

DOUBLE HEART  
(THE COURTSHIP OF  
BEATRICE AND BENEDICK)

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A romantic comedy by  
David Hansen

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

DON PEDRO, 30.

BENEDICK, 18.

PENE, 40.

VIRGINIA, 16.

BEATRICE, 16.

VALENTINE, 28.

PAGE, 10.

SECUNDO, 50.

## CHARACTER DOUBLING ASSIGNMENTS

Man 1            DON PEDRO, PENE, VALENTINE,  
                      SECUNDO

Man 2            BENEDICK

Woman 1        VIRGINIA, PAGE

Woman 2        BEATRICE

## SETTING

Messina, Italy. 1571.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Double Heart (The Courtship of Beatrice and Benedick)* received its world premiere as an Educational Outreach Tour for Great Lakes Theater in Cleveland, Ohio, February 2013, directed by Lisa Ortenzi. The cast and company for the production was as follows:

Benedick – James Rankin  
Beatrice – Emily Pucell  
Don Pedro (et al) – David Hansen  
Virginia (et al) – Annie Hickey

Rehearsal Stage Manager – Diana Lehotsky  
Set and Property Design – Terry Martin  
Costume Design – Esther Montgomery Haberlen  
Sound Design – Richard Ingraham  
Dance Choreographer – Carli Taylor Miluk  
Fight Choreographer – Kelly Elliott

Producing Artistic Director – Charles Fee  
Production Manager – Chris Flinchum  
Education Director – Daniel Hahn  
Education Associate – Kelly Schaffer Florian

*Double Heart (The Courtship of Beatrice and Benedick)* was presented by The New York International Fringe Festival, a production of The Present Company, featuring the original company and design, in New York City, August 2013.

**DON PEDRO:** *Come, lady, come; you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.*

**BEATRICE:** *Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile; and I gave him use for it, a double heart for a single one.*

**- Much Ado About Nothing (II.i)**

**PROLOGUE**

*(Enter DON PEDRO.)*

**DON PEDRO:** Perhaps, dear friends, you know a set of foes,  
The kind who quarrel ever without cease?  
They tire their friends with all their angry prose,  
And never give each other any peace.

But did you ever think to ask, but why?  
How did such rancor come between these two?  
Is there some missing piece from their lifes' pie  
Which, if t'were known, would be a toothsome clue?

Young lovers twain descend to bitter rage  
Which, as years pass, become a kind of game.  
Attend the one-hour traffic of our stage,  
A tale of love and joy, betrayal and shame.

For never was romance more full of secrets  
Than this 'twixt Benedick and Beatrice.

## INTRODUCTION

*(Messina, Italy. Fifteen years earlier.)*

*(Enter BENEDICK.)*

**BENEDICK:** Messina! Fair Sicilian burgh, at last!  
From northern climes I've soldiered, twice enlisted  
To defend this federated kingdom,  
Italy. But leaving Padua  
I've never yet encountered sun so bright,  
Air so fresh and salty from the sea,  
The sight and scent of citrus, hanging low.  
If I must rest and recreate abroad,  
Why then, Messina is the place for me!  
PENE!

*(Enter PENE, with many heavy bags.)*

**PENE:** Good Bennydict...swee' Bennydict...

**BENEDICK:** That's me!

**PENE:** Ye bastard! What great weight, or stone  
Did ye put in these 'fore we disembark'd?

**BENEDICK:** Pene, did you agree to game with me?

**PENE:** Yeh, buh—

**BENEDICK:** And did you not fall short of cash?

**PENE:** Yeh, buh—

**BENEDICK:** And rather than default before  
The captain, company and all the men,  
Did you agree to be my personal slave,  
Perform my bidding and my will no matter  
What I ask, you'll have it so?

**PENE:** Oi did.

**BENEDICK:** So take my kit without complaint unto  
The barracks, unpack my things, turn down my bed  
Clean off my boots then stand and wait 'till I  
Can think of something else that needs be done.

