

BEAUTY & THE BEAST

By Dan Neidermyer

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Seven males; eight females, plus extras; highly flexible)

NOTE: *Females can play all roles except the Prince, Angelo de Beaumont, and Gaston. Additional courtiers to the Prince can be added by dividing the dialogue among as many (or as few) courtiers as desired.*

THE HANDSOME PRINCE	Who also becomes the MONSTROUS BEAST. (103 lines)
RYMAN	A fine member of the Prince's court. (15 lines.)
REEVES	Another loyal member of the Prince's court. (12 lines)
RESTON	The third of a trio of courtiers. (10 lines)
CHANDLER	A slightly more important official in the Prince's court. (44 lines)
ANGELO de BEAUMONT	A traveling merchant of cloth and our Storyteller. (84 lines)
GASTON	A brute, if ever there was one! (74 lines)
BEGGAR WOMAN	Describes her quite well. (6 lines)
BRENNA	Angelo's most pompous daughter. (52 lines)
DANA	Angelo's arrogant and irritating daughter. (50 lines)
BEAUTY	Angelo's sincere and very gracious daughter. (120 lines)
DAEL	Angry townspeople against the beast. (3 lines)
EARTHA	Another angry townspeople against the beast. (3 lines)
NEDA	And yet another angry townspeople. (2 lines)
ISABELLA	Angelo's matronly wife. (11 lines)
VENDORS/TOWNSPEOPLE	Citizens of the realm. (6 lines)
COURTIERS	Members of the prince's court. (8 lines)

NOTE: All action of the play takes place near the Castle of the Handsome Prince in a kingdom far, far away and in a time long, long, long ago...yet it might as well be told as if the events were happening today in our own town! because in truth, it just very well might.

A NOTE ABOUT STAGING

"BEAUTY AND THE BEAST" can be presented in any size/any type staging facility, with or without a stage. All the action takes place near the castle of the handsome Prince.

The castle can be constructed as simply or as elaborately as desired. Or there need be no castle. Instead, the actors (*characters*) creatively adjust their movements in those scenes in some way involving a castle so that they (*the actors*) "see" in their imaginations a grand and glorious castle. If they do, the audience will also!

The play's action can also be set throughout the staging facility. Thus, scenes or portions of scenes can be played on the sides of the performance space or in the aisles etc., totally at the discretion of the director.

NOTE: Throughout the play, opportunities are given for spontaneous audience involvement. Such involvement adds to the total enjoyment of the audience and makes "BEAUTY & THE BEAST" a truly interactive experience for both the audience and the cast!

ADDITIONAL NOTE REGARDING THE HANDSOME PRINCE

Within the script, there will be opportunities for the Handsome Prince to sing, juggle, perform gymnastic feats, and/or perform magic and illusions. This is not required and keep in mind, that other "actions" could be substituted. In every sense of the word however, the Prince is a grand entertainer. His entertaining actions endear the Prince to the audience right from the opening scene. Thus, what unfortunately happens to him heightens the audience's sadness when he "disappears!" And makes his ultimate return, even more glorious!

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- SCENE #1 A sunny spring morning just outside the Prince's castle.
SCENE #2 Same morning, just a few moments later.
SCENE #3 Same morning, but now caught in a great, raging storm!
SCENE #4 Days and days later.
SCENE #5 "Inside" the castle. Right now.
SCENE #6 Same location. Days later.
SCENE #7 Somewhere close by, at this very moment.
SCENE #8 "Inside" the castle. Now.

PROPS

ANGELO—all types/all kinds of cloth (NOTE: ANGELO will need one magnificent piece of cloth.)

SET

The beautiful area just outside the castle of the handsome Prince. Can be a medieval garden, the courtyard of a palace, and/or a medieval marketplace. Whatever will work for the performance space available.

COSTUMES

A "medieval" fashion would best serve this production if the play is played in a time long, long ago. If the director chooses to set the play in contemporary times, then the fashion would be appropriate to the time of the action of the play.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

SCENE 1

The beautiful area just outside the Prince's castle; a sunny spring morning. From the rear of the staging area and through the audience, the handsome PRINCE enters, whistling and/or singing a most entertaining medieval ditty...to the enjoyment of all in attendance!

Concerning the Prince's singing—far more important that the PRINCE'S singing ability is his "likeability!" In every sense of the word, the PRINCE is grand and noble, a true gentleman. If he does not enter the staging area singing, then he should enter with a smile, moving through the audience ad-libbing a "welcome" to all/to everyone, even shaking some hands, especially the children in the audience. Truthfully, even if he does sing, the PRINCE should also welcome and greet everyone.

SCENE 3

A raging rainstorm would make "BEAUTY & THE BEAST" a bit more exciting; its message a bit more meaningful. This can be accomplished through the use of audio sound effects and a strobe light creating the effect of lightning. If possible, add the sound of a howling wind at the end of the scene.

SCENE 4

The sounds of chirping birds would enhance the beginning of this scene and would change the mood from the raging storm!

SCENE 8/CURTAIN CALL

A magnificent waltz most appropriate for a "new" princess and the handsome Prince.

