



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont

Virtually every culture knows the story of *Beauty and the Beast* and the differences the two figures must resolve in order to be joined in wedlock. “*Beauty and the Beast*” has been celebrated as the quintessential story of romantic love, demonstrating its power to transcend physical appearances. But in many ways it is also a plot rich in opportunities for expressing a woman’s anxieties about marriage, and it may at one time have circulated as a story that steadied the fears of young women facing arranged marriages to older men. In cultures where arranged marriages were the rule, it was a tale that could brace women for an alliance that required them to efface their own desires or to favor the desire for wealth over other considerations.

“*Cupid and Psyche*,” the earliest known version of “*Beauty and the Beast*,” appeared in the second century A.D. in *The Transformations of Lucian*, Otherwise Known as the *Golden Ass*, written in Latin by the distinguished rhetorician

From Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, “*La Belle et la bête*,” in *Le Magasin des enfants* (London: Haberkorn, 1757).

Apuleius of Madaura. Told by a “drunken and half-demented” woman to a young bride abducted by bandits on her wedding day, it is described as a fairy tale designed to console the distraught captive. But in “Cupid and Psyche” the “beast” is only rumored to be a beast, and Psyche, the tale’s heroine, resolves the romantic conflict not by showing compassion but by carrying out a series of tasks. Still, it seems evident that most Anglo-American and European versions of the tale either derived from or were contaminated in some way by Apuleius’s story about the complexities of romantic love.

The version of “Beauty and the Beast” best known to Anglo-American audiences was penned in 1756 by Madame de Beaumont (Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont) for publication in a magazine designed for girls and young women and translated into English three years later. Showing signs that it is intended as a vehicle for instructing children about the value of good manners, good breeding, and good behavior, this “Beauty and the Beast” concludes with a flurry of commendations and condemnations. Beauty has “preferred virtue to looks” and has “many virtues,” and she enters a marriage “founded on virtue.” Her two sisters, by contrast, have hearts “filled with envy and malice” and are turned into statues that symbolize their cold, hard essence.

Beauty’s virtues, as her name and her story make clear, stem from her attractive appearance and her sterling character. After discovering that Beast is prepared to accept a daughter in place of the father, she declares her good fortune, for she will have “the pleasure of saving” her father and proving “feelings of tenderness for him.” To be sure, not every “Beauty” is so willing a victim. The heroine of the Norwegian “East of the Sun and West of the Moon” (included in this volume as tale 14), for example, has to be talked into marrying the beast (a white bear) by her father. But many beauties are not only willing to sacrifice themselves for their fathers but are also prepared to marry a beast out of pity for his condition. Madame de Beaumont’s Beauty comes to a conclusion that few would embrace wholeheartedly today as a recipe for a successful marriage. Claiming that neither “good looks” nor “great intelli-

gence" are what count, Beauty disavows the passion of romantic love and asserts that feelings of "respect, friendship, and gratitude" suffice for a good marriage.

"Beauty and the Beast" remains a powerful story for meditating on what we value in a marriage partner. Rooted in a culture where arranged marriages were often the norm, Madame de Beaumont's tale endorses obedience, self-denial, and a form of love based on gratitude rather than passion for women even as it gives us a Beast who clearly appreciates physical perfection in addition to kindness and compassion. But those very values can be challenged in a variety of ways as the story is read. Can we imagine, as Chaucer did in the Wife of Bath's tale, a story that could be called "Handsome and the Beast"? Why is Beauty physically perfect while Beast can remain a perfect marriage partner despite his looks? Why does the story end by subverting its own terms when it turns both marriage partners into figures of physical perfection? Does Beauty feel any disappointment after Beast's transformation, as she does in Jean Cocteau's cinematic version, made in France right after World War II?

Just as oral versions from earlier centuries took advantage of the comic possibilities of stories in which girls are betrothed to pigs, hedgehogs, snakes, frogs, or donkeys, so modern retellings capitalize on the rich opportunities for social satire and irony. Today we produce stories that celebrate the superiority of beasts over humans, with "happy endings" marked by the transformation of the tale's "Beauty" into a noble beast. In works ranging from Jon Scieszka's *Frog Prince Continued* to Angela Carter's *The Tiger's Bride*, we see a profound ideological shift revealing that humans are the real beasts in need of redemption.

1. *a wealthy merchant*. Note that the fairy tale puts the reader in a social milieu different from that of the customary village, forest, or castle of fairy tales. "Beauty and the Beast" reflects the presence of an emerging bourgeoisie in pre-revolutionary France, one that functions in a moral, social, and financial economy very different from that of feudal times.



