



## Speak Easy, Speak Love

*McKelle George*

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## **Speak Easy, Speak Love** McKelle George

Six teenagers' lives intertwine during one thrilling summer full of romantic misunderstandings and dangerous deals in this sparkling retelling of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

After she gets kicked out of boarding school, seventeen-year-old Beatrice goes to her uncle's estate on Long Island. But Hey Nonny Nonny is more than just a rundown old mansion. Beatrice's cousin, Hero, runs a struggling speakeasy out of the basement—one that might not survive the summer. Along with Prince, a poor young man determined to prove his worth; his brother John, a dark and dangerous agent of the local mob; Benedick, a handsome trust-fund kid trying to become a writer; and Maggie, a beautiful and talented singer; Beatrice and Hero throw all their efforts into planning a massive party to save the speakeasy. Despite all their worries, the summer is beautiful, love is in the air, and Beatrice and Benedick are caught up in a romantic battle of wits that their friends might be quietly orchestrating in the background.

Hilariously clever and utterly charming, McKelle George's debut novel is full of intrigue and 1920s charm. For fans of Jenny Han, Stephanie Perkins, and Anna Godbersen.

## **Speak Easy, Speak Love Details**

Date : Published September 19th 2017 by Greenwillow Books

ISBN :

Author : McKelle George

Format : Kindle Edition 368 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Retellings, Romance

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# From Reader Review Speak Easy, Speak Love for online ebook

## Myrna says

Quit a retell with a mix of prohibition, speakeasies, mobsters, class, race, and breaking gender roles. The author did her research quite clearly and gave the novel an authentic feel regarding the events and times. On one hand, I liked reading about the characters' (especially Benedick and Beatrice) love, friendship, dreams, connections, and the discovery of each other's strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, this one had too many chapters on prohibition for my taste but the book overall was an escape which a good book provides. A must read for fans of the 1920s and Shakespeare buffs.

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## Stacee says

I love MAAN and I legitimately didn't need to read anything else to read.

I loved this Beatrice and Benedick. Of course the rest of the cast of characters is fun, but I was obsessed with the banter between Bea and Ben. She's so smart and he's so stubborn and it was absolutely glorious.

Plot wise, it was a slow and perhaps dense in a few sections. There are a few working threads of story that make it feel well rounded, but it's also a lot to keep track of.

Overall, it was a fun read with a creative setting and characters I couldn't get enough of. I could have done with a million more pages of banter and it wouldn't have been enough, but the ending was perfection.

**\*\*Huge thanks to Greenwillow Books for providing the arc free of charge\*\***

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## Jaime Arkin says

4.5 stars

I first fell in love with the cover of this book and then I fell in love with the words that make up this amazingly told retelling of Much Ado About Nothing. Speak Easy, Speak Love is set during the 1920's in New York... a time of prohibition and secret clubs called Speakeasy's, mobsters and bootlegging, and all make for an entertaining and captivating read that I couldn't put down.

The story itself revolves around six teens whose lives tangle one fateful summer. Told from three points of views (Beatrice, Benedick, and Maggie) I found myself so invested in their fates and the amazing, layered, stories that made up each of their arrivals and time at Hey Nonny Nonny that even when I turned the last page, I wanted more.

George's writing was just lovely... I loved how she captured the feel of the time period and I couldn't get enough of delving into the 1920's. She took me back to the jazz age with her gorgeous writing and I found myself slowing down just to immerse myself in her words and sentences... going back to read them again and again and highlighting so much that just struck me.

*"Maggie got a bit closer until she was able to just see into the room. Prince stood at his window in slacks and an undershirt, the smoke of the cigarette between his fingers drifting out through the open crack."*

I cheered for each character in this book... from Prince, to Maggie, to John, to Hero... I loved them all, but I was especially enamored with Benedick and Beatrice. The banter was so fun and witty and seeing these two people from two different worlds find a common thread among the people they cared for was lovely.