NOTE: Medieval songs can readily be found on the Internet and are quite simple tunes about everyday life. These tunes are long since public domain and thus available for use within your production. Or you can use original music penned by a cast member or friend of your theatre organization.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

The beautiful area just outside the Prince's castle; a sunny spring morning. From the rear of the staging area and through the audience, the handsome PRINCE enters, whistling and/or singing a most entertaining medieval ditty...to the enjoyment of all in attendance!

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE PRINCE'S ENTERTAINING ENTRANCE. NOTE: The following action is rapid and meant to totally involve the audience right away. Three of the Prince's many courtiers, RYMAN, REEVES, and RESTON, enter the staging area. THEY move immediately toward the audience and speak directly to the audience, urging:

RYMAN, REEVES, & RESTON: *(Encouraging/urging the audience.)*

Three cheers for the Prince! Three cheers for the Prince! (The trio works the audience to get all in attendance cheering and applauding the handsome PRINCE.) Three cheers for the Prince!

THEN:

RYMAN: *(Indicating the PRINCE.)* He is truly grand!

REEVES and RESTON "work" the audience, urging the audience to verbally agree with RYMAN'S statement about the PRINCE. Then, immediately:

REEVES: *(Indicating the PRINCE.)* He is truly noble!

RYMAN and RESTON "work" the audience, urging the audience to verbally agree with REEVES' statement about the PRINCE.

RESTON: *(Indicating the PRINCE.)* There is none like him in all the realm.

RYMAN and REEVES "work" the audience, urging the audience to verbally agree with RESTON'S statement about the PRINCE.

PRINCE: (*Slightly embarrassed.*) Please, please, gentlemen!
Enough flattery!

RYMAN: (*Quickly correcting the PRINCE.*) Truth, My Prince! Real truth!

To which, REEVES and RESTON immediately ad-lib their agreement.

PRINCE: (*Really embarrassed.*) Okay, already.

REEVES: Our kingdom is the luckiest kingdom on the face of the earth.

PRINCE: And why?

We might just have to wait until the end of this production to find out "Why?" because RYMAN, REEVES, RESTON, and the PRINCE "freeze" in position. As:

ANGELO de BEAUMONT enters. ANGELO is a wealthy traveling merchant, a seller of cloth, all types/all kinds. From time-to-time, he also serves as the "STORYTELLER."

ANGELO: (*Spontaneously greets the audience with whatever words are appropriate, then:*) My name is Angelo de Beaumont, and I am a seller of cloth, all kinds, all types, beautiful, brilliantly-colored brocades; the finest of silks; the shiniest of satins; the most elegant of fabrics from all over the world. (*Asking the audience directly.*) And why can I say this? (*A beat, waiting perhaps for responses from the audience, then.*) Because I travel the world—all over the known world—seeking the most exquisite cloth available...which I then offer to my many, many customers—(*Indicating the audience.*)—wonderful people like you. (*Becoming quite serious.*) But today [or "tonight," depending upon the time of the production], I am also a "teller of stories." And what a story I have to tell all of you; a story that is hundreds and hundreds of years old. A tale told and re-told, then re-told and told yet again and again, over and over, thousands and thousands of times in many different countries—all over the world—and a story told in many different ways!

Our story today [or "tonight"] began first as a tale told by parents to their young children because the tale had a meaning, a reason for being told, a "message" if you will. And that meaning, that reason, that message was for young children to figure out, even as they were listening and enjoying the excitement of the story.

ANGELO (*Continued.*): And then—when those very same young children grew up and became parents, they told the very same story to their young children, hoping their children would learn the meaning, the reason, the message of the story just like they did. And then those young children—when they became parents—told the very same story to their— (*His hand gesture indicates the audience should complete his sentence with the word "children."*)

Exactly. And now, I am telling you this story. Our version today [or "tonight"] is originally from France, and it happened a long, long, long time ago, but not so long ago, we too can't learn something from its telling today [or "tonight"].

Our story begins with a very handsome— (*His hand gesture indicates the audience should complete his sentence with the word "PRINCE."*)

Upon hearing the word—"Prince"—THE PRINCE BECOMES "ANIMATED."

If possible, the PRINCE entertains by juggling...or by doing a gymnastic feat...or by singing another medieval ditty...even possibly doing a bit of magic and illusion, totally mystifying the audience. No matter what he does, the PRINCE "entertains" his audience and his courtiers, who respond at the appropriate time and SUDDENLY—

RYMAN, REEVES, & RESTON: (*Encouraging/urging the audience.*)

Three cheers for the Prince! Three cheers for the Prince!

PRINCE: (*Now all this has become a bit much!*) Please, guys, what have I done to deserve all this?

RYMAN: You've served our kingdom well.

REEVES: Very, very—

RESTON: *(Completing REEVES' statement.)* —well!!

RYMAN: You've made us proud of where we live!

Ad-libbed agreement from REEVES and RESTON.

NOTE: ANGELO watches all this action with polite amusement.

PRINCE: I've only done what's right for our people!

REEVES: And you've been a shining example for everyone throughout all of our realm. Would that every kingdom had a Prince as fine as you!

Ad-libbed agreement from RYMAN and RESTON.

PRINCE: *(Asking quite sincerely.)* I've been a shining example of what?

