Jean Cocteau's

La BELLE et la BÊTE

(WITH ENGLISH SUB-TITLES)

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(BEAUTY AND THE BEAST)

Synopsis

Felicity, Adelaide and Belle are the three daughters of a rich merchant, but they are not at all alike. Whilst the first two spend their time in arraying themselves in all sorts of finery, Belle (the beautiful), who is well named, waits on them almost as a servant and has to put up with their airs and graces. They also have a brother Ludovic, whose friend Avenant is in love with Belle and would like to marry her. Belle, however, will have none of him, not because she doesn't care for him, but because she promised her father that she would not leave him in his old age.

The merchant has many worries; his heavily laden ships have not returned to port. If they are lost, father and daughters will be ruined. Eventually one of the ships arrives in port and the merchant hastens to acquaint his family with the good news, before leaving for the town to arrange for the unloading. Adelaide and Felicity ask him to bring them costly silks, fans and trinkets, but Belle asks for only one thing—a rose. Alas, when the merchant arrives at the quay, it is only to find that his creditors have already seized the ship and its cargo. He has not even enough money left to stay at the inn and is obliged to hurry home through the storm.

Whilst going through the forest he comes across a castle of which he had no previous knowledge. He enters without meeting anybody but, whilst there, he has some experiences undreamed of except in legends. In the morning he leaves by way of the rose garden and picks a rose, the promise he made to Belle is the only one he will be able to keep. At that moment there appears before him a strange being, half man, half beast, who tells him that he must pay the penalty for the theft of the rose.

For having picked the rose, the merchant must die. But the monster agrees eventually to allow one of his daughters to perish in his stead, if she is willing to do so. The merchant returns home knowing quite well that he cannot escape the power of the monster to whom he must return, taken by his horse The Magnificent; but first he must see his daughters and relate his strange adventures.

After telling his story, a fierce argument arises between Avenant, Ludovic and the two elder daughters. Belle takes advantage of the situation and goes to the stables to repeat to The Magnificent the magic words which will enable him to find again the road to the mysterious castle.

Belle is in the monster's power, but he does not wish her death—on the contrary. Henceforth she is mistress of the great empty castle.

Once daily, at 7.0 o'clock in the evening, the monster comes to the castle whilst Belle is finishing her dinner. Each evening he asks her the same question: "Will you be my wife?" and each evening Belle replies "No." She feels instinctively, however, that beneath the uncompromising exterior of the monster there beats a human sensitive heart—but each evening she replies "No." At the home of the merchant, the situation goes from bad to worse. To pay the gambling debts of his son and his companion, he is obliged to sell his furniture.

The merchant becomes gravely ill. The two sisters are obliged to do their own household tasks. By pleading with the monster, Belle obtains permission to return home for a week to be at her father's side, but she promises to return at a stipulated time. The monster does not for a moment doubt her good faith, and, to prove his confidence in her, he gives to her, whom he loves, the key to the Pavilion of Diana, in which are all his riches. Belle is transported to her home dressed like a princess and covered with costly jewels. Her return restores her father to health and they both go to tell her sisters of the adventure, which seems to have given Belle a supernatural power and beauty. She tells her story, and from then on her two jealous sisters and their companions have only one idea: to steal the golden key and get possession of the monster's treasures.

According to the pleadings of her father and those of her crafty sisters, Belle stays over the time of her promised return to the castle. Adelaide takes advantage of this by stealing the key and giving it to Ludovic. It now only remains for them to find the way to the castle, by no means an easy task. Happily for them The Magnificent returns to the stables carrying a saddlebag in which there is a mirror. The two boys give the mirror to the sisters and, mounting the horse's back, are taken by him to the monster's castle.

The mirror is returned to Belle, who sees in it the now almost human features of the monster and the anguish he is suffering. Not wishing to be the cause of such suffering, Belle returns to the power of the magic glove. She finds the monster dying on the shores of a lake and tries in vain to restore him, even promising to become his wife. Meanwhile, the two boys have entered the Pavilion of Diana, where they find sparkling jewels and precious stones. But before they can lay hands on anything, Avenant is pierced by a mysterious arrow and changes instantly into the monster. Ludovic also collapses in a cascade of broken glass....

When Belle looks up, she sees by her side, no longer the monster, but a handsome prince with the features of Avenant, whom she loved.

CAST AND CREDITS

JEAN MARAIS

JOSETTE DAY

MARCEL ANDRÉ

MILA PARELY

NANE GERMON

MICHEL AUCLAIR

THE BEAST

JOAN DAVY

BELLE

MARCELLE

FELICIE

LUDOVIC

DRAUGHTED, STORY AND DIALOGUE BY

JEAN COCTEAU

Suggested from a fairy-tale by Madame Leprince de Beaumont.

