



**Sample Pages from
Much Ado High School**

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MUCH ADO HIGH SCHOOL

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Much Ado High School

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About the Play

Much Ado High School is loosely based on Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Theatrefolk also carries a 45 minute version of the original text.

Characters

CLAUDIO: Very naive

BENEDICK: Obsessive in his aversion to girls

DON PEDRO (DP): Obsessively in charge

HERO: Obsessively boy crazy

BEATRICE: Very sour girl

MARGARET: Friend to Hero

URSULA: Friend to Hero

DON JOHN (DJ): Don Pedro's obsessively evil step-sister

CONRAD: DJ's only friend

DOGBERRY: Male computer nerd

VERGES: Female computer nerd

Setting

A high school dance.

Although the play is clearly set in modern times, the tone of the characters is more indicative of the 1950's. The play should have a stylistic "squeaky-clean sheen" to it.

Lights come up on a school dance. Everyone is dancing to the music as the lights flash. DOGBERRY and VERGES move only slightly and never dance full out. They remain off to the side for the whole play, buried in a laptop. Suddenly the music stops and all the characters, except for those talking, freeze. This will be the same for all the sections.

DP: *(throwing a fatherly arm around CLAUDIO)* Welcome to your first dance at Much Ado High School, Claudio.

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz. Thanks.

BENEDICK: Don't get too close to the girls though. They have cooties.

CLAUDIO: What?

DP: *(laughing – hearing a joke no one else can hear)* Isn't he a blast?

BENEDICK: *(handing CLAUDIO some rubber gloves)* Here. Just in case.

DP: Now. You can call me Don Pedro. You can call me Don. You can call me Pedro. Whatever you want. I'm a flexible guy.

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz. Thanks Don.

DP: *(a little menacing)* Everyone calls me DP.

Music plays. Everyone dances wildly. The music stops.

HERO: Beatrice, do you think a boy will ask me to dance? I know it's my first dance and I shouldn't get my hopes up but I think I will probably die if a boy doesn't ask me to dance. I will fall down dead. On the floor. Dead person on the floor.

BEATRICE: *(with disgust)* Hero. They're just boys.

HERO: Just boys? Just boys? Did you say they were just boys? I can't believe you just said they were just boys.

BEATRICE: If we weren't related I'd have to drown you.

Music plays for just a second. The music stops.

HERO: Oh Bea. You're so funny.

BEATRICE: If only I was joking.

Music plays. Everyone dances. The music stops. DJ is now lurking around DP's group. DP talks to CLAUDIO.

DP: I'm a flexible guy. That's what makes me a great Student Council president. Flexibility. I've got honour too. Honour and Flexibility.

DJ: You don't have to crusade anymore. You won.

DP: *(a little less friendly)* No thanks to you Don John.

DJ: DJ. It's DJ.

DP: Not according to your mom.

DJ: Shut up!

DP: Whatever you say Don John.

DJ: I'm not listening!

BENEDICK: Not so close, not so close!

DP: *(back with the friendly tone to CLAUDIO)* My darling stepsister played a little smear campaign jokey-joke on me during the elections.

DJ: It wasn't really a smear campaign.

DP: She told everyone I gave the lunch lady pinkeye.

CLAUDIO: Wouldn't that make it a smudge campaign?

He laughs at his own joke. No one else does.

DP: Dude. *(pointing at BENEDICK)* He does the jokes.

BENEDICK: You better put those gloves on. Cooties are airborne you know.

Music plays. Everyone dances. The music stops.

DOGBERRY: *(not really wanting to dance)* Would you like to partake in some improvised choreography?

VERGES: *(in disgust)* No.

DOGBERRY: *(agreeing)* No. *(slapping himself on the forehead)* Brain fart! *(back to VERGES)* Would you like to calculate the statistical probability that someone will slip on their own sweat?

VERGES: Of course I would!

*Music plays. Everyone dances. The music stops.
BENEDICK and BEATRICE stand centre stage glaring at each other.*

BEATRICE: Benedick.

BENEDICK: Beatrice.

BEATRICE: I see you're still aiming for world's worst dressed guy.

BENEDICK: I see you're still in the running for Ms. Grumpy-Pants.