We might just have to wait to find out the answer to this question also—because at this very moment—rushing on stage—CHANDLER enters, hurrying to the PRINCE—

CHANDLER: *(With a sense of utmost urgency.)* Your Highness, Your Highness, when's the "big day"?

PRINCE: The "big day"?! What "big day"?

RYMAN: *(Jumping into the fray.)* Everyone's been asking.

REEVES: *(Rather quickly.)* Everyone everywhere.

RESTON adds his two cents by hurrying toward the audience, urging the audience with his hand gestures and facial features to agree with REEVES' statement. Then:

CHANDLER: Now don't act like you don't know what I'm talking about—

PRINCE: But—I don't.

CHANDLER: *(Thunderstruck!)* You don't?

RYMAN, REEVES, & RESTON: *(Dumbfounded!)* You don't?!

PRINCE: *(Very honestly.)* Really, guys, what are you talking about?

CHANDLER: *(Clearing his throat; then—quite auspiciously— informing the PRINCE.)* A "new" princess!

PRINCE: *(Put quite simply.)* There is none!

ALL THE COURTIERS PLUS CHANDLER: RIGHT!

RYMAN: Is that any way for our grand—

REEVES: —and noble—

RESTON: —and there is none like you in all our realm—

ALL THE COURTIERS PLUS CHANDLER: —Prince to be?!

PRINCE: *(Slightly taken aback.)* Well—?

ALL THE COURTIERS PLUS CHANDLER: NO!

CHANDLER: *(Pointing to the Prince.)* When you're King—

PRINCE: Wait, Chandler! Not so fast! I won't be "King" for a long, long time. My father's doing a great job as "King." There's time enough for me.

CHANDLER: As your advisors and courtiers, we've got to think about tomorrow; for the good of the kingdom.

The following several lines are delivered quite quickly.

RESTON: With no princess, our kingdom will have no queen.

REEVES: With no queen, our kingdom will have no heir to the throne.

RYMAN: With no heir to the throne, our kingdom will have no king after you! Whatever will we do?

PRINCE: You're talking a long, long, long time into the future when our kingdom will need an heir. My father is doing an excellent job as king—

ALL THE COURTIERS PLUS CHANDLER: *(Very solemnly nodding their heads.)* Granted!

PRINCE: —and he's going to live to be king for many, many, many more years to come.

CHANDLER: Let us hope so.

Ad-libbed agreement from all the courtiers.

PRINCE: And then—when I'm king—

Immediate shouting—

ALL THE COURTIERS PLUS CHANDLER: LONG LIVE THE KING!
LONG LIVE THE KING!

PRINCE: *(With much sincerity.)* Let us hope so.

ALL THE COURTIERS PLUS CHANDLER: *(Very solemnly nodding their heads.)* Amen.

PRINCE: So—adding up my father's years as king and my years as king—well, our tiny kingdom won't need an heir for 60-70 more years. And, guys, that's a very long, long, long time into the future.

CHANDLER: But no matter! With no princess—

RESTON: —no queen—

REEVES: —no heir—

RYMAN: *(Perish the thought; sadly.)* Perhaps the result will be—no kingdom.

CHANDLER: We cannot permit that to happen, fine Prince. We must think of our citizens.

PRINCE: *(Realizing the obvious.)* So the answer to this future dilemma is—

ALL THE COURTIERS PLUS CHANDLER: *(Not waiting for the PRINCE to come to a conclusion.)* A "new" princess!

PRINCE: But where will I find a princess? *(Moves toward the audience; speaking directly to the audience, asking/working the audience.)* Where will I find a princess?...Where will I find a princess? *(Continues working the audience, seeking a princess.)*

As the PRINCE is seeking a princess among the audience members—

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

Same location. Same morning, just a few moments later.

VENDORS enter the staging area. ALL are hawking his/her goods, foods, crafts, services, etc. EVERYONE'S speech is ad-libbed, quite loud, filling the staging area with a wonderful mixture and cacophony of voices, all trying to sell something to someone. Examples:

- *Lambs for sale! Only one shilling!*
- *Pigeons for sale! Mine are the best pigeons in all the land!*
- *Candles for sale! Made from the finest wax!*
- *Dresses for sale! Please buy!*
- *Homemade cookies! There are none tastier in all the realm!*
- *I am the finest blacksmith in all the kingdom. None better!*

Add any variation of the above statements.

The VENDORS "sell" to the members of the audience (or at least try to do so.) as THEY enter the staging area...and are making their way to the stage.

When the VENDORS walk onstage, the stage becomes a colorful medieval marketplace. The VENDORS hold up their wares for all to see as they continue hawking the qualities of their goods, animals, foods, crafts, services, etc. The PRINCE'S COURTIER PLUS CHANDLER literally fade into the crowd of vendors, very much enjoying the events of the marketplace.

Even the PRINCE leaves his "trying to find a new princess" mantra among the audience members and moves to the marketplace. There, he, rather randomly, looks and examines various items being offered for sale. And then, EVERYONE ONSTAGE "freezes" in position as:

ANGELO: *(Speaking directly to the audience.)* Now this is where I come into the story!

Begins hawking his wares, ad-libbed, based on whatever cloth he has to sell. Then:

ANGELO: But wait! You must all see my wares!

