

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

"Siege"

by

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HOUSE DRAFT

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FADE IN:

EXT. AN ALLEY - WITH VINCENT - NIGHT

Vincent is on a foraging run, searching for useable cast-offs in an alley behind an old apartment building. He pulls a broken rocking chair from a dumpster, checks it out. A couple of broken rungs and its wicker seat is torn, but talented hands will soon make it right. He moves down the alley toward another dumpster, then stops, listening... The faint strains of CLASSICAL MUSIC drift from a transom window. Intrigued, Vincent approaches the window, kneels and peers through the grimy glass...

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

An old man sits at an upright piano, his fingers dancing across the keys. He plays beautifully, passionately... a Mozart concerto he keeps in his head with hundreds of other pieces. His name is MICHA LANGER. The passing years haven't stripped him of his dignity; there's an almost tangible strength of character about him.

VINCENT

listens, caught up in the beautiful music... now the SOUND of a VEHICLE approaching... Vincent reacts, darting for cover just ahead of the slash of HEADLIGHTS that knifes down the alley...

MICHA

breaks off his playing abruptly when he sees the HEADLIGHTS through the transom window. He quickly douses the lights and hides behind some storage crates, obviously frightened.

IN THE ALLEY - THE CAR

rolls to a stop; TWO MEN climb out. The interior light goes on when the door opens; we see the DRIVER clearly. Early 50's, hard-eyed... The door slams.

THE TWO MEN - VINCENT'S POV

The move toward the transom windows. Both are carrying bottles with rags stuffed into the necks. One of the men flicks a cigarette lighter; the rags catch fire. The men kneel, hurl the bottles through the transom window, then race back to the car as FLAMES mushroom inside the basement. The car takes off, tires squealing, fishtails out of the alley and speeds away...

VINCENT

dashes from cover, kneels at the window, trying to see through the flames...

IN THE BASEMENT - MICHA

is trying desperately to get to the door, but the fire pushes him back.

MICHA
(over the flames)
Help me! Someone help me!

ANOTHER ANGLE - VINCENT

struggles through the window, shielding his face with his cloak, and drops to the floor. He doffs the cloak, then uses it to beat at the flames. Micha pulls a canvas drape off a pile of furniture and joins in the battle. The two of them fight the flames furiously, and finally gain the upper hand.

Vincent, certain that the old man is safe, quickly shields his face and tries to go back out the window. Micha notices, reacts, grabbing Vincent's arm.

MICHA
I owe you my life --

ANOTHER ANGLE

Vincent turns; Micha gasps and steps back as if slapped. Vincent tries for the window again, too used to this kind of reaction to be hurt. But Micha takes his arm, turning Vincent back around to face him.

MICHA
Please ...
(holding up his wrist)
I know what it's like to be
hunted, to be afraid...

Vincent looks at the FADED NUMBERS tattooed on MICHA'S WRIST.

MICHA
(continuing)
Without your help, those punks
would have done what the Nazis
couldn't... killed us all.

VINCENT
All?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED

MICHA

The other tennants. There are still some left, those who refuse to run, to be bought off. We are survivors. All of us.

Micha moves to his precious piano, examines it. He's relieved, sits at the keyboard and begins to play.

MICHA

(continuing)

Auschwitz, Dacchau, Buchenwald... we survived.

VINCENT

The men that did this... Why do they try to drive you from your homes?

MICHA

(a wry smile)

Like trees planted by the water... we shall not be moved.

(a beat)

What is your name?

VINCENT

Vincent.

MICHA

I am Micha. I think maybe we'll be friends.

CLOSE ON THE OLD MAN'S HANDS

moving across the ancient keyboard...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. A MANHATTAN GALLERY - MATCHING CUT OF BLACK HANDS ON A KEYBOARD - NIGHT

The classical music washes into cocktail piano; we hear the sounds of a large party OVER: laughter, conversation, etc.

