

Much Ado About Nothing

2.1

Enter Leonato, Antonio his brother, Hero his daughter, Beatrice his niece, [Margaret, and Ursula]

LEONATO Was not Count John here at supper?

ANTONIO I saw him not.

BEATRICE How tartly that gentleman looks. I never can see him but I am heartburned an hour after.

HERO He is of a very melancholy disposition. 5

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±± 10

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. 15

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 curst.

BEATRICE Too curst is more than curst. I shall lessen God's sending that way, for it is said God sends a curst cow short horns, but to a cow too curst he sends none. 20

LEONATO So, by being too curst, 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. 25

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 30

sixpence in earnest of the bearherd and lead his apes
into hell.

35

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 40
my apes and away to Saint Peter fore 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 45
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.' 50

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

BEATRICE Not till God make men of some other mettle
than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be
overmastered with a piece of valiant dust?±±to make 55
an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No,
uncle, I'll none. Adam's sons are my brethren, and
truly I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

LEONATO (*to Hero*) Daughter, remember what I told you.
If the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your 60
answer.

BEATRICE The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be
not wooed in good time. If the Prince be too important,
tell him there is measure in everything, and so dance
out the answer. For hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, 65
and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a
cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch
jig±±and full as fantastical; the wedding mannerly
modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry. And
then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into 70
the cinquepace faster and faster till he sink into his
grave.

LEONATO Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

BEATRICE I have a good eye, uncle. I can see a church by

daylight.

75

LEONATO The revellers are entering, brother. Make good room.

Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, and Balthasar, all masked, Don John, and Borachio, [with a drummer]

DON PEDRO (to Hero) Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?

HERO So you walk softly, and look sweetly, and say 80
nothing, I am yours for the walk; and especially when
I walk away.

DON PEDRO With me in your company?

HERO I may say so when I please.

DON PEDRO And when please you to say so? 85

HERO When I like your favour; for God defend the lute
should be like the case.

DON PEDRO

My visor is Philemon's roof. Within the house is Jove.

HERO

Why, then, your visor should be thatched.

DON PEDRO

if you speak love.

Speak low

They move aside

[BALTHASAR] (to Margaret) Well, I would you did like me. 90

MARGARET So would not I, for your own sake, for I have
many ill qualities.

[BALTHASAR] Which is one?

MARGARET I say my prayers aloud.

[BALTHASAR] I love you the better±±the hearers may cry 95
amen.

MARGARET God match me with a good dancer.

BALTHASAR Amen.

MARGARET And God keep him out of my sight when the
dance is done. Answer, clerk. 100

BALTHASAR No more words. The clerk is answered.

They move aside

URSULA (to Antonio) I know you well enough, you are
Signor Antonio.

ANTONIO At a word, I am not.

URSULA I know you by the waggling of your head. 105

ANTONIO To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA You could never do him so ill-well unless you were the very man. Here's his dry hand up and down. You are he, you are he.

ANTONIO At a word, I am not. 110

URSULA Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? Can virtue hide itself? Go to, mum, you are he. Graces will appear, and there's an end.

They move aside

BEATRICE *(to Benedick)* Will you not tell me who told you so? 115

BENEDICK No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK Not now.

BEATRICE That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the Hundred Merry Tales±±well, this was 120 Signor Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK What's he?

BEATRICE I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE Did he never make you laugh? 125

BENEDICK I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool. Only his gift is in devising impossible slanders. None but libertines delight in him, and the commendation is not in his wit but in his villainy, for he both pleases 130 men and angers them, and then they laugh at him, and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet. I would he had boarded me.

BENEDICK When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what you say. 135

BEATRICE Do, do. He'll but break a comparison or two on me, which peradventure not marked, or not laughed at, strikes him into melancholy, and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night. 140

[Music]

We must follow the leaders.

BENEDICK In every good thing.

BEATRICE Nay, if they lead to any ill I will leave them at

the next turning.

