A New Life

by mrmistoffelee

Summary

A new maid is hired at the Beast's castle post movie. What is in store for her and the castle's major domo Cogsworth?

Notes

Disclaimer: I don’t own Beauty and the Beast. Anything you recognize isn’t mine and belongs to their owners. Anything you don’t is mine unless I say otherwise.

A/N: This story was developed with help from my friends at the Bittersweet and Strange forum. For those of you that are wondering, this will be mainly a Cogsworth/OFC pairing, along with the canon pairings of Prince/Belle and Lumiere/Babette-am using musical version for her name. Please let me know if I make a mistake with pairings and personalities so I can fix it. This initial chapter, though, is to introduce my OFC, Collette de Roche.
Chapter 1

Chapter 1:

Collette took a deep breath before entering her quarters to pack. Her master, former master, she thought, correcting herself, had dismissed her after she’d punched his eldest son in the nose. Why the lad thought she was worth bedding was beyond her. Besides, if manor gossip was to be believed, he wasn’t worth it. Punching him the nose, though, was. It got the point across, didn’t it? She asked herself. He isn’t the type to understand that no means no. I pity the girl he’ll end up marrying. Hearing a knock on the door, she went to open it to reveal her father, Pierre, the head of the household.

“Pere,” she said in surprise, both at seeing him and at the expression on his face. “Come in. I was just packing.” She moved to allow her father in. “What’s wrong?”

“Collette, I warned you time and time again not to anger the master,” he began, knowing that it was a lost cause to warn her. She’d inherited her mother’s stubborn nature, though where her quick temper had come from, no-one in the family knew.

“So I should have let his oaf of an heir force himself on me?” Collette was angry now. “That boy has tried to get me to have sex with him for weeks. He thought I was playing hard to get while I want to save that for the marriage bed!” She opened her mouth to continue, but her father held up a hand to stop her.

“That’s what I told the master. You are very lucky that he trusts my opinion on issues like this. I made it clear to him that if Jean had been able to do what he wanted, as well as get you pregnant, it would be a disaster. Why it would be is no concern of yours” He lifted her head up. “As it stands, I do not want you in the same house as he.” Pulling a letter out of a pocket, he explained that it was a letter of introduction. “Your brother Henri will take you to the royal palace via stagecoaches after the household is asleep. He is the only one out of your brothers who knows that you are leaving. It will be a two day trip.” Fontine is mad enough as it is about the master’s decision to send our daughter away. Of course, that’s not considering what Andre’s reaction will be when he finds out.

Collette was thinking similar thoughts about her eldest brother’s reaction. The two had disagreed often about her reluctance to give in to Jean’s demands. “Thank you, pere,” she said, accepting his hug. “I should finish packing. The quicker I finish, the quicker I can be ready to leave here. Does the master know about when I plan to leave?”

“All he asked is that you not be here in by breakfast tomorrow. He doesn’t care how or when you leave, though he has agreed for Henri to escort you as far as your next job. The only stipulation is that the two of you take stagecoaches vs. taking a horse and buggy from the house. Andre is already in bed, you’re lucky this took place after the evening meal. Enough talk. You need to finish packing and I need to speak with Henri and one of the stable boys.” With that, Pierre left the room, leaving the letter with his only daughter.

A few hours later, Collette found herself bundled up in her winter cloak outside a tavern, which was just about to close up. The stable boy had dropped Henri and her at the closest stagecoach stop, which happened to be the local tavern. She was happy that her brother was with her, because she wasn’t sure what would have happened if Henri hadn’t been there. He and the tavern owner were debating over the price of a room at this time of night and she hoped they finished soon. Despite this being early spring, she was freezing.

“Collette,” Henri called, waving her over. “M. Firmin has a room for us. Let’s get to bed. We have a lot of travel ahead of us.”

“Merci, Monsieur,” she said to the tavern owner. “I feel sorry for you in this weather.” The tavern owner scowled at her before stamping up the stairs, leading them to their room. “Here
you two are.” He pointed at a door, which revealed a room with one bed. The next couple of days brought more of the same and Henri was not looking forwards to the ride back. “At least I know that you’ll be safe here,” he said, during the drive to the royal palace. “Cogsworth might run a tight household, but he and Mrs. Potts take care of the servants under their care.”
Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own BATB or any characters that you recognize from Disney. Collette, her family, and any OC's are mine unless I say otherwise. Any errors are my own. Mind you, some spelling errors-like how maitre'd is supposed to be spelled (with a small arrow over top the i)-is due to writing this on a Mac. The first few chapters were written on a Mac, the rest on a Dell.

As with errors, any character differences are my own and most will take place over the course of the story. However, if you feel like I am doing a character wrong, let me know politely. Don't say "You're doing so-and-so wrong" without saying HOW I'm doing it wrong. Mind you, this only applies to the canon characters, not my OCs for now. I will let you know if this changes. The time period in which I have placed the story in is my own interpretation and as such, please don't tell me I've placed the fic in the wrong era. As I haven't been able to find any official statement on when the Beauty and the Beast films and musical take place, I can only place it based off of my own best guess. On THAT note, I've placed the films and musical between 1810 and 1820. 1830 at the very least. To explain further would require more space then I've allotted to the disclaimers and authors notes. Most of the chapters will be focusing on Collette, though there will be times where I'll switch to another character's viewpoint. As for French words, I'll try to stick to the obvious ones-pere (father or dad), mere and maman (mom), mon ami (friend) and so on-but I'll keep it in character. For instance, you won't see Cogsworth using mon ami, nor Lumiere old friend, linguistically.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

For the week after she settled in, Collette couldn’t believe her luck. She was grateful for her father arranging this; she didn’t think that she’d have been able to get a position here-or many other places-otherwise. She had been placed under the tutelage of Mrs. Potts, which Collette thought was a good thing. On one hand, she much preferred the kitchen to maid’s work, while good at either, cooking came easier. On the other hand, she’d never worked at a castle and had been more nervous her first day in the kitchen then she’d been the day she’d arrived. She found, though, that Mrs. Potts was every bit as kind as she looked and had taken the time to calm the younger girl’s nerves. Collette found that the work there was the same as it had been working for her former master. The biggest difference that she had found was that the dishes were fancier, but she had been expecting that.