BEATRICE: Oh the wit. The wit. I'm dying of laughter inside. I can so see why DP thinks you're the funniest thing since sliced bread.

BENEDICK: Don't touch me.

BEATRICE: Why, are you afraid?

BENEDICK: Don't touch me!

BEATRICE: Are you a big ole scaredy-cat?

BENEDICK: You... really... suck.

BEATRICE: You suck.

BENEDICK: No you do.

BEATRICE: You do.

Music plays. Everyone dances. The music stops.

BEATRICE: I can't believe how much you suck.

BENEDICK: No you do.

BEATRICE: You do.

BENEDICK: You do.

Music plays. Everyone dances. The music stops.

HERO: Who's the new guy?

MARGARET: Where?

HERO: Standing over there beside Benny.

BEATRICE: (*as if disgusted by the word*) Benedick. Icky, gross, yick, yuck, phooey!

URSULA: Why do you hate him so much?

BEATRICE: He's a creepy pig. A disease. A pestilence.

HERO: (*to MARGARET and URSULA*) They used to go out.

URSULA & MARGARET: Ahhhhhhhhh.

BEATRICE: Excuse me. We were ten. That is not going out.

HERO: (*singing*) Benny and Beebee sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G.

BEATRICE: He threw a snowball at me with a stone in it. On purpose.

MARGARET & URSULA: Ahhhhhhhhh.

BEATRICE: What? What's with the ahhhhhhhhh?

URSULA: It's so sweet.

MARGARET: He loves you.

BEATRICE: Get away from me.

Music plays. Everyone dances. Music stops.

DP: The game was great.

BENEDICK: Real great.

DP: Great game.

BENEDICK: Yeah.

They both look at CLAUDIO. All this time CLAUDIO has been staring across the room at HERO. CLAUDIO is not listening and DP is annoyed.

DP: Claudio? (*he snaps his fingers*) Claudio!

CLAUDIO: Huh?

DP: Wake up sunshine.

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz I'm sorry.

DP: You're missing scintillating conversation about today's game. (*he snaps at BENEDICK*)

BENEDICK: The game was great. Real great. Great game. Yeah.

CLAUDIO: Hey DP, who's that girl over there?

BENEDICK: Girl? You want to know about a girl? You've been here five minutes and you're already trapped in the girly girl net! Get out before the girl and her girly cooties get all over you! Run now! Save yourself!

CLAUDIO: This guy does the jokes huh?

Music plays to a fever pitch. Everyone dances. The music stops.

BEATRICE: I hate Benedick.

BENEDICK: I hate Beatrice.

DJ: I hate DP.

DP: I love my teeth. They're so white.

HERO: I love Claudio.

CLAUDIO: I love Hero.

DOGBERRY: And the statistical probability is 42 percent!

VERGES: I love the number 42!

EVERYONE: Let's dance!

Everyone dances. The song ends. Quiet background music plays.

DP: So you want the girl do you Skippy? Ok. Let's go get you the girl. I'll charm her with my winning ways at the next slow dance.

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz DP. That's ok, I can talk to her.

He starts off but DP holds him back.

DP: Hang back there Sparky. As your honourable and flexible Student Council president it is my duty to speak to Hero on your behalf.

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz. Really DP, it's no big deal. I've talked to girls before.

He starts off but DP holds him back, more forcefully.

DP: Listen up Bucko. I'm going to talk to Hero and that's final. Any questions?

CLAUDIO: Nope. None. Zero. Wouldn't have it any other way. Go get her.

A slow song plays. During the following DP struts over to HERO and silently asks her to dance. She is all aflutter. MARGARET and URSULA flutter with her. The focus shifts to DJ and CONRAD.

DJ: I can't believe the pinkeye scheme didn't work. It was foolproof! I even had the lunch lady convinced she had pinkeye. What do I

have to do to topple DP off his pedestal? I have tried everything and every time he comes out looking like a sunny day. How can he be so lucky? And how does he get his teeth so white? Conrad, I'm exhausted. I've exhausted my evil resources. I'm tapped. (*noticing what's happening between HERO and DP*) Aw man. Now what's happening?

DP has brought HERO over to CLAUDIO and is introducing them to each other.