Dance. Exeunt all but Don John, Borachio, and Claudio

DON JOHN (*aside to Borachio*) Sure my brother is amorous 145
on Hero, and hath withdrawn her father to break with
him about it. The ladies follow her, and but one visor
remains.

BORACHIO (*aside to Don John*) And that is Claudio. I know
him by his bearing. 150

DON JOHN Are not you Signor Benedick?

CLAUDIO You know me well. I am he.

DON JOHN Signor, you are very near my brother in his
love. He is enamoured on Hero. I pray you dissuade
him from her. She is no equal for his birth. You may 155
do the part of an honest man in it.

CLAUDIO How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO So did I, too, and he swore he would marry
her tonight. 160

DON JOHN Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt all but Claudio

CLAUDIO

Thus answer I in name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
'Tis certain so, the Prince woos for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things 165
Save in the office and affairs of love.
Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.
Let every eye negotiate for itself,
And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood. 170
This is an accident of hourly proof,
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell, therefore, Hero.

Enter Benedick

BENEDICK Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO Yea, the same.

BENEDICK Come, will you go with me? 175

CLAUDIO Whither?

BENEDICK Even to the next willow, about your own
business, County. What fashion will you wear the

garland of? About your neck, like an usurer's chain?
Or under your arm, like a lieutenant's scarf? You must 180
wear it one way, for the Prince hath got your Hero.

CLAUDIO I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK Why, that's spoken like an honest drover; so
they sell bullocks. But did you think the Prince would
have served you thus? 185

CLAUDIO I pray you leave me.

BENEDICK Ho, now you strike like the blind man±±'twas
the boy that stole your meat, and you'll beat the post.

CLAUDIO If it will not be, I'll leave you.

Exit

BENEDICK Alas, poor hurt fowl, now will he creep into 190
sedges. But that my Lady Beatrice should know me,
and not know me! The Prince's fool! Ha, it may be I
go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so I
am apt to do myself wrong. I am not so reputed. It is
the base, though bitter, disposition of Beatrice that puts 195
the world into her person, and so gives me out. Well,
I'll be revenged as I may.

Enter Don Pedro the Prince

DON PEDRO Now, signor, where's the Count? Did you see
him?

BENEDICK Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady 200
Fame. I found him here as melancholy as a lodge in a
warren. I told him±±and I think I told him true±±that
your grace had got the good will of this young lady,
and I offered him my company to a willow tree, either
to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to bind 205
him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipped.

DON PEDRO To be whipped±±what's his fault?

BENEDICK The flat transgression of a schoolboy who, being
overjoyed with finding a bird's nest, shows it his
companion, and he steals it. 210

DON PEDRO Wilt thou make a trust a transgression? The
transgression is in the stealer.

BENEDICK Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been
made, and the garland too, for the garland he might
have worn himself, and the rod he might have bestowed 215
on you, who, as I take it, have stolen his bird's nest.

DON PEDRO I will but teach them to sing, and restore them to the owner.

BENEDICK If their singing answer your saying, by my faith you say honestly. 220

DON PEDRO The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you. The gentleman that danced with her told her she is much wronged by you.

BENEDICK O, she misused me past the endurance of a block. An oak but with one green leaf on it would have answered her. My very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me±±not thinking I had been myself±±that I was the Prince's jester, that I was duller than a great thaw, huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her, she would infect to the North Star. I would not marry her though she were endowed with 235 all that Adam had left him before he transgressed. She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire, too. Come, talk not of her. You shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure 240 her, for certainly, while she is here a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary, and people sin upon purpose because they would go thither, so indeed all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follows her.

Enter Claudio and Beatrice, [and Leonato with Hero]

DON PEDRO Look, here she comes. 245

BENEDICK Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on. I will fetch you a tooth-picker now from the furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester John's 250 foot, fetch you a hair off the Great Cham's beard, do you any embassy to the pigmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO None but to desire your good company. 255

BENEDICK O God, sir, here's a dish I love not. I cannot
endure my Lady Tongue.