*"Miss Clark," he said, "have we just made the hard turn from enemies into friends?"*  
*"I'd like that," she said. "If you don't mind being wrong and inferior most of the time because that's not something I can help."*

I just couldn't get enough of Beatrice and her solid acceptance of who she is... no trying to change just to gain the acceptance of those around her. When she & Benedick butted heads I loved the quick witted banter... when they supported each other, I loved the quiet way they connected. The end of the story was absolute perfection for me.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention John and Maggie. I loved them and I cheered for them and the situation they are in. Their relationship was heartbreaking at times, but ultimately uplifting and so beautiful.

I also have to mention the research that George did on this book – It's apparent in every description, and detail and once you read the Author's Note at the end of the book I think you'll be blown away to see how she tailored this story. I definitely was and I am so excited to put a copy on my bookshelf. I'm also very excited to see what she writes next.

If you're looking for something that perfectly captures the spirit of Much Ado About Nothing, with amazing crafted characters, and a unique setting and plot then I highly recommend Speak Easy, Speak Love.

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## **Mackenzi says**

Speak Easy Speak Love is a book nerd's dream. With the vivid hedonism of the 1920s, a cast of exquisitely drawn characters (with snappy chemistry and sexual tension that makes you want to smash their faces together), and wit to rival Will himself, a loving, fresh, and unputdownable homage to the original romantic comedy.

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## **may 🌸 says**

Besides the fact that enemies to lovers trope is totally the greatest trope to exist (there is scientific proof to back this up) this book is just SO FANTASTIC YOU NEED TO READ IT RIGHT NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING

### ***The Characters***

- now, you should be aware that this book is very character driven and so the majority of the story surrounds my babies and their preciousness
- and now imma go into detail

- **benedict:** my writer son whos willing to throw his silver spoon for his dreams, also hes sassy and snarky and is the loveable idiot that everyone wants to succeed in life
- **beatrice:** an actual queen among us peasants. She comes from this rough background as an orphan but shes fought her way to studying to become a doctor (and the book takes place in the 1920s :) so much sass from this one too
- **prince:** a boi who is a Mess™ but we still love and support and give lots of hugs bc hes trying his best (even tho, he gets shot at from time to time)
- **hero:** an actual diva queen this girl will literally flirt her way to the top like just move out of her way and give her what she wants bc shes getting it anyways ? ? ? ~~shes everything I wanna be when I grow up~~
- **maggie:** the only saint in this disastrous family this girl needs love and support and some hot chocolate for putting up with this mess
- **john:** another walking disaster but give him credit hes trying his best
- **claud:** a basic rich boi, honestly he can take a seat

So basically it follows their lives and they're all simultaneously falling for each other but everyones stubborn and would rather die than admit their feelings so lots of drama and lots of messes but Beatrice and benedict's romance arc is actually hilarious (and my fav) bc they lowkey hate each other and theyre not subtle about it

Benedict the entire book basically, *"Look here, he told himself, we've decided as a unified body not to be in love with her, so stop it."*

And not only is the romance hilarious and entertaining and angsty but the friendships and family is just so beautiful

Hero and Beatrice are cousins but theyre so caring and sweet to each other but they fight like sisters and at this point theyre practically twins I just, I stan so much ??

*"Are you tired of me?" Beatrice asked.*

*"Maybe I am just at this moment, but aren't you a little tired of me, too?"*

*"I lost my temper."*

*"So? Everybody does some time or other. Sometimes I'll be sick to death of you and wish you'd jump out a window, but the way this works is that even when that happens, even if I actually tell you to jump out the window, you don't have to. You can stay. I'll expect you to stay even after I tell you to go away."*

*That was the single most baffling and perfect thing Beatrice had ever heard. "That's nuts." Hero laughed. She tucked her arm into Beatrice's. "In normal protocol, I would take up not speaking to you for at least a day, except for an underhanded gibe at your hair over breakfast, but in this one particular case we'll skip that step and go straight back to loving each other."*

And whats the most amazing is that it's a retelling of Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing and I actually enjoyed it :')

The only points where I feel this story lacks is the plot, its very very very character driven and so while we're focusing on the characters, the snippets of the plot that get featured are kinda masked and I kinda didn't even pay attention to them until I pretty much *had to* (and that was only for a short bit)

In conclusion,,,,,this book was SO MUCH FUN

*Buddy read* with the sweetest, marygrace?

