

ACT 3

Scene 1

Enter Hero and two gentlewomen, Margaret and Ursula.

HERO

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor.
There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice
Proposing with the Prince and Claudio.
Whisper her ear and tell her I and Ursula
Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse 5
Is all of her. Say that thou overheardst us,
And bid her steal into the pleachèd bower
Where honeysuckles ripened by the sun
Forbid the sun to enter, like favorites,
Made proud by princes, that advance their pride 10
Against that power that bred it. There will she hide
her
To listen our propose. This is thy office.
Bear thee well in it, and leave us alone.

MARGARET

I'll make her come, I warrant you, presently. 15
She exits.

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
As we do trace this alley up and down,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit. 20
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay. Now begin,
For look where Beatrice like a lapwing runs 25
Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

Enter Beatrice, who hides in the bower.

URSULA, *aside to Hero*

The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream
And greedily devour the treacherous bait.
So angle we for Beatrice, who even now 30
Is couchèd in the woodbine coverture.
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

HERO, *aside to Ursula*

Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.—
They walk near the bower.
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.
They move away from the bower.

URSULA, *aside to Hero*
 She's limed, I warrant you. We have caught her,
 madam. 110

HERO, *aside to Ursula*
 If it prove so, then loving goes by haps;
 Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.
Hero and Ursula exit.

BEATRICE, *coming forward*
 What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
 Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?
 Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu! 115
 No glory lives behind the back of such.
 And Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
 Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.
 If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
 To bind our loves up in a holy band. 120
 For others say thou dost deserve, and I
 Believe it better than reportingly.

She exits.

Scene 2

Enter Prince, Claudio, Benedick, and Leonato.

PRINCE I do but stay till your marriage be consummate,