**PENE:** May Oi, without request, relieve mesel'?

**BENEDICK:** Of course not, you must sing the privy  
song.

**PENE:** Alas! It's best Oi sing it fas', aiete?  
Since mess Oi've 'ad a thund'rous call of nature.

**BENEDICK:** I'll join you.

**BENEDICK:** *(Singing:)*

There is nothing quite  
obscene –

As burning in the anger'd

spleen –

Then charging towards the

old latrine –

And hope to care of things,

unseen –

*(Enter VIRGINIA.)*

**PENE:** And now Oi really needs mus' go.

**BENEDICK:** Not yet.

**PENE:** Good sir, me waterworks are horrid tax'd

And soon me wretched pipes will burst.

**BENEDICK:** Young miss!

**VIRGINIA:** Who me?

**BENEDICK:** Sir dingle-seed and I desire to find

The billet of Madonna of the Letter

Where we may check our martial and rest



Before we join the blessed urban throng.

**VIRGINIA:** Direct you to that place I can, but first  
Your footling man appears in great distress.

**PENE:** Permission sir, oi must evacuate.

**BENEDICK:** Say first the magic phrase before you go.

**PENE:** Exalted Bennydict—

**BENEDICK:** Much louder.

**PENE:** EXALTED BENNYDICK, MASTER OF  
THE SEA AND LAND, BENEFICENT MARQUIS,  
MOST DOUGHTY AND DIVINE—

**BENEDICK:** T'll serve.

*(Pene starts to go.)*

Just one thing more.

**PENE:** Uh-huh?

**BENEDICK:** Be sure to steam  
My pants.

**PENE:** Why not? Oi'm steaming mine righ' now.

*(Exit Pene.)*

**BENEDICK:** You must excuse my minion. He's Tedescan.

**VIRGINIA:** *(Watching Pene go:)* O dear, he's gone in the  
basilica.

**BENEDICK:** To whom am I indebted?

**VIRGINIA:** I am Virginia.

**BENEDICK:** And is it custom in these parts for ladies  
As yourself to walk alone?

**VIRGINIA:** My, no!

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My neighbor was accomp'nying me this morn  
To market, an' as we were going to part  
'Greed to meet here fore the Sanctuary.  
And here I am, but she cannot be found.

**BENEDICK:** And is your friend as charming as yourself?

**VIRGINIA:** Who, Beatrice?

**BENEDICK:** If that's her name.

**VIRGINIA:** Depends on what you like, I guess.

**BENEDICK:** Do tell.

**VIRGINIA:** Good sir, if you would slip a little near,  
I could a tale do tell of my good friend  
To set your ears ablaze. Nay, closer. Closer.  
Closer still!

**BENEDICK:** If I were any closer,  
I'd be behind you.

**VIRGINIA:** Ha ha! You clever man.

**BENEDICK:** It seems you've lost the thread of our nice chat.  
This friend, this Beatrice?

**VIRGINIA:** O, her. She reads.

**BENEDICK:** So and?

**VIRGINIA:** That's all.

**BENEDICK:** That's all?

**VIRGINIA:** Is't not enough?  
Whenever not in school, or at her wheel  
Or safe in prayer, she's peering at a book.

**BENEDICK:** Ah boring, is she now?

**VIRGINIA:** Ay me, I wish!

A pointed tongue she's got, that one, it comes  
From all that learnin'! Mind, I think she's bitter,  
At her age, that not a man in town  
Has got the nerve to court her.

**BENEDICK:** A spinster's age?

**VIRGINIA:** You fiend, she's not! Why she's as young as me.  
Both of an age, born sixteen years last June.

**BENEDICK:** I see.

**VIRGINIA:** And you? Your wife would not approve  
To see you here with me exchanging tales.

**BENEDICK:** Till now the tales have all gone but one way.  
But if you care a wife I do not have,  
Nor have pursued, nor in three years I have  
Soldiered far and wide have I look'd twice  
Upon a single girl.

