented! So will you say
when you
have seen the sequel.

Exeunt

Modern Text

DON JOHN

If you won't risk coming to see her tonight, then don't claim to know what she's
like. If you follow me, I'll give you all the proof you need. Once you have seen
more and heard more, then you can decide what to do.

CLAUDIO

If I see anything tonight that convinces me not to marry her, I'll shame her
tomorrow in the very congregation where I would have married her.

DON PEDRO

And since I wooed her in your name, I'll join you in disgracing her.

DON JOHN

I won't say anything else about her until you two see things for yourselves.
Remain calm until midnight, and then you'll see what the trouble is.

DON PEDRO

Oh, this day has turned into a disaster!

CLAUDIO

Oh, mischief has ruined our plans!

DON JOHN

Oh, a plague has been prevented, thank God! That's what you'll say once you've
seen part two.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 3

Original Text

Enter **DOGBERRY** and **VERGES** with the Watch

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

VERGES

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

DOGBERRY

Nay, that were a punishment too good for them, if they should have any allegiance in them, being chosen for the Prince's watch.

VERGES

Well, give them their charge, neighbor Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

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

FIRST WATCHMAN

Hugh Otecake, sir, or George Seacole, for they can write and read.

DOGBERRY

Come hither, neighbor Seacole. God hath blessed you with a good name. To be a well-favored man is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature.

SEACOLE

Both which, Master Constable—

DOGBERRY

You have. I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favor, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it, and for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch; therefore bear you the

Modern Text

[DOGBERRY](#) and **VERGES** with several of the Prince's WATCHMEN enter.

DOGBERRY

Are you all good and honest men?

VERGES

Yes they are, otherwise it would be proper for them to suffer [salvation](#), body and soul.

DOGBERRY

If they had any [allegiance](#) when they were chosen for the Prince's watch, a punishment like that would be too good for them.

VERGES

Well, give them their assignment, Sir Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

First, which man do you think is most [desertless](#) to be leader of the watch?

FIRST WATCHMAN

Either Hugh Otecake, sir, or else George Seacole, because both of them can read and write.

DOGBERRY

Come here, Sir Seacole. God has blessed you with a good name. To be good-looking is a matter of luck, but to read and write is a natural gift.

SECOND WATCHMAN

Both of which, master constable—

DOGBERRY

You have. I knew that would be your answer. Well, for your good looks, sir, thank God and don't boast about it. As for your reading and writing, use those skills when you can't use your looks. You're thought to be the most [senseless](#) and fit man here, so you will carry the lantern and be constable. This is your assignment:

lantern. This is your charge:

Act 3, Scene 3, Page 2

Original Text

you shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the Prince's name.

SECOND WATCHMAN
How if he will not stand?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go and presently call the rest of the watch together and thank God you are rid of a knave.

VERGES

If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none of the Prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY

True, and they are to meddle with none but the Prince's subjects.—You shall also make no noise in the streets; for, for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable and not to be endured.

WATCHMAN

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

DOGBERRY

Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I cannot see how sleeping should offend. Only have a care that your bills be not stolen. Well, you are to call at all the alehouses and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

WATCHMAN

How if they will not?

Modern Text

you will [comprehend](#) any vagrant men you see. You are to order all men to stop, in the Prince's name.

SECOND WATCHMAN

And what if he won't stop?

DOGBERRY

Well then, don't bother with him and let him go. Then immediately call the rest of the watch together and thank God that you've gotten rid of such a criminal.

VERGES

If he won't stop when he's told to, then he isn't one of the Prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY

True, and you aren't supposed to meddle with anyone but the Prince's subjects. You will also stay quiet in the streets, for a babbling watch is most [tolerable](#) and will not be endured.

WATCHMAN

We'll sleep instead of talk. We know what's appropriate for a watch.

DOGBERRY

Why, you speak like an experienced and quiet watchman. Sleeping on the watch shouldn't be a problem; just make sure that your weapons don't get stolen. Also, you're supposed to visit all the bars and tell anyone who's drunk to go home and go to bed.

WATCHMAN

And what if they won't go?

DOGBERRY
Why, then, let them alone
40 till they are sober. If they
make
you not then the better
answer, you may say they
are not the
men you took them for.

WATCHMAN
Well, sir.

DOGBERRY
Well then, leave them alone until they're sober. If even then they don't answer to
your satisfaction, you can say that they're not the men you thought they were.

WATCHMAN
Very good, sir.

Act 3, Scene 3, Page 3

Original Text

DOGBERRY

If you meet a thief, you may
suspect him, by virtue of your
office, to be no true man, and
45 for such kind of men, the less
you meddle or make with
them, why the more is for your
honesty.

WATCHMAN

If we know him to be a thief,
shall we not lay hands on him?

DOGBERRY

Truly, by your office you may,
but I think they that touch
pitch will be defiled. The most
50 peaceable way for you, if
you
do take a thief, is to let him
show himself what he is and
steal
out of your company.

VERGES

You have been always called a
merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY

Truly, I would not hang a dog
55 by my will, much more a man
who hath any honesty in him.

VERGES

(to the Watch) If you hear a
child cry in the night, you must
call to the nurse and bid her
still it.

WATCHMAN

How if the nurse be asleep and
will not hear us?

DOGBERRY

Why then, depart in peace and
let the child wake her with
60 crying, for the ewe that will
not hear her lamb when it baas
will never answer a calf when
he bleats.

Modern Text

DOGBERRY

If you meet a thief, you can expect him to be dishonest. The less you have to do
with that kind of man, the more honest you will be.

WATCHMAN

So if we know that a man is a thief, should we try to arrest him?

