

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Once upon a time there was a rich merchant. He had three beautiful daughters, but the youngest was the most beautiful. When she was a child everyone called her Beauty and the name stuck with her over the years. Her sisters envied her because she was also the kindest and the smartest of the three. Their father lost all his money because his ships sank at sea. The family had to move to a small cottage in a small village. The man went to the fields every morning to work, while Beauty did the cleaning and prepared lunch for her family every day. The only thing her sisters did was wake up late, wander around all day and complain that they had no lovely clothes to wear anymore.

A year passed. One day the father received a letter saying that one of the ships he owned had returned undamaged. It meant that the family was rich again. When they heard the news, the older sisters made a list of things they wanted their father to buy for them - dresses, hats, shoes, earrings, bracelets and lots more.

“Would you like me to buy something for you too?” her father asked Beauty.

She thought that the money they had wouldn't be enough for her sisters' lists, so she replied kindly, “Since you ask, I would like you to bring me a rose, because they don't flower here.”

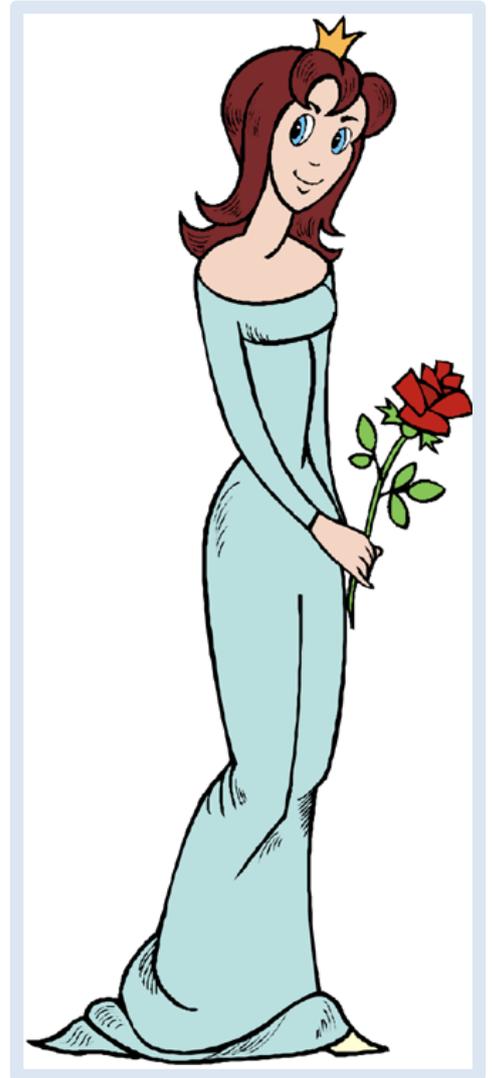
When the man arrived at the ship, it was undamaged, but it was empty and so the man had to go back home as poor as he was before. There was only ten miles left to his house when suddenly a blizzard started. The snow was so thick and the winds so strong that the man fell off his horse twice. It was evening so the man thought that he was going to die from cold and hunger. Just then he spotted a castle not far away. He arrived at the castle and went into a hall. There was a fire where he could dry his clothes and a table set for just one person. The man waited to see if someone would come, but since no one came, and he couldn't stand the hunger any longer, he ate the meal in front of him. He felt a lot better and started to explore the castle. At last he found a bed, which seemed to have been made up for him. He didn't bother waiting, but he got in and fell asleep right away.

When he woke up the next day, he was surprised to find some clean clothes left out for him instead of his own dirty clothes. He put them on and went outside to find his horse. On his way out of the castle he passed under an arch of roses and remembered what his youngest daughter had asked him to bring her. He plucked some roses from the bush. At once, he heard a terrible roar and saw a beast running towards him.

“You are so ungrateful! I gave you food, a warm bed, and clothes and still you pick my roses, the only thing I truly love. Prepare to die!”

“Please master, don't kill me,” the man answered, “I have three lovely girls waiting for me to get back home.”

