

# Much adoe about Nothing

William Shakespeare

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\*\*\*\*\*Much adoe about Nothing\*\*\*\*\*

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Much adoe about Nothing

by William Shakespeare

July, 2000 [Etext #2240]

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Project Gutenberg's Etext of Shakespeare's The first Part of Henry the Sixth

Executive Director's Notes:

In addition to the notes below, and so you will \*NOT\* think all the spelling errors introduced by the printers of the time have been corrected, here are the first few lines of Hamlet, as they are presented herein:

Barnardo. Who's there?

Fran. Nay answer me: Stand & vnfold  
your selfe

Bar. Long liue the King

\*\*\*

As I understand it, the printers often ran out of certain words or letters they had often packed into a "cliche". . .this is the original meaning of the term cliche. . .and thus, being unwilling to unpack the cliches, and thus you will see some substitutions that look very odd. . .such as the exchanges of u for v, v for u, above. . .and you may wonder why they did it this way, presuming Shakespeare did not actually write the play in this manner. . . .

The answer is that they MAY have packed "liue" into a cliche at a time when they were out of "v"s. . .possibly having used "vv" in place of some "w"s, etc. This was a common practice of the day, as print was still quite expensive, and they didn't want to spend more on a wider selection of characters than they had to.

You will find a lot of these kinds of "errors" in this text, as I have mentioned in other times and places, many "scholars" have an extreme attachment to these errors, and many have accorded them a very high place in the "canon" of Shakespeare. My father read an assortment of these made available to him by Cambridge University in England for several months in a glass room constructed for the purpose. To the best of my knowledge he read ALL those available . . .in great detail. . .and determined from the various changes, that Shakespeare most likely did not write in nearly as many of a variety of errors we credit him for, even though he was in/famous for signing his name with several different spellings.

So, please take this into account when reading the comments below made by our volunteer who prepared this file: you may see errors that are "not" errors. . . .

So. . .with this caveat. . .we have NOT changed the canon errors, here is the Project Gutenberg Etext of Shakespeare's The first Part of Henry the Sixt.

Michael S. Hart  
Project Gutenberg  
Executive Director

\*\*\*

Scanner's Notes: What this is and isn't. This was taken from a copy of Shakespeare's first folio and it is as close as I can come in ASCII to the printed text.

The elongated S's have been changed to small s's and the conjoined ae have been changed to ae. I have left the spelling, punctuation, capitalization as close as possible to the printed text. I have corrected some spelling mistakes (I have put together a spelling dictionary devised from the spellings of the Geneva Bible and Shakespeare's First Folio and have unified spellings according to this template), typo's and expanded abbreviations as I have come across them. Everything within brackets [] is what I have added. So if you don't like that you can delete everything within the brackets if you want a purer Shakespeare.

Another thing that you should be aware of is that there are textual differences between various copies of the first folio. So there may be differences (other than what I have mentioned above) between this and other first folio editions. This is due to the printer's habit of setting the type and running off a number of copies and then proofing the printed copy and correcting the type and then continuing the printing run. The proof run wasn't thrown away but incorporated into the printed copies. This is just the way it is. The text I have used was a composite of more than 30 different First Folio editions' best pages.

If you find any scanning errors, out and out typos, punctuation errors, or if you disagree with my spelling choices please feel free to email me those errors. I wish to make this the best etext possible. My email address for right now are haradda@aol.com and davidr@inconnect.com. I hope that you enjoy this.

David Reed

Much adoe about Nothing

Actus primus, Scena prima.

Enter Leonato Governour of Messina, Innogen his wife, Hero his daughter,  
and Beatrice his Neece, with a messenger.

Leonato. I learne in this Letter, that Don Peter of Arragon, comes this night to Messina

Mess. He is very neere by this: he was not three Leagues off when I left him

Leon. How many Gentlemen haue you lost in this action?

Mess. But few of any sort, and none of name

Leon. A victorie is twice it selfe, when the atchieuer brings home full numbers: I finde heere, that Don Peter hath bestowed much honor on a yong Florentine, called Claudio

Mess. Much deseru'd on his part, and equally remembered

by Don Pedro, he hath borne himselfe beyond the promise of his age, doing in the figure of a Lambe, the feats of a Lion, he hath indeede better bettred expectation, then you must expect of me to tell you how

Leo. He hath an Vnckle heere in Messina, wil be very much glad of it

Mess. I haue alreadie deliuered him letters, and there appeares much ioy in him, euen so much, that ioy could not shew it selfe modest enough, without a badg of bitternesse

Leo. Did he breake out into teares?

Mess. In great measure

Leo. A kinde ouerflow of kindnesse, there are no faces truer, then those that are so wash'd, how much better is it to weepe at ioy, then to ioy at weeping?

Bea. I pray you, is Signior Mountanto return'd from the warres, or no?

Mess. I know none of that name, Lady, there was none such in the armie of any sort

Leon. What is he that you aske for Neece?

Hero. My cousin meanes Signior Benedick of Padua

Mess. O he's return'd, and as pleasant as euer he was

Beat. He set vp his bills here in Messina, & challeng'd Cupid at the Flight: and my Vnckles foole reading the Challenge, subscrib'd for Cupid, and challeng'd him at the Burbolt. I pray you, how many hath hee kil'd and eaten in these warres? But how many hath he kil'd? for indeed, I promis'd to eate all of his killing

Leon. 'Faith Neece, you taxe Signior Benedicke too much, but hee'l be meete with you, I doubt it not

Mess. He hath done good seruice Lady in these wars

Beat. You had musty victuall, and he hath holpe to ease it: he's a very valiant Trencher-man, hee hath an excellent stomacke

Mess. And a good souldier too Lady

Beat. And a good souldier to a Lady. But what is he to a Lord?

Mess. A Lord to a Lord, a man to a man, stuff with all honourable vertues

Beat. It is so indeed, he is no lesse then a stuff man: but for the stuffing well, we are all mortall

Leon. You must not (sir) mistake my Neece, there is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick, & her: they neuer meet, but there's a skirmish of wit between them

Bea. Alas, he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict,

four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man govern'd with one: so that if hee haue wit enough to keepe himselfe warme, let him beare it for a difference betweene himselfe and his horse: For it is all the wealth that he hath left, to be knowne a reasonable creature. Who is his companion now? He hath euery month a new sworne brother

Mess. Is't possible?

Beat. Very easily possible: he weares his faith but as the fashion of his hat, it euer changes with y next block

Mess. I see (Lady) the Gentleman is not in your bookes

Bea. No, and he were, I would burne my study. But I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no young squarer now, that will make a voyage with him to the diuell?

Mess. He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio

Beat. O Lord, he will hang vpon him like a disease: he is sooner caught then the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad. God helpe the noble Claudio, if hee haue caught the Benedict, it will cost him a thousand pound ere he be cur'd

Mess. I will hold friends with you Lady

Bea. Do good friend

Leo. You'l ne're run mad Neece

Bea. No, not till a hot Ianuary

Mess. Don Pedro is approach'd.

Enter don Pedro, Claudio, Benedicke, Balthasar, and Iohn the bastard.

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

Leon. Neuer came trouble to my house in the likenes of your Grace: for trouble being gone, comfort should remaine: but when you depart from me, sorrow abides, and happinesse takes his leaue

Pedro. You embrace your charge too willingly: I thinke this is your daughter

Leonato. Her mother hath many times told me so

Bened. Were you in doubt that you askt her?

Leonato. Signior Benedicke, no, for then were you a childe

Pedro. You haue it full Benedicke, we may ghesse by this, what you are, being a man, truely the Lady fathers her selfe: be happie Lady, for you are like an honorable father

Ben. If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not haue his head on her shoulders for al Messina, as like him as she is

Beat. I wonder that you will still be talking, signior Benedicke, no body markes you

Ben. What my deere Ladie Disdaine! are you yet liuing?

Beat. Is it possible Disdaine should die, while shee hath such meete foode to feede it, as Signior Benedicke? Curtesie it selfe must conuert to Disdaine, if you come in her presence

Bene. Then is curtesie a turne-coate, but it is certaine I am loued of all Ladies, onely you excepted: and I would I could finde in my heart that I had not a hard heart, for truely I loue none

Beat. A deere happinesse to women, they would else haue beene troubled with a pernicious Suter, I thanke God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that, I had rather heare my Dog barke at a Crow, than a man sweare he loues me

Bene. God keepe your Ladiship still in that minde, so some Gentleman or other shall scape a predestinate scratcht face

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

Bene. Well, you are a rare Parrat teacher

Beat. A bird of my tongue, is better than a beast of your

Ben. I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer, but keepe your way a Gods name, I haue done

Beat. You alwaies end with a lades tricke, I know you of old

Pedro. This is the summe of all: Leonato, signior Claudio, and signior Benedicke; my deere friend Leonato, hath inuited you all, I tell him we shall stay here, at the least a moneth, and he heartily praies some occasion may detaine vs longer: I dare sweare hee is no hypocrite, but praies from his heart

Leon. If you sweare, my Lord, you shall not be forsworne, let mee bid you welcome, my Lord, being reconciled to the Prince your brother: I owe you all

duetie

Iohn. I thanke you, I am not of many words, but I thanke you

Leon. Please it your grace leade on?

Pedro. Your hand Leonato, we will goe together.

Exeunt. Manet Benedicke and Claudio.

Clau. Benedicke, didst thou note the daughter of signior Leonato?

Bene. I noted her not, but I lookt on her

Claud. Is she not a modest yong Ladie?

Bene. Doe you question me as an honest man should doe, for my simple true iudgement? or would you haue me speake after my custome, as being a professed tyrant to their sexe?

Clau. No, I pray thee speake in sober iudgement

Bene. Why yfaith me thinks shee's too low for a hie praise, too browne for a faire praise, and too little for a great praise, onely this commendation I can affoord her, that were shee other then she is, she were vnhandsome, and being no other, but as she is, I doe not like her

Clau. Thou think'st I am in sport, I pray thee tell me truely how thou lik'st her

Bene. Would you buie her, that you enquier after her?

Clau. Can the world buie such a iewell?

Ben. Yea, and a case to put it into, but speake you this with a sad brow? Or doe you play the flowting iacke, to tell vs Cupid is a good Hare-finder, and Vulcan a rare Carpenter: Come, in what key shall a man take you to goe in the song?

Clau. In mine eie, she is the sweetest Ladie that euer I lookt on

Bene. I can see yet without spectacles, and I see no such matter: there's her cosin, and she were not possesst with a furie, exceedes her as much in beautie, as the first of Maie doth the last of December: but I hope you haue no intent to turne husband, haue you?

Clau. I would scarce trust my selfe, though I had sworne the contrarie, if Hero would be my wife

Bene. Ist come to this? in faith hath not the world one man but he will weare his cap with suspition? shall I neuer see a batcheller of three score againe? goe to yfaith, and thou wilt needes thrust thy necke into a yoke, weare the print of it, and sigh away sundaies: looke, don Pedro is returned to seeke you.

Enter don Pedro, Iohn the bastard.

Pedr. What secret hath held you here, that you followed

not to Leonatoes?

Bened. I would your Grace would constraine mee to tell

Pedro. I charge thee on thy alleageance

Ben. You heare, Count Claudio, I can be secret as a dumbe man, I would haue you thinke so (but on my alleageance, marke you this, on my alleageance) hee is in loue, With who? now that is your Graces part: marke how short his answeere is, with Hero, Leonatoes short daughter

Clau. If this were so, so were it vttered

Bened. Like the old tale, my Lord, it is not so, nor 'twas not so: but indeede, God forbid it should be so

Clau. If my passion change not shortly, God forbid it should be otherwise

Pedro. Amen, if you loue her, for the Ladie is verie well worthie

Clau. You speake this to fetch me in, my Lord

Pedr. By my troth I speake my thought

Clau. And in faith, my Lord, I spoke mine

Bened. And by my two faiths and troths, my Lord, I speake mine

Clau. That I loue her, I feele

Pedr. That she is worthie, I know

Bened. That I neither feele how shee should be loued, nor know how shee should be worthie, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me, I will die in it at the stake

Pedr. Thou wast euer an obstinate heretique in the despight of Beautie

Clau. And neuer could maintaine his part, but in the force of his will

Ben. That a woman conceiued me, I thanke her: that she brought mee vp, I likewise giue her most humble thanks: but that I will haue a rechate winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an inuisible baldricke, all women shall pardon me: because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will doe my selfe the right to trust none: and the fine is, (for the which I may goe the finer) I will liue a Batchellor

Pedro. I shall see thee ere I die, looke pale with loue

Bene. With anger, with sicknesse, or with hunger,

my Lord, not with loue: proue that euer I loose more  
blood with loue, then I will get againe with drinking,  
picke out mine eyes with a Ballet-makers penne, and  
hang me vp at the doore of a brothel-house for the signe  
of blinde Cupid

Pedro. Well, if euer thou doost fall from this faith,  
thou wilt proue a notable argument

Bene. If I do, hang me in a bottle like a Cat, & shoot  
at me, and he that hit's me, let him be clapt on the shoulder,  
and cal'd Adam

Pedro. Well, as time shall trie: In time the sauage  
Bull doth beare the yoake

Bene. The sauage bull may, but if euer the sensible  
Benedicke beare it, plucke off the bulles hornes, and set  
them in my forehead, and let me be vildely painted, and  
in such great Letters as they write, heere is good horse  
to hire: let them signifie vnder my signe, here you may  
see Benedicke the married man

Clau. If this should euer happen, thou wouldst bee  
horne mad

Pedro. Nay, if Cupid haue not spent all his Quiuer in  
Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly

Bene. I looke for an earthquake too then

Pedro. Well, you will temporize with the houres, in  
the meane time, good Signior Benedicke, repaire to Leonatoes,  
commend me to him, and tell him I will not faile  
him at supper, for indeede he hath made great preparation

Bene. I haue almost matter enough in me for such an  
Embassage, and so I commit you

Clau. To the tuition of God. From my house, if I  
had it

Pedro. The sixt of Iuly. Your louing friend, Benedick

Bene. Nay mocke not, mocke not; the body of your  
discourse is sometime guarded with fragments, and the  
guardes are but slightly basted on neither, ere you flout  
old ends any further, examine your conscience, and so I  
leauue you.

