

# Beauty & the Beast

production 0254

6/29/90  
Second Draft

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE VILLAGE - A BRISK MORNING IN LATE FALL

We OPEN on a charming provincial French village: winding cobblestone streets, poplar trees with a few leaves clinging to the branches, sparkling fountain in the town-square, stone cottages with thatched roofs, crumbling Medieval steeped church, outdoor cafe tables, autumn flowers in the green shuttered windows and colorful signs above the quaint shops. We follow the cobblestone street over a small rise and find....

EXT. BELLE'S COTTAGE

It is small and maybe just a little shabbier than the rest. But it has a warm, rustic charm: flower pots line the steps leading to the front door, a stone thatched-roofed well in the yard, chickens and goats wandering freely, a vegetable garden and a weathered barn. The door opens and BELLE trots down the steps carrying a book. Even dressed in poor provincial clothes, she's a stunning sight. At eighteen, she already has a classically beautiful face and her eyes shine with intelligence. Unlike other beauties, Belle seems entirely unaware of her looks. This is no ordinary girl. She tops the rise leading into town and sings:

BELLE

(singing)

LITTLE TOWN, IT'S A QUIET VILLAGE,  
EVERY DAY LIKE THE ONE BEFORE

THE VILLAGE

Autumn leaves skitter across the cobblestones as Belle eagerly starts into town and the villagers begin to bustle about their daily business. The colorful open air marketplace comes alive with flower vendors, bakers, blacksmiths, fruit sellers, potters, milkmaids, merchants, harried mothers, elderly ladies in the windows, laughing children, clip-clopping horses and gabby young girls.

BELLE (cont.)

LITTLE TOWN FULL OF LITTLE PEOPLE  
WAKING UP TO SAY...

A MOTHER

Bonjour..

A BUTCHER

Bonjour...

A MILKMAID

Bonjour....

A PRISONER

Bonjour...

A MERCHANT

Bonjour...

A baker unloads a tray of rolls from his wagon to sell in the marketplace.

BELLE  
 THERE GOES THE BAKER WITH HIS TRAY,  
 LIKE ALWAYS  
 THE SAME OLD BREAD AND ROLLS TO SELL  
 EVERY MORNING JUST THE SAME  
 SINCE THE MORNING THAT WE CAME  
 TO THIS POOR PROVINCIAL TOWN

BAKER  
 Good morning, Belle.

BELLE  
 Morning, Monsieur.

BAKER  
 Where you off to?

BELLE  
 The bookshop. I just finished the most wonderful  
 story about a beanstalk and an ogre and a...

But he's not interested. He yells over his shoulder to his wife.

BAKER  
 (interrupting her)  
 That's nice. Marie! The Baguettes hurry up!

Belle sighs. *Never mind.* She continues on her way.

Various townspeople talk about her as she passes.

TOWNSFOLK  
 LOOK THERE SHE GOES  
 THE GIRL IS STRANGE, NO QUESTION  
 DAZED AND DISTRACTED, CAN'T YOU TELL?  
 NEVER PART OF ANY CROWD  
 'CAUSE HER HEADS UP ON SOME CLOUD  
 NO DENYING SHE'S A FUNNY GIRL, THAT BELLE

A man in a cart speaks to an elderly woman.

MAN IN A CART  
 BONJOUR, GOOD DAY. HOW IS YOUR FAMILY?

ELDERLY WOMAN  
 BONJOUR, GOOD DAY. HOW IS YOUR WIFE?

A harried mother with three children speaks to an egg merchant.

MOTHER  
 I NEED...SIX EGGS.

A large man bellows at a candlestick maker.

LARGE MAN  
 ...THAT'S TOO EXPENSIVE!

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Belle speaks softly to herself as all of this goes on around her.

BELLE  
THERE MUST BE MORE THAN THIS  
PROVINCIAL LIFE!

EXT. THE BOOKSHOP

With some relief, she escapes into a tiny bookshop.

INT. BOOKSHOP

The door tinkles as she enters. The bookshop is small and deserted with few books on the shelves. A gentleman in glasses comes out from behind a curtain in the back.

KINDLY BOOKSELLER

Ah, Belle!