ANGLE WIDENS to reveal a handsome black man in a tux at a baby grand, playing background music for a very large, very exclusive gallery crowd. The pianist should bear a striking resemblance to Bobby Short... CAMERA PANS off the pianist, across the glitzy, black-tie-and-diamonds crowd to FIND CATHY and EDIE sipping champagne and admiring the art work on display.

CLOSER - CATHY AND EDIE

Eddie's not all that impressed with what she's seeing, but she likes Cathy's company. Both women look absolutely stunning.

EDIE

(looking at the modern art)

I see better stuff than this on walls in Avenue C. Ug-lee...

CATHY

(amused; shushing her)

The artist might hear you.

EDIE

He's loose? Oughta have him in rubber reception over at Bellevue.

(adjusting her dress)

I wish you'd gain some weight. I love this dress, but it's tight in all the wrong places.

(glancing around; reacting like a starstruck kid)

That's him! He's coming right at us!

CATHY

The artist?

EDIE

Elliot Burch! Don't look! My lord, the richest man in the hemisphere... He's gorgeous...

ANOTHER ANGLE - ELLIOT BURCH

and a small entourage is moving toward Cathy and Edie, admiring the exhibits and chatting. Edie averts her eyes, embarrassed to be caught looking, but Cathy gets caught mid-stare. Burch, a handsome, dapper man in his early 40's, smiles at her and raises his glass to her in salute; color comes to her cheeks.

Elliot Burch is one of the world's richest, most powerful men, a legendary titan of industry. His empire and influence is global in scope, with tentacles stretching into real estate, media, manufacturing, etc. He's also a jet-setting playboy, one of the world's most eligible bachelors.

Cathy tries to concentrate on another painting, but he's on his way over to introduce himself. CAMERA IN as he and his party reach Cathy and Edie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED

ELLIOT
 (to Cathy)
 I don't believe I've had the
 pleasure. I'm Elliot Burch.

CATHY
 Catherine Chandler... my friend
 Edie Tyler...

ELLIOT
 (as he shakes hands)
 Ms. Chandler... Ms. Tyler...

EDIE
 (he's dazzling)
 It's 'miss'... both of us, I mean
 you can call us 'ms.' if you want,
 but neither of us is 'mrs.'...
 someone stop me...

ELLIOT
 (a nice laugh)
 Two beautiful single women... I
 lead a charmed life.
 (he touches Cathy's
 elbow, guiding her to
 the next art work)
 Excuse us, please...

His charm is magnetic; Cathy's literally being swept away by
 this man. Edie watches them go, sighs...

EDIE
 The glass slipper never fits my
 foot...

WITH CATHY AND BURCH

They pause before another painting.

BURCH
 This is really marvelous... such
 passion... a hint of danger...
 (a look at her)
 I sense both qualities in you,
 Cathy. Perhaps that's why I find
 you so attractive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED

CATHY

(she's a bit
overwhelmed; his
directness is
unsettling)

Not much for small talk are you,
Mr. Burch?

BURCH

Elliot, please. If I've offended
you, I'm sorry. But I find the
ritual of courting antiquated.
(a warm smile)

I was never any good at it.

Cathy returns his smile, more at ease with him now. There's an almost boyish quality to the man that's unexpected, and very appealing. They're moving to he next painting when a portly, distinguished man intercepts them. He's Burch's attorney, ARTHUR LEWIS.

LEWIS

Excuse me, Elliot, but it's most
urgent. If I could have a
moment...

BURCH

I'm sorry, Arthur, but as you can
see, I'm not available.

LEWIS

But Elliot --

BURCH

-- Later.

LEWIS

Of course.

He goes off as Burch plucks a couple of glasses of champagne from a passing waiter's tray, gives one to Cathy.

BURCH

Arthur's my attorney. A
professional worrier.
(touching his glass to
hers)

To our first sunrise.

