

*LAURA WHITMORE is the charming, vapid, and stylish host of award-winning UK show Love Island. She is a non-intersectional feminist, a reader of self-help books, a drinker of Earl Grey, a regular disappointment to her parents despite her overwhelming television success, and the girlfriend of an Irish comedian. All of that is probably in her Instagram bio.*

*BEATRICE ARNOLD is a contestant on the show. She is the tangible expression of the phrase “sly as a fox”. She is sleek, cunning, radiant, observant, easily stunned, agile, and manipulative. She is so, so beautiful, but in an indisputably mischievous, impish way. She used to be a producer-and-audience favorite on the show, but overnight, she has become the most hated woman in the UK. We are about to find out why.*

*LAURA and BEATRICE are sitting down for an interview. Love Island: Season 7 has just come to a conclusion, and BEATRICE was the winner.*

*BEATRICE is staring down at her shoes and adjusting her tight skirt. This interview determines whether she will die a villain, or roll in the indeterminate wealth of brand deals for years to come. For some reason, she doesn't seem too nervous, especially considering the circumstances. LAURA stares at her, almost entranced, and wonders at her eerie sense of calm.*

*A light flashes. A cameraman counts. LAURA snaps to attention, coughs, and then smiles at the viewers at home.*

*BEATRICE turns toward the camera, smoothly and slow, like she is made of molasses. Her face contorts into a garish, bleach-white grimace lined in red. She smiles at the cameras.*

LAURA: Welcome back, everyone! I'm your host, Laura Whitmore, and we are back with a very special treat for all of our viewers at home. I'm here with Love Island: Season 7 contestant and winner, Beatrice Arnold. Beatrice, hello, and thank you for joining us tonight.

BEATRICE: Thank you so much for having me, Laura, I'm happy to be here.

LAURA: Yes. Well, I think everyone at home is wondering -

BEATRICE: - HA! Yes, I'm sure they -

LAURA: - You took a lot of people by surprise last night.

BEATRICE: Did I?

LAURA: Did you! Yes - well - I'm afraid you did, many people, including myself, actually.

I feel sure you took George by surprise, at the very least, to be sure, dear.

For all of you at home who aren't aware, there is a Love Island tradition in which the winning couple is made to decide, live, in front of millions of fans, whether they were really here for love or for money. By luck of the draw, one member of the couple will receive the prize money of 50,000 pounds. The other - zilch. Then, the winner will have to decide whether they will steal the entire prize, or share 50/50 with their new partner.

*BEATRICE squints her eyes and raises one eyebrow defiantly, but just for an instant, before returning to her counterfeit smug smile.*

LAURA: Last night, Beatrice, you made Love Island history by being the first half of a winning couple to EVER steal the entire sum. Is that correct?

BEATRICE:... To my knowledge, Laura dearie.

LAURA: Lands! And... I suppose all the viewers are wondering then... well...

BEATRICE/LAURA: Why?

LAURA: You said it!

BEATRICE: We said it.

Well. It's an apt question, innit? I suppose a lot of people want to share the love - share the wealth - whatever idiom applies here, eh? with their new partner.

LAURA: That's just it. So, -

BEATRICE: So why. I'm getting there. You say "steal" - a funny word, that - but I truly believe it's just taking one's winnings, innit? The whole game is a game of wits and manipulation - the game being love, not even Love Island - and this very last test is a game of chance. I won the game of love, I won the game of chance - and collecting my winnings, I think, doesn't count as stealing. Right, then?

*LAURA is stunned.*

LAURA: Well - yes, I suppose, if you think of it that way, but -

BEATRICE: So, glad we've cleared that up, then.

*LAURA and BEATRICE stare at each other, in shock and in victory respectively. LAURA turns to the camera operator for help, then turns back to interrogate BEATRICE.*

LAURA: I think, Bea - I think what everyone's so concerned with, then - it seems like you've taken George's affections just for the money, and kind of led him on, like. So I think to the audience, it's sort of like - you've cheated them, and you've cheated George. You've only won the game of chance because the game of love wasn't real. You were just in it for the money.

BEATRICE: Well, then the audience is half-right, I'll give them that. I WAS in it for the money, but I was in it for a lot of other reasons as well. And I don't think I've cheated poor Georgie, though I do feel a bit bad for him, like. If you were listening to what I was saying throughout the show, I don't think I was ever dishonest, which to me is the implication when you say "cheating him". And really, it's not my own fault if you lot have misinterpreted me.

LAURA: How so?

BEATRICE: How can I prove I wasn't cheating him, do you mean?

LAURA: More like, how, in your opinion, do you mean you weren't ever dishonest? What should we have been looking out for?

BEATRICE: Well for starters, in the intro, I said I were here for money. I know everybody took me as a joker because I seem so sweet-natured, and I laughed, but that doesn't mean I was kidding.

LAURA: I -

BEATRICE: And in all my chat-up and grafting with George, I never did say I love him? He told me, and I said, "Oh, Georgie," and all that lot and I gave him a peck, and I DO like him and think him sweet, but that doesn't mean I reciprocated. See, a lot of people

thought I was too overcome to respond, but the truth were, sorry then, laddie, I don't feel the same.

