



Beauty and the Beast

Disney

Once upon a time there was a rich merchant, who had three daughters. They lived in a very fine house in a beautiful city, and had many servants in grand liveries to wait upon them. All their food was served on gold and silver dishes, and their gowns were made of the richest stuff sewn with jewels.

The two eldest were called Marigold and Dressalinda. Never a day passed but these two went out to some feast or junketing; but Beauty, the youngest, loved to stay at home and keep her old father company.

Now, it happened that misfortune came upon the merchant. Ships of his which were sailing the high seas laden with merchandise of great price, were wrecked, and in one day he found that he was no longer the richest merchant in the city, but a very poor man.

There was still left to him a little house in the country, and to this, when everything else had been sold, he retired. His three daughters, of course, went with him.

Marigold and Dressalinda were very cross to think that they had lost all their money, and after being so rich and sought after, they must now live in

a miserable cottage. But Beauty's only thought was to cheer her old father, and while her two sisters sat on wooden chairs and cried and bewailed themselves, Beauty lighted the fire and got the supper ready, for the merchant was now so poor that he could not even keep a servant.

And so it went on. The two eldest sisters would do nothing but sulk in corners, while Beauty swept the floors and washed the dishes, and did her best to make the poor cottage pleasant. They led their sister a dreadful life too, with their complaints, for not only did they refuse to do anything themselves, but they said that everything she did was done wrong. But Beauty bore all their unkindness patiently, for her father's sake.

In this way a whole year went by, and then one day a letter came for the merchant. He hastened to find his daughters, for he was anxious to tell them the good news contained in the letter. "My dear children," he said, "at last our luck has turned. This letter says that one of the ships supposed to have been lost has come safely home to port, and if that be so, we need no longer live in poverty. We shall not be so rich as before, but we shall have enough to keep us in comfort. Get me my traveling-cloak, Beauty. I will set out at once to claim my ship. And now tell me, girls, what shall I bring you when I come back?"

"A hundred pounds," said Marigold, without hesitating an instant. "I want a new silk dress," said Dressalinda, "an apple-green one, sewn with seed-pearls, and green shoes with red heels, and a necklace of emeralds, and a box of gloves."

"And what shall I bring for you, my Beauty?" asked the father, as his little daughter helped him to put on his traveling-cloak.

"Oh, bring me a rose," said Beauty hastily.

Her father kissed her fondly, and set out. "You silly girl," said Marigold, "you just want our father to think you are more unselfish than we are. that's what you want! A rose, indeed!" "Indeed, sister," said Beauty, "that was not the reason. I thought our father would have enough to do in seeing to

not the reason. I thought our father would have enough to do in seeing to the safety of his ship, without being troubled to do shopping for me."

But the sisters were very much offended, and went off to sit in their own room to talk of the fine things they would have when their father came back. In the meantime the merchant went his way to the city, full of hope and great plans as to what he would do with his money. But when he got there, he found that some one had played a trick on him, and no ship of his had come into harbor, so he was just as badly off as before.

He spent the whole day looking about to make sure there was no truth in the letter he had received, and it was beginning to get dusk when he started out, with a sad heart, to make the journey home again. He was tired and miserable, and he had tasted no food since he left home in the morning. It was quite dark by the time he came to the great wood through which he had to pass to get to his cottage, and when he saw a light shining through the trees, he decided not to go to his home that night, but to make his way towards the light in the wood and ask for food and shelter.

He expected to find a woodcutter's cottage, but what was his surprise, as he drew near to the light, to find that it came from the windows of a large and beautiful palace! He knocked at the gates, but no one answered, and presently, driven by hunger and cold, he made bold to enter, and mounted the marble steps into the great hall. All the way he never saw a soul. There was a big fire in the hall, and when he had warmed himself, he set out to look for the master of the house. But he did not look far, for behind the first door he opened was a cosy little room with supper set for one, a supper the mere look of which made you hungry. So the merchant sat down as bold as you please, and made a very hearty supper, after which he again thought he would look for the master of the house. He started off and opened another door, but there he saw a bed, merely to look at which made you sleepy, so he said to himself:

"This is some fairies' work. I had better not look any farther for the master of the house." And with that he tumbled into bed, and, being very tired, he went to sleep at once, and slept like a top till it was time to get up in the



He slept at last, and slept well. He was glad to get up in the morning. When he awoke he was quite surprised to find himself in such a soft and comfortable bed, but presently he remembered all that had happened to him. "I must be going," he said to himself, "but I wish I could thank my host for my good rest and my good supper."

