Beauty And The Beast

Written by Michele L. Vacca

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CHARACTERS

NOTE: The eight performers in this version of the play are part of a Company of Players. Some of the players don various hats during the course of the story. For example the player whose "name" is Beast does not actually play "the Beast" until Florabunda casts a spell on him during Act I. Similarly, the Players called Calliope, Penelope, and Theodore and so on alternately assume many guises, such as nosy neighbors, town officials, and courtly attendants. **We also have an expanded cast version of this script**.

THE COMPANY OF PLAYERS

FLORABUNDA – Storyteller and Enchantress

BELINDA BELL – "a Beauty"

HENRY "HEMLOCK" BEAUMONT – the Fatherly type

PHILIP PEMBERTON PRINCE

BERNARD "BEAST" BEOWULF

PENELOPE PEABODY

CALLIOPE CARRUTHERS

THEODORE THERMIDORE

PRODUCTION NOTES

The script is designed for eight actors; 4 women, 4 men, (could be 5 women and 3 men, if Theodore becomes Theodora.) All the actors double (see NOTE above) except Beauty. The same actor does NOT play both the Beast and the Prince.)

SETTINGS, COSTUMES AND PROPS

SETTINGS: The first half of Act I requires flexible changeable areas, all of which can be exteriors. The second half of Act I and all of Act II (except for one short scene) both take place in the courtyard/garden atrium of the Beast's castle. This courtyard, except for the possible addition of portable items, such as a dining table laid on trestles, should remain a permanent

setting, since once it is in place the action needs to flow smoothly, and loses momentum if constantly interrupted for massive set changing. Conversely, the first half of Act I BENEFITS from a constant flow of neatly choreographed, simple and rapid changes of location. Since the script premiered in a proscenium fly house, you will see occasional references to scenery "flying" in or out. The play works just as well in a space where flying scenery is not an option or a preference.

COSTUMES: Should be fun. Almost any fairy tale period will suffice: Use what you have. The "disguises" in Act I should be accomplished with the addition and/ or subtraction of hats, vests, shawls, capes, scarves, wigs, glasses and the like. The idea is to NOT disguise people totally. Once the location changes to the castle of the Beast costumes should be more elaborate, in keeping with the atmosphere of the place, and the deepening of the plot. Belinda should have the loveliest and most flattering costumes the budget can afford. And remember, the Beast may be a Beast, but he's a very WEALTHY Beast, and the appearance of everything and everyone should reflect that.

A few comments about PROPS: Just think in terms of larger than life for all of them, i.e., the Beast's napkin should be tablecloth size, and his bone should be at LEAST a yard long.

<u>BEAST HEAD OR MASK</u> The Beast should obviously look somewhat like a beast, but he shouldn't look like a monster. The services of a professional mask maker or those of a designer experienced in making head pieces and masks will be necessary to create a professional look that is durable and also safe for the actor. Aim for some humor in the design; and keep in mind that a shaggy Beast is funnier than a neatly groomed one. The Beast is written to be a true clown, one who commands a response of laughter and sympathy at the same time.

<u>HELPFUL HINT FOR THE ACTOR PLAYING THE BEAST</u> The use of the "word" "Grrr" in the script does not always mean it is time to growl or even say the "word" that can only be spelled g-r-r-r. Often the "word" is there simply to denote a tone of voice. If the Beast growls TOO much he's too scary, and may become monotonous – and also risks losing his voice!

<u>GENERAL</u>

The use of music and sound effects, live or taped, greatly enhances the production of this play.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

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by Michele L. Vacca

ACT I

(OVERTURE PLAYS. CURTAIN UP. FLORABUNDA AND THE COMPANY OF PLAYERS DISCOVERED ON STAGE. PERHAPS THEY ALL SING, AS IN THE PREMIERE PRODUCTION, OR PERHAPS FLORABUNDA SIMPLY SAYS:)