Enter.

Clau. My Liege, your Highnesse now may doe mee  
good

Pedro. My loue is thine to teach, teach it but how,  
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learne  
Any hard Lesson that may do thee good

Clau. Hath Leonato any sonne my Lord?  
Pedro. No childe but Hero, she's his onely heire.  
Dost thou affect her Claudio?

Clau. O my Lord,  
When you went onward on this ended action,  
I look'd vpon her with a souldiers eie,  
That lik'd, but had a rougher taske in hand,  
Than to driue liking to the name of loue:  
But now I am return'd, and that warre-thoughts  
Haue left their places vacant: in their roomes,  
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,  
All prompting mee how faire yong Hero is,  
Saying I lik'd her ere I went to warres

Pedro. Thou wilt be like a louer presently,  
And tire the hearer with a booke of words:  
If thou dost loue faire Hero, cherish it,  
And I will breake with her: wast not to this end,  
That thou beganst to twist so fine a story?

Clau. How sweetly doe you minister to loue,  
That know loues griefe by his complexion!  
But lest my liking might too sodaine seeme,  
I would haue salu'd it with a longer treatise

Ped. What need y bridge much broder then the flood?  
The fairest graunt is the necessitie:  
Looke what will serue, is fit: 'tis once, thou louest,  
And I will fit thee with the remedie,  
I know we shall haue reuelling to night,  
I will assume thy part in some disguise,  
And tell faire Hero I am Claudio,  
And in her bosome Ile vnclaspe my heart,  
And take her hearing prisoner with the force  
And strong incounter of my amorous tale:  
Then after, to her father will I breake,  
And the conclusion is, shee shall be thine,  
In practise let vs put it presently.

Exeunt.

Enter Leonato and an old man, brother to Leonato.

Leo. How now brother, where is my cosen your son:  
hath he prouided this musicke?

Old. He is very busie about it, but brother, I can tell  
you newes that you yet dreamt not of

Lo. Are they good?

Old. As the euent stamps them, but they haue a good  
couer: they shew well outward, the Prince and Count  
Claudio walking in a thick pleached alley in my orchard,  
were thus ouer-heard by a man of mine: the Prince discouered  
to Claudio that hee loued my niece your daughter,  
and meant to acknowledge it this night in a dance,  
and if hee found her accordant, hee meant to take the  
present time by the top, and instantly breake with you  
of it

Leo. Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

Old. A good sharpe fellow, I will send for him, and question him your selfe

Leo. No, no; wee will hold it as a dreame, till it appeare it selfe: but I will acquaint my daughter withall, that she may be the better prepared for an answer, if peradventure this bee true: goe you and tell her of it: coosins, you know what you haue to doe, O I crie you mercie friend, goe you with mee and I will vse your skill, good cosin haue a care this busie time.

Exeunt.

Enter Sir Iohn the Bastard, and Conrade his companion.

Con. What the good yeere my Lord, why are you thus out of measure sad?

Ioh. There is no measure in the occasion that breeds, therefore the sadnesse is without limit

Con. You should heare reason

Iohn. And when I haue heard it, what blessing bringeth it?

Con. If not a present remedy, yet a patient sufferance

Ioh. I wonder that thou (being as thou saist thou art, borne vnder Saturne) goest about to apply a morall medicine, to a mortifying mischief: I cannot hide what I am: I must bee sad when I haue cause, and smile at no mans iests, eat when I haue stomacke, and wait for no mans leisure: sleepe when I am drowsie, and tend on no mans businesse, laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humor

Con. Yea, but you must not make the ful show of this, till you may doe it without controllment, you haue of late stood out against your brother, and hee hath tane you newly into his grace, where it is impossible you should take root, but by the faire weather that you make your selfe, it is needful that you frame the season for your owne haruest

Iohn. I had rather be a canker in a hedge, then a rose in his grace, and it better fits my bloud to be disdain'd of all, then to fashion a carriage to rob loue from any: in this (though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man) it must not be denied but I am a plaine dealing villaine, I am trusted with a mussell, and enfranchisde with a clog, therefore I haue 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 meane time, let me be that I am, and seeke not to alter me

Con. Can you make no vse of your discontent?

Iohn. I will make all vse of it, for I vse it onely.  
Who comes here? what newes Borachio?

Enter Borachio.

Bor. I came yonder from a great supper, the Prince your brother is royally entertained by Leonato, and I can giue you intelligence of an intended marriage

Iohn. Will it serue for any Modell to build mischief on? What is hee for a foole that betrothes himselfe to vnquietnesse?

Bor. Mary it is your brothers right hand

Iohn. Who, the most exquisite Claudio?

Bor. Euen he

Iohn. A proper squier, and who, and who, which way lookes he?

Bor. Mary on Hero, the daughter and Heire of Leonato

Iohn. A very forward March-chicke, how came you to this:

Bor. Being entertain'd for a perfumer, as I was smoaking a musty roome, comes me the Prince and Claudio, hand in hand in sad conference: I whipt behind the Arras, and there heard it agreed vpon, that the Prince should wooe Hero for himselfe, and hauing obtain'd her, giue her to Count Claudio

Iohn. Come, come, let vs thither, this may proue food to my displeasure, that young start-vp hath all the glorie of my ouerthrow: if I can crosse him any way, I blesse my selfe euery way, you are both sure, and will assist mee?

Conr. To the death my Lord

Iohn. Let vs to the great supper, their cheere is the greater that I am subdued, would the Cooke were of my minde: shall we goe proue whats to be done?

Bor. Wee'll wait vpon your Lordship.

Exeunt.

Actus Secundus.

Enter Leonato, his brother, his wife, Hero his daughter, and Beatrice his neece, and a kinsman.

Leonato. Was not Count Iohn here at supper?

Brother. I saw him not

Beatrice. How tartly that Gentleman looks, I neuer can see him, but I am heart-burn'd an howre after

Hero. He is of a very melancholy disposition

Beatrice. Hee were an excellent man that were made iust in the mid-way betweene him and Benedicke, the one is too like an image and saies nothing, and the other too like my Ladies eldest sonne, euermore tatling

Leon. Then halfe signior Benedicks tongue in Count Iohns mouth, and halfe Count Iohns melancholy in Signior Benedicks face

Beat. With a good legge, and a good foot vnckle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would winne any woman in the world, if he could get her good will

Leon. By my troth Neece, thou wilt neuer get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue

Brother. Infaith shee's too curst

Beat. Too curst is more then curst, I shall lessen Gods sending that way: for it is said, God sends a curst Cow short hornes, but to a Cow too curst he sends none

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

Beat. Iust, if he send me no husband, for the which blessing, I am at him vpon my knees euery morning and euening: Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face, I had rather lie in the woollen

Leonato. You may light vpon a husband that hath no beard

Beatrice. What should I doe with him? dresse him in my apparell, and make him my waiting gentlewoman? he that hath a beard, is more then a youth: and he that hath no beard, is lesse then a man: and hee that is more then a youth, is not for mee: and he that is lesse then a man, I am not for him: therefore I will euen take sixepence in earnest of the Berrord, and leade his Apes into hell

Leon. Well then, goe you into hell

Beat. No, but to the gate, and there will the Deuill meete mee like an old Cuckold with hornes on his head, and say, get you to heauen Beatrice, get you to heauen, heere's no place for you maids, so deliuer I vp my Apes, and away to S[aint]. Peter: for the heauens, hee shewes mee where the Batchellers sit, and there liue wee as merry as the day is long

Brother. Well neece, I trust you will be rul'd by your father

Beatrice. Yes faith, it is my cosens dutie to make curtsie, and say, as it please you: but yet for all that cosin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make an other cursie, and say, father, as it please me

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

Beatrice. Not till God make men of some other mettall

then earth, would it not grieue a woman to be ouermastred  
with a peece of valiant dust: to make account of  
her life to a clod of waiward marle? no vnckle, ile none:  
Adams sonnes are my brethren, and truly I hold it a sinne  
to match in my kinred

Leon. Daughter, remember what I told you, if the  
Prince doe solicit you in that kinde, you know your answere

Beatrice. The fault will be in the musicke cosin, if you  
be not woed in good time: if the Prince bee too important,  
tell him there is measure in euery thing, & so dance  
out the answere, for heare me Hero, wooing, wedding, &  
repenting, is as a Scotch jigge, a measure, and a cinquepace:  
the first suite is hot and hasty like a Scotch jigge  
(and full as fantastical) the wedding manerly modest,  
(as a measure) full of state & aunchentry, and then comes  
repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace  
faster and faster, till he sinkes into his graue

Leonato. Cosin you apprehend passing shrewdly

Beatrice. I haue a good eye vnckle, I can see a Church  
by daylight

Leon. The reuellers are entring brother, make good  
roome.  
Enter Prince, Pedro, Claudio, and Benedicke, and Balthasar, or  
dumbe lohn,  
Maskers with a drum.

Pedro. Lady, will you walke about with your friend?

Hero. So you walke softly, and looke sweetly, and say  
nothing, I am yours for the walke, and especially when I  
walke away

Pedro. With me in your company

Hero. I may say so when I please

Pedro. And when please you to say so?

Hero. When I like your fauour, for God defend the  
Lute should be like the case

Pedro. My visor is Philemons roofe, within the house  
is Loue

Hero. Why then your visor should be thatcht

Pedro. Speake low if you speake Loue

Bene. Well, I would you did like me

Mar. So would not I for your owne sake, for I haue  
manie ill qualities

Bene. Which is one?

Mar. I say my prayers alowd

Ben. I loue you the better, the hearers may cry Amen

Mar. God match me with a good dauncer

Balt. Amen

Mar. And God keepe him out of my sight when the daunce is done: answer Clarke

Balt. No more words, the Clarke is answered

Vrsula. I know you well enough, you are Signior Anthonio

Anth. At a word, I am not

Vrsula. I know you by the wagling of your head

Anth. To tell you true, I counterfet him

Vrsu. You could neuer doe him so ill well, vnlesse you were the very man: here's his dry hand vp & down, you are he, you are he

Anth. At a word I am not

Vrsula. Come, come, doe you thinke I doe not know you by your excellent wit? can vertue hide it selfe? goe to mumme, you are he, graces will appeare, and there's an end

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

Bene. No, you shall pardon me

Beat. Nor will you not tell me who you are?

Bened. Not now

Beat. That I was disdainfull, and that I had my good wit out of the hundred merry tales: well, this was Signior Benedicke that said so

Bene. What's he?

Beat. I am sure you know him well enough

Bene. Not I, beleeeue me

Beat. Did he neuer make you laugh?

Bene. I pray you what is he?

Beat. Why he is the Princes ieaster, a very dull foole, onely his gift is, in deuising impossible slanders, none but Libertines delight in him, and the commendation is not in his witte, but in his villanie, for hee both pleaseth 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

Bene. When I know the Gentleman, Ile tell him what you say

Beat. Do, do, hee'l but breake a comparison or two

on me, which peradventure (not markt, or not laugh'd at) strikes him into melancholly, and then there's a Partridge wing saued, for the foole will eate no supper that night. We must follow the Leaders

Ben. In euery good thing

Bea. Nay, if they leade to any ill, I will leaue them at the next turning.

Exeunt.

Musicke for the dance.

Iohn. Sure my brother is amorous on Hero, and hath withdrawne her father to breake with him about it: the Ladies follow her, and but one visor remaines

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

Iohn. Are not you signior Benedicke?

Clau. You know me well, I am hee

Iohn. Signior, you are verie neere my Brother in his loue, he is enamor'd on Hero, I pray you dissuade him from her, she is no equall for his birth: you may do the part of an honest man in it

Claudio. How know you he loues her?

Iohn. I heard him sweare his affection

Bor. So did I too, and he swore he would marrie her to night

Iohn. Come, let vs to the banquet.

Ex. manet Clau.

Clau. Thus answer I in name of Benedicke,  
But heare these ill newes with the eares of Claudio:  
'Tis certaine so, the Prince woes for himselfe:  
Friendship is constant in all other things,  
Saue in the Office and affaires of loue:  
Therefore all hearts in loue vse their owne tongues.  
Let euerie eye negotiate for it selfe,  
And trust no Agent: for beautie is a witch,  
Against whose charmes, faith melteth into blood:  
This is an accident of hourelly prooffe,  
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore Hero.  
Enter Benedicke.

Ben. Count Claudio

Clau. Yea, the same

Ben. Come, will you goe with me?

Clau. Whither?

Ben. Euen to the next Willow, about your own businesse,  
Count. What fashion will you weare the Garland

off? About your necke, like an Vsurers chaine? Or vnder your arme, like a Lieutenants scarfe? You must weare it one way, for the Prince hath got your Hero

Clau . I wish him ioy of her

Ben. Why that's spoken like an honest Drouier, so they sel Bullockes: but did you thinke the Prince wold haue serued you thus?

Clau. I pray you leaue me

Ben. Ho now you strike like the blindman, 'twas the boy that stole your meate, and you'l beat the post

Clau. If it will not be, Ile leaue you.  
Enter.

Ben. Alas poore hurt fowle, now will he creepe into sedges: But that my Ladie Beatrice should know me, & not know me: the Princes foole! Hah? It may be I goe vnder that title, because I am merrie: yea but so I am apt to do my selfe wrong: I am not so reputed, it is the base (though bitter) disposition of Beatrice, that putt's the world into her person, and so giues me out: well, Ile be reuenged as I may.  
Enter the Prince.

Pedro. Now Signior, where's the Count, did you see him?

Bene. Troth my Lord, I haue played the part of Lady Fame, I found him heere as melancholy as a Lodge in a Warren, I told him, and I thinke, told him true, that your grace had got the will 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 binde him a rod, as being worthy to be whipt

Pedro. To be whipt, what's his fault?

