

## ABOUT THE SHOW

*Much Ado About Elvis* is a musical re-telling of Shakespeare's comedy, *Much Ado About Nothing*, written in modern-day English and set in the rock 'n' roll era of the 1950s.

The story closely follows Shakespeare's play but with the addition of some extra characters, notably Valentina (John's girlfriend) and Sister Angela (an eccentric nun). The play has the potential for a huge cast of 50+ but there are plenty of opportunities for multi-roling/reduction of characters for a smaller number of actors.

Many of the characters are gender-neutral and can therefore meet the needs of the cast and production.



*Much Ado About Elvis* was originally commissioned by Bingley Little Theatre for their youth training section, Kaleidoscope Youth Theatre, and performed to sell-out audiences at Bingley Arts Centre in April 2019. The brief was to provide substantial parts for their many talented young actors and singers who were interested in working on a different kind of large-cast production, rather than a traditional musical theatre show. The theatre also aimed to provide speaking parts for a large number of actors so that they would have the chance to shine individually and also act effectively as a chorus. There are therefore over fifty speaking roles of various sizes to give plenty of scope for actors to showcase their talents.

**It gave us great pleasure to commission *Much Ado about Elvis* from Sally Edwards and Katy Grainger for our 2019 Kaleidoscope Youth Theatre production. This clever adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* allows a large, diverse and inclusive cast of 12 to 19-year-olds to fully engage with both each other and an audience through acting, song, comedy and dance. It also allows each member of cast to have their moment to shine. We at Bingley Little Theatre are proud of what Sally, Katy and the students achieved, but more importantly the students enjoyed themselves and had FUN.**

Richard Thompson  
*Chair of Bingley Little Theatre*

## THE WRITERS

SALLY EDWARDS is a writer, editor and teacher based in West Yorkshire. As Youth Theatre Director of Kaleidoscope Youth Theatre (the youth training section of Bingley Little Theatre) she has written and directed numerous productions for casts of 40+, many in collaboration with Katy Grainger as musician and composer.



Sally's youth theatre plays have been performed in over fifteen different countries internationally (in Asia, Australia, Europe, North America as well as the UK). In addition to writing, Sally teaches weekly youth drama classes and also runs workshops in schools and community settings.

KATY GRAINGER is a musician, composer and teacher, also based in West Yorkshire. Katy has performed, composed and musically directed a wide range of theatrical and community music projects. She also works as a HCPC registered music therapist, providing a range of music therapy sessions, primarily in mental health settings. Katy has collaborated for a number of years with Sally Edwards, within the Bingley Little Theatre youth training section, Kaleidoscope, and also providing bespoke drama- and music-based workshops and training sessions within schools, community settings and mental health institutions.



## MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

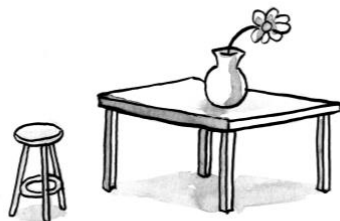
One of the Bard's best-loved and most popular comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing* was written by Shakespeare in 1588/89 and was included in the *First Folio*.

The play's plot has romance, mistaken identity, deceit and drama, as well as the famous comedic banter between its main characters, Beatrice and Benedick.

Shakespeare's use of rhythm and rhyme, imagery and metaphors, puns and wordplay in the language of *Much Ado About Nothing* is as appealing as the entertaining plot and characters. Working with an adaptation written in modern-day English such as *Much Ado About Elvis*, students of *Much Ado About Nothing* can be therefore helped to understand Shakespeare's verse and prose, how it can be realised in different ways creatively as well as helping to reduce fear and prejudice about tackling the works of the great Bard.

## THE SET

*Much Ado About Elvis* is designed in such a way to make it as easy as possible to perform on a studio or black box stage with minimal, low-cost furniture. Several of the scenes take place on a bare stage, using lighting to suggest the venue etc.



The original set consisted of the following items:

- A counter for Leonato's restaurant
- Two small restaurant tables
- Four restaurant chairs
- Three small stools for Francesca's salon
- A reception counter for Francesca's salon
- Mancini's bar (Leonato's counter reversed)
- A small bench for the orchard scenes
- A wheeled-on raised area for Hero's balcony
- A small altar table for the church memorial scene

In the original production, bunting was used (stretched between the wings) for the party scene in the church hall.

It is possible to perform *Much Ado About Elvis* on a very minimal budget, using furniture items that are very easy to source.

## SYNOPSIS

The plot is based around a family-owned Italian restaurant in Messina, Leonato's. Leonato, a traditional and well-respected businessman, runs the restaurant with his wife, Antonia and his daughter, Hero, a devoted Elvis fan. Leonato's niece, Beatrice, a quick-witted and acerbic young woman, is a frequent visitor to the restaurant as she is best friend to her cousin, Hero. Beatrice works at Francesca's salon in Messina. Francesca has a long-standing dislike of Valentina, a local girl who is tainted with the stigma of illegitimacy and her father's collaboration with the enemy during the war.



When ex-resistance fighters and rock 'n' roll band members, Don, Benedick and Claudio arrive at Leonato's, it is clear that Claudio and Hero are smitten with each other. It is also evident that Benedick and Beatrice have some history between them as they engage in some witty verbal one-upmanship. As Beatrice and Benedick trade barbs and Hero and Claudio fall in love, Don's malevolent half-brother, John, decides to cause trouble, using a vulnerable Valentina, and his sidekicks, Conrad and Borachio to carry out his plans.

Claudio and friends meet up in Mancini's bar, where Benedick tries to convince them that bachelorhood is the way forward. Beatrice is disdainful when Hero and friends descend on Francesca's salon in great excitement at the prospect of the dance in the church hall that night and the possibility of an engagement between Hero and Claudio. Meanwhile, the whole town conspire in a plot to fix Benedick and Beatrice up as a couple, by convincing each of them that the other is secretly and hopelessly in love with them.

At the dance, the young people are excited by the appearance of The Bardettes, a popular all-girl singing group, despite the best efforts of Sister Angela, a strict nun, who is determined that there be no 'sinful' dancing. There is much excitement as Claudio and Hero become engaged and their

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stag and hen night parties are the talk of Messina. On hearing that Claudio and Hero are engaged and that Don will be best man, a jealous John

decides to trick a naïve Claudio into believing that he has seen Hero being unfaithful by planting seeds of jealousy in Claudio's mind, convincing him that the girl on Hero's balcony kissing Borachio is Hero when it is another girl, Margaret, dressed in Hero's gown. John persuades Claudio that, in order to preserve his dignity, he should publicly reject Hero at their wedding and expose her as unfaithful in front of the whole town.

Dogberry and Verges, who run a cleaning company in Messina whilst also working as members of the Messina neighbourhood watch, have overheard Conrad and Borachio revealing John's wicked plans and make a citizens' arrest before reporting them to the local police and to Leonato. However, their eccentric manner and speech means that Leonato does not understand what they are trying to tell him and he asks them to leave as he is busy with wedding preparations.

At the wedding, the locals are shocked as Claudio accuses Hero of infidelity and refuses to marry her. Hero faints from shock and Claudio departs with Don and John leaving Leonato and family in their shame in front of the whole town. Leonato is persuaded by the priest, Father Russo, to pretend that Hero is dead until they can prove her innocence.

Eventually, with the help of the police, Dogberry and Verges expose John as the originator of the wicked plan to trick Claudio, and Hero's besmirched name is cleared. Claudio begs for forgiveness from Leonato and agrees to lead a public memorial service for Hero. He also promises to give up his rock 'n' roll career in return for working for Leonato as repentance for his false accusations of Hero. Hero's memorial is attended by the whole of Messina town and the locals gather to watch Claudio hand his guitar over to Leonato and Antonia as a sign of his commitment to their family business.

Valentina helps the search for John who has gone into hiding, and Beatrice realises that the town have misjudged her. The locals agree that they should not blame Valentina for the sins of her family. John is captured and left in the hands of the formidable Sister Angela. It is then revealed that Hero is alive and, seeing how sorrowful he is, Hero forgives Claudio and declares the wedding to be back on. Benedick and Beatrice at first try to

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deny their obvious affection for each other before admitting defeat and publicly declaring their love.



## CHARACTERS

There are a total of 56 individual speaking roles in *Much Ado About Elvis*.

These consist of 25 Female roles (8 Principals, 17 Other), 13 Male roles (8 Principals and 5 Other) and 18 Gender Neutral roles (3 Principal, 14 Other).

A smaller cast is perfectly possible by reducing the size of the chorus, sharing the roles of Hero's friends out between fewer actors, and doubling up on the smaller parts.

### Principal Female Roles

BEATRICE*	<i>Manicurist and niece of Antonia and Leonato</i>
HERO	<i>Daughter of Leonato and Antonia</i>
VALENTINA*	<i>John's girlfriend</i>
ANTONIA	<i>Restaurant owner in Messina, wife of Leonato</i>
SISTER ANGELA	<i>Nun at the Messina convent</i>
THE BARDETTES** (MIMI, CECE & BIBI)	<i>Popular singing trio from Messina</i>

### Principal Male Roles

BENEDICK	<i>Band member and ex-resistance fighter</i>
CLAUDIO*	<i>Band member and friend to Don</i>
DON	<i>Band leader and ex-resistance fighter</i>
JOHN	<i>Malevolent half-brother of Don</i>
LEONATO	<i>Restaurant owner in Messina, husband of Antonia</i>
FATHER RUSSO	<i>Parish Priest of Messina</i>
CONRAD	<i>Sidekick of John</i>
BORACHIO	<i>Sidekick of John and boyfriend of Margaret</i>

### Other Principal Roles

DOGBERRY	<i>Cleaner</i>
VERGES	<i>Cleaner, junior to Dogberry</i>
BALTHASAR*	<i>Singer in Leonato's restaurant</i>

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\* These roles involve solo singing.

\*\* The Bardettes sing in a trio in three-part harmonies, so need to be strong singers.

### Other Female Roles (also make up the Chorus)

FRANCESCA	<i>Beauty salon owner</i>
URSULA	<i>Waitress at Leonato's restaurant</i>
MARGARET	<i>Waitress at Leonato's restaurant</i>
LUCIA	<i>Friend to Hero</i>
ALESSIA	<i>Friend to Hero</i>
ANNA	<i>Friend to Hero</i>
SOFIA	<i>Friend to Hero</i>
CATERINA	<i>Friend to Hero</i>
GIULIA	<i>Manicurist at Francesca's salon</i>
CARLOTTA	<i>Manicurist at Francesca's salon</i>
MARTINA	<i>Manicurist at Francesca's salon</i>
CLIENTS 1, 2 & 3	<i>Customers at Francesca's salon</i>
WIFE 1, 2 & 3	<i>Wives of Lorenzo, Angelo and Giovanni</i>

### Other Male Roles (also make up the Chorus)

MANCINI	<i>Bar owner</i>
LORENZO	<i>Regular patron of Mancini's bar</i>
ANGELO	<i>Regular patron of Mancini's bar</i>
GIOVANNI	<i>Regular patron of Mancini's bar</i>
SMALL BOY	<i>Diminutive partygoer</i>

### Other Roles (Gender Neutral)

COURIER	<i>Parcel delivery courier</i>
GUEST 1-8	<i>Partygoers at the dance</i>
WAITER	<i>Member of Leonato's staff</i>
STAFF 1, 2 & 3	<i>Members of Dogberry's cleaning team</i>
OFFICER TAGLIONE	<i>Messina Police Officer</i>
ELVIS	<i>The king of rock 'n' roll</i>

The CHORUS also play the roles of:

TOWNSPEOPLE  
PARTY/WEDDING GUESTS



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STAGS & HENS

## SONGS

### Act One

*Sigh No More* (Balthasar)  
*Welcome to Leonato's* (Chorus)  
*The Dance Tonight* (Girls' Chorus)  
*Bromance* (Boys' Chorus)  
*Sigh No More Reprise* (Balthasar)  
*Benedick* (Beatrice)  
*Can I Trust You?* (The Bardettes)  
*They Think They Know Me* (Valentina)  
*Someone's Getting Married* (Chorus)