DOGBERRY

Your position permits you to, but I think that those who stick their hands in [pitch](#)
get their hands dirty. If you encounter a thief, I think the most peaceable thing to
do is to let him be himself—and steal away.

VERGES

You have always been known as a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY

Truly, I wouldn't even hang a dog, much [more](#) a man who has any honesty in
him.

VERGES

(to the watchmen) If you hear a child crying in the night, you should call the
nurse and tell her to quiet the child.

WATCHMAN

What if the nurse is asleep and doesn't hear us?

DOGBERRY

Well then, leave quietly, and let the child's crying wake up the nurse. The ewe
that doesn't go to her lamb when it *baas* will never tend to another animal's
child.

VERGES

'Tis very true.

VERGES

That's very true.

DOGBERRY

This is the end of the charge.

You, constable, are to present
65 the Prince's own person. If you
meet the Prince in the night,
you may stay him.

DOGBERRY

And that's the end of your assignment. You, constable, are representing the
Prince himself. If you meet the Prince in the night, you can order him to stop.

VERGES

Nay, by 'r Lady that I think he
cannot.

VERGES

No, by our Lady, I don't think he can.

Act 3, Scene 3, Page 4

Original Text

DOGBERRY

Five shillings to one on 't, with
any man that knows the
statutes, he may stay him—
marry, not without the Prince
be willing, for indeed the watch
70 ought to offend no man,
and it is an offense to stay a man
against his will.

Modern Text

DOGBERRY

I'll bet any man who knows the law five shillings to one on it. Truly though,
you can't stop the Prince without the Prince's consent, for the watch shouldn't
offend anyone, and it's an offense to keep a man without his consent.

VERGES

By 'r lady, I think it be so.

VERGES

By our Lady, I think that's true.

DOGBERRY

Ha, ha, ha!—Well, masters,
good night.

An there be any matter of weight
75 chances, call up me. Keep your
fellows'
counsels and your own; and
good night.—Come, neighbor.

DOGBERRY

Ha, ha, ha! Well, gentlemen, good night. And if anything important happens,
find me and let me know. Keep each other's secrets and your own. Good night.
Come, friend.

WATCHMAN

Well, masters, we hear our
charge. Let us go sit here upon
the church bench till two, and
then all to bed.

WATCHMAN

Well gentlemen, we've heard our assignment. Let's sit here on the church
bench until two and then go off to bed.

DOGBERRY

One word more, honest
neighbors. I pray you watch
about

Signior Leonato's door, for the
80 wedding being there
Tomorrow, there is a great coil
tonight. Adieu, be vigilant,
I beseech you.

DOGBERRY

One more thing, good gentlemen. Watch over Signior Leonato's house; with
the wedding being held there tomorrow, there's a great to-do there tonight.
Adieu. Be [vigilant](#), I beg you.

Exeunt **DOGBERRY** and
VERGES

DOGBERRY and **VERGES** exit.

Enter **BORACHIO** and
CONRADE

BORACHIO and **CONRADE** enter.

BORACHIO
What Conrade!

BORACHIO
Conrade!

WATCHMAN
(aside) Peace! Stir not.

WATCHMAN
(whispering) Quiet! Don't move!

BORACHIO
Conrade, I say!

BORACHIO
Conrade, I say!

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

CONRADE
I'm here, man, at your elbow.

Act 3, Scene 3, Page 5

Original Text

BORACHIO

Mass, and my elbow itched, I thought there would a scab follow.

CONRADE

I will owe thee an answer for that. And now forward with thy tale.

BORACHIO

90 Stand thee close, then, under this penthouse, for it drizzles rain, and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.

WATCHMAN

(aside) Some treason, masters. Yet stand close.

BORACHIO

Therefore know I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats.

CONRADE

95 Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear?

BORACHIO

Thou shouldst rather ask if it were possible any villainy should be so rich. For when rich villains have need of poor ones, poor ones may make what price they will.

CONRADE

I wonder at it.

BORACHIO

100 That shows thou art unconfirmed. Thou knowest that the fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a cloak, is nothing to a man.

CONRADE

Yes, it is apparel.

BORACHIO

I mean the fashion.

CONRADE

Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

Modern Text

BORACHIO

Come to think of it, I thought I felt a scab there.

CONRADE

I'll get you for that. Now get on with your story.

BORACHIO

Since it's drizzling, stand under this overhang with me and, like a true drunk, I'll tell you everything.

WATCHMAN

(speaking so that only the other WATCHMEN can hear) There's some treason occurring, gentlemen. Stay here.

BORACHIO

You should know I've earned a thousand gold pieces from Don John.

CONRADE

Is it possible that any crime could be so valuable?

BORACHIO

You should ask instead if it's possible that any criminal could be so rich. Because when rich villains need poor villains' services, those poor ones can name the price.

CONRADE

I can't believe it.

BORACHIO

That only proves how inexperienced you are. You know that the style of a man's jacket or hat or coat means nothing.

CONRADE

Yes, it's just clothing.

BORACHIO

No, I mean, the fashion of a man's clothing tells us nothing about the man.

CONRADE

Yes, fashion is fashion.

Act 3, Scene 3, Page 6

Original Text

BORACHIO

Tush, I may as well say the
fool's the fool. But seest
105 thou not
what a deformed thief this
fashion is?

Modern Text

BORACHIO

C'mon, I might as well say the fool's the fool! But don't you see what a [deformed](#)
villain fashion is?

WATCHMAN

(aside) I know that
Deformed. He has been a
vile thief this
seven year. He goes up and
down like a gentleman. I
remember his name.

WATCHMAN

(speaking so that only the other WATCHMEN can hear) I know that man,
[Deformed](#). For the past seven years, he's been a wicked thief. He walks around as if
he were a gentleman. I remember that name.

