

Much Ado About Nothing

5.2

Enter Benedick and Margaret

BENEDICK Pray thee, sweet Mistress Margaret, deserve well
at my hands by helping me to the speech of Beatrice.

MARGARET Will you then write me a sonnet in praise of
my beauty?

BENEDICK In so high a style, Margaret, that no man living 5
shall come over it, for in most comely truth, thou
deservest it.

MARGARET To have no man come over me±±why, shall I
always keep below stairs?

BENEDICK Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth, 10
it catches.

MARGARET And yours as blunt as the fencer's foils, which
hit but hurt not.

BENEDICK A most manly wit, Margaret, it will not hurt a
woman. And so I pray thee call Beatrice. I give thee 15
the bucklers.

MARGARET Give us the swords. We have bucklers of our
own.

BENEDICK If you use them, Margaret, you must put in the
pikes with a vice±±and they are dangerous weapons 20
for maids.

MARGARET Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I think
hath legs.

Exit

BENEDICK And therefore will come.
(Sings)

The god of love 25
That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve±±

I mean in singing; but in loving, Leander the good
swimmer, Troilus the first employer of panders, and a 30
whole book full of these quondam carpet-mongers
whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a
blank verse, why they were never so truly turned over

and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show
it in rhyme. I have tried. I can find out no rhyme to 35
`lady' but `baby', an innocent rhyme; for `scorn' `horn',
a hard rhyme; for `school' `fool', a babbling rhyme.
Very ominous endings. No, I was not born under a
rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

Enter Beatrice

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee? 40

BEATRICE Yea, signor, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK O, stay but till then.

BEATRICE `Then' is spoken. Fare you well now. And yet
ere I go, let me go with that I came for, which is with
knowing what hath passed between you and Claudio. 45

BENEDICK Only foul words, and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is
but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome, therefore
I will depart unknissed.

BENEDICK Thou hast frightened the word out of his right 50
sense, so forcible is thy wit. But I must tell thee plainly,
Claudio undergoes my challenge, and either I must
shortly hear from him or I will subscribe him a coward.
And I pray thee now tell me, for which of my bad parts
didst thou first fall in love with me? 55

BEATRICE For them all together, which maintain so politic
a state of evil that they will not admit any good part
to intermingle with them. But for which of my good
parts did you first suffer love for me?

BENEDICK Suffer love±±a good epithet. I do suffer love 60
indeed, for I love thee against my will.

BEATRICE In spite of your heart, I think. Alas, poor heart.
If you spite it for my sake I will spite it for yours, for I
will never love that which my friend hates.

BENEDICK Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably. 65

BEATRICE It appears not in this confession. There's not
one wise man among twenty that will praise himself.

BENEDICK An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that lived in
the time of good neighbours. If a man do not erect in
this age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no 70
longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow
weeps.

BEATRICE And how long is that, think you?

BENEDICK Question±±why, an hour in clamour and a quarter in rheum. Therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if Don Worm±±his conscience±±find no impediment to the contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am to myself. So much for praising myself who, I myself will bear witness, is praiseworthy. And now tell me, how doth your cousin? 75 80

BEATRICE Very ill.

BENEDICK And how do you?

BEATRICE Very ill too.

BENEDICK Serve God, love me, and mend. There will I leave you too, for here comes one in haste. 85

Enter Ursula

URSULA Madam, you must come to your uncle. Yonder's old coil at home. It is proved my lady Hero hath been falsely accused, the Prince and Claudio mightily abused, and Don John is the author of all, who is fled and gone. Will you come presently? 90

BEATRICE Will you go hear this news, signor?

BENEDICK I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes. And moreover, I will go with thee to thy uncle's.

Exeunt