

“The Gulling of Benedick” from *Much Ado About Nothing*

Two of Shakespeare’s funniest characters are Benedick and Beatrice, who have been having a “merry war” of words for a long time. Their friends think they would be perfect for each other! In this scene, Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato trick Benedick into falling in love with Beatrice. They stage a loud conversation about Beatrice’s love for Benedick, making sure that Benedick overhears them.

Where will you set this scene? Where will Benedick hide? How will he be convinced that Beatrice loves him?

Characters:

Don Pedro
Claudio
Leonato
Benedick

Act 2, scene 3 (cut)

DON PEDRO:

[Aside] See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO:

[Aside] O, very well, my lord.

DON PEDRO:

Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of today, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO:

[Aside] O, ay. Stalk on.

[Aloud] I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

LEONATO:

No, nor I neither; but most wonderful that she should so dote on Signior Benedick, whom she hath seemed ever to abhor.

BENEDICK:

Is it possible?

LEONATO:

She loves him with an enraged affection.

DON PEDRO:

Maybe she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO:

Faith, like enough.

LEONATO:

O God, counterfeit! There was never counterfeit of passion came so near the life of passion.

CLAUDIO:

Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

DON PEDRO:

I would have thought her spirit had been invincible against all assaults of affection.

LEONATO:

I would have sworn it had, my lord; especially against Benedick.

BENEDICK:

I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it.

CLAUDIO:

He hath taken the infection.
Hold it up.

DON PEDRO:

Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO:

No, and swears she never will.

CLAUDIO:

She falls, weeps,
sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses;
'O sweet Benedick! God give me patience!'

DON PEDRO:

She's an excellent sweet lady.

CLAUDIO:

And she is exceeding wise.

DON PEDRO:

In everything but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO:

My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready.

CLAUDIO:

If he do not
dote on her upon this, I will never trust my
expectation.

BENEDICK:

This can be no trick.
Here comes Beatrice. By this day! She's a fair lady. I do spy some
marks of love in her.