ONCE UPON A TIME there was a wealthy merchant¹ who lived with his six children, three boys and three girls. Since he was a man of intelligence

and good sense, he spared no expense in educating his children and hiring all kinds of tutors for them. His daughters were all very beautiful, but everyone fell in love with the youngest. When she was a small child, people used to call her “Little Beauty.” The name “Beauty” stuck, and it was no surprise that the two older girls grew jealous of their sister.

The youngest of the three daughters was not only more beautiful than her sisters; she was also far more charming. The two older sisters were vain and proud just because they came from a wealthy family. They tried to act like ladies of the court and paid no attention at all to other girls from merchant families. They chose to spend their time solely with people of rank. Every day they went to balls, to the theater, and to the park, and they made fun of their younger sister for spending most of her time reading good books.²

Since the girls were known to be very wealthy, many prominent merchants sought their hands in marriage. But the two older sisters vowed that they would never marry unless they found a duke or, at the very least, a count. Beauty (remember, this was the name of the youngest daughter) very politely thanked all those who proposed to her and told them that she was still too young for marriage. She was hoping to stay by her father’s side for a few more years to come.

One day, out of the blue, the merchant lost his entire fortune, and he was left with nothing but a small country house quite far from town. With tears in his eyes, he told his children that they would have to stay in that house from now on and live like peasants in order to make ends meet. The two older daughters vowed that they would not leave town and insisted that they had many admirers who would be more than happy to marry them, even though they had lost their fortune. But these fine young ladies were wrong. Their admirers had lost interest in them now that they were poor. And since they had always been disliked for their arrogance, everyone said: “Those two girls don’t deserve our sympathy. It’s reassuring to see that

2. *reading good books.* It is unusual for fairy-tale characters to advance themselves by reading. Most are relegated to menial tasks at home, or they set out on journeys into the world.

3. *Her two sisters, on the other hand, were dreadfully bored.* Beauty compares favorably in every way with her two sisters. As in most fairy-tale trios of same-sex siblings, the youngest, as underdog, is superior to the two older siblings. Beauty combines good looks with a powerful work ethic, impeccable manners, and compassion.

4. *not only made Beauty do all the housework.* Like Cinderella, Beauty is an innocent young heroine, persecuted by sibling rivals.

pride takes a fall. Let them play the ladies while tending sheep.” Everyone was also saying: “As for Beauty, her misfortune is distressing. She’s such a kind girl! She speaks with such compassion to the poor. And she is so sweet and sincere.”

There were a number of gentlemen who would have been happy to marry Beauty even though she didn’t have a penny. She told them that she could not bring herself to abandon her father in his anguish and that she was planning to accompany him to the country in order to console him and to help him with his work. Poor Beauty was upset at the loss of the family fortune, but she just said to herself: “No matter how much I cry, my tears won’t bring back our fortune. I will try to be happy without it.”

When the merchant and his three sons arrived at the country house, they began working the land. Beauty got up every day at four in the morning and started cleaning the house and making breakfast for the family. It was hard for her at first, because she was not accustomed to working like a servant. By the end of two months, however, she had become stronger, and the hard work improved her health. After finishing her housework, she would read a book or sing some songs while spinning. Her two sisters, on the other hand, were dreadfully bored.³ They would get up at ten in the morning, take walks all day long, and talk endlessly about the beautiful clothes they used to wear.

“Look at our sister,” they said to each other. “She’s such a simpleton and so dim-witted that she seems perfectly satisfied with her miserable lot.”

The good merchant did not agree with his two daughters. He knew that Beauty stood out from the crowd in a way that her sisters did not. He admired his daughter’s many virtues, especially her patience. The sisters not only made Beauty do all the housework;⁴ they also insulted her whenever they had the chance.

The family had lived an entire year in seclusion when the merchant received a letter informing him that a ship containing his merchandise had just arrived safely in its

home port. The news made the two older sisters giddy with joy, for they were sure that they would finally be able to leave the countryside, which they found terribly dull. When they saw that their father was about to go on a trip, they begged him to bring back dresses, furs, laces, and all kinds of trinkets. Beauty did not ask for anything, because she was sure that the profits from the ship would not suffice to buy everything her sisters wanted.

"Don't you want me to buy anything for you?" her father asked.

"You are kind to think of me," Beauty replied. "Perhaps you could bring me a rose,⁵ for they do not grow here."