BORACHIO

110 Didst thou not hear
somebody?

BORACHIO

Did you hear someone?

CONRADE

No, 'twas the vane on the
house.

CONRADE

Just the weathervane moving.

BORACHIO

Seest thou not, I say, what
a deformed thief this
fashion is,
how giddily he turns about
all the hot bloods between
fourteen and five-and-
thirty, sometimes
fashioning them
like Pharaoh's soldiers in
115 the reechy painting,
sometime
like god Bel's priests in
the old church-window,
sometime
like the shaven Hercules in
the smirched worm-eaten
tapestry, where his
codpiece seems as massy
as his club?

BORACHIO

As I was saying, fashion is a deformed villain. It makes hot-blooded young men
spin around feverishly, forever changing their appearances, dictating that
sometimes they dress like Pharaoh's soldiers in that grimy painting and sometimes
like the priests of the god Baal, as seen in old church windows. And sometimes
fashion dresses them like the great Hercules in that dirty, worm-eaten tapestry—the
one where his [codpiece](#) seems almost as big as his club.

CONRADE

All this I see, and I see that
the fashion wears out more
apparel than the man. But
art not thou thyself giddy
120 with
the fashion too, that thou
hast shifted out of thy tale
into
telling me of the fashion?

CONRADE

I get all this. And I also understand how fashion changes so quickly that a man's
clothing never gets a chance to wear itself out. But you're all wound up about
fashion, too. Otherwise, why would you stray from your story to blabber on about
it?

BORACHIO

Not so, neither. But know
125 that I have tonight wooed
Margaret, the Lady Hero's
gentlewoman, by the name
of

BORACHIO

No, I'm not wound up. But I will tell you that I seduced Margaret, the Lady Hero's
waiting woman, tonight. I called her "Hero" the whole time. She leaned out of her
mistress's bedroom window and told me good night a thousand times—but I am
telling this story poorly. I should backtrack and begin with how my master, Don
John, arranged for the Prince, Claudio, and himself to witness this friendly
encounter from the orchard.

Hero. She leans me out at
130 her mistress' chamber
window,
bids me a thousand times
good night. I tell this tale
vilely.
I should first tell thee how
the Prince, Claudio and my
master, planted and placed
and possessed by my
master
Don John, saw afar off in
the orchard this amiable
encounter.

Act 3, Scene 3, Page 7

Original Text

CONRADE

And thought they Margaret
was Hero?

BORACHIO

Two of them did, the Prince
and Claudio, but the devil
my
master knew she was
Margaret; and partly by his
oaths,
which first possessed them,
partly by the dark night,
which
135 did deceive them, but chiefly
by my villainy, which did
confirm any slander that Don
John had made, away went
Claudio enraged, swore he
140 would meet her as he was
appointed next morning at
the temple, and there, before
the
whole congregation, shame
her with what he saw
o'ernight
and send her home again
without a husband.

SECOND WATCHMAN

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

FIRST WATCHMAN

Call up the right Master
Constable. We have here
recovered the most
dangerous piece of lechery
that ever was
known in the
commonwealth.

SECOND WATCHMAN

145 And one Deformed is one of

Modern Text

CONRADE

And they thought Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO

The Prince and Claudio did, but the devil, my master, knew that it was Margaret. They believed the charade partially because of my master's testimony—which first caused them to doubt Hero—and partially because of how dark and deceiving the night was, but mostly because of my villainous actions, which confirmed Don John's slander. Claudio went away enraged, swearing that he'd meet Hero at the temple as planned and there, before the entire congregation, shame her with what he'd discovered and send her home without a husband.

SECOND WATCHMAN

We charge you, in the Prince's name, to stop!

FIRST WATCHMAN

Call up the Master Constable Dogberry. We have [recovered](#) the most dangerous piece of lechery that was ever known in the commonwealth.

SECOND WATCHMAN

And one of them is the criminal Deformed. I know him; he wears a lock of hair.

them. I know him; he wears
a
lock.

CONRADE
Masters, masters—

CONRADE
Gentlemen, gentlemen—

SECOND WATCHMAN
(to BORACHIO) You'll be
made bring Deformed forth,
I warrant you.

SECOND WATCHMAN
(to BORACHIO) I bet you'll be forced to bring Deformed forward.

FIRST WATCHMAN
Masters, never speak, we
150 charge you, let us obey you
go with us.

FIRST WATCHMAN
Gentlemen, don't speak. We obey you to go with us.

Act 3, Scene 3, Page 8

Original Text

BORACHIO

We are like to prove a goodly commodity, being taken up
of
these men's bills.

CONRADE

A commodity in question, I warrant you.—Come, we'll
155 obey you.

Exeunt

Modern Text

BORACHIO

We're probably a very valuable catch for these guys.

CONRADE

Well, our value is debatable, I bet. Let's go, we'll
obey you.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 4

Original Text

Enter **HERO, MARGARET, and**
URSULA

HERO

Good Ursula, wake my cousin
Beatrice and desire her to
rise.

URSULA

I will, lady.

HERO

And bid her come hither.

URSULA

5 Well.

Exit

MARGARET

Troth, I think your other rebato
were better.

HERO

No, pray thee, good Meg, I'll wear
this.

MARGARET

By my troth, 's not so good, and I
warrant your cousin will
say so.

Modern Text

HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA enter.

HERO

Good Ursula, go wake my cousin and ask her to get up.

URSULA

I will, lady.

HERO

And request that she come here.

URSULA

Very well.

She exits.

MARGARET

Really, I think your other ruff is better.

HERO

No, please good Meg, I'll wear this one.

MARGARET

Honestly, it's not as good as the other one, and I'm sure your cousin will
agree with me.

HERO
10 My cousin's a fool, and thou art
another. I'll wear none but
this.