CATHY

You're moving too fast for me,
Elliot. I'm very flattered, but
I don't think...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED (2)

BURCH
(the good smile again)
Don't you?

His eyes are challenging; she can't seem to pull away from them...

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A light burns in the transom window; classical MUSIC drifts in the stillness.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Micha is still playing and telling Vincent about the situation at the building.

VINCENT
You've been to the police?

MICHA
They tell us there's nothing they can do, that we should hire our own guards. We're all on pensions here. Where would we find money for guards? So we stay inside behind locked doors, like frightened children. Now they turn off our heat, break the elevator, stop up the plumbing...

Vincent hears something; he waves at Micha to stop playing. We hear FOOTSTEPS above, coming down the stairs.

OLD WOMAN'S VOICE
Micha? Are you all right? Micha?

MICHA
Sophie. My neighbor. A good woman, but such a gossip! If she sees you...

Vincent rises, goes to the window. Micha gives him a hug of gratitude.

VINCENT
Something will be done, Micha.
I promise you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED

SOPHIE'S VOICE
 (outside the door)
 It's freezing down here! You'll
 catch your death...

Micha helps Vincent get back out the window. SOPHIE comes IN just as Vincent disappears. She's a small, frail woman, totally devoted to Micha.

SOPHIE
 And not even wearing a sweater!
 Cold enough to hang beef and not
 even a sweater... You should bring
 your piano upstairs again.
 Rosencratz and Gildenstern moved
 out, who's left to complain...
 Your face, what is that on your
 face, soot?
 (she looks around at
 the area blackened by
 the fire)
 My God, Micha! What...

MICHA
 (coming to comfort her;
 she checks his burned
 face)
 I'm fine. A sunburn hurts worse.
 A gas bomb through the window...

SOPHIE
 Monsters! When will it stop, when
 will they leave us in peace?

Micha has no answer for her...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF CATHY'S BUILDING - NIGHT

A stretch limo glides into the curb...

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CATHY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cathy and Elliot come off the elevator, come down the hall toward CAMERA. They are smiling and laughing, loose and easy with each other. They reach her door; she gets out her key and unlocks the locks, opens it. Now the moment of truth...

CATHY
 It's been a lovely evening,
 Elliot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED

ELLIOT

It doesn't have to end.

CATHY

Tonight it does. I've got to be in court bright and early... and I have the feeling you might keep me up very late.

ELLIOT

It goes against my grain, but I guess I'll have to say good night.

He leans to kiss her... It's the first time she's been kissed since meeting Vincent, and she's a bit hesitant, uncertain of her feelings. He breaks the kiss, traces her cheek with a fingertip, kisses her again... This time she kisses back...

ON CATHY'S TERRACE - WITH VINCENT

He's waiting in the shadows, and his empathic powers are giving him some unsettling feelings... ones he's not familiar with.... almost painful...

INT. CATHY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She's saying a final good night to Elliot.

ELLIOT

I'm walking away from your door,
Cathy... but not out of your life.
Good night.

CATHY

Good night...

He moves OUT of SHOT; she closes and chains the door, sets the locks, then leans against it a long beat, trying to make sense of her feelings. Now she reacts to a faint TAPPING on the terrace door. Excitement registers as she instinctively pats her hair, preens... for Vincent...

ON THE TERRACE - VINCENT

steps from the shadows as Cathy steps out, calls his name.

CATHY

(softly)
Vincent...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED

VINCENT

Catherine... how lovely you look.

He can't gaze at her too long; she's achingly beautiful. He looks out at the city lights, slightly angry with her and not fully understanding why.

VINCENT

What is his name?

CATHY

Who?

VINCENT

The man who brought you home.

CATHY

Elliot Burch. We met at the gallery opening. He's --

VINCENT

(sharply)

I know the name.

Cathy steps closer to him, but he won't look at her. She feels strange, almost guilty, as if she's done something wrong. She puts her hand on his arm; he still won't meet her eyes.

