DON PEDRO
Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of to-day, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO
I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

LEONATO
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
Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

LEONATO
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.

DON PEDRO
May be she doth but counterfeit.

LEONATO
O God, counterfeit! There was never counterfeit of passion came so near the life of passion as she discovers it.

DON PEDRO
Why, what effects of passion shows she?

CLAUDIO
Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

LEONATO
What effects, my lord? She will sit you, you heard my daughter tell you how.

CLAUDIO
She did, indeed.

DON PEDRO
How, how, pray you? You amaze me: I would have I thought her spirit had been invincible against all assaults of affection.

LEONATO
I would have sworn it had, my lord; especially against Benedick.

BENEDICK
I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

CLAUDIO
He hath ta'en the infection: hold it up.

DON PEDRO
Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO
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?'

LEONATO
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!'

LEONATO
She doth indeed; my daughter says so: and the ecstasy hath so much overborne her that my daughter is sometime afeared she will do a desperate outrage to herself: it is very true.

DON PEDRO
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.

DON PEDRO
An 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.

DON PEDRO
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.

LEONATO
Were it good, think you?

DON PEDRO
If she should make tender of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it; for the man, as you know all, hath a contemptible spirit.