[SPONTANEOUS] AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

ANGELO recruits "SERVANTS" from the audience. As ANGELO chooses his servants, HE asks each helper to display a piece of his cloth, very much similar to the manner in which the vendors just did.

ANGELO: *(Now pleased with his servants and the display of his cloth, HE begins again.)* Everyone! Everyone! I am Angelo de Beaumont, merchant extraordinaire! I've brought to your fine realm the most exquisite of cloth from all over the world...the most beautiful of silks and satins...the most delicate and intricate of brocades...Every piece of cloth I offer to you is fit for a King! Fit for a Queen! But with a price, so very, very low, anyone...no, no, everyone!—can easily and most readily afford!

PRINCE: *(His attention drawn by the cloth merchant; now crossing to Angelo.)* And is your cloth fit for a "Prince"??

ANGELO: But of course; if I saw a "Prince"!

ANGELO'S remark brings a loud gasp from EVERYONE onstage! That he would not recognize the Prince!!

ANGELO: *(Realizing something's amiss. What gave him the first clue?)* Have I said something wrong?

EVERYONE nods, "Yes!" ANGELO is "rescued" by the PRINCE himself.

PRINCE: *(With much courtesy.)* My good man, welcome to our realm! *(Even bowing.)* I am the "Prince"!

ANGELO: *(Immediately recognizing his faux pas.)* My apologies, Your Grace. *(Bowing; in all sincerity.)* I did not know you were the—

PRINCE: How could you? You're a stranger to our tiny kingdom.

ANGELO: Not after today I trust. (*Pointing immediately to his cloth being displayed by several servants.*) I have brought to your beautiful kingdom some of the finest cloth in all the world.

PRINCE: (*With eager anticipation.*) So you're a merchant!

ANGELO: A "traveling" merchant. I've been all over the exotic East, seeking only the finest of silks and satins, brocades and broadcloth, even cashmere, tweeds, taffeta, and fleece. And all this magnificent cloth I bring back here for the likes of you, my Prince, to enjoy.

PRINCE: But what would I do with such fine cloth?

ANGELO: Create the most beautiful of garments—fit for a King!

PRINCE: But I am not the King.

ANGELO: (*With a tone of expectation in his voice.*) Surely, some day—

PRINCE: Surely, surely, but not for a very, very long, long time...way, way, way far into the future— (*Says the word "future" and creates an echo—"future! future! future!" —saying each word as if farther and farther away!.*)

Very quickly—

CHANDLER: (*Solemnly informing Angelo.*) Before our Prince becomes King, he must find—

CHANDLER now "works" the audience to get them to say—

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: A princess!

ANGELO: (*With much surprise.*) A princess, my Prince?! A handsome prince such as yourself must find a princess!

PRINCE: Alas, 'tis all too true. Or so my subjects think.

RESTON: What your subjects **know**.

RYMAN and REEVES urge EVERYONE onstage...and then the AUDIENCE to chant—

EVERYONE: PRINCESS! PRINCESS! PRINCESS!

ANGELO calms the crowd. Then:

ANGELO: *(With much amazement; to the Prince.)* You're having a difficult time finding a princess?

The PRINCE'S answer: a shrug of his shoulders; an expression on his face that immediately states: "Apparently."

ANGELO: Then seek no more, handsome Prince! Your troubles are over! Your not having a princess is solved! I have three wondrous daughters!

And with that, almost every VENDOR suddenly begins hawking—

- I've got a beautiful daughter!
- I have three wondrous daughters!
- Wait 'til you see my six fantastic daughters!
- Please take my firstborn!

Or any variation of the above statements!

PRINCE: *(Silencing the crowd.)* Wait! Wait! Silence! I cannot find a princess at a marketplace—

CHANDLER: Why not?

PRINCE: *(Indicating ANGELO'S cloth.)* —like one would buy cloth!

ANGELO: Why not?

PRINCE: Haven't any of you ever heard of— "love"?

CHANDLER: Heard of it. But what does "love" have to do with the business of our kingdom?

RYMAN: What is "love" when it comes to finding a princess?

PRINCE: What is "love"? Love is everything, my fine subjects.
Everything!

*If possible—the PRINCE now explains "love" by **singing** a fun love song from the medieval period...or by singing an original song about love...or by reading a poem about love.*

ANGELO: *(Trying to correct a false impression.)* My fine Prince, do I look like a "marketplace"?

PRINCE: You are a grand merchant, to be sure. And I'm certain, Angelo de Beaumont, you're also a very fine fellow. But to suddenly just arrive in our realm and announce, "I have your princess!" Well—you can understand my finding a princess is not like buying a piece of your cloth.

ANGELO: I've got a solution! I will bring her to you.

PRINCE: All **three** "hers"?

ANGELO: Yes, I've got three daughters. But—truly—only one would be fine enough for you, my handsome prince.

PRINCE: Only one? What're you saying about your other two daughters?

ANGELO: Like buying cloth. All my cloth is truly elegant— *(Explains his statements by showing pieces of cloth.)* —but only one piece is truly, truly exquisite enough for a Prince! *(Produces a very fine, very beautiful piece of cloth.)* Or should I say, "Exquisite enough for a Princess?"