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## Elise (TheBookishActress) says

**Actual Rating: 3.5 Stars.** This is an incredibly creative and interesting concept for a novel - a 1920s *Much Ado About Nothing* retelling set in prohibition era? count me in. And I enjoyed this *fine* upon first reading, but I don't know... I think as time as has gone on, I've realized I found some of this sort of boring.

This is definitely a character-driven novel; in fact, it follows *seven* lead young characters, not even including the adults - the flirty and worldly Hero, my aspiring-doctor icon Beatrice, aspiring writer and asshole Benedick, professional annoying rich kid Claude, dorky and sweet Prince, less-villainous-than-usual John, and my favorite singer, Maggie.

All that being said, aside from Maggie, Ben, and Bea, I found myself slightly disappointed on the character aspect. I *liked* Hero, but I definitely thought she could've gotten a more clear character arc; here, I feels a bit muddled at points, even getting into some implied slut-shaming that is only somewhat condemned.

There's one thing here I'm entirely confident in loving: the retelling aspect. **This is one of the most fantastic retellings I have ever read** - keeping all the good aspects of the original, and fixing the things that suck. Anyone who's read *Much Ado About Nothing* probably has a couple of complaints. First of all, why do Claudio and Hero end up together, and second of all, what the fuck is up with John? **This novel solves them both.** I also appreciated the expansion on characters who don't feature in the original much - using Maggie and Prince was an inspired decision. Maggie's struggle as a 1920s black jazz singer especially was so well-written that it quickly became my favorite arc of the book.

Unfortunately, it's not all good. The main issue here? **Boredom.** This comes from the fact that **sideplots weren't established very well towards the beginning**, leading to lack of tension and confusion in the latter half. And to be quite honest, the whole book felt sort of pat - I never truly worried whether it would hold up in the end. That could, perhaps, work if the book were just a bit funnier. But aside from a few humorous sections, I really didn't think this was all that funny.

All that being said, though, the setting was lovely, the characters were good, the romantic relationships were sweet, the dialogue was funny, and the retelling aspect is *perfectly* done - you'll definitely love this if you're a fan of Shakespeare's original play. **It was a charming read and I'm glad I gave it a try.**

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## mith says

you can read this & other reviews on my blog!

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THIS BOOK. Oh my gosh, this was just so charming. I was already drawn to it because have you seen that cover?! I want a poster of it on my wall. I want to look at it FOREVER because it is just so pretty, bless the

artist. Everything about it--the author's name in that font, the typography, THE HAIR THINGS, the shadowy wisps, the 1920's feel--IS PURE PERFECTION.

Now, about the book itself! It is beautiful. Full of finding yourself, romance, SO MUCH BANTER, and faaaaaamily. I loved it. Honestly, it was just such a book.

I will admit, the plot is a bit slow, but that's because there's a few other arcs in the book. There are several POVs--primarily Beatrice and Benedick, with some Maggie--and they each have their own issues they need to battle through. I thought George seamlessly did this and it totally added to the book. It made each character, not just the three who got their own chapters, come alive.

Speaking of, the characters definitely made this book! I adored each and every one of them! Hero, the flirt, and, personally, an Inspiration (tm), was beautiful and dedicated and just plain amazing. I loved her style, her ability to put herself out there, just everything. Then there was Beatrice, my fierce, feminist darling! She was never afraid to voice her opinions and to stand up for herself. She said whatever she wanted, consequences be damned. Benedick was a smart, sassy writer and I liked how George wrote him! He was so sweet, funny at times, and adorably awkward with his feelings! Prince and John weren't were a pair of brothers that were so different, it's surprising they were related at all! I wished we'd seen more of John, but they were both complicated and admirable in their own way. And finally, Maggie, my loooooove. Her POV was probably my favourite. There's just so much about her I love, I could go on for ages.

