

AFTER ALL, a musical much ado

By

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When a wealthy young American woman named Hero invites a circle of friends to her seaside Italian villa for an extended holiday, a musical much ado ensues. At the center of this escapade are Beatrice & Benedick, two people who are in love with each other but don't know it yet.

SYNOPSIS

AFTER ALL opens with three women on the terrace of a villa in Messina one recent summer afternoon: Beatrice, a writer who has been a guest at the villa for the past year; her young cousin Hero, the owner of the villa; and Margaret, Hero's personal assistant. Four invited friends are traveling to the villa in a jeep. Led by their Commander, Pedro, we meet the key members of a U. N. peacekeeping force: the irrepressible Benedick; his best friend and celebrated soldier, Claudio; and Pedro's disinherited half-brother, John. (THIS IS MY WORLD) After Hero welcomes her guests to the Shakespearean-themed holiday she has planned, Beatrice and Benedick encounter one another for the first time since they had a falling out. (I KNOW YOU TOO WELL) Seeing the beautiful Hero again, a love-struck Claudio seeks Pedro's advice. (BEFORE I WENT TO WAR) Pedro suggests a plan whereby he will propose to Hero on Claudio's behalf during that evening's masquerade. John, overhearing Pedro's plan for Claudio, becomes irritated and ruminates on his second-class status. (I LOVE MESSINA)

At the MASQUERADE, after the confusion caused by the trouble-making John is cleared up, the engagement of Hero and Claudio is announced and a wedding date is set. In a private moment, Beatrice tells Pedro why she intends never to marry. (A MERRY STAR) Benedick and Beatrice leave the party having had words yet again. Pedro sees through their defensiveness and organizes a plan to bring them together.

Stung by her fight with Benedick and stunned by her cousin's sudden engagement, Beatrice takes refuge at her computer and suddenly finds the inspiration to begin writing her novel, *After All, a life in progress*. (COMPUTER MUSIC) As she begins to write, she imagines John brooding over Claudio's good fortune and Pedro's match-making success. So, the jealous John hatches a plan to undermine their happiness. (REPRISE: I LOVE MESSINA)

Several days later Beatrice is in the garden taking a break from her writing and Benedick is in the orchard trying to relax and read a book. Benedick is annoyed at Claudio's betrayal of their "bachelors forever" pact and swears, even if he's the last bachelor on earth, he will never succumb. (I FEEL FINE) Just then, the match-making conspirators enter the orchard and the garden respectively to carry out Pedro's plan for letting Benedick and Beatrice know of their love for one another. Taken aback by what they overhear, the now humbled lovers reveal their true feelings in simultaneous soliloquies. (NOT AS I WAS/ALL OUT OF TUNE)

The day before the intended wedding, Claudio and Pedro are out on the terrace erecting a canopy for the reception, when the now love-struck Benedick approaches complaining of a toothache. (THE LONGEST WEEK) Benedick, teased and tormented, leaves in pain.

John shows up at the villa and, after much hemming and hawing, advises Claudio that Hero has been seen with another man. He arranges for Pedro and Claudio to witness proof of his accusation. That evening, outside the villa, Pedro and Claudio mistakenly believe they see Hero making love with an unknown man. (TANGO) What they actually see is Margaret with her secret lover, Borachio. After Claudio and Pedro have seen all that they can bear, they leave. Moments later, Margaret and Borachio are startled by Hero getting up to close the chamber-window. As the lovers hurry to escape, Borachio inadvertently leaves behind a money pouch containing the \$10,000 fee John paid to him for carrying out this scheme.

As the novel continues, Beatrice rises on the day of Hero's wedding and starts to pack her things and also help Hero get dressed. Hero, catching sight of Beatrice's suitcase, asks her cousin

what she plans to do. Beatrice answers. (I HAVEN'T DECIDED YET)

At the wedding ceremony, Claudio is strangely circumspect and Benedick and the others begin to feel uneasy. (LOOKS NOT LIKE A WEDDING) Finally, Claudio denounces Hero, calling her a faithless liar. The humiliated and confused Hero retreats into her own thoughts, as she is unrelentingly questioned. (MY WEDDING DAY) At last Hero faints and the wedding party sum up the horror of the situation as the curtain falls. (FINALE ACT ONE)

Act Two opens with the tableau that ended Act One. (REPRISE: LOOKS NOT LIKE A WEDDING) Hero is revived and the Friar, recalling that Claudio, Pedro, and John have left her for dead, sets forth a plan to hide her away and say that she is dead. Left alone in the chapel, Benedick tries to console the heart-broken Beatrice. (MORE THAN) The inconsolable Beatrice rages. (IF I WERE A MAN) Benedick asks what he can do and Beatrice responds, "Kill Claudio."

Later that night Margaret, who has returned to find out about Hero's humiliation and her own unwitting complicity, mends Hero's torn wedding veil and weighs her responsibility. (MUSTN'T DROP A STITCH)

The next day Benedick finds Claudio and Pedro on the steps of a pensione. They have just found out about Hero's "death". Benedick proceeds to challenge Claudio to a duel and to resign his position in Pedro's service. Left speechless by this turn of events, Pedro and Claudio are about to head out of town when Margaret stops them and pours out her confession about how she was tricked into playing a role in John's vicious scheme. The chastened Claudio vows to make a public apology at Hero's memorial service that night. Pedro's thoughts turn to his troubled half-brother John who Margaret says has fled. At the same moment, John is on his way back to Messina in search of the lost money. (IT IS MINE)

Back at the villa, Benedick is practicing his swordsmanship in anticipation of the confrontation with his best friend Claudio. He has little heart for this and instead decides to write a poem to Beatrice. This expression of love leads him to reflect on the sad turn of events. (HAPPY) Beatrice discovers the melancholy Benedick and tries to cheer him up, but is interrupted when Pedro arrives bringing news of Hero's innocence and John's treachery. Benedick leaves to go to the distraught Claudio and Pedro apologizes to Beatrice.

Left alone on the terrace, Beatrice examines the price of her independence and calls for Hero and Margaret to help her set in motion a plan whereby the women will take matters into their own hands and make things right again. (IMPRESARIO)

In the hours just before dawn, Claudio prays at Hero's monument. (EV'RY GOOD WISH) The grieving Claudio is instructed by the "angel" Hero to go to her house later that morning. He then agrees to marry, sight unseen, the woman who will be waiting there for him.

Meantime, outside Hero's villa, John (hotly pursued by Margaret) is frantically searching the bushes for the lost money. Just as he finds it and turns to run away, he is confronted by the armed Margaret. (YOU AND I)

While Beatrice races to finish her novel, life intrudes to call her back to the actual wedding that is about to take place between Hero and Claudio, and one final round with Benedick. (AFTER ALL) Curtain.