It was not that Beauty was really anxious to have a rose, but she didn't want to make her sisters look bad. They, in turn, would have said that she was not asking for anything in order to make herself look good.

The good merchant left home, but when he arrived at the port, he found that there were legal problems with his merchandise. After much aggravation, he set off for home as impoverished as ever. He had only thirty miles left before him and was already feeling revived by the prospect of seeing his children again when he arrived at the edge of a deep forest and realized that he was lost. A snowstorm was raging, and the wind was so strong that twice he was knocked off his horse. When night fell, he was sure that he was going to die either of hunger or of the cold or, worse yet, that the wolves howling in the distance would attack and devour him.

All of a sudden he saw a bright light at the end of a long row of trees. The light seemed very distant. As he walked toward it, he realized that it was coming from an immense castle that was completely lit up. The merchant thanked God for sending help, and he made his way quickly toward the castle. He was surprised to find that no one was in the courtyard. His horse sauntered over toward a large, open stable and found some hay and oats there. The poor animal, near starvation, began eating with a voracious appetite. The merchant tied the horse up in the stable and began walking toward the castle. There was not a soul

5. *Perhaps you could bring me a rose.* The "modest choice" of the youngest sister often stirs up trouble in fairy tales. The plot of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, with its three daughters—two arrogant and one modest—is fueled by similar circumstances.

in sight. When he entered the great hall, he found a warm fire and a table laden with food, but with just a single place setting. Since he was soaked to the bone from the rain and snow, he went over to the fire to get dry. He thought: "The master of the house and his servants will not be offended by the liberties I am taking. No doubt someone will be back soon."

He waited a long time. When the clock struck eleven and there was still no one in sight, he could not control the pangs of hunger he was feeling, and, trembling all over, he took a chicken and made short work of it in just two bites. He also drank several glasses of wine, and, feeling somewhat emboldened, he left the great hall and crossed many large, magnificently furnished apartments. Finally he found a room with a good bed in it. Since it was past midnight and he was exhausted, he decided to shut the door and go to sleep.

When he woke up the next day, it was already ten in the morning. He was greatly surprised to find clean clothes in place of the ones that had been completely soaked by the rain. He thought: "This palace must belong to a good fairy who has taken pity on me."

He looked out the window and noticed that it was no longer snowing. Before his eyes a magnificent vista of gardens and flowers unfolded. He returned to the great hall where he had dined the night before and found a small table with a cup of hot chocolate on it. "Thank you, Madame Fairy," he said out loud, "for being so kind as to remember my breakfast."

After finishing his hot chocolate, the good man left to find his horse. Passing beneath a magnificent arbor of roses, he remembered that Beauty had asked him for a rose, and he picked one from a branch that had many flowers on it. All of a sudden he heard a loud noise and saw a beast coming toward him. It looked so dreadful that he nearly fainted.

"You are very ungrateful," the beast said in a ferocious voice. "I have saved your life by giving you shelter in my castle, and you repay me by stealing my roses, which I love



LANCELOT SPEED,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1913

Beauty's father, given an oriental look with his cloak, turban, and slippers, cowers before an upright beast whose magnificent castle, complete with domes and minarets, looms large in the background. The modest possessions of the merchant, wrapped in a large scarf, contrast sharply with the vastness of Beast's holdings.



W. HEATH ROBINSON,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1921

Although the lower half of Beast appears close to human form, his upper parts present a ferocious appearance. Poised to attack when he discovers an intruder on his property, this Beast remains to be tamed.



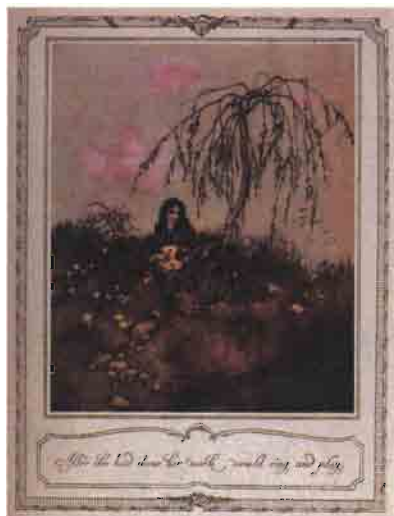
ARTHUR RACKHAM,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1909

Beauty's father is caught red-handed by the Beast, whose elaborate robe cannot conceal his true beastliness. The bower of roses also fails to mask the sinister black and white trees and sky in the background.

more than anything in the world. You will have to pay for your offense. I'm going to give you exactly a quarter of an hour to say your prayers."

