Beauty and the Beast
The Legacy of the Rose

By Brian Kral

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DEDICATION

To the poet and filmmaker Jean Cocteau

STORY OF THE PLAY

By beginning the play with the arrival of the merchant and his daughter at the Beast's castle, this adaptation of the familiar fairy tale focuses on the many variations on the theme of love. Once the character referred to as “Beauty”' agrees to stay at the castle, the audience becomes involved in the developing relationship of the two central characters, leading to a bond of love that goes beyond surface appearances -- and that will outlast even death. It's a tale of happiness and sadness, of growing and changing. But in this version Beauty discovers her own courage when the Beast must leave her. About 90 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This play had its premiere production at Arizona State University in November, 1982. The cast was as follows:

Beast: David Colosimo II
Beauty: Sarah Tattersal

Joel McGuire	*Ingrid MacCartney*
Martin English	*Cynthia Villareal*
J. David Bailey	*Phillip Mitton*
Grif Sadow	

The production staff included:

Don Doyle	*Jeffrey R. Thomson, USAA*
Donna Rae Bartz	*Timothy J. Kupka*
Glorianne Engel	*Karen Miller*
Sybil Huskey	*Jackson D. Fisher*
Charles M. Mosher	*Ken Evans*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Minimal cast: 3 m, 3 f)

THE MERCHANT: A man in his 40s -- 50s; also plays Puppet Orasmyn and Puppet Father.

BEAUTY: His daughter, Nina, in her 20s.

THE BEAST: A figure of indeterminate age.

SUIT OF ARMOR: A non-speaking animate object; also plays Puppet Queen and Puppet Beauty.

SISTER: Beauty's older sister, Inez, late 20s; also plays Puppet Sister.

BROTHER: Beauty's brother, late teens or early 20s; also plays Puppet Brother.

Note: If desired, directors may cast the puppet roles separately.

A Note on the Time and Space of the Play

The action of the play takes place in and around the Beast's castle. No historical period is specified. A contrast is suggested, however, between the romantic dress of the Beast and that of the Merchant and his family, who express a stricter, Puritanical society. Beauty should bridge these periods, in the line and color of her clothing, especially as she becomes part of the Beast's life in the castle.

The interludes reveal scenes that have occurred previous to the action within the castle, as remembered by Beauty.

"Visual effects" can be minimal, grandiose, or left entirely to the imagination of the audience. They should not, however, overpower the actions and emotions of the characters.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: A large castle hall, with majestic stairs leading up to a wide gallery landing. Along this landing are three sets of windows, adjacent to one another, all opening onto a balcony. All three have curtains, but the center window is open, revealing a sky and several bright stars. The hall is dark except for the STARLIGHT. There is a loud, insistent KNOCKING the sound of a brass clapper reverberating through an oak door. A dark FIGURE hurries through the dim hall, prompted by this knocking. He stops at the base, then climbs the wide stairway to the gallery. He steps out through the center window, and draws the curtains closed, concealing himself from view. The knocking resumes. When the knocking again stops, the hall falls silent. This is broken by the sound of the unseen door being opened. It is heard striking the wall behind it with a dull boom.)

MERCHANT: *(Offstage.)* It's unlocked. Just as before.

(The MERCHANT and his daughter, BEAUTY, enter the dark hall. Several stanchions suddenly and simultaneously flare to life. Both the Merchant and Beauty jump, startled.)

BEAUTY: Those ghostly lights.

(SHE stops to look at the spacious room. The MERCHANT continues into the hall. He removes his cloak, shakes it. He lays it on the table, but an ornamental SUIT OF ARMOR takes the cloak, draping it over its arm. Pause. The Merchant lifts and looks inside the visor of the Suit of Armor.)

MERCHANT: Empty.
BEAUTY: The hall is magic.
MERCHANT: Yes. *(HE unconsciously touches his throat.)*
BEAUTY: There's no one here, Father. Perhaps we should go.

(HE doesn't reply.)

BEAUTY: Perhaps it was imagination.

MERCHANT: No. He'll appear. *(HE moves cautiously about the hall.)* Not in my worst dream could I have imagined the horror I faced in this hall. Besides, now I'm awake. And it is still here. This table that was set with an impeccable feast ... The stairs I climbed to a comfortable bed ... *(He has climbed the wide stairs, and stops before the center window of the balcony.)* The balcony that led to my fall. *(He raises his hands to the curtains, then abruptly separates them. The balcony is empty. He steps out, looking at the sky.)* The rain has stopped.

BEAUTY: *(Starting up the stairs.)* But, Father, why would he set out food and offer you a bed if---

MERCHANT: Would you ask the devil why he assumes a pleasant look? *(SHE joins him on the landing.)* You're shaking. Are you frightened?

BEAUTY: Cold from the rain.

MERCHANT: *(Wraps his arms around her.)* I've brought a great sorrow on you.

BEAUTY: No, Father, it's my fault. If I hadn't asked you to bring me a rose…

(On a trellis framing the window, bright red roses are suddenly visible. BEAUTY stops, startled. Her FATHER turns to see.)

BEAUTY: Are those ...?

(The MERCHANT nods, staring at them.)

BEAUTY: They're lovely.

MERCHANT: *(Moving towards the roses.)* Like their master, they thrive at night, each petal abloom with the hint of blood. If I thought it would erase this nightmare, I'd reach out my hand and crush each bud…

(HE reaches out for the flowers; a gloved hand appears from behind the curtain, gripping the Merchant's wrist.)

BEAST: *(From behind the curtain.)* So, Merchant! Would you commit the same crime again!

MERCHANT: *(Struggling to free himself.)* I ... did not know ... you were watching.

BEAST: *(Letting him go.)* Obviously! Or you wouldn't have been foolish enough to try plucking yet another of my flowers.

(The BEAST steps out from the shadows of the balcony. He is powerfully built and dressed in court finery in comparison to his guests. He also wears an elaborately tooled leather hood, reminiscent of those worn by hunting birds. It conceals much of his face, adding an inhuman quality. BEAUTY shrinks back at the sight of him.)

MERCHANT: *(Kneeling, rubbing his wrist.)* Do with me as you please. But I told you before: I meant you no harm.

BEAST: So you said.

BEAUTY: You've no cause to punish him. He took the flower for me.

BEAST: That's why he still lives. I'm not completely monstrous --- I do have a heart.

BEAUTY: *(Staring at him.)* An ... odd heart. Hiding -- waiting to frighten people.

BEAST: Waiting, yes, but not to frighten you. Only to see if you were as lovely -- *(Steps towards her, tentatively.)* -- as your father told me. I think he was too modest.

MERCHANT: Enough, Monster! You mock us with good manners. I saw you as you are.

BEAST: I haven't forgotten, Merchant.

MERCHANT: Then why the mask, and this pretense at courtesy?

BEAUTY: Please, Father…

BEAST: I'm not used to company. You intruded on me; you saw what you saw. I thought to spare your daughter the same shock.

End of Freeview

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