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Cast of Characters

NARRATOR
BEATRICE
LEONATO
HERO
MESSENGER
DON PEDRO
DON JOHN
CLAUDIO
BENEDICK
CONRADE
BORACHIO
ANTONIO
MARGARET
URSULA
DOGBERRY
VERGES
FRIAR FRANCIS
SEXTON
FIRST WATCHMAN
SECOND WATCHMAN

Production Notes

Please note that the following scenes from the original script are not missing from your text, but have been judiciously eliminated in order to tell this story in one hour. The addition of a narrator serves to fill in any gaps in the plot.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 3

Act 3, Scene 4

Act 5, Scene 2

Act 5, Scene 3

Acknowledgments

The original production was produced by Michael Tritto and Guy Strauss and directed by Michael Tritto.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

(IN ONE HOUR)

adapted by Maxine Kern

based on the play written by William Shakespeare & edited by Michael Tritto

ACT I

Scene 1

(Before LEONATA's house.)

(Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a MESSENGER.)

NARRATION ONE. *(Possibly played by the MESSENGER.)* The time is 1945. The place the North End of Boston. A messenger has arrived to announce the return from battle of the prominent Don Pedro, his brother Don John and several soldiers including Benedick and Claudio. Beatrice, niece to Leonata and cousin to Hero, speaks out.

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

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

LEONATO. What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO. My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER. O, he's returned; and as pleasant as ever he was.

BEATRICE. I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? For indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

LEONATO. Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

MESSENGER. He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE. You had musty victual, and he hath holp to eat it: he is a very valiant trencherman; he hath an excellent stomach.

MESSENGER. And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE. And a good soldier to a lady: but what is he to a lord?

MESSENGER. A lord to a lord, a man to a man; stuffed with all honourable virtues.

BEATRICE. It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuffed man: but for the stuffing,—well, we are all mortal.

LEONATO. You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

MESSENGER. I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE. Do, good friend.

LEONATO. You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE. No, not till a hot January.

MESSENGER. Don Pedro is approached.

(Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK.)

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

LEONATO. Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace: for trouble being gone, comfort should remain; but when you depart from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave.

DON PEDRO. You embrace your charge too willingly. I think this is your daughter.

LEONATO. Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK. Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

LEONATO. Signior Benedick, no; for then were you a child.

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

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

BEATRICE. Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

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

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

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

LEONATO. Please it your grace lead on?

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

(Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO.)

CLAUDIO. Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK. I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO. Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK. Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgment; or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

CLAUDIO. No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment. In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

BENEDICK. I can see yet without spectacles and I see no such matter: there's her cousin, an she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

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

BENEDICK. Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion?

Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again?
Go to, i' faith; an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck
into a yoke, wear the print of it and sigh away
Sundays. Look Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

(Re-enter DON PEDRO.)

NARRATION TWO. Don Pedro notices a change in tone between his soldiers Claudio and Benedick. He soon learns that Claudio has fallen in love with Hero and promises to disguise himself as Claudio and to woo Hero in Claudio's name. Benedick meanwhile, continues to foreswear love entirely.

BENEDICK. That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: but all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none; and the fine is, for the which I may go the finer, I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO. I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.

BENEDICK. With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord, not with love: prove that ever I lose more blood with love than I will get again with drinking, pick out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen and hang me up at the door of a brothel-house for the sign of blind Cupid.

DON PEDRO. Well, you will temporize with the hours. In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's: commend me to him and tell him I will not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made great preparation.

BENEDICK. I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassage: and so I leave you.

(Exit.)

Scene 3

(The same.)

(Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE.)

NARRATION THREE. Now we meet Don John, the unhappy, overlooked brother of Don Pedro. *(The NARRATOR can play CONRADE.)*

CONRADE. What the good-year, my lord! why are you thus out of measure sad?

DON JOHN. There is no measure in the occasion that breeds; therefore the sadness is without limit.

CONRADE. You should hear reason.

DON JOHN. And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it?

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

DON JOHN. I wonder that thou goest about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief. I cannot hide what I am: I must be sad when I have cause and smile at no man's jests, eat when I have stomach and wait for no man's leisure, sleep when I am drowsy and tend on no man's business, laugh when I am merry and claw no man in his humour.