Okay, okay wrapping up here, but before I go: ALL THE SHIPS. THEY ARE SO GOOD. ALL OF THEM. Oh my GOSH, they were so cute, so perfect, SO WELL DEVELOPED. I loved them. All of them. Particularly Bea and Ben, because you see most of them, BUT YEAH. They're all!! So!! Good!!

And to end this not-so-mini-review (lmao sorry), READ THIS BOOK. It is so charming, so funny, and so, so good!

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this is my new favourite cover i am in love

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## **MaryGrace says**

I wish more people would read this book. It was so FUN

Speak Easy, Speak Love is a retelling of Much Ado About Nothing set in prohibition era Long Island. That's the only thing I needed to know and I was sold.

The plot may be a little lacking but the characters were spectacular. We've got a rich boy who doesn't want to be useless and is trying to find his purpose (sound familiar?) A feminist girl who's brilliant and wants to go to medical school, her spunky energetic flapper cousin who just wants to be loved. A black female jazz singer trying to make it in a world set against her. Two boys from an Italian crime family. And all the characters who love and care for each other so much and are trying to the best of their ability to keep themselves together and to save a speakeasy that's become a home to all of them.

Through the summer spent in a house on Long Island DRAMA ensues. This book is funny, it's fun, it's romantic. There's witty banter everywhere which is the surest way to bring about my death. There's angst. There's hate to love. It's a great time. It's certainly better than the last adaptation I've seen of this play aka a

movie featuring the same 5 British actors featured in every Shakespeare retelling ever ( The people who play Gilderoy Lockhart, Professor Trelawney, Professor Umbridge, and Carson from Downton Abbey)

My favorite part of this was the setting of Long Island, which is just so close to where I live that it was just a total joy to read about. Tons of books take place in New York, but always the city and how glamorous it is. So for once this was really refreshing. It's so nice to see a place like Roosevelt Field, where Charles Lindberg took off from for his trans-Atlantic flight, as an actual air field, and not the shopping mall that's there currently.

There was also a subtle touch on topics such as racism and feminism in the 1920s, and society's expectations on young people.

Anyway, if you're in the mood for something lighthearted and easy to fly through, but you aren't a big contemporary reader, then I'd highly recommend Speak Easy, Speak Love. Also Mackenzi Lee blurbed it so there's that.

Buddy Read with Canada's only soccer fan

This is supposed to be a retelling of Much Ado About Nothing, which I don't remember at all except for I read it in high school and I played Beatrice and had a large crush on the boy who played Benedick, conveniently. fun times

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## **Shreya (?High Lady of The Night Court?) says**

***"I love you."***

***She closed her eyes and tucked his fingers close, right where they belonged. "Against your will."***

***"With so much of my heart, none of it is left to protest."***

It shouldn't be possible to love characters this much. This book was mind blowing and reading it was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life. The book is set in the 1920's following a group of people who each somehow ended up at Hey Nonny Nonny. These characters have spent their lives fighting to survive, now more than ever, and they're not going to give up. Every single one of them is fierce and would do anything for the ones they love.

Hey Nonny Nonny is a speakeasy run by Hero Stahr after her mother's death. Prince brings the alcohol, and is probably the only boy immune to Hero's charms. Benedick comes from a wealthy family who want him to go to college and get a high paying job when all he wants is to become a writer. Beatrice wants to become a doctor, but her stepfather stopped paying for her schooling and she goes to her cousin Hero for refuge till she figures out how to get into college. Maggie is the speakeasy's singer with a voice that can charm just about anybody, but now the speakeasy is struggling and she must pursue her dream of singing at bigger jazz clubs.

Beatrice is naturally smarter than 95% of the population and will never beat around the bush. She will speak her mind honestly and will not think twice about emotions. She has a very scientific view of life and watching her and Benedick argue constantly and get nowhere is one of the most amusing things I've read because it's so pointless.