The merchant fell to his knees and, hands clasped, pleaded with the beast: "My Liege, forgive me. I did not think I would be offending you by picking a flower for my daughter, who asked me to bring her back a rose or two."

"I am not called 'My Liege,'" said the monster. "My name is Beast, and I don't like flattery. I prefer that people say what they think. So don't try to change my mind with your compliments. But you mentioned something about daughters. I am prepared to forgive you if one of your daughters consents to die in your place. Don't argue with me. Just go. If your daughters refuse to die for you, swear that you will return in three days."



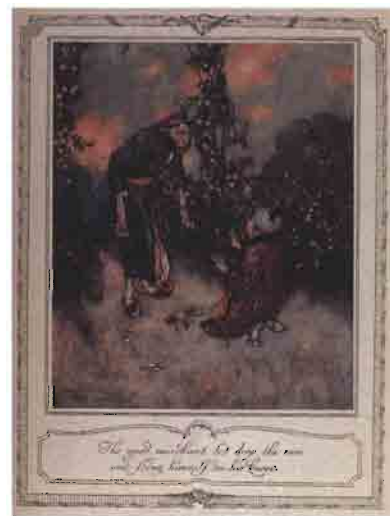
EDMUND DULAC,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1910

"After she had done her work, [she] would sing and play." Dulac's Beauty, with her musical talents, is introduced as a raven-haired young woman who banishes loneliness through music. The rich blues and pinks of Beauty's clothing are repeated in the landscape, which, in its somewhat desolate state, mirrors her feelings.



EDMUND DULAC,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1910

"He had been fasting for more than twenty-four hours, and lost no time in falling to." Beauty's father sits in regal splendor, feasting on the magnificent banquet before him. The picture is idyllic, but the one claw foot left exposed by the tablecloth is a powerful omen that all is not as serene as it seems.



EDMUND DULAC,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1910

"The good merchant let drop the rose and flung himself on his knees." Beast, a grotesque hybrid animal with the paws of a lion, inspires fear in the merchant. Note the orientalizing touch in the turban and slippers worn by Beast and by Beauty's father.

The good man was not about to sacrifice one of his daughters to this hideous monster, but he thought: "At least I will have the chance to embrace my children one last time."

The merchant swore that he would return, and Beast told him that he could leave whenever he wanted. "But I don't want you to go empty-handed," he added. "Return to the room in which you slept. There you will find a large, empty chest. You can fill it up with whatever you like, and I will have it delivered to your door at home."

The beast withdrew, and the good man thought: "If I have to die, I will at least die with the reassurance of leaving something for my poor children to live on."

The merchant returned to the room where he had



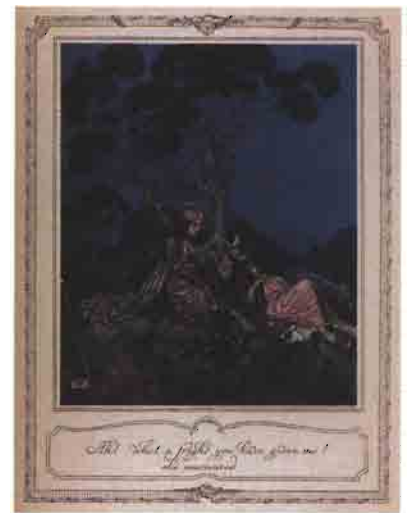
EDMUND DULAC,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1910

"Soon they caught sight of the castle in the distance." Despite her humble mount, Beauty appears regal in the icy landscape before which Beast's castle is situated. She stoically prepares herself to cross the threshold from the safe, yet snowy, climes of home territory to the perils of the castle. That Beast lives in an enchanted palace is suggested by the verdant landscape surrounding the castle.



EDMUND DULAC,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1910

"These no sooner saw BEAUTY than they began to scream and chatter." With the castle brilliantly lit up in the background, Beauty appears to stand on cobblestones that bleed into a fog connecting to the castle. Even the exotic birds of Beast's realm are attracted to Beauty's loveliness, and they gather around her to crown her beauty and to exchange views about her radiance.



EDMUND DULAC,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1910

"Ah! what a fright you have given me!" she murmured." Beauty ministers to the lovestruck Beast, who has been pining away for his beloved. This final illustration reprises the first in the series, which featured Beauty alone, and it prefigures a happy ending in which the two have become a couple.

slept. He filled the great chest described by Beast with the many gold pieces he discovered in his room. He went to the stable, found his horse, and left the palace with a sense of sadness equal to the joy he had felt on entering it. His horse instinctively followed one of the paths in the forest, and, in just a few hours, the good man arrived at his little house. His children gathered around him, but instead of responding to their caresses, the merchant burst into tears as he was gazing at them. In his hand he was holding the branch of roses he had brought for Beauty. He gave it to her and said: "Beauty, take these roses. They have cost your poor father dearly."