Exit

DON PEDRO Come, lady, come, you have lost the heart of
Signor Benedick.

BEATRICE Indeed, my lord, he lent it me a while, and I 260
gave him use for it, a double heart for his single one.
Marry, once before he won it of me, with false dice.
Therefore your grace may well say I have lost it.

DON PEDRO You have put him down, lady, you have put
him down. 265

BEATRICE So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest
I should prove the mother of fools. I have brought
Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seek.

DON PEDRO Why, how now, Count, wherefore are you
sad? 270

CLAUDIO Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO How then? Sick?

CLAUDIO Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE The Count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry,
nor well, but civil count, civil as an orange, and 275
something of that jealous complexion.

DON PEDRO I'faith, lady, I think your blazon to be true,
though I'll be sworn, if he be so, his conceit is false.
Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair
Hero is won. I have broke with her father and his good 280
will obtained. Name the day of marriage, and God give
thee joy.

LEONATO Count, take of me my daughter, and with her
my fortunes. His grace hath made the match, and all
grace say amen to it. 285

BEATRICE Speak, Count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but
little happy if I could say how much. *(To Hero)* Lady,
as you are mine, I am yours. I give away myself for
you, and dote upon the exchange. 290

BEATRICE *(to Hero)* Speak, cousin. Or, if you cannot, stop
his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak, neither.

DON PEDRO In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE Yea, my lord, I thank it. Poor fool, it keeps on
the windy side of care.±±My cousin tells him in his ear 295
that he is in her heart.

CLAUDIO And so she doth, cousin.

BEATRICE Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes everyone to
the world but I, and I am sunburnt. I may sit in a
corner and cry `Heigh-ho for a husband'. 300

DON PEDRO Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

BEATRICE I would rather have one of your father's getting.
Hath your grace ne'er a brother like you? Your father
got excellent husbands if a maid could come by them.

DON PEDRO Will you have me, lady? 305

BEATRICE No, my lord, unless I might have another for
working days. Your grace is too costly to wear every
day. But I beseech your grace, pardon me. I was born
to speak all mirth and no matter.

DON PEDRO Your silence most offends me, and to be merry 310
best becomes you; for out o' question, you were born
in a merry hour.

BEATRICE No, sure, my lord, my mother cried. But then
there was a star danced, and under that was I born.
(*To Hero and Claudio*) Cousins, God give you joy. 315

LEONATO Niece, will you look to those things I told you
of?

BEATRICE I cry you mercy, uncle. (*To Don Pedro*) By your
grace's pardon.

Exit Beatrice

DON PEDRO By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady. 320

LEONATO There's little of the melancholy element in her,
my lord. She is never sad but when she sleeps, and not
ever sad then; for I have heard my daughter say she
hath often dreamt of unhappiness and waked herself
with laughing. 325

DON PEDRO She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

LEONATO O, by no means. She mocks all her wooers out
of suit.

DON PEDRO She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

LEONATO O Lord, my lord, if they were but a week married 330
they would talk themselves mad.

DON PEDRO County Claudio, when mean you to go to

church?

CLAUDIO Tomorrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches till
love have all his rites. 335

LEONATO Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence
a just sevennight, and a time too brief, too, to have all
things answer my mind.

DON PEDRO Come, you shake the head at so long a
breathing, but I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall 340
not go dully by us. I will in the interim undertake one
of Hercules' labours, which is to bring Signor Benedick
and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection
th'one with th'other. I would fain have it a match, and
I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but 345
minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

LEONATO My lord, I am for you, though it cost me ten
nights' watchings.

CLAUDIO And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO And you too, gentle Hero? 350

HERO I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my
cousin to a good husband.

DON PEDRO And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband
that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble
strain, of approved valour and confirmed honesty. I 355
will teach you how to humour your cousin that she
shall fall in love with Benedick, and I, with your two
helps, will so practise on Benedick that, in despite of
his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in
love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer 360
an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only
love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

Exeunt