**VIRGINIA:** Do you like men?

**BENEDICK:** Of course, that must be why.

**VIRGINIA:** I will not tell.

**BENEDICK:** Excuse me if I find it hard to buy,  
That any word of gossip cross your path  
Without it making way throughout the town  
With fleetness like the plague afflicting sheep.  
But I will state that I like women –

**VIRGINIA:** O!

**BENEDICK:** And yet I don't like you.

**VIRGINIA:** Ha ha! You jest.

**BENEDICK:** Ha.

**VIRGINIA:** Ha ha!

**BENEDICK:** Ha ha ha!

**VIRGINIA:** Ha ha ha!

**BENEDICK:** No.

**VIRGINIA:** I see. But as a gentleman you'd not  
Refuse to see a lady to the market  
Considering her consort stood her up?

**BENEDICK:** As a gentleman, I will.

*(They exit. Enter BEATRICE and VALENTINE.)*

**BEATRICE:** Good signor Valentine, my thanks to you,  
An escort I no longer need. My schoolmate  
That I told you of, she should be here,  
And if not now, then soon, and if not soon,  
Then...well. The day is high, the crowd is thick,  
And I can manage well all by myself.

**VALENTINE:** It would not suit an officer to leave you  
On your own amongst the gath'ring swarm.  
They that soldiers from the North arrive,  
And such a bawdy tale of them I've heard,  
Not to repeat to such a one as you,  
A lady fair, and young and unpolluted.

**BEATRICE:** Kind sir, you have walk'd with me now for five  
And forty minutes. In that time remark'd  
Once and again about my beauty, youth  
And state of my virginity.

**VALENTINE:** I say!

**BEATRICE:** You bore me, sir. And I would sooner be  
Assaulted by a randy horde of Romans  
Then have to listen to another sermon  
From you, sir.

**VALENTINE:** I know not what to say.

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**BEATRICE:** I know. So best say naught at all, agreed?

*(Enter Benedick and Virginia.)*

**VIRGINIA:** And there she is!

**BENEDICK:** My old friend Valentine!

**VALENTINE:** Is that young Benedick?

**BENEDICK:** Not so young  
As when we fought to drive out Old French Henry!

**BEATRICE:** Praise be, instead to serve Old Spanish Phil.

**BENEDICK:** Forgive me, miss, we've yet been introduced.

**VALENTINE:** Sir Benedick, may I present the lady  
Beatrice? Her father, Lord Secundo,  
Governor of all Messina.

**VIRGINIA:** Ahem.

**BENEDICK:** Good Valentine, my Veronese compadre,  
Is Miss Virginia...whose father I know not.

**BEATRICE:** Well, that's all one, for nor does anyone else.

*(Benedick laughs.)*

**VIRGINIA:** Thou hurtful vile-mare!

**VALENTINE:** O, I must concur.  
How could you be so cruel to one as fair  
As this fresh pompon that I see before me?

*(Valentine takes Virginia's hand in greeting.)*

**VIRGINIA:** Sir Valentine, my avocation stays.  
This Beatrice and I had planned to do  
Our marketing as one, but I think my way  
Were better metéd with a boy like you.

**VALENTINE:** Why not? Good Benedick and Beatrice,

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We shall leave you.

**VIRGINIA:** In company, perhaps,  
They'll tire, bandying word for word.  
Good day, O Signor Sass and Mistress Mouth.

*(Exit Valentine and Virginia.)*

**BENEDICK:** A 'pompon'? What the hell?

**BEATRICE:** They suit each other.

**BENEDICK:** A suit, you say? As he's a jack who should  
Be spade?

**BEATRICE:** An' she a queen who should be clubb'd.

**BENEDICK:** The deuce you say.

**BEATRICE:** A pair of aces.

**BENEDICK:** Jack-aces!

**BEATRICE:** You are a pretty boy, sir Benedick.  
T'would appear you're hurting for a beard.

**BENEDICK:** What this?  
These bristles have I cultivatéd nigh  
These eighteen years.

**BEATRICE:** How old are you?

**BENEDICK:** Eighteen.

**BEATRICE:** So young?

**BENEDICK:** And yet so old, a soldier now  
For three.

**BEATRICE:** An' have you taken many lives?

**BENEDICK:** It's not a tale to tell to gentle maids,  
With constitutions weak and quick to blanch.

**BEATRICE:** And I?

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**BENEDICK:** O you, I'll gladly tell.

