

Much Ado Act III, Scene 1

At auditions you will be asked to read at least one part of in one of the scenes included at this link. For scene context, consider consulting one of the dozens of scene-by-scene summaries online. One free source is <https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/muchado/>

*HERO*

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlor.  
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 that thou overheardst us,  
And bid her steal into the pleachèd bower  
Where honeysuckles ripened by the sun  
Forbid the sun to enter, like favorites,  
Made proud by princes, that advance their pride  
Against that power that bred it. There will she hide  
her  
To listen our propose. This is thy office.  
Bear thee well in it, and leave us alone.

MARGARET

I'll make her come, I warrant you, presently.  
*She exits.*

HERO

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.

*Enter Beatrice, who hides in the bower.*

URSULA

*aside to Hero*  
The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish

Cut with her golden oars the silver stream  
And greedily devour the treacherous bait.  
So angle we for Beatrice, who even now  
Is couchèd in the woodbine coverture.  
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

HERO

*aside to Ursula*

Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing  
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.—

*They walk near the bower.*

No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful.  
I know her spirits are as coy and wild  
As haggards of the rock.

URSULA

But are you sure  
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO

So says the Prince and my new-trothèd lord.

URSULA

And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?

HERO

They did entreat me to acquaint her of it,  
But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick,  
To wish him wrestle with affection  
And never to let Beatrice know of it.

URSULA

Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman  
Deserve as full as fortunate a bed  
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?

HERO

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,  
Misprizing 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-endear'd.

URSULA

Sure, I think so,  
And therefore certainly it were not good  
She knew his love, lest she'll make sport at it.

HERO

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,  
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,  
But she would spell him backward. If fair-faced,  
She would swear the gentleman should be her  
sister;  
If black, why, Nature, drawing of an antic,  
Made a foul blot; if tall, a lance ill-headed;  
If low, an agate very vilely cut;  
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;  
If silent, why, a block moved with none.  
So turns she every man the wrong side out,  
And never gives to truth and virtue that  
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

URSULA

Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO

No, not to be so odd and from all fashions  
As Beatrice is cannot be commendable.  
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 covered fire,  
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly.  
It were a better death than die with mocks,  
Which is as bad as die with tickling.

URSULA

Yet tell her of it. Hear what she will say.

HERO

No, rather I will go to Benedick  
And counsel him to fight against 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.

URSULA

O, do not do your cousin such a wrong!  
She cannot be so much without true judgment,  
Having so swift and excellent a wit  
As she is prized to have, as to refuse  
So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

HERO

He is the only man of Italy,  
Always excepted my dear Claudio.

URSULA

I pray you be not angry with me, madam,  
Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedick,  
For shape, for bearing, argument, and valor,  
Goes foremost in report through Italy.

HERO

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA

His excellence did earn it ere he had it.  
When are you married, madam?

HERO

Why, every day, tomorrow. Come, go in.  
I'll show thee some attires and have thy counsel  
Which is the best to furnish me tomorrow.  
*They move away from the bower.*

URSULA

*aside to Hero*

She's limed, I warrant you. We have caught her,  
madam.

HERO

*aside to Ursula*

If it prove so, then loving goes by haps;  
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.