

# BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

By VERA MORRIS

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**PIONEER DRAMA SERVICE, INC.**  
Englewood, Colorado

# BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Adapted and Dramatized from the Classic Fables of  
Giovani Francesco Straparola  
and Madame Leprince de Beaumont

By VERA MORRIS

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place in France, long, long ago.  
There are two acts.

## ABOUT THE STAGING

For rehearsal purposes, individual scenes have been indicated as such. However, the action should flow continuously, one scene blending into the next, nonstop. Use atmospheric music and shifts in lighting to cover any pauses. Above all, avoid choppiness. If necessary, the play can be performed without any lighting shifts or effects.

For preview only

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### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

	<i># of lines</i>
PRINCE* ..... selfish young man	47
FIRST PRINCESS ..... hopes to marry Prince, haughty	27
CAPTAIN..... in the service of the prince	28
SECOND PRINCESS..... young noblewoman, also hopes to marry Prince	21
OLD WOMAN ..... witch with awesome powers	33
LOUISE ..... young maidservant at castle	26
HELEN ..... castle housekeeper	31
BEAST* ..... the prince transformed into a lion-like creature	122
MADAME RONDEAU..... owns a small farm, a widow	113
WOLF..... crafty, always hungry	13
MAGIC LOOKING GLASS..... sees all, knows all	8
ISABEL..... Mme. Rondeau's daughter	56
MARGUERITE ..... another daughter	48
BEAUTY ..... the youngest daughter	117
GRASPO ..... Marguerite's husband, a farmer	47
BRUTUS ..... hound dog	13
GREEDO..... Isabel's husband, a hunter	66
ROSE LEGEND ..... agent of the witch	9
CLOCK..... likes to pass the time	18
MASTERPIECE PAINTING ..... all for beauty	13
MOVING CHAIR ..... not only moves, but talks	11
Additional Party Guests, Princesses if/as desired	

\*The roles of PRINCE and BEAST are played by two different actors.  
However, if desired, one actor can play both roles.

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# BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

## ACT ONE

### Prologue

**SETTING:** The STAGE shows three playing areas. The largest area is the main hall of the castle belonging to the young PRINCE (soon to become the BEAST). The basics: a large dining table UP CENTER. Bench behind the dining table and a handsome chair RIGHT and LEFT. STAGE RIGHT is a large, throne-like chair. On a low platform, if possible, to signify "importance" and rank. DOWN RIGHT is a small table. DOWN LEFT is the farmyard of MADAME RONDEAU. Suggested by crude wooden table with two stools, or, maybe, a small bench. FORESTAGE is an all-purpose locale -- a path in the forest, outside the BEAST'S castle. (NOTE: For suggestions on dressing up the setting, consult PRODUCTION NOTES at rear of playbook.)

**PRIOR TO CURTAIN:** MUSIC. Spritely enough for a dance.  
LAUGHTER.

**AT RISE:** PRINCE is entertaining. He is dancing with FIRST PRINCESS. CAPTAIN, a soldier in the service of PRINCE, dances with SECOND PRINCESS. PRINCESSES are gorgeously costumed, jewelry, tiaras. CAPTAIN wears a rapier or fencing foil (sword). A large tablecloth covers the dining table. Goblets and a bowl of fruit. MUSIC OUT. DANCERS bow to one another.

**FIRST PRINCESS:** (*Flirting.*) It's always such a pleasure to visit you, Prince.

**PRINCE:** (*Conceited.*) I know.

**SECOND PRINCESS:** (*Also flirting.*) You're such fun to be with.

**PRINCE:** (*Indifferent.*) So it has been said.

**FIRST PRINCESS:** Soon it will be time for you to choose a bride.  
(*PRINCESSES giggle.*)

**CAPTAIN:** That's not a subject that interests the prince.

**SECOND PRINCESS:** (*Disappointed.*) Oh?

**FIRST PRINCESS:** Why is that?

**PRINCE:** The thought of sharing my life and worldly goods with another I find depressing. I prefer to live free and keep everything I have for myself. (*PRINCESSES think he's joking. Laugh.*)

FIRST PRINCESS: Surely, you don't believe a wife would be a burden?

PRINCE: She might want one thing, and I might want another. It would be a nuisance. Anything or anyone who interferes with what I want is to be avoided at all costs. (Again, PRINCESSES think he's joking. Or, at least, they hope so.)

SECOND PRINCESS: Ha, ha, ha. Such a witty fellow you are, Prince.

PRINCE: That is true.

FIRST PRINCESS: You only say such things to tease us.

CAPTAIN: His Royalness never teases. Takes far too much energy.

PRINCE: The captain is correct. I prefer to save my energy for dancing and dining.

PRINCESSES: (Forcing themselves.) Ha, ha, ha. hee, hee, hee.  
(SOUND: THUNDER. STAGE DARKENS for an instant.)

FIRST PRINCESS: (Alarmed.) What's that?

CAPTAIN: Only a storm brewing. It's been threatening all day.

SECOND PRINCESS: I'm afraid of thunder.

PRINCE: A goblet or two will banish your fear. Come, to table.  
(PRINCE gallantly extends his hand to FIRST PRINCESS. She curtsies, takes his hand. He walks her to the table and indicates that she should sit to his RIGHT. PRINCE steps behind table, does not sit. CAPTAIN extends his hand to SECOND PRINCESS. She curtsies, takes his hand. He walks her to the table, LEFT. While this movement plays -- MORE THUNDER and, again, a DIMMING of the STAGE LIGHTS, DOWN and UP [or some LIGHTNING FLASHES if you can manage them]. An OLD WOMAN, dressed in ragged fashion, steps INTO VIEW, EXTREME DOWN RIGHT, on the FORESTAGE. She is exhausted. Reacts when the THUNDER ROARS. OLD WOMAN walks with the aid of a long staff or trimmed tree branch. Mutters as she crosses FORESTAGE to EXTREME DOWN LEFT.)

OLD WOMAN: As if I don't have trouble enough...no food. . . weary as weary can be. . . and now, foul weather. . . I must secure shelter. . . perhaps some kind soul will help me. . .  
(She's OUT. PRINCE slaps his hands together, a signal to some OFFSTAGE servant. He sits. When he is seated, FIRST PRINCESS and SECOND PRINCESS sit. CAPTAIN remains standing. LOUISE, a young serving girl, ENTERS RIGHT.)

LOUISE: M'lord?

PRINCE: (Indicates.) My goblet is empty.

LOUISE: I'll refill it at once, m'lord.

PRINCE: You'd better. Otherwise, you can find employment at some other castle. I understand Bluebeard is hiring.

LOUISE: (*Horrified at the prospect.*) Bluebeard! (*She turns and runs OFF, RIGHT.*)

PRINCE: I enjoy teasing the servants.

PRINCESSES: (*Forcing themselves.*) Ha, ha, ha.

PRINCE: Especially when employment is hard to come by.  
(*PRINCESSES, again, laugh -- only this time without much enthusiasm.*)

PRINCESSES: Ha, ha, ha.

CAPTAIN: The maidservant either jumps when the prince barks or she can starve in the forest. (*LOUISE quickly RE-ENTERS, carrying a silver pitcher.*)

PRINCE: What kept you?

LOUISE: I hurried as fast as I could, m'lord. (*PRINCE holds up a goblet.*)

PRINCE: My goblet is still empty!