LAURA: Well, I -

BEATRICE: Your confusion is understandable. And I know the show's going to try to paint me out posthumously to be a villain, like, but you already gave me the money, and I know I may not get the brand deals and all that now, but...

To me it were more important to prove a point, like. I think it's near impossible to actually find love, real honest human love, on an 8-week show in a North African paradise. I fell in love with the ocean, and the wind, and made some friendships, but it's just - you'd be hard-pressed, I think, to find anybody to really love in just under two months.

LAURA:...

*BEATRICE seems finished.*

LAURA: So, why?

BEATRICE: Why what, then, love? We've just been over - I mean, I wish him no ill will, but I just wanted -

LAURA: Not "why did you steal from George" - and it IS stealing, because the audience voted for the two of you, not just you alone, dear - but - why did you come on the show in the first place, then? If you don't believe you can find love in this circumstance, then why would you put yourself into it? And if you can't find love in THIS situation, then where in God's name can you find it?

*BEATRICE purses her lips and thinks.*

BEATRICE: I dunno. Maybe that just wasn't the goal.

*LAURA glares at her. She believes in the power of love and truly believes it can come from any source, including a nightly reality tv show. She resents BEATRICE's cynical attack on it.*

LAURA: Beatrice...

I think I can speak for everyone - on the show, at home watching - it's a deception, and a cruel one, to have made me, your friends at home and on the show, George, and the whole UK think you're a lamb when you're a wolf. I think THAT's what people mean when you say you've cheated them. I think you're a fraud.

BEATRICE: I'm not a fraud.

*She drops her accent, revealing herself to be as American as apple pie.*

BEATRICE: You just don't know me as well as you think you do. It's okay, it happens to all of us, You think I've deceived you, but really, you're just a poor judge of character. And, "dearie," that's not exactly something you get to blame me for.

*BEATRICE grins at an open-mouthed LAURA.*

*BEATRICE throws her head back and laughs.*

BEATRICE: HA! That's even better than what I imagined.

LAURA: But - I -

*BEATRICE looks directly at the camera, right in the viewers' eyes.*

BEATRICE: Honestly, it was impressive. An extensive interview process, an expansive backstory, forged documentation - done. And then, 24-hour surveillance, having to pick up on the lingo and the geography everyone seems to know - I definitely had a few slip-ups, but on the whole I'm really proud of what I've accomplished here. Kinda incredible, can't lie!

LAURA: But you - and - but I - !

BEATRICE: Take your time, Laura.

*She looks back at the camera.*

BEATRICE: So, you wanted an explanation? That's why! I was never here for love OR money. I was here for fame and power! Which, to be fair, is what everyone else is here for too, even if they lie to you (or themselves) about it.

LAURA: But it's against the rules! We literally have a Love Island: USA! Why didn't you just audition for that??

BEATRICE: Eh, this is the one everyone watches. Besides, it's an immersive rehearsal, months-long acting practice.

And NOW, everyone knows I have my accents down, so I won't need THAT on my special skills, plus I nailed a near-flawless execution of an entirely different identity, a fake personality, a staged relationship, and feigned interest, emotion, and even jealousy in a situation I honestly don't care about at all. This was a fast-track to Hollywood. That's why I don't need a brand deal - after this stunt, there won't be a casting director in the world that doesn't pick up their phone to call me. And the 50 thou will be juuust enough to get me started on my first month's rent in L.A.

LAURA: But -

*LAURA centers herself. She builds all her strength to this moment. BEATRICE has to hold in a snort because her best effort is reminiscent of a whiny toddler.*

LAURA: But - love is - sacred! Love is all humanity has! It's the eternal web that binds people together and intertwines souls and - it is salvation! It is the reason people can get out of bed and go to work and not want to die on the way there! Because they know they have someone to do it for and to come back to! Love is pink and yellow and blue and red and - infinite, and nothing, and everything! Love is a sacrament! How could you even think of - destroying that? Coming between it? Making it meaningless, or a joke, or a way to get ahead? Love is - everything.

*BEATRICE looks at LAURA with the slightest twinkle of empathy in her eye.*

BEATRICE: You know, I think I'm starting to agree with you. Love IS sacred.

*LAURA smiles triumphantly, still gasping for air and red with righteous anger.*

BEATRICE: So why are you exploiting it, mocking it, disrupting it - anything except for actually cultivating it - for the sake of a stupid reality tv show?

*LAURA falls off her pedestal. BEATRICE laughs. People never change. Or listen.*

BEATRICE: Well, anyway. It was a great time, lovely to meet everyone, and a really cool method experience to be someone else for so long! Thank you guys so much!

*She smirks at the camera.*

BEATRICE: Well, assuming we haven't gone to commercial break already,

*She adopts her accent again.*

BEATRICE: That's all the time we have tonight on Love Island. Thanks for tuning in, and goodnight!

*As the cameras cut to commercial, the scene fades instantly to black.*