The merchant then told his family about the dreadful events that had befallen him. Upon hearing his tale, the two sisters uttered cries of distress and made insulting remarks about Beauty, who was not crying at all. "See what the pride of this little creature has brought down on us!" they said. "Why didn't she ask for fine clothes the way we did? No, she wanted to get all the attention. Now she's going to be the cause of Father's death, and she's not even shedding any tears."

"That would be quite pointless," Beauty replied. "Why should I shed a tear about Father when he is not going to die? Since the monster is willing to accept one of his daughters, I am prepared to offer myself to appease his fury. I feel fortunate that I can make this sacrifice, since I will have the pleasure of saving Father and proving my feelings of tenderness for him."

"No, dear Sister," said her three brothers. "You will not die. We will find this monster, and if we can't slay him, we are prepared to die trying."

"Don't count on that, children," said the merchant. "The beast's power is so great that I don't have the least hope of killing him. I am moved by the goodness of Beauty's heart, but I refuse to let her risk her life. I'm old, and I don't have many years left. I will only lose a few years of my life, and I don't regret losing them for your sake, my dear children."

"Rest assured, Father," said Beauty, "that you will not go to the palace without me. You can't stop me from following you. I may be young, but I am not fiercely attached to life, and I would rather be devoured by that monster than die of grief from losing you."

There was no arguing with Beauty. She was determined to go to the palace. Her sisters were delighted, for Beauty's virtues had long filled them with envy. The merchant had been so preoccupied by the bleak prospect of losing his daughter that he had forgotten all about the chest filled with gold that he had brought back. When he retired to his room to get some sleep, he was stunned to find it beside his bed. He decided not to tell his children

that he had become rich, for his daughters would then want to return to town, and he was determined to die in the country. He did confide his secret to Beauty, who told him that several gentlemen had come during his absence and that two of them were hoping to marry her sisters. Beauty pleaded with her father to let them marry. She was so kind that she still loved her sisters with all her heart⁶ and forgave them the evil they had done her.

When Beauty set out with her father, the two cruel sisters rubbed their eyes with an onion in order to draw tears. The brothers, however, cried real tears, as did the merchant. Only Beauty did not cry at all, because she did not want to make everyone even sadder.

The horse got on the road to the palace, and, when night fell, they could see that Beast's residence was all lit up. The horse went on its own over to the stable, and the good man went with his daughter into the hall, where there was a magnificently set table with two place settings. The merchant did not have the stomach for supper, but Beauty, forcing herself to appear calm, sat down and served her father. "You see, Father," she said while forcing a laugh, "the beast wants to fatten me up before eating me, since he paid so dearly for me."

After finishing supper, they heard a loud noise, and the merchant tearfully bid adieu to his poor daughter, for he knew that the beast was approaching. Beauty could not help shuddering at the sight of this horrible figure, but she tried as hard as she could to stay calm. The monster asked her if she had come of her own free will, and, trembling, she said that she had.

"You are very kind," said Beast, "and I am very grateful to you. As for you, my good man, get out of here by tomorrow morning and don't think of coming back here ever again. Good-bye, Beauty."

"Good-bye, Beast," she replied, and suddenly the monster vanished.

"Oh, my daughter!" cried the merchant, embracing Beauty. "I'm half dead with fear. Believe me, you have to let me stay with you," he said.

6. *she still loved her sisters with all her heart.* Like some Cinderellas (Perrault's, to cite one example), Beauty is willing to forgive her sisters, no matter how wickedly they behave. Beauties and Cinderellas in oral folktales tend to be less forgiving.

7. *The good deed you have done in saving your father's life will not go unrewarded.* In fairy tales, virtue is never its own reward. Good deeds are settled in gold, or through ascension to a throne.

"No, Father," Beauty said firmly. "You must be on your way tomorrow morning and leave me to the mercy of heaven. Perhaps heaven will take pity on me after all."

