

William SHAKESPEARE

MUCH ADO
ABOUT NOTHING



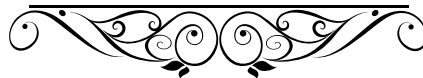
THE COMEDY
OF ERRORS

Kyiv
"ZNANNIA"

MUCH ADO
ABOUT NOTHING



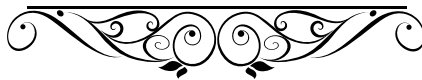
DRAMATIS PERSONAE



Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon.
Don John, his bastard Brother.
Claudio, a young Lord of Florence, } favourites of
Benedick, a young Gentleman of Padua, } Don Pedro.
Leonato, Governor of Messina.
Antonio, his Brother.
Balthazar, attendant on Don Pedro.
Borachio, } followers of Don John.
Conrade, }
Dogberry, } two foolish Officers.
Verges, }
Friar.
A Sexton.
A Boy.
Hero, daughter to Leonato.
Beatrice, niece to Leonato.
Margaret, } Gentlewomen attending on Hero.
Ursula, }
Messengers, Watch, Attendants, etc.

Scene, — Messina.

ACT 1



SCENE I

Grounds adjoining Leonato's House.

Enter Leonato, Hero, and Beatrice,
with a Messenger.

Leonato. I learn in this letter, that Don Pedro of Arragon comes this night to Messina.

Messenger. He is very near by this; he was not three leagues off when I left him.

Leonato. How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

Messenger. But few of any sort, and none of name.

Leonato. A victory is twice itself, when the achiever brings home full numbers. I find here, that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honour on a young Florentine, called Claudio.

Messenger. Much deserved on his part, and equally remembered by Don Pedro. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age; doing in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion: he hath, indeed, better bettered expectation, than you must expect of me to tell you how.

Leonato. He hath an uncle here in Messina will be very much glad of it.

Messenger. I have already delivered him letters, and there appears much joy in him; even so much, that joy could not show itself modest enough without a badge of bitterness.

Leonato. Did he break out into tears?

Messenger. In great measure.

Leonato. A kind overflow of kindness: there are no faces truer than those that are so washed. How much better is it to weep at joy, than to joy at weeping!

Beatrice. I pray you is signior Montanto returned from the wars or no?

Messenger. I know none of that name, lady: there was none such in the army of any sort.

Leonato. What is he that you ask for, niece?

Hero. My cousin means signior Benedick of Padua.

Messenger. O, he is returned; and as pleasant as ever he was.

Beatrice. He set up his bills here in Messina, and challenged Cupid at the flight; and my uncle's fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for Cupid, and challenged him at the birdbolt. — I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? For, indeed, I promised to eat all of his killing.

Leonato. Faith, niece, you tax signior Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

Messenger. He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

Beatrice. You had musty victual, and he hath help to eat it: he is a very valiant trencherman; he hath an excellent stomach.

Messenger. And a good soldier, too, lady.

Beatrice. And a good soldier to a lady; — but what is he to a lord?

Messenger. A lord to a lord, a man to a man; stuffed with all honourable virtues.

Beatrice. It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuffed man: but for the stuffing — Well, we are all mortal.

Leonato. You must not, sir, mistake my niece; there is a kind of merry war betwixt signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

Beatrice. Alas, he gets nothing by that! In our last conflict four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one: so that if he hath wit enough to keep himself warm, let him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse; for it is all the wealth that he hath left, to be known a reasonable creature. — Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

Messenger. Is't possible?

Beatrice. Very easily possible: he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block.

Messenger. I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

Beatrice. No; an' he were, I would burn my study.
But I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no young
squarer now, that will make a voyage with him to the
devil?

Messenger. He is most in the company of the
right noble Claudio.

Beatrice. O Lord! he will hang upon him like a
disease: he is sooner caught than the pestilence, and
the taker runs presently mad. God help the noble Clau-
dio! If he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a
thousand pound ere he be cured.

Messenger. I will hold friends with you, lady.

Beatrice. Do, good friend.

Leonato. You will ne'er run mad, niece.

Beatrice. No, not till a hot January.

Messenger. Don Pedro is approached.

Enter Don Pedro, Don John, Claudio, Benedick
and Balthazar.

D. Pedro. Good signior Leonato, you are come to
meet your trouble: the fashion of the world is to avoid
cost, and you encounter it.

Leonato. Never came trouble to my house in the
likeness of your grace; for trouble being gone, comfort
should remain; but when you depart from me, sorrow
abides, and happiness takes his leave.

D. Pedro. You embrace your charge too willingly.
— I think this is your daughter.

Leonato. Her mother hath many times told me so.

Benedick. Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

Leonato. Signior Benedick, no; for then were you a child.

Don Pedro. You have it full, Benedick: we may guess by this what you are, being a man. Truly, the lady fathers herself. — Be happy, lady; for you are like an honourable father.

Benedick. If signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

Beatrice. I wonder that you will still be talking, signior Benedick: nobody marks you.

Benedick. What, my dear lady Disdain! are you yet living?

Beatrice. Is it possible disdain should die, while she hath such meet food to feed it, as signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

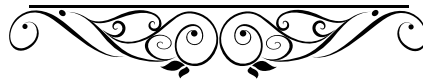
Benedick. Then is courtesy a turn-coat. — But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

Beatrice. A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow, than a man swear he loves me.