FLORA: Listen, my friends, and all gather near – Come share a story I'd like you to hear –
ALL: It's Florabunda! She's going to tell a story!
FLORA: My favorite story; it's very old – A tale that really likes to be told –
ALL: Ahhh!
FLORA: Of course, we don't need to tell it in rhyme – A story that begins –
ALL: ONCE UPON A TIME!
THEODORE: Does this story have ADVENTURE?!
CALLIOPE: And ROMANCE?
FLORA: Oh, yes. This story has both adventure –
ALL: OOOO!
FLORA: – AND romance.
ALL: AHHH!
THEODORE: (DOING SOMETHING "FUNNY.") Will it make us LAUGH?
ALL: (LAUGHTER.)
FLORA: (LAUGHING ALSO.) Oh, yes.
CALLIOPE: (WHO IS THE INCURABLE ROMANTIC IN THE GROUP.) Will it make us CRY?
ALL: (EXCEPT FLORABUNDA . . . TEASING CALLIOPE.) Awwwww!
FLORA: (TO CALLIOPE.) Well, you MAY shed a tear or two –
ALL: (SAME BIT.) AWWWW!
FLORA: – IF you are soft-hearted.
CALLIOPE: (WITH A SOB.) Oh, I am!
ALL: (MORE SINCERELY THIS TIME.) Awww!

HENRY: What's the NAME of your story, Florabunda?
FLORA: My story is called –
ALL: AH?
FLORA: THE BEAUTY –
ALL: Ahhhh!
FLORA: – AND –
ALL: OH?
FLORA: THE BEAST!
ALL: OOOOOOOO!
BELINDA: Well, the part about the BEAUTY sounds wonderful –
ALL: (AGREE.)
PHILIP: But who wants to hear a story about a BEAST??
ALL: (REACTIONS; SOME POSITIVE, SOME NEGATIVE.)
FLORA: (GESTURES TO AUDIENCE.) THEY do.
ALL: AHHH!
PHILIP: Oh, Phooey! (STARTS OFF STAGE.)
FLORA: Wait just a moment! YOU have a part in this story!
PHILIP: I DO??
FLORA: And so – (GESTURING TO INCLUDE ALL AND SUNDRY.) – do we ALL!
ALL: (ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE.)
PHILIP: What part do I play?
FLORA: You are perfect for the role of –
ALL: Yes?
FLORA: The Prince!
ALL: Oooo!
PHILIP: The Prince? Well, I guess I don't mind playing a Prince, but –
FLORA: (CUTTING HIM OFF.) Good. Now –
PHILIP: Is this Prince RICH?
FLORA: Oh, he's VERY rich.
ALL: Ahhhh!
PHILIP: That's great.
FLORA: Rich in money. Poor in spirit.
ALL: Oooo!
PHILIP: What does THAT mean?
FLORA: You'll soon find out – IF you let me tell the story.
THEODORE: Will you let her tell the story?!
ALL: (AGREEMENT.)
PHILIP: All right, all right, all right.
FLORA: (POINTING TO HER STORYBOOK.) Come, take a look at the roles each of you will play.
ALL: (A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MINOR COMMENTARY.)

FLORA: Now – are we ready?
ALL: (ASSENT.)
BEAST: WAIT!
ALL: WHAT!?
CALLIOPE: What part do YOU play in the story, Florabunda?
ALL: (VARIOUS REACTIONS OF CURIOSITY AND QUERY.)
FLORA: Well, all stories that begin with "once upon a time" need a bit of magic to make them work properly.
ALL: Oooo! MAGIC!
FLORA: My role, as Florabunda – the Enchantress –
ALL: Oooo!
FLORA: – is to provide that magic.
ALL: Oooo!
PENELOPE: What KIND of magic?
FLORA: Oh, the magic of dreams. The magic of imagination. The magic of – MAGIC!
ALL: Ahhh!
FLORA: Are you all ready?
ALL: YES!
FLORA: Very well. Then I shall begin. Once –
ALL: UPON A TIME!
FLORA: A very long time ago . . . There was a small town by the sea. In this town there lived a prosperous merchant named Henry Beaumont, who shared a comfortable house with his beloved and only daughter, Belinda. They were not rich, but they were very comfortable, because, as you should know – Master Beaumont was a good man of business. He and his daughter, Belinda, had many friends, and they lived very happily.

