The Complete Works of Shakespeare

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Edited by

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Enter [as maskers] Prince [Don] Pedro, Claudio, and Benedick, and Balthasar, [Borachio],
and Don John.

DON PEDRO Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?

[The couples pair off for the dance.]

HERO So you walk softly and speak sweetly and say nothing, I am yours for the walk, and especially when I walk away.

DON PEDRO With me in your company?

HERO I may say so, when I please.

DON PEDRO And when please you to say so?

HERO When I like your favor, for God defend the lute should be like the case!

DON PEDRO My visor is Philemon’s roof; within the house is Jove.

HERO Why, then, your visor should be thatched.

DON PEDRO Speak low, if you speak love.

BALTHASAR Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET So would not I for your own sake, for I have many ill qualities.

BALTHASAR Which is one?

MARGARET I say my prayers aloud.

BALTHASAR I love you the better. The hearers may cry Amen.

MARGARET God match me with a good dancer!

MARGARET Amen.

MARGARET And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done! Answer, clerk.

BALTHASAR No more words. The clerk is answered.

URSULA I know you well enough. You are Signor Antonio.

ANTONIO At a word, I am not.

URSULA I know you by the wagging of your head.

ANTONIO To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA You could never do him so ill-well unless you were the very man. Here’s his dry hand up and down. You are he, you are he.

ANTONIO At a word, I am not.

URSULA Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? Can virtue hide itself? Go to, mum, you are he. Graces will appear, and there’s an end.

[They dance to one side.]

37 In earnest in token advance payment for. beaward one who keeps and exhibits a bear (and sometimes apes). 37–8 lead . . . hell (An ancient proverb says, “Such as do madis do all lead apes in hell.”) 44 for the heavens (A common interjection, like “God heav-
45 earth” but here also carrying its literal meaning, i.e., bound for heaven.) 45 bachelors unmarried persons of either sex 55 metal substance. (With play on “meris.”) 58 man clay earth (such as was used by God to make Adam in Genesis 2). 59–60 Adam’s . . . kin-
61 dered (Beatrice jests that since men and women are all descended from Adam, it would be incestuous for her to marry a man.) 62 In that kind to that effect (i.e., to marriage). 65 in good time (1) soon (2) in 66 time to the music, rhythmically. 66 important importunate, urgent. measure (1) moderation (2) rhythm, dance 68–9 a measure a formal dance 69 cinquepace five-step lively dance, galliard. (The pun on “sink space,” as it was pronounced, is evident in lines 72–4: repentance will sink faster and faster, with a suggestion of detumescence.) 72–3 state and ancestry dignity and traditional staleness 73 apprehend passing shrewdly understand with unusual perspicacity. 76–7 see . . . daylight i.e., see something as plain as the nose on your face. 80 walk a bout take a turn, join in a section of a dance. (Here probably a slow, stately pavane.) 81 friend woer. 88 favor face 89–9 God . . . case i.e., God forbid the face within should be unhandsome as its cover. your visor. 90 Philemon’s roof i.e., the humble cottage in which the peasants Philemon and Bala-
91 tians entertained Jove, or Jupiter, unaware of. (See Ovid, Metamorphoses, 8.) 93–4 I . . . love (A fourteen-syllable rhymed couplet, the verse form of Arthur Golding’s translation of the Metamorphoses, 1567.) 92 visor mask. thatched i.e., whiskered, to resemble the thatch of a humble cottage. 94–95 BALTHASAR (The speech prefixes in the Quarto text for Balthasar’s lines read Benv. and Balth. Some editors speculate that Benchio is intended.) 104 clerk (So addressed because of Balthasar’s repeatedly answering “Amen” like the parish clerk saying the responses.) 110 At a word In short 111 do . . . ill-well imitate his imperfections so perfectly. 112 dry hand (A sign of age.) up and down up exactly. 116 mum be silent 117–18 an end no more to be said.
DON PEDRO Now, signor, where's the Count? Did you see him?

BENEDICK Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame. I found him here as melancholy as a lodiage in a warren. I told him, and I think I told him true, that your Grace had got the good will of this young lady, and I offered him my company to a walk through, either to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipped.

DON PEDRO To be whipped! What's his fault?

