

Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare

Act 3, Scene 1

*Hero is in the garden and is planning to trick her cousin Beatrice into believing Benedict loves her.*

HERO:

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlour; There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice proposing with the prince and Claudio. Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Ursula walk in the orchard and our whole discourse is all of her; say thou overheard'st us. And bid her steal into the pleached bower, to listen our purpose.

This is thy office; bear thee well in it and leave us alone.

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come as we do trace this alley up and down, our talk must only be of Benedick. When I do name him, let it be thy part to praise him more than ever man did merit. My talk to thee must be how Benedick is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter is little Cupid's crafty arrow made, that only wounds by hearsay. Now begin, for look where Beatrice, like a lapwing, runs close by the ground to hear our conference. Then we go near her, that her ear lose nothing of the false sweet bait that we lay for it. {changing for Beatrice's benefit} No truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful; I know her spirits are as coy and wild as haggerds of the rock.

O God of love! I know he doth deserve as much as may be yielded to a man: but nature never framed a woman's heart of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice. Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes, misprising what they look on, and her wit values itself so highly that to her all matter else seems weak: she cannot love, nor take no shape nor project of affection, she is so self-endeared.

But who dare tell her so? If I should speak she would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me out of myself, press me to death with wit. Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire, consume away in sighs, waste inwardly. It were a better death than die with mocks, which is as bad as die with tickling.

No, rather I would go to Benedick and counsel him to fight his passion. And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders to stain my cousin with: one doth not know how much an ill word may empoison liking.

{move away from Beatrice} If it proves so, then loving grace goes by haps; some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.