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The Beast Within: A Tale Of Beauty's Prince (Villains)



Synopsis

A cursed prince sits alone in a secluded castle. Few have seen him, but those who claim they have say his hair is wild and nails are sharp--like a beast's! But how did this prince, once jovial and beloved by the people, come to be a reclusive and bitter monster? And is it possible that he can ever find true love and break the curse that has been placed upon him?

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Customer Reviews

Gr 4-6 • Many children grow up with some familiarity with the story of Beauty and the Beast, particularly the Walt Disney version. Readers often admire the beautiful and smart Belle, a devoted daughter and booklover, who is as lovely on the inside as the outside. That she could come to love such a horrific-looking and reclusive creature is testament to her kind nature. And yet, readers know so little of this mysterious Beast and of the spell that caused him to become an outcast within his own kingdom. In this spin-off from Disney's retelling of the old tale, Valentino does her best to expand upon the Beast's side of things: What was it that transformed the handsome and charming Prince into a Beast? Gaston plays a big role in this story, as does a competing love interest of both male characters, Tulip. Belle doesn't appear until toward the end, as this book operates as a prelude to the film. Some new characters add interest, such as the Odd Sisters, a trio of witches spurred by a broken heart and a zeal for revenge. As interesting as that premise is, the book is weighted down by clunky writing, shallow character development, a lack of depth and

nuance. It will likely appeal to only the most die-hard fans of the Disney film. —Meg Allison,
The Moretown School, VT

4Q 4P M This prequel to *Beauty and the Beast* is presented as a young adult title, yet its layout and format might attract a middle-grade population. The writing is polished and appealing to young teens, with just enough spin on the old tale to encourage young readers to stay with the story. Valentino brings back the Macbethian "Odd Sisters"-young witches with a definite nod to Shakespeare's *Weird Sisters*-who first appeared in her retelling of *Snow White, Fairest of All* (Disney, 2009), in which we can see the villain's point of view. The author knows the structure of fairy tales and enhances this one with some new characters who bring life to the "tale as old as time." She also weaves in a few threads from the old film version by Cocteau and hints at Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Readers learn how the Beast came to be cursed; witness quite a bit of his backstory, as well as those of the other familiar faces, like Belle's father; and feel satisfied by the conclusion and the hopeful message that beauty comes from within. The popularity of television series such as *Once Upon a Time* and *Grimm* make this book even more appealing to contemporary young readers. This volume will do well in middle school library collections, as well as medium-sized public libraries with solid tween collections. —Jane Murphy. VOYA

"The tale of a beautiful girl transforming a beast to his original princely form is a familiar and often retold one, but the story of how exactly the prince initially came to be cursed and why is less well known. Valentino sets her version of the prince's perspective in the Disney world, with Cogsworth, Lumiere, and even Mrs. Potts all making an appearance. The setting and the plot are far darker here, however, and musical numbers with dancing cutlery are replaced by the internal contemplations of an increasingly melancholic and occasionally violent Beast as he transforms from human to monster. It begins with the Prince's betrayal of Circe, a young maiden whom he initially woos for her beauty and then rejects when he discovers she is merely a pig farmer's daughter. Her older sisters, a trio of magical witches, vengefully cast a spell on the Prince, and the spoiled, selfish man futilely tries to outrun his fate, losing his human form and almost his mind in the process. Valentino is so successful at making the Prince unlikable that he seems nearly irredeemable, and a disjointed timeline makes it difficult to identify the chronology of the moral transformation that must precede his physical one. The combination of the Disney tie-in and the thoughtful, more folkloric elements, though, makes this an interesting choice for readers who've outgrown the pink-princess phase but are still captivated by fairy tales. KQG BCCB

"A retelling of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, told from the Beast's perspective. The story opens as the Beast contemplates whether Belle-recently made a prisoner in

his castle-will ever come to love him. The timeline then moves backward to the days when the Beast was a human prince, and so begins a story that is predictable-when it isn't entirely ridiculous-and filled with characters as flat as the pages they're written on. As a human prince, the Beast spurns the love of Circe, who turn out to be the younger sister of the "odd sisters," witches whose behavior is so nonsensical it's a wonder they stop cackling long enough to curse him. Though the pre-Beast Prince certainly deserves his curse, whether any actual human being could contain the degree of vanity, selfishness and conceit the Prince exhibits is questionable. One interesting curveball comes in the presentation of the Prince and Gaston (the vain sportsman romantically interested in Belle) as childhood best friends. However, the blandness of the characters negates anything interesting that might have sprung from this twist, which is not nearly enough to save the story as a whole. With clunky writing, an uninspired plot and unbelievably one-dimensional characters (including villains so absurd no one would fear them), this spinoff effort is disappointing at best. (Fantasy. 12-18)

