

Much Ado About Nothing

4.1

Enter Don Pedro the Prince, Don John the bastard, Leonato, Friar Francis, Claudio, Benedick, Hero, and Beatrice

LEONATO Come, Friar Francis, be brief. Only to the plain form of marriage, and you shall recount their particular duties afterwards.

FRIAR *(to Claudio)* You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady? 5

CLAUDIO No.

LEONATO To be married to her. Friar, you come to marry her.

FRIAR *(to Hero)* Lady, you come hither to be married to this count? 10

HERO I do.

FRIAR If either of you know any inward impediment why you should not be conjoined, I charge you on your souls to utter it.

CLAUDIO Know you any, Hero? 15

HERO None, my lord.

FRIAR Know you any, Count?

LEONATO I dare make his answer±±none.

CLAUDIO O, what men dare do! What men may do! What men daily do, not knowing what they do! 20

BENEDICK How now! Interjections? Why then, some be of laughing, as `ah, ha, he!"

CLAUDIO

Stand thee by, Friar. Father, by your leave,
Will you with free and unconstrain'd soul
Give me this maid, your daughter? 25

LEONATO
As freely, son, as God did give her me.

CLAUDIO
And what have I to give you back whose worth
May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO
Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO

Sweet Prince, you learn me noble thankfulness. 30
There, Leonato, take her back again.
Give not this rotten orange to your friend.
She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
O, what authority and show of truth 35
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none. 40
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed.
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATO

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO Not to be married,
Not to knit my soul to an approveÁd wanton.

LEONATO

Dear my lord, if you in your own proof 45
Have vanquished the resistance of her youth
And made defeat of her virginity±±

CLAUDIO

I know what you would say. If I have known her,
You will say she did embrace me as a husband,
And so extenuate the forehead sin. 50
No, Leonato,
I never tempted her with word too large,
But as a brother to his sister showed
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

HERO

And seemed I ever otherwise to you? 55

CLAUDIO

Out on thee, seeming! I will write against it.
You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown.
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus or those pampered animals 60
That rage in savage sensuality.

HERO

Is my lord well that he doth speak so wide?

LEONATO

Sweet Prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO

What should I speak?

I stand dishonoured, that have gone about
To link my dear friend to a common stale.

65

LEONATO

Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN

Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.

BENEDICK This looks not like a nuptial.

HERO `True! O God!

CLAUDIO Leonato, stand I here?

70

Is this the Prince? Is this the Prince's brother?
Is this face Hero's? Are our eyes our own?

LEONATO

All this is so. But what of this, my lord?

CLAUDIO

Let me but move one question to your daughter,
And by that fatherly and kindly power
That you have in her, bid her answer truly.

75

LEONATO *(to Hero)*

I charge thee do so, as thou art my child.

HERO

O God defend me, how am I beset!
What kind of catechizing call you this?

CLAUDIO

To make you answer truly to your name.

80

HERO

Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name
With any just reproach?

CLAUDIO

Marry, that can Hero.

Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.
What man was he talked with you yesternight
Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?
Now if you are a maid, answer to this.

85

HERO

I talked with no man at that hour, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honour,
Myself, my brother, and this grieveÁd Count

90

Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window,
Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,
Confessed the vile encounters they have had
A thousand times in secret.

DON JOHN Fie, fie, they are
Not to be named, my lord, not to be spoke of.
There is not chastity enough in language
Without offence to utter them. Thus, pretty lady,
I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

95

CLAUDIO
O Hero! What a Hero hadst thou been
If half thy outward graces had been placed
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair, farewell
Thou pure impiety and impious purity.
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,
And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,
And never shall it more be gracious.

100

105

LEONATO
Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?
Hero falls to the ground

BEATRICE
Why, how now, cousin, wherefore sink you down?

110

DON JOHN
Come. Let us go. These things come thus to light
Smother her spirits up.
Exeunt Don Pedro, Don John, and Claudio

BENEDICK
How doth the lady?

