

# **SHAKESPEARIENCE!**

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## **CHARACTER / ACT BREAKDOWN**

### **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**

#### **KEY CHARACTERS:**

*Don Pedro*, Prince of Arragon

*Benedick*, a young lord

*Beatrice*, niece of Leonato (therefore cousin to Hero)

*Claudio*, a young lord

*Hero*, daughter of Leonato

*Leonato*, Governor of Messina

*Don John*, bastard brother of Don Pedro

*Dogberry*, a silly constable

#### **ACT I:**

Don Pedro has just triumphed at war.

He decides to drop in on the local governor, Leonato.

With him come Benedick and Claudio.

Immediately they find Beatrice....verbal fireworks begin between she and Benedick. Evidently they have a bit of a past together! They fight with words the way soldiers fight with swords.

Claudio, on the other hand, has a softer side...he's in love with Hero.

Don Pedro, Claudio and Benedick are all staying at Leonato's home, while in town Leonato is throwing a party. Don Pedro offers to arrange the marriage between Claudio and Hero that night...to woo Hero on behalf of Claudio, a very cool thing for the Prince to do.

Don John is Pedro's nasty brother.

He's a bastard, so his only goal in life (as you'll see in other Shakespeare plays) is to cause trouble and make mischief.

#### **ACT II:**

Don John (the bastard) tries to ruin Leonato's party.

He tells Claudio that Don Pedro wants Hero for himself.

Claudio rushes to judgment...he condemns Don Pedro as a false friend.

In reality, Pedro has secured the agreement of both Hero and her father Leonato for her to marry Claudio.

Fortunately, they straighten matters out, and the wedding day is set for one week later.

Claudio is speechless with delight.

Beatrice is coming from a very different place than her cousin.  
She and Benedick continue to battle verbally.  
Don Pedro sees her wit and smarts and gently asks if she will marry...sort of asking her to marry him!  
She gently declines, saying that marriage is not for her.  
He understands and they are friends...but he does notice the tension between she and Benedick may actually be attraction.

Don Pedro gets an idea: he will play Cupid and make Beatrice and Benedick fall in love.

For this Herculean task, he enlists the aid of Leonato, Claudio, and Hero.  
The men have a rather loud discussion about how Beatrice is madly in love with Benedick...while Benedick is nearby and over-hears.  
He believes it, which seems to give him permission to admit his love for her.

### **ACT III:**

The women lay the same trap for Beatrice...a loud discussion about Benedick's love for her.

She too takes the bait and admits her unwavering love for him.

Don John also has plans...but of course, to a very different end.  
He leads Claudio and Don Pedro to a window where they see a man and woman together, amorously.

The man calls the woman "Hero", and Claudio and Don Pedro now believe that Hero is unfaithful.

Shakespeare balances things out by introducing the clown role, Dogberry.  
He is ridiculously funny.

He considers himself in charge of the night watchmen.

The night watchmen overhear Don John's henchmen talking:

One explains that he was the man in the window calling the woman "Hero", and so fooling Claudio and Don Pedro. For doing this, Don John paid him 1,000 ducats.

The watchmen arrest the henchmen.

Dogberry tells Leonato that he has arrested two villains and asks Leonato to question them.

Leonato is busy arranging the marriage of his daughter and asks Dogberry to conduct the examination himself.

### **ACT IV:**

The wedding ceremony begins...but Claudio refuses to marry Hero.

In the middle of the ceremony, he accuses her of infidelity.

Don Pedro backs him up. They storm out of the wedding.

Hero is baffled and broken.

Leonato is furious, first at Hero, but then Beatrice turns it around by explaining that she had been with Hero non-stop and that she was loyal to Claudio.

Beatrice is very upset.

They decide to pretend that Hero died from the shame of the accusation.

After everyone believes that she is dead, they seek to uncover the truth of what has happened.

Benedick is there for all of this.

He recognizes that Claudio and Don Pedro and honest men, so if they've been misled, most likely Don John is involved.

After Leonato leads away his daughter, only Benedick and Beatrice remain.

They reveal their hearts to each other, professing their mutual love.

Then Benedick asks how he can help her with her pain over the slander of Hero.

She tells him to kill Claudio. He finally agrees.

Dogberry interrogates the prisoners.

Leonato is contacted, given their guilt and crime.

#### **ACT V:**

Leonato finally gets to hear the report and goes to confront Don John's henchmen.

In front of Claudio and Don Pedro, he reveals the full story of how Don John paid him handsomely to carry out their plan.

Claudio is devastated and heart broken.

Leonato offers a substitute: his daughter is "dead", but Claudio could marry one of his nieces instead. But first, Claudio must publicly apologize.

The next day, Claudio arrives as scheduled only to find that Hero is alive after all and luckily, Benedick does not have to take action against his friend.

Benedick publicly professes his love for Beatrice and they decide to be married.

Claudio and Hero will be married, at last, as well.

News arrives that Don John has been captured and all the villains have been arrested.

Happy ending. Hooray.