(DURING THE PRECEDING SPEECH THE "PLAYERS" HAVE ASSUMED THEIR POSITIONS FOR THE STORY . . . WHEN NAMED, BEAUMONT AND BELINDA APPEAR. WHEN THE HOUSE IS MENTIONED, IT APPEARS. WHEN FRIENDS ARE MENTIONED, THEY APPEAR.)

HENRY: (TO NEIGHBORS.) Greetings, my friends!
WOMEN: Greetings, Master Beaumont.
MEN: Give our regards to your daughter, Belinda.
HENRY: The neighbors say hello, Belinda.
MEN: Yoo-hoo!

BELINDA: (ABSORBED WITH A BOOK, REPLIES ABSENTLY.) Yes, Papa.

FLORA: Now, Belinda was very fond of reading, and spent many hours dreaming over her books. No matter how many she read, she always felt that she could never read enough . . .

BELINDA: There's so much to learn! How will I ever read them ALL!

FLORA: But she kept trying.

HENRY: Belinda, my dear, you're so clever. Perhaps one day you'll be an astronaut.

FLORA: (ASIDE TO AUDIENCE.) Master Beaumont was quite progressive for his times.

BELINDA: (ABSENTLY.) That's a good idea, Papa. (HE GOES; SHE ADDRESSES AUDIENCE.) What's an astronaut??

FLORA: Master Beaumont was very proud of his daughter's interest in learning, and he bragged about her to all his neighbors.

HENRY: (TO NEIGHBORS.) My Belinda is so clever. Why, she reads all day long.

ALL: (LOOKING AT HIM SOMEWHAT ASKANCE.) Oh! (TO AUDIENCE.) That's nice.

HENRY: She even reads books without any PICTURES!

ALL: (IN AMAZEMENT.) NO!

HENRY: Yes, she's a smart one, my Belinda. Maybe someday she'll be a rocket scientist!

ALL: Oh! (TO AUDIENCE.) That's nice.

HENRY: (GOES.)

ALL: (TO EACH OTHER IN PUZZLEMENT.) What's a ROCKET SCIENTIST???

FLORA: Now Belinda was very beautiful, but she didn't really care about that. She had many admirers, but she didn't really care too much about them, either . . .

CALLIOPE: She's too beautiful for her own good!

PENELOPE: AND she doesn't even know it!

BEAST: (AS SUITOR.) Oh, Belinda, please accept this gift.

PHILIP: (AS SUITOR.) Please take these flowers.

THEODORE: (AS SUITOR.) What about this candy?

BELINDA: (TO THEM ALL.) No, thank you. (GOES BACK TO HER READING.)

WOMEN: SHE'D RATHER READ A BOOK!!

SUITORS: (SIGH AND EXIT.)

HENRY: (TO ALL.) Well, after all, someday she's going to be the PRESIDENT!! (WATCHES BELINDA FONDLY.)

WOMEN: (TO EACH OTHER.) WHAT'S THAT????? (THEY GO OFF.)

FLORA: But then one day everything changed, and Belinda and her father found their lives altered forever . . .

(TOWN OFFICIALS ENTER. THESE "ROLES" ARE PLAYED BY THE FIVE OTHERS ASIDE FROM BELINDA, HENRY AND FLORA.)

BEAST: (AS TOWN OFFICIAL.) You are Master Henry Beaumont?

HENRY: I am.

BEAST: I regret to tell you, sir, that your bank has failed –

HENRY: Oh, no!

PENELOPE: (AS TOWN OFFICIAL.) And your stocks all have crashed –

HENRY: Oh, no!

CALLIOPE: (AS TOWN OFFICIAL.) And all your cargo has been lost at sea!

HENRY: Oh, no! Does that mean – ?

BEAST: Yes, sir. You are bankrupt.

ALL: OH, NO!

THEODORE: (AS "JUDGE.") On behalf on Prince Philip, acting as regent for his parents, the King and Queen, it is the finding of this court that all your remaining property be seized at once!

HENRY: But, Your Honor – !

THEODORE: Case dismissed! Seize his house!

HENRY: Not my house!

BEAST: Take it away! (HOUSE FLIES.)

THEODORE: And his goods!

