

(BELLE heads for home, with GASTON and LEFOU close behind. GASTON runs around in front of her and strikes a nonchalant pose.)

GASTON

Hello... Belle.

BELLE

Bonjour, Gaston.

(GASTON moves and blocks BELLE's way. She is amused by this. He's harmless.)

Excuse me.

(GASTON snatches the book out of BELLE's hand.)

Gaston. May I have my book, please?

GASTON

(flicking through the book)

How can you read this? There's no pictures.

BELLE

Well, some people use their imagination!

GASTON

Belle, it's about time you got your head out of these books and paid attention to more important things.

(GASTON strikes a handsome pose.)

LEFOU

Hint... hint.

BELLE

Like you?

GASTON

Exactly! The whole town's talking about it. It's not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts getting ideas... and thinking... for herself!

BELLE

Gaston, you are positively primeval!

GASTON

Why, thank you, Belle. What do you say you and me take a walk over to the tavern? I can show you my trophies.

BELLE

Maybe later. I have to go help my father.

LEFOU

That crazy old fool. He needs all the help he can get!

(GASTON and LEFOU laugh heartily.)

BELLE

Don't talk about my father that way!

(GASTON thunks LEFOU on the head.)

GASTON

Yeah! Don't talk about her father that way!

BELLE

My father's not crazy! He's a genius!

#3B — Maurice's Entrance

Orchestra

(MAURICE enters with his colorful new invention.)

MAURICE

Belle! Belle!

BELLE

It's working!

(MAURICE waves merrily as part of the invention falls apart.)

GASTON

Some genius! Now, Lefou, I want you to go out into the woods and bring me back the biggest, healthiest deer you can find.

LEFOU

Not the woods! Anything but the woods! You know I hate the woods.

GASTON

Just bring me a deer for my wedding feast!

LEFOU

But I hate the woods! It's dark and spooky, and there's bugs and spiders!

(GASTON and LEFOU exit.)

BELLE

Papa, are you all right?

MAURICE

I can't for the life of me figure out why that happened! I'm about to give up on this hunk of junk!

BELLE

Oh, you always say that.

MAURICE

I mean it this time! I'll never get this bone-headed contraption to work!

BELLE

Yes, you will. And you'll win first prize at the fair tomorrow.

MAURICE

(sulking)

Hmmph!

BELLE

And become a world-famous inventor.

MAURICE

You really think so?

BELLE

You know I do. I always have.

MAURICE

Well, we'd better get cracking. This thing's not going to fix itself. Now let's see...

(tinkers with the invention)

So... did you have a good time in town today?

BELLE

I got a new book.

MAURICE

You do love those books.

BELLE

Well, they take me away to wonderful places where there's adventure and mystery and romance and... happy endings.

(a beat)

Papa... if I ask you something, will you answer me honestly?

MAURICE

Don't I always?

(MAURICE ducks behind the invention.)

BELLE

Do you think I'm... odd?

MAURICE

My daughter! Odd?

(reappears with a silly-looking work helmet and goggles)

Now, where would you get an idea like that?