When EVERYONE ONSTAGE sees this very fine/very beautiful piece of cloth—much excited "Oohh's and "Ahhh" from among the crowd.

RESTON: Could it be?

RYMAN: Could you really have a daughter so fine?

REEVES: Such a princess for our realm would be—

CHANDLER: WOW!

PRINCE: *(With a slight bow to Angelo.)* I will be honored to meet your fine daughter—

ANGELO: My wondrous daughter!

PRINCE: *(Correcting himself.)* Your "wondrous" daughter. But—in truth—what if she doesn't like— *(Ends the question and his worry by pointing to himself—"me"?)*

ANGELO: Then—from that moment on—I will consider my wondrous daughter to be both blind and a bit cuckoo!

PRINCE: *(Almost consoling Angelo.)* I'm not certain, my new friend.

ANGELO: Just spend some time with my daughter—then, then you will know, my Prince, that you have met a true princess.

PRINCE: But "love," I cannot simply fall in love on demand.

ANGELO: And perhaps my wondrous daughter will say the same. That she cannot meet you one moment and fall in love with you the very next. (*Re-thinking his statement.*) She might...but I don't think she will. (*Warning.*) And if she does—

Suddenly, GASTON appears in the staging area. HE is laughing very loudly, even a bit cruelly.

GASTON: (*Pointing at the prince.*) Who would want to fall in love with him!?

EVERYONE onstage loudly gasps!

GASTON: He's just handsome! That's what all of you—every one of you—is saying! There is more to life than being handsome! Life is more than outward appearances!

Immediately, CHANDLER moves to speak—quite strongly—to GASTON.

CHANDLER: What are you doing here?

GASTON: I've come to the marketplace to buy what I need.

CHANDLER: (*Issuing an order.*) LEAVE! You're not welcome here!

GASTON: (*Mimics...and thus makes fun of Chandler.*) "LEAVE! You're not welcome here!" And why not, knave?

CHANDLER: Our kingdom is only for—

GASTON: (*Angrily.*) Only for certain people, right?

CHANDLER: (*Smugly.*) You took the words out of my mouth.

GASTON: And I'm not one of those "certain" people.

CHANDLER: (*Bingo!*) You've got that right.

GASTON: So?

CHANDLER: (*Moving toward GASTON, clenching his fists.*) Get out of here! Now!

PRINCE: Wait! Friends—friends—violence is not the answer! (*To GASTON.*) As the Prince and future ruler of this kingdom I say, "You are most welcome (*Extending his hand in friendship.*) — here!

AUDIO CUE: STORM

LIGHT CUE: The lights blink several times, lightning style, strobe like!

VENDORS look upward, realizing a major storm is about to overtake them! Instantaneous reactions—

- 1) VENDORS rush offstage, shouting: "Storm! Storm!"
- 2) ANGELO rushes to shield his cloth from the rain! HE also sends his "servants" back to their seats in the audience. HE does whatever he must do to protect his cloth.
- 3) All the COURTIERS plus CHANDLER rush to find shelter.
- 4) GASTON hurries offstage.

Only the PRINCE is left onstage alone as the "impending storm" builds in intensity!

As the STORM continues, the PRINCE slowly walks offstage, the last to leave. But within seconds of the storm's starting/raging, an old, haggard BEGGAR WOMAN appears.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

Same location, same day, but now in the middle of a great, raging storm. This old, haggard BEGGAR WOMAN is surely a most haggard creature! Wrinkled, horrifically clothed, a sight to be seen, no, a sight to be feared—!

BEGGAR WOMAN: (*Calling out; seeking.*) Shelter! Shelter! I need shelter from this storm!

CHANDLER: (*Appearing from nowhere; shrieking.*) "Go away! You are not welcome here!"

BEGGAR WOMAN: (*Continuing to call out.*) Shelter! Someone have pity! PLEASE—I need shelter!

CHANDLER: (*Shouting even more loudly.*) GET AWAY FROM HERE!

ALL THE COURTIERS PLUS CHANDLER: (*Sticking his head into the staging area.*) GO AWAY! YOU'RE NOT WANTED HERE!

BEGGAR WOMAN: (*Calling out, shouting.*) Won't someone help me? This storm! I'll be drenched in this storm!

The PRINCE enters, moving toward the old, haggard beggar woman.

PRINCE: (*Most kindly.*) Yes, I'll help you.

CHANDLER: (*Pulling the PRINCE away from the woman.*) No! No, Prince! You mustn't go near her! She looks terrible! She doesn't belong here!

PRINCE: She needs help! She deserves shelter from the storm!

CHANDLER: She'll find help somewhere else!

PRINCE: Where—if not from us?

CHANDLER: That is not **your** problem, Prince!

OLD, HAGGARD BEGGAR WOMAN moves towards the Prince.

BEGGAR WOMAN: (*Shouting; imploring.*) Handsome Prince! Please give me shelter from this bad storm!

PRINCE: Yes! I will!

CHANDLER: (*Loudly correcting the PRINCE.*) NO! He won't! Go away, old beggar woman!

CHANDLER pulls the PRINCE toward the offstage area.

