

### **Excerpt 1**

BENEDICK If Signior Leonato be her father, she would  
not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina,  
as like him as she is.

BEATRICE I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior  
Benedick, nobody marks you. 115

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

BEATRICE Is it possible disdain should die while she  
hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick?  
Courtesy itself must convert to disdain if you come  
in her presence. 120

BENEDICK Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain  
I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted; and  
I would I could find in my heart that I had not a  
hard heart, for truly I love none. 125

BEATRICE A dear happiness to women. They would  
else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I  
thank God and my cold blood I am of your humor  
for that. I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow  
than a man swear he loves me. 130

BENEDICK God keep your Ladyship still in that mind,  
so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate  
scratched face.

BEATRICE Scratching could not make it worse an  
'twere such a face as yours were. 135

BENEDICK Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of  
yours.

BENEDICK I would my horse had the speed of your  
tongue and so good a continuer, but keep your  
way, i' God's name, I have done. 140

BEATRICE You always end with a jade's trick. I know  
you of old.

## Excerpt 2

PRINCE I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.  
BENEDICK With anger, with sickness, or with hunger,  
my lord, not with love. Prove that ever I lose more 245  
blood with love than I will get again with drinking,  
pick out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen and  
hang me up at the door of a brothel house for the  
sign of blind Cupid.  
PRINCE Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou 250  
wilt prove a notable argument.  
BENEDICK If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and  
shoot at me, and he that hits me, let him be clapped  
on the shoulder and called Adam.  
PRINCE Well, as time shall try. 255  
In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.  
BENEDICK The savage bull may, but if ever the sensible  
Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns and set  
them in my forehead, and let me be vilely painted,  
and in such great letters as they write "Here is good 260  
horse to hire" let them signify under my sign "Here  
you may see Benedick the married man."  
CLAUDIO If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be  
horn-mad.  
PRINCE Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in 265  
Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly.  
BENEDICK I look for an earthquake too, then.  
PRINCE Well, you will temporize with the hours. In the  
meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's.  
Commend me to him, and tell him I will not 270  
fail him at supper, for indeed he hath made great  
preparation.  
BENEDICK I have almost matter enough in me for such  
an embassage, and so I commit you—  
CLAUDIO To the tuition of God. From my house, if I had 275  
it—  
PRINCE The sixth of July. Your loving friend,  
Benedick.  
BENEDICK Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your  
discourse is sometimes guarded with fragments, 280  
and the guards are but slightly basted on neither.  
Ere you flout old ends any further, examine your  
conscience. And so I leave you. *He exits.*  
CLAUDIO  
My liege, your Highness now may do me good.  
PRINCE  
My love is thine to teach. Teach it but how, 285  
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn  
Any hard lesson that may do thee good.  
CLAUDIO  
Hath Leonato any son, my lord?  
PRINCE  
No child but Hero; she's his only heir.  
Dost thou affect her, Claudio? 290  
CLAUDIO O, my lord,

When you went onward on this ended action,  
 I looked upon her with a soldier's eye,  
 That liked, but had a rougher task in hand  
 Than to drive liking to the name of love. 295  
 But now I am returned and that war thoughts  
 Have left their places vacant, in their rooms  
 Come thronging soft and delicate desires,  
 All prompting me how fair young Hero is,  
 Saying I liked her ere I went to wars. 300

PRINCE  
 Thou wilt be like a lover presently  
 And tire the hearer with a book of words.  
 If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,  
 And I will break with her and with her father,  
 And thou shalt have her. Was 't not to this end 305  
 That thou began'st to twist so fine a story?

CLAUDIO  
 How sweetly you do minister to love,  
 That know love's grief by his complexion!  
 But lest my liking might too sudden seem,  
 I would have salved it with a longer treatise. 310

PRINCE  
 What need the bridge much broader than the flood?  
 The fairest grant is the necessity.  
 Look what will serve is fit. 'Tis once, thou lovest,  
 And I will fit thee with the remedy.  
 I know we shall have reveling tonight. 315  
 I will assume thy part in some disguise  
 And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,  
 And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart  
 And take her hearing prisoner with the force  
 And strong encounter of my amorous tale. 320  
 Then after to her father will I break,  
 And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.  
 In practice let us put it presently.