CONRADE. Yea, but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace; where it is needful that you frame the season for your own harvest.

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

seek not to alter me.

CONRADE. Can you make no use of your discontent?

DON JOHN. I make all use of it, for I use it only. Who comes here?

(Enter BORACHIO.)

DON JOHN. What news, Borachio?

NARRATION FOUR. Borachio conspires with Don John. He “gives him intelligence” of the intended wooing of Hero and marriage to Claudio. Don John replies:

DON JOHN. Come, come, let us thither: this may prove food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow: if I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way.

(Exeunt.)

ACT II

Scene 1

(A hall in LEONATA's house.)

(Enter LEONATA and BEATRICE, and others.)

LEONATO. Was not Count John here at supper?

BEATRICE.

I saw him not. How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am heart-burned an hour after.

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

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

(Enter ANTONIO and HERO.)

BEATRICE. For the which blessing I am at him upon my knees every morning and evening. Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face: I had rather lie in the woollen.

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 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 for me, and he that is less than a man, I am not for him.

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 "Father, as it please you." But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy and say "Father, as it please me."

LEONATO. The revellers are entering, brother: make good room.

(All put on their masks.)

(Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA and others, masked.)

DON PEDRO. Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

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

DON PEDRO. With me in your company?

HERO. I may say so, when I please.

DON PEDRO. And when please you to say so?

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

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

HERO. Why, then, your visor should be thatched.

DON PEDRO. Speak low, if you speak love.

NARRATION FIVE. The party has begun. The soldiers meet and woo the women of the house from behind their party masks. Don Pedro pretends he is Claudio. Borachio meets up with Hero's serving woman, Margaret. And Beatrice and Benedick continue their quarrel even while in disguise. Don John leads Claudio down his road of displeasure saying that Don Pedro has wooed Hero for his own ends. But Don Pedro is quick to put things right for Claudio and Hero and even becomes inspired to make a love match between Benedick and Beatrice.

(Drawing her aside:)

BORACHIO. Well, I would you did like me.

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

BORACHIO. Which is one?

MARGARET. I say my prayers aloud.

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

MARGARET. God match me with a good dancer!

BORACHIO. Amen.

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

BORACHIO. No more words: the clerk is answered.

BEATRICE. Will you not tell me who told you so?

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 “Hundred Merry Tales:”—well this was Signior Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK. What’s he?

BEATRICE. I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK. Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE. Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK. I pray you, what is he?

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

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

DON PEDRO. The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you: 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 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 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.

DON PEDRO. Look, here she comes.

(Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO.)

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

(Exit.)

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

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

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

BEATRICE. So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I

should prove the mother of fools. I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seek.

DON PEDRO. Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won: I have broke with her father, and his good will obtained: name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!

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

BEATRICE. Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO. Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: I were but little happy, if I could say how much. Lady, as you are mine, I am yours: I give away myself for you and dote upon the exchange.

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. Yea, my lord; I thank it, poor fool, it 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 every one to the world but I, and I am sunburnt; I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband!

(BEATRICE 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. O, by no means: she mocks all her wooers out of suit.

DON PEDRO. She were an excellent wife for Benedict.

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. To-morrow, my lord: time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

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

LEONATO. My lord, I am for you.

CLAUDIO. And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO. And you too, gentle Hero?

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

DON PEDRO. And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him; he is of a noble strain, of approved valour and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will so practise on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he 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.)

Scene 3

(LEONATA's orchard.)

(Enter BENEDICK.)

BENEDICK. I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by failing in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; and now had he rather hear the tabour and the pipe: I have known when he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthography; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: 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 fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

(Withdraws.)

(Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO.)

DON PEDRO. See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO. O, very well, my lord: Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of to-day, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

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

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

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

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

DON PEDRO. May be she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO. 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. Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

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

CLAUDIO. She did, indeed.

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

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

BENEDICK. I should think this a gull, but that the white-haired lady speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

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

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

LEONATO. No; and swears she never will: that's her torment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEONATO. My lord, will you walk? dinner is ready.

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

DON PEDRO. Let there be the same net spread for her; and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be, when they 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 LEONATO.)