### Act Two

*Messina, We Love You* (The Bardettes)  
*La Bella Sposa* (The Bardettes)  
*Erat Innocentes* (Chorus)  
*Forgive Me* (Claudio)  
*Much Ado About Elvis* (Full company)

## PROPS LIST



### ACT ONE

- Scene 1** Menus  
Notepad and pencil (Leonato)  
Clipboard with paper and pencil (Courier)  
Telephone
- Scene 2** Appointment Book  
Telephone  
3 x magazines (Clients 1, 2 & 3)  
3 x nail files (Carlotta, Giulia, Martina)
- Scene 3** 3 x beer bottles (Angelo, Giovanni, Lorenzo)  
Beer bottle (behind bar)
- Scene 4** Cigarette (John)
- Scene 5** Mop (Dogberry)  
Rule book (Verges)  
Trays/tea towels (Leonato, Antonia, Ursula & Margaret)
- Scene 6** Champagne bottle (Claudio)  
Champagne bottle (Beatrice)
- Scene 7** Bridal magazine (Anna)
- Scene 8** None
- Scene 9** Nail file (Beatrice)
- Scene 10** Champagne bottle (Claudio)  
Glasses (Chorus)

## ACT TWO

- Scene 1** Microphone (optional)
- Scene 2** L-plates (Hero)
- Scene 3** Keys (Mancini)  
Dusters (Staff 1 & 2)  
Feather duster on a stick (Staff 3)  
Cleaning contract and pencil (Verges)  
2 x beer bottles (behind bar)  
Key (Borachio)
- Scene 4** None
- Scene 5** Wedding service book (Father Russo)  
Bridal bouquet (Hero)
- Scene 6** Baseball bat (Sister Angela)  
Handkerchief (Sister Angela)  
Notepad and pencil (Officer Taglione)  
Rope (Officer Taglione)
- Scene 7** None
- Scene 8** Guitar (Benedick)  
Paper and pencil (Benedick)  
Small mirror (Benedick)
- Scene 9** Candles/lights (Chorus)  
Epitaph (Claudio)
- Scene 10** Catechism book (Father Russo)  
Guitar (Claudio)  
Limerick on piece of paper (Francesca)  
Love song on piece of paper (Balthasar)



## COSTUMES

Costumes for *Much Ado About Elvis* can be kept as simple or as complicated as the production desires. The vast majority of youth theatre and school productions have minimal budgets and therefore 'simple but effective' is the rule of thumb when selecting and changing costumes.



The original Kaleidoscope Youth Theatre production used white t-shirts and jeans with denim and/or leather jackets for the boys and plain t shirts and 1950s-style dresses for the girls. For the party scenes shirts, ties and trousers for the boys (prom suits were redeployed) worked very well and 1950s party dresses for the girls were sourced quite cheaply online or netting used under existing dresses. Gelled teddy-boy quiffs, high ponytails and neck scarves complete the 1950s look at relatively low cost.

## LIGHTING EFFECTS

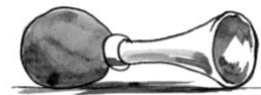
The lighting requirements are minimal. There are black outs written at the end of the scenes but these can be changed to suit the staging/production.



The original production used a spotlight on Hero's balcony and a projection of a cross on to the back wall for the church wedding and the epitaph scenes (but this is by no means essential).

## SOUND EFFECTS

The sound effects required are minimal. The original production used a phone ringing sound effect and church bells (both optional).



## ACT ONE

### SCENE 1

LEONATO's restaurant in Messina, Sicily. 1956. The stage is set with a service counter and two small tables with two chairs at each of them. There is a phone on the counter and menus on the tables. LEONATO, is on stage, writing his day's takings down in a notebook. His daughter, HERO, is also on stage, accompanied by two of her friends, LUCIA and ALESSIA.

LUCIA            *(To HERO)* Go on. Tell him now while he's in a good mood.

ALESSIA         Yes. The takings were good today. He'll be fine.

*(LUCIA and ALESSIA push HERO in LEONATO's direction.)*

HERO             Daddy?

LEONATO         Uh-oh.

HERO             Why uh-oh?

LEONATO         Because you're going to say something I won't like.

HERO             How do you know that?

LEONATO         Because you called me Daddy. Never a good sign. And those two friends of yours over there are definitely helping you plot something. *(To LUCIA and ALESSIA)* Aren't you?

LUCIA             No, Sir.

ALESSIA         Absolutely not, Sir.

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LEONATO        A likely story. Go home, girls. You can leave my daughter to her own dirty work.

LUCIA            Bye, Hero.

ALESSIA        Bye. See you at the concert on Friday?

LEONATO        Not more rock and roll?

LUCIA            We'll make sure she's home before midnight, Sir.

LEONATO        Unless you turn into a pumpkin first, eh?

ALESSIA        Eh?

LEONATO        Never mind. Go home, girls.

(LUCIA and ALESSIA exit.)

HERO            Daddy ...

(ANTONIA enters.)

ANTONIA        Oh dear. (To LEONATO) What does she want?

HERO            Mummy...

LEONATO        (To ANTONIA) Mummy as well as Daddy?

ANTONIA}        (Together)

LEONATO}        What have you done?

HERO            There's going to be a new addition.

ANTONIA        What?

HERO            You'll get used to it. I promise.

LEONATO        (*Furiously jumping to the wrong conclusion*) You have shamed the family? Tell me his name! I will find him and

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kill him! I will find him and kill him twice! I will find him and put his entrails on the menu as an example to others!

HERO No! No, nothing like that.

ANTONIA Thank goodness for that.

LEONATO *(Changing his tune and sweet again)* Of course not! Not my Hero!

ANTONIA What is this new addition then?

HERO Well ...

*(HERO is interrupted by BALTHASAR who enters, looking for LEONATO.)*

LEONATO There you are, Balthasar. Are you ready to sing for us? *(To ANTONIA and HERO)* He has been practising all day.

ANTONIA What have you been practising for, Balthasar?

BALTHASAR Signor Leonato wants me to sing at the dance at the church hall.

LEONATO The resistance fighters' reunion ball. Don Pedro is chief guest. A very brave young man even if he dresses like a teddy bear.

HERO Teddy boy.

LEONATO Sing for us, Balthasar. Go on, don't be shy.

*(BALTHASAR begins to sing in a very old-fashioned manner.)*

SONG - SIGH NO MORE *(Balthasar)*

*Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more.  
Men were deceivers ever,  
One foot in sea, and one on shore,*



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*To one thing constant never.  
Then sigh not so, but let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny,  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into hey nonny, nonny.*

LEONATO Beautiful.

ANTONIA Very nice, Balthasar, but for the dance ...

LEONATO It will be perfect!

ANTONIA You don't think it will be a bit ...

HERO Old-fashioned?

ANTONIA There will be a lot of young people there, Leonato. They will want something a bit more modern. Some rock and roll music.

HERO Like Elvis Presley.

LEONATO The one with the pelvis?

HERO (*Dreamily*) Yes.

LEONATO Modern filth. Rock and roll. It is for idiots.

HERO I love it.

LEONATO You are an idiot.

ANTONIA I'm sorry, Balthasar, it's just that —

*(ANTONIA is interrupted by the entrance of BEATRICE, URSULA and MARGARET with a COURIER who carries a clipboard, paper and pen.)*

COURIER (*Pointing into the wings*) In there all right for you?

BEATRICE Yes, thank you.

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- COURIER Who should I get to sign for it?
- LEONATO What is going on here? Beatrice?
- BEATRICE It's not my doing, Uncle.
- LEONATO That one – she has a smart answer for everything.
- BEATRICE I try. It's not my fault if I was born with such amazing wit.
- URSULA Not to mention modesty.
- MARGARET And humility.
- LEONATO Will someone please tell me what this is?
- COURIER Please can you sign for it, Sir? I don't want to miss Elvis on the radio. He's my idol, Elvis is.
- LEONATO (*Disgustedly*) Your idol is Elvis Presley?
- COURIER Yes, Sir.
- LEONATO Not Michelangelo? Giotto? Shakespeare?
- COURIER Who?
- LEONATO You are an idiot.
- COURIER Yes, Sir. (*Giving Leonato his pen*) Sign here please, Sir.
- (LEONATO *signs the form.*)
- (*The COURIER exits.*)
- ANTONIA What is it?
- HERO The new addition.
- BEATRICE A Wurlitzer Model 1015 jukebox!

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LEONATO A what?

HERO Now, Daddy...

LEONATO Don't you, Daddy me. I didn't-

*(LEONATO is interrupted by the phone ringing.)*

ANTONIA Saved by the bell.

LEONATO *(Answering the phone)* Hello? Oh, hello, Mancini. Of course they can. Ursula and Margaret are still here and as long as they don't mind staying on. No, I'm sure they won't. When will they be here? Ok. We'll be ready.

*(LEONATO hangs up the phone.)*

HERO Who's coming?

LEONATO No less than our local hero, Don Pedro. He's just been at Mancini's bar and he's hungry.

ANTONIA Then we must make sure he gets a good meal. It's the least we can do after what he did for this town.

URSULA A brave young man indeed.

MARGARET We're happy to stay on for Don.

LEONATO I'm glad of the help. He's bringing his friends. A young Florentine by the name of Claudio. And, of course, Signor Ben-

BEATRICE *(Interrupting him)* Oh no! Don't tell me he's bringing him?

URSULA Could you mean Signor Benedick perchance?

BEATRICE Yes, Benedick. *(With some venom)* With the emphasis on the-

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LEONATO        (*Interrupting quickly*) Thank you, niece.

MARGARET     He was very brave in the resistance.

BEATRICE       So they say.

ANTONIA       I know there is a kind of merry war betwixt Signor Benedick and you, Beatrice, but you will be kind, I hope. If only for the sake of his new friend, Claudio.

BEATRICE       He will hang upon him like a disease. God help the noble Claudio! If he has caught the Benedick, it will cost him thousands in therapy before he is cured.

ANTONIA       (*Looking into the wings*) And here they are.

HERO            They've brought half the town with them!

(DON, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, JOHN *and the* CHORUS,  
*as townspeople, enter.*)

DON             (*Shaking LEONATO's hand*) Signor Leonato, you are too good to us troublemakers.

LEONATO       Troublemakers? No, Sir. You are always welcome here.

DON             Thank you. This is my friend, Claudio. (*Noticing that CLAUDIO is staring at HERO*) And this must be your daughter, Hero.

LEONATO       So her mother tells me.

BENEDICK       So there is some doubt then?

BEATRICE       (*With a sneer*) Eurgh.

DON             Don't judge everyone by your own standards, Benedick. I hope you take after your excellent father, Hero.

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- BENEDICK But perhaps without the stubbly chin.
- BEATRICE You do know that they are laughing at you rather than with you, Signor Benedick?
- BENEDICK Oh, look who it is! You. What's your name again? Beetlebug or something? I thought you were dead. But then I am the eternal optimist.
- BEATRICE If I were dead I'd return as a ghost, if only to warn the rest of the female population about you.
- BENEDICK It is true that the ladies love me. You excepted of course. Not that love is my thing.
- BEATRICE A dear happiness to women. It does save them the trouble of dreaming up ways to get rid of you. It's actually the only thing we have in common. If it wouldn't ruin my nails—
- BENEDICK (*Interrupting*) Claws more like.
- BEATRICE (*Ignoring his interruption*) If it wouldn't ruin my nails, I'd rather scratch my eyes out than a man swear he loves me.
- BENEDICK Let's hope it's not necessary then. I can hardly bear to look at you now but with scratched out eyes, I'd definitely need my beer goggles.
- BEATRICE If I could get away with it, I'd poison you.
- BENEDICK If it were that or have to listen to you for much longer, I'd consider death a blessing.
- BEATRICE You always have to have the last word. I wish you'd drop—
- ANTONIA Enough! Enough! Despite my niece's words, Signor Benedick, you are very welcome. All of you.