Bene. The flat transgression of a Schoole-boy, who being ouer-ioyed with finding a birds nest, shewes it his companion, and he steales it

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

Ben. Yet it had not been amisse the rod had beene made, and the garland too, for the garland he might haue worne himselfe, and the rod hee might haue bestowed on you, who (as I take it) haue stolne his birds nest

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

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

Pedro. The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrell to you, the Gentleman that daunst with her, told her shee is much wrong'd by you

Bene. O she misusde me past the indurance of a block:  
an oake but with one greene leafe on it, would haue answered  
her: my very visor began to assume life, and scold  
with her: shee told mee, not thinking I had beene my  
selfe, that I was the Princes lester, and that I was duller  
then a great thaw, hudling iest vpon iest, with such impossible  
conueiance vpon me, that I stood like a man at a  
marke, with a whole army shooting at me: shee speakes  
poynyards, and euery word stabbes: if her breath were  
as terrible as terminations, there were no liuing neere  
her, she would infect to the north starre: I would not  
marry her, though she were indowed with all that Adam  
had left him before he transgrest, she would haue made

Hercules haue turnd spit, yea, and haue cleft his club to  
make the fire too: come, talke not of her, you shall finde  
her the infernall Ate in good apparell. I would to God  
some scholler would coniure her, for certainly while she  
is heere, a man may liue as quiet in hell, as in a sanctuary,  
and people sinne vpon purpose, because they would goe  
thither, so indeed all disquiet, horror, and perturbation  
followes her.

Enter Claudio and Beatrice, Leonato, Hero.

Pedro. Looke heere she comes

Bene. Will your Grace command mee any seruice to  
the worlds end? I will goe on the slightest arrand now  
to the Antypodes that you can devise to send me on: I  
will fetch you a tooth-picker now from the furthest inch  
of Asia: bring you the length of Prester lohns foot: fetch  
you a hayre off the great Chams beard: doe you any embassage  
to the Pigmies, rather then hould three words  
conference, with this Harpy: you haue no employment  
for me?

Pedro. None, but to desire your good company

Bene. O God sir, heeres a dish I loue not, I cannot indure  
this Lady tongue.

Enter.

Pedr. Come Lady, come, you haue lost the heart of  
Signior Benedicke

Beatr. Indeed my Lord, hee lent it me a while, and I  
gaue him vse for it, a double heart for a single one, marry  
once before he wonne it of mee, with false dice, therefore  
your Grace may well say I haue lost it

Pedro. You haue put him downe Lady, you haue put  
him downe

Beat. So I would not he should do me, my Lord, lest  
I should prooue the mother of fooles: I haue brought  
Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seeke

Pedro. Why how now Count, wherfore are you sad?  
Claud. Not sad my Lord

Pedro. How then? sicke?

Claud. Neither, my Lord

Beat. The Count is neither sad, nor sicke, nor merry, nor well: but ciuill Count, ciuill as an Orange, and something of a iealous complexion

Pedro. Ifaith Lady, I thinke your blazon to be true. though Ile be sworne, if hee be so, his conceit is false: heere Claudio, I haue wooed in thy name, and faire Hero is won, I haue broke with her father, and his good will obtained, name the day of marriage, and God giue thee ioy

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

Beatr. Speake Count, tis your Qu

Claud. Silence is the perfectest Herault of ioy, I were but little happy if I could say, how much? Lady, as you are mine, I am yours, I giue away my selfe for you, and doat vpon the exchange

Beat. Speake cosin, or (if you cannot) stop his mouth with a kisse, and let not him speake neither

Pedro. In faith Lady you haue a merry heart

Beatr. Yea my Lord I thanke it, poore foole it keepes on the windy side of Care, my coosin tells him in his eare that he is in my heart

Clau. And so she doth coosin

Beat. Good Lord for alliance: thus goes euey one to the world but I, and I am sun-burn'd, I may sit in a corner and cry, heigh ho for a husband

Pedro. Lady Beatrice, I will get you one

Beat. I would rather haue one of your fathers getting: hath your Grace ne're a brother like you? your father got excellent husbands, if a maid could come by them

Prince. Will you haue me? Lady

Beat. No, my Lord, vnlesse I might haue another for working-daies, your Grace is too costly to weare euerie day: but I beseech your Grace pardon mee, I was borne to speake all mirth, and no matter

Prince. Your silence most offends me, and to be merry, best becomes you, for out of question, you were born in a merry howre

Beatr. No sure my Lord, my Mother cried, but then there was a starre daunst, and vnder that was I borne: cosins

God giue you ioy

Leonato. Neece, will you looke to those things I told you of?

Beat. I cry you mercy Vncle, by your Graces pardon.

Exit Beatrice.

Prince. By my troth a pleasant spirited Lady

Leon. There's little of the melancholy element in her my Lord, she is neuer sad, but when she sleepes, and not euer sad then: for I haue heard my daughter say, she hath often dreamt of vnhappinesse, and wakt her selfe with laughing

Pedro. Shee cannot indure to heare tell of a husband

Leonato. O, by no meanes, she mocks all her wooers out of suite

Prince. She were an excellent wife for Benedick

Leonato. O Lord, my Lord, if they were but a weeke married, they would talke themselues madde

Prince. Counte Claudio, when meane you to goe to Church?

Clau. To morrow my Lord, Time goes on crutches, till Loue haue all his rites

Leonato. Not till monday, my deare sonne, which is hence a iust seuen night, and a time too briefe too, to haue all things answer minde

Prince. Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing, but I warrant thee Claudio, the time shall not goe dully by vs, I will in the interim, vndertake one of Hercules labors, which is, to bring Signior Benedicke and the Lady Beatrice into a mountaine of affection, th' one with th' other, I would faine haue it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall giue you direction

Leonato. My Lord, I am for you, though it cost mee ten nights watchings

Claud. And I my Lord

Prin. And you to gentle Hero?

Hero. I will doe any modest office, my Lord, to helpe my cosin to a good husband

Prin. And Benedick is not the vnhopefullest husband that I know: thus farre can I praise him, hee is of a noble straine, of approued valour, and confirm'd honesty, I will teach you how to humour your cosin, that shee shall fall in loue with Benedicke, and I, with your two helpes, will so practise on Benedicke, that in despight of his quicke

wit, and his queasie stomacke, hee shall fall in loue with Beatrice: if wee can doe this, Cupid is no longer an Archer, his glory shall be ours, for wee are the onely louegods, goe in with me, and I will tell you my drift.  
Enter.

Enter Iohn and Borachio.

Ioh. It is so, the Count Claudio shal marry the daughter of Leonato

Bora. Yea my Lord, but I can crosse it

Iohn. Any barre, any crosse, any impediment, will be medicinable to me, I am sicke in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes athwart his affection, ranges euenly with mine, how canst thou crosse this marriage?

Bor. Not honestly my Lord, but so couertly, that no dishonesty shall appeare in me

Iohn. Shew me breiefely how

Bor. I thinke I told your Lordship a yeere since, how much I am in the fauour of Margaret, the waiting gentlewoman to Hero

Iohn. I remember

Bor. I can at any vnseasonable instant of the night, appoint her to looke out at her Ladies chamber window

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

Bor. The poyson of that lies in you to temper, goe you to the Prince your brother, spare not to tell him, that hee hath wronged his Honor in marrying the renowned Claudio, whose estimation do you mightily hold vp, to a contaminated stale, such a one as Hero

Iohn. What prooffe shall I make of that?

Bor. Prooffe enough, to misuse the Prince, to vexe Claudio, to vndoe Hero, and kill Leonato, looke you for any other issue?

Iohn. Onely to despight them, I will endeauour any thing

Bor. Goe then, finde me a meete howre, to draw on Pedro and the Count Claudio alone, tell them that you know that Hero loues me, intend a kinde of zeale both to the Prince and Claudio (as in a loue of your brothers honor who hath made this match) and his friends reputation, who is thus like to be cosen'd with the semblance of a maid, that you haue discover'd thus: they will scarcely beleeeue this without triall: offer them instances which shall beare no lesse likelihood, than to see mee at her chamber window, heare me call Margaret, Hero; heare Margaret terme me Claudio, and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, for in the meane time, I will so fashion the matter, that Hero shall be absent, and there shall appeare such seeming truths of

Heroes disloyaltie, that iealousie shall be cal'd assurance,  
and all the preparation ouerthrowne

Iohn. Grow this to what aduerse issue it can, I will  
put it in practise: be cunning in the working this, and  
thy fee is a thousand ducates

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

Iohn. I will presentlie goe learne their day of marriage.  
Enter.

Enter Benedicke alone.

Bene. Boy

Boy. Signior

Bene. In my chamber window lies a booke, bring it  
hither to me in the orchard

Boy. I am heere already sir.  
Enter.

Bene. I know that, but I would haue thee hence, and  
heere againe. I doe much wonder, that one man seeing  
how much another man is a foole, when he dedicates his  
behaiours to loue, will after hee hath laught at such  
shallow follies in others, become the argument of his  
owne scorne, by falling in loue, & such a man is Claudio.  
I haue known when there was no musicke with him but  
the drum and the fife, and now had hee rather heare the  
taber and the pipe: I haue knowne when he would haue  
walkt ten mile afoot, to see a good armor, and now will  
he lie ten nights awake caruing the fashion of a new dublet:  
he was wont to speake plaine, & to the purpose (like  
an honest man & a souldier) and now is he turn'd orthography,  
his words are a very fantasticall banquet, iust so  
many strange dishes: may I be so conuerted, & see with  
these eyes? I cannot tell, I thinke not: I will not bee  
sworne, but loue may transforme me to an oyster, but Ile  
take my oath on it, till he haue made an oyster of me, he  
shall neuer make me such a foole: one woman is faire, yet  
I am well: another is wise, yet I am well: another vertuous,  
yet I am well: but till all graces be in one woman,  
one woman shall not come in my grace: rich shee shall  
be, that's certaine: wise, or Ile none: vertuous, or Ile neuer  
cheapen her: faire, or Ile neuer looke on her: milde,  
or come not neere me: Noble, or not for an Angell: of  
good discourse: an excellent Musitian, and her haire shal  
be of what colour it please God, hah! the Prince and  
Monsieur Loue, I will hide me in the Arbor.  
Enter Prince, Leonato, Claudio, and lacke Wilson.

Prin. Come, shall we heare this musicke?

Claud. Yea my good Lord: how still the euening is.  
As husht on purpose to grace harmonie

Prin. See you where Benedicke hath hid himselfe?  
Clau. O very well my Lord: the musicke ended,  
Wee'll fit the kid-foxe with a penny worth

Prince. Come Balthasar, wee'll heare that song again

Balth. O good my Lord, taxe not so bad a voyce,  
To slander musicke any more then once

Prin. It is the witness still of excellency,  
To slander Musicke any more then once

Prince. It is the witness still of excellencie,  
To put a strange face on his owne perfection,  
I pray thee sing, and let me woe no more

Balth. Because you talke of wooing, I will sing,  
Since many a wooer doth commence his suit,  
To her he thinkes not worthy, yet he wooes,  
Yet will he sweare he loues

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

Balth. Note this before my notes,  
Theres not a note of mine that's worth the noting

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

Bene. Now diuine aire, now is his soule rauisht, is it  
not strange that sheepes guts should hale soules out of  
mens bodies? well, a horne for my money when all's  
done.

The Song.

Sigh no more Ladies, sigh no more,  
Men were deceiuers euer,  
One foote in Sea, and one on shore,  
To one thing constant neuer,  
Then sigh not so, but let them goe,  
And be you blithe and bonnie,  
Conuerting all your sounds of woe,  
Into hey nony nony.  
Sing no more ditties, sing no moe,  
Of dumps so dull and heauy,  
The fraud of men were euer so,  
Since summer first was leauy,  
Then sigh not so, &c

Prince. By my troth a good song

Balth. And an ill singer, my Lord

Prince. Ha, no, no faith, thou singst well enough for a  
shift

Ben. And he had been a dog that should haue howld thus, they would haue hang'd him, and I pray God his bad voyce bode no mischiefe, I had as lief haue heard the night-rauen, come what plague could haue come after it

Prince. Yea marry, dost thou heare Balthasar? I pray thee get vs some excellent musick: for to morrow night we would haue it at the Lady Heroes chamber window

Balth. The best I can, my Lord.

Exit Balthasar.

Prince. Do so, farewell. Come hither Leonato, what was it you told me of to day, that your Niece Beatrice was in loue with signior Benedicke?

Cla. O I, stalke on, stalke on, the foule sits. I did neuer thinke that Lady would haue loued any man

Leon. No, nor I neither, but most wonderful, that she should so dote on Signior Benedicke, whom shee hath in all outward behaiours seemed euer to abhorre

Bene. Is't possible? sits the winde in that corner?

Leo. By my troth my Lord, I cannot tell what to thinke of it, but that she loues him with an inraged affection, it is past the infinite of thought

Prince. May be she doth but counterfeit

Claud. Faith like enough

Leon. O God! counterfeit? there was neuer counterfeit of passion, came so neere the life of passion as she discouers it

Prince. Why what effects of passion shewes she?

Claud. Baite the hooke well, this fish will bite

Leon. What effects my Lord? shee will sit you, you heard my daughter tell you how

Clau. She did indeed

Prince. How, how I pray you? you amaze me, I would haue thought her spirit had beene inuincible against all assaults of affection

Leo. I would haue sworne it had, my Lord, especially against Benedicke

Bene. I should thinke this a gull, but that the whitebearded fellow speakes it: knauery cannot sure hide himselfe in such reuerence

Claud. He hath tane th' infection, hold it vp

Prince. Hath shee made her affection known to Benedicke:

Leonato. No, and swears she neuer will, that's her torment

Claud. 'Tis true indeed, so your daughter saies: shall I, saies she, that haue so oft encountred him with scorne, write to him that I loue him?