**BEATRICE:** O yay!

**BENEDICK:** When first I join'd the service, a lank recruit,  
'Twas sent as part of ten brigades to high  
Old Monte Carmo, facing Genoa.  
The French, determin'd not to lose the rich  
Salt Road. They held Torriglia, but Spain  
Was waiting in the sea, one hundred ships,  
The Great Good Navy sat.

**BEATRICE:** Were you not afeared?

**BENEDICK:** Was I afeared? I could have passed a brick.  
And what I saw that morn I'll ne'er forget.  
We took the lead, a sacrificial flank,  
Those red and dewey privates, we. My friends,  
What friends I'd made in that short time, all lost.  
A trio, fresh from Padua; there's me,  
Stout Thaddeus, he barely made it o'er  
The bluff before the Spanish cannon made  
A paste of him. But cherished most of all,  
Was Amadeo, eldest son of our  
Lord Mayor. I'd never cared for amity.  
Not one to get too close. But from the day  
We met, for training in the Eugenean,  
He made a certain aim of me, and would  
Not rest until he made me smile.  
Says he, "I have the power to make a man  
A sooth-sayer, and all that it will cost  
Is twenty lira." Says I, "All's one, you're on."  
He puts into my hand a small, round pellet,  
Says "Bite on this and you can tell the truth."  
Into my mouth I popped the ball and bit  
Down hard and spat it out again. "That's shite!"

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Says I, and he goes, "Truer word was never  
Spoke! Now where's my twenty lira?"

*(Beatrice laughs.)*

**BENEDICK:** Amadeo. Amadeo. Amadeo.  
He was my man. We were like brothers.  
But on that day we stormed the hill, as one  
I turned to see that he had gone, like that.  
A chasm where his chest had been, I knew  
Not what to think or feel or do, took one  
Step toward him, then away. Looked out, looked up.  
There was a lad, and from his hat I'd say  
That he was from Merano. And face to face,  
We scream'd, deep havok all around.  
His eyes were blue as mine, his height as kind.  
The diff'rence was he froze where I did not;  
I ran him through up to my hilt.

**BEATRICE:** O my.

**BENEDICK:** That day was ours. But I will ne'er forget  
The manner which the blaze within those spheres  
Did flash and start, then dull and die, as embers do  
When they give up their light at last  
And cool to worthless dust.

**BEATRICE:** Poor Benedick,  
A face so smooth, with yet a soul so hard.  
Do you no longer scare?

**BENEDICK:** There's but one thing  
Can shake my breast, I'm full shot-through with coolness.

**BEATRICE:** And but one thing? Could that one thing be love?

**BENEDICK:** A thoughtful girl, you are, young Beatrice  
As long as all that lives must die, indeed.  
To love would be too much to risk.

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**BEATRICE:** It is  
A fearful thing to love what death can touch.  
Amadeo—

**BENEDICK:** No, please. Do not speak of him.

**BEATRICE:** The sun is high, the best already gone,  
If we not get to market soon.

**BENEDICK:** O, we?

**BEATRICE:** You would not leave a lady so, to walk  
All on her own, would you?

**BENEDICK:** Direct my course.

*(He offers his arm. They exit.)*

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 INVITATION SCENE

*(A street.)*

*(Enter Pene, hungover.)*

**PENE:** Me carapace could splinter inna thousand  
 Bits this morn for alla transubstantiations  
 Heap'd upon it. Oi! Wass this?  
 A letter posted inna barracks: *[reads]*  
 "Fer estimation and in exultation,  
 Of those good men among us now who toil  
 T'bring sweet harmony and peace to all — "  
 (That's us, the soldiers, Oi do think they mean,  
 We who make peace by cracking foreign skulls.)  
 "A 'satur-nalia' gay we do proclaim  
 Set fer the date two weeks since when arriv'd  
 Great soldiers they, arriving from th'North."  
 A fortnight since arr squadron made the scene?  
 Why that's tonight! "Drink an' sup fer all!"  
 O that's fer me! Oi'd ne'er refuse a dinner  
 Offered freely, only a fool'd do that.  
 Oi mus' be shor t'keep me wits about  
 And only let my cup be full on every  
 Second pass. We do not want repeat  
 Of last week-end when Oi were dredged up from  
 The Fountain. Twice. What if a lady asks t'dance?  
 "Good sar," quoth she, "Would ye come bend yer leg?"  
 Oi could pavon. Oi may de-mark. An' piss,  
 An' piss, an' double-piss, if that will surve.  
 True, Oi'm a dancer much declined, buh still...  
 Ye have t'dance with them what brung you. If that's  
 The fee fer entrance to the feast, then dance  
 Oi will!