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DON Thank you. Please let me introduce my brother, John.

JOHN Good evening, Signor Leonato. You have a lovely place here.

LEONATO Thank you. Let me get you a menu. Hero, get the gentlemen a menu.

HERO Of course.

*(LEONATO moves upstage to show DON and JOHN a menu leaving CLAUDIO downstage talking to BENEDICK.)*

CLAUDIO Benedick, did you see Leonato's daughter, Hero?

BENEDICK Of course I did. *(Realising that CLAUDIO is smitten)* Do you need a slap?

CLAUDIO Isn't she the most beautiful girl you've ever seen in your life?

BENEDICK She's all right. A bit short. At least she doesn't have the foul temper of her cousin. You're not thinking of turning husband I hope?

CLAUDIO Do you think she might?

BENEDICK What? You've only just met her.

CLAUDIO Have you never heard of love at first sight?

BENEDICK I think I am going to have to slap you now.

*(DON approaches BENEDICK and CLAUDIO.)*

DON What are you two plotting?

BENEDICK He has fallen in love.

DON Already?

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BENEDICK At first sight. Isn't it vomit-inducing?

DON With who?

BENEDICK With Hero. Leonato's short daughter.

DON Good for you, Claudio. She is from a well-respected family. They were part of the resistance in the war with myself and Benedick. Her father is a strict man but a good one. You might have to cut your hair though. He's not a fan of rock and roll.

BENEDICK You wouldn't catch Elvis getting married.

DON He will one day. It will happen for you too.

BENEDICK Oh no, not me! I will die a bachelor.

DON We'll see. Come on, let's join the others. This is turning into a party and now we have something to celebrate.

LEONATO To our friends!

DON To Messina!

ALL To Leonato's!

(THE CHORUS *begin to sing.*)

SONG - WELCOME TO LEONATO'S (CHORUS)

*Welcome to Leonato's  
Have some food and drink*

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*Welcome to Leonato's  
We're all tickled pink*

*To have you in Messina tonight  
You'll open late?  
It's only polite*

*Welcome to Leonato's  
Have a glass or two  
Welcome to Leonato's  
Here to welcome you*

*Into our homes you brave boys and men  
Let's raise a toast  
Saluti, Amen!*

*Welcome to Leonato's  
Sicily's real jewel  
Welcome to Leonato's  
Nobody's fool*

*Your intentions are not just in fun?*

CLAUDIO (Spoken) Of course not, Sir.

*Good, he owns a gun*

*Welcome to Leonato's  
Love is in the air  
Welcome to Leonato's  
Shout the fanfare*

*A wedding's hatched so send for the priest  
We've clothes to buy  
And wine for the feast*

*Welcome to Leonato's  
Love is in the air  
Welcome to Leonato's  
Shout the fanfare  
Welcome to Leonato's*



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*Welcome to Leonato's*  
*Welcome to Leonato's*  
*Love is in the air*

BLACK OUT

**SCENE 2**

FRANCESCA's salon. There is a reception desk with an appointment book and a phone on it. CLIENTS 1, 2 and 3 are sitting on stools with their hair in foils and protective capes over their shoulders. GIULIA, MARTINA and CARLOTTA are sitting on stools in between each client, filing their nails. FRANCESCA is at the counter talking to BEATRICE.

FRANCESCA And she's seen him every day?

GIULIA Every day.

BEATRICE Without fail. Love at first sight she says.

MARTINA Love at first sight. So romantic.

CARLOTTA It's wonderful.

BEATRICE It's ridiculous.

FRANCESCA Is it?

BEATRICE Of course it is. Hero's not much more than a child. Nor is Claudio for that matter.

FRANCESCA What about Don's brother? He seems ... interesting.

BEATRICE I know! What a sourpuss! Just looking at him gave me heartburn.

FRANCESCA He does seem a bit of a misery.

GIULIA I gave him my best smile and nothing. Never happened before.

CARLOTTA I wondered why you were so quiet.

GIULIA I thought I was losing my touch.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

MARTINA You keep up that cleavage and no man in Messina is safe tonight. Not even the miserable John Pedro. Men!

BEATRICE It would be excellent if they could make a man halfway between John and Benedick. One of them is too miserable and never speaks and the other is too much like a spoiled little boy, always chattering. And if he was ridiculously handsome, ludicrously rich, and supremely agile, a man like that would be almost tempting. Order me one of them immediately, Francesca!

FRANCESCA (*Laughing*) Excuse me! Who is the boss around here?

BEATRICE You, your highness. (*Curtseying*) You are the queen of all the hairdressers, the chief empress of all the manicurists and the tsarina of all the salon owners in Messina.

FRANCESCA I'm the only salon owner in Messina.

BEATRICE Exactly.

FRANCESCA Very funny.

BEATRICE Precisely. I'm just too funny for a man. They can't stand the competition.

FRANCESCA Anyone in particular you're referring to?

BEATRICE No.

FRANCESCA You don't want to be single for ever, do you?

BEATRICE I do, actually. I shall die a smelly old bag of wrinkles with unwaxed legs, a single, unkempt eyebrow, surrounded by my many cats and with no ring on my finger.

FRANCESCA An old maid!

(CLIENTS 1, 2 & 3 *gasp audibly.*)

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- GIULIA            You can't be an old maid!
- CARLOTTA        No!
- MARTINA          Single life is for ugly women. And nuns.
- BEATRICE         Oh be quiet! It's not fair, bachelor sounds so much more fun than spinster. Better an old maid than to be hitched to a bore, spending your life praying for him to die.
- CLIENT 1         What about Signor Benedick?
- BEATRICE         I pray for him to die every day. (CLIENTS 1, 2 & 3 *gasp audibly again.*) I don't really! What about Benedick?
- CLIENT 1         He's single, isn't he?
- FRANCESCA        You are a braver woman than you look.
- CLIENT 1         Why?
- CLIENT 2         Beatrice doesn't like him.
- CLIENT 3         Everyone knows that.
- BEATRICE         It's not that I don't like Benedick.
- CLIENT 2         Oh.
- BEATRICE         It's more that I loathe him. Detest you might say. Hate even. He's a deeply irritating, smug, self-satisfied, arrogant, cocksure –
- CLIENT 3         Ooh!
- BEATRICE         Behave yourself!
- (BEATRICE, FRANCESCA and CLIENTS 1, 2 & 3 *laugh.*)
- (VALENTINA *enters, stopping the laughter.*)

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

GIULIA            You again.

FRANCESCA      What are you doing here?

VALENTINA      I have come to book an appointment.

CARLOTTA       You've got a nerve.

MARTINA        Coming here after what your father did to Francesca's father.

FRANCESCA      (*To VALENTINA*) We do not have any appointments.

VALENTINA      You didn't even look.

FRANCESCA      I don't need to.

VALENTINA      I see.

*(The phone rings. FRANCESCA answers it.)*

FRANCESCA      (*Speaking into the phone*) Hero! Of course we can fit you in. I will always make room for you. See you soon.

*(FRANCESCA hangs up the phone.)*

VALENTINA      So there are free appointments for Hero?

FRANCESCA      Yes.

VALENTINA      But not for me?

FRANCESCA      No.

VALENTINA      I see.

FRANCESCA      Good.

*(VALENTINA exits.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

BEATRICE Was that really necessary?

FRANCESCA You know her father sold information to Mussolini and his friends in the war?

BEATRICE I know. But Valentina was just a child.

FRANCESCA If it hadn't been for Leonato hiding my father he would have been killed because of what her father did.

BEATRICE Her father, not her. It's not her fault.

FRANCESCA You know her mother was a—

BEATRICE I know, I know. But again, not her fault.

FRANCESCA I don't want to think about them anymore. Tell me about Hero's new love.

BEATRICE Must I?

*(HERO enters with LUCIA, ALESSIA, SOFIA, ANNA and CATERINA.)*

FRANCESCA No, she can tell me herself. *(To HERO)* We've just been talking about you.

HERO All good I hope?

BEATRICE Well ...

HERO Francesca, these are my friends, Sofia, Anna and Caterina.

FRANCESCA And bridesmaids soon perhaps?

*(HERO and the other girls giggle. BEATRICE looks disgusted.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- BEATRICE      You're all pathetic. A disgrace to our sex quite frankly.
- FRANCESCA    What can I do for you, girls?
- HERO            Well it's the dance tonight so we thought we'd come in for some of beautification.
- LUCIA          (*Teasingly*) Somebody is keen to impress somebody.
- SOFIA          Especially now that Claudio might...
- ANNA           ... Pop the question!
- CATERINA      Oh, Hero, do you think he might?
- ALESSIA        Will he go down on one knee do you think?
- BEATRICE      (*Mimicking*) Oh, Hero, do you think he might? Will he go down on one knee do you think?
- FRANCESCA    There's nothing wrong with looking your best. Just in case.
- HERO            Could you do our-
- CLIENT 1        Nails?
- CLIENT 2        Face?
- CLIENT 3        Hair?
- HERO            Yes.
- FRANCESCA    Of course. I thought I'd be run off my feet with the dance on tonight.
- GIULIA          I know. Looks like an early night for us, girls.
- MARTINA        You can go and test out your 'smile' on John again.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

GIULIA           (*Adjusting her top*) Maybe I will.

CARLOTTA       (*Shouting*) Women of Messina, lock up your sons!

*(The CHORUS enter, rushing to ask FRANCESCA and BEATRICE for an appointment and all talking at once.)*

FRANCESCA     Looks like we spoke too soon. Button up, Giulia, we've work to do!

CHORUS           (*Speaking at the same time*) Francesca, I need you to set my hair?/Beatrice, can you do my nails?/Please, do my eyebrows/Help me with my make-up etc.

BEATRICE        And here they all are. Messina's women. One sniff of a guy and a slow dance and they're like vultures.

FRANCESCA     Don't worry. We'll fit you all in. We'll do your nails.

GIULIA           Face.

CARLOTTA       Hair.

SONG - THE DANCE TONIGHT (Girls' Chorus)

*Nails  
Face  
Hair  
You'll be stunning*

*Nails  
Face  
Hair  
They'll come running  
When you get to the dance tonight  
(When you get to the dance tonight)*



MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

*Spray  
Scent  
Wax  
Works its magic*

*You  
Won't  
Look  
Quite so tragic  
When you get to the dance tonight  
(When you get to the dance tonight)*

*Nail varnish  
Oh so glamorous  
Dress, jewels, heels  
Feeling amorous  
We can't wait for the dance tonight  
(We can't wait for the dance tonight)*

*Hair up or down  
Someone tell me  
This scent is nice  
Come here, smell me  
We've gone mad for the dance tonight  
(We've gone mad for the dance tonight)*

*Get a grip, girls,  
You're so funny  
Just keep quiet and think  
Of the money  
We can't wait for the dance tonight  
Let's get you set for the dance tonight  
We can't wait for the dance tonight  
We can't wait for the dance tonight*

BLACK OUT

SCENE 3

MANCINI's bar. MANCINI, the owner, is standing behind the bar. Three drunk men, LORENZO, ANGELO and GIOVANNI are on stage, sitting on bar stools and drinking from beer bottles.

LORENZO      Another one, my good man!

MANCINI      Are you sure that's wise?

LORENZO      I know, I know, it's bad for the skin.

ANGELO      Skin, who needs it?

GIOVANNI     Exactly! I could do very well without it.

MANCINI      Really?

ANGELO      Of course he could. You're always saying we've had a skinful. With no skin you couldn't say that anymore, could you, Mancini?

MANCINI      I suppose not.

LORENZO      Genius.

GIOVANNI     Mind you, there is a flaw in this plan.