Leo. This saies shee now when shee is beginning to write to him, for shee'll be vp twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smocke, till she haue writ a sheet of paper: my daughter tells vs all

Clau. Now you talke of a sheet of paper, I remember a pretty iest your daughter told vs of

Leon. O when she had writ it, & was reading it ouer, she found Benedicke and Beatrice betweene the sheete

Clau. That

Leon. O she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence, raild at her self, that she should be so immodest to write, to one that shee knew would flout her: I measure him, saies she, by my owne spirit, for I should flout him if hee writ to mee, yea though I loue him, I should

Clau. Then downe vpon her knees she falls, weepes, sobs, beates her heart, teares her hayre, praies, curses, O sweet Benedicke, God giue me patience

Leon. She doth indeed, my daughter saies so, and the extasie hath so much ouerborne her, that my daughter is sometime afeard she will doe a desperate out-rage to her selfe, it is very true

Prince. It were good that Benedicke knew of it by some other, if she will not discouer it

Clau. To what end? he would but make a sport of it, and torment the poore Lady worse

Prin. And he should, it were an almes to hang him, shee's an excellent sweet Lady, and (out of all suspition,) she is vertuous

Claudio. And she is exceeding wise

Prince. In euery thing, but in louing Benedicke

Leon. O my Lord, wisdom and bloud combating in so tender a body, we haue ten proofes to one, that bloud hath the victory, I am sorry for her, as I haue iust cause, being her Vncle, and her Guardian

Prince. I would shee had bestowed this dotage on mee, I would haue daft all other respects, and made her halfe my selfe: I pray you tell Benedicke of it, and heare what he will say

Leon. Were it good thinke you?

Clau. Hero thinkes surely she wil die, for she saies she will die, if hee loue her not, and shee will die ere shee make her loue knowne, and she will die if hee wooe her, rather than shee will bate one breath of her accustomed crossenesse

Prince. She doth well, if she should make tender of her loue, 'tis very possible hee'l scorne it, for the man (as you know all) hath a contemptible spirit

Clau. He is a very proper man

Prin. He hath indeed a good outward happines

Clau. 'Fore God, and in my minde very wise

Prin. He doth indeed shew some sparkes that are like wit

Leon. And I take him to be valiant

Prin. As Hector, I assure you, and in the managing of quarrels you may see hee is wise, for either hee auoydes them with great discretion, or vndertakes them with a Christian-like feare

Leon. If hee doe feare God, a must necessarilie keepe peace, if hee breake the peace, hee ought to enter into a quarrell with feare and trembling

Prin. And so will hee doe, for the man doth fear God, howsoever it seemes not in him, by some large ieasts hee will make: well, I am sorry for your niece, shall we goe see Benedicke, and tell him of her loue

Claud. Neuer tell him, my Lord, let her weare it out with good counsell

Leon. Nay that's impossible, she may weare her heart out first

Prin. Well, we will heare further of it by your daughter, let it coole the while, I loue Benedicke well, and I could wish he would modestly examine himselfe, to see how much he is vnworthy to haue so good a Lady

Leon. My Lord, will you walke? dinner is ready

Clau. If hee do not doat on her vpon this, I wil neuer trust my expectation

Prin. Let there be the same Net spread for her, and that must your daughter and her gentlewoman carry: the sport will be, when they hold one an opinion of anothers dotage, and no such matter, that's the Scene that I would see, which will be meerey a dumbe shew: let vs send her to call him into dinner.

Exeunt.

Bene. This can be no tricke, the conference was sadly borne, they haue the truth of this from Hero, they seeme to pittie the Lady: it seemes her affections haue the full bent: loue me? why it must be requited: I heare how I am censur'd, they say I will beare my selfe proudly, if I perceiue the loue come from her: they say too, that she will rather die than giue any signe of affection: I did neuer thinke to marry, I must not seeme proud, happy are they that heare their detractions, and can put them to mending: they say the Lady is faire, 'tis a truth, I can beare them witnesse: and vertuous, tis so, I cannot reprooue it, and wise, but for louing me, by my troth it is no addition to her witte, nor no great argument of her folly; for I will be horribly in loue with her, I may chance haue some odde quirkes and remnants of witte broken on mee, because I haue rail'd so long against marriage: but doth not the appetite alter? a man loues the meat in his youth, that he cannot indure in his age. Shall quips and sentences, and these paper bullets of the braine awe a man from the careere of his humour? No, the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a batcheler, I did not think I should liue till I were married, here comes Beatrice: by this day, shee's a faire Lady, I doe spie some markes of loue in her.  
Enter Beatrice.

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

Bene. Faire Beatrice, I thanke you for your paines

Beat. I tooke no more paines for those thankes, then you take paines to thanke me, if it had been painefull, I would not haue come

Bene. You take pleasure then in the message

Beat. Yea iust so much as you may take vpon a kniues point, and choake a daw withall: you haue no stomacke signior, fare you well.  
Enter.

Bene. Ha, against my will I am sent to bid you come into dinner: there's a double meaning in that: I tooke no more paines for those thankes then you took paines to thanke me, that's as much as to say, any paines that I take for you is as easie as thankes: if I do not take pittie of her I am a villaine, if I doe not loue her I am a lew, I will goe get her picture.  
Enter.

Actus Tertius.

Enter Hero and two Gentlemen, Margaret, and Vrsula.

Hero. Good Margaret runne thee to the parlour,  
There shalt thou finde my Cosin Beatrice,

Proposing with the Prince and Claudio,  
Whisper her eare, and tell her I and Vrsula,  
Walke in the Orchard, and our whole discourse  
Is all of her, say that thou ouer-heardst vs,  
And bid her steale into the pleached bower,  
Where hony-suckles ripened by the sunne,  
Forbid the sunne to enter: like fauourites,  
Made proud by Princes, that aduance their pride,  
Against that power that bred it, there will she hide her,  
To listen our purpose, this is thy office,  
Beare thee well in it, and leaue vs alone

Marg. Ile make her come I warrant you presently

Hero. Now Vrsula, when Beatrice doth come,  
As we do trace this alley vp and downe,  
Our talke must onely be of Benedicke,  
When I doe name him, let it be thy part,  
To praise him more then euer man did merit,  
My talke to thee must be how Benedicke  
Is sicke in loue with Beatrice; of this matter,  
Is little Cupids crafty arrow made,  
That onely wounds by heare-say: now begin,  
Enter Beatrice.

For looke where Beatrice like a Lapwing runs  
Close by the ground, to heare our conference

Vrs. The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish  
Cut with her golden ores the siluer streame,  
And greedily deuoure the treacherous baite:  
So angle we for Beatrice, who euen now,  
Is couched in the wood-bine couerture,  
Feare you not my part of the Dialogue

Her. Then go we neare her that her eare loose nothing,  
Of the false sweete baite that we lay for it:  
No truely Vrsula, she is too disdainfull,  
I know her spirits are as coy and wilde,  
As Haggerds of the rocke

Vrsula. But are you sure,  
That Benedicke loues Beatrice so intirely?  
Her. So saies the Prince, and my new trothed Lord

Vrs. And did they bid you tell her of it, Madam?  
Her. They did intreate me to acquaint her of it,  
But I perswaded them, if they lou'd Benedicke,  
To wish him wrastle with affection,  
And neuer to let Beatrice know of it

Vrsula. Why did you so, doth not the Gentleman  
Deserue as full as fortunate a bed,  
As euer Beatrice shall couch vpon?

Hero. O God of loue! I know he doth deserue,  
As much as may be yeilded to a man:  
But Nature neuer fram'd a womans heart,  
Of powder stufte then that of Beatrice:  
Disdaine and Scorne ride sparkling in her eyes,

Mis-prizing what they looke on, and her wit  
Values it selfe so highly, that to her  
All matter else seemes weake: she cannot loue,  
Nor take no shape nor proiect of affection,  
Shee is so selfe indeared

Vrsula. Sure I thinke so,  
And therefore certainly it were not good  
She knew his loue, lest she make sport at it

Hero. Why you speake truth, I neuer yet saw man,  
How wise, how noble, yong, how rarely featur'd.  
But she would spell him backward: if faire fac'd,  
She would sweare the gentleman should be her sister:  
If blacke, why Nature drawing of an anticke,  
Made a foule blot: if tall, a launce ill headed:  
If low, an agot very vildlie cut:  
If speaking, why a vane blowne with all windes:  
If silent, why a blocke moued with none.  
So turnes she euery man the wrong side out,  
And neuer giues to Truth and Vertue, that  
Which simplenesse and merit purchaseth

Vrsu. Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable

Hero. No, not to be so odde, and from all fashions,  
As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable,  
But who dare tell her so? if I should speake,  
She would mocke me into ayre, O she would laugh me  
Out of my selfe, presse me to death with wit,  
Therefore let Benedicke like couered fire,  
Consume away in sighes, waste inwardly:  
It were a better death, to die with mockes,  
Which is as bad as die with tickling

Vrsu. Yet tell her of it, heare what shee will say

Hero. No, rather I will goe to Benedicke,  
And counsaile him to fight against his passion,  
And truly Ile devise some honest slanders,  
To staine my cosin with, one doth not know,  
How much an ill word may impoison liking

Vrsu. O doe not doe your cosin such a wrong,  
She cannot be so much without true iudgement,  
Hauing so swift and excellent a wit  
As she is prisde to haue, as to refuse  
So rare a Gentleman as signior Benedicke

Hero. He is the onely man of Italy,  
Alwaies excepted, my deare Claudio

Vrsu. I pray you be not angry with me, Madame,  
Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedicke,  
For shape, for bearing argument and valour,  
Goes formost in report through Italy

Hero. Indeed he hath an excellent good name

Vrsu. His excellence did earne it ere he had it:  
When are you married Madame?

Hero. Why euerie day to morrow, come goe in,  
Ile shew thee some attires, and haue thy counsell,  
Which is the best to furnish me to morrow

Vrsu. Shee's tane I warrant you,  
We haue caught her Madame?

Hero. If it proue so, then louing goes by haps,  
Some Cupid kills with arrowes, some with traps.  
Enter.

Beat. What fire is in mine eares? can this be true?  
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorne so much?  
Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adew,  
No glory liues behinde the backe of such.  
And Benedicke, loue on, I will requite thee,  
Taming my wilde heart to thy louing hand:  
If thou dost loue, my kindnesse shall incite thee  
To binde our loues vp in a holy band.  
For others say thou dost deserue, and I  
Beleeue it better then reportingly.  
Enter.

Enter Prince, Claudio, Benedicke, and Leonato.

Prince. I doe but stay till your marriage be consummate,  
and then go I toward Arragon

Clau. Ile bring you thither my Lord, if you'l vouchsafe  
me

Prin. Nay, that would be as great a soyle in the new  
glosse of your marriage, as to shew a childe his new coat  
and forbid him to weare it, I will onely bee bold with  
Benedicke for his companie, for from the crowne of his  
head, to the sole of his foot, he is all mirth, he hath twice  
or thrice cut Cupids bow-string, and the little hang-man  
dare not shoot at him, he hath a heart as sound as a bell,  
and his tongue is the clapper, for what his heart thinkes,  
his tongue speakes

Bene. Gallants, I am not as I haue bin

Leo. So say I, methinkes you are sadder

Claud. I hope he be in loue

Prin. Hang him truant, there's no true drop of bloud  
in him to be truly toucht with loue, if he be sad, he wants  
money

Bene. I haue the tooth-ach

Prin. Draw it

Bene. Hang it

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

Prin. What? sigh for the tooth-ach

Leon. Where is but a humour or a worme

Bene. Well, euery one cannot master a grieffe, but hee that has it

Clau. Yet say I, he is in loue

Prin. There is no appearance of fancie in him, vnlesse it be a fancy that he hath to strange disguises, as to bee a Dutchman to day, a Frenchman to morrow: vnlesse hee haue a fancy to this foolery, as it appeares hee hath, hee is no foole for fancy, as you would haue it to appeare he is

Clau. If he be not in loue with some woman, there is no beleeuing old signes, a brushes his hat a mornings, What should that bode?

Prin. Hath any man seene him at the Barbers?

Clau. No, but the Barbers man hath beene seen with him, and the olde ornament of his cheeke hath alreadie stuff tennis balls

Leon. Indeed he lookes yonger than hee did, by the losse of a beard

Prin. Nay a rubs himselfe with Ciuit, can you smell him out by that?

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

Prin. The greatest note of it is his melancholy

Clau. And when was he wont to wash his face?

Prin. Yea, or to paint himselfe? for the which I heare what they say of him

Clau. Nay, but his iesting spirit, which is now crept into a lute-string, and now gouern'd by stops

Prin. Indeed that tels a heauy tale for him: conclude, he is in loue

Clau. Nay, but I know who loues him

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

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

Prin. Shee shall be buried with her face vpwards

Bene. Yet is this no charme for the tooth-ake, old signior, walke aside with mee, I haue studied eight or nine wise words to speake to you, which these hobby-horses must not heare

Prin. For my life to breake with him about Beatrice

Clau. 'Tis euen so, Hero and Margaret haue by this played their parts with Beatrice, and then the two Beares will not bite one another when they meete.  
Enter Iohn the Bastard.

Bast. My Lord and brother, God saue you

Prin. Good den brother

Bast. If your leisure seru'd, I would speake with you

Prince. In priuate?

Bast. If it please you, yet Count Claudio may heare, for what I would speake of, concernes him

Prin. What's the matter?

Basta. Meanes your Lordship to be married to morrow?

Prin. You know he does

Bast. I know not that when he knowes what I know

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

Bast. You may thinke I loue you not, let that appeare hereafter, and ayme better at me by that I now will manifest, for my brother (I thinke, he holds you well, and in dearenesse of heart) hath holpe to effect your ensuing marriage: surely sute ill spent, and labour ill bestowed

Prin. Why, what's the matter?

Bastard. I came hither to tell you, and circumstances shortned, (for she hath beene too long a talking of) the Lady is disloyall

Clau. Who Hero?

Bast. Euen shee, Leonatoes Hero, your Hero, euery mans Hero

Clau. Disloyall?

Bast. The word is too good to paint out her wickednesse, I could say she were worse, thinke you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it: wonder not till further warrant: goe but with mee to night, you shal see her chamber window entred, euen the night before her wedding day, if you loue her, then to morrow wed her: But it would better fit your honour to change your minde

Claud. May this be so?

