

Much Ado About Nothing

Plot summary

Don Pedro ([Denzel Washington](#)), Prince of Aragon and his noblemen are visiting their good friend Leonato in Messina after having quashed the uprising led by Don John ([Keanu Reeves](#)), the prince's bastard half-brother. Among the victors are the misogynistic and witty Benedick, erstwhile flame of Leonato's equally sharp-tongued and somewhat fierce niece Beatrice ([Emma Thompson](#)), who is something of a [misandrist](#), and Benedick's "sworn brother" Claudio, a young count. Claudio has been thinking fondly of Leonato's gentle and lovely daughter Hero since before he went to war, and returns to find her as attractive as ever. Don Pedro, learning of his young friend's feelings, arranges the match at a party. Despite Don John's best efforts to foil it, the Prince's plan works out perfectly in the end. Needing something to pass the time until the wedding day, Don Pedro decides to arrange a similar fate for Beatrice and Benedick. Of course, both parties being such "professed tyrant[s]" to the opposite sex, this match will take a little more ingenuity.

Leonato, Claudio and the Prince stage a loud conversation containing a fictitious account of how much Beatrice is in love with Benedick; all the while, they know Benedick to be hiding well within earshot. Hero and her [gentlewoman](#) Ursula play the same trick upon Beatrice. Each of them believes the story they hear about the other. In the midst of all of this good-natured scheming, Don John and his men have been casting about for ways to stop the intended marriage between the man who "hath all the glory of [Don John's] overthrow" and the woman for whom one may suspect he has cherished some tender feeling. The night before the wedding, his servant Borachio arranges to meet with Hero's gentlewoman Margaret at Hero's chamber window. John shows his half-brother and Claudio the rendezvous and makes them believe that they are seeing Hero in the act of infidelity.

Against the revelry of the evening, the constable [Dogberry](#) appoints a watch to keep the peace. The three hapless watchmen happen to hear Borachio bragging to his colleague Conrade about how he and Don John had finally succeeded in wrecking the wedding plans. They make the arrest and send Dogberry in the morning to fetch Leonato for the examination, but the old gentleman is in too much of a hurry to try to decipher what the constable would say to him. Amidst the confusion, the villain has managed to escape to parts unknown before he can get his comeuppance.

At the wedding, Claudio publicly disgraces his would-be bride and storms away along with all of the guests except for Ursula, the Friar, Leonato, Beatrice, her father Antonio, and Benedick. They all agree to the Friar's plan to publish the tale that Hero, upon the grief of Claudio's accusations, suddenly died. Beatrice and Benedick linger a moment, and wind up confessing their love to one another. In the wake of this declaration, Beatrice asks Benedick to do the one thing that will satisfy her outrage with what has just happened; she asks him to kill Claudio. He agrees, but it is with a heavy heart. Just after the challenge is issued, the story of Don John's deception comes to light, and the Prince and Claudio are sorely grieved for their grave mistake. Leonato forgives Claudio on the condition that he marry Hero's cousin on the next morning. When the bride is brought forth, she is revealed to be none other than Hero herself! They then profess their true and undying love for each other, as do Beatrice and Benedick when faced with written evidence (acquired and produced by Hero and Claudio) found in the pockets of each, Benedick's in the form of an endearingly poorly-written song. All are reconciled and Don John is discovered and promised punishment. The movie ends

with the whole of Leonato's household dancing in the courtyard, with the newlyweds at the center of them.

Main characters

Benedick ([Kenneth Branagh](#)) is a nobleman in the court of Don Pedro. He is very arrogant but shows himself to have a good character during the "wedding" scene, as he is the only man apart from the Friar who implicitly believes Hero. His pride does not allow him to admit that he loves Beatrice, but at the end of the film, Beatrice and Benedick agree to marry.

Don John ([Keanu Reeves](#)) is the evil half brother of Don Pedro. His dissatisfaction with his own lot in life leads him to his attempts to foil the happiness of his perceived enemies. There is also an unspoken suggestion that he did once or does still have some kind of romantic interest in Hero. He conspires with his men Borachio and Conrade to ruin Hero and Claudio's wedding by casting severe doubt upon Hero's honor. When his plot is found out, he attempts to escape but is captured and imprisoned.

Don Pedro of Aragon ([Denzel Washington](#)) is remarkable for being one of the few "marriageable" men in the piece who does not get married by the end of the play. He helps his two friends Claudio and Benedick to marry, but finds no lady for himself. He believes, with Claudio, in Hero's alleged infidelity, but is earnestly sorry when he learns the truth.