MARGARET

I like the new tire within
excellently, if the hair were a
thought browner; and your gown's
a most rare fashion, i'
faith. I saw the Duchess of Milan's
gown that they praise so.

15 **HERO**
Oh, that exceeds, they say.

HERO

My cousin's a fool, and you are too. I'll wear this one and none other.

MARGARET

I like your new wig and headdress, though I'd like it more if the hair were a
shade browner. And your gown is really stylish. You know, I saw the
Duchess of Milan's gown, the one that everyone praises so highly.

HERO

Oh, they say that dress surpasses all others.

Act 3, Scene 4, Page 2

Original Text

MARGARET

By my troth, 's but a
nightgown in respect of
yours—cloth

o' gold, and cuts, and
laced with silver, set with
pearls,

down sleeves, side
sleeves, and skirts, round
underborne

20 with a bluish tinsel. But
for a fine, quaint, graceful,
and

excellent fashion, yours is
worth ten on 't.

HERO

God give me joy to wear
it, for my heart is
exceeding heavy.

MARGARET

'Twill be heavier soon by
the weight of a man.

HERO

Fie upon thee! Art not
ashamed?

MARGARET

Of what, lady? Of
speaking honorably? Is
not marriage
honorable in a beggar? Is
not your lord honorable
without

25 marriage? I think you
would have me say,

“Saving your
reverence, a husband.” An
bad thinking do not wrest
true

30 speaking, I'll offend
nobody. Is there any harm
in “the

heavier for a husband”?

None, I think, an it be the
right

husband and the right

Modern Text

MARGARET

Compared to your dress, it's no better than a nightgown. The cloth is interwoven
with gold thread, and slashes in the material show the fabric beneath. It is trimmed
with silver lace and embroidered with pearls. It has one set of fitted sleeves and
another ornamental pair that hangs open from the shoulders. The skirts are trimmed
with a blue, metallic fabric. But for a fine, elegant, graceful, and excellent dress,
yours is worth ten of those.

HERO

I hope I enjoy wearing it, for my heart is very heavy.

MARGARET

It will be made even heavier soon—by the weight of a man.

HERO

Watch your tongue! Have you no shame?

MARGARET

Shame of what, lady? Sex and marriage are honorable things—even for a beggar,
right? And isn't your husband an honorable man? You're so prudish you'd probably
like me to say, “I beg your pardon, your *husband*”—as if husband were a dirty word!
So long as suspicious minds aren't misinterpreting my honest words, I'll offend no
one. What's wrong with admitting your husband's going to lie on you? Nothing, as
long as it's the right husband with the right wife. That's right and proper—anything
else is frivolous and immoral. Ask Beatrice. Here she comes.

wife. Otherwise, 'tis light
and not
heavy. Ask my Lady
Beatrice else. Here she
comes.

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

HERO **HERO**
Good morrow, coz. Good morning, cousin.

BEATRICE **BEATRICE**
Good morrow, sweet Good morning, sweet Hero.
Hero.

Act 3, Scene 4, Page 3

Original Text

HERO

Why, how now? Do you
speak in the sick tune?

BEATRICE

35 I am out of all other tune,
methinks.

MARGARET

Clap 's into "Light o' love."
That goes without a burden.
Do you sing it, and I'll dance
it.

BEATRICE

Ye light o' love, with your
heels! Then, if your husband
have stables enough, you'll
see he shall lack no barns.

MARGARET

40 O illegitimate construction! I
scorn that with my heels.

BEATRICE

'Tis almost five o'clock,
cousin. 'Tis time you were
ready.
By my troth, I am exceeding
ill. Heigh-ho!

MARGARET

For a hawk, a horse, or a
husband?

BEATRICE

For the letter that begins
them all, H.

MARGARET

45 Well, an you be not turned
Turk, there's no more sailing
by
the star.

BEATRICE

What means the fool, trow?

MARGARET

Nothing, I; but God send
everyone their heart's desire.

HERO

50 These gloves the Count sent
me, they are an excellent
perfume.

Modern Text

HERO

Why do you sound so odd? Are you ill? You sound out of tune.

BEATRICE

I must be ill—I don't think I can speak in any other tune.

MARGARET

If it's a tune we want, let's sing "Light on Love!" It's a light song and doesn't
require a man to sing the baritone. You sing, and I'll dance.

BEATRICE

You're "light on love" sure enough—your frivolous dancing proves you have
light heels! When you're married one of these days, if your husband is rolling in
dough, you'll let him roll in the hay whenever he wants.

MARGARET

Never! I reject that life; I kick it away with my [heels](#).

BEATRICE

(to HERO) It's almost five o'clock, cousin. You should be ready by now. Oh, I
really don't feel well. Heigh-ho!

MARGARET

Are you sighing for a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

BEATRICE

I have an ache; I'm sighing for the letter that begins all those words.

MARGARET

Well, if you haven't [renounced](#) your old faith yet, we can't trust anything
anymore.

BEATRICE

What does the fool mean by that, I wonder?

MARGARET

I don't mean anything—but God sends everyone their heart's desire.

HERO

The Count sent me an excellent pair of perfumed gloves.

Act 3, Scene 4, Page 4

Original Text

BEATRICE

I am stuffed, cousin. I cannot smell.

MARGARET

A maid, and stuffed! There's goodly catching of cold.

BEATRICE

Oh, God help me, God help me! How long have you

professed apprehension?

MARGARET

Even since you left it.

55 Doth not my wit become me rarely?

BEATRICE

It is not seen enough; you should wear it in your cap. By my troth, I am sick.

MARGARET

Get you some of this distilled *carduus benedictus* and lay it to your heart. It is the only thing for a qualm.