BENEDICK. *(Coming forward:)* This can be no trick: the conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady: it seems her affections have their full bent. Love me! why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured: they say I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her; they say too that she will rather die than give any sign 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? Here comes Beatrice. By this day! she's a fair lady: I do spy some marks of love in her.

(Enter BEATRICE.)

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

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

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

BENEDICK. You take pleasure then in the message?

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

(Exit.)

BENEDICK. Ha! "Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner;" there's a double meaning in that "I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me." that's as much as to say, Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks. If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain; if I do not love her, I am a Jew. I will go get her picture.

(Exit.)

ACT III

Scene 1

(LEONATA's garden.)

(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
Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us;
And bid her steal into the pleached bower,
To listen our purpose. 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,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit:
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay.

(Enter BEATRICE, behind.)

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

URSULA. Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

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

(Approaching the bower.)

NARRATION SIX. Similarly, Ursula and Hero convince Beatrice to accept Benedick's vows of love. However, in another part of town, a plot continues to destroy love and Hero's marriage to Claudio.

(Exit.)

Scene 2

(A room in LEONATA's house.)

NARRATION SEVEN. Meanwhile Borachio has returned to Don John with a villainous plot to dishonor Hero by having Margaret play her part as a disloyal lover to Claudio. Don John now enters to lead his brother and Claudio into a wedding betrayal.

(Enter DON JOHN.)

DON JOHN. My lord and brother, God save you!

DON PEDRO. Good den, brother.

DON JOHN. If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO. In private?

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

DON PEDRO. What's the matter?

DON JOHN. *(To CLAUDIO:)* Means your lordship to be married to-morrow?

DON PEDRO. You know he does.

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

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

DON JOHN. You may think I love you not: let that appear hereafter, and aim better at me by that I now will manifest. For my brother, I think he holds you well, and in dearness of heart hath help to effect your ensuing marriage; —surely suit ill spent and labour ill bestowed.

DON PEDRO. Why, what's the matter?

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

CLAUDIO. Who, Hero?

DON PEDRO. Even she; Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

CLAUDIO. Disloyal?

DON JOHN. The word is too good to paint out her wickedness; I could say she were worse: think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it. Wonder not till further warrant: go but with me to-night, you shall see her chamber-window entered, even the night before her wedding-day: if you love her then, to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honour to change your mind.

CLAUDIO. May this be so?

DON PEDRO. I will not think it.

DON JOHN. If you dare not trust that you see, confess not that you know: if you will follow me, I will show you enough; and when you have seen more and heard more, proceed accordingly.

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

DON PEDRO. 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. O plague right well prevented! so will you say when you have seen the sequel.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 5

(Another room in LEONATA's house.)

(Enter LEONATO, with DOGBERRY and VERGES.)

LEONATO. What would you with me, honest neighbour?

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.

DOGBERRY. Marry, this it is, sir.

VERGES. Yes, in truth it is, sir.

LEONATO. What is it, my good friends?

DOGBERRY. 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 honester than I.

DOGBERRY. Comparisons are odorous: palabras, neighbour Verges.

LEONATO. Neighbours, 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 to bestow it all of your worship.

LEONATO. 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. I would fain know what you have to say.

VERGES. Marry, sir, our watch to-night, 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. Well said, i' faith, neighbour Verges: well, God's a good man; an two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. An 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 neighbour!

LEONATO. Indeed, neighbour, 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 aspicious persons, and we would have them this morning examined before your worship.

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. Drink some wine ere you go: fare you well.

(Enter ANTONIO.)

ANTONIO. Brother, 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 the Sexton; bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the gaol: we are now to examination these men.

VERGES. And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY. We will spare for no wit, I warrant you: only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication and meet me at the gaol.

(Exeunt.)

ACT IV

Scene 1

(A church.)

(Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, LEONATA, FRIAR FRANCIS, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, HERO, BEATRICE, and ATTENDANTS.)

LEONATO. Come, Friar Francis, be brief; only to the plain form of marriage, and you shall recount their particular duties afterwards.

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

CLAUDIO. No.

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

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

HERO. I do.

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

CLAUDIO. Know you any, Hero?

HERO. None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS. Know you any, count?

LEONATO. I dare make his answer, none.

CLAUDIO. Stand thee by, friar. Father, by your leave:
Will you with free and unconstrained soul
Give me this maid, your daughter?

