

# MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

## Part 8: Disaster at the Wedding

Act 4, Scene 1

### BEFORE YOU READ

The wedding begins, but Claudio publicly rejects Hero and accuses her of being unfaithful. Hero collapses after Don Pedro and Don John support the charge. Friar Francis believes Hero and proposes that the family report her death. Alone afterward, Beatrice and Benedick confess their love, and Beatrice asks Benedick to challenge Claudio.

### A HELPFUL SHAKESPEARE HABIT

Expect the tone to change sharply. Read the accusations slowly and notice which characters look for evidence, which react from emotion, and which remain silent.

## Who's Who in This Reading

**Hero:** Arrives to marry Claudio and is publicly accused.

**Claudio:** Rejects Hero because he believes Don John's staged evidence.

**Leonato:** Moves from celebration to shock and grief.

**Don Pedro:** Supports Claudio's accusation.

**Don John:** Stands behind the deception.

**Friar Francis:** Studies Hero's reaction and argues that she is innocent.

**Beatrice:** Defends Hero and demands action from Benedick.

**Benedick:** Chooses Beatrice and justice over loyalty to Claudio.

### SOURCE AND USE

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## Quick Word Help

**approved**

proven or tested

**wanton**

sexually unfaithful or uncontrolled

**rotten orange**

something attractive outside but spoiled within

**semblance**

outward appearance

**blush**

reddening of the face

**maidenhood**

virginity or unmarried purity

**counsel**

advice or secret plan

**remorse**

pity or compassion

**slander**

a damaging false accusation

**reverence**

deep respect

**requite**

repay or return

**challenge**

call someone to a duel

**practice**

plot or scheme

**strange sores**

hidden moral corruption

### LOOK AND LISTEN FOR

- The images Claudio uses to contrast Hero's outward appearance with his belief about her character.
- Why the Friar trusts Hero when others do not.
- How Beatrice and Benedick's love scene is shaped by the crisis around them.

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

**ACT 4, SCENE 1**

**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?

**CLAUDIO** No.

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

**FRIAR** Lady, you come hither to be married to this count?

**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?

**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!

**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 unconstrained soul  
Give me this maid, your daughter?

**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?

**PRINCE**

Nothing, unless you render her again.

**CLAUDIO**

Sweet prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.--  
There, Leonato, take her back again.  
Give not this rotten orange to your friend.  
She's but the sign and semblance of her honor.  
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!  
O, what authority and show of truth  
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.  
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  
approved wanton.

**LEONATO**

Dear my lord, if you in your own proof  
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.

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?

**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  
 That rage in savage sensuality.

**HERO**

Is my lord well that he doth speak so wide?

**LEONATO**

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

**PRINCE** What should I speak? I stand dishonored that have  
 gone about To link my dear friend to a common stale.

**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? 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.

**LEONATO**

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.

**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.

**HERO**

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

**PRINCE**

Why, then, are you no maiden.--Leonato,

I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honor,  
 Myself, my brother, and this grieved count  
 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 offense, to utter them.--Thus, pretty lady,  
 I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

**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.

**LEONATO**

Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?  
 [Hero falls.]

**BEATRICE**

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

**DON JOHN**

Come, let us go. These things, come thus to light,  
Smother her spirits up.  
[Claudio, Prince, and Don John exit.]

**BENEDICK**

How doth the lady?

**BEATRICE** Dead, I think.--Help, uncle!-- Hero, why Hero!  
Uncle! Signior Benedick! Friar!

**LEONATO**

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

**BEATRICE** How now, cousin Hero? [Hero stirs.]

**FRIAR** [to Hero] Have comfort, lady.

**LEONATO**

[to Hero]  
Dost thou look up?

**FRIAR** Yea, wherefore should she not?

**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,  
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?

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;  
 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 fall'n  
 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 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.

**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!

**FRIAR** Hear me a little, For I have only silent been so long,  
 And given way unto this course of fortune, By noting of  
 the lady. I have marked 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 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, 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. Why  
 seek'st thou then to cover with excuse That which  
 appears in proper nakedness?

**FRIAR**

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  
 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,  
 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 honor,  
 And if their wisdoms be misled in this,  
 The practice of it lives in John the Bastard,  
 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 honor,  
 The proudest of them shall well hear of it.  
 Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,  
 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,  
 Ability in means and choice of friends,  
 To quit me of them throughly.

**FRIAR** Pause awhile, And let my counsel sway you in this  
 case. Your daughter here the princes left for dead. Let  
 her awhile be secretly kept in, 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.

**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.

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  
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,  
Th' idea of her life shall sweetly creep  
Into his study of imagination,  
And every lovely organ of her life  
Shall come appareled in more precious habit,  
More moving, delicate, and full of life,  
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 accused her,  
No, though he thought his accusation true.  
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 leveled false,  
The supposition of the lady's death  
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.

**BENEDICK**

Signior 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 honor, I will deal in this  
 As secretly and justly as your soul  
 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.--  
 Come, lady, die to live. This wedding day  
 Perhaps is but prolonged. Have patience and  
 endure.  
 [All but Beatrice and Benedick exit.]

**BENEDICK** Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

**BEATRICE** Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

**BENEDICK** I will not desire that.

**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?

**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?

**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!

**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 I love thee.

**BEATRICE** Why then, God forgive me.

**BENEDICK** What offense, sweet Beatrice?

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

**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.

**BENEDICK** Ha! Not for the wide world.

**BEATRICE** You kill me to deny it. Farewell. [She begins to exit.]

**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.

**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.

**BENEDICK** Is Claudio thine enemy?

**BEATRICE** Is he not approved in the height a villain that hath slandered, scorned, dishonored my kinswoman? O, that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until they come to take hands, and then, with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancor--O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the marketplace.

**BENEDICK** Hear me, Beatrice--

**BEATRICE** Talk with a man out at a window! A proper saying.

**BENEDICK** Nay, but Beatrice--

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

**BENEDICK** Beat--

**BEATRICE** Princes and counties! Surely a princely testimony, a goodly count, Count Comfect, 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 curtsies, valor into compliment, and 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.

**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.

**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. [They exit.]

## END OF PART 8

# 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.**

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

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

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