

Beauty and the Beast

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The eternal lovers: Vincent and Catherine.

Beauty and the Beast

A Fairy Tale For All Time

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Beauty and the Beast is a tale as old as time. It is a story of an unusual friendship and an even more unlikely love shared between two very different types of people from two very different worlds. One a bright, spirited and lovely young girl, the other a hideous man-turned-monster. It is the story of true love coming not from physical beauty, but from the inner soul, which has been passed down through the generations and seen many different retellings. It seemed only natural that such a tale be turned into a weekly television program.

When Ron Koslow penned the pilot episode for the then-new series of *Beauty and the Beast* he was presented with sort of a problem: how to turn a classic fairy tale into a continuing series set in modern times. His inspiration came from an article which chronicled the 3000 miles of tunnels which stretched and wound their way underneath the streets of New York City. It described how the poor and homeless people of the city had taken shelter in these tunnels from the chill of the night air and gave Koslow the model for what eventually became the Tunnel World: home to the beast, his father and countless others.

This fantasy world below the gritty and tough streets of New York City gave the series a strong and flexible format. Stories could take place either below in the dark mysteries of the tunnels or above in the all-too-real world of New York City. Koslow admitted to uncertainty while writing the series' pilot episode. This series dealt with some pretty heavy stuff for television and it certainly would take a lot to come across as marginally believable on the screen.

The first step in this process was to have performers with a certain kind of flair cast as the series regulars. The character of Vincent, the Beast, called for the actor to be concealed under facial appliances and makeup throughout the filming. Koslow knew the perfect man for the job. Ron Perlman already had a reputation for playing roles which required heavy amounts of makeup. He had already been seen as a caveman in the movie *Quest for Fire* and as a pirate in the misunderstood film *The Ice Pirates*. Koslow was aware that Perlman was growing tired of makeup roles and wanted to try something else. However, when Perlman read the script for the pilot, he immediately changed his mind and wanted to play Vincent with only the stipulation that he not wear contact lenses as the makeup had been designed. Perlman felt that the eyes are the window to the soul and since Vincent was written as a very soulful character, the contacts would only defeat the purpose Koslow was trying to project. The eyes only added to the mystery of Vincent's origins; a mystery never fully explained and perhaps one that is best left a mystery.

For Catherine Chandler, the New York attorney who would become Vincent's soulmate, Koslow wanted *Terminator* star Linda Hamilton. Koslow felt that her portrayal of the changing life of Sarah Connor in that film would perfectly carry over to the role of Catherine. The other roles in the series, the man Vincent called Father (whose actual name was later revealed to be Jacob Wells) was played by veteran character actor Roy Dotrice. Dotrice had at first read for the role of Vincent and wanted to be in this new series so much that he accepted the role of Father when it was offered to him. Catherine Chandler's boss, Assistant District Attorney Joe Maxwell was played by Jay Acovone.

CBS executives crossed their fingers as they screened the pilot. They loved the visions of the Tunnel World, the beautifully orchestrated music, and the beginning of the strange relationship between Vincent and Catherine. They granted Koslow the green light to do the series. And then Koslow was presented with his second problem: Since the pilot itself was so good, what could be done next?

The first several episodes of the series dealt with the gradual building of the relationship between Vincent and Catherine, as well as Vincent's first exposures to the world above the tunnels. Vincent and Catherine's relationship seemed to be in constant danger of snapping apart like a dry twig under foot at any moment. In *Terrible Savior*, a subway vigilante who seems to resemble Vincent in every fashion is killing people and Catherine begins questioning Vincent's gentle nature. In both *No Way Down* and *Nor Iron Bars a Cage*, Vincent is captured above, severely beaten and left with no way to return to the safety of the tunnels below. In both these episodes, it is Catherine who saves his life.