LOUISE: (*Hurries to him.*) Yes, yes, m'lord. (*LOUISE hurries to the PRINCE'S side and pours drink into the goblet. SOUND: LOUD KNOCKING from OFFSTAGE, LEFT. Someone knocking at the castle door.*)

CAPTAIN: (*Turns to the sound.*) What's that?

LOUISE: Someone's at the castle door, Captain.

CAPTAIN: I thought it might have been the storm.

PRINCE: What does it matter? My goblet is full, and now, Louise, you may fill the others. But always remember -- me first.

LOUISE: Your wish is my command, Prince.

PRINCE: It had better be. Ha, ha, ha.

OTHERS: (*Dutifully.*) Ha, ha, ha. (*LOUISE fills the goblet belonging to PRINCESSES, CAPTAIN. When she is done, she steps aside.*)

PRINCE: I shall make a toast.

CAPTAIN: Bravo. (*PRINCESSES applaud in polite fashion.*)

FIRST PRINCESS: To friendship?

SECOND PRINCESS: To love?

CAPTAIN: To loyalty?

PRINCE: Bah! (*He stands, holds up the goblet for his toast.*) Who needs friendship, or love, or loyalty? I drink to the only thing that truly matters -- to selfishness and all the pleasures it brings to me! (*The PRINCESSES are less than thrilled by the toast. Stand. They and CAPTAIN lift their goblets.*)

PRINCESSES/CAPTAIN: To selfishness and all the pleasures it brings to the prince!

PRINCE: Drink! (ALL drink. HELEN, the housekeeper, a motherly sort, hurries IN from LEFT. Keys dangle from her belt.)

HELEN: Forgive me, Prince.

PRINCE: What is it? (Motions to PRINCESSES.) Sit, sit. (PRINCESSES sit.)

HELEN: There's an old woman at the castle door.

PRINCE: Do I know her?

HELEN: I doubt it.

PRINCE: What does she want?

HELEN: Shelter from the storm.

PRINCE: (Indignant.) Shelter from the storm? The impudence. Is my castle to become a wayside inn for every vagabond and beggar? Tell her to be on her way. No shelter here.

HELEN: I told her, Prince.

PRINCE: What did she say to that?

HELEN: She insisted I speak to you on her behalf.

PRINCE: Insisted, did she? Let me have a look at this insolent hag.

HELEN: At once, Prince. (HELEN curtsies, EXITS LEFT.)

CAPTAIN: (Hand on his sword grip.) Say the word, my Prince, and I'll run her off.

PRINCE: No, no. It's been a dull day. I shall enjoy a bit of diversion.

FIRST PRINCESS: Dull day, Prince?

SECOND PRINCESS: Surely you don't mean that?

PRINCE: I always mean what I say -- even when I'm insincere. (He stands. Moves to throne chair.) You have no idea what a prince has to contend with. People who don't pay their taxes, apples with worms in them. Too much sun. I detest too much sun. I tell you, being a prince is no easy thing. (He sits in throne chair like a monarch about to receive some unwelcome ambassador.) Louise.

LOUISE: M'lord?

PRINCE: You may fetch me my goblet.

LOUISE: Yes, Prince. At once, Prince. You first. (LOUISE steps to table and picks up PRINCE'S goblet, refills it. She puts the pitcher on the table. Brings goblet to PRINCE. He takes it. Sips. LOUISE steps back. HELEN RETURNS.)

HELEN: Here she is, Prince. The old woman.

PRINCE: (Impatiently.) Well, well, where is she? Never keep a prince waiting. (OLD WOMAN hobbles IN.)

OLD WOMAN: It will be a relief to sit down. (To HELEN.) Might I have a chair? (HELEN looks nervously to PRINCE.)

PRINCE: Chairs are for guests.

OLD WOMAN: It hurts me to stand. I am very old, Prince.

PRINCE: Is that my fault?

OLD WOMAN: My bones ache and crackle.

PRINCE: I advise you to see a physician. I'm no doctor.

FIRST PRINCESS: Does the prince look like a doctor?

SECOND PRINCESS: The prince could never look like anything but what he is -- *(Fawning.)* -- a prince.

CAPTAIN: Be on your way, hag.

OLD WOMAN: I beg you, Prince. Allow me to stay. I'll be no trouble. I've been travelling for several days. My feet are swollen.

PRINCE: Next time ride a horse. *(This strikes PRINCESSES as funny. They laugh. CAPTAIN sniggers. OLD WOMAN takes note.)*

OLD WOMAN: I've had nothing to eat since yesterday morning.

PRINCE: Old women shouldn't diet. Even I know that.

OLD WOMAN: Diet? Did you say diet?

CAPTAIN: He did.

OLD WOMAN: I've had nothing to eat because there's been nothing to eat. I'm near to starving. I don't have a copper penny to my name. I'm weary from travel. The storm is nasty and wet. The wind harsh. I beg you, Prince -- a crust of bread. Some mercy.

PRINCE: Out of the question.

OLD WOMAN: A corner by some fire. To dry my dress and warm my bones.

PRINCE: Not unless you can pay. I don't believe in something for nothing.

OLD WOMAN: What a pity. What a sadness. So young and yet so cruel. *(This is an enormous breach of court etiquette. OTHERS gasp.)*

PRINCE: *(Outraged.)* Bite your tongue, Old Woman. You are speaking to a prince.

OLD WOMAN: Then act like a prince. *(CAPTAIN steps forward, ready to draw his sword. OTHERS gasp.)*

CAPTAIN: Say the word, sire, and I'll run her through.

PRINCE: *(To OLD WOMAN.)* You come to my castle uninvited. You disrupt my day. You say unpleasant things. You have no manners.

OLD WOMAN: Hunger is never polite. I have so little. You have so much. A crust of bread, a chair to sit in, a moment's shelter -- is that so much to ask?

PRINCE: I thought you'd be amusing. But you're not. Out, out, Old Woman. I have no time for your sorrows. I am not interested in such things.



OLD WOMAN: What, pray tell, Prince, does interest you? (*PRINCE stands and lifts high his goblet.*)

PRINCE: Selfishness and all the pleasures it brings to me! (*He drinks, holds out goblet for LOUISE to take. She steps forward, takes goblet, steps back.*)

OLD WOMAN: (*Strong voice.*) Hear me well, vain and selfish Prince. (*OTHERS react, shocked.*)

PRINCE: (*Can't believe her impudence.*) What, what?!

OLD WOMAN: I am no ordinary beggar. I have powers, although I cannot use them for my own benefit.

CAPTAIN: Powers?

OLD WOMAN: My powers are so awesome, I hesitate to employ them. (*PRINCESSES laugh. OLD WOMAN turns to them and speaks sharply.*) I have not forgotten you, my pretties. You laughed at my swollen feet. (*Suddenly, PRINCESSES are very frightened. To CAPTAIN.*) They laughed and you sniggered, "brave" Captain. I won't forget.

CAPTAIN: (*To PRINCE.*) Let me toss her to the wolves. She'll never be hungry again. (*OLD WOMAN lifts her staff, as if to call down thunder. SOUND: THUNDER! ALL react.*)

OLD WOMAN: That is not the thunder of the storm. That is the thunder of my wrath!

LOUISE: (*Nervously attempting to move from her place.*) I -- I -- can't move.

FIRST PRINCESS: I -- I -- I can't get up. (*She attempts to do so.*)

SECOND PRINCESS: Nor can I! (*Attempts to rise. Impossible.*)

HELEN: I'm -- I'm -- I'm stuck to the floor. (*She tries to move, can't.*)

CAPTAIN: What is this, Old Woman? Sorcery?