HERO

60 There thou prick'st her with a thistle.

BEATRICE

Benedictus! Why *benedictus*? You have some moral in this *benedictus*?

MARGARET

Moral! No, by my troth, I have no moral meaning. I meant

plain holy thistle. You may think perchance that I think you

65 are in love. Nay, by 'r Lady, I am not such a fool to think

what I list, nor I list not to think what I can, nor

70 indeed I

cannot think, if I would think my heart out of thinking, that

you are in love or that

you will be in love or that

you can be

Modern Text

BEATRICE

Sorry, I'm all stuffed. I can't smell a thing.

MARGARET

Oh, just a young lady and already [stuffed!](#) That's a nice way to catch a cold.

BEATRICE

Oh, God help me! Since when have you claimed to be such a great wit?

MARGARET

Ever since you lost yours. Doesn't my wit suit me well?

BEATRICE

It doesn't get seen enough; you should wear it in your cap, the way fools wear coxcombs. God, I'm really sick.

MARGARET

You should get some distilled [carduus benedictus](#) and put it on your chest. It's the only way to cure a sudden faintness.

HERO

With that you've managed to prick her with a thistle.

BEATRICE

Benedictus! Why do you suggest I use *benedictus*? Is there some double meaning in that word, "benedictus"?

MARGARET

Double meaning! No, honestly, there's no other meaning. I just meant that you should use some holy thistle. Maybe you think that I think you're in love. No, by Our Lady, I'm not such a fool to think what I please, and I don't please to think what I can, and in fact I cannot think, even if I could think my heart right past thinking, that you are in love or that you will be in love or even that you can be in love. But Benedick was once an enemy of love as well, and now he's become a real man. He swore that he'd never get married, but now, despite his earlier protestations, he loves ungrudgingly. How we're going to convert you I'll never know. And yet I think you look with your eyes just like every other woman does.

in love. Yet Benedick
was such another, and
now is he
become a man. He swore
he would never marry,
and yet
now, in despite of his
heart, he eats his meat
without
grudging. And how you
may be converted I know
not, but
methinks you look with
your eyes as other
women do.

Act 3, Scene 4, Page 5

Original Text

BEATRICE

What pace is this that thy
tongue keeps?

MARGARET

75 Not a false gallop.

Enter **URSULA**

URSULA

Madam, withdraw: the Prince,
the Count, Signor
Benedick, Don John, and all
the gallants of the town are
come to fetch you to church.

HERO

Help to dress me, good coz,
good Meg, good Ursula.

Exeunt

Modern Text

BEATRICE

Why are you talking at such a crazy clip?

MARGARET

It's not a false gallop, anyway.

URSULA enters.

URSULA

Madam, we have to go: the Prince, the Count, Signior Benedick,
Don John, and all the gentlemen of the town have come to bring
you to church.

HERO

Good cousin, good Meg, good Ursula, come help me get dressed.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 5

Original Text

Enter LEONATO
with DOGBERRY and
VERGES

LEONATO

What would you wish me,
honest neighbor?

DOGBERRY

Marry, sir, I would have some
confidence with you that
decerns you nearly.

LEONATO

Brief, I pray you, for you see it
is a busy time with me.

5 DOGBERRY

Marry, this it is, sir.

VERGES

Yes, in truth it is, sir.

LEONATO

What is it, my good friends?

DOGBERRY

10 Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a
little off the matter. An old
man, sir, and his wits are not so
blunt as, God help, I would
desire they were, but, in faith,
honest as the skin between
his brows.

VERGES

Yes, I thank God I am as honest
as any man living that is an
old man and no honestier than I.

DOGBERRY

Comparisons are odorous.
Palabras, neighbor Verges.

15 LEONATO

Neighbors, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY

It pleases your Worship to say
so, but we are the poor duke's
officers. But truly, for mine own
part, if I were as tedious as
a king, I could find it in my heart

Modern Text

LEONATO enters with DOGBERRY and VERGES.

LEONATO

What do you want from me, my good man?

DOGBERRY

Please, sir, I would like to discuss some news that [decerns](#) you
greatly.

LEONATO

Be brief, please, because, as you can see, this is a busy time for
me.

DOGBERRY

Indeed, sir, it is.

VERGES

Yes, it truly is.

LEONATO

What's the news, my good friends?

DOGBERRY

Sorry, sir, Goodman Verges tends to ramble. He's an old man,
sir, and his wits are not as [blunt](#) as I wish they were. But truly,
he's as honest as the skin between his brows.

VERGES

Yes, I thank God that I am as honest as all the other old men
who are not honestier than me.

DOGBERRY

Making comparisons is [odorous](#), Verges. Get on with your story.

LEONATO

Friends, you are becoming tedious.

DOGBERRY

Thank you for saying that, your Worship, but we're just the poor
duke's officers. But truly, if I were as [tedious](#) as a king, I would
give everything to you, your Worship.

to bestow it all of your worship.

Act 3, Scene 5, Page 2

Original Text

LEONATO

20 All thy tediousness on me,
ah?

DOGBERRY

Yea, an 'twere a thousand
pound more than 'tis, for I
hear
as good exclamation on your
Worship as of any man in the
city, and though I be but a
poor man, I am glad to hear
it.

VERGES

And so am I.

LEONATO

25 I would fain know what you
have to say.

VERGES

Marry, sir, our watch tonight,
excepting your Worship's
presence, ha' ta'en a couple of
as arrant knaves as any in
Messina.

DOGBERRY

A good old man, sir. He will
be talking. As they say,
“When
the age is in, the wit is out.”
God help us, it is a world to
see!

30 Well said, i' faith, neighbor
Verges.—Well, God's a good
man. An two men ride of a
horse, one must ride behind.
An

35 honest soul, i' faith, sir, by
my troth he is, as ever broke
bread, but God is to be
worshipped, all men are not
alike,
alas, good neighbor!

