

Much Ado About Nothing

2.3

Enter Benedick

BENEDICK Boy!

[Enter Boy]

BOY Signor?

BENEDICK In my chamber window lies a book. Bring it
hither to me in the orchard.

BOY I am here already, sir. 5

BENEDICK I know that, but I would have thee hence and
here again.

[Exit Boy]

I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much
another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours
to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow 10
follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn
by falling in love. And such a man is Claudio. I have
known when there was no music with him but the
drum and the fife, and now had he rather hear the
tabor and the pipe. I have known when he would have 15
walked ten mile afoot to see a good armour, and now
will he lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a
new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the
purpose, like an honest man and a soldier, and now is
he turned orthography. His words are a very fantastical 20
banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so
converted, and see with these eyes? I cannot tell. I
think not. I will not be sworn but love may transform
me to an oyster, but I'll take my oath on it, till he
have made an oyster of me he shall never make me 25
such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well. Another
is wise, yet I am well. Another virtuous, yet I am well.
But till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall
not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain.
Wise, or I'll none. Virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her. 30
Fair, or I'll never look on her. Mild, or come not near
me. Noble, or not I for an angel. Of good discourse, an
excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour

it please God. Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love. I
will hide me in the arbour.

35

He hides.

Enter Don Pedro the Prince, Leonato, and Claudio

DON PEDRO Come, shall we hear this music?

CLAUDIO

Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,
As hushed on purpose to grace harmony.

DON PEDRO *(aside)*

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO *(aside)*

O, very well, my lord. The music ended,
We'll fit the hid-fox with a pennyworth.

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Enter Balthasar with music

DON PEDRO

Come, Balthasar, we'll hear that song again.

BALTHASAR

O good my lord, tax not so bad a voice
To slander music any more than once.

DON PEDRO

It is the witness still of excellency
To put a strange face on his own perfection.
I pray thee sing, and let me woo no more.

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BALTHASAR

Because you talk of wooing I will sing,
Since many a wooer doth commence his suit
To her he thinks not worthy, yet he woos,
Yet will he swear he loves.

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DON PEDRO

Nay pray thee, come;
Or if thou wilt hold longer argument,
Do it in notes.

BALTHASAR Note this before my notes:

There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting.

DON PEDRO

Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks±±
Note notes, forsooth, and nothing!

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The accompaniment begins

BENEDICK Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished. Is it
not strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out of
men's bodies? Well, a horn for my money, when all's
done.

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BALTHASAR (*sings*)

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more.

Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

Then sigh not so, but let them go, 65
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no more
Of dumps so dull and heavy. 70
The fraud of men was ever so
Since summer first was leafy.

Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe 75
Into hey nonny, nonny.

DON PEDRO By my troth, a good song.

BALTHASAR And an ill singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO Ha, no, no, faith. Thou singest well enough
for a shift. 80

BENEDICK (*aside*) An he had been a dog that should have
howled thus, they would have hanged him; and I pray
God his bad voice bode no mischief. I had as lief have
heard the night-raven, come what plague could have
come after it. 85

DON PEDRO Yea, marry, dost thou hear, Balthasar? I pray
thee get us some excellent music, for tomorrow night
we would have it at the Lady Hero's chamber window.

BALTHASAR The best I can, my lord.

Exit

DON PEDRO Do so. Farewell. Come hither, Leonato. What 90
was it you told me of today, that your niece Beatrice
was in love with Signor Benedick?

CLAUDIO (*aside*) O, ay, stalk on, stalk on. The fowl sits.±±
I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

LEONATO No, nor I neither. But most wonderful that she 95
should so dote on Signor Benedick, whom she hath in
all outward behaviours seemed ever to abhor.

BENEDICK (*aside*) Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

LEONATO By my troth, my lord, I cannot tell what to
 think of it. But that she loves him with an enraged 100
 affection, it is past the infinite of thought.

DON PEDRO Maybe she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO Faith, like enough.

LEONATO O God! Counterfeit? There was never counterfeit
 of passion came so near the life of passion as she 105
 discovers it.

DON PEDRO Why, what effects of passion shows she?

CLAUDIO (*aside*) Bait the hook well. This fish will bite.

LEONATO What effects, my lord? She will sit you±±you
 heard my daughter tell you how. 110

CLAUDIO She did indeed.

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

LEONATO I would have sworn it had, my lord, especially 115
 against Benedick.

BENEDICK (*aside*) I should think this a gull, but that the
 white-bearded fellow speaks it. Knavery cannot, sure,
 hide himself in such reverence.