OLD WOMAN: Revenge.

CAPTAIN: (*Struggling to move.*) Prince, I can't move!

PRINCE: Get out! Get out! No witches here. (*He takes a threatening step toward her. OLD WOMAN points to him with the staff and, instantly, he's frozen in place.*) What have you done? I can't move!

FIRST PRINCESS: Someone do something!

OLD WOMAN: All in good time, Princess Pretty. (*Step by step, OLD WOMAN advances on the PRINCE. OTHERS are wary, struggle to move. They can't. To PRINCE.*) The pleasures of selfishness, Prince? You haven't lived long enough to know such pleasures are brass, not gold. As you have been beastly to me, you shall become a beast.

PRINCE: How dare you!

OLD WOMAN: *(Circling round and round.)* Beast, beast. You shall become a beast, I say.

HELEN: Stop, Old Woman! Please.

OLD WOMAN: Beast, beast. *(Circling.)* Beast, beast.

OTHERS: *(Unable to censor themselves.)* Beast, beast.

PRINCE: *(Dumbfounded, horrified.)* Beast, beast.

OLD WOMAN: *(Points an accusing finger to PRINCE.)* Why are you standing on two feet? You are a beast. Down on the floor like the other beasts. The curs and the cats. Stay there until you are bidden to rise.

PRINCE: No, no. *(As if to ward off her evil eye, PRINCE throws his hands in front of his face and, unable to help himself, drops to his knees. He begins to make awful growling noises. He holds his hands like paws. Snorts and snarls. He's in torment.)*

OLD WOMAN: *(Chanting as she circles.)* "Mean and sly, with the wink of an eye. Selfish fun and too much sun. Beastly to all, beastly to one. The curse is chanted, the curse is done." *(The OLD WOMAN lifts high the staff. SOUND: THUNDER. A terrific BANG. OTHERS scream! Immediately, the STAGE is plunged into DARKNESS! [NOTE: In the TOTAL DARKNESS, ALL but the OLD WOMAN quickly EXIT, unseen by AUDIENCE.] Supposedly, in the BLACKNESS, the PRINCE is transformed into the BEAST. Another actor plays the BEAST, taking the place of the actor portraying the PRINCE. [NOTE: If you do not wish to use two actors to portray PRINCE/BEAST, CONSULT PRODUCTION NOTES.] In the BLACKNESS, which continues to be punctuated with the SOUNDS OF RUMBLING THUNDER, we hear the "NOISES" of the BEAST -- more agonized growls and grunts and groans -- bestial and inhuman.)* "Needle, beetle, hog, dog. Squirm worm, stroll mole. Talk beast, walk beast." *(Strongly.)* The curse is chanted. The curse is -- done. *(Echo.)* The curse is done -- done -- done. *(The animal sounds of the BEAST are now subdued. He could be softly crying or whining. These SOUNDS continue as the LIGHTS DIM UP -- but not to full. The BEAST is right where we last saw the PRINCE -- on the floor. He wears gauntlet gloves to cover his furry hands [paws]. His head resembles that of a male lion. Mane, whiskers, black snout for a nose. BEAST is horrified to find himself in such a state.)* Welcome to the "pleasures of selfishness." So you will remain, Beast.

BEAST: *(Barely human.)* How long. . . ?

OLD WOMAN: How long, you ask? Always.

BEAST: *(Dazed.)* Always?

OLD WOMAN: Or until someone will love you for yourself. Not for your worldly treasurers and princely state. (BEAST gets up on his knees, gloves held like paws.)

BEAST: Mercy.

OLD WOMAN: You ask for mercy, and yet you give none. Selfish Beast. You have heard the curse. If it lasts one thousand years, so be it. Perhaps no one will ever love you for yourself. Still, as the years pass, you may learn something of life. Maybe not.

BEAST: Mercy.

OLD WOMAN: A simple crust of bread given in honest charity would have spared you. But that was not your way. You may rise. (Starts to EXIT.) Farewell, Beast. Your castle will be lost in time and space. But it will belong to you alone. Enjoy it.

BEAST: Nooooooooo. . . !

OLD WOMAN: (Mumbles.) . . . weary as weary can be. . . perhaps some kind soul will help me. . . (She's OUT. BEAST thrashes about. He could be trying to break some unseen ropes or chains. Sobbing, frightened, lost, BEAST crawls up onto the throne chair and falls back against it. Cries out, once again.)

BEAST: Noooooo. . . ! (From the sound of his echoing cry, he could be some forest animal caught in a hunter's trap. Repeats.) Noooooo. . . ! (BLACKOUT.)

End of Prologue

## ACT ONE Scene One

Years and years later. Night.

PRIOR TO CURTAIN: MUSIC -- lonely and mournful. It plays a few moments to set a melancholy mood.

AT RISE: Softly the LIGHTS illuminate the castle. It is now a dark place filled with menacing shadows. There is one significant addition to the props. A single large rose in a slender crystal vase atop the table DOWN RIGHT. MUSIC FADES. Nothing. Then -- VOICE OF MADAME (MME.) RONDEAU from OFF FORESTAGE EXTREME DOWN RIGHT.

MME. RONDEAU'S VOICE: Caesar! Caesar! (Pause.) Caesar, please come back! Where are you? (Pause.) Caeeeeesar . . . ! (A moment passes and MME. RONDEAU ENTERS on FORESTAGE. Wears a rustic cloak.) Where could he have gone? What am I to do without my pony and cart? (Looks

about as she nervously steps CENTER on FORESTAGE.) What a strange forest. Everything is so still. Nothing moves, and the air smells musty. (Suddenly, SOUND OF HOWLING WOLF. MME. RONDEAU reacts.) A wolf! (WOLF APPEARS EXTREME DOWN RIGHT. A creature out for blood. He snarls and bares his teeth.)

WOLF: Grrrrr. (MME. RONDEAU is too terrified to move.) Grrrrr.

MME. RONDEAU: What a fearsome-looking wolf! I'll never see my children again. (Cautiously, but in menacing fashion, WOLF advances on MME. RONDEAU. Wide-eyed, she stares out into the AUDIENCE and mutters incoherently. WOLF advances another step, stops. His growl is low. Then.)

WOLF: (Slyly.) How many children do you have?

MME. RONDEAU: (Without thinking.) Three. I have three children. Daughters. (She realizes the WOLF spoke.) You -- you spokel

WOLF: How observant you are. Your children are well-fed? Plump, perhaps? (Another low growl.)

MME. RONDEAU: (Bewildered.) How is such a thing possible? A talking wolf?

WOLF: All things are possible when you are in the bewitched forest.

MME. RONDEAU: Dreaming. I must be dreaming. That's it. Why, my pony threw me from the cart. I must have struck my head on a stone.

WOLF: (Craftily.) Think so?

MME. RONDEAU: (Shaking.) If I'm not dreaming and you're real -- what are you going to do?

WOLF: I'm going to do what a wolf does best. I'm going to have dinner. We wolves are always -- (Wipes his lips with his tongue.) -- hungry.

MME. RONDEAU: (Horrorified.) Hun-hun-hungry?

WOLF: Yes. (Low growl.) Hungry. (Spells it out.) H-U-N-G-R-Y. Hungry.

MME. RONDEAU: (Edgy.) You're not going to devour me?

WOLF: Yes, I am. I won't even use salt and pepper. You'll see. (Another growl -- louder than before. MME. RONDEAU screams.)

