BEATRICE  He were an excellent man that were made just in the midway between him and Benedick. The one is too like an image and says nothing, and the other too like my lady’s eldest son, evermore tattling.

LEONATO  Then half Signor Benedick’s tongue in Count John’s mouth, and half Count John’s melancholy in Signor Benedick’s face—

BEATRICE  With a good leg and a good foot, uncle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world—if a could get her good will.

LEONATO  By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.

ANTONIO  In faith, she’s too curt.

BEATRICE  Too curt is more than curt. I shall lessen God’s sending that way, for it is said, “God sends a curt cow short horns,” but to a cow too curt he sends none.

LEONATO  So, by being too curt, God will send you no horns.

BEATRICE  Just, if he send me no husband, for the which blessing I am at him upon my knees every morning and evening, Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face. I had rather lie in the woollen!

LEONATO  You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

BEATRICE  What should I do with him? dress him in my apparel and make him my waiting gentlewoman? He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man; and he that is more than a youth is not for me, and he that is less than a man, I am not for him. Therefore I will even take sixpence in earnest of the bear-herd and lead his apes into hell.

LEONATO  Well then, go you into hell?

BEATRICE  No, but to the gate, and there will the devil meet me like an old cuckold with horns on his head, and say, “Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven. Here’s no place for you maids.” So deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter. For the heavens, he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

ANTONIO  [To Hero] Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

BEATRICE  Yes, faith. It is my cousin’s duty to make curtsy and say, “Father, as it please you.” But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy, and say, “Father, as it please me.”

LEONATO  Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

BEATRICE  Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be over-mastered with a piece of valiant dust? to make an account of her life to a clot of wayward mire? No, uncle, I’ll none. Adam’s sons are my brethren, and truly I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

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6 He were that man would be 8 image statue 9 my lady’s eldest son a spoiled child who talks too much 13 foot often a euphemism for “penis” 14 pure (punning on “scrocut”) 15 good will agreement, sexual desire, genitalia 17 shrewd satirical 18 curt shrewish, ill-tempered 19 To (punning on “two”) 20 that way in that respect 21 short horns (punning on “small penises”) 25 just exactly, no husband (because she will not have sex and hence will not cuckold him) 28 in the wooden between blankets without sheets 29 light on find

37 in earnest as deposit; bear-herd (who often also kept trained apes); lead his apes (the proverbial punishment of women who die virgins) 44 For the heavens i.e., as my share of heavens; in front of “fore”; as an exclamation 45 bachelors unmarried men and women 49–50 make curtsy curtsy, show respect 55 meat material 58 marl clay, earth 60 match . . . kindred i.e., wed a brother 62 solicit . . . kind propose 65–66 important important 66 measure moderation (but also a stately dance)