CLAUDIO (*aside*) He hath ta'en th'infection. Hold it up. 120

DON PEDRO Hath she made her affection known to
 Benedick?

LEONATO No, and swears she never will. That's her
 torment.

CLAUDIO 'Tis true, indeed, so your daughter says. `Shall 125
 I,' says she, `that have so oft encountered him with
 scorn, write to him that I love him?'

LEONATO This says she now when she is beginning to
 write to him, for she'll be up twenty times a night, and
 there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet 130
 of paper. My daughter tells us all.

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

LEONATO O, when she had writ it and was reading it over,
 she found Benedick and Beatrice between the sheet. 135

CLAUDIO That.

LEONATO O, she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence,
 railed at herself that she should be so immodest to

write to one that she knew would flout her. 'I measure him,' says she, 'by my own spirit, for I should flout 140 him if he writ to me, yea, though I love him I should.'

CLAUDIO Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps, sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses, 'O sweet Benedick, God give me patience.'

LEONATO She doth indeed, my daughter says so, and the 145 ecstasy hath so much overborne her that my daughter is sometime afeard she will do a desperate outrage to herself. It is very true.

DON PEDRO It were good that Benedick knew of it by some other, if she will not discover it. 150

CLAUDIO To what end? He would make but a sport of it and torment the poor lady worse.

DON PEDRO An he should, it were an alms to hang him. She's an excellent sweet lady, and, out of all suspicion, she is virtuous. 155

CLAUDIO And she is exceeding wise.

DON PEDRO In everything but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO O my lord, wisdom and blood combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one that blood hath the victory. I am sorry for her, as I have just 160 cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

DON PEDRO I would she had bestowed this dotage on me. I would have doffed all other respects and made her half myself. I pray you tell Benedick of it, and hear what a will say. 165

LEONATO Were it good, think you?

CLAUDIO Hero thinks surely she will die, for she says she will die if he love her not, and she will die ere she make her love known, and she will die if he woo her, rather than she will bate one breath of her accustomed 170 crossness.

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

CLAUDIO He is a very proper man. 175

DON PEDRO He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

CLAUDIO Before God; and in my mind, very wise.

DON PEDRO He doth indeed show some sparks that are

like wit.

CLAUDIO And I take him to be valiant. 180

DON PEDRO As Hector, I assure you; and in the managing of quarrels you may say he is wise, for either he avoids them with great discretion or undertakes them with a most Christianlike fear.

LEONATO If he do fear God, a must necessarily keep peace. 185
If he break the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

DON PEDRO And so will he do, for the man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests he will make. Well, I am sorry for your niece. Shall we 190
go seek Benedick and tell him of her love?

CLAUDIO Never tell him, my lord. Let her wear it out with good counsel.

LEONATO Nay, that's impossible. She may wear her heart out first. 195

DON PEDRO Well, we will hear further of it by your daughter. Let it cool the while. I love Benedick well, and I could wish he would modestly examine himself to see how much he is unworthy so good a lady.

LEONATO My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready. 200

CLAUDIO (*aside*) If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation.

DON PEDRO (*aside*) Let there be the same net spread for her, and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be when they hold one an opinion 205
of another's dotage, and no such matter. That's the scene that I would see, which will be merely a dumb show. Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

Exeunt Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato

BENEDICK (*coming forward*) This can be no trick. The conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of 210
this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady. It seems her affections have their full bent. Love me! Why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured. They say I will bear myself proudly if I perceive the love come from her. They say too that she will rather die than 215
give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry. I must not seem proud. Happy are they that hear their

detractions and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair. 'Tis a truth, I can bear them witness. And virtuous±±'tis so, I cannot reprove it. And wise, 220 but for loving me. By my troth, it is no addition to her wit±±nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me because I have railed so long against marriage; but doth not the 225 appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour? No. The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not 230 think I should live till I were married. Here comes Beatrice.

Enter Beatrice

By this day, she's a fair lady. I do spy some marks of love in her.

BEATRICE Against my will I am sent to bid you come in 235 to dinner.

BENEDICK

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

BEATRICE I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me. If it had been painful I would not have come. 240

BENEDICK You take pleasure, then, in the message?

BEATRICE Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point and choke a daw withal. You have no stomach, signor? Fare you well.

Exit

BENEDICK Ha! `Against my will I am sent to bid you come 245 in to dinner.' There's a double meaning in that. `I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me.' That's as much as to say `Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks.'±±If I do not take pity of her I am a villain. If I do not love her I am a 250 Jew. I will go get her picture.

Exit