When he got out of bed he found he had something else to be grateful for, for on the chair by the bedside lay a fine suit of new clothes, marked with his name, and with ten gold pieces in every pocket. He felt quite a different man when he had put on the suit of blue and silver, and jingled the gold pieces of money in his pockets. When he went downstairs, he found a good breakfast waiting for him in the little room where he had supped the night before, and when he had made a good meal, he thought he would go for a stroll in the garden. Down the marble steps he went, and when he came to the garden, he saw that it was full of roses, red and white and pink and yellow, and the merchant looked at them, and remembered Beauty's wish.

"Oh, my poor daughters," he said, "what a disappointment it will be to them to know that my ship has not come home after all, but Beauty at any rate can have what she wanted." So he stretched out his hand and plucked the biggest red rose within his reach. As the stalk snapped in his fingers, he started back in terror, for he heard an angry roar, and the next minute a dreadful Beast sprang upon him. It was taller than any man, and uglier than any animal, but, what seemed most dreadful of all to the merchant, it spoke to him with a man's voice, after it had roared at him with the Beast's.

"Ungrateful wretch!" said the Beast. "Have I not fed you, lodged you, and clothed you, and now you must repay my hospitality by stealing the only thing I care for, my roses?" "Mercy! mercy!" cried the merchant. "No," said the Beast, "you must die!" The poor merchant fell upon his knees and tried to think of something to say to soften the heart of the cruel Beast; and at last he said, "Sir, I only stole this rose because my youngest daughter asked me to bring her one. I did not think, after all you have given me, that you would grudge me a flower."

"Tell me about this daughter of yours," said the Beast suddenly. "Is she a good girl?"" "The best and dearest in the world," said the old merchant.

And then he began to weep, to think that he must die and leave his Beauty alone in the world, with no one to be kind to her. "Oh!" he cried, "what will my poor children do without me?" "You should have thought of that

before you stole the rose," said the Beast. "However, if one of your daughters loves you well enough to suffer instead of you, she may. Go back

and tell them what has happened to you, but you must give me your promise that either you, or one of your daughters, shall be at my palace door in three months' time from to-day."

The wretched man promised. "At any rate," he thought, "I shall have three months more of life." Then the Beast said, "I will not let you go empty-handed." So the merchant followed him back into the palace. There, on the floor of the hall, lay a great and beautiful chest of wrought silver.

"Fill this with any treasures that take your fancy," said the Beast. And the merchant filled it up with precious things from the Beast's treasure-house. "I will send it home for you," said the Beast, shutting down the lid. And so, with a heavy heart, the merchant went away; but as he went through the palace gate, the Beast called to him that he had forgotten Beauty's rose, and at the same time held out to him a large bunch of the very best.

The merchant put these into Beauty's hand when she ran to meet him at the door of their cottage. "Take them, my child," he said, "and cherish them, for they have cost your poor father his life." And with that he sat down and told them the whole story. The two elder sisters wept and wailed, and of course blamed Beauty for all that had happened. "If it had not been for your wanting a rose, our father would have left the palace in safety, with his new suit and his gold pieces; but your foolishness has cost him his life."

"No," said Beauty, "it is my life that shall be sacrificed, for when the three months are over, I shall go to the Beast, and he may kill me if he will, but he shall never hurt my dear father." The father tried hard to persuade her not to go, but she had made up her mind, and at the end of the three months she set out for the Beast's palace. Her father went with her, to show her the way. As before, he saw the lights shining through the wood, knocked and rang in vain at the great gate, warmed himself at the fire in the big hall, and then found the little room with the supper on the table that made you

hungry to look at. Only this time the table was laid for two.

"Come, father dear," said Beauty, "take comfort. I do not think the Beast means to kill me, or surely he would not have given me such a good supper." But the next moment the Beast came into the room. Beauty screamed and clung to her father. "Don't be frightened," said the Beast gently, "but tell me, do you come here of your own free will?" "Yes," said Beauty, trembling.

"You are a good girl," said the Beast, and then, turning to the old man, he told him that he might sleep there for that night, but in the morning he must go and leave his daughter behind him. They went to bed and slept soundly, and the next morning the father departed, weeping bitterly. Beauty, left alone, tried not to feel frightened. She ran here and there through the palace, and found it more beautiful than anything she had ever imagined. The most beautiful set of rooms in the palace had written over the doors, "Beauty's Rooms," and in them she found books and music, canary-birds and Persian cats, and everything that could be thought of to make the time pass pleasantly.

"Oh, dear!" she said; "if only I could see my poor father I should be almost happy." As she spoke, she happened to look at a big mirror, and in it she saw the form of her father reflected, just riding up to the door of his cottage. That night, when Beauty sat down to supper, the Beast came in.
"May I have supper with you?" said he.