MANCINI      You don't say?

GIOVANNI     I suppose, if you had no skin to cover you, you'd leak beer and that would be a criminal waste. Isn't that right, Lorenzo?

LORENZO      A criminal waste, Giovanni. My best friend, Giovanni.

ANGELO      (*Crying*) I thought I was your best friend.

GIOVANNI     No. You're my best friend. Always have been. Always-

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- LORENZO        Has be.
- ANGELO         Exactly. In vino veritas. In beer veritas anyway. See, it's good for the brain. I'm speaking Latin.
- GIOVANNI      I said it is good for us. Didn't I say that, Mancini? And stop moving all the time.
- MANCINI        Far be it from me to do myself out of business and miss out on the rest of your philosophizing, but I think your rides are here.
- LORENZO        What?
- MANCINI        Your good lady wives are outside.
- GIOVANNI      Good? They're not good.
- MANCINI        No?
- ANGELO         No. They're so demanding. They want us to stay home sometimes and drink water and they even want us to care about what the kids are doing as well.
- MANCINI        Sounds tough.
- ANGELO         *(Tearfully)* It is, Mancini. It is.
- LORENZO        Do you think they'll know we've been here since lunchtime?
- GIOVANNI      No. Just speak slow and articulate and you'll look as sober as a judge. I mean as jobber as a sudge. No, I was right the first time. *(Hiccoughing)* Hic!
- MANCINI        Good luck, fellas. I think they're coming in.
- (WIFE 1, 2 and 3 enter with rolling pins.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

LORENZO           They've brought weapons.

MANCINI           Ladies.

WIFE 1}           (*Together*)

WIFE 2}

WIFE 3}           Mancini.

MANCINI           These three belong to you, I believe.

WIFE 1}           (*Together*)

WIFE 2}

WIFE 3}           Well?

LORENZO           (*Trying to speak slowly and articulately*) Why, hello, my dear. I stust jopped in for a bint of peer.

WIFE 1            You're drunk.

ANGELO           No, no, no, no, no, n—

GIOVANNI         Yes.

WIFE 2            Out.

WIFE 3            You're a disgrace!

(LORENZO, GIOVANNI, ANGELO and WIFE 1, 2 and 3 exit.)

(*The CHORUS enter with DON, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, FATHER RUSSO and JOHN.*)

DON                Hi, Mancini.

MANCINI           Hi, Don.

DON                This is my brother, John.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

MANCINI *(Offering his hand out to be shaken)* Pleased to meet you, John. We all love Don round here. He's like a local hero. I didn't know he had a brother.

JOHN *(Ignoring the offer of his handshake)* He's never mentioned me? I see. I'm his half-brother.

MANCINI Oh, I see.

JOHN *(Threateningly)* Mine's a beer.

MANCINI *(Handing JOHN a bottle of beer from behind the bar)* On the house.

JOHN *(Taking the beer)* Yeah.

*(JOHN exits to the wings.)*

MANCINI You boys been practising for the dance?

CLAUDIO Yeah.

BENEDICK And if I say so myself, I was brilliant. Even Beatrice would've admitted it. Probably.

CLAUDIO You were.

BENEDICK I am loyal though. If Elvis calls and wants me on his next tour I shall say 'No, Elvis, no. You may be the king of rock 'n' roll and I am, as you say, insanely talented but I can not leave my considerably less talented friends'.

DON You are too kind.

BENEDICK I am.

CLAUDIO A lady would be lucky to have you.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- BENEDICK Oh no, no, no, no! My kindness comes from being a confirmed bachelor. A woman would rob me of all my fine qualities.
- DON *(To BENEDICK)* Are you completely determined to stay single until the day you die?
- BENEDICK I am. Bachelorhood is wonderful. Ask Father Russo. Women are best avoided. Isn't that right, Padre?
- FR RUSSO What's that?
- CLAUDIO Benedick says that women should be avoided.
- FR RUSSO By me, yes. It's in the rules.
- BENEDICK Women should be avoided.
- DON All of them?
- BENEDICK Without exception.
- CLAUDIO Even Beatrice?
- BENEDICK Especially Beatrice. They are all trouble.
- DON I don't believe you.
- BENEDICK My mother was a woman. She was insane. My sister is a woman. Totally deranged. My aunt is a woman. Mad as a box of frogs. Beatrice is a woman.
- DON She is.
- BENEDICK Certifiable.
- CLAUDIO So they're all crazy?
- BENEDICK Beyond reason.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

DON                   And all related to you?

BENEDICK        Coincidental. And Beatrice isn't related to me.

DON                   No. It's funny you keep mentioning her. She's single I believe.

BENEDICK        I'm not surprised. Do you know I once spoke to Beatrice on my way out of the market? I was carrying a litre of fresh milk. One look from her and it had curdled.

DON                   I swear I will see you one day sick with love.

BENEDICK        With measles, mumps, with lesser-spotted Dutch elm disease possibly. But not with love.

*(The CHORUS, BENEDICK, CLAUDIO and FATHER RUSSO move into position for the song.)*

SONG – BROMANCE (Boys' Chorus)

*Doo-de-doo-de-doo-de-doo  
Doo-de-de-doo-de-doo-de-doo-de-doo  
Women – they are trouble  
Girls – they wreck your life  
Who needs weighing down  
By an unessential wife?*

BENEDICK        *(Spoken)* Exactly!

CHORUS           *(Spoken)* But then again ...

*A bachelor forever?  
I'm not sure that's for me!  
An outright ban on all romance?  
No down on bended knee?*

CLAUDIO         *(Spoken)* But what about romance?

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

BENEDICK      (*Spoken*) Romance? What about bromance?

*We need bromance  
Nights out with the boys  
Bromance  
Drinking and lots of noise  
Doo-de-doo-de-doo*

*Who needs romance  
When you've got your mates?  
Football, lots of curry  
And some lifting weights*

*Women – they are trouble  
Girls – they wreck your life  
Who needs weighing down  
By an unessential wife?*

*We need bromance  
Nights out with the boys  
Bromance  
Drinking and lots of noise  
Doo-de-doo-de-doo  
Doo-doo-doo*

*Who needs women  
when there's friends like these?  
We can leave our socks on  
'Til they smell of cheese*

*Women – they are trouble  
Girls – they wreck your life  
Who needs weighing down  
By an unessential wife?  
Doo-de-doo-de-doo-de-doo*

CLAUDIO      (*Spoken*) I do. Women are a civilising influence.

CHORUS      (*Spoken*) He's not wrong.



MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

*Women – they are crazy  
But they sure smell great  
Guys are good to hang with  
But man needs a mate*

*A bachelor forever?  
I'm not sure that's for me!  
An outright ban on all romance?  
No down on bended knee?*

*We need romance  
Give me some romance  
We need romance  
Give me some romance  
De-doo-de-doo-de-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo  
De-doo-de-doo-de-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo*

BENEDICK      *(Sensing he has lost the room)* Oh brother.

BLACK OUT

SCENE 4

*A street in Messina. JOHN is on stage, smoking. VALENTINA enters.*

JOHN            Ah, Valentina, my angel. And by angel, I obviously mean one in the style of Lucifer himself, thoroughly black-hearted and irredeemably wicked.

VALENTINA    You say the sweetest things. (*Referring to the cigarette*) Those are bad for you, you know.

JOHN            (*Putting the cigarette out on the floor with his foot*) I was holding it for a friend.

VALENTINA    Liar. Besides, you don't have any friends.

JOHN            And need none. And no more do you.

VALENTINA    And need none. What are you doing lurking here?

JOHN            Thinking.

VALENTINA    Plotting more like. Please tell me it involves some irreparable damage to the saintly-

JOHN            (*With venom*) Claudio.

VALENTINA    I was going to say Hero. That girl makes me want to heave. Such a goody-two-shoes.

JOHN            And now in love with the young and spotless Claudio – Don's new favourite puppy dog. Ever since the war everyone has treated Don as a hero whilst I-

VALENTINA    Collaborated with the enemy?

JOHN            (*Viciously*) Be quiet! As beautiful as you are, no-one is indispensable.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- VALENTINA And you think I rely on your affections, do you?
- JOHN I think you know that everyone in this town bar me thinks that you're dirt. Hero, the pure and spotless daughter of Leonato, respected business owner. And Valentina, the illegitimate daughter of a whore.
- VALENTINA Stop! I hate you.
- JOHN But you hate Hero more. And my brother needs to be taught a lesson in family loyalty. And you and I are such good teachers.
- VALENTINA Tell me more.
- (CONRAD *and* BORACHIO *enter*.)
- CONRAD I hope we're not interrupting a lovers' assignation.
- JOHN Shut up, Conrad.
- BORACHIO He was only saying.
- VALENTINA And you can take that smirk off your face, Borachio. You have the brains of a half-wit between the two of you.
- CONRAD (*To* BORACHIO) Is that bad?
- BORACHIO (*To* JOHN) Have you heard the news?
- JOHN What news?
- BORACHIO You said you'd pay us for information about your brother.
- JOHN And?
- CONRAD An engagement is to be announced.
- VALENTINA What?

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

BORACHIO Your brother's right-hand man, Cl—

JOHN (*Venomously*) Claudio. Pretty boy, Claudio.

CONRAD To—

VALENTINA (*Venomously*) Hero. Pure and saintly, Hero.

BORACHIO I heard Don Pedro say that he would help Claudio find a time to ask her at the dance.

JOHN Really?

CONRAD Yes. I think Don will be Claudio's best man. They seemed so happy.

JOHN (*Bitterly*) Happy.

BORACHIO And I believe that Hero is expecting the proposal and beside herself with joy.

VALENTINA (*Bitterly*) Joy.

CONRAD We should go.

JOHN (*Thinking*) Yes.

BORACHIO What about the money?

JOHN Later, later.

CONRAD We need to get off anyway. They need help arranging the church hall for the dance.

BORACHIO Yes. Everyone's helping get ready. The whole town is thrilled.

JOHN} (*Together, bitterly*)  
VALENTINA} Thrilled.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

(JOHN *gestures for* CONRAD *to pick up his cigarette butt.*)

(CONRAD *picks up the cigarette butt and exits with* BORACHIO.)

VALENTINA Hero and Claudio are so happy and good. It makes me sick.

JOHN All good things come to an end, my dear.

VALENTINA Especially with a little help. You and I have a dance to attend I think.

JOHN And a plan to formulate.

(VALENTINA *and* JOHN *exit.*)

BLACK OUT

SCENE 5

*The church hall. The stage is decorated with bunting and a sign that reads 'Messina Dance 1956'. FATHER RUSSO is on stage with the cleaners, DOGBERRY and VERGES. VERGES is holding a book.*

FR RUSSO        You've done a marvellous job cleaning the hall for the dance, thank you, Mr(s) Dogberry.

DOGBERRY       I consider it no less than my duty.

VERGES         Clause 4.13 of our cleaning contract reads 'Clean thoroughly'. And so that is what we did do.

FR RUSSO        Thank you, Mr-?

VERGES         Verges. I was named after my father.

FR RUSSO        What was his name?

VERGES         Mr(s) Verges.

DOGBERRY        And I was named after my dear departed mother.

FR RUSSO        And what was her name?

DOGBERRY        Ethelred. A beautiful soul. May she rest in peace.

DOGBERRY}     *(Together)*

VERGES}        Amen.

FR RUSSO        They'll be here in a minute.

DOGBERRY        The patronisers?