*(Pene exits.)*

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## FOUNTAIN SCENE

*(Fontana Di Orione.)*

*(Enter Benedick and Valentine, with Beatrice and Virginia.)*

*(Music from the dance can still be heard in the nearby piazza.  
The quartet is drunk with happiness, and flush from the dance.)*

**VALENTINE:** Friend Benedick, have you no mem'ry of  
The time when we last danc'd with girls so full  
Of spirit, bless'd with grace and style, and dare  
I say it, shined so lovely in the full  
Moonlight?

**BEATRICE:** 'Shining' say you now, do you?  
Perhaps you'd like to tell a lass exactly  
What you mean by that?

**VIRGINIA:** Perhaps that Diane's  
Beams alight upon our countenance,  
Reflecting back to her the glory of her  
Vict'ry over Orion's heart and soul?

**BENEDICK:** In truth, my dear, I think he means you sweat.

**VIRGINIA:** *(Laughing:)* How dare!

**BENEDICK:** You needn't act offended, Ginny.  
For perspiration is an element  
Divine; indeed, the humor most sublime.

**BEATRICE:** A sign of life! Its basic use to cool  
The torrid skin, to keep the throat unmarred,  
And when a man and maid are close and dear,  
This transudation works its myst'ries best.

Or so they say.

**VALENTINE:** I see.

**VIRGINIA:** O my.

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**BENEDICK:** Awkward.

**BEATRICE:** Besides, it doesn't take Orion's sight  
To notice that in our so young quartet  
Virginia here, she sweats the most.

**VIRGINIA:** You beast!

*(Virginia chases Beatrice away.)*

**VALENTINE:** O have you, friend? O tell me, have you ever?

**BENEDICK:** No.

**VALENTINE:** You haven't?

**BENEDICK:** What're you on about?

**VALENTINE:** Virginia!

**BENEDICK:** O. You like her then?

**VALENTINE:** I do!

My only dream is to enchant her heart.

**BENEDICK:** Then you're in luck. For well I hear the maid  
She does not merely fall in love, than say  
Give in, give o'er, give up, give way, go down  
Go under, then submit, succumb, at last  
Capitulate entirely. Virginia  
Bows fore love as slaves do fore their lord,  
First praised to be last beaten. And they say  
She likes that, too.

*(Valentine stares.)*

**BENEDICK:** Did I say something wrong?

*(Reenter Beatrice with Virginia, with Virginia's arm twisted  
behind her back.)*

**BEATRICE:** Say it!

**VIRGINIA:** No!

**BEATRICE:** (*Wrenching:*) Say it!

**VIRGINIA:** O! I sweat! I sweat!

*(Beatrice releases Virginia.)*

**VIRGINIA:** And now I see what kind of friend you are,  
To shame me in the public square, all for  
Your sport. Pray no one ever does the same  
To you or one you love.

**BEATRICE:** 'Tis but a joke.

**VIRGINIA:** But none would call it funny.

**VALENTINE:** No.

**BENEDICK:** I would.

*(Virginia turns to Valentine.)*

**VIRGINIA:** Kind sir, the hour is late and I am spent.  
Would you escort me home, as one I trust?

**VALENTINE:** Good Lady, nothing would more happily end  
This evening's revels than to see you safely  
Home.

My friends.

*(Valentine and Virginia see themselves somberly out.)*

**BENEDICK:** Good night.

**BEATRICE:** See you in church.

*(Beatrice and Benedick laugh tremendously once their friends  
have gone, a big long laugh which Benedick continues after  
Beatrice has stopped and stands, looking at him expectantly.)*

**BENEDICK:** O dear.

**BEATRICE:** What shall we do.

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**BENEDICK:** O us, you mean.