LEONATO

Indeed, neighbor, he comes
too short of you.

DOGBERRY

Gifts that God gives.

LEONATO

I must leave you.

DOGBERRY

One word, sir. Our watch, sir,
have indeed comprehended
two auspicious persons, and
40 we would have them this
morning examined before
your worship.

Modern Text

LEONATO

Oh, so you'd give me all your tediousness?

DOGBERRY

Yes, even if I had a thousand more pounds than that, for I hear that you are
exclaimed throughout the city, and though I am only a poor man, it makes me
glad to hear it.

VERGES

Me, too.

LEONATO

Gentlemen, please, I'd like to hear your news.

VERGES

Sir, our watch tonight—expectfully, sir—has captured a couple of the worst
criminals in Messina.

DOGBERRY

(to LEONATO) Verges is a good old man, sir, but he's always babbling. Like
they say, “When age comes, wit goes.” God help us, what a world! (to VERGES)
You did well, Verges, honestly. (to LEONATO) Well, God's a fair man. If two
men are riding on one horse, one must naturally ride behind. Verges is as honest a
man as any, but, God bless him, not all men are created equal. Am I right, my
friend?

LEONATO

Truly, my friend, he isn't nearly as impressive as you are.

DOGBERRY

God gives those gifts—I had nothing to do with it.

LEONATO

Now I must return to the wedding.

DOGBERRY

One more thing, sir. Our watch, sir, as you know, has comprehended two
auspicious persons. We'd like for you to examine them this morning.

Act 3, Scene 5, Page 3

Original Text

LEONATO

Take their examination yourself
and bring it me. I am now
in great haste, as it may appear
unto you.

DOGBERRY

It shall be suffigance.

LEONATO

45 Drink some wine ere you go. Fare
you well.

Enter a MESSENGER

MESSENGER

My lord, they stay for you to give
your daughter to her
husband.

LEONATO

I'll wait upon them. I am ready.

Exeunt LEONATO and
MESSENGER

DOGBERRY

Go, good partner, go, get you to
Francis Seacole. Bid him
50 bring his pen and inkhorn to the
jail. We are now to
examination these men.

VERGES

And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY

We will spare for no wit, I warrant
you. Here's that shall
drive some of them to a noncome.
55 Only get the learned
writer to set down our
excommunication and meet me at
the jail.

Exeunt

Modern Text

LEONATO

Examine them yourselves, then bring me your findings. Now I'm in a great
hurry, as I'm sure you can see.

DOGBERRY

That will be [suffigance](#).

LEONATO

Have some wine before you go. Goodbye.

A MESSENGER enters.

MESSENGER

My lord, they're waiting for you to give your daughter away to Claudio.

LEONATO

I'm coming.

LEONATO and the MESSENGER exit.

DOGBERRY

Go to Francis Seacole, the constable of the watch. Tell him to bring his pen
and his inkwell to the jail. We will now go to [examination](#) these men.

VERGES

We must do this wisely.

DOGBERRY

We won't hold back any of our wisdom. We'll drive them to a [noncome](#). Go
get the educated writer to record our excommunication, and I'll meet you at
the jail.

They all exit.

SUMMARY OF ACT # 3

Act III, scenes i–ii

Summary: Act III, scene i

In Leonato's garden, Hero prepares to trick Beatrice into believing that Benedick loves her. With the help of her two waiting women, Margaret and Ursula, she plans to hold a conversation and let Beatrice overhear it—just as Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio have done to trick Benedick in the previous scene. Margaret lures Beatrice into the garden, and when Hero and Ursula catch sight of where she is hiding, they begin to talk in loud voices. Hero tells Ursula that Claudio and Don Pedro have informed her that Benedick is in love with Beatrice. Ursula suggests that Hero tell Beatrice about it, but Hero answers that everybody knows that Beatrice is too full of mockery to listen to any man courting her—Beatrice would merely make fun of both Hero and Benedick and break Benedick's heart with her witticisms. Therefore, she says, it will be better to let poor Benedick waste away silently from love than expose him to Beatrice's scorn. Ursula replies by disagreeing with Hero: Hero must be mistaken, because surely Beatrice is too intelligent and sensitive a woman to reject Benedick. After all, everybody knows that Benedick is one of the cleverest and handsomest men in Italy. Hero agrees, and goes off with Ursula to try on her wedding dress.

After Hero and Ursula leave the garden, winking at each other because they know they have caught Beatrice, Beatrice emerges from her hiding place among the trees. Just as Benedick is shocked earlier, Beatrice cannot believe what she has heard at first. Also, like Benedick, she swiftly realizes that it would not be so difficult to “take pity” on her poor suitor and return his love. She knows how worthy Benedick really is and vows to cast off her scorn and pride in order to love him back.

Summary: Act III, scene ii

Elsewhere, Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato begin to tease Benedick about his decision never to marry. Benedick announces that he has changed, and the others agree; they have noticed that he is much quieter. They say that he must be in love and tease him about it. But Benedick is too subdued even to answer their jokes. He takes Leonato aside to speak with him.

As soon as Claudio and Don Pedro are left alone, Don John approaches them. He tells them that he is trying to protect Don Pedro's reputation and save Claudio from a bad marriage. Hero is a whore, he says, and Claudio should not marry her. The two are shocked, of course, but Don John immediately offers them proof: he tells them to come with him that night to watch outside Hero's window where they will see her making love to somebody else. Claudio, already suspicious and paranoid, resolves that if what he sees tonight does indeed prove Hero's unfaithfulness, he will disgrace her publicly during the wedding ceremony the next day, and Don Pedro vows to assist him. Confused, suspicious, and full of dark thoughts, Claudio and Don Pedro leave with Don John.