AUDIO CUE: *The storm is becoming stronger.*

LIGHT CUE: *The lighting becomes fierce! More clashes of thunder/lightning!*

BEGGAR WOMAN: (*Issuing a very real threat.*) Because none of you would give me shelter—because you only looked at my appearance— because you judged me evil and bad only because of how I looked—then I will show you, everyone one of

you! From this moment on—your fine, handsome Prince shall be turned into a monstrous—

AUDIO CUE: A huge/very loud thunderclap!

LIGHT CUE: The stage goes completely dark!

During this darkness, the old, haggard BEGGAR WOMAN laughs—loudly, evilly—then:

BEGGAR WOMAN: *(Completing her curse.)* —and your handsome Prince will stay this way until someone truly beautiful truly loves him.

Another evil laugh as SHE slinks off. The old, haggard BEGGAR WOMAN is now gone, but her angry curse will remain for years to come!

AUDIO CUE: THE SOUND OF A COLD, HOWLING WIND!

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

Same location, days and days later. When the lights come up, if available, AUDIO CUE: The sound of birds chirping; the sounds of spring! ANGELO de BEAUMONT enters.

ANGELO: *(Once again, becoming the STORYTELLER.)* Because of that old, haggard beggar woman something terrible happened to the handsome Prince. No—that's not quite right, not quite true! Rather—because of the unkind actions of some of the people of his kingdom, the Prince would never, ever be the same! What happened to the Prince brought him great shame. So much so, he would hide himself far away...deep, deep down inside his castle. Hiding where no-one would ever find him; no-one would ever even see him. Thus, to all the people of his kingdom, the Prince had somehow and most mysteriously "vanished!" Gone

without word; disappearing without a trace never even heard from by anyone in any way, not even by his most trusted advisors and courtiers. *(Asking the audience.)* What do you think might have happened to the Prince? *(HE interacts with the audience, reacting with appropriate ad-libbed comments based on what members of the audience say.)*

Then, from OFFSTAGE:

BEAUTY: *(Calling, from offstage.)* Father! Father!

ANGELO: *(To the audience—with much pride.)* That's my wondrous daughter! Actually, she's only one of my—

BRENNA and DANA: *(Calling—from offstage—but not the nicest sounding girls!!)* Father! Father!

ANGELO: *(To the audience—being quite realistic.)* wondrous daughters. Those are my other two wondrous daughters, Brenna and Dana. *(Calling to his daughters.)* This way, girls!

BRENNA and DANA enter the staging area, rather awkwardly and in a manner that would assure with a very real certainty, neither girl would ever, ever win any beauty pageant and/or modeling contest anywhere anytime—ever!

BRENNA: *(Her voice screeching.)* A prince!

DANA: *(An even more irritating voice—if that could ever be possible.)* We're meeting a prince!

BRENNA and DANA: *(Laughing/giggling.)* Aren't we the lucky ones?!

DANA: Imagine—meeting a handsome Prince!

ANGELO: A most handsome Prince, Dana.

BRENNA: And he could be ours! *(To which, BOTH BRENNA and DANA giggle/laugh and make sounds like "goody, goody, goody!" How truly childish or perhaps indicative of their true nature which just simply can't be helped!)*

ANGELO: Now, Brenna, don't get your hopes up too high! After all, this is only a first meeting.

BRENNA: But when he sees "us"—!!!

DANA: *(Correcting her sister.)* When he sees "me"—!!!

DANA'S correction immediately sets off BRENNA. BOTH go after each other, each ad-libbing her disgust with the other, grabbing/pulling each other's hair! Oh, what a mess!

During this pettiness between BRENNA and DANA, BEAUTY hurries into the staging area—

BEAUTY: *(With real excitement.)* Father! A Prince! A "real" Prince!

ANGELO: As I just told Dana—and now, I'll tell you, Beauty, "A most handsome Prince!"

BEAUTY: *(Intrigued.)* What's he like, father?

ANGELO: *(As if he didn't know!)* What's "who" like?

BEAUTY: The Prince!

BRENNA and DANA: *(As if chewing gum.)* Yeah, the Prince! What's he like, father? Huh? Huh?

ANGELO: *(Most truthfully.)* Actually, just like us.

BEAUTY: Like us?

ANGELO: I mean he's a "regular guy."

DANA: Then how can he be a prince?

BRENNA: *(Becoming quite the cry baby.)* Yeah, who wants a "regular guy" for a Prince? I want an absolute dreamboat!

DANA: Me too.

ANGELO: I mean the Prince is a most enjoyable fellow. He makes everyone feel very much at ease. And much, much better than anything else—this Prince is a friend to everyone, regardless of his or her station in life.

BEAUTY: He sounds almost too good to be true, father.

BRENNA: Would it matter if what father says wasn't completely true? We're talking our meeting "a real prince" here!

DANA: I could become a real princess! Just imagine—me—a real princess!

BRENNA pauses, thinks a moment.

BRENNA: Uggghhhh.

DANA: I could have everything I've ever, ever, ever wanted! I could spend all day—every day—giving orders!

ANGELO: Heaven help the Prince.

BRENNA: I'd never have to make my own breakfast! I'd never have to make my bed, pick up my clothes, or do my laundry. Someone else would do all of those things for ME, ME, ME, ME, the princess!