### **Excerpt 3**

CONRADE What the goodyear, my lord, why are you  
thus out of measure sad?

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

CONRADE You should hear reason. 5

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

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

DON JOHN I wonder that thou, being, as thou sayst thou 10  
art, born under Saturn, goest about to apply a moral  
medicine to a mortifying mischief. I cannot hide  
what I am. I must be sad when I have cause, and  
smile at no man's jests; eat when I have stomach,  
and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am 15  
drowsy, and tend on no man's business; laugh when  
I am merry, and claw no man in his humor.

CONRADE Yea, but you must not make the full show of  
this till you may do it without controlment. You  
have of late stood out against your brother, and he 20  
hath ta'en you newly into his grace, where it is  
impossible you should take true root but by the fair  
weather that you make yourself. It is needful that  
you frame the season for your own harvest.

DON JOHN I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a 25  
rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be  
disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob  
love from any. In this, though I cannot be said to be  
a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I  
am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a 30  
muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I  
have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my  
mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do  
my liking. In the meantime, let me be that I am, and  
seek not to alter me. 35

CONRADE Can you make no use of your discontent?

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

*Enter Borachio.*

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO I came yonder from a great supper. The 40  
Prince your brother is royally entertained by  
Leonato, and I can give you intelligence of an  
intended marriage.

DON JOHN Will it serve for any model to build mischief  
on? What is he for a fool that betroths himself to 45  
unquietness?

BORACHIO Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN Who, the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO Even he.

DON JOHN A proper squire. And who, and who? Which 50

way looks he?  
BORACHIO Marry, on Hero, the daughter and heir of  
Leonato.  
DON JOHN A very forward March chick! How came you  
to this? 55  
BORACHIO Being entertained for a perfumer, as I was  
smoking a musty room, comes me the Prince and  
Claudio, hand in hand, in sad conference. I  
whipped me behind the arras, and there heard it  
agreed upon that the Prince should woo Hero for  
himself, and having obtained her, give her to Count  
Claudio. 60  
DON JOHN Come, come, let us thither. This may prove  
food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath  
all the glory of my overthrow. If I can cross him any  
way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure, and  
will assist me? 65  
CONRADE To the death, my lord.  
DON JOHN Let us to the great supper. Their cheer is the  
greater that I am subdued. Would the cook were o'  
my mind! Shall we go prove what's to be done? 70  
BORACHIO We'll wait upon your Lordship.

*They exit.*

#### **Excerpt 4**

HERO No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful. 35  
I know her spirits are as coy and wild  
As haggards of the rock.

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

HERO  
So says the Prince and my new-trothèd lord. 40

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

HERO  
They did entreat me to acquaint her of it,  
But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick,  
To wish him wrestle with affection  
And never to let Beatrice know of it. 45

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

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

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

HERO  
Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,  
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,  
But she would spell him backward. If fair-faced,  
She would swear the gentleman should be her 65  
sister;  
If black, why, Nature, drawing of an antic,  
Made a foul blot; if tall, a lance ill-headed;  
If low, an agate very vilely cut;  
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds; 70  
If silent, why, a block moved with none.  
So turns she every man the wrong side out,  
And never gives to truth and virtue that  
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

URSULA  
Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable. 75

HERO  
No, not to be so odd and from all fashions  
As Beatrice is cannot be commendable.  
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,  
She would mock me into air. O, she would laugh

me 80

Out of myself, press me to death with wit.  
Therefore let Benedick, like covered fire,  
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly.  
It were a better death than die with mocks,  
Which is as bad as die with tickling. 85

URSULA

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

HERO

No, rather I will go to Benedick  
And counsel him to fight against his passion;  
And truly I'll devise some honest slanders  
To stain my cousin with. One doth not know 90  
How much an ill word may empoison liking.

URSULA

O, do not do your cousin such a wrong!  
She cannot be so much without true judgment,  
Having so swift and excellent a wit  
As she is prized to have, as to refuse 95  
So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

HERO

He is the only man of Italy,  
Always excepted my dear Claudio.

URSULA

I pray you be not angry with me, madam,  
Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedick, 100  
For shape, for bearing, argument, and valor,  
Goes foremost in report through Italy.

HERO

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA

His excellence did earn it ere he had it.  
When are you married, madam? 105

HERO

Why, every day, tomorrow. Come, go in.  
I'll show thee some attires and have thy counsel  
Which is the best to furnish me tomorrow.

