



Much Ado About Nothing

Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon, pays a visit to Leonata, the governor of Messina, while returning from a victorious campaign against his rebellious brother, Don John. Accompanying him are two of his officers, Benedick and Claudio. While in Messina, Claudio falls for Leonato's daughter, Hero; Benedick verbally spars with Beatrice, the governor's niece. The budding love between Claudio and Hero prompts Don Pedro to arrange with Leonato for the marriage.

Meanwhile, the trickery begins as Don Pedro (with the help of Leonato and Claudio) attempts to sport with Benedick and Beatrice in an effort to make the two of them fall in love. Likewise, Hero and her waiting woman help to set up Beatrice. Both Benedick and Beatrice will think that the other has professed a great love for them.

The marriage of Claudio to Hero is set to go. Don John—ostensibly reconciled with his brother—despises Claudio, however, and plots against him. First, he tells Claudio that Pedro wants Hero for himself; next, he enlists the aid of his henchman Borachio and one of Hero's gentlewomen disguised as Hero to stage an encounter that will bring Hero's virtue into question. Claudio falls for the ruse and denounces Hero at the altar. Friar Francis helps her, hiding her away and enlisting the aid of Leonata, who announces that his daughter has died of grief from the proceeding.

Fortunately for Hero, Borachio is arrested while drunkenly boasting of his part in the plan (and the 1,000 ducats paid him). With Borachio's confession, Hero is to be exonerated. Leonato demands a public apology from Claudio, then tells him that he will allow Claudio to marry one of his nieces in Hero's place—a niece that turns out to be none other than Hero herself. Claudio and Hero are reunited, Benedick and Beatrice will wed alongside them, and they receive the news that the bastard Don John has been apprehended.

Dramatis Personae

Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon
Don John, his bastard brother
Claudio, young lord of Florence
Benedick, young lord of Padua
Leonato, Governor of Messina
Antonio, brother of Leonato
Balthasar, servant to Don Pedro
Borachio, follower of Don John
Conrade, follower of Don John
Dogberry, a constable
Verges, a headborough
Friar Francis
A Sexton
A Boy
Hero, daughter of Leonato
Beatrice, niece of Leonato
Margaret, gentlewoman to Hero
Ursula, gentlewoman to Hero
Messengers, Watch, and Attendants