BELLE

Good morning. I've come to return the book  
I borrowed

KINDLY BOOKSELLER

Finished already?

BELLE

Oh, I couldn't put it down. Have you got anything new?

She gives him the book and looks around eagerly.

KINDLY BOOKSELLER

(a chuckle)

Not since yesterday.

Belle points to a book on the shelf.

BELLE

That's all right. I'll borrow...this one.

BOOKSELLER

That one? But you've read it twice!

BELLE

Well, it's my favorite. Far-off places, daring  
sword fights, magic spells, a prince in disguise...

BOOKSELLER

(chuckling and giving her the book)  
If you like it all that much...

(a beat)

...it's yours..

BELLE

But sir!

BOOKSELLER

I insist.

BELLE

Well, thank you. Thank you very much!

She gives him a beautiful smile and the tinkling bell ushers her out.

EXT. VILLAGE

Belle emerges from the bookstore, opens the book and starts to read. During the following, she continues to read as she crosses the road, skillfully avoiding getting run-over by carts and carriages. She jumps over a mud puddle, sidesteps a fat man, and pats a little girl on the head...all without looking up.

TOWNSFOLK

LOOK THERE SHE GOES  
THE GIRL IS SO PECULIAR  
I WONDER IF SHE'S FEELING WELL  
WITH A DREAMY, FAR-OFF LOOK  
AND HER NOSE STUCK IN A BOOK  
WHAT A PUZZLE TO THE REST OF US  
IS BELLE

AT THE FOUNTAIN

Belle sinks down on the edge of the fountain, engrossed in the book. A cat and her kittens wander past. Belle shares her excitement with them.

BELLE

OH...ISN'T THIS AMAZING?

The cat gathers the kittens around for storytime.

BELLE

IT'S MY FAVORITE PART BECAUSE....  
YOU'LL SEE..

Belle holds the illustration up for them. The kittens climb all over each other to see the pictures.

BELLE

HERE'S WHERE SHE MEETS PRINCE CHARMING  
BUT SHE WON'T DISCOVER THAT IT'S HIM  
TIL CHAPTER THREE.

The cat and kittens get a big kick out of this. Belle scratches the cat under the chin and continues on her way, nose still in the book.

A young girl in a dress shop looks out as she passes.

YOUNG LADY

NOW IT'S NO WONDER  
THAT HER NAME MEANS "BEAUTY"  
HER LOOKS HAVE GOT NO PARALLEL

The shopkeeper joins her in the window.

SHOPKEEPER  
BUT BEHIND THAT FAIR FACADE  
I'M AFRAID SHE'S RATHER ODD  
VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF US

TOWNSFOLK  
SHE'S NOTHING LIKE THE REST OF US  
YES, DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF US  
IS BELLE

THE TOWNSQUARE

The handsome hunter, GASTON, and his adoring hanger-on, LEFOU, approach the town-square. They've been hunting. Lefou's loaded down with the spoils: antlers, pelts, birds. Gaston walks ahead with an arrogant stride, gun slung over his shoulder. He's a rude, self-centered bully with a feral look in his eye as if the whole world is his prey.

LEFOU  
You didn't miss a shot, Gaston. You're the  
greatest hunter in the whole world!

GASTON  
I know.

Belle comes around a corner on the opposite side of the square, head buried in the book. Gaston stops dead. He watches her with a proprietary glint in his eye. Lefou dumps the booty into a pile.

LEFOU  
No beast alive stands a chance against you!

A group of group of twittering local girls come out of a shop and spot Gaston. They giggle and whisper...trying to get his attention. Gaston ignores them...eyes still glued on Belle.

LEFOU (cont.)  
(a lascivious chuckle)  
And no girl for that matter.

GASTON  
It's true, Lefou. And I've got my sights set on that  
one.

Gaston points toward Belle, but Lefou's still looking at the local girls. He sighs enviously. Gaston jabs him with an elbow and points impatiently to Belle. Lefou stumbles all over himself with surprise.

LEFOU  
The inventor's daughter?

GASTON  
She's the one. The lucky girl I'm going to marry.

LEFOU  
But, she's...

GASTON  
The most beautiful girl in town.