Princ. I will not thinke it

Bast. If you dare not trust that you see, confesse not that you know: if you will follow mee, I will shew you enough, and when you haue seene more, & heard more, proceed accordingly

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

Prin. And as I wooed for thee to obtaine her, I will ioyne with thee to disgrace her

Bast. I will disparage her no farther, till you are my witnesses, beare it coldly but till night, and let the issue shew it selfe

Prin. O day vntowardly turned!

Claud. O mischiefie strangelie thwarting!

Bastard. O plague right well preuented! so will you say, when you haue seene the sequele.

Enter.

Enter Dogbery and his compartner with the watch.

Dog. Are you good men and true?

Verg. Yea, or else it were pittie but they should suffer saluation body and soule

Dogb. Nay, that were a punishment too good for them, if they should haue any allegiance in them, being chosen for the Princes watch

Verges. Well, giue them their charge, neighbour Dogbery

Dog. First, who thinke you the most desartlesse man to be Constable

Watch.1. Hugh Ote-cake sir, or George Sea-coale, for they can write and reade

Dogb. Come hither neighbour Sea-coale, God hath blest you with a good name: to be a wel-fauoured man, is the gift of Fortune, but to write and reade, comes by Nature

Watch 2. Both which Master Constable

Dogb. You haue: I knew it would be your answer: well, for your fauour sir, why giue God thankes, & make no boast of it, and for your writing and reading, let that appeare when there is no need of such vanity, you are thought heere to be the most senslesse and fit man for the Constable of the watch: therefore beare you the lanthorne: this is your charge: You shall comprehend all vagrom men, you are to bid any man stand in the Princes name

Watch 2. How if a will not stand?

Dogb. Why then take no note of him, but let him go, and presently call the rest of the Watch together, and thanke God you are ridde of a knaue

Verges. If he will not stand when he is bidden, hee is none of the Princes subiects

Dogb. True, and they are to meddle with none but the Princes subjects: you shall also make no noise in the streetes: for, for the Watch to babble and talke, is most tollerable, and not to be indured

Watch. We will rather sleepe than talke, wee know what belongs to a Watch

Dog. Why you speake like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I cannot see how sleeping should offend: only haue a care that your bills be not stolne: well, you are to call at all the Alehouses, and bid them that are drunke get them to bed

Watch. How if they will not?

Dogb. Why then let them alone till they are sober, if they make you not then the better answeere, you may say, they are not the men you tooke them for

Watch. Well sir,

Dogb. If you meet a theefe, you may suspect him, by vertue of your office, to be no true man: and for such kinde of men, the lesse you meddle or make with them, why the more is for your honesty

Watch. If wee know him to be a thiefe, shall wee not lay hands on him

Dogb. Truly by your office you may, but I think they that touch pitch will be defil'd: the most peaceable way for you, if you doe take a theefe, is, to let him shew himselfe what he is, and steale out of your company

Ver. You haue bin alwaies cal'd a merciful ma[n] partner

Dog. Truely I would not hang a dog by my will, much more a man who hath anie honestie in him

Verges. If you heare a child crie in the night you must call to the nurse, and bid her still it

Watch. How if the nurse be asleepe and will not heare vs?

Dog. Why then depart in peace, and let the childe wake her with crying, for the ewe that will not heare her Lambe when it baes, will neuer answeere a calfe when he bleates

Verges. 'Tis verie true

Dog. This is the end of the charge: you constable are to present the Princes owne person, if you meete the Prince in the night, you may staie him

Verges. Nay birladie that I thinke a cannot

Dog. Fiue shillings to one on't with anie man that knowes the Statutes, he may staie him, marrie not without

the prince be willing, for indeed the watch ought to offend no man, and it is an offence to stay a man against his will

Verges. Birladie I thinke it be so

Dog. Ha, ah ha, well masters good night, and there be anie matter of weight chances, call vp me, keepe your fellowes counsailes, and your owne, and good night, come neighbour

Watch. Well masters, we heare our charge, let vs go sit here vpon the Church bench till two, and then all to bed

Dog. One word more, honest neighbors. I pray you watch about signior Leonatoes doore, for the wedding being there to morrow, there is a great coyle to night, adiew, be vigitant I beseech you.

Exeunt.

Enter Borachio and Conrade.

Bor. What, Conrade?

Watch. Peace, stir not

Bor. Conrade I say

Con. Here man, I am at thy elbow

Bor. Mas and my elbow itcht, I thought there would a scabbe follow

Con. I will owe thee an answere for that, and now forward with thy tale

Bor. Stand thee close then vnder this penthouse, for it drissels raine, and I will, like a true drunkard, vtter all to thee

Watch. Some treason masters, yet stand close

Bor. Therefore know, I haue earned of Don Iohn a thousand Ducates

Con. Is it possible that anie villanie should be so deare?

Bor. Thou should'st rather aske if it were possible anie villanie should be so rich? for when rich villains haue neede of poore ones, poore ones may make what price they will

Con. I wonder at it

Bor. That shewes thou art vnconfirm'd, thou knowest that the fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a cloake, is nothing to a man

Con. Yes, it is apparell

Bor. I meane the fashion

Con. Yes the fashion is the fashion

Bor. Tush, I may as well say the foole's the foole, but seest thou not what a deformed theefe this fashion is?

Watch. I know that deformed, a has bin a vile theefe, this vii. yeares, a goes vp and downe like a gentle man: I remember his name

Bor. Did'st thou not heare some bodie?

Con. No, 'twas the vaine on the house

Bor. Seest thou not (I say) what a deformed thiefe this fashion is, how giddily a turnes about all the Hotblouds, betweene, foureteene & fiue & thirtie, sometimes fashioning them like Pharaoes souldiours in the rechie painting, sometime like god Bels priests in the old Church window, sometime like the shauen Hercules in the smircht worm-eaten tapestrie, where his cod-peece seemes as massie as his club

Con. All this I see, and see that the fashion weares out more apparrell then the man; but art not thou thy selfe giddie with the fashion too that thou hast shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the fashion?

Bor. Not so neither, but know that I haue to night wooed Margaret the Lady Heroes gentle-woman, by the name of Hero, she leanes me out at her mistris chamberwindow, bids me a thousand times good night: I tell this tale vildly. I should first tell thee how the Prince Claudio and my Master planted, and placed, and possessed by my Master Don Iohn, saw a far off in the Orchard this amiable incounter

Con. And thought thy Margaret was Hero?

Bor. Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio, but the diuell my Master knew she was Margaret and partly by his oathes, which first possest them, partly by the darke night which did deceiue them, but chiefly, by my villanie, which did confirme any slander that Don Iohn had made, away went Claudio enraged, swore hee would meete her as he was apointed next morning at the Temple, and there, before the whole congregation shame her with what he saw o're night, and send her home againe without a husband

Watch.1. We charge you in the Princes name stand

Watch.2. Call vp the right master Constable, we haue here recouered the most dangerous peece of lechery, that euer was knowne in the Common-wealth

Watch.1. And one Deformed is one of them, I know him, a weares a locke

Conr. Masters, masters

Watch.2. Youle be made bring deformed forth I warrant you,

Conr. Masters, neuer speake, we charge you, let vs obey you to goe with vs

Bor. We are like to proue a goodly commoditie, being taken vp of these mens bills

Conr. A commoditie in question I warrant you, come weele obey you.

Exeunt.

Enter Hero, and Margaret, and Vrsula.

Hero. Good Vrsula wake my cosin Beatrice, and desire her to rise

Vrsu. I will Lady

Her. And bid her come hither

Vrs. Well

Mar. Troth I thinke your other rebato were better

Hero. No pray thee good Meg, Ile weare this

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

Hero. My cosin's a foole, and thou art another, ile weare none but this

Mar. I like the new tire within excellently, if the haire were a thought browner: and your gown's a most rare fashion yfaith, I saw the Dutchesse of Millaines gowne that they praise so

Hero. O that exceedes they say

Mar. By my troth's but a night-gowne in respect of yours, cloth a gold and cuts, and lac'd with siluer, set with pearles, downe sleeues, side sleeues, and skirts, round vnderborn with a blewish tinsel, but for a fine queint gracefull and excellent fashion, yours is worth ten on't

Hero. God giue mee ioy to weare it, for my heart is exceeding heauy

Marga. 'Twill be heauier soone, by the waight of a man

Hero. Fie vpon thee, art not asham'd?

Marg. Of what Lady? of speaking honourably? is not marriage honourable in a beggar? is not your Lord honourable without marriage? I thinke you would haue me say, sauing your reuerence a husband: and bad thinking doe not wrest true speaking, Ile offend no body, is

there any harme in the heauier for a husband? none I  
thinke, and it be the right husband, and the right wife,  
otherwise 'tis light and not heauy, aske my Lady Beatrice  
else, here she comes.

Enter Beatrice.

Hero. Good morrow Coze

Beat. Good morrow sweet Hero

Hero. Why how now? do you speake in the sick tune?

Beat. I am out of all other tune, me thinkes

Mar. Claps into Light a loue, (that goes without a  
burden,) do you sing it and Ile dance it

Beat. Ye Light aloue with your heeles, then if your  
husband haue stables enough, you'll looke he shall lacke  
no barnes

Mar. O illegitimate construction! I scorne that with  
my heeles

Beat. 'Tis almost fiue a clocke cosin, 'tis time you  
were ready, by my troth I am exceeding ill, hey ho

Mar. For a hauke, a horse, or a husband?

Beat. For the letter that begins them all, H

Mar. Well, and you be not turn'd Turke, there's no  
more sayling by the starre

Beat. What meanes the foole trow?

Mar. Nothing I, but God send euery one their harts  
desire

Hero. These gloues the Count sent mee, they are an  
excellent perfume

Beat. I am stuff cosin, I cannot smell

Mar. A maid and stuff! there's goodly catching of  
colde

Beat. O God helpe me, God help me, how long haue  
you profest apprehension?

Mar. Euer since you left it, doth not my wit become  
me rarely?

Beat. It is not seene enough, you should weare it in  
your cap, by my troth I am sicke

Mar. Get you some of this distill'd carduus benedictus  
and lay it to your heart, it is the onely thing for a qualm

Hero. There thou prick'st her with a thissell

Beat. Benedictus, why benedictus? you haue some morall  
in this benedictus

Mar. Morall? no by my troth, I haue no morall meaning, I meant plaine holy thissell, you may thinke perchance that I thinke you are in loue, nay birlady I am not such a foole to thinke what I list, nor I list not to thinke what I can, nor indeed, I cannot thinke, if I would thinke my hart out of thinking, that you are in loue, or that you will be in loue, or that you can be in loue: yet Benedicke was such another, and now is he become a man, he swore hee would neuer marry, and yet now in despight of his heart he eates his meat without grudging, and how you may be conuerted I know not, but me thinkes you looke with your eies as other women doe

Beat. What pace is this that thy tongue keepes

Mar. Not a false gallop.  
Enter Vrsula.

Vrsula. Madam, withdraw, the Prince, the Count, signior Benedicke, Don Iohn, and all the gallants of the towne are come to fetch you to Church

Hero. Helpe me to dresse mee good coze, good Meg, good Vrsula.  
Enter Leonato, and the Constable, and the Headborough.

Leonato. What would you with mee, honest neighbour?  
Const.Dog. Mary sir I would haue some confidence with you, that decernes you nearely

Leon. Briefe I pray you, for you see it is a busie time with me

Const.Dog. Mary this it is sir

Headb. Yes in truth it is sir

Leon. What is it my good friends?  
Con.Do. Goodman Verges sir speakes a little of the matter, an old man sir, and his wits are not so blunt, as God helpe I would desire they were, but infaith honest as the skin betweene his browes

Head. Yes I thank God, I am as honest as any man liuing, that is an old man, and no honester then I

Con.Dog. Comparisons are odorous, palabras, neighbour Verges

Leon. Neighbours, you are tedious

Con.Dog. It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poore Dukes officers, but truly for mine owne part, if I were as tedious as a King I could finde in my heart to bestow it all of your worship

Leon. All thy tediousnesse on me, ah?  
Const.Dog. Yea, and 'twere a thousand times more than 'tis, for I heare as good exclamation on your Worship

as of any man in the Citie, and though I bee but a poore man, I am glad to heare it

Head. And so am I

Leon. I would faine know what you haue to say

Head. Marry sir our watch to night, excepting your worships presence, haue tane a couple of as arrant knaues as any in Messina

Con.Dog. A good old man sir, hee will be talking as they say, when the age is in, the wit is out, God helpe vs, it is a world to see: well said yfaith neighbour Verges, well, God's a good man, and two men ride of a horse, one must ride behinde, an honest soule yfaith sir, by my troth he is, as euer broke bread, but God is to bee worshipt, all men are not alike, alas good neighbour

Leon. Indeed neighbour he comes too short of you

Con.Do. Gifts that God giues

Leon. I must leaue you

Con.Dog. One word sir, our watch sir haue indeede comprehended two aspitious persons, & we would haue them this morning examined before your worship

Leon. Take their examination your selfe, and bring it me, I am now in great haste, as may appeare vnto you

Const. It shall be suffigance

Leon. Drinke some wine ere you goe: fare you well.  
Enter.

Messenger. My Lord, they stay for you to giue your daughter to her husband

Leon. Ile wait vpon them, I am ready

Dogb. Goe good partner, goe get you to Francis Seacoale, bid him bring his pen and inkehorne to the Gaole: we are now to examine those men

Verges. And we must doe it wisely

Dogb. Wee will spare for no witte I warrant you: heere's that shall driue some to a non-come, only get the learned writer to set downe our excommunication, and meet me at the laile.

Exeunt.

Actus Quartus.

Enter Prince, Bastard, Leonato, Frier, Claudio, Benedicke, Hero,

and  
Beatrice.