BEAST: Take them away! (GOODS ARE REMOVED BY STAGE CREW.)

THEODORE: Is that all?

BEAST: Except for these books.

BELINDA: No! Not my books!

THEODORE: Seize the books!

PENELOPE: Consider it done, Your Honor. (TAKES THE BOOKS.)

CALLIOPE: (TO JUDGE.) What about this rosebush, sir?

THEODORE: I think I'll take this rosebush for my fee.

BELINDA: Not my favorite rosebush!

THEODORE: Case closed! Remove the bench!

(CALLIOPE TRIES TO REMOVE THE BENCH, BUT FLORABUNDA STOPS HER; PENELOPE DROPS ONE OF THE BOOKS ON HER WAY OFF STAGE.)

BELINDA: Oh, Papa!
HENRY: What can we do? We're ruined!
BELINDA: Well, Papa, I suppose we'll just have to move to the country.
HENRY: The COUNTRY!!
BELINDA: What else can we do?
HENRY: You mean – raise cows and chickens?
BELINDA: Why not?
HENRY: And grow beans? And corn? And zucchini?
BELINDA: Well, you like beans and corn.
HENRY: But, Belinda, I don't know anything about being a farmer!
BELINDA: Well, neither do I, but we can learn. (FINDS DROPPED BOOK, PICKS IT UP, LOOKS INTO IT.)
HENRY: I'm sure I'll be a terrible farmer!
BELINDA: But – what else can we do?
HENRY: (SIGHS.) Do we HAVE to grow zucchini?
FLORA: And so Belinda and her father set out for the countryside . . . (BELINDA AND HENRY GO OFF.)
PHILIP: (CHARGING ON STAGE; ADDRESSES FLORABUNDA.) Hey! What about ME? What about my BIG part in the story? You said I was going to play the Prince!
FLORA: And so you are.
PHILIP: Well. That's more like it. (EXITS.)
FLORA: (RESUMING THE STORY.) Near the town there was a beautiful castle. The handsome Prince of the Kingdom, Prince Philip the Proud, lived in this wonderful castle with his VERY loyal friends and followers . . .

(PHILIP ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY BEAST AND THEODORE, WHO ARE NOW THE "LOYAL" FOLLOWERS OF THE PRINCE.)

THEODORE: (TO BEAST.) Forget it! It's YOUR turn to serve His Highness!
BEAST: MY turn?! It's YOUR turn!
FLORA: Prince Philip's followers were all devoted to him –
THEODORE: And I say – it's YOUR turn!
BEAST: And I say – it's YOURS!

FLORA: You see, Prince Philip really didn't know how to manage his budget.
BEAST: Highness, I haven't been paid in over two years!
THEODORE: Neither have I!
PHILIP: SO?
THEODORE and BEAST: WE WANT TO BE PAID!!!
PHILIP: Is that all that's bothering you? Then we'll just go collect some MORE taxes from the people!
THEODORE and BEAST: Good idea, Highness!
THEODORE: Let's go!

(DURING THE FOLLOWING BELINDA AND HENRY APPEAR, MAKING THEIR WAY OUT OF TOWN, AND CALLIOPE AND PENELOPE APPEAR AS PEASANTRY PASSING-BY.)

FLORA: . . . And so, as Belinda and her Father made their humble way out of the town they heard . . .
THEODORE: Make way! Make way, peasants! His royal Highness the Pompous, Powerful AND Proud Prince Philip proceeds! Make way! Make way!
BEAST: You heard him! Make way!
CALLIOPE AND PENELOPE: Ooooh! The Prince! How exciting!
PHILIP: (TO HIS ATTENDANTS.) Who ARE these people?
THEODORE: Probably poor peasants, Sire.
PHILIP: How boring.
THEODORE: Yes, sire.
BEAST: Make way, boring Poor Peasants!
PEASANTS: (MUTTER AS "RESENTFUL BORING PEASANTS.")
THEODORE: Prince Philip passes by!
BEAST: Make way!
THEODORE: (TO BELINDA.) Step aside, Miss.
BELINDA: But it's muddy on the side of the road!
BEAST: His Highness doesn't care about that!
BELINDA: But there's plenty of room for us all on the road!
THEODORE: Move over, peasant! Make room for the Prince!
PHILIP: How basically boring.
CALLIOPE: (GUSHING.) Ohhh, he's so handsome!
PENELOPE: (GUSHING.) Ooo! The Prince!
CALLIOPE: Isn't he so handsome?!
PENELOPE: (SIGHS ROMANTICALLY.) What a prince!
BELINDA: (ANGRILY.) What a BEAST!!!
CALLIOPE AND PENELOPE: (TO BELINDA.): Hmph!