Beatrice ([Emma Thompson](#)) is Leonato's niece, and Hero's cousin and chambermate. She is a strong-willed woman whose strongest trait is her wit and cleverness. Beatrice believes from the beginning that her cousin Hero has never been unfaithful to Claudio. Unable to challenge Claudio herself, she impels Benedick to challenge him in order to prove his love for her. Despite all her prickly speech, in Benedick she finds a man who is worthy of her intellect and good humor and in the end agrees to marry him.

Governor Leonato ([Richard Briers](#)) is the father of Hero. He loves his daughter but upon hearing the false news that she was being unfaithful to Claudio, he wishes she had never been born if that would mean that he would be spared the pain of her disgrace. He is party to the plot of saying that Hero has died in order to reunite Claudio and Hero.

Dogberry ([Michael Keaton](#)) is the local constable. He is not half so clever as he thinks he is and specializes in hilarious [malapropisms](#). He and his men catch Borachio boasting about his involvement with separating Claudio and Hero and his men arrest Borachio and his conspiring friends. He ultimately saves the day by doing so.

Claudio ([Robert Sean Leonard](#)) is a close friend of Don Pedro, and in love with Hero. He is rather gullible and naive. He does not believe Hero when she protests her innocence and casts her off, but later realizes his mistake and apologizes to Hero vehemently.

Hero ([Kate Beckinsale](#)) is in love with Claudio and is the sweet and only daughter of Governor Leonato. She is falsely accused of being unfaithful to Claudio on the night before her wedding. At the end of the play, Don John's plot against her and Claudio is revealed and they are happily married as was planned in the beginning.

Antonio ([Brian Blessed](#)) is the brother of Leonato and Beatrice's father. He is very good natured, but is deeply aggrieved by the accusations leveled against his niece.

Margaret ([Imelda Staunton](#)) is a rather worldly maidservant who is tricked by Borachio, and mistaken for Hero by the Prince and Claudio.

Selected memorable quotes from *Much Ado About Nothing*
(with notes on difficult vocabulary)

Benedick: O, she misused me past the endurance of a block. She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the Prince's jester, and 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. So indeed all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follows her.

Don Pedro: 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 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?

Don Pedro: None but to desire your good company.

Benedick: O God, sir, here's a dish I love not. I cannot endure my lady Tongue.

Endurance = sopportazione; **Prince's jester** = buffone del principe/di corte; **to huddle** = ammassare; **to speak poniards** = lanciare frecce

Leonato: By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.

Antonio: In faith, she's too curst.

By my troth = in fede mia; **thou wilt never get thee a husband** = non ti troverai mai marito; **shrewd** = tagliente; **curst** = bisbetico

Benedick: That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: but that I will hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick, all women shall pardon me. I will live a bachelor.

Bugle = spada; **baldrick** = guaina della spada per indossarla

Benedick: Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor? No. The world must be peopled.

[first lines]

Beatrice: Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more. Men were deceivers ever. One foot in sea and one on shore, to one thing constant never. Then sigh not so but let them go and be you blithe and bonny, converting all your sounds of woe into hey nonny nonny.

To sigh = sospirare; **deceiver** = imbroglione; **shore** = spiaggia; **blithe** = allegro; **bonny** = bello; **woe** = pena, sventura

Benedick: They say the lady is fair, 'tis a truth, I can bear them witness; and virtuous, 'tis so, I cannot reprove it; and wise, but for loving me - by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no great argument of her folly; for I will be horribly in love with her.

To bear witness = testimoniare; **to reprove** = disapprovare

Leonato: For there was never yet philosopher that could endure the tooth-ache patiently.

Toot-ache = mal di denti

Dogberry: Were I as tedious as a king, I could find it in my heart to bestow it all on Your Worship.

Leonato: All thy tediousness on me?

Tedious = noioso; **to bestow** = (qui) donare

Benedick: [*Has been standing in front of the mirror, improving his looks, but stop when he notices the others' amusement*] Gallants! I am not as I have been!

Leonato: So say I. Me thinks you are sadder!

[*He and the other three start laughing again*]

Claudio: I hope he be in love!

Leonato, Antonio, and Pedro: Ooohhh!

Benedick: [*Turns indignantly to Leonato*] Good signor, walk aside with me. I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak to you which these hoppy horses must not hear!

[*Leaves with Leonato and Antonio, provoking more laughter from Claudio and Pedro*]

Don Pedro: Oh my life! To break with him about Beatrice!

Hoppy = sciancato

Read a review of *Much Ado About Nothing* at
http://www.reelviews.net/movies/m/much_ado.html

Sources

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Much_Ado_About_Nothing_%28film%29