Each of these people have the most amazing personalities and it made the story so much better. We watch these kids defy all social etiquette, expectations, and stereotypes and exhibit amazing skills. I love that the author didn't change their personalities drastically but rather focused on how their relationships evolved at the turning point in their lives. They each work extremely hard to achieve their goals and their relationship with Hey Nonny Nonny will never fail to make me smile. Their love for each other is touching and watching Beatrice find her place in this family is very charming.

The romantic relationships in this book are also written well, expected, but done very well. The characters complemented each other wonderfully and the pairs work out perfectly. I would have loved an epilogue further in the past showing us what the characters grow up to be but the ending that is provided is amazing.

I enjoyed this book immensely and look forward to reading more books by McKelle George. This story was fun and the characters were perfect, I give this book 5 stars.

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## Angie says

Originally reviewed here @ Angieville

I am having difficulty achieving some semblance of coherence when it comes to this beautiful book. My feelings for it are threatening to overwhelm me on every level this morning. I didn't sleep last night. And I mean that literally. I didn't sleep a wink. Twice, I tried to force myself to do the ~~right~~ smart thing and wait to finish on the morrow. But my head and my heart would have none of it. They were both buzzing far too loudly to even think of sleep. I bought McKelle George's debut novel *Speak Easy, Speak Love* on the day it released based on three things: it has *easily* my favorite cover of the year (I swoon, I *swoon* over this cover), it was edited by my Martha (say no more), and it is a Roaring Twenties adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* (as Ms. George herself puts it—Shakespeare's most romantic comedy). I really feel like I could just leave it there, and that those of you in possession of a *soul* would immediately run to the bookstore (as one does) and set about doing yourselves the massive favor of devouring this story. In case any of you are forcibly housebound or bedridden (been there), I shall expand.

Benedick Scott is one hundred percent over it. He's leaving his posh prep school and his autocratic father once and for all and is bound for the only place (and people) that have ever really felt like home. Hey Nonny Nonny—the Long Island speakeasy run by the jovial (if rarely sober) Leo Stahr and his glittering daughter Hero—is home to a number of other rascallions ever on the down and out. Chief among them are Benedick's best friend—the mercurial Prince—and Hey Nonny's star crooner—Maggie Hughes. What Benedick does not expect is to be followed into the night by his fellow trust fund kid Claude Blaine or to encounter one Miss Beatrice Clark—aspiring medical student and sometime boarding school reject. Beatrice, like Benedick, is in need of a home. Kicked out of boarding school just before graduation, she is determined nothing will stop her from getting into medical school and pursuing her dream of being a doctor. Beatrice has always been different from others, and she takes the unusual denizens of her Uncle Leo's home (and their various highly suspect and massively illegal activities) in absolute stride. And before any of the others realize it, Beatrice has made herself an indispensable member of the small group of outsiders desperately trying to keep the struggling speakeasy afloat.

Benedick Scott was on his way to freedom or profound failure or, if the usual order of things held up, both. Two chests, strapped closed and marked for delivery to an apartment in Manhattan, sat at the end of his bed. On his person he needed only his typewriter, slung over his shoulder in a battered case. He'd stuffed the case with socks to cushion any dinging, along

with his shaving kit, a worn copy of *Middlemarch*, and thirty-four pages of typed future.

I read these opening lines aloud to Aaron as I began the book, and his eyes widened slightly, his head tipped knowingly, as he quietly bid me farewell and Godspeed. He knows. He *knows* because it's as though that first paragraph was tailor fit for me. After a handful more pages, I gave up trying to muffle my exclamations of delight. *Speak Easy, Speak Love* had clearly announced itself as an experience and I gave myself over to it entirely. McKelle George's writing is exquisite. Every line feels at once effortless and meticulously crafted, to the point that I, who never go slowly, was slowing down and savoring each rich turn of phrase. By the 100-page mark, I was beside myself in love with these characters. They were so dashing, I was afraid to let them out of my sight.