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS



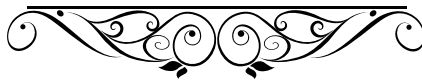
DRAMATIS PERSONAE



Solinus, Duke of Ephesus.
Aegeon, a Merchant of Syracuse.
Antipholus of Ephesus, } Twin Brothers, and sons
Antipholus of Syracuse, } to Aegeon and Aemilia.
Dromio of Ephesus, } Twin Brothers, attendants
Dromio of Syracuse, } on the two Antipholuses.
Balthazar, a Merchant.
Angelo, a Goldsmith.
Merchant, friend to Antipholus of Syracuse.
Pinch, a Schoolmaster and a Conjuror.
Aemilia, Wife to Aegeon, an Abbess at Ephesus.
Adriana, Wife to Antipholus of Ephesus.
Luciana, her Sister.
Luce, servant to Adriana.
A Courtezan.
Gaoler, Officers, and other Attendants.

Scene, — Ephesus.

ACT 1



SCENE I

A Hall in the Duke's Palace.

Enter Duke, Aegeon, Gaoler, Officers, and other
Attendants.

Aegeon

Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,
And by the doom of death end woes and all.

Duke

Merchant of Syracuse, plead no more.
I am not partial, to infringe our laws:
The enmity and discord which of late
Sprung from the rancorous outrage of your duke
To merchants, our well-dealing countrymen, —
Who, wanting gilders to redeem their lives,
Have seal'd his rigorous statutes with their bloods,
Excludes all pity from our threatening looks.
For, since the mortal and intestine jars
'Twixt thy seditious countrymen and us,
It hath in solemn synods been decreed,
Both by the Syracusians and ourselves,

To admit no traffic to our adverse towns:
Nay, more, if any, born at Ephesus,
Be seen at any Syracusian marts and fairs;
Again, if any Syracusian born
Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies,
His goods confiscate to the duke's dispose,
Unless a thousand marks be levied,
To quit the penalty and to ransom him.
Thy substance, valued at the highest rate,
Cannot amount unto a hundred marks;
Therefore, by law thou art condemn'd to die.

A e g e o n

Yet this my comfort, — when your words are done,
My woes end likewise with the evening sun.

D u k e

Well, Syracusian, say, in brief, the cause
Why thou departedst from thy native home,
And for what cause thou cam'st to Ephesus.

A e g e o n

A heavier task could not have been impos'd,
Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable:
Yet, that the world may witness that my end
Was wrought by nature, not by vile offence,
I'll utter what my sorrow gives me leave.
In Syracuse was I born; and wed
Unto a woman, happy but for me,
And by me too, had not our hap been bad.
With her I liv'd in joy; our wealth increas'd
By prosperous voyages I often made

To Epidamnum; till my factor's death,
And the great care of goods at random left,
Drew me from kind embracements of my spouse:
From home my absence was not six months old,
Before herself (almost at fainting under
The pleasing punishment that women bear)
Had made provision for her following me,
And soon and safe arrived where I was.
There had she not been long, but she became
A joyful mother of two goodly sons;
And, which was strange, the one so like the other,
As could not be distinguish'd but by names.
That very hour, and in the self-same inn,
A poor mean woman was delivered
Of such a burden, male twins, both alike:
Those, — for their parents were exceeding poor, —
I bought and brought up to attend my sons.
My wife, not meanly proud of two such boys,
Made daily motions for our home return;
Unwilling I agreed. Alas, too soon,
We came aboard;
A league from Epidamnum had we sail'd
Before the always wind-obeying deep
Gave any tragic instance of our harm:
But longer did we not retain much hope;
For what obscured light the heavens did grant,
Did but convey unto our fearful minds
A doubtful warrant of immediate death;
Which, though myself would gladly have embrac'd,

Yet the incessant weepings of my wife,
Weeping before for what she saw must come,
And piteous plainings of the pretty babes,
That mourn'd for fashion, ignorant what to fear,
Forc'd me to seek delays for them and me.
And this it was, — for other means was none.
The sailors sought for safety by our boat,
And left the ship, then sinking-ripe, to us:
My wife, more careful for the latter-born,
Had fasten'd him unto a small spare mast,
Such as sea-faring men provide for storms:
To him one of the other twins was bound,
Whilst I had been like heedful of the other.
The children thus dispos'd, my wife and I,
Fixing our eyes on whom our care was fix'd,
Fasten'd ourselves at either end the mast;
And floating straight, obedient to the stream,
Was carried towards Corinth as we thought.
At length, the sun, gazing upon the earth,
Dispers'd those vapours that offended us;
And, by the benefit of his wish'd light,
The seas wax'd calm, and we discovered
Two ships from far making amain to us;
Of Corinth that, of Epidaurus this:
But ere they came, — O, let me say no more!
Gather the sequel by that went before.

D u k e

Nay, forward, old man; do not break off so;
For we may pity, though not pardon thee.

Aegeon

O, had the gods done so, I had not now
Worthily term'd them merciless to us!
For, ere the ships could meet by twice five leagues,
We were encounter'd by a mighty rock;
Which being violently borne upon,
Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst;
So that, in this unjust divorce of us,
Fortune had left to both of us alike
What to delight in, what to sorrow for.
Her part, poor soul! seeming as burdened
With lesser weight, but not with lesser woe,
Was carried with more speed before the wind;
And in our sight they three were taken up
By fishermen of Corinth, as we thought.
At length, another ship had seiz'd on us;
And, knowing whom it was their hap to save,
Gave healthful welcome to their shipwreck'd guests;
And would have reft the fishers of their prey,
Had not their bark been very slow of sail,
And therefore homeward did they bend their course. —
Thus have you heard me sever'd from my bliss;
That by misfortunes was my life prolong'd,
To tell sad stories of my own mishaps.

Duke

And, for the sake of them thou sorrowest for,
Do me the favour to dilate at full
What hath befall'n of them, and thee, till now.