(CALLIOPE AND PENELOPE EXIT, FOLLOWING THEIR ADORED PRINCE.)

FLORA: Now Belinda's comment gave me an idea, but I really didn't have a chance to pursue it right away. In the meantime the Prince went trotting along on his merry selfish way, and Belinda and her father found a nice cozy little cottage in the country . . .

(A COTTAGE DROP FLIES IN.)

BELINDA: Oh, look, Papa! A nice cozy little cottage!
HENRY: Let's move in!

– END OF 1ST E-MAIL SEGMENT –

There are a total of 60 pages in the complete smaller cast version of this script (ensemble version) of which these segments are an excerpt. There are 31 pages in the First Act and 26 in the Second Act.

The first segment above is from the start of the play while the second segment below begins near the end of Act I.

– START OF 2ND E-MAIL SEGMENT –

BELINDA: Beast!
BEAST: (OFF) WHAT DO YOU WANT??!
THEODORE: Oh, dear, he's handling this very badly.
ALL: (AGREEMENT)
BELINDA: Are you coming to supper?
BEAST: GRR!
BELINDA: Well? ARE you?
BEAST: (OFF) LEAVE ME ALONE!
BELINDA: Should I go up and talk to him?
ALL: NO!
THEODORE: That's his private den; we NEVER bother him there.
ALL: NEVER!

BELINDA: Oh. What does he DO up there?
PHILIP: Howl, mostly.
BEAST: (OFF) HOOOWWWLLLL!
PENELOPE: See?
BEAST: HOOWWWLLL!
BELINDA: How long will he do that?
BEAST: HOWWLLLLLLLL!
CALLIOPE: It depends.
PENELOPE: Sometimes for hours.
BEAST: (OFF) YOOWLLLL!
PHILIP: You'll get used to it.
BELINDA: Will I?
THEODORE: WE did.
BEAST: YOOWWLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL!

(ALL PUT THEIR HANDS OVER THEIR EARS.)

BELINDA: He sounds very lonely.
THEODORE: You think so?
PENELOPE: We never thought of that.
CALLIOPE: Maybe he IS lonely.
PHILIP: And then maybe he just likes to howl.
ALL: (LAUGH)
THEODORE: And now, Belinda, will you allow us to entertain you?
BELINDA: I would be delighted.

(A LIVELY DANCE ENSUES. EVERYONE PARTICIPATES, INCLUDING FLORABUNDA AND HENRY "HEMLOCK," THE CHEF. PERHAPS THE BEAST PUNCTUATES WITH AN OCCASIONAL HOWL. A GOOD TIME IS HAD BY ALL, AND THE NUMBER ENDS IN A FLOURISH.)

BEAST: (OFF) GRRRRRRR!
ALL: UH-OH!
ALL: Here he comes!
BEAST: (STOMPS ON STAGE) WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND HERE?
ALL: Nothing.
BEAST: (SNIFFS SUSPICIOUSLY) It looks to me like you're all having – FUN!
THEODORE: Oh, no, sir. Never that.
PHILIP: Oh, no, sir. We wouldn't dare.

PENELOPE: FUN, sir?
CALLIOPE: What's THAT?
BEAST: GRRRRR!
ALL: Yes, sir.
BEAST: If there's one thing I HATE, it's PEOPLE having FUN!
ALL: Yes, sir.
BEAST: Grr! Especially when I never have any!
ALL: Yes, sir.
BEAST: I won't have you enjoying yourselves! Do you hear me??
ALL: Yes, sir. We hear you.
BEAST: If I can't have any gr-fun! Then nobody can!
ALL: Yes, sir!
BEAST: Now, gr-begone! Go away!
THEODORE: Shall we clear the table, sir?
BEAST: GRRRR! Get out of here!!!
ALL: Yes, sir!