ANGELO: (*Wagging his index finger; a warning.*) Ah-ah-ah, my daughters. The Prince has not selected either of you—yet. Best not count your chickens before they hatch.

BRENNA: What's that mean?

DANA: (*Answering in a rather low-class, common, crass way.*) We gotta keep doing everything for ourselves until the Prince points his beautiful finger at me and coos, "Will you marry me"? (*Overwhelming even herself with her joy.*) Oh, yes, yes, YES!!

BRENNA: (*Correcting her sister Dana.*) You've got it all wrong, sister dearest.

DANA: I do?!

BRENNA: (*Pointing at Dana.*) Not "you" do! (*Pointing to herself.*) "I" do.

DANA: No, no, no!

Another catfight begins, involving ad-libbed slams; hair grabbing, pulling; perhaps even an unladylike kick or two! FINALLY:

BEAUTY: Whatever happened to "love"?

BRENNA and DANA: (*Stop fighting instantly and agree on at least one thing.*) Yuck!!

The following dialogue between BRENNNA and DANA is delivered quite rapidly...almost as if the one is trying to "out-do" the other! Continuously!!

DANA: I will love being waited on by all my servants.

BRENNA: I will love going to fancy dinners and wearing the most beautiful of ball gowns...far, far, far prettier than anyone else's.

DANA: I will love everyone bowing and curtsying to me, saying, "Yes, My Lady; whatever you want, My Lady."

BRENNA: I will love never, never, ever having to work again.

DANA: I will love my new jewel-encrusted crown and my diamond rings and my blood red ruby broaches and my necklaces made of sparkling sapphires the color of the deep blue sky. I will love having my own huge—luxurious—bedroom and my very own—

BRENNA: I will love everyone knowing "**who**" I am! I'll be famous!

DANA: I will love not getting up in the morning until I want to get up. And then maybe not even getting up until late afternoon or not getting up at all that day. Whatever I wish, that is what I will be able to do!

BEAUTY: *(Again, with much sincerity.)* I thought love involved "another" person.

BRENNA: It most certainly does.

DANA: When the prince selects me to be the princess—his subjects will all loooovvvve **me**!

BRENNA: *(Taking aim.)* Who says the prince will choose "you"?

DANA: *(As if it's already happened.)* Who else could he possibly choose?

BRENNA: *(Getting her dander up.)* I might say the same!

DANA: *(Oh, this girl is tacky.)* You might—but then—you'd be lying!

BRENNA: *(Really steamed, to Dana.)* You're disgusting! Absolutely, totally dis—

DANA: *(Wagging her index finger at her sister.)* Ah-ah-ah, watch your tongue. You're talking to the future princess who just might say—*(Imitating the "Queen of Hearts" in ALICE IN WONDERLAND.)* —"Off with her head!"

ANGELO: *(Trying to stave off yet another catfight.)* Girls! GIRLS! Is this any way to prepare yourselves to meet the handsome Prince?

BRENNA: *(Pointing at Dana.)* She started it!

DANA: *(Grabbing her sister's pointing finger.)* I only stated the obvious truth, "Who else could the Prince possibly choose"? Answer—moi, moi, moi!

BRENNA: *(Oh, brother!)* As if you're the only lily in the pond!

DANA: I'm not the only lily in the pond, but— *(Again, pointing at her sister.)* —I know a crab when I see one.

BRENNA: What!?

ANGELO: That's it! No more! Only one of you will be the—

From off in the distance, ANGELO'S statement is never completed because he is interrupted by a loud HOWL!

BRENNA: *(Immediate frightened reaction.)* What was that?

Then, total silence.

BEAUTY: *(Very eager and most graciously.)* When will we meet the Prince, father?

ANGELO: Very, very soon I hope.

From off in the distance, and yet another loud HOWL!

BEAUTY: *(A bit frightened.)* What was that?

A third HOWL!

ANGELO: I have no idea.

DANA: It's something awful!

BRENNA: Something terrible!

BRENNA and DANA: *(Rushing to their father; fiercely grabbing him; seeking protection.)* Save us, Father! Save us!

ANGELO: I will! But save you from what?

GASTON swaggers onstage.

GASTON: *(Bellowing.)* That's the beast!

BRENNA and DANA: The "beast"?!

GASTON: Uglier than anything you've ever seen! Just one look at the beast turns anyone to stone!

DANA: *(Asking GASTON while pointing at her BRENNA.)* Have you seen my sister?

BRENNA: Huh!?

DANA: *(Directly into her sister's face.)* Is that your real face...or are you still celebrating Halloween?

BRENNA: That's enough! *(Stomping off.)* When I'm princess, I'll have you banished from the kingdom!

DANA: (*Stomping after her.*) When I'm princess, I'll have you put in a museum for old, unwanted relics! Otherwise known as "wrecks!"

DANA and BRENNA ad-lib their anger while fighting with one another...exiting as THEY do so, continuing their nasty bickering for a few moments offstage in the wings! FINALLY:

ANGELO: (*Thinking; pondering.*) I don't remember hearing anyone say anything about a beast in this part of the kingdom...or in any part of the kingdom for that matter. (*Asking Gaston.*) You've seen the beast?

GASTON: Not hardly.