MME. RONDEAU: Help! Help! Wolf! Wolf! (She runs OFF, EXTREME DOWN LEFT. WOLF rears up and slashes the air with his sharp nails. Howls. Gives chase.)

WOLF: It's no use. You'll never escape! (Growling ferociously, WOLF BOLTS after MME. RONDEAU. OPTIONAL BUSINESS: After WOLF EXITS, a SPOT OF LIGHT picks out the rose in the crystal vase. A moment passes and we hear the EXCITED VOICE of MME. RONDEAU from OFFSTAGE, LEFT.)

MME. RONDEAU'S VOICE: Help! Help! Somebody, please! Wolf, wolf! (HOWL of the WOLF from OFF LEFT, followed by the SOUND of MME. RONDEAU BANGING at the castle door. Pause. Another WOLF HOWL. More BANGING. HELEN APPEARS from UP RIGHT, a lighted candle in one hand. Behind her is LOUISE.)

HELEN: Such a racket. Who could it be? (As HELEN ENTERS, LIGHTS DIM UP somewhat.)

LOUISE: No one ever comes to the castle of the Beast. No one would dare. (More BANGING.)

HELEN: It seems someone has dared.

LOUISE: Shall I see who it is?

HELEN: I'm the housekeeper. That's my job. (HELEN assumes a dignified post and parades OUT, OFF LEFT. LOUISE takes a cautious step after her.)

LOUISE: Be careful. (Pause.)

HELEN'S VOICE: Who are you? What do you want?

MME. RONDEAU'S VOICE: Quick! Shut and bolt the door! Wolf, wolf! (Yet another HOWL from the WOLF. Terrified, MME. RONDEAU hurries INTO the castle. She immediately sees LOUISE and talks nonstop.)

MME. RONDEAU: It was in the forest. Eyes burning like embers. It wanted to devour me. I was to be its dinner! May I sit down? I'm exhausted. (Without waiting for LOUISE to answer, MME. RONDEAU sits at table, breathing heavily. HELEN RETURNS.)

HELEN: There's nothing to fear now. Wolves never come into the castle.

MME. RONDEAU: I'm relieved to hear it.

LOUISE: How did you find this castle?

MME. RONDEAU: I stumbled upon it. I was coming back from the seaport of Calais. My pony bolted and ran off with the cart. I didn't know where I was, and everything seemed so odd. Then I heard the wolf, and it spoke to me. (LOUISE and HELEN exchange a look.) There's no need to look like that. I'm not mad. I know what I saw and I know what I heard.

HELEN: We won't doubt you.

LOUISE: It's just that we so rarely have visitors.

HELEN: To be truthful, we never have visitors.

MME. RONDEAU: May I stay the night? I don't want to be out there in the forest. In the dark. I'm afraid of the dark.

HELEN: It's not up to us to say who can stay.

MME. RONDEAU: Isn't this your castle?

HELEN: Heavens, no. I'm the housekeeper. My name is Helen.

*(Indicates.)* This is Louise. She's a serving maid.

MME. RONDEAU: Whose castle is this? *(VOICE OF THE BEAST is heard from OFF RIGHT.)*

BEAST'S VOICE: It is the castle of the Beast.

HELEN: *(Tense.)* He approaches.

MME. RONDEAU: Who?

LOUISE: *(To MME. RONDEAU.)* Try not to anger him. He has a fiery temper.

MME. RONDEAU: Who has a fiery temper?

HELEN/LOUISE: The Beast. *(MME. RONDEAU can tell the servants are afraid. They back OUT, LEFT -- as if they feared to look upon the BEAST. MME. RONDEAU stands, takes a step after them. Calls out.)*

MME. RONDEAU: What do you mean -- "The Beast"?

BEAST'S VOICE: See for yourself. *(Slowly, on guard, MME. RONDEAU turns. Pause. The BEAST ENTERS. His voice is dark and commanding.)* You may stay the night. You will be safe. No wolf enters here. *(Poor MME. RONDEAU is about to faint at the sight of the BEAST. She mutters foolishly to herself.)* You are frightened of me.

MME. RONDEAU: *(Lies.)* No, no, no, Sir Beast. *(BEAST roars out as he points a finger at her.)*

BEAST: You lier! *(He runs at her as if to pounce. He's terrifying in his rage. MME. RONDEAU drops to her knees and holds up her hands in supplication.)*

MME. RONDEAU: Do not devour me, Sir Beast. I have children. They need their mother.

BEAST: Foolish woman. I have no desire to devour you. *(He sits in the throne chair, wearily. MME. RONDEAU babbles on, as if she thinks her words will placate the BEAST.)*

MME. RONDEAU: I am a widow. I have a small farm. When my husband lived, he put everything he made into a sailing ship. A sailing ship that went to India. It was to make our fortune.

BEAST: And?

MME. RONDEAU: The ship was to dock at Calais. When I got there I was greeted with terrible news. The ship was lost in a storm. I have nothing. Everything has been lost. Nothing left. Nothing but the farm, and even that is heavily mortgaged.

BEAST: You say you have children?

MME. RONDEAU: Three, Sir Beast. Daughters. Isabel, Marguerite. Beauty. *(Panics again.)* Do not devour me!

BEAST: Stop whining. Stop grovelling. Stand up.

MME. RONDEAU: Yes, yes. Thank you, Sir Beast.

BEAST: What is your name?

MME. RONDEAU: Madame Rondeau. I come from the village of Petite Nante.

BEAST: I would see your daughters. I am curious about life outside this castle.

MME. RONDEAU: Yes, yes, Sir Beast. You must come and visit us. Stay as long as you like.

BEAST: It is not possible for me to leave this castle. I can see everything I wish to see with the aid of my Magic Looking Glass.

MME. RONDEAU: Magic Looking Glass? *(She takes a step to AUDIENCE, speaks sotto.)* Whatever is to become of me? Surely I'm doomed. A bewitched forest, a talking wolf, a Beast who speaks like a nobleman and, now -- a Magic Looking Glass. I must be dreaming.

BEAST: *(Gestures UP LEFT.)* Behold the Magic Looking Glass. *(MAGIC LOOKING GLASS ENTERS UP LEFT. The actress is costumed in a flowing gown, over which are sewn many small mirrors, or pieces of glass, or large sequins. She holds a large hand mirror. She is "faceless" -- that is, she seems to have no face. This is due to the nylon cloth which covers her features like a gauze mask. She doesn't exactly walk, she floats. Or, as close to floating as the actress can manage.)*

MAGIC LOOKING GLASS: North, East, South, West. Whatever you see will be for the best. *(BEAST motions MAGIC LOOKING GLASS to approach. She moves to throne chair. MME. RONDEAU is beside herself with confusion and fear. Doesn't know whether to stay or run. The MAGIC LOOKING GLASS scares her.)*

MME. RONDEAU: Oh, dear, oh, dear. *(To escape the approaching MAGIC LOOKING GLASS, MME. RONDEAU hides behind the throne chair.)* She frightens me.

BEAST: Be silent!

MME. RONDEAU: *(Cowering.)* Yes, Sir Beast. Forgive me, Sir Beast.

BEAST: *(Motioning to MAGIC LOOKING GLASS.)* Closer. I wish to peer into the glass. *(MAGIC LOOKING GLASS steps closer. Holds out the hand mirror. BEAST leans forward, peers into the glass.)*

MAGIC LOOKING GLASS: What is it you wish to see? Tell me and what will be will be.

BEAST: Show me the daughters of Madame Rondeau.

MAGIC LOOKING GLASS: It will be so.

