

**UTSC Drama Society's Summer Reading Series**  
**Episode 2: Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare**

**Colette**

*Welcome to the UTSC Drama Society's Summer Reading Series. On this episode we're going to hear an excerpt from William Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing'. Prior to this excerpt, we find ourselves in Messina, Italy where Leonato learns that Don Pedro will be coming into town with his army, including a highly decorated soldier named Claudio. Leonato's niece, Beatrice, asks if Benedick has returned from the war as well. They once had a pretty intense relationship but Beatrice has nothing nice to say about Benedick when asked. Don Pedro arrives with the army, including Claudio and Benedick. Benedick and Beatrice exchange harsh words for a moment, and Claudio finds himself falling in love with Leonato's daughter Hero. Don Pedro agrees that Hero and Claudio would be well matched and Benedick declares that he never wishes to marry. The three hatch a plot that Don Pedro will pretend to be Claudio at the masked ball later that night to try and get Hero to fall for Claudio. Elsewhere, Leonato and his brother Antonio find out about the plot. Leonato is excited at the prospect of marrying his daughter off to Claudio and hopes everything goes well. Meanwhile, Don John is depressed, despite reconciling with Don Pedro and plans with his friend Borachio to thwart Claudio's plans and ruin the wedding plot. This is 'Much Ado About Nothing' by William Shakespeare.*

**ACT 2**

**Scene 1**

*Enter Leonato, his brother, Hero his daughter, and  
Beatrice, his niece, with Ursula and Margaret.*

**Leonato**

Was not Count John here at supper?

**Leonato's Brother**

I saw him not.

**Beatrice**

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

**Hero**

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

**Beatrice**

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

**Leonato**

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

**Beatrice**

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

**Leonato**

By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue. In faith, she's too curst.

**Beatrice**

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

**Leonato**

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

**Beatrice**

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

**Leonato**

You may light on a husband that hath no  
beard.

**Beatrice**

What should I do with him? Dress him in my  
apparel and make him my waiting gentlewoman?  
He that hath a beard 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. Therefore I will even  
take sixpence in earnest for the beardherd, and lead  
his apes into hell.

**Leonato**

Well then, go you into hell?

**Beatrice**

No, but to the gate, and there will the devil

meet me like an old cuckold with horns on his head, and say "Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids." So deliver I up my apes and away to Saint Peter; for the heavens, he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

**Leonato's Brother**

*[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**

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

**Beatrice**

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

**Leonato**

*[to Hero]* Daughter, remember what I told you. If the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

**Beatrice**

The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time. If the Prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything, and so dance out the answer. For hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly modest as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster till he sink into his grave.

**Leonato**

Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

**Beatrice**

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

**Leonato**

The revelers are entering, brother. Make good room.

*Enter, with a Drum, Prince Pedro, Claudio, and Benedick, Signior Antonio, and Balthasar, all in masks, with Borachio and Don John.*

**Prince**

*[to Hero]* Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?

*They begin to dance.*

**Hero**

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

**Prince**

With me in your company?

**Hero**

I may say so when I please.

**Prince**

And when please you to say so?

**Hero**

When I like your favor, for God defend the lute should be like the case.

**Prince**

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

**Hero**

Why, then, your visor should be thatched.

**Prince**

Speak low if you speak love.

*They move aside;  
Benedick and Margaret move forward.*

**Benedick**

*[to Margaret]* Well, I would you did like me.

**Margaret**

So would not I for your own sake, for I have

many ill qualities.

**Benedick**

Which is one?

**Margaret**

I say my prayers aloud.

**Benedick**

I love you the better; the hearers may cry  
“Amen.”

**Margaret**

God match me with a good dancer.

*They separate; Benedick moves aside;  
Balthasar moves forward.*

**Balthasar**

Amen.

**Margaret**

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

**Balthasar**

No more words. The clerk is answered.

*They move aside;  
Ursula and Antonio move forward.*

**Ursula**

I know you well enough. You are Signior  
Antonio.

**Antonio**

At a word, I am not.

**Ursula**

I know you by the wagging of your head.

**Antonio**

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

**Ursula**

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

**Antonio**

At a word, I am not.

**Ursula**

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

*They move aside;  
Benedick and Beatrice move forward.*

**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.

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

**Benedick**

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

**Beatrice**

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

**Benedick**

In every good thing.

**Beatrice**

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

*Dance. Then exit all except  
Don John, Borachio, and Claudio.*

**Don John**

*[to Borachio]* Sure my brother is amorous on Hero, and hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it. The ladies follow her, and but with visor remains.

**Borachio**

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

**Don John**

*[to Claudio]* Are not you Signior Benedick?

**Claudio**

You know me well. I am he.

