The happy ending all round

PRINCE — Good morrow to this fair assembly.

LEONATO — Good morrow, prince; good morrow, Claudio.
We here attend you. Are you yet determined
Today to marry with my brother's daughter?

CLAUDIO — I'll hold my mind were she an Ethiope.

LEONATO — Call her forth, brother. Here's the Friar ready.

[Antonio exits.]

PRINCE — Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what's the matter
That you have such a February face,
So full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness?

CLAUDIO — I think he thinks upon the savage bull.
Tush, fear not, man. We'll tip thy horns with gold,
And all Europa shall rejoice at thee,
As once Europa did at lusty Jove
When he would play the noble beast in love.

BENEDICK — Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low,
And some such strange bull leapt your father's cow
And got a calf in that same noble feat
Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.

CLAUDIO — For this I owe you. Here comes other reck'nings.

[Enter Leonato's brother, Hero, Beatrice, Margaret, Ursula, the ladies masked.]

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

LEONATO — This same is she, and I do give you her.

CLAUDIO — Why, then, she's mine. –
Sweet, let me see your face.

LEONATO — No, that you shall not till you take her hand
Before this friar and swear to marry her.

CLAUDIO [to Hero] — Give me your hand before this holy friar.

[They take hands.]

I am your husband, if you like of me.

HERO — And when I lived, I was your other wife,
And when you loved, you were my other husband.

[She unmasks.]

CLAUDIO — Another Hero!

HERO — Nothing certainer.
One Hero died defiled, but I do live,
And surely as I live, I am a maid.

PRINCE — The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

LEONATO — She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived.

FRIAR — All this amazement can I qualify,
When after that the holy rites are ended,
I'll tell you largely of fair Hero's death.
Meantime let wonder seem familiar,
And to the chapel let us presently.

BENEDICK — Soft and fair, friar. – Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE *[unmasking]* — I answer to that name. What is your will?

BENEDICK — Do not you love me?

BEATRICE — Why no, no more than reason.

BENEDICK — Why then, your uncle and the Prince and Claudio
Have been deceived. They swore you did.

BEATRICE — Do not you love me?

BENEDICK — Troth, no, no more than reason.

BEATRICE — Why then, my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula
Are much deceived, for they did swear you did.

BENEDICK — They swore that you were almost sick for me.

BEATRICE — They swore that you were well-nigh dead for me.

BENEDICK — 'Tis no such matter. Then you do not love me?

BEATRICE — No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

LEONATO — Come, cousin, I am sure you love the gentleman.

CLAUDIO — And I'll be sworn upon 't that he loves her,
For here's a paper written in his hand,
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
Fashioned to Beatrice.

[He shows a paper.]

HERO — And here's another,
Writ in my cousin's hand, stol'n from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto Benedick.

[She shows a paper.]

BENEDICK — A miracle! Here's our own hands against our hearts. Come, I will have thee, but by this light I take thee for pity.

BEATRICE — I would not deny you, but by this good day, I yield upon great persuasion, and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption.

BENEDICK — Peace! I will stop your mouth.

[They kiss.]

PRINCE — How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK — I'll tell thee what, prince: a college of wit-crackers cannot flout me out of my humour. Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram? No. If a man will be beaten with brains, he shall wear nothing handsome about him. In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it, and therefore never

flout at me for what I have said against it. For man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion. – For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised, and love my cousin.

CLAUDIO I had well hoped thou wouldst have denied Beatrice, that I might have cudgelled thee out of thy single life, to make thee a double-dealer, which out of question thou wilt be, if my cousin do not look exceeding narrowly to thee.

BENEDICK Come, come, we are friends. Let's have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts and our wives' heels.

LEONATO We'll have dancing afterward.

BENEDICK First, of my word! Therefore play, music. – Prince, thou art sad. Get thee a wife, get thee a wife. There is no staff more reverend than one tipped with horn.