

Much Ado About Nothing

3.1

Enter Hero and two gentlewomen, Margaret and Ursula

HERO

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlour.
There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice
Proposing with the Prince and Claudio.
Whisper her ear, and tell her I and Ursula
Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse 5
Is all of her. Say that thou overheard'st us,
And bid her steal into the pleacheÁd bower
Where honeysuckles, ripened by the sun,
Forbid the sun to enter±±like favourites
Made proud by princes, that advance their pride 10
Against that power that bred it. There will she hide her
To listen our propose. This is thy office.
Bear thee well in it, and leave us alone.

MARGARET

I'll make her come, I warrant you, presently.
Exit

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come, 15
As we do trace this alley up and down
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit.
My talk to thee must be how Benedick 20
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay.

Enter Beatrice

Now begin,

For look where Beatrice like a lapwing runs
Close by the ground to hear our conference. 25

URSULA

The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream

And greedily devour the treacherous bait.
So angle we for Beatrice, who even now
Is couched in the woodbine coverture. 30
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

HERO

Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing
Of the false-sweet bait that we lay for it.±±
They approach Beatrice's hiding-place
No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful.
I know her spirits are as coy and wild 35
As haggards of the rock.

URSULA But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO

So says the Prince and my new trothèd lord.

URSULA

And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?

HERO

They did entreat me to acquaint her of it, 40
But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick,
To wish him wrestle with affection
And never to let Beatrice know of it.

URSULA

Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman
Deserve as full as fortunate a bed 45
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?

HERO

O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man.
But nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice. 50
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection, 55
She is so self-endearèd.

URSULA Sure, I think so.
And therefore certainly it were not good
She knew his love, lest she'll make sport at it.

HERO

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured, 60
But she would spell him backward. If fair-faced,
She would swear the gentleman should be her sister.
If black, why nature, drawing of an antic,
Made a foul blot. If tall, a lance ill headed;
If low, an agate very vilely cut; 65
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moveÁd with none.
So turns she every man the wrong side out,
And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth. 70

URSULA

Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO

No, not to be so odd and from all fashions
As Beatrice is cannot be commendable.
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak
She would mock me into air, O, she would laugh me 75
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.
Therefore let Benedick, like covered fire,
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly.
It were a better death than die with mocks,
Which is as bad as die with tickling. 80

URSULA

Yet tell her of it, hear what she will say.

HERO

No. Rather I will go to Benedick
And counsel him to fight against his passion.
And truly, I'll devise some honest slanders
To stain my cousin with. One doth not know 85
How much an ill word may empoison liking.

URSULA

O, do not do your cousin such a wrong.
She cannot be so much without true judgement,
Having so swift and excellent a wit
As she is prized to have, as to refuse 90
So rare a gentleman as Signor Benedick.

HERO

He is the only man of Italy,
Always excepted my dear Claudio.

URSULA

I pray you be not angry with me, madam,
Speaking my fancy. Signor Benedick, 95
For shape, for bearing, argument, and valour
Goes foremost in report through Italy.

HERO

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA

His excellence did earn it ere he had it.
When are you married, madam? 100

HERO

Why, every day, tomorrow. Come, go in.
I'll show thee some attires and have thy counsel
Which is the best to furnish me tomorrow.

URSULA (*aside*)

She's limed, I warrant you. We have caught her,
madam.

HERO (*aside*)

If it prove so, then loving goes by haps. 105
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

Exeunt Hero and Ursula

BEATRICE (*coming forward*)

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?
Contempt, farewell; and maiden pride, adieu.
No glory lives behind the back of such. 110

And, Benedick, love on. I will requite thee,
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.
If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
To bind our loves up in a holy band.

For others say thou dost deserve, and I 115
Believe it better than reportingly.

Exit