I am, admittedly, an enormous fan of *Much Ado About Nothing*. But as I read, I kept thinking to myself—she took the bones, yes. But this achingly gorgeous slip of magic and mirth is all hers. And I knew it from the moment I met Prince—there in the darkness, leaning against the tree, cigarette dangling, eyes flashing, waiting for Benedick. Prince is the early warning signal that beyond this point there be dragons. Dragons and heart-stopping jazz, inexplicable longing and the sharpest of tongues. The trio of romances in this tale are absolutely not for the faint of heart. What I mean by that is, they are so ineffably real and so elegantly delineated that I choked back thick and sudden tears on more than one occasion. The thing is—I had heard reviewers describe this book as "light" and "romantic" and "fun" and "witty." And it is *all* of those things. But make no mistake—just like its source material, it is *so much more*. So much more that I don't think those four descriptors would even make it into the top fifty terms I would use to describe it. What I'm saying is, I was nowhere near prepared for how consummate the storytelling would be. "For fans of Stephanie Perkins and Jenny Han," the blurb read. Yes. Okay. Sure. But I feel compelled to say that the caliber of writing and the emotional weight in this volume put *me* in mind of Megan Whalen Turner and Robin McKinley, which is to say *wordsmiths* in possession of the deftest of touches and the most expansive of souls.

For example:

Benedick opened his door and stood up, keeping one elbow on the doorframe, the other on the Ford's roof, shedding his exhaustion like a winter coat. His eyes brightened, and his pale, clammy skin managed to defy medicine and glow. "Have I got a story for you!"

And it was a story—in that it was not quite the truth.

But it wasn't a lie either.

Listening to him, Beatrice experienced the afternoon all over again, but this time there was no real danger. There was a boy who'd had a terrific idea that went a little off the rails and a girl who was a good sport and just the kind of sidekick you'd like to have along. Beatrice heard herself laugh when Benedick described her shooting off a man's hat, but it hadn't seemed that funny when it actually happened.

There was a sunniness in his words that somehow even disguised his appearance, erasing the boy shaking with exhaustion, flattening all his mercurial layers into one outfit of razzle-dazzle. But the razzle-dazzle was also real. That was the most baffling part of all. He was this, too.

She let him do it, not only because she came out looking all right in his story, not a clock-throwing ruin of a girl, but also because Benedick's talking about her as if she were already one of them *made* her one of them.

Words.

What a tricky, tangled science.

I am physically restraining myself from sharing more passages just like this one. Because honestly? This passage is just one of a thousand that left me gasping on the floor with their acuity. McKelle George has fleshed out my favorite relationships and forged new connections I couldn't have seen, but that felt right and real the moment they landed. Which brings me to John and to Maggie, who I find I can't even talk about just yet—so fresh and lasting are my emotions regarding them. Just know that I am not overstating things when I say that their respective arcs are arguably the most compelling and ethereal of all in this novel bursting at the seams with compelling and ethereal character arcs. Likewise, know that you ought to discover them for yourselves. Go find them. Find them all, and come back and tell me. And maybe by then I'll have summoned a bit more in the way of coherence. Until then, adieu.

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## Aleksandra says

### I loved it!!!

I was hoping I would love the book, but I didn't expect *Speak Easy, Speak Love* to be this **hilarious, charming and all round entertaining read!**

The story takes place in 1920s New York during the Prohibition era. The events occur in the speakeasy Hey Nonny Nonny in Long Island. There are **three pov characters**.

**Beatrice** is aspiring doctor and high school drop out because her step father couldn't afford to pay for her education. She moves to live with her Uncle Leo and his daughter Hero, owners of the a bovementioned speakeasy. Beatrice is smart, outspoken and kind. I love her sense of humor and I love her. She's amazing protagonist.

**Benedick** is aspiring writer from a well off family who drops out from school to write novels and he lives at Hey Nonny Nonny. He's tender-hearted and smart and his sense of humor matches Beatrice's. No wonder the romance happened. Ben is a god guy and it's been fun reading his pov. I want to mention that his father turned out to be a better man than I expected.

**Maggie** is blues singer, she's seventeen year old black girl. She lives in Hey Nonny Nonny too and performs in the speakeasy. She's ambitious, driven and talented. I loved reading about her path towards career and seeing her being the heart of the Hey Nonny Nonny.