**BEATRICE:** Two friends...beneath the moon...far from the crowd.

Beside the Fountain of Orion.

**BENEDICK:** Indeed.

A fitting opportunity for chess.

*(Music drifts in. Benedick bows, they dance. At each turn one, then the other, attempts to speak, but is at a loss for what to say.)*

**BENEDICK:** My heart—

**BEATRICE:** I know.

**BENEDICK:** My tongue—

**BEATRICE:** I know.

**BENEDICK:** My hand.

*(He takes her hand, the dance concludes, and they stand, trembling, facing each other. Beatrice takes her hand away.)*

**BEATRICE:** We've taken this as far as it may go.

For I do fear that with each passing day  
 More of my heart moves into yours, and so  
 'Fore you or I or both commit some act,  
 To compromise our better judgement, cloudy,  
 Movéd by the lateness of the hour,  
 Or dev'lish inspiration of the moon,  
 The rough touch of your gentle hand,  
 Or sweetness of your breath...o my.  
 In order to preserve the comradeship  
 Of wit, of words, of confidence and cheer,  
 I do propose this compact 'twixt us both;  
 To-morrow will we once more be just friends.

**BENEDICK:** Indeed, I understand, we will. I swear.

**BEATRICE:** And so.

To-morrow, will we once again be friends.

**BENEDICK:** As proper as good proper friends should be.

**BEATRICE:** Big sigh...

TO-MORROW –

**BENEDICK:** O! To-morrow!

**BEATRICE:** Yes. To-morrow.

*(Beatrice and Benedick kiss.)*

**BENEDICK:** And to-night?

**BEATRICE:** No words.

*(Beatrice leads Benedick off by the hand.)*

**INTERLUDE**

*(Enter Don Pedro.)*

**DON PEDRO:** When love's let in, it does not eas'ly 'scape.  
The heart is like a maze with many bends.  
Those striving to restore their former state  
Can rarely find the door marked "only friends."

One night of heaven, gently plucked, when Jove,  
It seem'd, did wink and turn His back on them,  
Have bound this man and maid within their souls,  
In spite of vows they'll never touch again.

The blood of heady nights it calms and cools,  
And days fly past as days they always will.  
The mem'ry of a moment join'd, it fades,  
But joy of that completeness lingers still.

Two hearts resign'd to what the mind permits,  
Content to be comrades with benefits.

*(Exit Don Pedro.)*



## REVELATION SCENE

*(A street.)*

*(Enter Valentine with Benedick.)*

**VALENTINE:** The declaration for my love, was true!  
The fealty of my heart was hers alone!  
Today, howbeit, my page returns and states  
That one he was to hear a-swaggering in  
The tavern boasts that of my sweet Virgin'  
Had his beguilement, and the worst of which  
Can prove through notes and tokens this is so!

**BENEDICK:** No point in asking her if this be so?

**VALENTINE:** Give her the chance to lie right to my face?

**BENEDICK:** Of course, that's right, how dumb of me, why bother?

**VALENTINE:** Ay me.

**BENEDICK:** I told you, you could trust her not.  
This skank of yours was often seen in comp'ny  
There's not much virgin in Virginia left.

**VALENTINE:** You dare!

**BENEDICK:** I dare? She dar'd with every scabby  
Untam'd lad who had a dollar found in Sicily.  
You made yourself a fool pursuing love  
So hard from where it came so eas'ly won.

**VALENTINE:** Upon my honor, here I challenge you  
To combat, lest you take the shame you lately  
Gave to me away, and swiftly, too.

**BENEDICK:** The shame I gave? You shame yourself!

**VALENTINE:** I? Shame?

**BENEDICK:** For sure, this shabby show of chivalry  
Doth shame us both. But see, my sword is out.  
Think if one word of what I've said is false  
Then God I pray will strike me down or you.  
If not, then your dishonor hound you til  
You face what sacrifice you've made of friendship.

**VALENTINE:** En garde!

*(They fight.)*

**BENEDICK:** Ha ha! O colleague mine, how better tis  
To friend than fight? Let's sheath our swords, all right?  
And offer hands to make amends.