DJ: Ooooh that just burns my butt. The new guy should be falling all over himself to ask me to dance. What's wrong with me? Am I not pretty? There should be boys lined up around the block waiting to dance with me. Conrad, why aren't there boys lined up around the block waiting to dance with me?

CONRAD: The poisonous attitude might have something to do with it.

DJ: What do you know?

CONRAD: It's kind of a turn off.

DJ: I should be walking on a beach all dainty-like in the rain during a sunset? Is that it?

CONRAD: Technically there wouldn't be rain and a sunset at the same time.

DJ: Shut up. I should act like little Miss Perfect over there? Hero? What a stupefyingly stupid name. Her parents clearly have issues. She is so stupid. We have to come up with a plan to make the whole lot of them look like morons.

CONRAD: DJ! (*hissing in Pig Latin*) X-nay on the an-play.

DJ: What? Why?

CONRAD: (*through clenched teeth*) There are people listening.

CONRAD points at DOGBERRY and VERGES, who look up from the laptop.

DOGBERRY & VERGES: Greetings and salutations.

DJ: Them? They're nerds. DP and his ship of fools would never listen to nerds.

VERGES: Abominable but accurate.

DOGBERRY: A comment on our times.

CONRAD: You're saying DP wouldn't listen to a DJ copyrighted plot?
That's loco in the braino.

DJ: We'll perform a social experiment. Hey. Nerd. What's your name?

DOGBERRY: Dogberry.

DJ: Like for real? What's up with parents in this town? You should
change that. Like immediately. Now listen carefully. Are you
listening?

DOGBERRY: As closely as I listen for hard disk failure.

DJ: Right. (*she leans in*) I'm going to make everyone miserable in one fell
swoop. I'm going to ruin Hero's reputation so that Claudio won't
ask her to dance, and DP will get mad at Claudio for wanting to
dance with a girl who has a bad reputation.

CONRAD: Wow. Can you do that?

DJ: Haven't worked out the details yet, don't bother me. (*back to
DOGBERRY*) Will you do me a great big favour and go tell DP my
plan please?

DOGBERRY: Ok.

CONRAD: But he'll –

DJ: Shush doubting one.

DOGBERRY: (*to VERGES*) Do I look appropriate?

VERGES: Tuck your shirt in. Stay true to Newton.

DOGBERRY: Don't get hit by the apple.

VERGES: Why did the chicken cross the road?

DOGBERRY & VERGES: A chicken in motion will always cross the
road!

The two do a complicated handshake.

DJ: Would you go already!

DOGBERRY crosses the stage to the others.

CONRAD: He's going to spill your plan all over floor and make you
look like the biggest fool on the ship of fools.

DJ: Watch and learn young grasshopper.

During the following everyone ignores DOGBERRY.

DP: So Hero, Claudio is going to ask you to take a twirl with him at the next slow dance.

DOGBERRY: (*urgently*) DP. DP.

DP: Is that all right with you?

DOGBERRY: There's a hacker in the system DP.

HERO: That's super fine with me.

DOGBERRY: A Blue Screen of Death is about to occur DP.

DP: How about that Claudio? Are you super fine too?

DOGBERRY: Claudio and Hero, DP.

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz. I'm super duper fine.

DP: Super duper duper!

They all laugh. The girls turn to each other. CLAUDIO and BENEDICK turn to each other so that everyone is occupied for this next section. DOGBERRY tugs on DP's shirt.

DOGBERRY: DP. I need to interact with you immediately DP!

DP: (*clearly not listening to DOGBERRY*) Hey there, ho there, watch the shirt there Scooter. Where's the fire?

DOGBERRY: (*says this as fast as he can*) DJ is going to make everyone miserable in one fell swoop she's going to ruin Hero's reputation so that Claudio won't ask her to dance and you'll get mad at Claudio for wanting to dance with a girl who has a bad reputation! (*he takes a big gulping breath*)

DP: (*shaking DOGBERRY's hand like a politician*) That's quite an issue Beauregard and I promise to bring it up with honour and flexibility at the next Student Council meeting. Who loves ya, baby?

He pushes past DOGBERRY who makes his way dejectedly back across the stage to VERGES.

DJ: You see?

CONRAD: You're a genius.

DJ: I know.