BEATRICE Dead, I think. Help, uncle.
Hero, why Hero! Uncle, Signor Benedick, Friar±±

LEONATO
O fate, take not away thy heavy hand.
Death is the fairest cover for her shame
That may be wished for.

115

BEATRICE How now, cousin Hero?

FRIAR (to Hero) Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO (to Hero) Dost thou look up?

FRIAR Yea, wherefore should she not?

120

LEONATO

Wherefore? Why, doth not every earthly thing
Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny
The story that is printed in her blood?
Do not live, Hero, do not ope thine eyes,
For did I think thou wouldst not quickly die, 125
Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames,
Myself would on the rearward of reproaches
Strike at thy life. Grieved I I had but one?
Chid I for that at frugal nature's frame?
O one too much by thee! Why had I one? 130
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?
Why had I not with charitable hand
Took up a beggar's issue at my gates,
Who smirched thus and mired with infamy,
I might have said 'No part of it is mine, 135
This shame derives itself from unknown loins.'
But mine, and mine I loved, and mine I praised,
And mine that I was proud on, mine so much
That I myself was to myself not mine,
Valuing of her why she, O she is fallen 140
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,
And salt too little which may season give
To her foul tainted flesh.

BENEDICK Sir, sir, be patient.

For my part, I am so attired in wonder 145
I know not what to say.

BEATRICE

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied.

BENEDICK

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE

No, truly not, although until last night
I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow. 150

LEONATO

Confirmed, confirmed. O, that is stronger made
Which was before barred up with ribs of iron.
Would the two princes lie? And Claudio lie,
Who loved her so that, speaking of her foulness,

Washed it with tears? Hence from her, let her die. 155

FRIAR Hear me a little,
 For I have only been silent so long
 And given way unto this course of fortune
 □
 By noting of the lady. I have marked 160
 A thousand blushing apparitions
 To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
 In angel whiteness beat away those blushes,
 And in her eye there hath appeared a fire
 To burn the errors that these princes hold 165
 Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool,
 Trust not my reading nor my observations,
 Which with experimental seal doth warrant
 The tenor of my book. Trust not my age,
 My reverence, calling, nor divinity, 170
 If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
 Under some biting error.

LEONATO Friar, it cannot be.
 Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left
 Is that she will not add to her damnation
 A sin of perjury. She not denies it. 175
 Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse
 That which appears in proper nakedness?

FRIAR *(to Hero)*
 Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO
 They know that do accuse me. I know none.
 If I know more of any man alive 180
 Than that which maiden modesty doth warrant,
 Let all my sins lack mercy. O my father,
 Prove you that any man with me conversed
 At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight
 Maintained the change of words with any creature, 185
 Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death.

FRIAR
 There is some strange misprision in the princes.

BENEDICK
 Two of them have the very bent of honour,
 And if their wisdoms be misled in this

The practice of it lives in John the bastard, 190
Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies.

LEONATO

I know not. If they speak but truth of her
These hands shall tear her. If they wrong her honour
The proudest of them shall well hear of it.
Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine, 195
Nor age so eat up my invention,
Nor fortune made such havoc of my means,
Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends,
But they shall find awaked in such a kind
Both strength of limb and policy of mind, 200
Ability in means, and choice of friends,
To quit me of them thoroughly.

FRIAR

Pause awhile,

And let my counsel sway you in this case.
Your daughter here the princes left for dead,
Let her a while be secretly kept in, 205
And publish it that she is dead indeed.
Maintain a mourning ostentation,
And on your family's old monument
Hang mournful epitaphs, and do all rites
That appertain unto a burial. 210

LEONATO

What shall become of this? What will this do?