Designs by CHRISTIAN BERARD

Music from GEORGES AURIČ

CERT. A

NO. REELS, 10
Jean Marais is a native of the Loiret Department. Even in his youth he had decided to become an actor. He felt his talent and wanted to exploit it. In order to succeed, he came to Paris, where he worked at first as a retoucher in a photographer's. Having been interviewed without success by several stage directors, he tried the Conservatoire, but was refused. This did not discourage him. He went to Dullin to play small parts. Thus he met Jean Cocteau, with whom he created LES PARENTS TERRIBLES. The play came out, giving Jean Marais a chance to show his accomplishments as an actor. But the war broke out shortly after and the young actor was called up. Circumstances did not give him time to make himself known to the public.

In 1940, Jean Marais was demobilised. He tried in vain to get going a new version of BRITANNICUS which he had prepared during the war. Only a year afterwards he had the chance to begin in films. Jacques de Baroncelli engaged him to play a fairly important part in LE PAVILLON BRULE. Already, qualities in the acting of Jean Marais were being noticed.

Roland Tual got him his second role in LE LIT A COLONNES, which he made in 1942. Jean Marais was perfect in his role, which he played very movingly. He carried off his first screen success.

Some months later, he left for Italy with Christian Jaque to play the part of Don Jose in CARMEN. Immense articles appeared, concerning the realisation of the film, which was announced as a production of great value. The name of Jean Marais became more and more popular in France and when, back in France, he began L'ETERNEL RETOUR, everybody knew him.

The film of Jean Delannoy and Jean Cocteau soon came out and was revealed as one of the greatest successes of the French Cinema. The two heroes, played by Madeleine Sologne and Jean Marais, were a great discovery. Overnight the two young actors became famous.

Christian Jaque engaged Jean Marais again, and entrusted him with the part of the young lead in VOYAGE SANS ESPOIR, partnering Simone Renant.

Then came the exacting dual role of Beast and Prince Charm-ing in Cocteau's LA BELLE ET LA BETE.

Josette Day was born in Paris. Both her parents are Parisians. "I did not like ordinary children's games and things little girls like—dolls for example," she says. "I had only two passions, reading and animals, and both were equally difficult to satisfy. Books, for instance, never came into the house, but I discovered one day the whole of Victor Hugo, which I read hidden under a table. And as my mother had a horror of animals, that wasn't easy either. She thought dogs noisy, cats disgusting, birds ridiculous and red fishes absurd."

At the age of nine she entered the Opera as a dancer. At fifteen she took her courage and her looks to the Gaumont studios and demanded to be allowed to break into films. She got a small part in a film being made by Henri Fescourt and then went to Sweden to make "Sermons" with Madeleine Renaud and Andre Burgeres.

Returning to France, she made a number of unimportant films after having experienced unemployment and dire poverty. "I have known what it means," she says, "to breakfast off a glass of cold water and dine on a cup of coffee and a small roll. I have had to make the acquaintance of the pawnshop, where I got rid of even my little bits of childish jewellery."

Her first real part was "Sœur d'Armes," a film of Leon Fotrzier's dealing with counter-spionage in the 1914-18 war. Next followed "L'Homme du Jour" with Maurice Chevalier, and then "two or three films which to-day are completely forgotten, and to name them would add nothing to my reputation."

In fact, she thought so little of her chances in films that she turned to the theatre. She was engaged by Fernand Crommelinck for his play "Une Femme que a le coeur trop petit."

Then came the turning-point of her career. She was sent for by Pagnol Films and offered a part in "Monsieur Bretonneau" with Rainu. "But before signing the contract," she says, "I had to go to Marselles to see Marcel Pagnol himself. He was disillusioned on seeing me, and didn't bother to hide it. I was too young, far too young to play Rainu's mistress. He said NO! very bluntly, but, moved by my tears and my insistence, relented and gave me the part. The film went well and I was immediately put into 'The Well - Digger's Daughter'."

Josette next made "Arlette et l'Amour" with Andre Luguet and Jimmy Gaillard, and followed this with "La Belle et la Bête," the Cocteau version of the famous fairy tale.

Jean Cocteau was born in 1891 and styles himself "French writer and artist." He also admits to being poet, essayist, novelist, caricaturist, stage designer and producer.

In spite of the foregoing formidable list, Jean Cocteau is not only the "easiest terrible" of European artistic circles, but has influenced thought and engendered controversy at a high level for the last twenty-five years. His play "The Eagle Has Two Heads" had a very great success in London's West End and was responsible for the discovery of a new and brilliant actress from Scotland—Eileen Herlie, now under contract to Alexander Korda.

His film production of LA BELLE ET LA BETE enabled him to demonstrate his many and curious attributes and, as a general connoisseur of opinion, however, was summarised by such divergent journals as "The Observer," and "The People" as "unbelievably beautiful" and "beautifully fascinating" respectively.
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