FR RUSSO        The guests, yes.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- VERGES We shall then depart like thieves in the night. But without stealing anything lest we go straight to hell and burn forever in the unholy fires of damnation.
- FR RUSSO (*Jokingly*) We can't have that now, can we?
- DOGBERRY We cannot indeed, your Holyship.
- FR RUSSO The young men and women will be here soon so ...
- VERGES I hope the dancing will not be sinful in this church hall of worshipfulness.
- DOGBERRY Mr(s) Verges makes a most judelicious point. If there is to be sinful dancing we will need to buy more bleach.
- FR RUSSO No, no, no. Myself and Sister Angela will be here to make sure everything is-
- VERGES (*Awestruck*) Sister Angela will be here?
- FR RUSSO Yes.
- VERGES Oooh.
- FR RUSSO Is that a problem?
- VERGES No. No. Quite the opposite in fact. An unproblem.
- DOGBERRY Mr(s) Verges worships Sister Angela, Father Rizzo.
- FR RUSSO Russo.
- DOGBERRY My humble apologies, Padre.
- FR RUSSO You admire, Sister Angela, do you?
- VERGES I think she is a magnificence, a splendouricity in a wimple. If she were not a sister she would make a marvellful woman. Such a gentle soul.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- FR RUSSO      Gentle?
- DOGBERRY     With a nature excessive in kindlitude.
- FR RUSSO      Kindly?
- VERGES        She taught me when I was a small childlet. When I couldn't do my alphabet because of my squint and my inherent stupidity, she beat me with a stick every day until I had become learned in my letters.
- DOGBERRY     Every day without fail. Such dedication.
- FR RUSSO      I shall make sure she knows of your admiration.
- VERGES        You are a goodly man, Father Russo. You should become a priest one day.
- FR RUSSO      I have.
- DOGBERRY     God bless you, Sire. We'll be off now. We're on the neighbourhood watch tonight. Mr(s) Verges has the rule book right here.
- VERGES        And should we meet with any criminalities intent on harm we shall stun them with the full extensions of the Messina legalities.
- FR RUSSO      Jolly good.
- (*LEONATO, ANTONIA, URSULA and MARGARET enter. They are carrying trays covered in tea towels.*)
- ANTONIA       Evening, Father. Mr(s) Dogberry, Mr(s) Verges.
- DOGBERRY     The very best of evetides to you also.
- VERGES        Amen. So be it.
- LEONATO       Where would you like us to put the food?



MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- DOGBERRY In people's mouths?
- VERGES Perhaps in their hands or fingers?
- DOGBERRY Or possibly on plates.
- VERGES Plates, yes. Plates would be best.
- FR RUSSO If you could put them in the kitchen for now, please.
- LEONATO Certainly, Father.
- (LEONATO, ANTONIA, URSULA *and* MARGARET  
*exit*.)
- VERGES Kitchen for now.
- DOGBERRY Yes, of course. Kitchen for now. Plates come later.
- VERGES Plates come later. Yes, of course. Forgive our stupidities,  
Reverend Mothership.
- FR RUSSO Not at all.
- VERGES You are indeed a gracious man of the cloth, Sire.
- DOGBERRY We'll be off now, Father. May God go with you.
- VERGES Which he likely will as he is omniprescient.
- DOGBERRY Enjoy the rock and roll music, Father Rizzler.
- FR RUSSO Russo.
- DOGBERRY That's right. Elvis Presley is quite good I think. Despite  
the pelvis.
- FR RUSSO I'm not sure about rock and roll.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

VERGES            You must not worry, Holy Bishop Sir, for the rocks are not real. They are purely metaphorical.

FR RUSSO        Thank you.

DOGBERRY       We bid you, adieu.

VERGES            Adieu.

FR RUSSO        Adieu.

VERGES            Please pass on my adorations to Sister Angela.

FR RUSSO        I will.

DOGBERRY        And God's too.

FR RUSSO        Yes. Goodbye.

(DOGBERRY *and* VERGES *exit*.)

(LEONATO, ANTONIA, URSULA *and* MARGARET *enter*.)

LEONATO        It's all ready now, Father.

ANTONIA        It's very good of you to let them use the church hall for the dance.

LEONATO        They'll be playing Elvis Presley, you know.

URSULA         And other music. Don's band will be playing.

MARGARET      They're very good.

LEONATO        Good? They're almost as bad as Elvis. With their leather jackets and guitars. It's only a matter of time before the pelvises start coming out. Sorry, Father.

FR RUSSO        That's all right. I prefer Bing Crosby myself of course.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- LEONATO Yes. That's more like it.
- ANTONIA Don't be such a misery. Don and his friends are good lads. You know that.
- LEONATO I hope you're right. We're ready to welcome him into the family.
- FR RUSSO Really?
- URSULA I think he plans to propose to Hero at the dance.
- MARGARET So romantic.
- LEONATO Romance! That'll soon go. He'll be knee deep in debt and nappies before he can blink.
- ANTONIA What Leonato means is that it is lovely news and we'll be asking you to book the church for the wedding.
- FR RUSSO Of course!
- URSULA (*Looking at her watch*) It's nearly 7 o'clock. We'd better go.
- MARGARET I need to put more make-up on.
- URSULA You do, yes.
- MARGARET Cheeky!
- LEONATO Why so much fuss? It's only a dance.
- ANTONIA I need to find my mask.
- LEONATO What?
- ANTONIA My mask.
- LEONATO What mask?
- URSULA It's a masquerade dance.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

LEONATO But no one will know who anyone is.

ANTONIA Exactly. It's fun.

LEONATO A masquerade dance but with rock and roll music?

ANTONIA Yes.

LEONATO I don't understand the young.

BLACK OUT

SCENE 6

*The church hall. The CHORUS are on stage in masquerade masks, dancing sedately as BALTHASAR sings. BEATRICE, BENEDICK, MARGARET, BORACHIO, JOHN, VALENTINA, CONRAD, and CLAUDIO are also on stage. SISTER ANGELA is also there, making sure that the dancing is appropriate.*

SONG – SIGH NO MORE REPRISE (Balthasar)

*Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more.  
Men were deceivers ever,  
One foot in sea, and one on shore,  
To one thing constant never.*

GUEST 1           What the hell is this?

GUEST 2           Yeah! A dance or a wake?

SR ANGELA       I suppose you think there should be some Elvis Presley or some other kind of immoral music?

GUEST 3           Well...

SR ANGELA       Exactly.

GUEST 4           Could we at least have something from this century, Sister? The Bardettes are meant to be coming tonight.

SR ANGELA       No, no, no, no. Balthasar has a beautiful voice. I'm sure that he can do you a bit of Doris Day.

GUEST 5           But-

SR ANGELA       *(Looking at GUESTS 6 and 7 who are getting friendly)* I hope I'm not going to have to get my stick out!

GUEST 6           Sorry, Sister.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

SR ANGELA Get yourself to Father Russo for confession. Now!

GUEST 7 Yes, Sister.

(GUESTS 6 and 7 exit.)

SR ANGELA (To GUEST 8) And as for you, girl. I could see that you were entertaining thoughts of a sinful nature.

GUEST 8 I wasn't.

SR ANGELA A likely story. I shall be telling your mother. And your father. And what is more –

JOHN (Interrupting) Sister Angela?

SR ANGELA Yes.

JOHN There's been a phone call at the convent for you.

SR ANGELA And?

JOHN Apparently it was from Rome.

SR ANGELA But I don't know anyone in Rome.

JOHN Except of course...

SR ANGELA The Vatican? A special commission?

JOHN Yes. Perhaps so.

SR ANGELA Why didn't you say so? I must go. The Holy Father needs me!

(SISTER ANGELA exits.)

(BALTHASAR moves upstage.)

CLAUDIO (To JOHN) Thanks for that.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- JOHN Not a problem.
- CLAUDIO I thought we'd never get rid of her.
- JOHN Happy to help.
- CLAUDIO Do you know where Hero is?
- JOHN Do you mean, Don's girl?
- CLAUDIO Don's?
- JOHN Yeah. They looked pretty cosy earlier. They were kind of in an intimate conversation earlier.
- (DON and HERO enter, upstage of JOHN and CLAUDIO.)
- And here they are.
- CLAUDIO He said he would prepare the ground for me to ask her to marry me.
- JOHN Prepare the ground?
- CLAUDIO Kind of buttering her up to make sure she said yes.
- JOHN Buttering her up?
- CLAUDIO Don't make it sound-
- JOHN I'm not making it sound anything. They look pretty close that's all I'm saying. And Don's cheated before. He's got form. I had a girl once and he ... Well, you get the picture. But if you say Hero's your girl then ok.
- CLAUDIO Hero isn't like that.
- JOHN They're all like that.
- CLAUDIO No!

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JOHN           Have it your way. I shouldn't have said anything. And that stuff about Don, it was a long time ago so don't rake it up again with him, will you?

CLAUDIO       No.

JOHN           Deep down he's ok. I'm sure he wouldn't do that to you. I'm sure he wouldn't. Forget I said anything.

CLAUDIO       *(Shaken)* Ok. I think I need a drink.

*(CLAUDIO exits.)*

*(VALENTINA approaches JOHN.)*

VALENTINA    Everything go according to plan?

JOHN           Oh yes. The seed of doubt has been sown and well and truly planted.

VALENTINA    Then let's sit back and watch it grow.

*(JOHN and VALENTINA move to the side of the stage to observe the action.)*

DON            Let's rock and roll! *(Looking into the wings)* Even better, here are The Bardettes! Music!

*(The BARDETTES enter and take their place centre stage.)*

*(CLAUDIO re-enters, carrying a bottle of champagne. He sees DON and HERO dancing together and it is clear he is suspicious of their relationship.)*

BARDETTES    Hello, Messina! Here's a new track from our new album. A warning song for you young lovers everywhere.



MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

*(As the BARDETTES begin to sing, CLAUDIO circles the room, staring at HERO and DON, misreading their innocent interactions with them as something more.)*

SONG – CAN I TRUST YOU? (The Bardettes)

*Can I trust you?  
Did you mean it?  
Or did you lie?  
Were we too young?  
Will my heart break?  
Will it be goodbye?  
For I fell for you so deep  
Loved you so much at first sight  
Was it too much and much too soon?  
Will it all end tonight?*

*Someone said that they saw you  
With someone new  
If I asked would you tell me  
If it was true?  
For I have been hurt before  
And my heart was broke in two  
No, I won't be made the fool of  
Do you love me or are you untrue?*

*Can I trust you?  
Did you mean it?  
Or did you lie?  
Were we too young?  
Will my heart break?  
Will it be goodbye?  
For I fell for you so deep  
Loved you so much at first sight  
Was it too much and much too soon?  
Will it all end tonight?  
Tonight  
Tonight  
Tonight  
Tonight  
Tonight*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

*Will it all end tonight?*

*(CLAUDIO exits, crestfallen.)*

*(URSULA enters.)*

URSULA        Pizza's ready!

*(Everyone exits except BEATRICE and BENEDICK.)*

*(BENEDICK moves downstage, followed by BEATRICE, who has removed her mask, clearly annoyed by something BENEDICK has said. When BENEDICK speaks, he puts on a silly voice, pretending to be someone else, not very convincingly.)*

BEATRICE        *(Furiously)* Who told you that?

BENEDICK        No, you must excuse me.

BEATRICE        And you won't tell me who you are?

BENEDICK        Not now.

BEATRICE        Who said I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of a bad joke book? It must have been Benedick.

BENEDICK        Who is he?

BEATRICE        You must know him.

BENEDICK        I don't, believe me.

BEATRICE        What? He never made you laugh?

BENEDICK        Please tell me. Who is this Benedick?

BEATRICE        Benedick is Don's pathetic sidekick. He thinks he is his friend but Don just pities him. He makes up clever insults to amuse himself but no one genuinely likes him. He's

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

here somewhere, dancing away like an electrocuted centipede.

BENEDICK      When I meet him, I'll tell him what you said.

BEATRICE      By all means, do. He'll say a few barbed things, people will pretend to laugh and then he'll go home in a childish sulk. Every cloud has a silver lining. I must find my cousin.

(BEATRICE *exits.*)

(BENEDICK *removes his mask.*)

BENEDICK      Childish sulk? How dare she? So unfair! (*Realising he is having a childish sulk*). Women!