"That must be as you please," said Beauty. So the Beast sat down to supper with her, and when it was finished, he said: "I am very ugly, Beauty, and I am very stupid, but I love you; will you marry me?" "No, Beast," said Beauty gently. The poor Beast sighed and went away.

And every night the same thing happened. He ate his supper with her, and then asked her if she would marry him. And she always said, "No, Beast." All this time she was waited on by invisible hands, as though she had been a queen. Beautiful music came to her ears without her being able to see the musicians, but the magic looking-glass was best of all, for in it she could see whatever she wished. As the days went by, and her slightest wish was

granted, almost before she knew what she wanted, she began to feel that the Beast must love her very dearly, and she was very sorry to see how sad he looked every night when she said "No" to his offer of marriage.

One day, she saw in her mirror that her father was ill, so that night she said to the Beast: "Dear Beast, you are so good to me, will you let me go home to see my father? He is ill, and he thinks that I am dead. Do let me go and cheer him up, and I will promise faithfully to return to you." "Very well," said the Beast kindly, "but don't stay away more than a week, for if you do, I shall die of grief, because I love you so dearly." "How shall I reach home?" said Beauty; "I do not know the way."

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Then the Beast gave her a ring, and told her to put it on her finger when she went to bed, turn the ruby towards the palm of her hand, and then she would wake up in her father's cottage. When she wanted to come back, she was to do the same thing. So in the morning, when she awoke, she found herself at her father's house, and the old man was beside himself with joy to see her safe and sound. But her sisters did not welcome her very kindly, and when they heard how kind the Beast was to her, they envied her her good luck in living in a beautiful palace, whilst they had to be content with a cottage.

"I wish we had gone," said Marigold. "Beauty always gets the best of everything." "Tell us all about your grand palace," said Dressalinda, "and what you do, and how you spend your time." So Beauty, thinking it would amuse them to hear, told them, and their envy increased day by day. At last Dressalinda said to Marigold: "She has promised to return in a week. If we could only make her forget the day, the Beast might be angry and kill her, and then there would be a chance for us."

So on the day before she ought to have gone back, they put, some poppy juice in a cup of wine which they gave her, and this made her so sleepy that she slept for two whole days and nights. At the end of that time her sleep grew troubled, and she dreamed that she saw the Beast lying dead among the roses in the beautiful gardens of his palace; and from this dream she awoke crying bitterly. Although she did not know that a week and two days had gone by since she left the Beast, yet after that dream she at once

turned the ruby towards her palm, and the next morning there she was, sure enough, in her bed in the Beast's palace.

She did not know where his rooms in the palace were, but she felt she could not wait till supper-time before seeing him, so she ran hither and thither, calling his name. But the palace was empty, and no one answered her when she called. Then she ran through the gardens, calling his name again and again, but still there was silence. "Oh! what shall I do if I cannot find him?" she said. "I shall never be happy again." Then she remembered her dream, and ran to the rose garden, and there, sure enough, beside the basin of the big fountain, lay the poor Beast without any sign of life in him.

Beauty flung herself on her knees beside him.

"Oh, dear Beast," she cried, "and are you really dead? Alas! alas! then I, too, will die, for I cannot live without you."

Immediately the Beast opened his eyes, sighed, and said: "Beauty, will you marry me?" And Beauty, beside herself with joy when she found that he was still alive, answered: "Yes, yes, dear Beast, for I love you dearly." At these words the rough fur dropped to the ground, and in place of the Beast stood a handsome Prince, dressed in a doublet of white and silver, like one made ready for a wedding. He knelt at Beauty's feet and clasped her hands.

"Dear Beauty," he said, "nothing but your love could have disenchanted me. A wicked fairy turned me into a Beast, and condemned me to remain one until some fair and good maiden should love me well enough to marry me, in spite of my ugliness and stupidity. Now, dear one, the enchantment is broken; let us go back to my palace. You will find that all my servants-who, too, have been enchanted, and have waited on you all this long time with invisible hands-will now become visible."

So they returned to the palace, which by this time was crowded with courtiers, eager to kiss the hands of the Prince and his bride. And the Prince whispered to one of his attendants, who went out, and in a very little time came back with Beauty's father and sisters.

The sisters were condemned to be changed into statues, and to stand at the right and left of the palace gates until their hearts should be softened, and

they should be sorry for their unkindness to their sister. But Beauty, happily married to her Prince, went secretly to the statues every day and

happily married to her Prince, went secretly to the statues every day and wept over them. And by her tears their stony hearts were softened, and they were changed into flesh and blood again, and were good and kind for the rest of their lives. And Beauty and the Beast, who was a Beast no more, but a handsome Prince, lived happily ever after.

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