**Don John**

Signior, you are very near my brother in his love. He is enamored on Hero. I pray you dissuade him from her. She is no equal for his birth. You may do the part of an honest man in it.

**Claudio**

How know you he loves her?

**Don John**

I heard him swear his affection.

**Borachio**

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

**Don John**

Come, let us to the banquet.

*They exit. Claudio remains.*

**Claudio**

Thus answer I in the name of Benedick,  
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.  
'Tis certain so. The Prince woos for himself.  
Friendship is constant in all other things  
Save in the office and love affairs.  
Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.  
Let every eye negotiate for itself  
And trust no agent, for beauty is a witch  
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.  
This is an accident of hourly proof,  
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore, Hero.

*Enter Benedick.*

**Benedick**

Count Claudio?

**Claudio**

Yea, the same.

**Benedick**

Come, will you go with me?

**Claudio**

Whither?

**Benedick**

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

**Claudio**

I wish him joy of her.

**Benedick**

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

**Claudio**

I pray you, leave me.

**Benedick**

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

the post.

**Claudio**

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

**Benedick**

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

*Enter the Prince, Hero, and Leonato.*

**Prince**

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

**Benedick**

Troth, my lord, I have played the part of  
Lady Fame. I found him here as melancholy as a  
lodge in a warren. I told him, and I think I told him  
true, that your Grace had got the goodwill of this  
young lady, and I offered him my company to a  
willow tree, either to make him a garland, as being  
forsaken, or to bind him up as a rod, as being worthy to  
be whipped.

**Prince**

To be whipped? What's his fault?

**Benedick**

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

**Prince**

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

**Benedick**

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

**Prince**

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

**Benedick**

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

**Prince**

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 my 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 - had left him before he transgressed. She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire, too. Come, talk not of her. You shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her, for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary, and people sin upon purpose because they would go thither. So indeed all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follows her.

*Enter Claudio and Beatrice.*

**Prince**

Look, here she comes.

**Benedick**

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

**Prince**

None but to desire your good company.

**Benedick**

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

**Prince**

*[to Beatrice]* 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.

**Prince**

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

**Beatrice**

So I would not should he - 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.

**Prince**

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

**Claudio**

Not sad, my lord.

**Prince**

How then, sick?

**Claudio**

Neither, my lord.

**Beatrice**

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

**Prince**

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

**Leonato**

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes. His Grace hath made the match, and all grace say "Amen" to it.

**Beatrice**

Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

**Claudio**

Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but little happy if I could say how much.—Lady, as you are mine, I am 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.

**Prince**

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 everyone to the world but I, and I am sunburnt. I may sit in a corner and cry "Heigh-ho for a husband!"

**Prince**

Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

**Beatrice**

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

**Prince**

Will you have me, lady?

**Beatrice**

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

**Prince**

Your silence most offends me, and to be merry best becomes you, for out o' question you were

born in a merry hour.

**Beatrice**

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

**Leonato**

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

**Beatrice**

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

*Beatrice exits*

**Prince**

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 dreamt of unhappiness and waked herself with laughing.

**Prince**

She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

**Leonato**

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

**Prince**

She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

**Leonato**

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

**Prince**

County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

**Claudio**

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

**Leonato**

Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence a just sevensnight, and a time too brief, too, to have all things answer my mind.

**Prince**

*[to Claudio]* 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' labors, which is to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection, th' one with th' 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, though it cost me ten nights' watchings.

**Claudio**

And I, my lord.

**Prince**

And you too, gentle Hero?

**Hero**

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

**Prince**

And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is one of a noble strain, of approved valor, and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humor your cousin that she shall fall in love with Benedick.— And I, with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he 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.

*They exit.*

**Scene 2**

*Enter Don John and Borachio.*

**Don John**

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

**Borachio**

Yea, my lord, but I can cross it.

**Don John**

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

**Borachio**

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

**Don John**

Show me briefly how.

**Borachio**

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

**Don John**

I remember.

**Borachio**

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

**Don John**

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

**Borachio**

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

**Don John**

What proof shall I make of that?

**Borachio**

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

**Don John**

Only to despise them I will endeavor anything.

**Borachio**

Go then, find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone. Tell them that you know that Hero loves me; intend a kind of zeal both to the Prince and Claudio, as in love of brother's honor, who hath made this match, and his friend's reputation, who is thus like to be cozened with the semblance of a maid, that you have discovered thus. They will scarcely believe this without trial. Offer them instances, which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber window, hear me call Margaret "Hero," hear Margaret term

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

**Don John**

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

**Borachio**

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

**Don John**

I will presently go and learn their day of marriage.

*They exit.*

**Scene 3**

*Enter Benedick alone.*

**Benedick**

Boy!

