

## 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 Ethiopie.

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 unmask.]*

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.