Leonato. Come Frier Francis, be briefe, onely to the  
plaine forme of marriage, and you shal recount their particular  
duties afterwards

Fran. You come hither, my Lord, to marry this Lady

Clau. No

Leo. To be married to her: Frier, you come to marrie  
her

Frier. Lady, you come hither to be married to this  
Count

Hero. I doe

Frier. If either of you know any inward impediment  
why you should not be conioyned, I charge you on your  
soules to vtter it

Claud. Know you anie, Hero?

Hero. None my Lord

Frier. Know you anie, Count?

Leon. I dare make his answer, None

Clau. O what men dare do! what men may do! what  
men daily do!

Bene. How now! interiections? why then, some be  
of laughing, as ha, ha, he

Clau. Stand thee by Frier, father, by your leaue,  
Will you with free and vnconstrained soule  
Giue me this maid your daughter?

Leon. As freely sonne as God did giue her me

Cla. And what haue I to giue you back, whose worth  
May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

Prin. Nothing, vnlesse you render her againe

Clau. Sweet Prince, you learn me noble thankfulnes:  
There Leonato, take her backe againe,  
Giue not this rotten Orenge to your friend,  
Shee's but the signe and semblance of her honour:  
Behold how like a maid she blushes heere!  
O what authoritie and shew of truth  
Can cunning sinne couer it selfe withall!  
Comes not that bloud, as modest euidence,  
To witnesse simple Vertue? would you not sweare  
All you that see her, that she were a maide,  
By these exterior shewes? But she is none:  
She knowes the heat of a luxurious bed:  
Her blush is guiltinesse, not modestie

Leonato. What doe you meane, my Lord?

Clau. Not to be married,

Not to knit my soule to an approued wanton

Leon. Deere my Lord, if you in your owne prooffe,  
Haue vanquisht the resistance of her youth,  
And made defeat of her virginities

Clau. I know what you would say: if I haue knowne  
(her,  
You will say, she did embrace me as a husband,  
And so extenuate the forehead sinne: No Leonato,  
I neuer tempted her with word too large,  
But as a brother to his sister, shewed  
Bashfull sincerities and comely loue

Hero. And seem'd I euer otherwise to you?

Clau. Out on thee seeming, I will write against it,  
You seeme to me as Diane in her Orbe,  
As chaste as is the budde ere it be blowne:  
But you are more intemperate in your blood,  
Than Venus, or those pamper'd animals,  
That rage in sauage sensualities

Hero. Is my Lord well, that he doth speake so wide?

Leon. Sweete Prince, why speake not you?

Prin. What should I speake?

I stand dishonour'd that haue gone about,  
To linke my deare friend to a common stale

Leon. Are these things spoken, or doe I but dreame?

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

Bene. This lookes not like a nuptiall

Hero. True, O God!

Clau. Leonato, stand I here?

Is this the Prince? is this the Princes brother?

Is this face Heroes? are our eyes our owne?

Leon. All this is so, but what of this my Lord?

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

Leo. I charge thee doe, as thou art my childe

Hero. O God defend me how am I beset,  
What kinde of catechizing call you this?

Clau. To make you answer truly to your name

Hero. Is it not Hero? who can blot that name  
With any iust reproach?

Claud. Marry that can Hero,  
Hero it selfe can blot out Heroes vertue.  
What man was he, talkt with you yesternight,  
Out at your window betwixt twelue and one?  
Now if you are a maid, answer to this

Hero. I talkt with no man at that howre my Lord

Prince. Why then you are no maiden. Leonato,

I am sorry you must heare: vpon mine honor,  
My selfe, my brother, and this grieued Count  
Did see her, heare her, at that howre last night,  
Talke with a ruffian at her chamber window,  
Who hath indeed most like a liberall villaine,  
Confest the vile encounters they haue had  
A thousand times in secret

Iohn. Fie, fie, they are not to be named my Lord,  
Not to be spoken of,  
There is not chastitie enough in language,  
Without offence to vtter them: thus pretty Lady  
I am sorry for thy much misgouernment

Claud. O Hero! what a Hero hadst thou beene  
If halfe thy outward graces had beene placed  
About thy thoughts and counsailes of thy heart?  
But fare thee well, most foule, most faire, farewell  
Thou pure impiety, and impious puritie,  
For thee Ile locke vp all the gates of Loue,  
And on my eie-lids shall Coniecture hang,  
To turne all beauty into thoughts of harme,  
And neuer shall it more be gracious

Leon. Hath no mans dagger here a point for me?  
Beat. Why how now cosin, wherfore sink you down?  
Bast. Come, let vs go: these things come thus to light,  
Smother her spirits vp

Bene. How doth the Lady?  
Beat. Dead I thinke, helpe vncke,  
Hero, why Hero, Vncke, Signor Benedicke, Frier

Leonato. O Fate! take not away thy heauy hand,  
Death is the fairest couer for her shame  
That may be wisht for

Beatr. How now cosin Hero?  
Fri. Haue comfort Ladie

Leon. Dost thou looke vp?  
Frier. Yea, wherfore should she not?  
Leon. Wherfore? Why doth not euery earthly thing  
Cry shame vpon her? Could she heere denie  
The storie that is printed in her blood?  
Do not liue Hero, do not ope thine eyes:  
For did I thinke thou wouldst not quickly die,  
Thought I thy spirits were stronger then thy shames,  
My selfe would on the reward of reproaches  
Strike at thy life. Grieu'd I, I had but one?  
Chid I, for that at frugal Natures frame?  
O one too much by thee: why had I one?  
Why euer was't thou louelie in my eies?  
Why had I not with charitable hand  
Tooke vp a beggars issue at my gates,  
Who smeered thus, and mir'd with infamie,  
I might haue said, no part of it is mine:  
This shame deriues it selfe from vnknowne loines,  
But mine, and mine I lou'd, and mine I prais'd,

And mine that I was proud on mine so much,  
That I my selfe, was to my selfe not mine:  
Valewing of her, why she, O she is falne  
Into a pit of Inke, that the wide sea  
Hath drops too few to wash her cleane againe,  
And salt too little, which may season giue  
To her foule tainted flesh

Ben. Sir, sir, be patient: for my part, I am so attired  
in wonder, I know not what to say

Bea. O on my soule my cosin is belied

Ben. Ladie, were you her bedfellow last night?  
Bea. No, truly: not although vntill last night,  
I haue this tweluemonth bin her bedfellow

Leon. Confirm'd, confirm'd, O that is stronger made  
Which was before barr'd vp with ribs of iron.  
Would the Princes lie, and Claudio lie,  
Who lou'd her so, that speaking of her foulnesse,  
Wash'd it with teares? Hence from her, let her die

Fri. Heare me a little, for I haue onely bene silent so  
long, and giuen way vnto this course of fortune, by noting  
of the Ladie, I haue markt.

A thousand blushing apparitions,  
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames,  
In Angel whitenesse beare away those blushes,  
And in her eie there hath appear'd a fire  
To burne the errors that these Princes hold  
Against her maiden truth. Call me a foole,  
Trust not my reading, nor my obseruations,  
Which with experimental seale doth warrant  
The tenure of my booke: trust not my age,  
My reuerence, calling, nor diuinitie,  
If this sweet Ladie lye not guiltlesse heere,  
Vnder some biting error

Leo. Friar, it cannot be:  
Thou seest that all the Grace that she hath left,  
Is, that she wil not adde to her damnation,  
A sinne of periury, she not denies it:  
Why seek'st thou then to couer with excuse,  
That which appears in proper nakednesse?

Fri. Ladie, what man is he you are accus'd of?  
Hero. They know that do accuse me, I know none:  
If I know more of any man aliue  
Then that which maiden modestie doth warrant,  
Let all my sinnes lacke mercy. O my Father,  
Proue you that any man with me conuerst,  
At houres vnmeete, or that I yesternight  
Maintain'd the change of words with any creature,  
Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death

Fri. There is some strange misprision in the Princes

Ben. Two of them haue the verie bent of honor,  
And if their wisdomes be misled in this:

The practise of it liues in Iohn the bastard,  
Whose spirits toile in frame of villanies

Leo. I know not: if they speake but truth of her,  
These hands shall teare her: If they wrong her honour,  
The proudest of them shall wel heare of it.  
Time hath not yet so dried this bloud of mine,  
Nor age so eate vp my inuention,  
Nor Fortune made such hauocke of my meanes,  
Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends,  
But they shall finde, awak'd in such a kinde,  
Both strength of limbe, and policie of minde,  
Ability in meanes, and choise of friends,  
To quit me of them throughly

Fri. Pause awhile:  
And let my counsell sway you in this case,  
Your daughter heere the Princesse (left for dead)  
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,  
And publish it, that she is dead indeed:  
Maintaine a mourning ostentation,  
And on your Families old monument,  
Hang mournfull Epitaphes, and do all rites,  
That appertaine vnto a buriall

Leon. What shall become of this? What wil this do?

Fri. Marry this wel carried, shall on her behalfe,  
Change slander to remorse, that is some good,  
But not for that dreame I on this strange course,  
But on this trauaile looke for greater birth:  
She dying, as it must be so maintain'd,  
Vpon the instant that she was accus'd,  
Shal be lamented, pittied, and excus'd  
Of euery hearer: for it so fals out,  
That what we haue, we prize not to the worth,  
Whiles we enioy it; but being lack'd and lost,  
Why then we racke the value, then we finde  
The vertue that possession would not shew vs  
Whiles it was ours, so will it fare with Claudio:  
When he shal heare she dyed vpon his words,  
Th' Idea of her life shal sweetly creepe  
Into his study of imagination.  
And euery louely Organ of her life,  
Shall come apparel'd in more precious habite:  
More mouing delicate, and ful of life,  
Into the eye and prospect of his soule  
Then when she liu'd indeed: then shal he mourne,  
If euer Loue had interest in his Liuer,  
And wish he had not so accused her:  
No, though he thought his accusation true:  
Let this be so, and doubt not but successe  
Wil fashion the euent in better shape,  
Then I can lay it downe in likelihood.  
But if all ayme but this be leuelld false,  
The supposition of the Ladies death,  
Will quench the wonder of her infamie.  
And if it sort not well, you may conceale her  
As best befits her wounded reputation,  
In some reclusiue and religious life,

Out of all eyes, tongues, mindes and iniuries

Bene. Signior Leonato, let the Frier aduise you,  
And though you know my inwardnesse and loue  
Is very much vnto the Prince and Claudio.  
Yet, by mine honor, I will deale in this,  
As secretly and iustlie, as your soule  
Should with your bodie

Leon. Being that I flow in greefe,  
The smallest twine may lead me

Frier. 'Tis well consented, presently away,  
For to strange sores, strangely they straine the cure,  
Come Lady, die to liue, this wedding day  
Perhaps is but prolong'd, haue patience & endure.  
Enter.

Bene. Lady Beatrice, haue you wept all this while?

Beat. Yea, and I will weepe a while longer

Bene. I will not desire that

Beat. You haue no reason, I doe it freely

Bene. Surelie I do beleeeue your fair cosin is wrong'd

Beat. Ah, how much might the man deserue of mee  
that would right her!

Bene. Is there any way to shew such friendship?

Beat. A verie euen way, but no such friend

Bene. May a man doe it?

Beat. It is a mans office, but not yours

Bene. I doe loue nothing in the world so well as you,  
is not that strange?

Beat. As strange as the thing I know not, it were as  
possible for me to say, I loued nothing so well as you, but  
beleeeue me not, and yet I lie not, I confesse nothing, nor  
I deny nothing, I am sorry for my cousin

Bene. By my sword Beatrice thou lou'st me

Beat. Doe not sweare by it and eat it

Bene. I will sweare by it that you loue mee, and I will  
make him eat it that sayes I loue not you

Beat. Will you not eat your word?

Bene. With no sawce that can be deuised to it, I protest  
I loue thee

Beat. Why then God forgiue me

Bene. What offence sweet Beatrice?

Beat. You haue stayed me in a happy howre, I was about  
to protest I loued you

Bene. And doe it with all thy heart

Beat. I loue you with so much of my heart, that none  
is left to protest

Bened. Come, bid me doe any thing for thee

Beat. Kill Claudio

Bene. Ha, not for the wide world

Beat. You kill me to denie, farewell

Bene. Tarrie sweet Beatrice

Beat. I am gone, though I am heere, there is no loue  
in you, nay I pray you let me goe

Bene. Beatrice

Beat. Infaith I will goe

Bene. Wee'll be friends first

Beat. You dare easier be friends with mee, than fight  
with mine enemy

Bene. Is Claudio thine enemies?

Beat. Is a not approued in the height a villaine, that  
hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O  
that I were a man! what, beare her in hand vntill they  
come to take hands, and then with publike accusation  
vncouered slander, vnmittigated rancour? O God that I  
were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place

Bene. Heare me Beatrice

Beat. Talke with a man out at a window, a proper  
saying

Bene. Nay but Beatrice

Beat. Sweet Hero, she is wrong'd, shee is slandered,  
she is vndone

Bene. Beat?

Beat. Princes and Counties! surelie a Princely testimonie,  
a goodly Count, Comfect, a sweet Gallant surelie,  
O that I were a man for his sake! or that I had any  
friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted  
into cursies, valour into complement, and men are  
onelie turned into tongue, and trim ones too: he is now  
as valiant as Hercules, that only tells a lie, and swears it:  
I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman  
with grieuing

Bene. Tarry good Beatrice, by this hand I loue thee

Beat. Vse it for my loue some other way then swearing

by it

Bened. Thinke you in your soule the Count Claudio hath wrong'd Hero?

Beat. Yea, as sure as I haue a thought, or a soule

Bene. Enough, I am engagde, I will challenge him, I will kisse your hand, and so leaue you: by this hand Claudio shall render me a deere account: as you heare of me, so thinke of me: goe comfort your coosin, I must say she is dead, and so farewell.

Enter the Constables, Borachio, and the Towne Clerke in gownes.

Keeper. Is our whole dissembly appeard?

Cowley. O a stoole and a cushion for the Sexton

Sexton. Which be the malefactors?