Beauty and her father went to bed thinking that they would not be able to sleep all night long, but they had hardly gotten into their beds when they nodded off. While she was asleep, Beauty saw a woman who told her: "Your kindness brings me great satisfaction, Beauty. The good deed you have done in saving your father's life will not go unrewarded."⁷

Upon awakening, Beauty recounted this dream to her father. While it comforted him a little, it did not prevent him from sobbing when he had to separate from his dear daughter. After he had left, Beauty sat down in the great hall and began to cry as well. But since she was courageous, she put herself in God's hands and resolved not to complain about her fate for the short time she had left to live.

Convinced that Beast was planning to devour her that very evening, Beauty decided to walk around the grounds and to explore the castle while awaiting her fate. She could not help admiring the castle's beauty, and who can imagine her surprise when she found a door upon which was written: "Beauty's Room." She opened the door right away and was dazzled by the radiant beauty of the chamber. She was especially impressed by a huge bookcase, a harpsichord, and various music books. "Someone is hoping I won't get bored!" she said softly. Then she realized: "If I had only one hour left to live, no one would have made such a fuss about my room." This thought lifted her spirits.

Beauty opened the bookcase and saw a book, on the cover of which was written in golden letters: "Your wish is our command. Here you are queen and mistress."

"Alas," she sighed. "I wish only to see my poor father again and to know what he is doing now."

Beauty had spoken these words to herself, so you can imagine how surprised she was when she looked into a large mirror and saw her father arriving home with a

dejected look on his face. Her sisters were going out to meet him, and, despite the faces they were making in order to act as if they were upset, they were visibly happy to have lost their sister. A moment later everything in the mirror vanished. Beauty could not help thinking that Beast was very obliging and that she really had nothing to fear from him.

At noon Beauty found the table set, and, during her meal, she listened to an excellent concert, even though she could not see a soul in her room. That evening, as she was about to sit down at the table, she could hear Beast making noises, and she could not help trembling with fear.

"Beauty," the monster said, "will you let me watch you dine?"⁸

"You are my master," Beauty replied, shuddering.

"No, you are the only mistress here," replied Beast. "If I start to bother you, tell me to go away, and I will leave at once. Tell me, don't you find me very ugly?"

"Yes, I do," said Beauty. "I don't know how to tell lies. But I do think that you are very kind."

"You are right," said the monster. "But in addition to being ugly, I also lack intelligence. I know very well that I am nothing but a beast."

"You can't be a beast," replied Beauty, "if you know that you lack intelligence. A fool never believes himself to be stupid."

"Go ahead and eat, Beauty," said the monster, "and try not to get bored in this house, for everything here is yours, and I would be distressed if you were to become unhappy."

"You are very kind," said Beauty. "I swear to you that I am completely pleased with your tender heart. When I think of it, you no longer seem ugly to me."

"Oh, of course," Beast replied. "I have a tender heart, but I am still a monster."

"There are certainly many men more monstrous than you," said Beauty. "I like you better, even with your looks, than men who hide false, corrupt, and ungrateful hearts behind charming manners."

"If I were intelligent," said Beast, "I would pay you a

8. "Beauty," the monster said, "will you let me watch you dine?" The extended dialogue that follows points to the literary nature of this version of "Beauty and the Beast." Note also the way in which the dialogue takes an uncharacteristic philosophical turn in reflecting on matters of appearances and essences. The embedded sermon on kindness and intelligence is also not typical for fairy tales.

fine compliment to thank you. But I am so stupid that all I can say is that I am very much obliged."

Beauty ate supper with a good appetite. She no longer dreaded the monster, but she thought that she would die of fright when he said: "Beauty, would you be my wife?"

It took her a moment to get to the point of being able to answer. She was afraid to provoke the monster by refusing him. Trembling, she said to him: "No, Beast."

At that moment the poor monster began to sigh deeply, and he made such a frightful whistling sound that it echoed throughout the palace. Beauty regained her composure, however, because Beast, turning to look at her from time to time, left the room and bid her adieu in a sad voice. Finding herself alone, Beauty began to feel compassion for poor Beast. "Alas," she said, "it's too bad he's so ugly, for he's really very kind."

The next three months passed for Beauty in great tranquillity. Every evening, Beast paid her a visit and, while she was dining, entertained her with good plain talk, though not with what the world would call wit. Each day Beauty discovered new qualities in the monster. Since she was meeting him on a daily basis, she grew accustomed to his ugly appearance, and, far from fearing his arrival, she would check her watch to see if it was nine o'clock yet. Beast never failed to appear at that hour. There was only one thing that still bothered Beauty. Before leaving, the monster would always ask her if she wanted to be his wife, and he seemed deeply wounded when she refused.