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

CLAUDIO. And what have I to give you back, whose worth
May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO. Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO. Sweet prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.

There, Leonato, take her back again:
Give not this rotten orange to your friend;
She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
O, what authority and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none:
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATO. What do you mean, my lord?

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

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

LEONATO. Sweet prince, why speak not you?

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

LEONATO. Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN. Madame, they are spoken, and these things are true.

BENEDICK. This looks not like a nuptial.

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

(HERO swoons.)

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

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

(Exeunt DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, and CLAUDIO.)

BENEDICK. How doth the lady?

BEATRICE. Dead, I think. Help, aunt!

Hero! why, Hero! Aunt! Signior Benedick! Friar!

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

BEATRICE. How now, cousin Hero!

FRIAR FRANCIS. Have comfort, lady.

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

BENEDICK. Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE. No, truly not; although, until last night,
I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow.

LEONATO. Confirm'd, confirm'd! O, that is stronger made
Which was before barr'd up with ribs of iron!
Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie,
Who loved her so, that, speaking of her foulness,
Wash'd it with tears? Hence from her! let her die.

FRIAR FRANCIS. Hear me a little;
For I have only been silent so long
And given way unto this course of fortune.
By noting of the lady I have mark'd
A thousand blushing apparitions
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes;
Pause awhile,
And let my counsel sway you in this case.
Your daughter here the princes left for dead:
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,
And publish it that she is dead indeed;
Maintain a mourning ostentation
And on your family's old monument
Hang mournful epitaphs and do all rites
That appertain unto a burial.

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

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

But not for that dream I on this strange course,
But on this travail look for greater birth.
She dying, as it must so be maintain'd,
Upon the instant that she was accused,
Shall be lamented, pitied and excused
Of every hearer: for it so falls out
That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it, but being lack'd and lost,
Why, then we rack the value, then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio:
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination,
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,
More moving-delicate and full of life,
Into the eye and prospect of his soul,
Than when she lived indeed; then shall he mourn,
If ever love had interest in his liver,
And wish he had not so accused her,
Come, lady, die to live: this wedding-day
Perhaps is but prolong'd: have patience and endure.

(Exeunt all but BENEDICK and BEATRICE.)

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

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

BENEDICK. I will not desire that.

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

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

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

BENEDICK. Is there any way to show such friendship?

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

BENEDICK. May a man do it?

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

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

BEATRICE. As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you: but believe me not; and yet I lie not; I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.

BENEDICK. By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

BEATRICE. Do not swear, and eat it.

BENEDICK. I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love not you.

BEATRICE. Will you not eat your word?

BENEDICK. With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.

BEATRICE. Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK. What offence, sweet Beatrice?

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

BENEDICK. And do it with all thy heart.

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

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

BEATRICE. Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK. Ha! not for the wide world.

BEATRICE. You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK. Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

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

BENEDICK. Beatrice,—

BEATRICE. In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK. We'll be friends first.

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

BENEDICK. Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE. Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until they come to take hands; and then, with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour.

BENEDICK. Enough, I am engaged; I will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account. As you hear of me, so think of me. Go, comfort your cousin: I must say she is dead: and so, farewell.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 2

(A prison.)

(Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and SEXTON, in gowns; and the WATCH, with CONRADE and BORACHIO.)

DOGBERRY. Is our whole dissembly appeared?

VERGES. O, a stool and a cushion for the sexton.

SEXTON. Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY. Marry, that am I and my partner.

VERGES. Nay, that's certain; we have the exhibition to examine.

SEXTON. But which are the offenders that are to be examined? let them come before master constable.

DOGBERRY. Yea, marry, let them come before me. What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO. Borachio.

DOGBERRY. Pray, write down, Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

CONRADE. I am a maid, sir, and my name is Conrade.

DOGBERRY. Write down, Mistress Maid Conrade. Master and Mistress do you serve God?

CONRADE BORACHIO. Yea, sir, we hope.

DOGBERRY. Write down, that they hope they serve God: and write God first; for God defend but God should go before such villains! Master and mistress, it is proved already that you are little better than false knaves; and it will go near to be thought so shortly. How answer you for yourselves?