“I'm not your master, I'm a beast, so don't flatter me. But you say you have daughters. You can go, but you must promise that one of your daughters will come on her own and die instead of you. If not - you should come back in three months to die.”



The man had no choice but to agree. The beast had one last thing to say. "I don't want you to leave the castle with empty hands. Before you leave take this bag and fill it with as much gold and precious things as you can find."

The man went home. He was very sad. He gave Beauty the roses he had taken from the beast's garden and told everyone what had happened. The older sisters started crying but Beauty stayed calm.

"Why aren't you crying?" demanded the sisters. "Father is going to die, just because of your silly roses."

"Father won't die," she replied. "The beast told father that he could send one of his daughters and so I'm going to go."

Nothing could change Beauty's mind. The next day she left with her father to go to the beast's castle. On the way, the father told Beauty about the gold which the beast had made him take. She advised her father to use the money as a dowry for her sisters.

When they arrived at the palace the beast met them. "Did you come here of your own will?" he asked. "Yes," Beauty replied.

"Your heart is too good!" the beast exclaimed and told them to have dinner and sleep well. "Tomorrow morning you can leave the palace", the beast told the man.

The next morning, after her father left the palace, Beauty started crying. She thought that the beast wanted to kill her. With her head full of these horrible thoughts, the girl started walking around the palace. It was very beautiful. To her surprise, she found a room which had a sign on it saying, "Beauty's Chambers". She opened the door and saw a lovely room with piano and library. "The beast doesn't want me to get bored," she thought and regained her courage. "If only I could see my family, everything would be perfect", she thought and at that moment the mirror on the wall showed her home. She saw that one of her sisters was getting married, but then everything disappeared. "This probably means he doesn't want to kill me."

At dinner time, she went into the dining room and saw that the beast was there. "Can I watch while you eat?" he asked.

"Of course," Beauty replied, "you are the master here".

"No," the beast replied. "You are the mistress of this castle. If you want me to leave, I will go right away. Tell me, you find me disgusting, don't you?"

Beauty couldn't lie, so she answered, "Yes, indeed I do, but I believe you have a good heart".

"You are right. Not only am I disgusting, but I don't have any brains either. I am a beast", he said and left her to have her dinner alone.

The next morning the beast entered the room around dinner time and asked the Beauty a question which shocked her. "Will you marry me?" he asked.

"No, beast", she answered. He sighed and left the room again. This is how they lived for three months - Beauty's happiness would have been complete if the beast didn't ask her one and the same question every evening.

One day Beauty was standing in front of the mirror, and saw her family again. She saw that her father was very sick. She ran to the beast and told him what she saw. "I promised never to leave you, but if you don't let me go, I will die from sorrow," she said.

"You can go visit your family", he said, "but you must promise me that you will be back on the eighth day. When you are ready to come back, you should just put your ring on the table."

The next morning she woke up at her father's home. When he saw his youngest daughter safe and well, the father got very excited. Her sisters also came to see her. They were both very envious and angry that Beauty was all dressed up in a lovely dress and was looking more beautiful than ever. They came up with a sly plan to make Beauty go back to the castle later than she had promised so that the beast would get angry and kill her. When the eighth day came, they started crying and asking their youngest sister to stay with them a little more. Beauty's good heart didn't even think there could be a plan and she believed they truly missed her. She promised to stay eight more days. But on the tenth day, Beauty had a dream. In her dream the beast was lying in the garden almost dead. She woke up and put her ring on the table.

The next morning she woke up in the castle. She called for the beast but no one replied. She searched for the beast everywhere but she couldn't find him. At last she remembered her dream and went in the garden. There she found the beast. He had fainted, but Beauty thought he was dead. "He died, because of me!" she thought and a tear drop fell on his chest. As soon as Beauty's tears dripped onto his chest, Beast turned into a handsome prince. Beauty was amazed.

"I was turned into a hideous beast by a fairy long ago, because I didn't let her shelter in the castle when there was a storm," Beast explained, "only finding true love could break the spell. Will you marry me?"

Beauty agreed happily and they lived many long years together in the castle.