BEAST: Isabel, Marguerite and -- what was the name of the last daughter?

MME. RONDEAU: *(Trembling, barely audible.)* B-B-B-Beauty.

BEAST: What?!

MME. RONDEAU: Beauty! Her name is Beauty!

BEAST: *(Softens.)* Yes. Beauty. *(MAGIC LOOKING GLASS holds the mirror to the BEAST. He continues to peer into it. At the same time, MAGIC LOOKING GLASS gestures gracefully to the farmyard.)*

MAGIC LOOKING GLASS: Come forth, Isabel and Marguerite and -- Beauty. *(LIGHTS DIM DOWN on castle and COME UP BRIGHT and SUNNY DOWN LEFT. ISABEL and MARGUERITE ENTER FORESTAGE from EXTREME DOWN LEFT and step to the farmhouse table. ISABEL carries a bowl of potatoes and a knife. MARGUERITE carries two pails of milk. The girls are rather unpleasant, in that they can think only of themselves. As the vignette plays, MME. RONDEAU creeps around the throne chair and stands peering into the glass. She and BEAST and MAGIC LOOKING GLASS remain motionless. ISABEL sits at table, begins to peel potatoes.)*

ISABEL: I can't imagine what's kept Mother so long.

MARGUERITE: You don't think anything has happened, do you?

ISABEL: Anything bad, you mean?

MARGUERITE: Uh-huh.

ISABEL: Mother can take care of herself.

MARGUERITE: She shouldn't have gone to Calais. My husband or your husband should have gone in her place.

ISABEL: You know how strong-willed Mother can be. She said Father would have gone alone, and she would do no less. *(MARGUERITE puts down the pails.)*

MARGUERITE: Only two pails of milk this morning. The cows are going dry.

ISABEL: I'll be glad to see the last of this old farm. I'm sick of the smell of vegetables. *(MARGUERITE sits.)*

MARGUERITE: My poor back. I'm much too young to have a bad back. It comes from carrying milk pails. *(BEAUTY APPEARS from LEFT, steps to table. She's overheard some of the conversation. Like her sisters, she's dressed in poor fashion. She's pretty, sweet, intelligent.)*

BEAUTY: You don't mean what you said, Isabel. About leaving the farm.



ISABEL: Yes, I do. As soon as Mother returns with all the money Father invested, we'll be rich. No more hard work and no more plain dresses.

MARGUERITE: There'll be dances and parties and things like that. (GRASPO, MARGUERITE'S husband, ENTERS FORESTAGE from EXTREME DOWN LEFT, joins the OTHERS. He carries a large straw rake or hoe. He's a bumpkin.)

GRASPO: (To MARGUERITE.) I'm not interested in such things.

ISABEL: (To MARGUERITE.) A fine husband you have.

MARGUERITE: Is yours so much better? (Scoffs.) Men. They know nothing of the better things in life.

GRASPO: I want horses. Fine horses. I want to race them. Fine horses cost a great deal of money. (To MARGUERITE.) When your mother returns, I'll be a rich man.

MARGUERITE: Sometimes I feel you only married me, Graspó, because you knew one day I'd be rich.

GRASPO: Think what you will.

MARGUERITE: Monster!

BEAUTY: Marguerite, Graspó. No quarreling.

GRASPO: I wish your mother would get here. I'm anxious to see the money. (SOUND: HUNTING HORN from OFFSTAGE, EXTREME DOWN RIGHT. This is followed by the BARKING OF A DOG. ALL at the farm house look to the sound. NOTE: BEAST and MME. RONDEAU continue to stare into the hand mirror that MAGIC LOOKING GLASS is holding. BRUTUS [or BERTA], a hunting hound, leaps ONTO the FORESTAGE and runs from RIGHT to LEFT and into the farmyard.)

BRUTUS: Bow-wow! Bow-wow! Bow-wow!

ISABEL: It's Brutus. (Pets him.) Good boy [girl], good boy. Where's my husband? Where's Greedo? (BRUTUS points to EXTREME DOWN RIGHT. GREEDO, a hunter, ENTERS. He has some dead birds slung over one shoulder, along with a hunting horn. Carries a bow and some arrows. He's well-named. Greed motivates him. BRUTUS sits by the table, scratches a flea.)

GRASPO: Hola, brother! Was it a good hunt?

GREEDO: I've had better.

BEAUTY: I hate to see birds fall.

ISABEL: Would you rather starve? (GREEDO crosses to table and tosses down the birds. NOTE: Since the farmyard scene is played in somewhat close quarters, don't be afraid to take up some castle space, if necessary. The important thing is that the AUDIENCE see everyone clearly. GREEDO is a sturdy, no

nonsense type. But, like his brother, he's greedy and eager for the rich life.)

GREEDO: With the money you'll get from your mother, I shall buy a vineyard. I have no liking for the farm life. I was meant for better things.

ISABEL: You sound so greedy, Greedo.

GRASPO: Why shouldn't he? Haven't we all worked this land day and night, living like paupers? Dreaming of the day that ship from India sailed into port?

MARGUERITE: I hope Mother doesn't forget the gifts she promised to bring us. I said I wanted a ruby ring.

ISABEL: I said I wanted perfume. The finest perfume from Paris. Anything to get rid of the stink of onions.

GRASPO: I asked for a fine saddle trimmed with silver stitching.

GREEDO: I asked for a new suit of clothing. (*Indicates.*) What I'm wearing is all I have. A man with a rich vineyard needs to dress well.

ISABEL: Do you know what our little sister asked for?

GRASPO: What did Beauty ask for?

MARGUERITE: You won't believe it -- a rose.

GREEDO/GRASPO: (*Incredulous.*) A rose?!

ISABEL: Did you ever hear of anything so foolish?

MARGUERITE: Beauty always has been a little "odd." Imagine asking for a rose when you could have a ruby.

GREEDO: That's no way to get ahead in the world, Beauty. Why did you ask for a rose?

BEAUTY: (*Simply.*) Because I love roses. They're lovely to look at. They smell better than any perfume from Paris. Sometimes they grow wild and cost nothing. They give what they have and ask nothing in return except to be appreciated by those who love them. (*BEAST is most interested in this explanation. He leans even closer to the glass. ISABEL and MARGUERITE put a finger to their temples to suggest BEAUTY is insane.*)

ISABEL: (*To GREEDO and GRASPO.*) What did we tell you? Odd, odd, odd.

GREEDO: I can't stand here listening to nonsense. (*To ISABEL.*) Let me know the minute your mother returns with the money. I want to hear the sound of coins clinking together. (*He picks up the birds. EXITS.*)

GRASPO: I better get back to the fields. But my thoughts will be with race horses. (*He EXITS.*)

MARGUERITE: Work, work. Always work. I'll be glad to see the end of it. I'm going to enjoy being rich. *(She picks up the pails, EXITS.)*

ISABEL: *(To BEAUTY.)* A girl as odd as you will never catch a husband.

BEAUTY: Maybe I don't want a husband.

ISABEL: No, all you want is a rose. Ha, ha, ha! A rose! Ha, ha, ha! *(She takes bowl of potatoes, EXITS.)*

BEAUTY: *(Thinking aloud.)* I don't know why they carry on so. I didn't laugh when I heard about their wishes. What's so wrong about wishing for a beautiful rose? *(Looks to BRUTUS who is lapping his paw.)* Do you know, Brutus? *(BRUTUS stops lapping, thinks. Shakes his head. He doesn't know.)* You're a clever hound. Come along. I'll see if I can find a soup bone for you. *(BEAUTY EXITS and, delighted with the prospect of something to chew on, BRUTUS follows after her and OUT.)*

BRUTUS: Bow-wow! Bow-wow! Bow-wow! *(LIGHTS DIM on farmyard and DIM UP in castle.)*

BEAST: Your sons-in-law are greedy and grasping.

