

## Beauty and the Beast

Once upon a time, a young Prince lived in a shining castle. One cold night an old beggar woman arrived, offering him a single rose if he would let her take shelter from the cold. But because of her ugliness, he turned her away. Suddenly she changed into a beautiful enchantress.

To punish the Prince, she turned him into a terribly ugly beast. Then she gave him a magic mirror and the rose, telling him it would bloom until his twenty-first year. To break the spell, he must love another and earn that person's love before the last petal fell.

In a small village nearby, a beautiful young woman named Belle hurried through town. She greeted the people and then rushed to her favorite shop – the bookstore. The owner gave her a book as a gift. A dreamy look crossed Belle's face. "It's my favorite! Far-off places, daring sword fights, magic spells, a prince in disguise... Oh, thank you very much!" Belle rushed outside, reading as she walked.

As Belle walked, a handsome hunter named Gaston ran after her. "Belle, the whole town's talking about you. It's not right for a woman to read! It's about time you got your nose out of those books and paid attention to more important things – like me!"

Belle tried to get away without being rude, but Gaston's friend, LeFou, joined them and began to insult Maurice, her father, who was an inventor.

"My father's not crazy! He's a genius!" As Belle spoke, an explosion boomed from her father's house so she started to run.

At the house, Belle found her father and told him what the villagers were saying about her. "They think I'm strange, Papa."

"Don't worry, Belle. My invention's going to change everything for us. We won't have to live in this little town forever!" Belle's father got up on his horse named Philippe, and set off for the fair with his new invention. Belle waved. "Goodbye! Good luck!"

But soon the horse was lost in a dark, misty forest. As Maurice paused to look around, he saw two yellow eyes staring out of the darkness. It was a wolf! The horse jumped up and ran away. Terrified, Maurice ran through the forest with the wolves behind him. When he reached a tall, heavy gate, he dashed inside, slamming the gate on the wolf whose sharp teeth snapped at his leg.

Still trembling, Maurice turned to see a huge, grand castle. "Hello? I've lost my horse, and I need a place to stay for the night."

“Of course, Sir! You are welcome here!”

Maurice turned around. He could see no one! Then he looked down and saw a big wall clock with a cold, frowning face. Beside him was a smiling candle stand! Maurice grabbed the clock and examined it. “This is impossible. Why – you’re alive!” The enchantress had turned all the Prince’s servants into household objects.

As the wall clock protested, the candle stand led Maurice into the sitting room. There he met a friendly teapot named Mrs. Potts and her son, a cute teacup named Chip. Suddenly, the door opened. A voice boomed. “There’s a stranger here...”

Maurice jumped out of his chair. In the shadows was a large, ugly figure. “Please... I need a place to stay...”

“I’ll give you a place to stay!” The Beast grabbed Maurice and pulled him out of the room.

Back home at the cottage, Belle heard a knock at the door and opened it. “Gaston! What a ‘pleasant’ surprise!”

“Belle, every girl in town would love to be in your shoes. Do you know why? Because I want to marry you!”

“Gaston, I don’t know what to say! I’m sorry, but... but... I just don’t deserve you!”

As Gaston was leaving, he tripped and fell in the mud. When Belle looked out, she saw that the villagers had come together, hoping to see a wedding. The priest and all Gaston’s friends saw him lose face!

After the villagers and an angry Gaston left, Belle ran outside to feed the chickens. There she found her father’s horse, alone. “Philippe! What are you doing here? Where’s Papa?”

The horse made some light sounds. Frightened, Belle jumped onto Philippe and returned to the mysterious forest. Soon, they found the castle. “What is this place?” Then she saw her father’s hat on the ground.

Belle hurried inside the gloomy castle and wandered down the wide, empty corridors. “Papa? Are you here? It’s Belle.” No one replied, but Belle didn’t know that the Enchanted Things had seen her. With joy, the candle stand danced around the wall clock. “Don’t you see? She’s the one? She has come to break the spell!”

Without noticing them, Belle continued to search for her father.

Finally, Belle discovered Maurice locked in a tower. “Papa! We must get you out of there!” Suddenly she heard a voice from the shadows. “What’re you doing here?”

Belle gasped. “Please let my father go. Take me instead!”

“You would take his place?”

Belle asked the voice to come out into the light. She was horrified when she saw the huge, ugly Beast. To save her father, Belle agreed to stay in the Beast’s castle forever.

The Beast pulled Maurice out of the castle and threw him into a carriage that would take him back to his home in the town. There, he entered a tavern where he saw Gaston surrounded by his friends. “Please, I need your help! A horrible beast has locked Belle in a dungeon!”

“Does it have cruel, sharp teeth?” one villager joked.

Maurice grabbed the man’s coat. “Yes! Yes! Will you help me?”

“We’ll help you, old man.” Gaston and his pals threw the inventor out. But Maurice’s story gave Gaston an idea.

At the castle, Belle nervously followed the Beast upstairs. He paused for a moment. “The castle is your home now, so you can go anywhere you like... except the West Wing.”

Belle stared back. “What’s in the West Wing?”