Two of the high points of the series' first season were the episodes *Masques* and *A Happy Life*. In *Masques* Vincent ventures above on Halloween night in an attempt to see a poet whose work he admires. His appearance is not a problem and in the end he not only saves the poet's life but also gets to spend one night in the city above with Catherine where he need not fear being captured. *A Happy Life* dealt with the changes Catherine experiences on the anniversary of her mother's death. She begins questioning everything in her life, including her relationship with Vincent. So great are Vincent's feeling for Catherine, that he is prepared to let her go rather than allow her to be miserable and lonely for the rest of her life.

Such deeply moving stories as these caused the series to develop a loyal fan following (mostly consisting of women) comparable to that of *Star Trek*. The series presented and idealized romance which was unlike anything ever seen before or since on television. The series was also a demographical success and CBS renewed it for a second season.

Unfortunately it was then that the 1988 Writer's Guild of America strike hit and delayed production of new episodes for the series for months. Finally, on November 18, 1988 the second season began with an episode entitled *Chamber Music*. The writer's strike had taken its toll on series' new episodes which were of somewhat lesser quality than the previous year. *Remember Love* was obviously *Beauty and the Beast's* version of *It's A Wonderful Life* and *Arabesque* had an almost inconceivable reappearance by a former love of Vincent's.

This is not to say that the season was totally without merit. It did have some outstanding entries such as *Orphans* in which the death of Catherine's father leads her to desire a life in the tunnels with Vincent (no doubt every fan of the series). *Dead of Winter* introduced the Tunnel World holiday Winterfest, and featured a return of the series' best recurring villain, the evil alchemist Paracelsus (played by Tony Jay). Even the season finale trilogy, *What Rough Beast*, *Ceremony of Innocence* and *The Rest is Silence* showcased the series at its highest dramatic level. It even ended with a cliffhanger for the next season.

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However when the next season finally did premiere after much lauding on the part of the *Beauty and the Beast* fans, it came with a major alteration to the series format. Linda Hamilton was pregnant in real life and because of the hectic pace of series television, felt that she didn't want to continue the show in her condition. CBS had also felt that the series was not reaching the widest possible audience it could and the network ordered Ron Koslow and his production team to make the series more action-oriented by concentrating more on Vincent. The network believed the series would then reach the male audience it had missed in the past.

The third season came in the form of a 12-episode limited-run serial and many fans were disappointed with it. Some have even gone so far as to believe the entire season to be something like the bad dream season which caused *Dallas* so many credibility problems. However, one must not discount this part of the series as it holds some of *Beauty and the Beast's* best mystery and dramatic elements.

In the third season, it was revealed that not only was Catherine able to bring Vincent out of his self-loathing, but their relationship had been consummated in the process. Unfortunately, Vincent and Catherine's son is kidnapped by a mysterious, evil, and powerful man named Gabriel (wonderfully portrayed by Stephen McHattie). Vincent loses Catherine at the hands of the murderous Gabriel and begins a quest to recover his missing son.

Meanwhile, Catherine Chandler's death has revealed a conspiracy in the city District Attorney's office all of which points to Gabriel as well. Unfortunately, the police cannot touch the mysterious Gabriel and they enlist a specialist named Diana Bennett (Jo Anderson) in an attempt to tie Catherine Chandler's death to Gabriel. Diana's investigation eventually leads her to the Tunnel World and Vincent, and together the pair work to locate Gabriel and recover Vincent's son.

This serial came across very well despite the absence of Linda Hamilton. Many fans believed that the series could not go on without Catherine being there for Vincent, but why not? Vincent's feelings for Catherine never died. Besides, it had already been revealed that Vincent had loved someone else before Catherine, why could he not develop feelings for Diana as well? But perhaps it is best not to dwell on what might have been. *Beauty and the Beast* ended with the recovery of Vincent's son and the opening of a new chapter in his life.

Beauty and the Beast remains a fan favorite and has recently been syndicated to various television stations around the country following a two-year run on cable's Family Channel. The series has been compared to *Star Trek* in terms of its ever-growing fan following. Writer George R.R. Martin, one of the chief creative minds behind the series, has even predicted that it will return in a motion picture as *Star Trek* did. Whether or not it does remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: *Beauty and the Beast* is a television fable that will continue to enthrall audiences for many years to come.