Andrew. Marry that am I, and my partner

Cowley. Nay that's certaine, wee haue the exhibition to examine

Sexton. But which are the offenders that are to be examined, let them come before master Constable

Kemp. Yea marry, let them come before mee, what is your name, friend?

Bor. Borachio

Kem. Pray write downe Borachio. Yours sirra

Con. I am a Gentleman sir, and my name is Conrade

Kee. Write downe Master gentleman Conrade: maisters, doe you serue God: maisters, it is proued alreadie that you are little better than false knaues, and it will goe neere to be thought so shortly, how answer you for your selues?

Con. Marry sir, we say we are none

Kemp. A maruellous witty fellow I assure you, but I will goe about with him: come you hither sirra, a word in your eare sir, I say to you, it is thought you are false knaues

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

Kemp. Well, stand aside, 'fore God they are both in a tale: haue you writ downe that they are none?

Sext. Master Constable, you goe not the way to examine, you must call forth the watch that are their accusers

Kemp. Yea marry, that's the efast way, let the watch come forth: masters, I charge you in the Princes name, accuse these men

Watch 1. This man said sir, that Don Iohn the Princes brother was a villaine

Kemp. Write down, Prince Iohn a villaine: why this is flat periurie, to call a Princes brother villaine

Bora. Master Constable

Kemp. Pray thee fellow peace, I do not like thy looke I promise thee

Sexton. What heard you him say else?

Watch 2. Mary that he had receiued a thousand Dukates of Don Iohn, for accusing the Lady Hero wrongfully

Kemp. Flat Burglarie as euer was committed

Const. Yea by th' masse that it is

Sexton. What else fellow?

Watch 1. And that Count Claudio did meane vpon his words, to disgrace Hero before the whole assembly, and not marry her

Kemp. O villaine! thou wilt be condemn'd into euerlasting redemption for this

Sexton. What else?

Watch. This is all

Sexton. And this is more masters then you can deny, Prince Iohn is this morning secretly stolne away: Hero was in this manner accus'd, in this very manner refus'd, and vpon the grieffe of this sodainely died: Master Constable, let these men be bound, and brought to Leonato, I will goe before, and shew him their examination

Const. Come, let them be opinion'd

Sex. Let them be in the hands of Coxcombe

Kem. Gods my life, where's the Sexton? let him write downe the Princes Officer Coxcombe: come, binde them thou naughty varlet

Couley. Away, you are an asse, you are an asse

Kemp. Dost thou not suspect my place? dost thou not suspect my yeeres? O that hee were heere to write mee downe an asse! but masters, remember that I am an asse: though it be not written down, yet forget not y I am an asse: No thou villaine, y art full of piety as shall be prou'd vpon thee by good witsnesse, I am a wise fellow, and which is more, an officer, and which is more, a housholder, and which is more, as pretty a peece of flesh as any in Messina, and one that knowes the Law, goe to, & a rich fellow enough, goe to, and a fellow that hath had losses, and one that hath two gownes, and euery thing handsome about him: bring him away: O that I had been writ downe an asse!

Enter.

Actus Quintus.

Enter Leonato and his brother.

Brother. If you goe on thus, you will kill your selfe,  
And 'tis not wisdom thus to second grieffe,  
Against your selfe

Leon. I pray thee cease thy counsaile,  
Which falls into mine eares as profitlesse,  
As water in a siue: giue not me counsaile,  
Nor let no comfort delight mine eare,  
But such a one whose wrongs doth sute with mine.  
Bring me a father that so lou'd his childe,  
Whose ioy of her is ouer-whelmed like mine,  
And bid him speake of patience,  
Measure his woe the length and bredth of mine,  
And let it answeere euery straine for straine,  
As thus for thus, and such a grieffe for such,  
In euery lineament, branch, shape, and forme:  
If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,  
And sorrow, wagge, crie hem, when he should grone,  
Patch grieffe with prouerbs, make misfortune drunke,  
With candle-wasters: bring him yet to me,  
And I of him will gather patience:  
But there is no such man, for brother, men  
Can counsaile, and speake comfort to that grieffe,  
Which they themselues not feele, but tasting it,  
Their counsaile turnes to passion, which before,  
Would giue preceptiall medicine to rage,  
Fetter strong madnesse in a silken thred,  
Charme ache with ayre, and agony with words,  
No, no, 'tis all mens office, to speake patience  
To those that wring vnder the load of sorrow:  
But no mans vertue nor sufficiencie  
To be so morall, when he shall endure  
The like himselfe: therefore giue me no counsaile,  
My griefs cry lowder then aduertisement

Broth. Therein do men from children nothing differ

Leonato. I pray thee peace, I will be flesh and bloud,  
For there was neuer yet Philosopher,  
That could endure the tooth-ake patiently,  
How euer they haue writ the stile of gods,  
And made a push at chance and sufferance

Brother. Yet bend not all the harme vpon your selfe,  
Make those that doe offend you, suffer too

Leon. There thou speak'st reason, nay I will doe so,  
My soule doth tell me, Hero is belied,  
And that shall Claudio know, so shall the Prince,  
And all of them that thus dishonour her.  
Enter Prince and Claudio.

Brot. Here comes the Prince and Claudio hastily

Prin. Good den, good den

Clau. Good day to both of you

Leon. Heare you my Lords?

Prin. We haue some haste Leonato

Leo. Some haste my Lord! wel, fareyouwel my Lord,  
Are you so hasty now? well, all is one

Prin. Nay, do not quarrel with vs, good old man

Brot. If he could rite himselfe with quarrelling,  
Some of vs would lie low

Claud. Who wrongs him?

Leon. Marry y dost wrong me, thou dissembler, thou:  
Nay, neuer lay thy hand vpon thy sword,  
I feare thee not

Claud. Marry beshrew my hand,  
If it should giue your age such cause of feare,  
Infaiht my hand meant nothing to my sword

Leonato. Tush, tush, man, neuer fleere and iest at me,  
I speake not like a dotard, nor a foole,  
As vnder priuiledge of age to bragge,  
What I haue done being yong, or what would doe,  
Were I not old, know Claudio to thy head,  
Thou hast so wrong'd my innocent childe and me,  
That I am forc'd to lay my reuerence by,  
And with grey haire and bruise of many daies,  
Doe challenge thee to triall of a man,  
I say thou hast belied mine innocent childe.  
Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,  
And she lies buried with her ancestors:  
O in a tombe where neuer scandall slept,  
Saeue this of hers, fram'd by thy villanie

Claud. My villany?

Leonato. Thine Claudio, thine I say

Prin. You say not right old man

Leon. My Lord, my Lord,  
Ile proue it on his body if he dare,  
Despight his nice fence, and his actiue practise,  
His Maie of youth, and bloome of lustihood

Claud. Away, I will not haue to do with you

Leo. Canst thou so daffe me? thou hast kild my child,  
If thou kilst me, boy, thou shalt kill a man

Bro. He shall kill two of vs, and men indeed,  
But that's no matter, let him kill one first:  
Win me and weare me, let him answere me,  
Come follow me boy, come sir boy, come follow me  
Sir boy, ile whip you from your foyning fence,

Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will

Leon. Brother

Brot. Content your self, God knows I lou'd my neece,  
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villaines,  
That dare as well answer a man indeede,  
As I dare take a serpent by the tongue.  
Boyes, apes, braggarts, lackes, milke-sops

Leon. Brother Anthony

Brot. Hold you content, what man? I know them, yea  
And what they weigh, euen to the vtmost scruple,  
Scambling, out-facing, fashion-monging boyes,  
That lye, and cog, and flout, depraue, and slander,  
Goe antiquely, and show outward hidiousnesse,  
And speake of halfe a dozen dang'rous words,  
How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst.  
And this is all

Leon. But brother Anthonie

Ant. Come, 'tis no matter,  
Do not you meddle, let me deale in this

Pri. Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience  
My heart is sorry for your daughters death:  
But on my honour she was charg'd with nothing  
But what was true, and very full of prooffe

Leon. My Lord, my Lord

Prin. I will not heare you.  
Enter Benedicke.

Leo. No come brother, away, I will be heard.

Exeunt. ambo.

Bro. And shall, or some of vs will smart for it

Prin. See, see, here comes the man we went to seeke

Clau. Now signior, what newes?  
Ben. Good day my Lord

Prin. Welcome signior, you are almost come to part  
almost a fray

Clau. Wee had likt to haue had our two noses snap  
off with two old men without teeth

Prin. Leonato and his brother, what think'st thou? had  
wee fought, I doubt we should haue beene too yong for  
them

Ben. In a false quarrell there is no true valour, I came  
to seeke you both

Clau. We haue beene vp and downe to seeke thee, for we are high prooffe melancholly, and would faine haue it beaten away, wilt thou vse thy wit?

Ben. It is in my scabberd, shall I draw it?

Prin. Doest thou weare thy wit by thy side?

Clau. Neuer any did so, though verie many haue been beside their wit, I will bid thee drawe, as we do the minstrels, draw to pleasure vs

Prin. As I am an honest man he lookes pale, art thou sicke, or angrie?

Clau. What, courage man: what though care kil'd a cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care

Ben. Sir, I shall meete your wit in the careere, and you charge it against me, I pray you chuse another subiect

Clau. Nay then giue him another staffe, this last was broke crosse

Prin. By this light, he changes more and more, I thinke he be angrie indeede

Clau. If he be, he knowes how to turne his girdle

Ben. Shall I speake a word in your eare?

Clau. God blesse me from a challenge

Ben. You are a villaine, I iest 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 cowardise: you haue kill'd a sweete Ladie, and her death shall fall heauie on you, let me heare from you

Clau. Well, I will meete you, so I may haue good cheare

Prin. What, a feast, a feast?

Clau. I faith I thanke him, he hath bid me to a calues head and a Capon, the which if I doe not carue most curiously, say my knife's naught, shall I not finde a woodcocke too?

Ben. Sir, your wit ambles well, it goes easily

Prin. Ile tell thee how Beatrice prais'd thy wit the other day: I said thou hadst a fine wit: true saies she, a fine little one: no said I, a great wit: right saies shee, a great grosse one: nay said I, a good wit: iust said she, it hurts no body: nay said I, the gentleman is wise: certaine said she, a wise gentleman: nay said I, he hath the tongues: that I beleeeue said shee, for hee swore a thing to me on munday night, which he forswore on tuesday morning: there's a double tongue, there's two tongues: thus did shee an howre together trans-shape thy particular vertues, yet at last she concluded with a sigh, thou wast the proprest man in Italie

Claud. For the which she wept heartily, and said shee

car'd not

Prin. Yea that she did, but yet for all that, and if shee did not hate him deadlie, shee would loue him dearely, the old mans daughter told vs all

Clau. All, all, and moreouer, God saw him when he was hid in the garden

Prin. But when shall we set the sauage Bulls hornes on the sensible Benedicks head?

Clau. Yea and text vnderneath, heere dwells Benedicke the married man

Ben. Fare you well, Boy, you know my minde, I will leaue you now to your gossep-like humor, you breake iests as braggards do their blades, which God be thanked hurt not: my Lord, for your manie courtesies I thank you, I must discontinue your companie, your brother the Bastard is fled from Messina: you haue among you, kill'd a sweet and innocent Ladie: for my Lord Lackebeard there, he and I shall meete, and till then peace be with him

Prin. He is in earnest

Clau. In most profound earnest, and Ile warrant you, for the loue of Beatrice

Prin. And hath challeng'd thee

Clau. Most sincerely

Prin. What a prettie thing man is, when he goes in his doublet and hose, and leaues off his wit.  
Enter Constable, Conrade, and Borachio.

Clau. He is then a Giant to an Ape, but then is an Ape a Doctor to such a man

Prin. But soft you, let me be, plucke vp my heart, and be sad, did he not say my brother was fled?

Const. Come you sir, if iustice cannot tame you, shee shall nere weigh more reasons in her ballance, nay, and you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be lookt to

Prin. How now, two of my brothers men bound? Borachio one

Clau. Harken after their offence my Lord

Prin. Officers, what offence haue these men done?

Const. Marrie sir, they haue committed false report, moreouer they haue spoken vntruths, secondarily they are slanders, sixt and lastly, they haue belyed a Ladie, thirdly, they haue verified vniust things, and to conclude they are lying knaues

Prin. First I aske thee what they haue done, thirdlie

I aske thee what's their offence, sixt and lastlie why they are committed, and to conclude, what you lay to their charge

Clau. Rightlie reasoned, and in his owne diuision, and by my troth there's one meaning well suted

Prin. Who haue you offended masters, that you are thus bound to your answer? this learned Constable is too cunning to be vnderstood, what's your offence?

Bor. Sweete Prince, let me go no farther to mine answere: do you heare me, and let this Count kill mee: I haue deceiued euen your verie eies: what your wisdomes could not discouer, these shallow fooles haue brought to light, who in the night ouerheard me confessing to this man, how Don Iohn your brother incensed me to slander the Ladie Hero, how you were brought into the Orchard, and saw me court Margaret in Heroes garments, how you disgrac'd her when you should marrie her: my villanie they haue vpon record, which I had rather seale with my death, then repeate ouer to my shame: the Ladie is dead vpon mine and my masters false accusation: and briefelie, I desire nothing but the reward of a villaine

Prin. Runs not this speech like yron through your bloud?

Clau. I haue drunke poison whiles he vtter'd it

Prin. But did my Brother set thee on to this?

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

Prin. He is compos'd and fram'd of treacherie,  
And fled he is vpon this villanie

Clau. Sweet Hero, now thy image doth appeare  
In the rare semblance that I lou'd it first

Const. Come, bring away the plaintiffes, by this time our Sexton hath reformed Signior Leonato of the matter: and masters, do not forget to specifie when time & place shall serue, that I am an Asse

Con.2. Here, here comes master Signior Leonato, and the Sexton too.  
Enter Leonato.

Leon. Which is the villaine? let me see his eies,  
That when I note another man like him,  
I may auoide him: which of these is he?

Bor. If you would know your wronger, looke on me

Leon. Art thou the slaue that with thy breath  
hast kild mine innocent childe?