Analysis: Act III, scenes i–ii

The trick that Hero and Ursula play upon Beatrice works just as well as the one Don Pedro and Claudio play upon Benedick in the preceding scene, as Beatrice, just as Benedick does, decides to stop resisting marriage and return her supposed pursuer's love. Clearly, the friends of these two characters know them well. The conversations that Benedick and Beatrice are allowed to overhear are psychologically complicated, appealing to both the characters' compassion and their pride. Beatrice, like Benedick, cannot help but be flattered to hear that her supposed enemy is in fact dying for love of her. But her sensitive side has been targeted: she is disturbed to hear that he is in such distress, and that she herself is the cause. Moreover, it seems likely that her pride is wounded when she hears people say that she has no compassion and that she would mock a man in love instead of pitying him. Just as Benedick is moved to prove the talkers wrong, so Beatrice seems to be stirred to show that she does have compassion and a heart after all. When Hero says, “Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire, / Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly. It were a better death than die with

mocks,” Beatrice is motivated to “save” poor Benedick and also to show that she is not heartless enough to be as cruel as Hero seems to think she is (III.i.77–79).

Of course, all of these complicated motivations in the friends’ plans to dupe Beatrice and Benedick into falling in love with one another relate to the same essential cause: their friends are trying to make Beatrice and Benedick realize that each, in his or her private heart, does have the potential to love the other profoundly. The tricks could hardly work otherwise—Beatrice and Benedick both seem too mature and intelligent to be deluded into thinking that they are in love. Their friends are simply trying to make them realize that they *already* love each other.

Beatrice’s speech at the end of the scene is much shorter than Benedick’s in the preceding one, but the gist of it is the same. Profoundly affected by what she has heard, she decides to allow herself to change her views about marriage in order to accept Benedick. She has learned how others perceive her—“Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?”—and has decided to change these perceptions: “Contempt, farewell; and maiden pride, adieu. / No glory lives behind the back of such” (III.i.109–111). Now, she decides she will accept Benedick if he courts her, “taming my wild heart to thy loving hand” (III.i.113).

In the next scene, however, the atmosphere grows dark. Don Pedro and Claudio’s merry teasing of the subdued Benedick amuses, but Don John’s shocking accusation against Hero suddenly changes the mood from one of rejoicing to one of foreboding. We also see Don Pedro and Claudio’s disturbingly quick acceptance of Don John’s word about Hero’s unfaithfulness—Don John has promised to show them “proof,” but it still seems strange that they so quickly believe evil about Claudio’s bride-to-be. Claudio earlier reveals his suspicious nature to the audience when he believes Don John’s lie in Act II, scene i that Don Pedro has betrayed him. His susceptibility to suspicion now returns to haunt him, this time with the support and encouragement of Don Pedro.

Act III, scene iii

Summary

In a street outside Leonato’s house, the town policemen of Messina—collectively called the Watch—gather together to discuss their duties for the night. Dogberry, the head constable, and Verges, his deputy, command and govern them. Dogberry and Verges are well intentioned and take their jobs very seriously, but they are also ridiculous. Dogberry is a master of malapropisms, always getting his words just slightly wrong. Under Dogberry, the Watch is very polite but not very effective at deterring crime. As Dogberry gives his orders to his men, it becomes clear that the Watch is charged with doing very little. For example, when asked how the men should react should someone refuse to stand in Don Pedro’s name, Dogberry replies, “Why then take no note of him, but let him go, and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave” (III.iii.25–27). Furthermore, the Watch is supposed to order drunkards to go home and sleep their drunkenness off—unless the drunkards won’t listen, in which case the men are to ignore them. The men are not to make too much noise in the street—they may sleep instead. They shouldn’t catch thieves, because it isn’t good for honest men to have too much to do with dishonest ones, and they should wake up the nurses of crying children—unless the nurses ignore them, in which case they should let the child wake the nurse by crying instead. In short, they may do anything they want and don’t have to do anything at all, as long as they are careful not to let the townspeople steal their spears.

Dogberry gives his men a final order: act particularly vigilant near the house of Leonato, for Leonato's daughter, Hero, is to be married the next day, and the house is filled with commotion and chaos. After Dogberry and Verges depart, the men they have left behind sit down quietly on a bench and prepare to go to sleep.

Suddenly, the watchmen are interrupted by the entrance of Don John's associates, Borachio and Conrad. Borachio, who does not see the watchmen, informs Conrad about what has happened this night. Acting on the plan he developed with Don John, Borachio made love to Margaret, Hero's waiting maid, at the window of Hero's room, with Margaret dressed in Hero's clothing. Don Pedro and Claudio, who were hiding nearby with Don John, saw the whole thing and are now convinced that Hero has been disloyal to Claudio. Claudio, feeling heartbroken and betrayed, has vowed to take revenge upon Hero by publicly humiliating her at the wedding ceremony the next day. The watchmen, who have quietly listened to this whole secretive exchange, now reveal themselves and arrest Borachio and Conrad for "lechery," by which they mean treachery. They haul them away to Dogberry and Verges for questioning.

Analysis

Dogberry and Verges provide welcome comic relief amid Don John's evil plotting. Their brand of humor is completely different from that provided by Benedick and Beatrice; while the two witty antagonists spar with a brilliant display of wit, Dogberry and Verges get half their words wrong, providing humor with their ignorance. Yet, like Benedick and Beatrice, they are in their own way good-hearted and sincere, and the humor of both duos, sophisticated and unsophisticated, hinges on punning and verbal display.