One day, Beauty said: "You are putting me in an awkward position, Beast. I would like to be able to marry you, but I am far too honest to allow you to believe that that could ever happen. I will always be your friend. Try to be satisfied with friendship."

"I will have to," Beast replied. "I don't flatter myself, and I know that I'm horrible looking, but I do love you very much. However, I am very happy that you want to stay here. Promise me that you will never leave."

Beauty blushed when she heard those words. In her mirror she could see that her father was feeling sick at

heart for having lost her. She had been hoping to see him again. "I can promise you that I will never leave you," she said to Beast. "But right now I feel a longing so powerful to see my father that I would die of grief if you were to deny me this wish."

"I would rather die than cause you pain," said Beast. "I will send you back to your father. But if you stay there, your poor beast will die of grief."

"No," Beauty said, bursting into tears. "I love you too much to be the cause of your death. I promise to return in a week. You have allowed me to discover that my sisters are married and that my brothers have left to serve in the army. Father is living all by himself. Let me stay with him for just a week."

"You will be there tomorrow morning," said Beast. "But don't forget your promise. In order to get back here, all you have to do is put your ring on the table before you go to sleep. Good-bye, Beauty."

Beast sighed deeply in his characteristic way after speaking, and Beauty went to bed feeling very sad to see him so downcast. The next morning, on waking up, she was in her father's house. She pulled a cord at the side of her bed, and a bell summoned a servant, who uttered a loud cry upon seeing her. The good man of the house came running when he heard the cry, and he almost fainted dead away when he set eyes on his beloved daughter. The two held on to each other for over a quarter of an hour. After the first wave of excitement subsided, Beauty realized that she didn't have any clothes to wear. But the servant told her that she had just discovered in the room next to hers a huge trunk full of silk dresses embroidered with gold and encrusted with diamonds. Beauty silently thanked Beast for his thoughtfulness. She took the least extravagant of the dresses and told the servants to lock up the others, for she wanted to make a present of them to her sisters. Hardly had she spoken these words when the chest disappeared. As soon as her father told her that Beast probably wanted her to keep everything for herself, the dresses and the chest reappeared on the spot.

9. *Let's try to keep Beauty here for more than a week.* Note that the sisters are blamed for Beauty's failure to keep her promise to Beast. As in "Cupid and Psyche," the responsibility for an act of disobedience is attributed to the sisters rather than to the actual agent of transgression.

While Beauty was getting dressed, the two sisters learned about her return home and rushed to the scene with their husbands. Both sisters were very unhappy. The older one had married a remarkably handsome gentleman, but he was so enamored of his own looks that he spent all day in front of the mirror. The other one had married a man of great intelligence, but he used his wit only to enrage everybody, first and foremost his wife. Beauty's sisters were ready to die when they saw her dressed like a princess and more beautiful than the bright day. In vain Beauty tried to shower them with attention, but they felt mortified and nothing could diminish their jealousy, which only intensified when Beauty told them how happy she was. The two women, filled with envy, walked out to the garden so that they could weep to their heart's content. They both asked themselves: "Why should that little monster enjoy greater happiness than we do? Aren't we more charming than she is?"

"Sister dear," the older one said, "I have an idea. Let's try to keep Beauty here for more than a week.⁹ Her stupid beast will be furious when he sees that she has broken her promise, and maybe he'll eat her up."

"You're right," the other one replied. "We'll make it work by showering her with affection and acting as if we're delighted to have her here."

After conspiring with each other, the two wicked creatures returned to Beauty's room and were so affectionate to her that she nearly wept for joy. When a week had gone by, the two sisters started tearing out their hair and acting so upset that Beauty promised to stay a few days longer. At the same time, she felt terrible about the grief she was causing poor Beast, whom she loved with all her heart and whom she missed deeply. On the tenth night spent at her father's house, she dreamed that she was in a garden of the palace when she noticed Beast, half dead, lying in the grass and reproaching her for her ingratitude.

Beauty woke up with a start and began weeping. "It's dreadful of me to cause heartache to someone who did so much to please me," she said. "Is it his fault that he's ugly

and lacks intelligence? He is kind. That's worth more than anything else. Why haven't I wanted to marry him? I would be happier with him than my sisters are with their husbands. It is neither good looks nor great intelligence that makes a woman happy with her husband, but character, virtue, and kindness. Beast has all those qualities. I may not be in love with him, but I feel respect, friendship, and gratitude toward him. If I make him unhappy, my lack of gratitude will make me feel terrible for the rest of my life."