The cast of characters consists of Beatrice, Ben, Maggie and Hero and Prince, an Italian young man who helps in the speakeasy. I loved reading about their dynamics and dialogues. They were so well-crafted.

**The romance is swoon worthy, tender and subtle.** There's three romantic plot lines and all of them are top notch exciting. **My only complain is I wish they were lgbtq+ characters & romances, but alas.**

The humor deserves a special mention. **The book is out of the world hilarious.** I can't remember the last time I laughed out loud on multiple scenes during the book. The dry sarcastic humor was right up my alley.

The author creates a very vivid atmosphere of the time, with its ups and downs. I honestly was surprised when I got notifications on my phone or somebody distracted me from reading. I felt like I was really in the book, reliving the events and hanging out with the six of them.

**Highest praise to McKelle George for writing this strong debut!** I will be on a lookout for more of her novels.

I highly recommend to read *Speak Easy, Speak Love*. If you've read and loved TGGTVAV or *The Diviners*, I'm sure you'll love this **wonderful standalone YA historical fiction retelling of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing***.

4.5 stars

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**★Rachelle★ says**

**5 stars**

*"I'm penniless, alas. If I win, I want a dance. If you win, I'll give you a kiss."*

*"I don't suppose it occurred to you I might not want your kiss."*

*"If you don't want it, you can give it back."*

This book is by and far one of my absolute FAVORITES of 2018 ?

Shakespeare can be hit or miss for me. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, annoying the living crap out of me. *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Twelfth Night*....these are my babies. Wit, humor, and massive confusion all resulting in a happily ever after is my dream book, and these plays deliver them all. So naturally when I find a YA retelling I'm all over it. And just like Shakespeare, some of these retellings are hit or miss. I'm pleased to say that *Speak Easy, Speak Love* is firmly in the hit camp for me. I mean, I even went to Barnes and Noble and bought a physical copy today, so there's that.

I'm not going to get into plot here, because I think it's fun to go in blind to this one. This book is set during the 1920's Prohibition era, and it has all the charm and fun that the 1920's brings. It follows *Much Ado About Nothing* pretty well, but it has it's own twists and turns that make it it's own story. The wit and snark in this book is at full speed, and I love all the interactions between all the characters. Even our villain gets his own little happily ever after =)

Off to watch the Joss Whedon version now. Oh, you haven't seen it? GO WATCH IT and then read this book =)

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**Tara ? says**

I'm finding it hard to fully fathom and express what it is I truly loved about this book so much. Aside from the fact that it's a SHAKESPEARE RETELLING set in the ROARING TWENTIES (this fact alone should make you want to read it) my love for this book can be summed up in these 2 words: THE CHARACTERS. So I'll just give you a walking tour of our six human disasters, because, boiz, this book is C H A R A C T E R D R I V E N:

**BEATRICE:** Aspiring doctor, the cleverest person you will ever meet, looks good in dungarees and is also rather handy with a rifle. Beatrice is the definition of an Actual Idol: She is smart and determined to go to medical school, with a tendency to run her mouth because she's usually the smartest person in the room and is Frustrated With These Idiots. Which sometimes gets her into trouble. (Spoiler: Not sometimes. Often. Very often.) I love Beatrice because in an era that emphasised heightened female sexuality, she's not afraid to be unfeminine. She knows she's not stereotypically pretty, or delicate or girlish, but she doesn't give a single damn about that, nor does she drag other girls down for being more feminine than her. Her cousin, Hero, is more stereotypically glamorous and good-looking, but did Beatrice ever once compare herself negatively to Hero? N O P E. In fact, she adores and admires her cousin, all while staying completely comfortable in her own self. No girl hate whatsoever. ANYWAY Beatrice is a sassy queen and I'd probably thank her if she shot me or sumthin.