MME. RONDEAU: *(Thinks he's gotten the names wrong.)* No. Greedo and Graspo.

BEAST: *(Roars.)* Silence!

MME. RONDEAU: Ooooo. . . *(Fearful BEAST will pounce and devour her in a rage, MME. RONDEAU, again, drops to her knees. Whimpers.)* Ooooo. . .

BEAST: Silence, I said!

MME. RONDEAU: *(Quivering.)* Silence you shall have, Sir Beast. I won't say another word.

BEAST: Two of your daughters are shallow.

MME. RONDEAU: You mean Isabel and Marguerite. Yes, they are shallow, I'm afraid. But they're hard workers. Forgive me, Sir Beast. I broke my silence.

BEAST: Your other daughter I find -- "interesting."

MAGIC LOOKING GLASS: Shall I go or shall I stay? Tell me now and make my day.

BEAST: I've seen enough. *(He gestures MAGIC LOOKING GLASS away. She steps back, curtsies. EXITS UP RIGHT.)* Madame Rondeau. *(She knee-walks in front of throne chair.)*

MME. RONDEAU: I'm here, Sir Beast. I haven't gone anywhere.

BEAST: Helen!

MME. RONDEAU: I don't know what my children will say when I return empty-handed. They all had such hopes.

BEAST: I'm not interested in their hopes. The hopes of greedy, grasping, shallow people are always the same. (HELEN ENTERS LEFT. LOUISE is with her.)

HELEN: Sire?

BEAST: Prepare a room for Madame Rondeau. She will be staying the night.

MME. RONDEAU: You are kind, Sir Beast.

BEAST: (Roars.) I am not kind!

MME. RONDEAU: (Cowers.) Whatever you say, Sir Beast.

BEAST: Louise.

LOUISE: M'lord?

BEAST: See the food is prepared. Bring drink. I wish Madame Rondeau to receive the hospitality of my castle.

HELEN: We'll attend to everything.

LOUISE: A visitor in the castle. How nice.

BEAST: (Roars.) Obey me! (Both HELEN and LOUISE give a yelp and dash OUT, RIGHT. MME. RONDEAU is still on her knees, still terrified. BEAST stands and looks down at her. She forces herself to smile. It's not easy.) You must excuse me now. I will not see you again. By morning you must be gone. Do you understand me?

MME. RONDEAU: I do, Sir Beast. Thank you for your kindness. (He bellows.)

BEAST: I am not kind!

MME. RONDEAU: You are not kind. I forgot. I forgot. (BEAST EXITS DOWN RIGHT. MME. RONDEAU slowly gets to her feet. She looks about, fearful of the shadows. LOVELY MOOD MUSIC. A SHAFT OF LIGHT falls on the rose in the crystal vase. MME. RONDEAU sees it.) What a lovely rose. (She walks to the vase. MOOD MUSIC CONTINUES UNDER -- never loud enough to overpower the dialogue.) I've never seen such a rose. (Closer look.) Such delicate petals. . . (Smells the rose without touching it.) Such a lovely scent. How Beauty would love a rose such as this. (ROSE LEGEND ENTERS from UP LEFT.)

ROSE LEGEND: In that case, why not take it to her?

MME. RONDEAU: Oh! (She turns to the voice. ABOUT ROSE LEGEND: She's a young girl dressed in greenery or a green garden costume, including cap. She is dotted with rosebuds.)

ROSE LEGEND: It is always nice to know of someone who admires and loves the rose. (ROSE LEGEND moves DOWNSTAGE. By this time MME. RONDEAU is not surprised by anything.) My name is Rose Legend. I am the guardian of the Beast's roses.

Every rose in the castle garden is under my care and protection. The Beast is fond of roses.

MME. RONDEAU: I would like to take Beauty a rose. But this one --  
(Points to crystal.) -- seems special.

ROSE LEGEND: All the more reason to take it for a gift.

MME. RONDEAU: Perhaps you could spare me one? They're so beautiful.

ROSE LEGEND: My roses are beautiful, true. But that rose is the most beautiful of all. Go on. Pluck it from the vase.

MME. RONDEAU: You mean now?

ROSE LEGEND: Yes.

MME. RONDEAU: I could take it in the morning.

ROSE LEGEND: It will not wither. If you do not take it now, you cannot take it ever.

MME. RONDEAU: (Thinking it over.) Well, in that case. (MME. RONDEAU steps to the vase. She stretches out her hand and, for a moment, it seems suspended in space. She turns back to ROSE LEGEND, smiles. ROSE LEGEND smiles back.)

ROSE LEGEND: (Urging.) Don't be afraid. The Beast won't mind. (Encouraged by ROSE LEGEND'S reassurance, MME. RONDEAU plucks the rose from its vase. SOFT MUSIC CUTS OFF ABRUPTLY. EFFECT: Instantly the castle is plunged into DARKNESS. THUNDER ROLLS. The LIGHTS FLASH UP AND DOWN WILDLY [STROBES if you have them]. Laughing madly, pleased with her mischief, ROSE LEGEND runs OFF UP LEFT. Terrified once again, MME. RONDEAU spins about wondering what's going on.)

MME. RONDEAU: What's happening? Rose Legend, where are you?! (As the LIGHTS CONTINUE TO FLASH UP AND DOWN and THUNDER ROLLS, the BEAST runs IN from UP RIGHT and moves CENTER.)

BEAST: Thief! Thief! Thief! (Enraged, he holds high his arms and his "fingers" curl to claw.)

MME. RONDEAU: Mercy! Mercy!

BEAST: I'll show you mercy. The mercy of the Beast! (He crosses to her and roughly grabs her by the wrist and pulls her CENTER.)

MME. RONDEAU: What have I done?

BEAST: You have stolen the only thing that gives me pleasure. Thief! (Cruelly, he pushes her to the floor and grabs away the rose.) My rose. My beautiful rose.

MME. RONDEAU: I wouldn't have done it unless she gave me permission. She said you wouldn't mind.

BEAST: Who said?

MME. RONDEAU: Rose Legend. The one who grows and protects your rose garden.

BEAST: You lie! There is no such person!

MME. RONDEAU: She was here. I swear it. She told me to take the rose.

BEAST: I am the only gardener here! There is no other. (*Bends down so his teeth are in her face.*) I offered you the hospitality of my castle, and you repay my kindness with treachery and deceit. Thief!

MME. RONDEAU: Mercy.

BEAST: You must die.

MME. RONDEAU: No!

BEAST: Die! That is my sentence. There is no reprieve from the justice of the Beast.

MME. RONDEAU: You can't mean it.

BEAST: Watch! (*He rears up, arms high, fingers curled, teeth bared. Ready to claw and tear. He roars.*)

MME. RONDEAU: Grant me one last wish, Sir Beast! Please, please, I beg you.

BEAST: Well?

MME. RONDEAU: Let me see my daughters one more time. Let me bid them one last farewell. If you allow me this, I promise to return.

BEAST: To death.

MME. RONDEAU: Yes. Death.

BEAST: You swear it?

MME. RONDEAU: I swear it.

BEAST: Swear it by the memory of your husband's love.