### Excerpt 5

LEONATO What would you with me, honest neighbor?  
DOGBERRY Marry, sir, I would have some confidence  
with you that decerns you nearly.  
LEONATO Brief, I pray you, for you see it is a busy time  
with me. 5  
DOGBERRY Marry, this it is, sir.  
VERGES Yes, in truth, it is, sir.  
LEONATO What is it, my good friends?  
DOGBERRY Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little off the  
matter. An old man, sir, and his wits are not so blunt 10  
as, God help, I would desire they were, but, in faith,  
honest as the skin between his brows.  
VERGES Yes, I thank God I am as honest as any man  
living that is an old man and no honester than I.  
DOGBERRY Comparisons are odorous. *Palabras*, neighbor 15  
Verges.  
LEONATO Neighbors, you are tedious.  
DOGBERRY It pleases your Worship to say so, but we  
are the poor duke's officers. But truly, for mine  
own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find 20  
in my heart to bestow it all of your Worship.  
LEONATO All thy tediousness on me, ah?  
DOGBERRY Yea, an 'twere a thousand pound more  
than 'tis, for I hear as good exclamation on your  
Worship as of any man in the city, and though I be 25  
but a poor man, I am glad to hear it.  
VERGES And so am I.  
LEONATO I would fain know what you have to say.  
VERGES Marry, sir, our watch tonight, excepting your  
Worship's presence, ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant 30  
knaves as any in Messina.  
DOGBERRY A good old man, sir. He will be talking. As  
they say, "When the age is in, the wit is out." God  
help us, it is a world to see!—Well said, i' faith,  
neighbor Verges.—Well, God's a good man. An two 35  
men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. An  
honest soul, i' faith, sir, by my troth he is, as ever  
broke bread, but God is to be worshiped, all men  
are not alike, alas, good neighbor.  
LEONATO Indeed, neighbor, he comes too short of you. 40  
DOGBERRY Gifts that God gives.  
LEONATO I must leave you.  
DOGBERRY One word, sir. Our watch, sir, have indeed  
comprehended two aspicious persons, and we  
would have them this morning examined before 45  
your Worship.  
LEONATO Take their examination yourself and bring it  
me. I am now in great haste, as it may appear unto  
you.  
DOGBERRY It shall be suffigance. 50  
LEONATO Drink some wine ere you go. Fare you well.

*Enter a Messenger.*



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

LEONATO I'll wait upon them. I am ready.

*He exits, with the Messenger.*

DOGBERRY Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis 55  
Seacoal. Bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the  
jail. We are now to examination these men.

VERGES And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY We will spare for no wit, I warrant you.  
Here's that shall drive some of them to a noncome. 60  
Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication  
and meet me at the jail.

*They exit.*

## Excerpt 6

FRIAR Yea, wherefore should she not?

LEONATO

Wherefore? Why, doth not every earthly thing  
Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny  
The story that is printed in her blood?— 130  
Do not live, Hero, do not ope thine eyes,  
For, did I think thou wouldst not quickly die,  
Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames,  
Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches,  
Strike at thy life. Grieved I I had but one? 135  
Chid I for that at frugal Nature's frame?  
O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?  
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?  
Why had I not with charitable hand  
Took up a beggar's issue at my gates, 140  
Who, smirched thus, and mired with infamy,  
I might have said "No part of it is mine;  
This shame derives itself from unknown loins?"  
But mine, and mine I loved, and mine I praised,  
And mine that I was proud on, mine so much 145  
That I myself was to myself not mine,  
Valuing of her—why she, O she, is fall'n  
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea  
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,  
And salt too little which may season give 150  
To her foul tainted flesh!

BENEDICK Sir, sir, be patient.

For my part, I am so attired in wonder  
I know not what to say.

BEATRICE

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied! 155

BENEDICK

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE

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

LEONATO

Confirmed, confirmed! O, that is stronger made  
Which was before barred up with ribs of iron! 160  
Would the two princes lie and Claudio lie,  
Who loved her so that, speaking of her foulness,  
Washed it with tears? Hence from her. Let her die!