CONRADE. Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY. A marvellous witty woman, I assure you: but I will go about with him. Come you hither, sirrah; a word in your ear: sir, I say to you, it is thought you are false knaves.

BORACHIO. Sir, I say to you we are none.

DOGBERRY. Well, stand aside. 'Fore God, they are both in a tale. Have you writ down, that they are none?

SEXTON. Master constable, you go not the way to examine: you must call forth the watch that are their accusers.

DOGBERRY. Yea, marry, that's the efastest way. Let the watch come forth. Masters, I charge you, in the prince's name, accuse these men.

FIRST WATCHMAN. This man said, sir, that Don John, the prince's brother, was a villain.

DOGBERRY. Write down Prince John a villain. Why, this is flat perjury, to call a prince's brother villain.

BORACHIO. Master constable,—

DOGBERRY. Pray thee, fellow, peace: I do not like thy look,

I promise thee.

SEXTON. What heard you him say else?

SECOND WATCHMAN. Marry, that he had received a thousand ducats of Don John for accusing the Lady Hero wrongfully.

DOGBERRY. Flat burglary as ever was committed.

BORACHIO. Away! you are an ass, you are an ass.

DOGBERRY. Dost thou not suspect my place? dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass. No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow, and, which is more, an officer, and, which is more, a householder, and, which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina, and one that knows the law, go to; and a rich fellow enough, go to; and a fellow that hath had losses, and one that hath two gowns and every thing handsome about him. Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass!

(Exeunt.)

ACT V

Scene 1

(Before LEONATA's house.)

(Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO.)

DON PEDRO. See, see; here comes the man we went to seek.

(Enter BENEDICK.)

BENEDICK. Shall I speak a word in your ear?

CLAUDIO. God bless me from a challenge!

BENEDICK. *(Aside to CLAUDIO.)* You are a villain; I jest not: I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you.

I must discontinue your company: Don John, your brother the bastard is fled from Messina: you have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet: and, till then, peace be with him.

(Exit.)

DON PEDRO. He is in earnest.

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

DON PEDRO. And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO. Most sincerely.

DON PEDRO. But, soft you, let me be: pluck up, my heart, and be sad. Did he not say, my brother was fled?

(Enter DOGBERRY, VERGES, and the WATCH, with CONRADE and BORACHIO.)

DOGBERRY. Come you, sir.

DON PEDRO. How now?

CLAUDIO. Hearken after their offence, my lord.

DON PEDRO. Officers, what offence have these two done?

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

BORACHIO. Sweet prince, let me go no farther to mine answer: do you hear me, and let this count kill me. I have deceived even your very eyes: what your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light: who in the night overheard me confessing to this man how Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero, how you were brought into the orchard and saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments, how you disgraced her, when you should marry her.

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

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

DON PEDRO. But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO. Yea, and paid me richly for the practise of it.

(Enter LEONATO.)

LEONATO. I thank you, princes, for my daughter's death: Record it with your high and worthy deeds: 'Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it.

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

DON PEDRO. By my soul, nor I: And yet, to satisfy this good old man, I would bend under any heavy weight

That he'll enjoin me to.

LEONATO. I cannot bid you bid my daughter live;
That were impossible: but, I pray you both,
Possess the people in Messina here
How innocent she died; and if your love
Can labour ought in sad invention,
Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb
And sing it to her bones, sing it to-night:
To-morrow morning come you to my house,
And since you could not be my son-in-law,
Be yet my nephew: my brother hath a daughter,
Almost the copy of my child that's dead,
And she alone is heir to both of us:
Give her the right you should have given her cousin,
And so dies my revenge.

CLAUDIO. O noble sir,
Your over-kindness doth wring tears from me!
I do embrace your offer; and dispose
For henceforth of poor Claudio.

DOGBERRY. God restore you to health! I
humbly give you leave to depart; and if a merry
meeting may be wished, God prohibit it! Come, neighbour.

(Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES.)

LEONATO. Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

DON PEDRO. We will not fail.

(Exeunt, severally.)

Scene 4

(A room in LEONATA's house.)

(Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, BENEDICK, FRIAR FRANCIS.)

FRIAR FRANCIS. The prince and Claudio promised by this hour
To visit me. You know your office, brother:
You must be father to your brother's daughter

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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