ACT II. Scene I (161–345).

As the house prepares for the evening’s party, Antonio seeks out Leonato to share some news. His trusted servant, having overheard only a portion of Claudio and Don Pedro’s plot to woo Hero, gives Antonio misinformation, which Antonio passes on to Leonato. He explains that Don Pedro is deeply in love with Hero and plans to win her over at the party. Leonato accepts this to be true, and tells Antonio to let Hero know so she can prepare.

Meanwhile, Don John “The Bastard” and Conrade are in another room, discussing Don John’s hatred of his brother, Don Pedro, for having more power and for limiting his own. As he stews, he describes himself as a “plain-dealing villain” (II.27–8), implying that while he may be malignant, he never pretends to be otherwise. He remains in sour spirits until Borachio joins them and explains that he has overheard Claudio and Don Pedro’s true plan to woo Hero. Don John sees this as a wonderful opportunity to stir up trouble for Don Pedro—whom he would like to overthrow—and Claudio—whom he sees as the only person to stand in his way. They head off to the feast as they begin their scheme.

At the party, Beatrice discusses her disdain for men and marriage, while Leonato prods Hero to get ready to accept the Prince’s courtship. A mask-donning Don Pedro does approach Hero, asking her to dance, and he begins to amuse her on behalf of Claudio. Wearing masks, the attendants of the gathering dance and chatter with one another, including one of Don John’s counterparts with an equal of Hero’s, and Beatrice with Benedick. While Benedick knows the identity of his dance partner, the same is not true for Beatrice. She inevitably releases a series of pointed insults regarding Benedick, who is left feeling rather scorned. Claudio tries to pretend he is Benedick in front of Don John to glean more about Don Pedro’s progress with Hero. Realizing the ruse and taking advantage of it, Don John tells “Benedick” that Don Pedro is wooing Hero for himself and not for Claudio. Don John leaves Claudio to put the pieces together, thinking his friend has betrayed him.
Benedick

Count Claudio?

Claudio

Yes, the same.

Benedick

Come, will you go with me?

Claudio

What's the harm?

Benedick

Even to the next willow, about your own business, remedy. What fashion will you wear the garland of? about your neck, like an honest draper or under your arms, like a lieutenant's sword? You must wear it one way, for the Jonah hath got your Holo.

I wish him joy of her.

Claudio

Benedick

As he, poor fool! now will he creep into a cudgel.

But that my Lady Beaufort should know me, and not know me! I'm printed on his face! He? It may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yes, but so I am apt to do myself wrong. I am not so reputed it is the base, though bitter, disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

Don Pedro

Betroth, again, where's the rout? did you see him?

Benedick

Trump, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame. I found him here as melancholy as a lute in a women; I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the good will of this young lady; and I allowed him my company to a willow-tree, either to make him a garland, or being forsook, or to bind him up a rod, or being wanting to be whipped.

Claudio

Benedick

Why, that's spoken like an honest drunkard as they sell butcher's. But did you think the prince would have served you thus?

Claudio

I pray you, love me.

Benedick

And now you strike like the blind man 'twas the boy that stole your mask, and you'll beat the jest.

Claudio

If it will not be, I'll leave you.

Don Pedro

Benedick

What's his fault?

Benedick

The fast transgression of a schoolboy, wise, being enraptured with finding a bird's nest, slew it with his companion, and he steals it.
The book is about a character named Lego.
DON PEDRO
Cara, lady, come; you have lost the heart of Signor Benedick.

BEATRICE
Indeed, my lord, he best it me unwillingly; and I gave him none for it; a double heart for his single one; many, since before he won it of me with false darts, 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 now, my lord; lest I should prove the mother of fools. I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to speak.

DON PEDRO
Why, how now, Count; wherewith art thou come?

CLAUDIO
Not well, my lord.

DON PEDRO
How then? sick?

CLAUDIO
Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE
The count is neither end, nor sick, nor merry, nor well; but civil, courteous, civil as an orange, and something of that jocosity complexion.

LEONATO
Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortune; his grace hath made the match, and all grace say Amen to it.

BEATRICE
Speak, count; ye your eye.
BEATRICE
Speak, cousin: as, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak neither.

BEATRICE
No, my lord, unless I might have another for working-days your grace is too hearty to wear away day. But, I beseech your grace, pardon me: I was born to speak all mirth and no matter.

CLAUDIO
Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: I were but little happy, if I could say how much, lady, as you are mine, I am yours: I give away myself for you and dote upon the exchange.

CLAUDIO
In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.
BEATRICE
Yes, my lord: I thank it, poor lad: it keeps on-the winds of my woos. My cousin tells him in his ear that he is in her heart.

DON PEDRO
In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.
BEATRICE
And so she doth, cousin.
BEATRICE
Good Lord, for ailsnee: Thus goes away one to the world but I, and I am sure, lady, I may sit in a corner and my life be too a husband.

DON PEDRO
Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.
BEATRICE
I would rather have one of your father's getting.
With your grace not a better like you? Your father got excellent husbands, if a maid could come by them.

DON PEDRO
Will you have me, lady?

DON PEDRO
Your silences must offend you, and to be merry here because you are out of question, you were born in a merry hour.
BEATRICE
My, my, my lord, my mother minds, but then there was a time damned, and under that were I born. Cousin, God give you joy!

DON PEDRO
 широко сутки большие няньки, а последнее время все беды, и пойдет она в саду с руками.

LEONATO
No, will you heed to these things I told you or?
BEATRICE
I say you marry, uncle. By your grace's pardon.

DON PEDRO
By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.
LEONATO
There's little of the mother's element in her, my lords; she is noise and but when she speaks, and not so rude thing too; I have heard my daughter say, she hath often dreamt of unhappiness and wished herself with laughing.
DON PEDRO
She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO
O, by my troth, she marks all her woes out of suit.
DON PEDRO
She was an excellent wife to Benedick.
LEONATO
O, Lord, my lord, if they were but a weak married, they would talk themselves mad.
DON PEDRO
County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?
ACT II. Scene III (89–246).

The match between Claudio and Hero has been made, making Don John’s plan of sabotage just a little bit harder. Borachio eases his fears by producing an elaborate set of scenarios to tarnish Hero’s name. While Don John is to convince Don Pedro that he has set Claudio up with a wolf in sheep’s clothing, Borachio will charm Hero’s attendant Margaret, all the way to Hero’s bedroom window and pose as if Hero were being unfaithful to Claudio.

Over in the orchard, Benedick ponders the changes he sees in Claudio, who went from a man who laughed at the things others did for love to becoming one of them. He promises himself that he will never become a fool to love unless the woman he desires is the true embodiment of perfection. Benedick sees Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato wander into the orchard and immediately hides so they do not know he is there. Both Claudio and Don Pedro know that Benedick is hiding, and they listen to Balthasar poorly sing while they grab Benedick’s attention. Balthasar leaves, and the two reel Benedick in to eavesdrop on their private discussion.