FRIAR

Marry, this, well carried, shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse. That is some good.
But not for that dream I on this strange course,
But on this travail look for greater birth. 215
She±±dying, as it must be so maintained,
Upon the instant that she was accused±±
Shall be lamented, pitied, and excused
Of every hearer. For it so falls out
That what we have, we prize not to the worth 220
Whiles we enjoy it, but, being lacked and lost,
Why then we rack the value, then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio.
When he shall hear she died upon his words, 225

Th'idea of her life shall sweetly creep
 Into his study of imagination,
 And every lovely organ of her life
 Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,
 More moving-delicate, and full of life, 230
 Into the eye and prospect of his soul
 Than when she lived indeed. Then shall he mourn,
 If ever love had interest in his liver,
 And wish he had not so accuseÁd her,
 No, though he thought his accusation true. 235
 Let this be so, and doubt not but success
 Will fashion the event in better shape
 Than I can lay it down in likelihood.
 But if all aim but this be levelled false,
 The supposition of the lady's death 240
 Will quench the wonder of her infamy.
 And if it sort not well, you may conceal her,
 As best befits her wounded reputation,
 In some reclusive and religious life,
 Out of all eyes, tongues, minds, and injuries. 245

BENEDICK

Signor Leonato, let the Friar advise you.
 And though you know my inwardness and love
 Is very much unto the Prince and Claudio,
 Yet, by mine honour, I will deal in this
 As secretly and justly as your soul 250
 Should with your body.

LEONATO Being that I flow in grief,
 The smallest twine may lead me.

FRIAR

'Tis well consented. Presently away,
 For to strange sores strangely they strain the cure. 255
 (*To Hero*) Come, lady, die to live. This wedding day
 Perhaps is but prolonged. Have patience, and endure.

Exeunt all but Beatrice and Benedick

BENEDICK Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK I will not desire that. 260

BEATRICE You have no reason, I do it freely.

BENEDICK Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE Ah, how much might the man deserve of me
that would right her!

BENEDICK Is there any way to show such friendship? 265

BEATRICE A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK May a man do it?

BEATRICE It is a man's office, but not yours.

BENEDICK I do love nothing in the world so well as you.
Is not that strange? 270

BEATRICE As strange as the thing I know not. It were as
possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you,
but believe me not, and yet I lie not. I confess nothing
nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.

BENEDICK By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me. 275

BEATRICE Do not swear and eat it.

BENEDICK I will swear by it that you love me, and I will
make him eat it that says I love not you.

BEATRICE Will you not eat your word?

BENEDICK With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest 280
I love thee.

BEATRICE Why then, God forgive me.

BENEDICK What offence, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE You have stayed me in a happy hour. I was
about to protest I loved you. 285

BENEDICK And do it with all thy heart.

BEATRICE I love you with so much of my heart that none
is left to protest.

BENEDICK Come, bid me do anything for thee.

BEATRICE Kill Claudio. 290

BENEDICK Ha! Not for the wide world.

BEATRICE You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE I am gone though I am here. There is no love
in you.±±Nay, I pray you, let me go. 295

BENEDICK Beatrice.

BEATRICE In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK We'll be friends first.

BEATRICE You dare easier be friends with me than fight
with mine enemy. 300

BENEDICK Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE Is a not approved in the height a villain, that

hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman?
O that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until
they come to take hands, and then with public 305
accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour±±
O God that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the
market place.

BENEDICK Hear me, Beatrice.

BEATRICE Talk with a man out at a window±±a proper 310
saying!

BENEDICK Nay, but Beatrice.

BEATRICE Sweet Hero, she is wronged, she is slandered,
she is undone.

BENEDICK Beat±± 315

BEATRICE Princes and counties! Surely a princely testi-
mony, a goodly count, Count Comfit, a sweet gallant,
surely. O that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had
any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood
is melted into courtesies, valour into compliment, and 320
men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones, too.
He is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie
and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore
I will die a woman with grieving.

BENEDICK Tarry, good Beatrice. By this hand, I love thee. 325

BEATRICE Use it for my love some other way than swearing
by it.

BENEDICK Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath
wronged Hero?

BEATRICE Yea, as sure as I have a thought or a soul. 330

BENEDICK Enough, I am engaged, I will challenge him. I
will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand,
Claudio shall render me a dear account. As you hear
of me, so think of me. Go comfort your cousin. I must
say she is dead. And so, farewell. 335

Exeunt