**BENEDICK:** Lovely boy who wants to be a writer. Talks in clever, pretty sentences and loves his friends with his whole heart. His father sent him to boarding school but he ran away to help his bros run an illegal speakeasy and if that isn't goals then I don't know what is. Falls in Dislike at First Sight with Beatrice, thus ensues many witty arguments and pages of sexual tension. Honestly I just adore everything about this little disaster of a boy, especially because I could relate so hard to everything he said about writing, about his insecurities and wondering whether he was good enough to make it as a novelist or whether it was just a pipe dream. FOLLOW YOUR BEAUTIFUL DREAMS, BENEDICK.  
(Also catch me sniggering at the second half of his name because apparently I am 5 years old.)

**MAGGIE:** A black jazz singer and the love of my life. Maggie is probably the purest person in this entire novel, and all I want in life is for her to succeed and become the most celebrated jazz singer in the world because it's what she deserves. Also I LOVED how Maggie wasn't afraid to follow her aspirations in the Cotton Club because it meant leaving the speakeasy behind; like, YES GURL you are allowed to be a little selfish and I'm so happy none of the other characters got mad at her for wanting to leave and pursue her career. Also she has the voice of an actual angel (I mean, her singing voice made a tough mafia mobster fall in love with her so you know it must be sent from the Heavens Themselves.)

**HERO:** You know that quote from The Great Gatsby where Daisy wishes that her daughter will be 'a beautiful little fool'? Well, catch me wondering whether Hero Stahr is actually Daisy's daughter in disguise. This girl is basically the humanization of every 1920s flapper stereotype that exists. She's beautiful, she's a flirt, she loves dresses and dancing with boys and drinking champagne. She's also vulnerable, emotional, strong and determined to save her father's speakeasy. It was easy to see why multiple boys fell in love with her in this story - she's like a bright flame in a dark house where everything else has gone cold. You know those sorts of people you think you'll never be able to keep up with, who seem to be running on a hidden electric current? That's Hero. But just because she's beautiful and wild doesn't mean she's an airhead,.

**PRINCE:** My suffering son who is just trying his best ok. Lowkey a bit of a mess but also determined and the hardest working boy in the world. Prince is actually the loveliest disastrous cinnamon roll and he did NOT receive enough page time in this book. Spent a good chunk of the story getting shot at (that's just how he lives his life ok) while trying to single-handedly save a failing business all whilst being in (supposedly) unrequited love with the most Extra girl in the world,, like just give my boy a BREAK, he is going thru a lot

right now. Just an all around Pure Boy.

**JOHN:** Big tough guy (supposedly) who is connected to the Italian mafia and cares far more than he will let on. Basically John puts on this cold distant persona to hide the fact that he is a **SOCIALLY AWKWARD BEAN** who does NOT know how to handle his feelings. He is Prince's big bro and their relationship is, shall we say, complicated (read: understatement). He's basically the definition of a tsundere and I absolutely LIVED for the moments when he forgot to put on his cold exterior and his emotions were naked on his face (usually when a certain awesome girl was around). I really loved this characterization of John; he's a straight-up villain in the original Shakespeare play, but this book gave him so much humanization and showed how he's more complicated than he lets on.

There's also **CLAUDE**, a rich boi from Ben's boarding school, but there's not really much to say about him. He's basically the epitome of every coddled white boy - harmless but not really that interesting.

Basically I just adored these characters and I loved reading about them falling in love with each other and being Literal Human Messes. Plus the 1920s is my absolute favourite decade in history. Kind of sad that there weren't any LGBTQIA+ characters but we can't have everything we want.

4 stars because I suddenly find myself extremely reluctant to give any book I read 5 stars (I will find you again one day, elusive 5 star read).

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### **McKelle George says**

This book's wit is as blunt as the fencer's foil, which hits but hurts not.  
This book wears its faith but as the fashion of its hat; it ever changes with the next block.  
I would my horse had the speed of this book's tongue.  
But by this day! I do spy some marks of love in this book...

....okay I'll stop. (¬?¬)

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### **Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says**

This was as fantastic as you would dare hope for a retelling of *Much Ado About About Nothing* set in a Long Island 1920s Prohibition-stricken speakeasy. It was shippy and banter-y and so much fun.

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