*Enter Boy.*

**Boy**

Signior?

**Benedick**

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

**Boy**

I am here already, sir.

**Benedick**

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

Boy Exits.

**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 falling 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 tabor and the pipe; I have known when he would have walked ten miles afoot to see a good armor, 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; and words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted to see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not. I will not be sworn by love may transform me to an oyster,

but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made such 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. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what color it please God. Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbor.

*He hides*

*Enter Prince, Leonato, Claudio, and Balthasar  
with music.*

**Prince**

Come, shall we hear this music?

**Claudio**

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

**Prince**

*[aside to Claudio]*

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

**Claudio**

*[aside to Prince]*

O, very well my lord. The music ended,

We'll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth.

**Prince**

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

**Balthasar**

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

**Prince**

It is the witness still of excellency  
To put a strange face on his own perfection.  
I pray thee, sing, and let me woo no more.

**Balthasar**

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

**Prince**

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

**Balthasar**

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

**Prince**

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

*Music plays.*

**Benedick**

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

**Balthasar**

*[sings]*

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,  
Men were deceivers ever,  
One foot in sea and one on shore,  
To one thing constant never.

Then sigh not so, but let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny,  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into Hey, nonny nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no mo,  
Of dumps so dull and heavy.  
The fraud of men was ever so,  
Since summer first was leavy.

Then sigh not so, but let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny,  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into Hey, nonny nonny.

**Prince**

By my troth, a good song.

**Balthasar**

And an ill singer, my lord.

**Prince**

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

**Benedick**

*[aside]* An he had been a dog that should have howled thus, they would have hanged him. And I pray God his bad voice bode no mischief. I had as lief have heard the night raven, come what plague could have come after it.

**Prince**

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

**Balthasar**

The best I can, my lord.

**Prince**

Do so. Farewell.

*Balthasar Exits.*

**Prince**

Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of

today, 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.

**Prince**

Maybe 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.

**Prince**

Why, what effects of passion shows she?

**Claudio**

*[aside to Leonato]* 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.

**Prince**

How, how I pray you? You amaze me. I would have 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-bearded fellow speaks it. Knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

**Claudio**

He hath ta'en th' infection.

Hold it up.

**Prince**

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 often encountered him with  
scorn, write to him that I love him?"

**Leonato**

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

**Claudio**

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

**Leonato**

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

**Claudio**

That.

**Leonato**

O, she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence,  
railed at herself that she should be so  
immodest to write to one that she knew would flout  
her. "I measure him," says she, "by my own spirit,  
for I should flout him if he write 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 sometimes afeared she will do a desperate  
outrage to herself. It is very true.

**Prince**

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.

**Prince**

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

**Claudio**

And she is exceeding wise.

**Prince**

In everything but in loving Benedick.

**Leonato**

O, my lord, wisdom and blood combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one that blood hath the victory. I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

**Prince**

I would she had bestowed this dotage on me. I would have daffed all other respects and made her half myself. I pray you tell Benedick of it, and hear what he will say.

**Leonato**

Were it good, think you?

**Claudio**

Hero thinks surely she will die, for she says she will die if he love her not, and she will die ere she make her love known, and she will die if he woo her rather than she will bate one breath of her accustomed crossness.

**Prince**

She doth well. If she should make tender of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it, for the man,

as you know all, hath a contemptible spirit.

**Claudio**

He is a very proper man.

**Prince**

He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

**Claudio**

Before God, and in my mind, very wise.

**Prince**

He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

**Claudio**

And I take him to be valiant.

**Prince**

As Hector, I assure you, and in the managing of quarrels you may say he is wise, for either he avoids them with great discretion or undertakes them with most Christianlike fear.

**Leonato**

If he do fear God, he must necessarily keep peace. If he break the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

**Prince**

And so will he do, for the man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests

he will make. Well, I am sorry for your niece. Shall we go seek Benedick and tell him of her love?

**Claudio**

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

**Leonato**

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

**Prince**

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.

*Leonato, Prince, and Claudio Begin to Exit*

**Claudio**

*[aside to Prince and Leonato]* If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation.

**Prince**

*[aside to Leonato]* 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.

*Prince, Leonato, and Claudio exit.*

### **Benedick**

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 would rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry. I must not seem proud. Happy are they to hear their detractions and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair; 'tis a truth, I can bear them witness. And virtuous; 'tis so, I cannot reprove it. And wise, but for loving me; by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her! I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me because I have railed so long against marriage, but doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor? No! The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. Here comes Beatrice. By this day, she's a fair lady. I do spy some

marks of love in her.

*Enter Beatrice.*

**Beatrice**

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.

*She exits.*

**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.

*He exits.*