Borachio's account of the events of that night inform us that Don John's plans have been put into action and that everything is working out as he intended. Once again, however, we are faced with a disturbing element in this action: Claudio and Don Pedro both believe Don John's claims and are willing to believe that they are watching Hero without investigating the matter more closely or interrogating Hero herself about it. When we see how ready Claudio is to believe that the woman he supposedly is in love with is betraying him, we are likely to be deeply troubled about him, even though we know that the play—being a comedy—has to end happily.

Borachio lists a few factors that might make the deception of Claudio and Don Pedro more understandable. He suggests that we should blame Don John's "oaths," which first made Don Pedro and Claudio suspicious of Hero's guilt; the "dark night, which did deceive them" (III.iii.136–137); and Borachio's own flat-out lies when he testified to them that he had made love to Hero. Some critics focus on the fact that Claudio is quite young and that he does not really know Hero very well as mitigating his distrust of her. Indeed, he seems hardly to have spoken any words to her before they become engaged, although presumably they have conversed more in the week that has passed since their betrothal. Nevertheless, Claudio's swift anger and the terrible revenge he has vowed to take—shaming Hero in public and abandoning her at the altar—has remained troubling to generations of critics and readers, as has Don Pedro's complicity in this desired revenge. Don Pedro, after all, does not have the excuse of youth and inexperience. The brutality of the principal male characters remains a problem with which readers of *Much Ado About Nothing* must grapple. It is difficult to feel sympathy for Claudio and Don Pedro after seeing how quickly they believe evil of Hero—and after what they do to her in Act IV, scene i, on the day of the wedding itself.

Act III, scenes iv–v

Summary: Act III, scene iv

On the morning of her wedding to Claudio, Hero wakes up early and tells her servant Ursula to wake Beatrice. Meanwhile, Hero's maid Margaret argues affectionately with Hero about what she ought to wear for her wedding. Hero is excited, but she is also uneasy for reasons she cannot name; she has a strange foreboding of disaster. Beatrice arrives, and Margaret, in high spirits, teases her about her changed personality, saying that now Beatrice too desires a husband. Beatrice expresses annoyance,

but Margaret is sure that she is right, and so she continues to tease Beatrice about Benedick—but in a manner subtle enough that Beatrice cannot accuse Margaret of knowing anything completely. Soon enough, Claudio arrives with his friends, accompanied by the large wedding party, apparently ready to take Hero to the church. They all set off together.

Summary: Act III, scene v

Just as Leonato prepares to enter the church for his daughter's wedding, Dogberry and Verges catch up with Leonato and try to talk to him. They explain that they have caught two criminals and want to interrogate them in front of him. However, their attempts to communicate their message are so long-winded, foolish, and generally mixed up that they fail to convey how urgent the matter is—and, in fact, they may not understand its importance themselves. Leonato defers their business, explaining that he is busy this day, and orders Dogberry and Verges to question the men themselves and tell him about it later. Dogberry and Verges head off to question the prisoners on their own, and Leonato enters the church in order to participate in the wedding ceremony about to take place.

Analysis: Act III, scenes iv–v

The scene in Hero's bedchamber, as Hero prepares for her wedding day, provides an example of some of *Much Ado About Nothing's* strongest features: the scene combines nonstop jokes with a sense of affection. It means a great deal to Hero to have her cousin and her beloved maids with her on her wedding morning, even amid all the raunchy joking surrounding Hero's impending marriage—for instance, Margaret's statement that Hero's heart will "be heavier soon by the weight of a man" (III.iv.23). Hero's unexpected sense of foreboding sets off warning bells in the minds of the audience. Hero asks God to "give me joy to wear [my wedding dress], for my heart is exceeding heavy" (III.iv.21–22). There is no clear reason for her to feel this way, except perhaps that she must sadly bid her innocent childhood adieu; we interpret her heaviness of heart as a foreshadowing of something bad to come.

Margaret, in high spirits after a night with Borachio, shows remarkable wit in this scene, jesting about Beatrice's conversion to the ways of love. When Beatrice, far more subdued than usual, says that she feels sick, Margaret teasingly offers her a cure—distillation of *carduus benedictus*, or "holy thistle," a plant thought to have medicinal powers in the Renaissance. Beatrice, of course, quite rightly thinks that Margaret is trying to make a point—"Why Benedictus?" she cries. "You have some moral in this Benedictus" (III.iv.10.). Margaret gaily avoids saying concretely what she means, but the gist of the joke is clear: Beatrice is sick with love, and only *benedictus*—that is, Benedick—can cure her. This scene juxtaposes Margaret's dirty punning and overt sexuality with Hero's fearful innocence and utter ignorance of all things carnal. We thus learn how different Hero is from Margaret, and how wrong Claudio is to doubt Hero and mistake Margaret for his untainted beloved.

Act III, scene v, in which Dogberry and Verges try to speak with Leonato outside the church, heightens the tension and our anticipation of an approaching disaster. The two constables entertain us with their foibles as always. In this conversation, Dogberry actually starts pitying Verges and making excuses for his friend's supposed foolishness, although Dogberry himself, as usual, gets many of his words wrong. He calls Verges "an old man," and says, "his wits are not so blunt as, God help, I would desire they were"; he means, of course, "sharp" instead of "blunt" (III.v.9–10). To Verges's response, saying he thinks that he is honest, Dogberry makes the oft-quoted reply, "Comparisons are odorous" (III.v.14). He means to quote the proverb "comparisons are odious." The men that the two constables have caught, of course, are Conrad and Borachio—and Borachio is the one who has helped Don John deceive Claudio and Don Pedro the night before. But because Dogberry and Verges are such poor communicators, they are unable to convey to Leonato how important it is that he hear Borachio's testimony; because they are so foolish, they do not seem to realize how important it is themselves. Thus, Leonato enters the church, and Dogberry and Verges go off without Don John's scheme having been exposed.