CATHY

Vincent, is there something wrong?
You seem so distant...

VINCENT

(masking his feelings)

It's nothing.

(beat)

I met an old man tonight... He and his friends are being terrorized, driven from their homes...

He turns to look at her, and she notices his singed face for the first time.

CATHY

You're hurt! Burned, cut... Let me help you...

VINCENT

I'm not the one who needs your help, Catherine. These people are old, terrified... The building would have burned tonight.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED (2)

VINCENT (Cont'd)

The've been beaten, robbed, their homes vandalized... Will you talk to them?

CATHY

Of course. You can tell me about your friends after I put some salve on those burns.

VINCENT

It's not necessary...

But she goes back into the apartment for the first aid supplies.

IN HER BATHROOM

She's searching through the medicine cabinet, finds salve and bandages. She goes OUT of SHOT.

ON THE TERRACE - WITH CATHY

as she comes INTO SHOT...

CATHY

We'll have you fixed up in no time... Vincent...?

PANNING THE TERRACE - CATHY'S POV

He's gone. But he's left a BOOK of poetry behind.

RESUME CATHY

She goes to the railing, looks over... but he's gone. She kneels to pick up the book, opens it... a sheet of folded paper is inside. She opens it, reads the scrawled name and address.

CATHY

(reading)

Micha Langer...

Off her thoughtful look,

CUT TO:

EXT. A RUNDOWN BUILDING IN THE BOWERY - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

This place should have been razed years ago. A real eyesore.
OVER THIS:

LEO BURNS' VOICE

Look, I don't know what happened.
The place should have gone up like
a haystack. I saw the flames
myself...

CUT TO:

INT. LEO BURNS' OFFICE - NIGHT

A small, dingy office that would gag Mickey Spillane. A man we recognize as the driver of the firebomb car sits behind the desk, cradling a phone receiver against his cheek as he twists the cap off a pint of whiskey, pours a dose in a coffee cup. His name is LEO BURNS.

BURNS

I know that... yeah... Look, I
know what you're paying me for,
okay? Next time out we'll connect.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - A STRETCH LIMO - NIGHT

cruises toward and past CAMERA...

MAN'S VOICE

See that you do, Mr. Burns.
There's a great deal of money at
stake here.

CUT TO:

INT. STRETCH LIMO - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

We're in TIGHT on a man's MOUTH against the receiver of a car phone. We can't see the man's face.

MAN

Don't bore me with the details.
Just do it. There won't be any
more chances. You try my patience,
Mr. Burns, and I'm not a patient
man.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - NIGHT

We PAN WITH the LIMO as it disappears into light traffic, then TILT DOWN to a street GRATE... PUSH IN...

CUT TO:

INT. FATHER'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Father is doctoring Vincent's burns; Vincent winces as the salve is applied.

FATHER

You could have been killed...

VINCENT

More than my life was at stake.

FATHER

What about our lives, Vincent?
You endanger us all every time you
go above. You know that!

Vincent brushes Father away, rises and crosses the chamber. He's troubled and moody; Father senses it.

FATHER

(a sigh)

I'm proud of you... but worried
as well.

(beat)

You've something on your mind.
Share it with me.

VINCENT

I'm very tired...

FATHER

It's the woman, isn't it? I'm not
so old that I've forgotten what
jealousy does to a man's heart.

VINCENT

(an edge)

But I'm not a man, am I? I have
no claim on Catherine. She has
her own life... as I have mine.

Vincent rises, moves away from Father, unable to meet his eyes. A long moment...

FATHER

Nothing can ever change that,
Vincent. She'll only bring you
pain. Surely you must know that...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED

VINCENT
(staring hotly; his
anger becomes sadness)
I know she's a part of me. And
nothing will ever change that.