(BENEDICK *exits.*)

(LEONATO, ANTONIA *and* HERO *enter.*)

LEONATO      (*To* HERO) You will not bring shame upon our family?

ANTONIA      Leonato!

HERO          Of course not, Daddy.

LEONATO      I know what these teddy bears are like.

ANTONIA      Boys. Teddy boys. How many times?

LEONATO      They are not boys. They are savages. Preying on pretty, innocent, pure young girls until they forget themselves.

ANTONIA      Leonato! Really!

LEONATO      I am a man of the world, Antonia. That Elvis Presley has a lot to answer for.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

ANTONIA       What has Elvis Presley got to do with this? Do you give Hero your blessing to say yes or not?

LEONATO       Not.

ANTONIA       *(Furiously)* What?

LEONATO       *(To HERO)* You really love this boy?

HERO           Yes.

LEONATO       *(Holding her face in his hands)* My child. I hope he deserves you.

ANTONIA       Yes?

LEONATO       Yes.

HERO           *(Hugging LEONATO)* Thank you! Thank you!

LEONATO       You are a good girl.

ANTONIA       Of course she is.

*(HERO's friends, ANNA, CATERINA, LUCIA, ALESSIA and SOFIA enter. They gesture to HERO to see if she has been successful in gaining LEONATO's permission. HERO confirms with a thumbs up that all is well and ANNA, CATERINA, LUCIA, ALESSIA and SOFIA look very excited as HERO approaches them to share her good news.)*

LEONATO       Hero, do not turn strumpet now. I still have my rifle.

ANTONIA       Be quiet, Leonato. Look how happy she is.

LEONATO       All right. I admit I am beaten down in the face of such youthful enthusiasm.

ANTONIA       Let's go home early, play some Bing Crosby and open a bottle of wine.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- LEONATO Perfect! If they are half as happy as we are then ...
- ANTONIA Speak for yourself! I'm as miserable as sin. I've been embezzling money from the business for years so I can hire a hitman to have you killed, buy my freedom and run off with a man half your age.
- LEONATO I see where Beatrice gets her sharp tongue from now. You have a vicious and cruel streak, Antonia Ricci.
- ANTONIA *(Laughing)* Come on. Let's find your coat.
- (LEONATO and ANTONIA exit.)*
- (The CHORUS re-enter in their masquerade masks, dancing to the music.)*
- (HERO, ANNA, CATERINA, LUCIA and ALESSIA join in with the dancing upstage.)*
- (BORACHIO and MARGARET enter.)*
- BORACHIO So I'll see you later this evening?
- MARGARET *(Flirtatiously)* Maybe you will and maybe you won't.
- BORACHIO You know I'm mad about you.
- MARGARET You thought I was Hero a minute ago!
- BORACHIO No, never. It was just that your hair is similar. You are much more... much more...
- MARGARET Easy with my favours? Is that what you mean?
- BORACHIO No! No, I wouldn't say that.
- MARGARET Really? I would!

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

BORACHIO     *(Looking up to the heavens)* Thank you!

*(MARGARET exits giggling followed swiftly by BORACHIO.)*

*(URSULA and SMALL BOY enter.)*

URSULA        No. For the last time, no.

SMALL BOY    But why not?

URSULA        You're much too young for me.

SMALL BOY    I'm twenty-one.

URSULA        No, you're not.

SMALL BOY    How can you be sure?

URSULA        You're wearing short trousers, for goodness sake.

SMALL BOY    It's very hot in here.

URSULA        Then go and buy me a drink.

SMALL BOY    Certainly. What would you like?

URSULA        A dry martini, please.

SMALL BOY    Of course. Have you seen a stool anywhere?

URSULA        No. Why?

SMALL BOY    So the barman can see me. And it's possible I might need to steal some ID.

URSULA        Come on, Casanova.

*(URSULA and SMALL BOY exit.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

(CLAUDIO *enters carrying a bottle of champagne.*)

(JOHN and CONRAD *enter from the opposite side, seeing CLAUDIO. When CLAUDIO sees JOHN he puts his mask on, not knowing that JOHN has seen that it is him.*)

CONRAD (*Approaching CLAUDIO*) This must be Signor Benedick, here.

JOHN (*To CLAUDIO*) Signor Benedick?

CLAUDIO That's right, Benedick.

CONRAD We must speak to you.

JOHN Sir, I know that we have only just met but I can see how fond you are of my brother.

CLAUDIO I am.

JOHN I know you are a good friend to Don and will tell him that he should not let Hero flirt with him so much.

CLAUDIO Hero?

CONRAD Hero, yes.

JOHN Claudio loves her so much it doesn't seem right for her to lead him on if she prefers Don.

CONRAD And Don has not exactly rejected her advances if you know what I mean.

CLAUDIO What?

JOHN I thought as you are friends with both of them you could advise them before any real harm comes of it.

CONRAD She looks so sweet and innocent. You'd never guess she was a dirty little...

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CLAUDIO        Enough!

CONRAD        If the cap fits...

JOHN            I'm sure you will know what to do, Signor. We will leave you now.

*(CONRAD and JOHN exit.)*

*(CLAUDIO removes his mask, crushed by what JOHN has said.)*

*(BENEDICK enters with DON.)*

DON             Claudio, I ...

CLAUDIO        I already know.

BENEDICK       Good.

CLAUDIO        Good?

BENEDICK       Well, not good. Bad if you ask me. Marriage is an altogether ridiculous idea.

CLAUDIO        Yes.

DON             Yes? You've changed your tune.

CLAUDIO        If it's not what Hero wants then ...

DON             Not what she wants? She's besotted with you. I thought you were lovesick but she seems just as bad, if not worse.

CLAUDIO        But who for?

BENEDICK       For you, you idiot.

DON             Who else?

CLAUDIO        But John said ...



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BENEDICK      What does he know? You cloth-eared patsy. She's mad about you. You're both mad but at least you can be mad together.

DON              Go and get the girl!

CLAUDIO        *(Cheering up)* I will!

*(CLAUDIO exits.)*

DON              Cloth-eared patsy?

BENEDICK      Well, he is.

DON              Beatrice is mad with you, you know. She says that the man who danced with her told her that you said she danced like an electrocuted centipede.

BENEDICK      What? She said that about me, the conniving minx! She hurled insults at me, not knowing it was me, or did she? She said I was a sulking child and your pathetic sidekick!

DON              Ouch!

*(BEATRICE enters, unseen by BENEDICK.)*

BENEDICK      *(To DON)* Do you know, she is the most vicious, vile wordsmith of a woman that I have ever encountered. Every word she utters is dripping with venom and her breath kills every living thing within fifty yards. God didn't make her pretty, the devil did - so that she can use her powers for his evil work. I wish that he would conjure her away to cause plagues, pestilence and disease elsewhere. In fact, I have a theory that beneath that beautiful, shining mane of hair of hers are three number sixes and a couple of horns. Hah!

*(BENEDICK turns round to see that BEATRICE has heard every word.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

Did you say you needed me to fetch your guitar for you, Don?

DON *(Laughing)* No. No, I don't think so. I only want your delightful company.

BENEDICK Then I must disappoint you as I have no choice now but to go and find a bottle of vodka and a drip, for I can not be around Lady Disdain from Planet Cyanide for one more minute.

*(BENEDICK exits.)*

DON Beatrice, you have lost the heart of Benedick.

BEATRICE *(Sarcastically)* Oh dear. Boo hoo.

*(CLAUDIO and HERO enter with FATHER RUSSO, LEONATO and ANTONIA.)*

CLAUDIO She said yes!

BEATRICE Of course she did!

HERO We're engaged!

BEATRICE *(To HERO)* Well, cousin of mine. Rather you than me.

ANTONIA Beatrice!

BEATRICE Marriage is not a word, but a sentence. *(Laughing)* But if a life of imprisonment is what you want then I say 'Hurrah' for you both, and may your nuptials never wither for your skin surely shall.

HERO Thank you, Beatrice.

ANTONIA *(To BEATRICE)* You are too young to be such a cynic, Miss. Fetch some champagne.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- BEATRICE To drown our sorrows?
- ANTONIA No! To celebrate!
- BEATRICE I will be obedient in such a good cause.  
(BEATRICE *exits.*)
- DON She really is allergic to love, isn't she?
- ANTONIA She mocks every man she meets. Every man in Messina is too frightened to court her.
- DON She would make an excellent wife for Benedick.
- HERO Beatrice and Benedick! They'd both be dead within hours.
- DON I wonder...
- ANTONIA (*To HERO and CLAUDIO*) You two aren't planning a long engagement, are you?
- CLAUDIO Not if we can help it.
- DON So when is the happy day?
- ANTONIA (*To FATHER RUSSO*) Padre?
- FR RUSSO (*Looking in his diary*) Saturday?
- LEONATO Saturday?
- ALL Saturday!
- (BEATRICE *enters with a bottle of champagne.*)
- BEATRICE Saturday?
- HERO Yes, Saturday!

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

BEATRICE You know that Francesca is going to Naples that day? I'd better warn her that the salon will be heaving on Friday. I hope she's packed. *(To CLAUDIO)* And who will be your best man? It will have to be Don. Benedick doesn't suit the title. Change the title to 'Most Irritating Man' and he'd be a dead cert for the job. Champagne! *(Emptying the bottle)* Don't worry, there's more somewhere!

*(BEATRICE exits.)*

CLAUDIO *(To HERO)* In a few days time we will be husband and wife! I wish I didn't have to wait even that long.

DON The time will pass quickly. And soon we will have another match.

CLAUDIO Who?

DON You know how I like a challenge?

CLAUDIO Yes.

DON Before your wedding I am going to make Benedick and Beatrice fall madly in love with each other.

HERO No!

DON I think with all your help it can be done.

*(BEATRICE enters from one side with a bottle of champagne.)*

*(BENEDICK enters from the opposite side. BEATRICE and BENEDICK spot each other, try to cross the stage but keep getting in each other's way. They eventually pass by each other, scowling at each other before exiting.)*

Oh, yes. It can be done. I have a plan.

BLACK OUT

SCENE 7

*Messina town square. SOFIA, ANNA, LUCIA, ALESSIA and CATERINA on stage. They are flicking through a bridal magazine.*

ANNA           *(Pointing at a picture in the magazine)* What about that one?  
My chest would look massive in that.

SOFIA           Is that a good thing?

ANNA           Yeah.

LUCIA           I like that one.

ALESSIA        Not with your shoulders.

LUCIA           What do you mean? What's wrong with my shoulders?

ALESSIA        Nothing. When they're hidden.

SOFIA           Isn't Hero choosing?

CATERINA      She said she'd leave it up to us.

SOFIA           But she's paying, right?

ANNA           Yes. Well, Leonato is. Antonia said just don't tell him how  
much they cost until after the wedding.

CATERINA      *(Looking at the dresses again)* That one is nice.

SOFIA           Gorgeous. But it won't arrive by Saturday.

ANNA           Oh. Honestly, I don't know what the rush is. It's not as if  
Hero's pregnant or anything.

CATERINA      Anna!

ANNA           What?

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

SOFIA Don't even say it in jest. If Leonato heard that he'd be after Claudio with a gun.

CATERINA And Hero is the most innocent girl in Messina.

(VALENTINA *enters.*)

ANNA Unlike some we could mention.

VALENTINA You have something to say?

CATERINA Not to the likes of you, no.

VALENTINA (*Fake crying*) Boo hoo. I am so sad that I can't be part of your gang. I don't know how I will cope without talking about which bridesmaid dress will make you look like you have giant, inflatable breasts.

ANNA You were listening.

VALENTINA You have a loud, piercing voice.

CATERINA It's better than having a traitor in the family.

ANNA Or a whore.

VALENTINA Don't you dare say that!

SOFIA You can't deny it, can you?

CATERINA Your father was an informer for the fascists in the war and—

VALENTINA (*Angrily*) I am not my parents!

ANNA Come on, girls. Let's get back to Hero.