FRIAR Hear me a little,

For I have only silent been so long, 165  
And given way unto this course of fortune,  
By noting of the lady. I have marked  
A thousand blushing apparitions  
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames  
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes, 170  
And in her eye there hath appeared a fire  
To burn the errors that these princes hold  
Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool,  
Trust not my reading nor my observations,

Which with experimental seal doth warrant 175  
The tenor of my book; trust not my age,  
My reverence, calling, nor divinity,  
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here  
Under some biting error.

LEONATO Friar, it cannot be. 180  
Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left  
Is that she will not add to her damnation  
A sin of perjury. She not denies it.  
Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse  
That which appears in proper nakedness? 185

**Excerpt 7**

FRIAR

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

They know that do accuse me. I know none.

If I know more of any man alive

Than that which maiden modesty doth warrant,

Let all my sins lack mercy!—O my father,

Prove you that any man with me conversed

At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight

Maintained the change of words with any creature,

Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death!

### Excerpt 8

BENEDICK Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?  
BEATRICE Yea, and I will weep a while longer. 270  
BENEDICK I will not desire that.  
BEATRICE You have no reason. I do it freely.  
BENEDICK Surely I do believe your fair cousin is  
wronged.  
BEATRICE Ah, how much might the man deserve of me 275  
that would right her!  
BENEDICK Is there any way to show such friendship?  
BEATRICE A very even way, but no such friend.  
BENEDICK May a man do it?  
BEATRICE It is a man's office, but not yours. 280  
BENEDICK I do love nothing in the world so well as  
you. Is not that strange?  
BEATRICE As strange as the thing I know not. It were as  
possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you,  
but believe me not, and yet I lie not; I confess 285  
nothing, nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my  
cousin.  
BENEDICK By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me!  
BEATRICE Do not swear and eat it.  
BENEDICK I will swear by it that you love me, and I will 290  
make him eat it that says I love not you.  
BEATRICE Will you not eat your word?  
BENEDICK With no sauce that can be devised to it. I  
protest I love thee.  
BEATRICE Why then, God forgive me. 295  
BENEDICK What offense, sweet Beatrice?  
BEATRICE You have stayed me in a happy hour. I was  
about to protest I loved you.  
BENEDICK And do it with all thy heart.  
BEATRICE I love you with so much of my heart that 300  
none is left to protest.  
BENEDICK Come, bid me do anything for thee.  
BEATRICE Kill Claudio.  
BENEDICK Ha! Not for the wide world.  
BEATRICE You kill me to deny it. Farewell. 305  
*She begins to exit.*  
BENEDICK Tarry, sweet Beatrice.  
BEATRICE I am gone, though I am here. There is no  
love in you. Nay, I pray you let me go.  
BENEDICK Beatrice—  
BEATRICE In faith, I will go. 310  
BENEDICK We'll be friends first.  
BEATRICE You dare easier be friends with me than  
fight with mine enemy.  
BENEDICK Is Claudio thine enemy?  
BEATRICE Is he not approved in the height a villain 315  
that hath slandered, scorned, dishonored my kinswoman?  
O, that I were a man! What, bear her in  
hand until they come to take hands, and then, with  
public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated  
rancor—O God, that I were a man! I would eat his 320

heart in the marketplace.  
BENEDICK Hear me, Beatrice—  
BEATRICE Talk with a man out at a window! A proper  
saying.  
BENEDICK Nay, but Beatrice— 325  
BEATRICE Sweet Hero, she is wronged, she is slandered,  
she is undone.  
BENEDICK Beat—  
BEATRICE Princes and counties! Surely a princely testimony,  
a goodly count, Count Comfect, a sweet 330  
gallant, surely! 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 curtsies, valor into  
compliment, and men are only turned into tongue,  
and trim ones, too. He is now as valiant as Hercules 335  
that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man  
with wishing; therefore I will die a woman with  
grieving.  
BENEDICK Tarry, good Beatrice. By this hand, I love  
thee. 340  
BEATRICE Use it for my love some other way than  
swearing by it.  
BENEDICK Think you in your soul the Count Claudio  
hath wronged Hero?  
BEATRICE Yea, as sure as I have a thought or a soul. 345  
BENEDICK Enough, I am engaged. I will challenge  
him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By  
this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account.  
As you hear of me, so think of me. Go comfort your  
cousin. I must say she is dead, and so farewell. 350  
*They exit.*