BEAUTY: Then how do you know he's "uglier than anything you've ever seen" – if you yourself have never ever seen him?

GASTON: (*Coming back at her; hard.*) No one's ever seen the beast, lady.

BEAUTY: Then how do you know, "Just one look at the beast turns anyone to stone"?

GASTON: Everyone around here just knows.

BEAUTY: You're not really being very fair, are you?

GASTON: What?

BEAUTY: Making a judgment about a person you've never seen, never even met.

GASTON: What's with you?! Not in our kingdom five minutes, and already you're telling us what to do!

BEAUTY: No, I'm not–

ANGELO: (*Quickly.*) My daughter's speaking from her heart.

GASTON: And I'm speaking from truth. I know what's happening here.

From off in the distance, another HOWL.

GASTON: (*Referring to the howl.*) And that's what's happening here! That's him! The beast!

Another HOWL.

BEAUTY: That doesn't sound "horrible" like a beast. That sounds "sad."

GASTON: We don't know where that beast came from...But I know this—someday—yes, someday—I'm going to make certain that hideous beast never menaces this kingdom ever again!

BEAUTY: How does the beast menace the kingdom?

GASTON: (*Ignoring her question; becoming quite boastful.*) He will no longer! Not while I'm around!

ANGELO: Quite good of you, sir. So heroic!

GASTON: (*Beaming with pride; very pleased with himself.*) I think so too! Actually, "quite" heroic!

ANGELO: And your name, good sir?

GASTON: Gaston! Protector of this kingdom!

ANGELO: "Protector of this kingdom!" Most impressive!

BEAUTY: If you don't mind my asking—

GASTON: (*Bowing to Beauty.*) Not at all my lady.

BEAUTY: What do you protect the kingdom from?

GASTON: Evil! Wickedness! Terrible things!

BEAUTY: Such as?

GASTON: In a word, the "beast."

BEAUTY: Which you've never seen.

GASTON: (*Quite brutish.*) What's your business in our kingdom?

ANGELO: I've brought my daughter to meet the Prince.

GASTON: Ha! The Prince! You've come to meet the Prince! That's a joke. The Prince is no longer here.

ANGELO: No longer here!?

GASTON: Gone, vanished, vamoosed, got out of town, months and months ago.

BEAUTY: (*Heartbroken.*) Vanished?

GASTON: And I say, "Good riddance!"

ANGELO: But the Prince was such a nice fellow.

GASTON: (*Disgustingly jealous.*) Yes, wasn't he.

BEAUTY: We had heard the Prince was truly a most—

GASTON: (*Cutting her off.*) Doesn't matter what you "had heard!" The Prince ain't here anymore! He's gone—gone—gone! That's what—(*Becoming quite sarcastic.*)—our fine Prince is! GONE!

ANGELO: But "gone" where?

GASTON: Who cares?

ANGELO: "Gone" why?

GASTON: Ask him if you ever see him again.

ANGELO: (*Shaking his head; quite perplexed.*) This is not good, not good at all.

BEAUTY points upstage to the Prince's castle. NOTE: At the director's discretion, the Prince's castle can be an actual set or can exist only in everyone's imagination.

BEAUTY: (*Pointing toward the Prince's castle.*) Let's try to find him in that castle, father.

GASTON: Why would you do that?

BEAUTY: Maybe someone in that castle knows what's happened to the Prince.

GASTON: Not hardly!

ANGELO: How could that possibly be?

GASTON: Because there's no one inside there!

ANGELO: No one!?

GASTON: Well, maybe some rats. Yeah, go try to talk with some rats. When the Prince disappeared, everyone left, just walked out of the castle. No, ran out of the castle.

ANGELO: This is terrible! What could have happened to the Prince?

GASTON: Again, "Who cares?"

BEAUTY: I care.

GASTON: Why should you care? You've never been here before. So—suddenly you show up and care about everything and everyone in this kingdom!? What's with you, girl you living in some fairy tale?

BEAUTY: (*With a very gracious determination.*) I'm going to see if there is someone in the castle who might know something about—

GASTON: (*Smugly; exiting.*) Suit yourself, lady!

ANGELO: Beauty—

BEAUTY: We've come all this way, father—just to turn around and leave?

Suddenly, there is another loud HOWL!

BEAUTY: (*Reacting to the howl.*) He's really, really sad.

ANGELO: Who?

BEAUTY: (*Moving toward the castle.*) That's what I'm going to find out.

ANGELO: No, Beauty! Don't go near that—that—whatever it is!

BEAUTY: But I must—

And with that statement of strong determination, BEAUTY "freezes" in position. ANGELO turns and speaks directly to the audience.

ANGELO: (*Moving about, much like a tour guide, explaining the lay of the land to the audience—or more specifically the Prince's castle.*) Imagine in your minds a grand castle—right here! Once, this grand castle was truly most impressive, but now, its walls have become overgrown with the ugliest of weeds and thick, entangling vines.

No repair on the castle has been done for quite some time. In truth, the walls seem to be in danger of collapsing, perhaps held up and kept standing only by the ugly weeds and thick vines.

But none of this frightens my lovely Beauty. Her heart tells her that mean, harsh howl was "not mean, not harsh," but "sad, tragic."

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