Kirkus"Gr 4-6 Many children grow up with some familiarity with the story of Beauty and the Beast, particularly the Walt Disney version. Readers often admire the beautiful and smart Belle, a devoted daughter and booklover, who is as lovely on the inside as the outside. That she could come to love such a horrific-looking and reclusive creature is testament to her kind nature. And yet, readers know so little of this mysterious Beast and of the spell that caused him to become an outcast within his own kingdom. In this spin-off from Disney's retelling of the old tale, Valentino does her best to expand upon the Beast's side of things: What was it that transformed the handsome and charming Prince into a Beast? Gaston plays a big role in this story, as does a competing love interest of both male characters, Tulip. Belle doesn't appear until toward the end, as this book operates as a prelude to the film. Some new characters add interest, such as the Odd Sisters, a trio of witches spurred by a broken heart and a zeal for revenge. As interesting as that premise is, the book is weighted down by clunky writing, shallow character development, a lack of depth and nuance. It will likely appeal to only the most die-hard fans of the Disney film. Meg Allison, The Moretown School, VT SLJ"

A rather short and quick adaptation of Disney's original award-winning film, it does seem rather rushed. About halfway through the book, it starts to delve into the original storyline, but it hurries along very quickly, skipping over Belle's arrival at the castle and hurrying to her trespass upon the West Wing to her rescue from the wolf pack that attacks her in the woods. Swiftly within a few pages you find Belle fleeing to rescue her father from illness, and before you know it the book is already over with "The End." Most of the storyline is told from the third-person perspective of three of the

witches that assisted in cursing the Beast who are hellbent on driving him mad and aiding Gaston in killing him. The first half is possibly the most interesting part because it's the most original and deviates from the original story the most. The Prince's origins are the most elaborated, adding twists that weren't there in the film. I would have loved this more if it were longer, like in the book "Maleficent." It just feels far too rushed. The second half of the book would have been far more entertaining were it from the Beast's third person perspective and not the evil witches'. It does make some references to other Disney characters in the Disney universe, and the reader will find that enticing. It really is a one-time read, though I'm a huge fan of the original, but I just wanted more from it. There seems to be a lot of missed opportunity from the author to take it to further reaches. If one sits down and really dedicates their attention to it, it can be finished within a day or two. Belle's and Beast's romance could have been explored in-depth much more, but it's hardly touched upon and breezed through. I hope someday a better adaptation is written with far-reaching details and hope-fulfilling content. The reader will just find it lacking overall, though sometimes enjoyable here and there. Don't expect a masterpiece here. I wish the publisher, author, and editor had spent more time dedicated to making it what the fans would appreciate; they really missed a big opportunity here.

Oh, my. First off, I have to start by saying that I absolutely love (as in want to marry) the Disney film 'Beauty and the Beast' (seriously, can anything be better than that wolf scene?) I also loved Serena Valentino's interpretation of the Evil Queen in her book 'Fairest of All'. Naturally, reading this book was a no-brainer. Unfortunately, the book didn't seem to have brains, either. While 'Fairest' heightened the story of Snow White and really made the Queen a more likeable (and understandable) character, 'Beast' muddled the story. It was obvious the book was rushed, and characters were not as fleshed out as they could have been. Valentino could have done a lot more with the Prince's backstory, but instead she tried to give him another "love" interest, made Gaston his hunting buddy (can you believe that?) and incorporated those three witches from 'Fairest' into the book. I don't entirely think this is her fault, however. I can practically hear her editor and publisher saying, "hurry up! Finish the book! We've got to get it out!" while reading each page, and unfortunately, the muddled plot shows. If you're a huge fan of 'Beauty and the Beast' like I am, then just watch the movie. Don't give yourself a headache trying to figure out how this backstory is possible.

This book was written so poorly that I actually researched the author to see if she happened to be a

fourteen year old that Disney took pity on. The story itself could have had potential, but the actual writing let me down page after page.

(jeffrey's wife) I was very disappointed. I'm a big B&B fan and I was excited at the idea of being able to see the other side, like Midnight Sun vs. Twilight. I looked all over locally for the book and finally decided to buy it on sale on Prime Day. It reads like bad fan fiction. It has intriguing ideas, but doesn't fully develop them. It bounces around, leaves things out, THEN tries to bring in parts of the movie, poorly. Towards the end I was basically skimming through it, just to finish it. I have 2 young readers I'll probably let read it, but I do feel like I wasted my money and effort. On the other hand, it gives me hope knowing that apparently I TOO could write something worthy of getting the Disney stamp.

I liked the story in itself and getting to know the previous life of the Beast. Though the part when the curse is becoming reality is too rushed off, so it's way too fast, and is not like you get to "hear" the servants speak in their enchanted forms, instead it looks like they are plain inanimate objects instead of the enchanted one we all love from the film. Not as good as I expected. I hope Ursula's story is better.

I love the Beast even as an adult and to be able to read something teenagers and adults can read is great. I happen to come across this by chance for new reading material for my daughter and it is so intriguing, sucks you right in.

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