(ANNA, CATERINA, LUCIA, ALESSIA *and* SOFIA *exit.*)

VALENTINA Precious Hero. Maybe if I had been born with a silver spoon in my mouth like her then things would have been different. But no, I am lucky enough to have a traitor for a father and a slattern of easy virtue for a mother. And so that is what they think I am and why the only people that associate with me are liars and criminals.

SONG – THEY THINK THEY KNOW ME (Valentina)

*They think they know me  
Not me inside  
They do not trust me  
I'm pushed aside*

*I am not one of them  
I'll never be  
My shameful family's  
Cruel legacy*

*But I've got brains, I've got flair  
If they judge and they stare  
I'll show them I don't care  
Get my own back I swear*

*They think they know me  
Not me inside*

(JOHN enters downstage, interrupting VALENTINA's song.)

JOHN On your own again, Valentina?

VALENTINA You know Hero and Claudio got engaged?

JOHN Yes.

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VALENTINA So your plan didn't work?

JOHN No.

VALENTINA And the wedding is on Saturday?

JOHN Yes.

VALENTINA And Don is to be 'best man'?

JOHN (*Grabbing VALENTINA by the arm*) I think you've made your point.

VALENTINA (*Taking JOHN's hand off her arm*) I am just as disappointed as you are. There's nothing I would have liked better than to see Hero's hopes and dreams crushed. We just have to think of something else, that's all.

JOHN I already have. That fool, Borachio, is on his way with some information and then I will act.

VALENTINA I know I hate Hero but nothing violent, John, please. She doesn't deserve that.

JOHN (*Grabbing VALENTINA by the throat*) Oh, doesn't she?

VALENTINA You're hurting me!

JOHN Just like that half-brother has mine has hurt me all his life. (*Letting go of VALENTINA*) And now he has this young upstart, Claudio at his side and in his confidence. I will take any chance to ruin his happiness if it means that Don will suffer too.

(BORACHIO *enters.*)

BORACHIO There is to be a party in Messina tonight to celebrate Hero and Claudio's engagement.

JOHN And?



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BORACHIO I stole Margaret's key to Leonato's house when we ... you know ...

VALENTINA Spare us the details.

JOHN And you know what she is wearing tonight?

BORACHIO I do. And I have purchased a very similar dress for Margaret.

VALENTINA What are you two talking about and what does Margaret have to do with it all?

JOHN I will meet with Don and his beloved Claudio after the party and make sure we walk back through Messina via Leonato's house.

VALENTINA So?

BORACHIO Where he will see Hero in flagrante delicto with yours truly.

VALENTINA In your dreams. And besides, Hero would never do such a ...

BORACHIO It will be Margaret dressed in Hero's dress being ...

JOHN ... attended to by Borachio here.

VALENTINA How will you get rid of the real Hero?

BORACHIO Margaret says that she is staying at Francesca's the night before the wedding.

JOHN I will go to Don at the party and say that Hero has been flirting with Borachio and that I am worried for Claudio's honour.

VALENTINA Surely he won't believe you after the last time?

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

JOHN He thinks that was Conrad and that I was misled by him. He still trusts me. The fool. They won't believe without proof but that's what Borachio is for.

BORACHIO Happy to help.

VALENTINA And what about Margaret in this?

BORACHIO She doesn't know anything about this. So don't go blabbing.

VALENTINA It just seems unnecessarily cruel.

JOHN Exactly.

VALENTINA And what if Margaret realises and tells them?

JOHN She won't if she knows what is good for her.

BORACHIO Steady on, John.

JOHN What can you mean?

VALENTINA Don't touch a hair on that girl's head.

JOHN Or?

BORACHIO If Leonato knew what kind of a girl she was he'd sack her at once.

VALENTINA She needs that job! Her mother is sick and her family rely on that money.

JOHN Exactly. She won't talk.

VALENTINA You're all heart, aren't you?

JOHN I have no heart left after every scrap of love I should have had was given to my brother. I have had enough of his arrogant hero act and will do anything to bring him down

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

and all his friends with him. I despise them and nobody is going to get in the way of my destroying him. Come Borachio, let us continue over a drink. (*Grabbing VALENTINA by the arm*) Mind you keep this to yourself or you know what.

(BORACHIO and JOHN *exit*.)

(VALENTINA *begins to sing*.)

SONG - THEY THINK THEY KNOW ME (Continued)

*I do not love him  
He doesn't care  
I do not trust him  
I wouldn't dare*

*His heart is empty  
And cold as ice  
He's no romantic  
Not even nice*

*Though he's more lion than lamb  
No one else gives a damn  
What I do, who I am  
My whole life is a sham*

*I do not love him  
He doesn't care*

BLACK OUT

SCENE 8

*An orchard in Leonato's garden. BENEDICK is sitting on a small bench under a pergola/arbour.*

BENEDICK Claudio has turned into Monsieur Love. I remember when he was good for a few drinks and a laugh with the boys and now it's all Hero this and Hero that. I asked him to come out last night and he said he couldn't because he was composing love poetry. And his eyes have gone all dewy and doe-like instead of bloodshot and hooded like a proper man's. Next thing he'll be eating quiche and shaving properly. Love. Eurgh! A woman would never make me act like such an idiot. Yes, women are beautiful but a man can keep his dignity. Yes, they are funny and good company but there is no need to go to pieces about it and start washing properly and not scratching yourself. And all this drivelling nonsense about feelings and butterflies in tummies and hearts leaping and skipping a beat and – oh, it is so vomit-inducing! Claudio is so head over heels and sickly sweet with romance I think I will bring up my breakfast if I have to listen to any more.

*(BENEDICK is interrupted by the sound of CLAUDIO, DON, BALTHASAR and LEONATO approaching.)*

*(Looking into the wings)* Oh, no! Claudio is coming with more talk of love. I can't take any more talk of romance. Oh, God, they've got Balthasar with them which means there'll be singing. No, that's too much. I need to hide.

*(BENEDICK hides, not very convincingly, behind the arbour.)*

*(DON, LEONATO, BALTHASAR and CLAUDIO enter.)*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

CLAUDIO           *(Taking DON aside)* Do you see where Benedick is hiding?

DON                Yes.

LEONATO           *(Sarcastically)* Very inconspicuous. Sing for us, Balthasar!

BENEDICK         Please, God, no.

CLAUDIO         Come on, Balthasar, you know you want to sing for us.

BALTHASAR       Oh no, I couldn't.

BENEDICK         Dodged a bullet there.

DON                Very well, if you don't want to.

BALTHASAR       *(Suddenly overcome his reticence)* Very well. If you insist.

SONG – SIGH NO MORE REPRISE (Balthasar)

*Sing no more ditties, sing no more,  
Of dumps so dull and heavy.  
The fraud of men was ever so,  
Since summer first was leavy.  
Then sigh not so, but let them go  
And be you blithe and bonny  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into hey, nonny, nonny.*

BENEDICK         Tell me it's over. If my dog howled like he does, I'd have had it put down as a mercy.

LEONATO         That is the kind of entertainment my Hero will have at her wedding.

DON                You will allow some music, Leonato?

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

LEONATO All right. But only at the party when I have left. Not at the church. The church is no place for Elvis.

BENEDICK (*Doing at Elvís impression*) Uh-huh-huh.

LEONATO What was that?

BENEDICK (*Pretending to be an owl*) Twit-twoo.

DON Some kind of strangled cat, perhaps?

(BENEDICK *looks offended.*)

LEONATO Go back to the restaurant, Balthasar, and see if Antonia has seen anything of Benedick. I'm sure he'd like to hear your song.

BENEDICK Yeah, right. Whoops. (*Pretending to be a bird again*) Coo, coo.

LEONATO And also ask her to clean up the orchard. There is something dying over there.

BALTHASAR Yes, Sir. You wouldn't like me to sing some more for you before I go?

(BENEDICK *kneels, as if praying.*)

LEONATO No, thank you.

(BALTHASAR *exits.*)

(BENEDICK *stands.*)

DON Leonato, what was it that you said before about your niece, Beatrice, being in love with Benedick?

(BENEDICK *is amazed.*)

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- CLAUDIO I never thought she would ever fall for anyone.
- DON I know. She always seemed to hate Benedick so.
- LEONATO Seemed to, yes. But only to disguise her deep passion for him it seems. She told me so herself.
- (BENEDICK's *mouth is agape.*)
- DON What did Beatrice say to you?
- LEONATO It was Hero who first told me. She said that she has heard Beatrice cry herself to sleep with love for Benedick. Her rudeness to him is just a protective mechanism against his scorn.
- DON I never would have thought it.
- LEONATO I asked her myself out right and she could not deny it. Though she says that she wishes she did not love him as she knows how he hates her.
- DON Poor Beatrice.
- LEONATO She tried to write to Benedick to tell him but then she ripped the paper into tiny pieces, crying and saying how he would mock her if he knew.
- CLAUDIO Then she fell to her knees, weeping and beating her breast shouting 'Oh sweet Benedick, God give me patience!'.  
  
(DON and LEONATO look at CLAUDIO as if he has gone too far. BENEDICK, however, is deeply moved.)
- LEONATO Sometimes, I worry that Beatrice will do herself harm.
- BENEDICK No! (*Realising he may be spotted, he makes an animal noise.*) Woof!

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

DON Poor Beatrice. I don't like hearing how unhappy she is on account of my friend. She is such a smart woman too.

(BENEDICK *nods in acknowledgment.*)

CLAUDIO Except in loving Benedick.

LEONATO He does not deserve my witty and beautiful niece.

DON Perhaps we should tell him.

LEONATO No! Hero said Beatrice would not like that. She does not want Benedick's pity.

CLAUDIO Poor Beatrice.

(A SERVANT *enters.*)

SERVANT The rehearsal dinner is almost ready, Sir.

LEONATO Excellent. Thank you.

CLAUDIO Now to get Hero and the girls to do their part.

(LEONATO, DON *and* CLAUDIO *exit with the* SERVANT.)

(BENEDICK *comes out of hiding.*)

BENEDICK This can't be a trick! They spoke with great seriousness, and it came from Beatrice herself. She loves me? Well, that love must be returned! I hear how I'm criticised. They say I'll be scornful if I knew that she loved me. I am much maligned! They say she'd rather die than give any sign of her feelings. For me. (A *pause*) Beatrice is beautiful; it's true, I can't deny it. And virtuous; that's true, I can't disprove that. And funny. And smart, except that she loves me. That's it! I am going to be horribly in love with her! It is possible



MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

that I may be teased here and there for one or two things that I have said about marriage. I said marriage! I never thought I'd marry. But a man can change! Will quips and clever remarks and scathing written words keep a man from getting what his heart desires? No!

The world must be populated. When I said that I'd die as a bachelor, I just meant that I didn't think I'd live until I got married. (*Looking into the wings*) Here comes Beatrice. By God! She's a fine-looking woman. I do think I sense some signs of love in her.

(BEATRICE *enters.*)

BEATRICE           Against my will, I've been sent to bring you into dinner.

BENEDICK           Beatrice! Thank you for taking the trouble. For your pains.

BEATRICE           It wasn't any trouble. There were no pains.

BENEDICK           No, I understand.

BEATRICE           If it had been troublesome, I wouldn't have done it.

BENEDICK           So, it was a pleasure then?

BEATRICE           Oh yes. I'm ecstatic. In raptures. Absolutely cock-a-hoop. You're not hungry then? Very well. Goodbye.

(BEATRICE *exits.*)

BENEDICK           Ha! 'Against my will, I've been sent to bring you into dinner.' 'Ecstatic'. 'In raptures'. 'Cock-a-hoop!' There's a double meaning in that. (*Exiting after her*) Beatrice!

BLACK OUT

SCENE 9

FRANCESCA's salon. Three stools are on stage, ready for clients. BEATRICE is sitting on the reception desk, filing her nails. The phone rings.