“You MUST NOT go there! It’s forbidden!” The Beast opened the door to her room. “You will join me for dinner. That’s not a request!” After the Beast left, Belle threw herself on the bed. “I’ll never escape from this prison – or see my father again!”

That night, Belle refused to eat with the Beast. Instead, she crept downstairs to the kitchen. All the Enchanted Things gave her food and entertained her. The wall clock agreed to take her on a tour. Belle halted beneath a dark staircase. “What’s up there?”

“Nothing, absolutely nothing of interest in the West Wing.”

But when the wall clock wasn’t looking, Belle slipped away and ran up the staircase to a long

hallway lined with broken mirrors. She slowly and carefully opened the door and entered a dark, dirty room. On the floor were broken furniture, torn curtains, and gray, broken bones. The only living thing was a rose, shining from under a glass bowl. Enchanted, Belle lifted the cover and touched one soft, pink petal. She did not hear the Beast enter the room.

“I warned you never to come here!” The Beast walked towards Belle. “GET OUT! GET OUT!!”

Terrified by his anger, Belle turned and ran. She rushed past the wall clock and the candle stand as she fled the castle. “Promise or no promise, I can’t stay here another minute!” She found Philippe, the horse, and they galloped through the snow until they met a pack of angry, hungry wolves. Terrified, the horse stood up and Belle fell to the ground. When Belle tried to defend Philippe, the wolves attacked her.

Suddenly, a large paw pulled the animals away from her. It was the Beast!

As Belle tried to get to her feet, the wolves turned and attacked the Beast. When the fight ended, the surprised wolves ran away and the Beast collapsed, wounded. Belle knew that this was her chance to escape, but when she looked at the fallen Beast, she could not leave him. “Here, lean against Philippe. I’ll help you back to the castle.”

Meanwhile, in the town Gaston and LeFou were plotting to have put Maurice put in a mad house unless his daughter, Belle, agreed to marry Gaston.

Back at the castle, Belle cleaned the Beast’s wounds and thanked him for saving her life. Later, she was quite surprised when he showed her a beautiful library. “I can’t believe it! I’ve never seen so many books in all my life!” The Beast smiled for the first time. “Then it’s yours!”

That evening, Mrs. Potts and the other Objects watched as Belle read a story to the Beast. They were filled with hope that the Beast and Belle would fall in love.

Gradually, the mood in the castle began to change. Belle and the Beast read together, ate together, and played together in the snow. They even had a snowball fight! When Belle watched the big, funny-looking Beast try to feed some birds, she realized that he was kind and gentle – something that she hadn’t seen before. In turn, the Beast started to hope that Belle would begin to care for him. He tidied his room, bathed, and dressed up for the evening. He was overjoyed when Belle taught him how to dance.

That evening, the Beast asked Belle if she was happy. “Yes, I only wish I could see my father. I miss him so much.”

“There is a way.” The Beast showed Belle the magic mirror. In it, she saw her father lost in the woods, ill from his search for her. When the Beast saw the unhappy look on Belle’s face, he decided to let her go, even if it meant he would never be human again. Before Belle left, he gave her the magic mirror. “Take it with you so you’ll always have a way to look back and remember me.”

Heartbroken, the Beast watched as Belle climbed on Philippe and rode away. When she found her poor father in the forest, Belle took him to their cottage so she could nurse him back to health. But as soon as they arrived, a tall, thin man knocked on the door. It was Mr. D’Arque! He had come to take her father to his mad house! LeFou had convinced the villagers that Maurice was crazy because he was always talking about some terrible beast!

“No! I won’t let you!” Belle blocked the way. Gaston put his arm around Belle. “I can clear up this little misunderstanding – if you marry me. Just say yes.” Belle showed them the Beast in the magic mirror. “He’s not ugly and cruel. He’s really kind and gentle.”

Enraged, Gaston shouted. “She’s as crazy as the old man! I say we kill the Beast!” The mob of villagers went to the castle, locked Belle and her father in the cellar and looked for the Beast. As the villagers fought the Enchanted Things, Gaston forced the Beast up to the castle roof. He beat the Beast who didn’t even try to resist. “Get up! Or are you too ‘kind and gentle’ to fight back?”

In the meantime, Chip had helped Belle and Maurice escape from the cellar. When the Beast saw Belle, he grabbed Gaston by the throat. But his love for Belle had made him too human. He let Gaston go and looked at Belle. Without warning, Gaston stabbed the Beast in the back! The Beast roared. Gaston stepped back – and fell off the roof to his death.

Wounded, the Beast gazed at Belle before he collapsed. She ran to him and held him in her arms. “No! Please! I love you!”

The rain began to fall gently. Slowly the Beast opened his eyes and in astonishment, he watched his paws change into hands. He held them out to Belle. “Belle, it’s me!”

Belle hesitated and then looked into his eyes. “It’s you!”

The Prince drew her close and kissed her. Then they watched happily as Cogsworth the wall clock, Lumiere the candle stand, Chip, Mrs. Potts, and all the other servants once again became human. True love had finally broken the spell, and everyone danced for joy.