Bor. Yea, euen I alone

Leo. No, not so villaine, thou beliest thy selfe,  
Here stand a paire of honourable men,  
A third is fled that had a hand in it:

I thanke you Princes for my daughters death,  
Record it with your high and worthie deedes,  
'Twas brauely done, if you bethinke you of it

Clau. I know not how to pray your patience,  
Yet I must speake, choose your reuenge your selfe,  
Impose me to what penance your inuention  
Can lay vpon my sinne, yet sinn'd I not,  
But in mistaking

Prin. By my soule nor I,  
And yet to satisfie this good old man,  
I would bend vnder anie heauie waight,  
That heele enioyne me to

Leon. I cannot bid you bid my daughter liue,  
That were impossible, but I praie you both,  
Possesse the people in Messina here,  
How innocent she died, and if your loue  
Can labour aught in sad inuention,  
Hang her an epitaph vpon her toomb,  
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 sonne in law,  
Be yet my Nephew: my brother hath a daughter,  
Almost the copie of my childe that's dead,  
And she alone is heire to both of vs,  
Giue her the right you should haue giu'n her cosin,  
And so dies my reuenge

Clau. O noble sir!  
Your ouerkindnesse doth wring teares from me,  
I do embrace your offer, and dispose  
For henceforth of poore Claudio

Leon. To morrow then I will expect your comming,  
To night I take my leaue, this naughtie man  
Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,  
Who I beleuee was packt in all this wrong,  
Hired to it by your brother

Bor. No, by my soule she was not,  
Nor knew not what she did when she spoke to me,  
But alwaies hath bin iust and vertuous,  
In anie thing that I do know by her

Const. Moreouer sir, which indeede is not vnder white  
and black, this plaintiffe here, the offendour did call mee  
asse, I beseech you let it be remembred in his punishment,  
and also the watch heard them talke of one Deformed,  
they say he weares a key in his eare and a lock hanging  
by it, and borrowes monie in Gods name, the which  
he hath vs'd so long, and neuer paied, that now men grow  
hard-harted and will lend nothing for Gods sake: praie  
you examine him vpon that point

Leon. I thanke thee for thy care and honest paines

Const. Your worship speakes like a most thankfull

and reuerend youth, and I praise God for you

Leon. There's for thy paines

Const. God saue the foundation

Leon. Goe, I discharge thee of thy prisoner, and I thanke thee

Const. I leaue an arrant knaue with your worship, which I beseech your worship to correct your selfe, for the example of others: God keepe your worship, I wish your worship well, God restore you to health, I humblie giue you leaue to depart, and if a merrie meeting may be wisht, God prohibite it: come neighbour

Leon. Vntill to morrow morning, Lords, farewell.

Exeunt.

Brot. Farewell my Lords, we looke for you to morrow

Prin. We will not faile

Clau. To night ile mourne with Hero

Leon. Bring you these fellowes on, weel talke with Margaret, How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.

Exeunt.

Enter Benedicke and Margaret.

Ben. Praie thee sweete Mistris Margaret, deserue well at my hands, by helping mee to the speech of Beatrice

Mar. Will you then write me a Sonnet in praise of my beautie?

Bene. In so high a stile Margaret, that no man liuing shall come ouer it, for in most comely truth thou deseruest it

Mar. To haue no man come ouer me, why, shall I alwaies keepe below staires?

Bene. Thy wit is as quicke as the grey-hounds mouth, it catches

Mar. And yours, as blunt as the Fencers foiles, which hit, but hurt not

Bene. A most manly wit Margaret, it will not hurt a woman: and so I pray thee call Beatrice, I giue thee the bucklers

Mar. Giue vs the swords, wee haue bucklers of our owne

Bene. If you vse them Margaret, you must put in the pikes with a vice, and they are dangerous weapons for Maides

Mar. Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I thinke hath legges.

Exit Margarite.

Ben. And therefore will come. The God of loue that sits aboue, and knowes me, and knowes me, how pittifull I deserue. I meane in singing, but in louing, Leander the good swimmer, Troilus the first imploier of pandars, and a whole booke full of these quondam carpet-mongers, whose name yet runne smoothly in the euen rode of a blanke verse, why they were neuer so truely turned ouer and ouer as my poore selfe in loue: marrie I cannot shew it rime, I haue tried, I can finde out no rime to Ladie but babie, an innocent rime: for scorne, horne, a hard rime: for schoole foole, a babling rime: verie ominous endings, no, I was not borne vnder a riming Plannet, for I cannot wooe in festiuall tearmes:  
Enter Beatrice.

sweete Beatrice would'st thou come when I cal'd thee?

Beat. Yea Signior, and depart when you bid me

Bene. O stay but till then

Beat. Then, is spoken: fare you well now, and yet ere I goe, let me goe with that I came, which is, with knowing what hath past betweene you and Claudio

Bene. Onely foule words, and thereupon I will kisse thee

Beat. Foule words is but foule wind, and foule wind is but foule breath, and foule breath is noisome, therefore I will depart vnkist

Bene. Thou hast frighted the word out of his right sence, so forcible is thy wit, but I must tell thee plainly, Claudio vndergoes my challenge, and either I must shortly heare from him, or I will subscribe him a coward, and I pray thee now tell me, for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in loue with me?

Beat. For them all together, which maintain'd so politique a state of euill, that they will not admit any good part to intermingle with them: but for which of my good parts did you first suffer loue for me?

Bene. Suffer loue! a good epithite, I do suffer loue indeede, for I loue thee against my will,

Beat. In spight of your heart I think, alas poore heart, if you spight it for my sake, I will spight it for yours, for I will neuer loue that which my friend hates

Bened. Thou and I are too wise to wooe peaceable

Bea. It appeares not in this confession, there's not one wise man among twentie that will praise himselfe

Bene. An old, an old instance Beatrice, that liu'd in the time of good neighbours, if a man doe not erect in this age his owne tombe ere he dies, hee shall liue no longer in monuments, then the Bels ring, & the Widdow weepes

Beat. And how long is that thinke you?

Ben. Question, why an hower in clamour and a quarter in rhewme, therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if Don worme (his conscience) finde no impediment to the contrarie, to be the trumpet of his owne vertues, as I am to my selfe so much for praising my selfe, who I my selfe will beare witness is praise worthie, and now tell me, how doth your cosin?

Beat. Verie ill

Bene. And how doe you?

Beat. Verie ill too.

Enter Vrsula.

Bene. Serue God, loue me, and mend, there will I leaue you too, for here comes one in haste

Vrs. Madam, you must come to your Vncle, yonders old coile at home, it is prooued my Ladie Hero hath bin falselie accusde, the Prince and Claudio mightilie abusde, and Don Iohn is the author of all, who is fled and gone: will you come presentlie?

Beat. Will you go heare this newes Signior?

Bene. I will liue in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eies: and moreouer, I will goe with thee to thy Vncles.

Exeunt.

Enter Claudio, Prince, and three or foure with Tapers.

Clau. Is this the monument of Leonato?

Lord. It is my Lord.

Epitaph.

Done to death by slanderous tongues,  
Was the Hero that here lies:  
Death in guerdon of her wrongs,  
Giues her fame which neuer dies:  
So the life that dyed with shame,  
Liues in death with glorious fame.  
Hang thou there vpon the tombe,  
Praising her when I am dombe

Clau. Now musick sound & sing your solemn hymne

Song.

Pardon goddesse of the night,

Those that slew thy virgin knight,  
For the which with songs of woe,  
Round about her tombe they goe:  
Midnight assist our mone, helpe vs to sigh and grone.  
Heauily, heauily.  
Graues yawne and yeelde your dead,  
Till death be vttered,  
Heauenly, heauenly

Lo. Now vnto thy bones good night, yeerely will I do this right

Prin. Good morrow masters, put your Torches out,  
The wolues haue preied, and looke, the gentle day  
Before the wheeles of Phoebus, round about  
Dapples the drowsie East with spots of grey:  
Thanks to you all, and leaue vs, fare you well

Clau. Good morrow masters, each his seuerall way

Prin. Come let vs hence, and put on other weedes,  
And then to Leonatoes we will goe

Clau. And Hymen now with luckier issue speeds,  
Then this for whom we rendred vp this woe.

Exeunt.

Enter Leonato, Bene. Marg. Vrsula, old man, Frier, Hero.

Frier. Did I not tell you she was innocent?

Leo. So are the Prince and Claudio who accus'd her,  
Vpon the error that you heard debated:  
But Margaret was in some fault for this,  
Although against her will as it appeares,  
In the true course of all the question

Old. Well, I am glad that all things sort so well

Bene. And so am I, being else by faith enforc'd  
To call young Claudio to a reckoning for it

Leo. Well daughter, and you gentlewomen all,  
Withdraw into a chamber by your selues,  
And when I send for you, come hither mask'd:  
The Prince and Claudio promis'd by this howre  
To visit me, you know your office Brother,  
You must be father to your brothers daughter,  
And giue her to young Claudio.

Exeunt. Ladies.

Old. Which I will doe with confirm'd countenance

Bene. Frier, I must intreat your paines, I thinke

Frier. To doe what Signior?

Bene. To binde me, or vndoe me, one of them:  
Signior Leonato, truth it is good Signior,  
Your neece regards me with an eye of fauour

Leo. That eye my daughter lent her, 'tis most true

Bene. And I doe with an eye of loue requite her

Leo. The sight whereof I thinke you had from me,  
From Claudio, and the Prince, but what's your will?

Bened. Your answer sir is Enigmaticall,  
But for my will, my will is, your good will  
May stand with ours, this day to be conioyn'd,  
In the state of honourable marriage,  
In which (good Frier) I shall desire your helpe

Leon. My heart is with your liking

Frier. And my helpe.  
Enter Prince and Claudio, with attendants.

Prin. Good morrow to this faire assembly

Leo. Good morrow Prince, good morrow Claudio:  
We heere attend you, are you yet determin'd,  
To day to marry with my brothers daughter?

Claud. Ile hold my minde were she an Ethiope

Leo. Call her forth brother, heres the Frier ready

Prin. Good morrow Benedicke, why what's the matter?  
That you haue such a Februarie face,  
So full of frost, of storme, and clowdinesse

Claud. I thinke he thinkes vpon the sauage bull:  
Tush, feare not man, wee'll tip thy hornes with gold,  
And all Europa shall reioyce at thee,  
As once Europa did at lusty loue,  
When he would play the noble beast in loue

Ben. Bull loue sir, had an amiable low,  
And some such strange bull leapt your fathers Cow,  
A got a Calfe in that same noble feat,  
Much like to you, for you haue iust his bleat.  
Enter brother, Hero, Beatrice, Margaret, Vrsula.

Cla. For this I owe you: here comes other recknings.  
Which is the Lady I must seize vpon?

Leo. This same is she, and I doe giue you her

Cla. Why then she's mine, sweet let me see your face

Leon. No that you shal not, till you take her hand,  
Before this Frier, and sweare to marry her

Clau. Giue me your hand before this holy Frier,  
I am your husband if you like of me

Hero. And when I liu'd I was your other wife,  
And when you lou'd, you were my other husband

Clau. Another Hero?

Hero. Nothing certainer.  
One Hero died, but I doe liue,  
And surely as I liue, I am a maid

Prin. The former Hero, Hero that is dead

Leon. Shee died my Lord, but whiles her slander liu'd

Frier. All this amazement can I qualifie,  
When after that the holy rites are ended,  
Ile tell you largely of faire Heroes death:  
Meane time let wonder seeme familiar,  
And to the chappell let vs presently

Ben. Soft and faire Frier, which is Beatrice?

Beat. I answer to that name, what is your will?

Bene. Doe not you loue me?

Beat. Why no, no more then reason

Bene. Why then your Vncle, and the Prince, & Claudio,  
haue beene deceiued, they swore you did

Beat. Doe not you loue mee?

Bene. Troth no, no more then reason

Beat. Why then my Cosin Margaret and Vrsula  
Are much deceiu'd, for they did sweare you did

Bene. They swore you were almost sicke for me

Beat. They swore you were wel-nye dead for me

Bene. 'Tis no matter, then you doe not loue me?

Beat. No truly, but in friendly recompence

Leon. Come Cosin, I am sure you loue the gentlema[n]

Clau. And Ile be sworne vpon't, that he loues her,  
For heres a paper written in his hand,  
A halting sonnet of his owne pure braine,  
Fashioned to Beatrice

Hero. And heeres another,  
Writ in my cosins hand, stolne from her pocket,  
Containing her affection vnto Benedicke

Bene. A miracle, here's our owne hands against our  
hearts: come I will haue thee, but by this light I take  
thee for pittie

Beat. I would not denie you, but by this good day, I  
yeeld vpon great perswasion, & partly to saue your life,  
for I was told, you were in a consumption

Leon. Peace I will stop your mouth

Prin. How dost thou Benedicke the married man?

Bene. Ile tell thee what Prince: a Colledge of witte-crackers  
cannot flout mee out of my humour, dost thou

think I care for a Satyre or an Epigram? no, if a man will be beaten with braines, a shall weare nothing handsome about him: in briefe, since I do purpose to marry, I will thinke nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it, and therefore neuer flout at me, for I haue said against it: for man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion: for thy part Claudio, I did thinke to haue beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, liue vnbruis'd, and loue my cousin

Cla. I had well hop'd y wouldst haue denied Beatrice, y I might haue cudgel'd thee out of thy single life, to make thee a double dealer, which out of questio[n] thou wilt be, if my Cousin do not looke exceeding narrowly to thee

Bene. Come, come, we are friends, let's haue a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts, and our wiues heeles

Leon. Wee'll haue dancing afterward

Bene. First, of my word, therefore play musick. Prince, thou art sad, get thee a wife, get thee a wife, there is no staff more reuerend then one tipt with horn.  
Enter. Mes.

Messen. My Lord, your brother Iohn is tane in flight, And brought with armed men backe to Messina

Bene. Thinke not on him till to morrow, ile devise thee braue punishments for him: strike vp Pipers.

Dance.

FINIS. Much adoe about Nothing.

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