**VALENTINE:** You Paduan mutt!

**BENEDICK:** Speak not ill of Padua!

*(They fight. Enter Virginia.)*

**VIRGINIA:** My love!

**VALENTINE:** Hey, what?

**BENEDICK:** Look out!

*(Valentine is wounded.)*

**VIRGINIA:** My love!

**VALENTINE:** I hurt!

**BENEDICK:** Thou ditzzy trollop! Risk you show your face?

**VIRGINIA:** How can I be elsewhere, I needs must see  
My love.

**VALENTINE:** I am but hurt. My dearest doe, please  
Help me to some doctor fore I faint.

**BENEDICK:** She came between us, threw us off our game!  
This reechy cow who late you curs'd beyond

All measure for her prov'n deceitful ways.

**VALENTINE:** I see her now, she comes to me an angel,  
One of care, to tend my harmsome wounds.

**BENEDICK:** You'd not have got them would she had not  
come!

**VIRGINIA:** Young Benedick, tis clear you do not 'get'  
What love can pass between those two for whom  
Eros himself has chosen for a lifetime bond?

**VALENTINE:** Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow.

**VIRGINIA:** I'm here, my sweet.

*(Virginia and Valentine exit.)*

**BENEDICK:** Excuse me? Do I live? Am I insane?  
Or have the commonsensical all shut  
Themselves indoors, to let the mad run free?  
I do not understand this willful vaulting  
Into love like lemmings leaping o'er a bluff.  
What weakness leads a man to crave a partner  
Dear enough that reputation, health  
And even sanity seem trifles worthy just  
To pitch under a cart? No, when I marry,  
If I marry, then it will be right  
And well-considered after months of courting,  
With a lass with whom I've taken time  
To know and recognize as she with whom  
A life co-lived is greater that than single.

*(Enter Beatrice.)*

**BEATRICE:** Good sir.

**BENEDICK:** O, hai.

**BEATRICE:** How does young Benedick?

**BENEDICK:** O, well. You know. Been to prayers. Had a fight.

**BEATRICE:** A normal day for you?

**BENEDICK:** Of course! 'Fore bed,  
I plan to wrestle with a bull and rid  
The world of scabies.

**BEATRICE:** Such wonders you perform!

**BENEDICK:** By night my wonders never cease.

**BEATRICE:** Uh-huh.

**BENEDICK:** But then, as friends, so have we marked the time  
Of these fond weeks, we spend our nights apart.

**BEATRICE:** And yet the wonders never cease.

**BENEDICK:** Er, yes?

**BEATRICE:** You've not asked how I am.

**BENEDICK:** How are you, girl?

**BEATRICE:** I'm late.

**BENEDICK:** Well, may a gentleman escort you  
Where it is you need to be?

**BEATRICE:** No. Late.

**BENEDICK:** Some kind of riddle, or local turn of phrase...?

**BEATRICE:** Huh. When the orb of night does make its turn  
Full eight and twenty days, a woman bleeds,  
What scripture calls 'the way of women.'

**BENEDICK:** And?

**BEATRICE:** I've not.

**BENEDICK:** O dear.

**BEATRICE:** You see?

**BENEDICK:** But we?

**BEATRICE:** We did.

**BENEDICK:** Just once!

**BEATRICE:** I know.

**BENEDICK:** And you?

**BEATRICE:** And I?

**BENEDICK:** No other?

**BEATRICE:** No.

**BENEDICK:** What will we do?

**BEATRICE:** Well that depends on you.

I will swell and 'gin to show, my Father  
Send me away afore my reputation's  
Ground to dust, or after, and the product  
Of our folly live apart from me  
In some old convent or at mercy of  
The state while I do live my life a woman  
Stained with mortal sin and die alone.  
Unless you have some more desirable plan.

**BENEDICK:** Is there no medicine or exercise  
Could make this...go...away?

**BEATRICE:** There are.  
And for a maid of means or with the right  
Connection might they risk such intervention.  
I know those who have tried such things and lived.