MME. RONDEAU: Done. (*BEAST pulls back.*)

BEAST: You may rise. I grant you one day. (*She stands. He gestures LEFT.*) Leave my castle. Return to your pitiful farm.

MME. RONDEAU: I don't know the way back. I don't know where I am. What road am I to take?

BEAST: My magic will take you home. Two simple lines. They are to be spoken once you cross the drawbridge. Listen well, for they will also return you to my castle. Spin as you recite. (*Recites.*) "Bell horses, bell horses, what time of day? One o'clock, two o'clock, three and away." (*Pause.*) Can you remember that?

MME. RONDEAU: Yes.

BEAST: Go now. (*She starts to EXIT LEFT.*) Remember -- (*MME. RONDEAU stops, turns back.*) One day. No longer.

MME. RONDEAU: I'll keep my promise.

BEAST: You'd better. *(He snarls. Struggling to hold back a sob, MME. RONDEAU EXITS. BEAST looks at the rose in his hand.)*  
My beautiful rose. So beautiful. . . beautiful. . . beautiful.  
*(Then.)* Beauty. *(LIGHTS DIM QUICKLY to BLACKNESS as BEAST smells the rose.)*

End of Scene One

ACT ONE  
Scene Two

The farmyard. Moments later.

AT RISE: LIGHTS UP on farmyard. Castle remains in DARKNESS.  
MME. RONDEAU, spinning round and round, comes INTO SIGHT from LEFT. Her eyes are closed, and she is reciting the magic travel verse.

MME. RONDEAU: *(Recites.)* "Bell horses, bell horses, what time of day? One o'clock, two o'clock, three and away." *(Pause.)* "Bell horses, bell horses, what time of day?" *(She bumps into the table.)* Oh! *(Opens her eyes, looks about.)* Wonder of wonders. The Beast spoke the truth. I'm home. And safe, too. *(BRUTUS ENTERS on FORESTAGE from EXTREME DOWN LEFT. Immediately sees MME. RONDEAU. He looks at her, and then out to AUDIENCE.)*

BRUTUS: *(Humanlike.)* Huh? *(Immediately, he starts to bark.)*  
Bow-wow! Bow-wow!

MME. RONDEAU: No, Brutus. You're not seeing things. It's me.

BRUTUS: Bow-wow! Bow-wow! *(He turns and races OFF to alert the others of MME. RONDEAU'S return.)* Bow-wow! Bow-wow!  
Bow-wow!

MME. RONDEAU: I'd better sit down. I feel weak. *(She sits at the table.)* What will I tell them? They're expecting so much.

BEAUTY'S VOICE: *(From OFFSTAGE LEFT.)* Mother! Mother!  
*(BEAUTY runs IN.)* Brutus is running about like a dancing chicken. He's so excited. We didn't see the pony cart.

MME. RONDEAU: Alas. I fear we've seen the last of the pony cart and the pony. Who knows where Caesar has gone? *(BEAUTY drops to one knee beside her mother.)*

BEAUTY: You look so strange. Has anything happened?

MME. RONDEAU: A great deal has happened. *(SOUND: BRUTUS BARKING. He REAPPEARS on FORESTAGE EXTREME DOWN LEFT. Points to MME. RONDEAU. GREEDO and GRASPO follow*

*IN. They're in a state of high excitement. BRUTUS crawls under the table backwards -- so that his face is to the AUDIENCE.)*

GREEDO: Dear, dear mother-in-law. We were so worried about you.

GRASPO: Show us the money. *(GREEDO elbows him in the side.)*

GREEDO: *(Sotto.)* Shut up, you fool. *(To MME. RONDEAU.)* Pay no attention to my brother. The only thing that concerns us is your safe return.

BEAUTY: Would you like a cup of water, Mother? You look pale.

MME. RONDEAU: No, Beauty. I can't stay long.

GRASPO: *(To GREEDO.)* Can't stay long? How long does it take to drink a cup of water?

MME. RONDEAU: One day is all I have.

GRASPO: *(To GREEDO.)* What's she talking about? *(To MME. RONDEAU.)* Show us the money. *(Again, GREEDO jabs him in the side with an elbow.)* Oh! *(MARGUERITE and ISABEL hurry IN from LEFT and step closer to their mother.)*

MARGUERITE: Mother, dear Mother. You're back.

MME. RONDEAU: For a little while, Marguerite.

ISABEL: I didn't see Caesar and the pony cart.

BEAUTY: Mother says they're gone.

ISABEL: Gone? What's that supposed to mean? Never mind, it's not important. *(Eager.)* My perfume. Where is it? I want to bathe in perfume from Paris.

MARGUERITE: *(Jumping up and down in gleeful fashion.)* My ring! My ring, my lovely ruby ring! Show it to me.

GRASPO: I hope you got the best saddle money could buy. I won't settle for anything less. Rich! We're rich!

GREEDO: No more hunting for this lad. What material is my new suit? I'll wager it's a handsome brocade.

BEAUTY: *(Stands.)* Did you bring me a rose, Mother? A beautiful rose?

MME. RONDEAU: About the rose, Beauty. There's something you all should know.

GREEDO: Never mind.

ISABEL: Who cares about a stupid rose?

GRASPO: We're rich.

MARGUERITE: Rich! *(ISABEL dances with GREEDO, MARGUERITE dances with GRASPO. BRUTUS crawls from under the table and dances with BEAUTY.)*

ALL: *(In rollicking fashion, singsong.)* "If I'd as much money as I could spend, I never would cry old chairs to mend; old chairs to mend, old chairs to mend; I never would cry old chairs to mend."



BRUTUS: Bow-wow! Bow-wow!

ISABEL/MARGUERITE: Rich! Rich!

GRASPO/GREEDO: Rich!

MME. RONDEAU: *(On impulse.)* Stop! *(ALL stop and face MME. RONDEAU.)* I've been trying to tell you --

OTHERS: What?

MME. RONDEAU: There is no money. *(Long pause. Then.)*

OTHERS: Huh?

MME. RONDEAU: The ship sank at sea. Everything was lost. We have nothing. We are poorer than before. *(Another long pause, followed by another.)*

OTHERS: Huh?

MME. RONDEAU: *(Woeful.)* We are destitute. *(ISABEL and MARGUERITE break out into wails and cries.)*

ISABEL/MARGUERITE: Not rich! Poor again! Oh, nooooo. . . *(GREEDO and GRASPO exchange a look. At this point they're in a state of shock.)*

MME. RONDEAU: There's more bad news.

BEAUTY: What is it?

MME. RONDEAU: When I was travelling home, I got lost in a bewitched forest.

GREEDO/GRASPO: Bewitched forest?

MME. RONDEAU: A talking wolf chased me into a castle that belonged to a great beast.

ISABEL/MARGUERITE: Beast?

MME. RONDEAU: A terrifying creature. He frightened me. He was going to let me stay the night. Only I took a rose, and he has condemned me to death.

BEAUTY: *(Aghast.)* Death? *(OTHERS look at MME. RONDEAU, and then each other. They're convinced she's raving mad.)*

MME. RONDEAU: I pleaded with him to let me return here to bid you all one last farewell. So -- farewell.

BEAUTY: You mustn't go back.

GREEDO: What's the matter with you, Beauty? Can't you see your mother has lost her mind?

GRASPO: Too much sun, maybe? *(GREEDO jabs him with an elbow.)* Oh.

ISABEL: The ship going to the bottom of the sea -- that's undone her. You know what this means.

MARGUERITE: Time to send for a doctor?