DOGBERRY: (*to VERGES*) Do you have any anti-nausea tablets?

CONRAD and DJ put their heads together to figure out their dastardly plan. The focus shifts back to DP's group. MARGARET and URSULA are dabbing their eyes with tissue. BEATRICE looks like she's going to be sick.

MARGARET: It's so romantic.

URSULA: It's so touching.

BEATRICE: It so makes me want to puke.

MARGARET & URSULA: Beatrice!

HERO: Oh Bea. Silly, hard-hearted, cynical, better-watch-it-or-you'll-end-up-with-forty-cats-in-a-basement, Bea. Don't you want a boyfriend?

BENEDICK: Love. Bah Humbug!

BEATRICE: Exactly!

BENEDICK: Don't touch me.

DP: Come now Benny. Come on Bea. These two crazy kids have fallen on the love wagon and who are we to stand in their way?

BENEDICK: "If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with 'love' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding!"

BEATRICE: Exactly! Only not so much.

CLAUDIO: (*aside*) What's he talking about now?

BEATRICE: He quotes Dickens. Badly. And he's only read the one book. We're supposed to find it charming.

BENEDICK: "It's indigestion. A bit of undigested beef. A blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of underdone potato. There's more gravy than of grave about you!"

DP: (*clearly hearing something funny no one else can*) Isn't he a blast!

BEATRICE: I hate getting derailed by Dickens. Where were we?

MARGARET: Ummmmmm. These two crazy kids have fallen on the love wagon and who are we to stand in their way?

BEATRICE: (*very matter of fact*) Great. Thanks. (*back in the emotion of the moment*) They're moving too fast. It isn't a true love wagon.

HERO: Sure it is. True love always happens instantaneously based purely on looks without having a shred of information positive or negative about your prospective partner. Did you just fall off the turnip truck or something?

BEATRICE: You two aren't in love!

BENEDICK: Love and dances are completely gross and disgusting.

BEATRICE: Exactly!

BENEDICK: Don't touch me.

BEATRICE: I'm nowhere near you!

BENEDICK: I am never going to fall in love.

BEATRICE: I would be a happy camper if no guy ever asked me to dance.

BENEDICK: And I never plan on asking a girl to dance.

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz, why not? Girls are fun!

BENEDICK: Girls have cooties.

BEATRICE: That is so mature.

BENEDICK: I am 100 percent cootie free.

BEATRICE: How do you know. Have you ever seen a cootie?

BENEDICK: Have you?

BEATRICE: I asked you first.

BENEDICK: I asked you second.

BEATRICE: This conversation is beneath me.

BENEDICK: That's right where the cooties are.

BEATRICE: Argh! Stupid boys! *(she walks away)*

BENEDICK: Argh! Cootie-filled girls! *(he walks away)*

HERO: You know if those two stopped fighting for one second, I think they'd see the forest through the trees.

DP: Sure they would.

HERO: The sun through the storm.

DP: Uh huh.

HERO: The needle in the haystack!

DP: Hear, hear!

HERO: You have no idea what I'm talking about, do you?

DP: Not a clue.

HERO: They'd figure out that they love each other.

THE REST: Ohhhhhhhh.

URSULA: Are you sure that's what's going on?

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz. They don't look like they're in love.

HERO: He threw a snowball at her when they were ten.

DP: Well, that's different then.

HERO: If only there were a way to trick them into thinking each was in love with the other then they'd realise their true feelings and really fall head over heels!

URSULA: It's our civic duty to get them together.

MARGARET: Cause a girl isn't happy till she has a guy to hang her hat on.

The girls give sounds of agreement.

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz. I don't know. Isn't that a bit sneaky?

The girls turn and stare at CLAUDIO. The focus shifts back to DJ and CONRAD.

CONRAD: You know, Margaret is wearing an outfit pretty similar to Hero's. I'll bet if they were in a dark corner, you couldn't tell them apart.

DJ: Go on my dark-hearted, centre-parted partner.

CONRAD: If someone saw someone they thought was Hero doing something she shouldn't be doing, then that someone would be pretty upset. Don't you think?

DJ: I think, I think! It's brilliant! I love that idea so much, I'm going to take all the credit. Unless it doesn't work of course. Then it's yours.