BENEDICK The flat transgression of a schoolboy, whom, being overjoyed with finding a bird's nest, shows it his companion, and he steals it.

DON PEDRO Why, then make a trust a transgression? The transgression is in the stealer.

BENEDICK Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been made, and the garland too; for the garland he might have worn himself, and the rod he might have bestowed on you, who, as I take it, have stolen his bird's nest.

DON PEDRO I will but teach them to sing and restore them to the owner.

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

DON PEDRO The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you. The gentleman that danced with her told her she is much wronged by you.

BENEDICK Oh, she misused me past the endurance of a block! An oak but with one green leaf on it would have answered my very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the Prince's jestor, that I was duller than a great thaw; huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her; she would infect to the North Star. I vow I would not marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed. She would have made Hermes have turned spit, yea, and have left his club to make the fire, too. Come, talk not of her. You shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her, for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary, and people sin upon purpose because they would go thither; so indeed all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follows her.

Enter Claudio and Beatrice.

DON PEDRO Look, here she comes.

BENEDICK Will Your Grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on; I will fetch you a toothpick now from the furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester John's foot, fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard, do you any embassage to the Pygmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO None but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK Oh, God, sir, here's a dish I love not! I cannot endure my Lady Tongue.

DON PEDRO Come, lady, come, you have lost the heart of Signor Benedick.

BEATRICE Indeed, my lord, he lent me it awhile, and I gave him use for it, a double heart for his single one. Marry, once before he won it of me with false dice; therefore Your Grace may well say I have lost it.

DON PEDRO You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.

BEATRICE So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools. I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seek.

DON PEDRO Why, how now, Count? Wherefore are you said?

CLAUDIO Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO How then? Sick?

CLAUDIO Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE The Count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, nor well; but civil count, civil as an orange, and something of that jealous complexion.

DON PEDRO Faith, lady, I think your blazon to be true, though I'll be sworn, he he is false, his conceit is false. Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair scholar... conjure (Scholars were supposed to be able to conjure evil spirits back into hell by addressing them in Latin.) 246 here i.e., on earth. (As long as Beatrice is on earth, hell will seem like a place of refuge.) 235 Antipodes people and region on the opposite side of the earth 244 toothpick toothpick 253 Prester John a legendary Christian king of the Far East 254 great Cham the Khan of Tartary, ruler of the Mongols 257 Pygmies legendary small race thought to live in India. 258 harpy legendary creature with a woman's face and body and a bird's wings and claws. 259-7 he... dice (Beatrice refers seemingly to a previous courtesey in which she feels that Benedick prevailed over her unfairly, in return for which she now has paid him back with use or interest, two to one.) 269 put him down got the better of him. (But Beatrice plays with the phrase in its literal and sexual sense.) 260 civil serious, grave. (Fanning on Sentin for the city in Spain whence came bitter-tasting oranges.) 260-1 something somewhat 281 jealous complexion, i.e., yellow, associated with melanocholy and symbolic of jealousy. 282 blazon description. (A heraldic term.) 283 conceal (1) notion, idea (2) heraldic device. (Continuing the metaphor of blazon.)
1126-1166 • 1167-1203

HERO
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

UESULA
So says the Prince and my new-trotthe lord.

UESULA
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.

UESULA
Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman
Deserve as full as fortune 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;
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
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endear'd.

UESULA
Sure I think so,
And therefore certainly it were not good
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 sister;
If black, why, Nature, drawing of an antic,
Made a fool blot; if tall, a lance ill-headed;
If low, an agate very vily cut;
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
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.

UESULA
Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO
No, not to be so odd and from all fashions
As Beatrice is not commendable.
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
She wouldmock me into air; oh, she would laugh me
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.

UESULA
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
How much an ill word may empoison liking.

UESULA
Oh, 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
So rare a gentleman as Signor Benedick.

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

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

HERO
Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

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

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.

UESULA [to Hero]
She's limed, I warrant you. We have caught her,
madam.

HERO [to Ursula]
If it prove so, then loving goes by haps;
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

UESULA [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!
No glory lives behind the back of such,
And Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.

[Exeunt Hero and Ursula.]

UESULA
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.

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