With these words, Beauty got up, wrote her father a short note to explain why she was leaving, put her ring on the table, and went back to bed. She had hardly gotten into bed when she fell sound asleep. And when she awoke in the morning, she was overjoyed to find herself in Beast's palace. She dressed up in magnificent clothes just to please him and spent the day feeling bored to death, waiting for the clock to strike nine. But nothing happened when the clock struck nine. Beast was nowhere to be seen.

Beauty feared that she might have caused Beast's death. She ran to look for him in every room of the castle, sobbing loudly. In a state of despair, she searched everywhere for him. Then she remembered her dream and ran into the garden, toward the canal where she had seen Beast in her sleep. Poor Beast was stretched out on the ground unconscious, and she was sure that he was dead. Feeling no dread about the way he looked, she flung herself on him and, realizing that his heart was still beating, ran to get some water from the canal and threw it on him. Beast opened his eyes and said to Beauty: "You forgot your promise. The thought of having lost you made me decide to starve myself to death. Now I will die happy, for I have the pleasure of seeing you one last time."

"No, dear Beast, you will not die," said Beauty. "You will live and become my husband. From this moment on, I give you my hand in marriage, and I swear that I will belong only to you. Alas, I thought that I felt only friendship for you, but the anguish I am feeling makes me realize that I can't live without you."



ANONYMOUS,
*"Beauty and the Beast:
 or a Rough Outside with a Gentle
 Heart,"* 1811

Despite the differences in their physical representations, Beauty and Beast share a wide-eyed determination to forge ahead. Difficult to identify, this Beast is all animal, without a trace of a human feature.



ELEANOR VERE BOYLE,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1875

The hybrid beast embraced by Beauty blends into the natural landscape, while Beauty herself, with her bright robes, appears as a powerful visual presence. Despite the tusks and powerful paws, Beast appears to be a gentle creature, eager for Beauty's human ministrations.



ARTHUR RACKHAM,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1915

Looking rather like a bat without wings, this Beast, tears in his eyes, attracts Beauty's pity. More whimsically suited and proportioned than most Beasts, Rackham's creature stirs compassion but also provides a measure of comic relief to the story.

10. *A wicked fairy condemned me to remain in that form.* Few versions of the story explain why the spell was cast on the prince. In some versions the prince's arrogance or failure to show charity to an old woman leads to his enchantment.

Scarcely had Beauty uttered these words when the castle became radiant with light. Fireworks and music signaled a celebration. But these were mere distractions for Beauty. She turned back to look at her dear beast, whose perilous condition made her tremble with fear. You can imagine her surprise when she discovered that Beast had disappeared and that a young prince more handsome than the day was bright was lying at her feet, thanking her for having broken the magic spell cast on him.

Even though she was worried about the prince, she could not keep herself from asking about Beast. "You see him at your feet," the prince said. "A wicked fairy condemned me to remain in that form¹⁰ until a beautiful girl would consent to marry me. She prohibited me from

revealing my intelligence. You were the only person in the world kind enough to be touched by the goodness of my character. Even by offering you a crown, I still can't repay you for what you have done."

Beauty was pleasantly surprised, and she gave the handsome prince her hand so that he could stand up. Together they went to the castle, and Beauty was nearly overcome with joy when she found her father and her entire family in the large hall. The beautiful lady who had appeared to her in a dream had transported them to the castle.

"Beauty," said the lady, who was a grand fairy, "come and accept the reward for your wise choice. You preferred virtue to looks and intelligence, and so you deserve to see those qualities united in a single person. You will become a noble queen, and I hope that sitting on a throne will not damage your many virtues. As for you, my dear ladies," the fairy continued, addressing Beauty's two sisters, "I know your hearts and all the malice that is in them. I am going to turn you into two statues, but you will keep your awareness beneath the stone that envelops you. You will be taken to the entrance of your sister's palace, and I can think of no better punishment for you than to witness her



WARWICK GOBLE,
"Beauty and the Beast," 1923

Beauty is overcome by pity at the sight of a disconsolate Beast, whose princely body cannot compensate for a horse-like head.

happiness. You will not return to your natural state until you acknowledge your faults. I fear that you may have to remain statues forever. You can correct pride, anger, gluttony, and laziness. But you need a miracle to transform a heart filled with malice and envy.”

The fairy waved her wand, and everyone there was transported to the great hall of the prince’s kingdom, where the subjects were elated by his return. The prince married Beauty, who lived with him for a long time in perfect happiness, for their marriage was founded on virtue.