BEATRICE       *(Speaking into the phone)* Francesca's Salon, Beatrice speaking. Hi, Antonia. Yes, I'm here. Obviously. I said I'd open up for Francesca. You don't know what was wrong with Benedick last night, do you? He was behaving even more strangely than usual. No ...No, I don't know where the silver napkin rings are. Honestly, this wedding is taking over everyone's lives. I'd better go before they get here and start drivelling on about the wedding and Claudio and love and...I'm sorry Antonia, I know she's your daughter and my cousin, but the romantic nonsense she talks just makes me want to heave. *(Looking into the wings)* Oh no, they're here already. Bye. *(She slams the phone down)* If I have smile politely anymore I'll go mad. I'll ... I'll... I'll hide.

*(BEATRICE hides behind the counter, poking her head out so that the audience can see her reactions.)*

*(FRANCESCA, HERO, ANNA, CATERINA, ALESSIA, LUCIA, CARLOTTA, GIULIA and SOFIA enter. HERO points to where BEATRICE is hiding.)*

FRANCESCA   Where can Beatrice be? I asked her to open up but she's not here.

LUCIA         Definitely not here.

ALESSIA       She must have popped out.

HERO          Good.

BEATRICE      Rude.

HERO          What was that?

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

(BEATRICE *squeaks like a mouse.*)

FRANCESCA Oh dear, I hope we don't have vermin.

(ANNA, CATERINA and SOFIA *squeal and jump up on to the stools before realising that there is no mouse and getting down again.*)

(To HERO) Tell me more about what Claudio said to you about Benedick.

ANNA Yes, you were about to tell us.

HERO I will, but we'd better be careful in case she comes back.

CATERINA What did Claudio tell you?

HERO That Benedick is head over heels in love with Beatrice.

(BEATRICE *is stunned.*)

LUCIA} (*Together*)  
ALESSIA} Benedick?

GIULIA Really?

HERO Yes.

LUCIA} (*Together*)  
ALESSIA} And Beatrice?

HERO Yes.

FRANCESCA It's true. Don told me that Benedick is crazy about her.

HERO But he is battling with his emotions as he knows that she hates him with a vengeance. And you know what a sharp tongue she has.

GIULIA She does.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

LUCIA} (*Together*)  
ALESSIA} She does.

GIULIA She does.

CATERINA Wicked sometimes.

BEATRICE Oi!

HERO What was that?

(BEATRICE *squeaks again.*)

FRANCESCA Must be a mouse. (*Pointedly*) Or a rat.

(BEATRICE *looks offended.*)

HERO Poor Benedick. Claudio says he is a broken-hearted man.

FRANCESCA Poor man. And such a brave and handsome one too. He deserves to find love. But nature never made a woman's heart as proud as Beatrice's. She has such scorn and disdain in her eyes and looks down on Benedick. I know that he has baited her in the past but ...

HERO ... He only does that to protect himself from hurting as he knows that she can never love him. Or anybody. She values her wit so highly that I'm not sure she will ever know love.

ANNA It's true. Whenever she meets a man – no matter how handsome, successful or charming he is – she re-arranges all his good qualities until they are bad.

CATERINA If they have a pretty face she says that he should be a sister, not a husband.

GIULIA If he's tall she says he is a spear with an odd-shaped head.

SOFIA If he's short she says he looks like a badly-carved miniature.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

CARLOTTA Such a cruel, cruel example of femininity.

FRANCESCA High standards are good but Beatrice can not be pleased.

HERO Claudio is handsome, isn't he?

ANNA Of course.

SOFIA Don't let Beatrice hear you say so.

CATERINA No. She'd mock you mercilessly.

FRANCESCA And wither you with her wit.

ANNA Thank goodness she isn't then! Poor Benedick. He is so deeply in love with her.

ALESSIA No wonder he will never tell her.

LUCIA He would rather die than be mocked for his love for her.

SOFIA He is such a great guy.

CARLOTTA Funny too.

FRANCESCA Handsome.

CATERINA And brave too. He worked for the resistance in the war like Don.

FRANCESCA Poor Benedick. (*To HERO*) Oh, I almost forgot. I've finished the adjustments to the bridesmaid dresses. Yes, I know I'm a genius. They're in the stockroom. You can try them on before I do your nails. Beatrice won't care if hers is fitted to her or not. Come on, let's go try them on.

(*HERO, FRANCESCA, ANNA, CATERINA and SOFIA, LUCIA, ALESSIA and CARLOTTA exit to the wings.*)

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

(BEATRICE *comes out of hiding.*)

SONG – BENEDICK (Beatrice)

*I can't believe this?  
Is this really true?  
Do they think I'm vicious?  
Oh yes they do!  
It's true I've been sharpish  
Sometimes quite blunt  
Not too romantic  
Icy cold front  
Hating of marriage  
Quick, biting wit  
Not keen on sweet talk  
Anti-commit  
Yes, I'm sarcastic  
Sardonic too  
Not keen on love talk  
No time to woo  
Oh my goodness  
Somehow, wow  
I've become  
Such a cynical cow*

BEATRICE

But Benedick loves me. Benedick loves me! Brave, handsome Benedick. My friends say.. at least, I think they're my friends ... My friends say that you deserve to be loved and so I will love you so much that I shall turn my back on my sharp wit. For you, Benedick. Benny. No, not Benny. Benji... No, not Benji. Dicky? (*Quickly*) No. Definitely not. Benedick.

*I'll turn romantic  
No more cold heart  
I'll speak of marriage  
A brand new start*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

*Leaves I've turned over  
Farewell to spite*

*Goodbye old Beatrice  
Love I'll requite*

*Oh, I will love you with all my heart!*

*Benedick  
With your wit so quick  
Benedick  
Benedick  
Benedick!*

BLACK OUT

**SCENE 10**

*Mancini's bar. MANCINI is behind the bar and the CHORUS (as stags) are on stage, ready to celebrate CLAUDIO's stag night with DON and JOHN. LEONATO is also on stage.*

DON                   Where is Benedick? We can't start this stag night without Benedick.

*(BENEDICK enters.)*

DON                   There you are.

BENEDICK          *(Dramatically)* Gentleman, I am not as I once was.

LEONATO            I agree. Something has happened to alter you.

BENEDICK          I am not well. I have some kind of sickness.

DON                   I think it is a girl. I think he is in love.

LEONATO            No!

DON                   He's been seen at the barbers.

CLAUDIO            And buying new clothes.

DON                   *(Smelling BENEDICK)* And wearing deodorant. This is irrefutable evidence. Benedick the Bachelor is in love!

BENEDICK          This pathetic banter is not helping my nausea. Leonato, could I have a word with you, Sir? I have something to say that these nincompoops need not hear.

*(BENEDICK and LEONATO exit.)*

DON                   I'd bet my bottom dollar that he's gone to talk to him about Beatrice!



MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

JOHN (To DON) Could I have a word?

DON What is it? It sounds serious.

JOHN (To CLAUDIO) Are you still planning to go through with the wedding tomorrow?

DON Of course he is. Why would you ask that?

JOHN I heard something. I don't know if I should ...

CLAUDIO Somebody told you I wasn't getting married tomorrow?

DON Whoever they were, they were wrong because, as you can see, brother dear, this is young Claudio's stag do.

JOHN I see. If you still want her then who am I to ...?

CLAUDIO What is it? What have you heard?

JOHN Nothing.

DON Nothing?

JOHN I'm sure it was a joke.

CLAUDIO I'm not laughing. Tell me.

JOHN I will. I do not know you well but I know that you are an honourable man and do not deserve to be humiliated.

DON Humiliated?

JOHN She has been unfaithful.

CLAUDIO Hero? Unfaithful?

DON No! She is as pure as an angel. Surely.

JOHN I was shocked too but I'm afraid I heard her flirting with Borachio yesterday and saw her for myself.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

- DON No!
- JOHN I know it is hard to believe but I found Borachio whispering to her again this afternoon and they seemed to be arranging some kind of assignation for later tonight. After the hen and stag parties.
- DON Not Hero!
- CLAUDIO I have seen her be friendly to Borachio but I always thought ... No! She can't have been. We are getting married tomorrow for goodness sake!
- JOHN It has been rather sudden. She has seemed very keen on a quick wedding. Perhaps because ...
- CLAUDIO No!
- DON Her father would have her killed first!
- JOHN If he ever found out, yes. But if she were to be married quickly then ...
- CLAUDIO Hero? My Hero? She has never been anything but proper with me. I ...
- JOHN Wait outside her house late tonight and see for yourself. If there is nothing to see on that balcony then I must have been mistaken. But if there is, I wouldn't want you to make a fool of yourself by going through with the wedding.
- STAGS (*Drunkenly toasting* CLAUDIO) To the groom! Like a lamb to the slaughter!
- CLAUDIO I need some air.  
  
(CLAUDIO *exits.*)
- DON (*Following* CLAUDIO) Claudio, wait!

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

(DON *exits.*)

*(The hen party made up of the CHORUS, BEATRICE, URSULA, MARGARET, ANTONIA, LUCIA, ALESSIA, CARLOTTA, MARTINA, GIULIA, SOFIA and ANNA enter, noisily with HERO, who is wearing a bridal veil and L-plates.)*

(BENEDICK *enters.*)

STAGS           Benedick!

HENS            Beatrice!

*(BEATRICE and BENEDICK exchange an awkward look whilst the CHORUS stare at them, gauging their reaction.)*

BENEDICK}    *(Together)*  
BEATRICE}    Someone give me a drink!

HENS            To Hero and Claudio!

STAGS           To Claudio and Hero!

HERO            Did I hear my name?

STAGS           Hero!

*(CLAUDIO enters, carrying a bottle of champagne.)*

HENS            Claudio!

MANCINI        It's bad luck for you two to see each other the night before the wedding!

CLAUDIO        Bad luck?

HERO            You're right! *(Laughing)* I shall have to find myself another gentleman for the evening! Do I have any takers?

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

BORACHIO Sold!

(CLAUDIO *looks furious.*)

BENEDICK} (*Together*)

BEATRICE} What's the matter, Claudio? Thinking of changing your mind?

HERO It's too late!

BORACHIO The church is booked!

(HERO *high fives* BORACHIO. CLAUDIO, *furiously drinks from his bottle as the CHORUS start to sing and dance around him and HERO.*)

SONG - SOMEONE'S GETTING MARRIED (Chorus)

*Someone's getting married  
And that person's you  
It's too late to cancel  
Single life adieu*

*Yeah baby  
Yeah baby  
It's too late to cancel  
Single life adieu*

*Time to get you shackled  
To this girl of yours  
Hope you've chosen wisely  
Word is that she snores*

*Quite loudly  
Quite loudly*

*Hope you've chosen wisely  
Word is that she snores*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

*Bachelorhood is finished  
For young Claudio-io-io  
Time for turning husband  
To your wife, Hero*

*Stags and hens have warned you  
Of what's underneath  
Hope you like her foibles  
Like she grinds her teeth*

*Quite grating  
Quite grating  
Hope you like her foibles  
Like she grinds her teeth*

BEATRICE *(Laughing)* Are you sure you know what you're taking on, Claudio? My cousin is a dreadful flirt, you know!

*(The CHORUS laugh. CLAUDIO takes another drink.)*

BENEDICK Look! She's driven him to drink already and they're not even married yet!

*(CLAUDIO drinks some more.)*

*(The CHORUS laugh again and resume singing and dancing.)*

SONG - SOMEONE'S GETTING MARRIED (Cont.)

*Someone's getting married  
And that person's you  
It's too late to cancel  
Single life adieu*

*Yeah baby  
Yeah baby  
It's too late to cancel  
Single life adieu*

MUCH ADO ABOUT ELVIS

*Someone's getting married  
In the morning – you  
Hope you know what's coming  
When you say 'I do'*

*I do  
Say I do  
Hope you know what's coming  
When you say 'I do'*

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT ONE