**BENEDICK:** I see. Dear maid, please do not hate me for  
My ignorance. I never meant to cause you  
Any harm, no ay, in truth, my thoughts  
For you since we first met have been, as 'twere,  
I mean, I think of you all of the time—

Not all the time, just mostly when I think.  
 When I'm awake, I mean, and also in  
 My dreams. Yes, when I sleep and when I wake,  
 Sweet Beatrice, you fill my thoughts. All day.  
 And night. But not at supper, then I think  
 Of food.

*(Beatrice laughs.)*

**BENEDICK:** I made you laugh!

**BEATRICE:** You make me laugh!  
 When I should be at my wit's end and curse  
 The sky and moan, bereft, sweet Benedick  
 You make me laugh.

**BENEDICK:** I'm glad of that, my love.

**BEATRICE:** Your what?

**BENEDICK:** My friend.

**BEATRICE:** But that's not what you said.

**BENEDICK:** It's what I meant. My friend. Whom I. Do love.  
 I love, as children love the thunder makes  
 'Em squeal with fear, then feel the peace that comes  
 Within their mother's warm embrace. I love,  
 As I stand naked, shiv'ring from a frigid bath  
 Before enveloped by a heated towel.  
 I love, as doubtful as the squire, who dreads  
 Some dire news, to find my record's clean  
 And all forgiven.

**BEATRICE:** And so I'm fear, cold bath and crushing debt?

**BENEDICK:** No – you're the hug, a towel and relief.  
 Love is those other things.

**BEATRICE:** I see.  
 And what does all this mean?

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**BENEDICK:** What most I doubt, comes back as my reward.  
So when the first we met, I was afraid.  
And when the first we spoke, I was alert.  
Then when the first we touched, I was amazed.  
And when the first we loved, I was undone.  
Your presence makes me whole, and now I fear  
That I'll not live another day, unless  
You will be mine.

Will you be mine?

**BEATRICE:** I will.

**BENEDICK:** Come, bid me do any thing for thee!

**BEATRICE:** Go tell my father.

**BENEDICK:** Tell the Governor.  
Your father.

**BEATRICE:** Yes. The Governor, my father.

**BENEDICK:** That you're with child?

**BEATRICE:** That you and I will marry.

**BENEDICK:** Right! Is he an angry man?

**BEATRICE:** The worst,  
I saw him once extract the neckspine from  
A bear.

**BENEDICK:** O my!

**BEATRICE:** And that was just for sport.

**BENEDICK:** Indeed. As you hear of me so think of me.

*(They embrace, and exit.)*

**PAGE SCENE**

*(Outside the Governor's estate.)*

*(Enter PAGE, speaks to the audience as though to a potential customer.)*

**PAGE:** What's that you say, a'headed to the Guvnor's?  
For half a crown I'll lead you there, for two,  
Put in a word to let you see him straight.  
My service to the house of wise Secundo  
Runs deep. My father served his father, too,  
My brothers serve his sons.  
Antonio was the first, the Great Anton,  
A noble guv'nor in his time, before  
Brought down by rashness fed by drink and sin.  
He stepp'd down in peace some time ago,  
The second-born, Secundo, takes his place.  
For twenty years, they say, all safe and prosper  
Are the gentry of dear old Messina.  
Things happen for a reason, so they say  
The youngest yet of this fraternal trio,  
Is Leonato, or the 'little lion.'  
His wife, poor wretch, she almost died last Spring,  
In bringing forth their child, a girl, named Hero.  
But what of this? You ask'd for me to take  
You to the Governor's estate! And here  
We are. Pray you, remember the page.

*(Exit Page.)*



### CONFESSION SCENE

*(Governor's estate.)*

*(Enter Lord Secundo, followed by Benedick.)*

**BENEDICK:** My Lord Secundo, I would like a word,  
Were you in mood or free to hear my plea;  
If not, 'tis well, perhaps a different time  
Would suit, not that I wouldn't like to speak  
With you, just there may be an evening soon  
More to your inclination when a soldier  
Such as me, I mean, no one else but me,  
For what I have to say is of a matter  
Close to your heart and mine —

**SECUNDO:** My daughter.

**BENEDICK:** What?  
How did you know?

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