**PRINCE**

By my troth, a good song.

Come hither, Leonata. What was it you told me of

today, that your niece Beatrice was in love with

Signior Benedick?

**CLAUDIO**

O, ay. *(Aside to Prince*).

Stalk on, stalk on; the

fowl sits.—I did never think that lady would have

loved any man.

**LEONATA**

No, nor I neither, but most wonderful that

she should so dote on Signior Benedick, whom she

hath in all outward behaviors seemed ever to

abhor.

**BENEDICK** *(aside)*

Is ’t possible? Sits the wind in that

corner?

**LEONATA**

By my troth, my lord, I cannot tell what to

think of it, but that she loves him with an enraged

affection, it is past the infinite of thought.

**PRINCE**

You amaze me. I would

have thought her spirit had been invincible against

all assaults of affection.

**LEONATA**

I would have sworn it had, my lord, especially

against Benedick.

**CLAUDIO** *(aside to Prince*)

He hath ta’en th’ infection.

Hold it up.

**PRINCE**

Hath she made her affection known to

Benedick?

**LEONATA**

No, and swears she never will. That’s her

torment.

**CLAUDIO**

’Tis true indeed, so your daughter says. “Shall

I,” says she, “that have so oft encountered him with

scorn, write to him that I love him?”

**LEONATA**

This says she now then she is beginning

to write to him. For she’ll be up twenty times

a night, and there will she

have writ a sheet of paper. My daughter tells us all.

**CLAUDIO**

Now you talk of a sheet of paper I remember a pretty jest your daughter told us of.

**LEONATA**

O, when she had writ it and was reading it

over, she found “Benedick” and “Beatrice” between

the sheet?

**CLAUDIO**

That?

**LEONATA**

O, she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence,

railed at herself that she should be so

immodest to write to one that she knew would flout

her. “

**CLAUDIO**

Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps,

sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses:

“O sweet Benedick, God give me patience!”

**PRINCE**

It were good that Benedick knew of it

By some other, if she will not discover it.

**CLAUDIO**

To what end? He would make but a sport

of it, and torment the poor lady worse.

**PRINCE**

And he should, it were an alms to hang

Him. She’s an excellent sweet lady, and out of all

suspicion she is virtuous.

**CLAUDIO**

And she is exceeding wise.

**PRINCE**

In every thing but in loving Benedick

I would she had bestowed this dotage on me. I

would have daffed all other respects and made her

half myself. I pray you tell Benedick of it, and hear

what he will say.

**CLAUDIO**

Hero thinks surely she will die, for she says

she will die if he love her not, and she will die ere

she make her love known, and she will die if he woo

her rather than she will bate one breath of her

accustomed crossness.

PRINCE

I love Benedick well, and I

could wish he would modestly examine himself to

see how much he is unworthy so good a lady.

LEONATA

My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready.

*(Leonata, Prince, and Claudio begin to exit.)*

CLAUDIO *(aside to Prince and Leonata)*

If he do not

dote on her upon this, I will never trust my

expectation.

PRINCE *(aside to Leonata)*

Let there be the same net

spread for her, and that must your daughter and her

gentlewomen carry.