



## Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare

### About Beatrice

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Beatrice is Leonato's niece, Hero's cousin, and the sworn enemy/true love of Benedick. While she's supposed to be billed a best supporting actress, it's usually agreed that she tends to steal the show. Her wit and her candor, combined with her vulnerability, arguably make her the play's most fleshed out (and endearing) character.

Beatrice's relentless and brilliant wit could easily typecast her in the role of a jester in the play, but her barbs are laced with insightful commentary and often inspired by penetrating understanding. She sees the absurdity of the world and instead of being melancholy; she chooses to laugh at it, which is a sure sign of wisdom. She would be a fool, except that when things get really grave (during Hero's first wedding day) and demand seriousness, she's the first to deliver the passion that the events of Hero's slander demand. Beatrice's transformation from jester to righteously angry woman isn't shocking; we know she feels deeply, is smart, and able enough to transfer her feelings into their appropriate outlets, whether good humor or anger.

Arguably, Beatrice ultimately falls short of Shakespeare's greatest comedic heroine, Rosalind of [As You Like It](#). Like Rosalind, Beatrice is self-aware enough to realize she's fallen victim to love. But unlike Rosalind, she can't bring herself to use her wit to mock her own situation. Rather than be a character flaw, this "failing" only endears Beatrice to us a little bit more. Through snippets of her conversation (like when she tells Don Pedro her mother cried when giving birth to her) we realize that Beatrice is actually a soulful character. She's been hurt before, and she's afraid to be vulnerable; if she were to be made vulnerable, she wouldn't quite know how to deal with it. Beatrice's pride, though she's consciously fighting it, gets in the way of admitting her folly in love, and she uses her wit as a defense.

As the play and her character develop, we realize what we might be considering pride is really Beatrice's fear of being vulnerable to love. She's been burned before, so unlike Rosalind of [As You Like It](#), Beatrice isn't willing to give herself over entirely to love. While Rosalind essentially loses her friendship to Celia while she's enamored with Orlando, Beatrice sticks to her guns and puts loyalty to her cousin above all else. She's even willing to walk away from Benedick when he won't commit to righting Hero's reputation. Beatrice's test of Benedick's love is how seriously he takes her loyalty to Hero. Ultimately, Benedick comes through (or at least tries to) but Beatrice is still a bit guarded. When asked to publicly declare her love, she's hesitant, and uses her wit to almost walk away from Benedick in the end. Only when her love is revealed through a stolen love letter she wrote is she willing to admit her affection for Benedick. After her love is declared, she teases Benedick, so we can be sure that Beatrice's partner is as worthy of her as anyone, and the couple will have a loving relationship that will stay interesting over time.

Beatrice, more than any character in this play displays the realistic characteristics of a

brilliant woman in love. She's afraid to be vulnerable, she's scornful of being a wimpy, lovesick fool, and all of these characteristics combine make her hesitant to dive into a romance headfirst. In this way, unlike Hero, who gives over her love like an obedient girl, Beatrice is a wise and warm woman. She is defended by her wit only up to a point, but when the time comes for love, she's self-aware and realistic enough to realize that she just has to take the risk and hope for the best.