VERGES: (to DOGBERRY) That sounds like a pretty insidious plan. Worse than the W.32 Blaster Worm even. I postulate we should try and intervene.

DOGBERRY: Let's calculate the statistical probability of DP listening to us if we set fire to his jacket.

The focus shifts back to DP's group.

DP: All right my little sugarsmacks, gather round. I've got a plan to get Bea and Ben together.

HERO: Actually, DP, since it was my idea I think I should get to come up with the plan.

DP: Of course you do. Still, we're going to do it my way.

A new song starts up. The next bit is done without words to the beat of the music. Everyone dances all the time.

HERO, MARGARET and URSULA dance across the stage near BEATRICE, who is fuming. DP and CLAUDIO dance near BENEDICK, who is also fuming. HERO and her group have an animated conversation. DP and CLAUDIO have an animated conversation. BENEDICK realises the group near him is talking about him. BEATRICE realises the group near her is talking about her. Continuing to dance, they both lean in to eavesdrop. HERO and MARGARET point at BENEDICK while CLAUDIO and DP point at BEATRICE. At the end of the song HERO, MARGARET and URSULA dance offstage in one direction. CLAUDIO and DP dance offstage in the other direction. BEATRICE and BENEDICK come downstage each in their own world, not acknowledging the other.

BEATRICE & BENEDICK: Wow.

BENEDICK: She likes me?

BEATRICE: That snowball had amorous undertones?

BENEDICK: Like, likes me?

BEATRICE: I never would have thought.

BENEDICK: Like, like, likes me?

BEATRICE: He's acts so creepy with the "don't touch me" thing.

BENEDICK: Like, like, like, like, like, like, like, like, like, likes me?

BEATRICE: And who quotes Dickens?

They both turn and see the other.

BEATRICE: Benedick.

BENEDICK: Beatrice.

There is a pause as if they are going to approach each other but run off in the opposite direction instead.

CONRAD: Now's your chance. Hero's gone to the bathroom.

DJ: And Margaret's in?

CONRAD: Sure, she's all for it. Especially since I'm not going to tell her what we're doing.

CONRAD exits. DJ crosses to DP.

VERGES: The probability just isn't that favourable Dogberry. The fire cancels out any additional data we might try to feed him. It's hopeless!

DOGBERRY: It's not hopeless. Did we surrender when we overclocked the CPU and it melted all over the motherboard?

VERGES: No.

DOGBERRY: Did we surrender when the firewall unceremoniously routed all our email into the bit bucket?

VERGES: No.

DOGBERRY: Did we surrender when Mitch Mahoney spilled his Supremo Mocha Latte all over our brand new keyboard?

VERGES: No!

DOGBERRY: Let's see what happens if we flood the bathrooms.

DJ: Hi DP.

DP: Hey DJ. Drop the needle DJ. Get the OJ with the DJ.

DJ: No hard feelings huh? The whole pinkeye hubbub.

DP: Of course not. We're family. We have to stick together.

DJ: Right. And that's why I feel so gosh darn awful about this. But I thought you really really ought to know, seeing as Claudio is getting set to ask her to dance and all.

DP: What are you talking about?

DJ: If you really want to know, you should look in the corner. But I don't think you should. In fact I'm telling you from the bottom of my heart, stepsister to step-brother, don't look in the corner. Where are you going?

DP: To look in the corner.

DJ: Oh DP, don't do it. Don't do it! I beg of you. Claudio where are you going?

CLAUDIO: Gee whiz. If he's going to look in the corner, I'm going to look in the corner.

DJ: I'm begging you, don't do it!

DP: I'm doing it.

DJ: Don't do it.

CLAUDIO: I'm doing it too.

DJ: Don't do it, don't –

CLAUDIO and DP give a gasp of horror.

DJ: Gee whiz. I guess they did it.

CLAUDIO: Is that Hero?

DP: In the corner?

CLAUDIO: With another guy?

CLAUDIO & DP: Dancing?

CLAUDIO: She's supposed to dance with me!

DP: That harlot!

CLAUDIO: That tramp!

DP: That Jezebel!

CLAUDIO: That scarlet woman!

DJ: That's such a shame.

CLAUDIO: What are we going to do?