ISABEL: No, you idiot. It means I'm not going to get my perfume from Paris. Ooooh. . . *(Wailing in disappointment, she EXITS LEFT.)*

MARGUERITE: No ruby ring. No finer things in life. Mother, how could you do this to us? Ooooh. . . (FOLLOWS after ISABEL.)

GRASPO: Goodbye to my dream of racing fine horses. (He EXITS.)

GREEDO: (To AUDIENCE.) We lose a fortune and inherit a mad mother-in-law. Rats.

BRUTUS: Bow-wow! Bow-wow!

GREEDO: Shut up, you wretched dog. (In his frustration at losing the money, he kicks at BRUTUS.)

BRUTUS: Bow-wow! Bow-wow! (BRUTUS runs OFF.)

BEAUTY: You mustn't kick a defenseless dog, Greedo.

GREEDO: No, I must hunt and farm unless I want to starve. Bah. (He EXITS EXTREME DOWN LEFT.)

MME. RONDEAU: I swear to you, Beauty. I am telling the truth.

BEAUTY: You mustn't mind what they say, Mother.

MME. RONDEAU: I shall be sorry to leave you.

BEAUTY: You can't return to the Beast.

MME. RONDEAU: I have no choice. He is a powerful lord. If I do not return, I'm sure he'll come for me.

BEAUTY: Let me go in your place. I will reason with him.

MME. RONDEAU: (Stands, hugs BEAUTY.) You don't know what you're saying.

BEAUTY: I won't allow the Beast to harm you in any way.

MME. RONDEAU: You're a good daughter, Beauty. But you don't know him as I do.

BEAUTY: It's worth a try, Mother.

MME. RONDEAU: I know you can be persuasive. But you'll be no match for him. (Thinks.) Although, he did seem to take an interest in you.

BEAUTY: How could he? The Beast has never seen me.

MME. RONDEAU: He has a Magic Looking Glass.

BEAUTY: The decision's been made. I'm going. How will I find his castle?

MME. RONDEAU: With a verse you must recite as you spin round and round.

BEAUTY: Tell me.

MME. RONDEAU: "Bell horses, bell horses, what time of day? One o'clock, two o'clock, three and away."

BEAUTY: Goodbye, Mother. (BEAUTY runs OFF, LEFT.)

MME. RONDEAU: Goodbye, Beauty. Take care. (SOUND of BRUTUS BARKING in the distance. MME. RONDEAU waves after her daughter.)

End of Scene Two

**End of Script Sample**

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For preview only

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### STAGE PROPERTIES

For Castle: Dining table, tablecloth, bench, two handsome chairs, throne-like chair for Beast (on low platform, if possible), small side table.

For Farmyard: Wooden table, two stools and/or small bench.

### BROUGHT ON AND PERSONAL:

#### Prologue

Three goblets, bowl of fruit (on dining table). Tiaras, jewelry (PRINCESSES); sword or foil (CAPTAIN); long walking stick or staff (OLD WOMAN); silver pitcher (LOUISE); keys on belt (HELEN); gauntlet gloves (BEAST).

#### ACT ONE, Scene One

Large rose in crystal vase. Cloak (MME. RONDEAU); lighted candle (HELEN); hand mirror, nylon mask for face [nylon stocking will work] (MAGIC LOOKING GLASS); bowl of potatoes, knife (ISABEL); two pails (MARGUERITE); hoe or rake (GRASPO); string of "dead birds," hunting horn, bow, arrows (GREEDO).

#### ACT ONE, Scene Three

Cloth or towel (HELEN); stool (MOVING CHAIR); reversible painting [one side showing pastoral scene and the other side a portrait of the BEAST] (MASTERPIECE PAINTING).

#### ACT TWO, Scene One

Painting of red rose (MASTERPIECE PAINTING); plates of food, silver pitcher (HELEN, LOUISE).

#### ACT TWO, Scene Two

Baskets with laundry [one basket to contain sheet or towel] (ISABEL, MARGUERITE).

#### ACT TWO, Scene Three

Optional candelabras (LOUISE, HELEN); hand mirror (MAGIC LOOKING GLASS); shawl, cane (MME. RONDEAU); medicine bottle, large wooden spoon (ISABEL); key on thin chain or colored string (BEAST).

#### ACT TWO, Scene Five

Sword (GREEDO); hoe, rake or club (GRASPO); sword for BEAST (arm belonging to either WOLF or CAPTAIN); lightweight frame with paper picture (MASTERPIECE PAINTING).

## SOUND

Sprightly dance music for Prologue, thunder, loud banging at offstage castle door, mournful mood music, wolf howl (may be done by actor who is good at howling), hunting horn, waltz music, optional fight music.

## FLEXIBLE CASTING

Arrange to fit your requirements. Several roles can be played by either males or females. They are: WOLF, BRUTUS (becomes "Berta"), CLOCK, MASTERPIECE PAINTING, MOVING CHAIR.

With a few minor line changes, MADAME RONDEAU can be switched to a male role -- MONSIEUR RONDEAU.

Some EXTRAS can be added in the Prologue as Guests or additional Princesses. Same for Act Two dance scene.

## ABOUT THE BEAST

If you wish to have only one actor perform the roles of PRINCE and BEAST, it's done this way: In the Prologue, when the OLD WOMAN works her curse, the lights will go out, and the actor will quickly put on a lion's head mask and gauntlet gloves. Mask and gloves are set behind the throne chair prior to the play's beginning. However, by having two actors, one for the PRINCE and another for the BEAST, you can work up a great facial makeup. The BEAST actor might also be larger than the PRINCE actor. If you decide to use just one actor, remember that he must be able to speak loud and clear through the mask. The head mask or half-mask must be comfortable.

## DRESSING UP THE SET

The play can easily be performed with the suggested simple set. To dress it up, you might consider some archways for the castle and some steps and platforms. This way entrances and exits will be more interesting. Maybe a backdrop for the castle, some standing candelabra, a chandelier, rug, etc. Section of a gate on forestage, EXTREME DOWN RIGHT.

For the farmyard, some overhanging tree branches would look impressive. Some shrubbery, too.

## COSTUMES

As indicated in the script. The customary "fairy tale" assortment (consult Sheila Smolensky's Costuming for Children's Theatre --

Pioneer Drama Service). BEAUTY'S Act Two costume should be beautiful.

#### ABOUT THE CLOCK

Long dark robe or painted lightweight wood or cardboard for the body. Actor's own arms. Box for face of clock with the actor's own face poking through. Although there are numerals "I," "II," "III," etc., the CLOCK face has no hands.

#### ABOUT THE MOVING CHAIR

A costume that looks like walking upholstery. Face might be covered with a thin cloth. Arms carry the stool, and when the stool is set on the floor, actor hunkers down so that his own arms become the arms of the chair.

#### LIGHTING

Depends on what you have. Actually, the play can be done with nothing special. However, a shadowy castle works wonders and area lighting for the rose in the vase, the farmyard, the forestage, is all to the good. Do not light the castle too brightly. It should be a scary place.

#### CURTAIN CALL SUGGESTION

MME. RONDEAU takes her place at the farmyard table and stares into the hand mirror. BRUTUS, ISABEL, MARGUERITE, GREEDO and GRASPO gather around and peer into the glass.

Those at the castle form a straight line, BEAUTY and PRINCE CENTER, and march onto the FORESTAGE and toss paper roses to the audience.

## We hope you've enjoyed this script sample.

We encourage you to read the entire script before making your final decision.

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