(THEY ALL GO OFF, LEAVING BELINDA AND THE BEAST ALONE. THE BEAST STOMPS AROUND ANGRILY.)

BEAST: GRR! GRR! GRR!
BELINDA: They were only trying to cheer me up.
BEAST: Gr-why?
BELINDA: They thought I might be feeling sad.
BEAST: Sad? Grr-what for?
BELINDA: "What for?" Because of you I may never see my father again. He's my only family, and I love him very dearly. And you ask me "what for?" Are you completely without feelings?
BEAST: Grr! I have LOTS of feelings!
BELINDA: Oh, yes. For YOURSELF.
BEAST: GRRRRR!
BELINDA: That's right. Go ahead. Growl at me. That's what you do best.
BEAST: GRRRRR!
BELINDA: (WHO HAS ABOUT REACHED THE END OF HER ENDURANCE) Oh, stop it!
BEAST: I won't! I won't! I WON'T! It's my castle, and I'll growl if I want to! (DOES SO) GRRRRRRRRRR!
BELINDA: I don't see how we can ever be friends –
BEAST: Who said I wanted to be your friend?
BELINDA: THEY did. (GESTURES TO STAFF FOLKS WHO

HAVE BEEN EAVESDROPPING)

ALL: (PEEKING AROUND THE SCENERY) Hello!

BEAST: (TO THEM) GRRR!

ALL: OOOPS! (THEY DISAPPEAR BRIEFLY)

BELINDA: Anyway, I don't see how we're ever going to be friends if you behave like this.

BEAST: Like WHAT?

BELINDA: Like a BEAST.

BEAST: But I AM a Beast!

BELINDA: You may LOOK like a Beast, but that doesn't mean you have to ACT like one!

BEAST: (SLINGS SOMETHING AROUND) GRRR!

BELINDA: Now that's just what I mean.

BEAST: GRRRRRRROOOOWWWWWLLLLLL! (STOMPS AWAY)

BELINDA: (MAKES AN ANGRY EXPLANATION THAT REALLY CAN'T BE SPELLED) OHHH! You – you – you BEAST!

(THE ATTENDANTS HAVE SNEAKED BACK INTO THE ROOM. BELINDA IS LOST IN AN ANGRY AND SAD REVERIE.)

PENELOPE: Is he gone?

CALLIOPE: I think so.

PHILIP: What a temper.

THEODORE: He's going to ruin everything.

HENRY: What can we do?

ALL: WHO KNOWS?

THEODORE: We're all doomed.

ALL: Woe is me!

(ALL FREEZE. FLORABUNDA STEPS FORWARD.)

FLORA: Well, so far my spell was not working out quite as well as I had hoped. And – the Beast was running out of time. And I certainly felt badly for Belinda, who was now separated from her loving and beloved father for what seemed to be no good reason at all . . .

BELINDA: Oh, Papa, I'm glad you're safe, but I don't know how I can endure this place!

BEAST: I can't help it if I act like a Beast; I AM a BEAST!

(MUSIC PLAYS AS THE CURTAIN COMES DOWN. IN THE PREMIERE PRODUCTION OF THIS PLAY A SONG WAS SUNG AT THIS POINT. DRAMATIC MUSIC ACCOMPLISHES THE SAME EFFECT.)

END ACT I

– END OF TOTAL E-MAIL SEGMENT –

(There are a total of 60 pages in the complete smaller cast version of this script (ensemble version) of which these segments are an excerpt. There are 31 pages in the First Act and 26 in the Second Act.)

TWO versions of the script are available – The ENSEMBLE (smaller cast) version: Eight actors (4 women, 4 men) play the numerous enchanted and enchanting characters that fill this delightful version of the beloved tale about love and loyalty.

The EXPANDED cast version: As many as 50 roles (8 principal roles, plus numerous smaller speaking roles) can be played by as few as 8 up to as many as 50+. Doubling suggestions are in the script.