

Beauty and the Beast



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In a far-off land, long, long ago,
there lived a merchant with
his three daughters.

They lived in a fine house with
a large garden, plenty of
servants, nice things to eat
and handsome clothes
to wear.

For many years he and his
children were happy
and contented.

But one night at sea there
was a terrible storm, and
the merchant's ships,
which were on their way
home filled with silks and
gold, were wrecked.





Then, indeed, came a change.
The merchant went to live
in quite a small house.

His daughters had to do all the
household work, for no
servant could be kept.

Only the plainest of food
appeared on his table,
and, as to clothes, they
wore the same coats
and dresses year in and
year out.





Of course, all this was very hard, but the only thing to do was to make the best of a bad situation, and this Beauty, the youngest daughter, did.

She worked early and late, cheerfully and well, doing all she could to help her father to forget his troubles.



But the two elder sisters were quite different.

Most of the day they sat idle. They grumbled from morning till night so that the poor merchant was quite miserable when he was near them.





This went on for some time,
and then, one day, the
merchant received a letter
informing him that his
ships had, after all, been
brought to shore and that
he must travel to a foreign
land to claim them.

The two elder daughters urged
him to lose no time, but to
go at once and to bring
them back expensive
presents.



"I want a diamond necklace,"



said the eldest.



"A silken gown sewn with
pearls for me,"



declared the second.



"And what for you, my Beauty?"

asked the merchant.





"Dear father,"



replied Beauty,



"to see you safely at home is all I want, but you may bring me a red rose."



The merchant traveled to the foreign land and found his ships. He bought the necklace and the gown, but not until he had nearly reached his home again did he find the rose.





At last, he saw hanging over a wall a rose tree full of crimson roses.



"There surely is no harm in picking one,"



thought the merchant, and he broke off a blossom. At the same instant there came a most terrific sound.





"He who picks my roses dies!"



Roared a dreadful voice. The trembling merchant beheld a great Beast bursting through a gate in the wall.



"Mercy, mercy!"



he screamed, falling down on his knees for he thought the fierce-looking creature meant to kill him immediately. He cried,



"Good Beast, I was but picking a rose to take to Beauty."





"Who's Beauty?"



growled the Beast. So then the merchant told him all about Beauty and his home and his ships, and how his daughters were looking forward to his return.



"You may go home,"



said the Beast,



"but tomorrow morning, without fail, you are to send your daughter, Beauty, to me, or to come yourself."





So the merchant went home,
but very sadly.



"Stupid Beauty!"



exclaimed the two elder
daughters when they heard
their father's story,



"Stupid Beauty! It's all your
fault, wanting that silly
rose; so you'd better go to
the Beast yourself."



At first the merchant would not
allow this, but Beauty had
quite made up her mind to
go. So the next morning
she set out.

The gate in the wall opened for
her as she approached, and
into the Beast's garden she
went.





The gate in the wall opened for her as she approached, and into the Beast's garden she went. It was a very beautiful garden, full of sweet-scented roses and other flowers, but there was nobody about.

There was a splendid palace with handsome halls and spacious rooms, through which Beauty roamed, but still she saw nobody.

Soon she came to a room in which was a table set out with gold and silver cups and plates, and choice fruits and cakes.

Beauty had eaten very little breakfast that morning, so she was feeling hungry. She sat down on one of the velvet chairs and was just going to take a peach when the Beast appeared.





It nearly took her appetite away, for he looked alarmingly fierce.

He spoke most kindly and politely, and sat down at the table with her, and they talked of all sorts of things.

He told Beauty she could have whatever she wished for, invisible servants would bring her all she desired, and that every day he would visit her.





Beauty was very happy in the splendid palace and beautiful garden, and as for companions there were all sorts of tame animals and birds.

Every day the Beast came to see her, and soon she looked forward to his visits, for she grew quite to love him.

He was so kind, but every day before he left her he said,





"Beauty, will you marry me?"



And every day she answered him:




"No, dear Beast, I cannot."



Then the Beast would sigh a big sigh and leave her.

Now in the palace was a magic mirror, and in it Beauty could see what her father was doing, and so she knew how sad he was in not knowing what had happened to her.

After a while she begged the Beast to let her go home, just for a day, and at last he consented.



"But, if you stay longer than a day and a night I shall die,"





he told her. So Beauty went to see her father and sisters, and she said how happy she was in the kind Beast's palace.

Her father was delighted to hear about this, but her sisters were horribly jealous.

They gave her something to drink that made her sleep so soundly that it was evening of the next day before she awoke.





Oh, how sorry she was. She hurried off at once, not even waiting to say good-bye.

All over the palace she searched for her dear Beast, but he was nowhere to be found.

At last, in the rose-garden, under her favorite bush, she saw him lying there, dying.



"Oh, dear Beast, speak to me; I love you!"



she sobbed.



"Beauty, will you marry me?"



gasped the Beast.



"Yes, I will!"



she cried.





Then there was a great crackling bang, as if all the fireworks in the world had been let off at once,

and there, where the Beast had laid, stood a handsome young Prince.

So he and Beauty were married, and they lived happily ever after. And Beauty, it is said forgave her unkind sisters.



The

End