Vincent leaves the chamber, Father staring after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CATHY'S TERRACE - DAWN

Cathy stands at the balcony railing, watching the sun rise over the sleeping city. She's in her nightgown and robe, but she hasn't slept. An emotional storm is brewing, and the tides are rough. She opens the book that Vincent left for her... softly reads aloud a poem by John Malcomb Brinnin...

CATHY
'Never seek to tell thy love Love
that never told can be; For the
gentle wind does move Silently,
invisibly.

Soon after she was gone from me
A traveller came by, Silently,
invisibly: He took her with a
sigh.'

She closes the book, holds it against her breast as we

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. MANHATTAN DISTRICT COURT - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Stock, if possible.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

A trial has just been recessed; people are streaming from the courtroom. CAMERA FINDS CATHY and DEPUTY D.A. JOE MARTELL amid the crowd and MOVES IN to FRAME THEM as they walk toward the elevators.

JOE

Nice goin' in there, Radcliffe.
I couldn't have slammed the cage
on that sleazeball without the
dirt you dug up. C'mon, I'll buy
you lunch. We'll go someplace
fancy, with napkins.

CATHY

(they reach the
elevators, wait for
the car)

Can I take a raincheck? I've got
some business on the lower east
side.

JOE

(teasing)

Uptown girl like you? It's gotta
be business. What case?

CATHY

(the car gets there;
as they go IN)

No case -- yet. I guess you could
say I'm prospecting.

The elevator doors close on CAMERA and we

CUT TO:

EXT. AN OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The flip side of the building we saw at the top of the show.
Old, but well maintained; the people that live here are proud of
their home.

CLOSER ANGLE

A moving van is parked in front, and the Movers are hauling furniture out of the building. A small crowd of old people has gathered near the truck. We recognize MICHA and his friend SOPHIE among them. Micha is pleading/arguing with an old man named HERMAN, trying to talk him out of moving. Herman's face is swollen and bruised; he's been badly beaten.

MICHA

Don't do this, Herman! Don't let them drive you out, this is your home! More than thirty years... you raised your children here...

HERMAN

I got a good price, plus a new condo in Jersey. That's so terrible a fate?

MICHA

You got scared, that's what you got! You let them buy you, like the others!

Herman's wife, SYLVIA, comes down the steps INTO SHOT, cradling a couple of prized possessions in her arms. She's heard enough; her eyes blaze at Micha.

SYLVIA

Look at his face! They nearly killed him, and you call him a coward! You're fools, all of you! Is this place worth dying for?

A few arguments break out, everyone hollering and finger waving...

AN ND SEDAN

rounds the corner, finds an empty space at the curb in front of the building, and parks. Cathy climbs out and walks toward the group, which is beginning to break up. Cathy speaks to Herman, who's supervising the loading of the van.

CATHY

Excuse me... I'm looking for Micha Langer...

HERMAN

(a disgusted nod)
Over there... the one with the big mouth.

FAVORING MICHA AND CATHY

He's on his way up the steps when Cathy catches up with him.

CATHY

Mr. Langer? I'm Catherine Chandler, special investigator for the District Attorney's office. We received an anonymous tip --

MICHA

(loudly, to the others)
This girl is from the D.A.! Maybe she'll listen to us!

(back to Cathy as the others gather round)
These people must be stopped, made to pay for what they've done! They send punks to rough us up, vandalize our apartments...

SOPHIE

The elevators have been broken a week, they won't fix them! We have to climb --

OLD MAN #1

-- Now we have no hot water, the cheap, miserable --

OLD WOMAN #1

-- Two knocked me down, took my purse, my check is gone... how do I live?

CATHY

(waving for silence;
they slowly quiet down)
Please, one at a time. You'll all get a chance. Mr. Langer, is there somewhere we can all sit down together?

OLD MAN #1

(pointing OS)
There! He's the boss, the one that sends the punks!

ANOTHER ANGLE - LEO BURNS

is by the moving van, speaking quietly to Herman and his wife. The crowd, furious at the sight of him, come toward the truck. Cathy is swept along...

(CONTINUED)