DP: You can't dance with her now.

CLAUDIO: I can't dance with a girl who would dance willy nilly with another guy before she's supposed to dance with me. That is just not done.

DP: We're going to take care of this. You bet your boots we are.

CLAUDIO: Hang on a second. It's pretty dark in that corner. Are we sure it's Hero?

DP: It is dark. Maybe we should get a closer look.

They start to move towards the corner but DJ intercepts.

DJ: Of course it's her. You just said it's her. You're not going to doubt yourself are you? You wouldn't be wrong would you?

DP: I am never wrong.

DJ: You are never wrong.

CLAUDIO: Yeah but –

DP: That is Hero and we have to humiliate her the way she humiliated you.

CLAUDIO: Yeah but –

DP: If ifs and buts were candy and nuts we'd all have a Merry Christmas. Come on!

DP and CLAUDIO exit.

DJ: That turned out rather well. What do you think nerds? Did I cause enough havoc?

DOGBERRY: Statistically speaking the probability of havoc is high.

VERGES: Intense altitude.

DJ: Wouldn't you two rather dance, at a dance?

VERGES: Who needs to dance when you have a laptop?

DOGBERRY: You never have to worry about keeping the beat.

VERGES and DOGBERRY laugh. DJ looks mildly disgusted.

DJ: Whatever turns your crank.

Slow dance music comes on. The BOYS enter in a slow and serious manner from one side of the stage. The GIRLS enter in a slow and slightly more giddy manner from the other side. CLAUDIO and HERO finally meet in the middle.

CLAUDIO: So. Hero. Do you want to dance?

HERO: Yes, yes, yes, of course I want to dance. I can't believe you're asking me! This is my first dance and the best boy in the whole place is standing right in front of me! This is the most remarkable thing that's ever happened to me in my whole entire life! (*she clears her throat and states a little more demurely*) Sure Claudio, I'd love to.

CLAUDIO: Well that's too bad, cause there is no way in H-E double hockey sticks I would ever dance with you.

HERO: What?

BEATRICE: What?

MARGARET & URSULA: What?

HERO: What do you mean Claudio?

CLAUDIO: I saw you in the corner.

HERO: I wasn't!

CLAUDIO: I saw you dancing in the corner with another guy.

HERO: I didn't!

CLAUDIO: You can't deny it. I saw you. DP saw you. DJ saw you and you, you, you – Gee whiz, you are a big fat liar, liar, pants on fire.

CLAUDIO stalks off in a huff with DP following behind in an even bigger huff. BENEDICK stands there in shock.

HERO: But I... But you... (*she faints*)

BEATRICE: Hero!

MARGARET: She's dead!

BEATRICE: She's not dead, she just fainted.

MARGARET: Look, she's not moving at all.

URSULA: You're right. She is dead!

BEATRICE: She's totally breathing.

MARGARET: Oh Hero! Hero!

BEATRICE: Just take her to the bathroom, splash some water on her face.

URSULA: Alas, alas, poor Hero I knew her well, a girl of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.

MARGARET: Will you stop showing off and help me carry her?

MARGARET and URSULA ungracefully get HERO offstage. BEATRICE pushes up her sleeves, cracks her knuckles and turns to go after CLAUDIO.

BENEDICK: Beatrice, wait. Where are you going?

BEATRICE: I have a score to settle with your little friend.

BENEDICK: Just wait a second. Don't go off in a huff.

BEATRICE: If you start quoting Dickens I'll dislocate your kneecaps.

BENEDICK: Please! Even I know this is not a time for Dickens. Just wait a sec.

BEATRICE: Your jerk friend humiliated my cousin! I mean, sure she's not my favourite person in the world. She's incredibly annoying. That voice of hers makes me want to drive my head through a wall sometimes and the boy-crazy thing is so stupid... Why am I going after Claudio again?

BENEDICK: He told Hero she was a liar, liar, pants on fire.

BEATRICE: Wait till I get my hands on him!

BENEDICK: You can't do anything to Claudio.

BEATRICE: Why not?

BENEDICK: You're a girl.

BEATRICE: I'm a girl?

BENEDICK: You're a girl.

BEATRICE: I can't do anything because I'm a girl?

BENEDICK: Exactly.



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