

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Part 4: The Matchmaking Scheme

Act 2, Scene 1 (continued), and Act 2, Scene 2

BEFORE YOU READ

After the dance, Don John tricks Claudio into thinking Don Pedro has taken Hero for himself. The misunderstanding is repaired, Hero and Claudio are promised to each other, and Don Pedro proposes a playful scheme to make Beatrice and Benedick fall in love. Don John and Borachio prepare a far crueler deception.

A HELPFUL SHAKESPEARE HABIT

Compare the two deceptions. One is meant to help people; the other is meant to hurt them. Mark moments when the purpose of a trick changes how it feels.

Who's Who in This Reading

Claudio: Believes a lie, then learns Hero has been won for him.

Don Pedro (Prince): Repairs the misunderstanding and starts the Beatrice-Benedick plot.

Benedick: Feels wounded by Beatrice's masked insults.

Beatrice: Continues her jokes after the dance.

Hero: Agrees to marry Claudio.

Leonato: Approves the marriage.

Don John: Searches for a way to destroy the wedding.

Borachio: Designs a staged scene that will make Hero appear unfaithful.

SOURCE AND USE

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Quick Word Help

amorous

in love

break with

speak privately with

bearing

manner or posture

equal for his birth

a socially suitable match

misuse

deceive or mistreat

civil

courteous and well mannered

office

service or helpful duty

conference

private conversation

gull

trick or fool

engineer

designer of a plot

close

secret

fashion the matter

arrange the plan

issue

outcome

chamber window

bedroom window

LOOK AND LISTEN FOR

- Claudio's speed in believing Don John.
- The group's confidence that Beatrice and Benedick can be changed by a story.
- The difference between comic trickery and malicious trickery.

Reading tip: Assign parts aloud. If a sentence feels confusing, read to the punctuation before stopping to define one word.

ACT 2, SCENE 1 - CONTINUED

DON JOHN [to Borachio] Sure my brother is amorous on Hero, and hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it.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

BORACHIO And that is Claudio. I know him by his bearing.

DON JOHN [to Claudio] Are not you Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO You know me well. I am he.

DON JOHN Signior, you are very near my brother in his love. He is enamored on Hero. I pray you dissuade him from her. She is no equal for his birth. You may 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.

DON JOHN Come, let us to the banquet. [They exit. Claudio remains.]

CLAUDIO

[unmasking]

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
 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.
 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?

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 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?

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. [He exits.]

BENEDICK Alas, poor hurt fowl, now will he creep into 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 the world into her person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

[Enter the Prince, Hero, and Leonato.]

PRINCE Now, signior, where's the Count? Did you see him?

BENEDICK Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady 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 goodwill 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 him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipped.

PRINCE 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.

PRINCE 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 on you, who, as I take it, have stolen his bird's nest.

PRINCE 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.

PRINCE 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 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 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.]

PRINCE Look, here she comes.

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 toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia,

bring you the length of Prester John's foot, fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard, do you any embassy to the Pygmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

PRINCE None but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK O God, sir, here's a dish I love not! I cannot endure my Lady Tongue. [He exits.]

PRINCE [to Beatrice] Come, lady, come, you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.

BEATRICE Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile, and I 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.

PRINCE You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.

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.

PRINCE Why, how now, count, wherefore are you sad?

CLAUDIO Not sad, my lord.

PRINCE 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 something of that jealous complexion.

PRINCE 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 goodwill 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.

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.--Lady, as you are mine, I am yours. I give away myself for you and dote upon the exchange.

BEATRICE Speak, cousin, or, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss and let not him speak neither.

PRINCE 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 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!"

PRINCE 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.

PRINCE Will you have me, lady?

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.

PRINCE Your silence most offends me, and to be merry 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.--Cousins, God give you joy!

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

BEATRICE I cry you mercy, uncle.--By your Grace's pardon.
[Beatrice exits.]

PRINCE By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

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.

PRINCE She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

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

PRINCE She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

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

PRINCE County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

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

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

PRINCE [to Claudio] Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing, but I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us. I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labors, which is to bring Signior 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 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.

PRINCE And you too, gentle Hero?

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

PRINCE And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble strain, of approved valor, and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humor your cousin that she shall fall in love with Benedick.-- And I, with your two helps, will so practice 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 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. [They exit.]

ACT 2, SCENE 2

DON JOHN It is so. The Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

BORACHIO Yea, my lord, but I can cross it.

DON JOHN Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be med'cinable to me. I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me.

DON JOHN Show me briefly how.

BORACHIO I think I told your Lordship a year since, how much I am in the favor of Margaret, the waiting gentlewoman to Hero.

DON JOHN I remember.

BORACHIO I can, at any unseasonable instant of the night, appoint her to look out at her lady's chamber window.

DON JOHN What life is in that to be the death of this marriage?

BORACHIO The poison of that lies in you to temper. Go you to the Prince your brother; spare not to tell him that he hath wronged his honor in marrying the renowned Claudio, whose estimation do you mightily hold up, to a contaminated stale, such a one as Hero.

DON JOHN What proof shall I make of that?

BORACHIO Proof enough to misuse the Prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero, and kill Leonato. Look you for any other issue?

DON JOHN Only to despite them I will endeavor anything.

BORACHIO Go then, find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone. Tell them that you know that Hero loves me; intend a kind of zeal both to the Prince and Claudio, as in love of your brother's honor, who hath made this match, and his friend's reputation, who is thus like to be cozened with the semblance of a maid, that you have discovered thus. They will scarcely believe this without trial. Offer them instances, which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber window, hear me call Margaret "Hero," hear Margaret term me "Claudio," and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, for in the meantime I will so fashion the matter that Hero shall be absent, and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance and all the preparation overthrown.

DON JOHN Grow this to what adverse issue it can, I will put it in practice. Be cunning in the working this, and thy fee is a thousand ducats.

BORACHIO Be you constant in the accusation, and my cunning shall not shame me.

DON JOHN I will presently go learn their day of marriage.
[They exit.]

END OF PART 4

WEEKLY REFLECTION ON COMEDY

Return to these questions as you read, discuss, and notice new kinds of humor during the week.

1. What makes something funny? Think about words, timing, characters, misunderstandings, surprise, or experiences people recognize.

2. Why do people want to watch comedy? What place does humor have in our everyday lives?

3. Why is comedy important? What can it help us understand about ourselves, other people, or the world around us?