What she hadn’t been expecting was the amount of attention she had gotten from other servants. From what she had heard a little bit from Mrs. Potts and more from one of the maids, "Call me Babette," Cogsworth, the castle's majordomo-and by proxy, their master, the Prince-hadn’t needed to hire a new servant in ages. Those that had been hired were mostly maids. Why she had been hired had set a number of tongues wagging, but Collette wasn't about to say anything and the servants that hadn't been warned off by either Mrs. Potts or Babette didn't want to get on Cogsworth's bad side. Well...except for Lumiere, who seemed to take some delight in winding the majordomo up, though the two remained good friends. From what she had gathered, he was the castle equivalent of the village womanizer. Her second day there, he'd flirted with her and tried to kiss her only to find that she'd slapped his face. To add insult to injury, Collette threatened to tell Babette if he even tried as
much with her...again. He largely left her alone romantically after that. She did apologize to Babette when the latter had come storming into the girl's room, making her wonder what, exactly, Lumiere had told her....and had to swear the maid to secrecy about her past.

"Babette, I am sorry about that, but if you had been in my shoes, from the situation at my last master's house, you'd have done the same thing," Collette had said, half-pleading. She didn't want to lose one of the first friends she had at the castle. "Just let me explain, please?"

Babette still didn't look too happy, but relented, "This had better be a good reason."

After Collette had extracted the promise, she started her story. "At my last home, the master's son was the type to sleep with any servant who was female and unattached. His father, the master, probably knew what his son was doing, but made no effort to reign him in. I was the only servant who was bold enough to fight back. Most of the others either didn't care or were too afraid of what would happen. I started by doing what the other servants had done-say no. He kept at it though, as if to prove that even the majordomo's daughter wasn't off limits. My eldest brother being his valet probably didn't help matters. He wants me to marry into an aristocratic family. Failing that, any wealthy family would do. It got bad enough that two days before I came here, he'd tried to force himself on me after dinner. I'd punched him in the nose and was then dismissed. Thankfully, my father and Cogsworth know each other somehow-or at least that's what my father implied, but without that, I don't know where I'd be. Likely worse off then I was or am now-very worse off. I don't know how my father and Cogsworth know each other, never had the chance to ask, and I don't know Cogsworth well enough to ask." Collette felt drained after telling that story and prayed that she'd never have to tell it again.

The two had become better friends after that and Collette was pleased that while Babette may be somewhat of a gossip, she had kept her promise and not spread the younger cook's story all over the palace. Babette had also explained that it was a rule of the master's that the female servants had the right to say no if asked to be in a romantic relationship. That included when they had male guests at the palace who might have been used to that either at their own homes or at the castle during the reign of the master's father. Collette was relieved because that meant if Jean visited the palace, she was safe. Privately, she felt that he and her brother Andre would at least try if not outright break that rule if or when they came. Lumiere had also spread the word among the male servants to avoid trying to flirt with her right off the bat. That story had made its way around the palace grapevine in no time, leading many of the servants to say that it wasn't the first time that the maitre'd had been slapped, but that this was the first time he had been slapped by a woman before he'd slept with her, making it a new record.

Collette found that her days had settled into a very comforting routine-get up, help Mrs. Potts with cooking the meals, wash the dishes, and generally help keep the kitchen clean. Even with all of that, there were other girls and some of the young male servants helping out Mrs. Potts and Chef Bouche. She found that after the evening chores were done, she had some free time on her hands to spend as she wished, as well as a day off a month. Collette could understand having the kitchen staff that they did. While the only people living in the castle besides the Master and Mistress were the servants, it wouldn't be that way throughout the year. There would be balls and such throughout the year, but once that Master and Mistress started a family, there would be those children and quite possibly their spouses once they grew old enough to marry. It made sense to have a staff on year round that could not only handle the ebb and fall of the number of people in the palace, but also knew the other
servants in the palace and the ways of the palace. That system, along with how well their Master and Mistresses treated them, left little room for any servant to betray the household.

After her evening chores had been completed, which usually included helping to wash, dry, and put away the dishes, as well as clean the kitchen, Collette usually explored the castle. She had been told by Cogsworth which areas were off limits to the bulk of the servants, including the West Wing. The only servants allowed there besides Cogsworth and Mrs. Potts usually ended up being the valet and ladies maid assigned to the Master and Mistress. That night, though, Collette quickly went to her quarters to get her yarn and crochet hooks. She had found a small room that looked somewhat like a study or common room during her explorations and would be perfect then just sitting around gossiping with some of the maids or kitchen staff. She usually heard enough gossip while she was working and during mealtimes. Even though she was making friends among the staff, Collette knew that alone time, where she could work on her knitting or crocheting would be a luxury, especially whenever there was any type of celebration to plan for.

That night, Fate seemed to work against her. When she got ready to open the door, she found it already open and Cogsworth was on one of the chairs in the room, staring into the fire. Collette didn't know who had lit it, but she suspected the majordomo himself, who looked up as she entered. It was useless to light a candle or fire in a room that wouldn't be occupied. That was just a waste of candles, wood, and matches. "I'm sorry, sir," she said, backing out of the room. "I didn't know anyone was in here." Her protestations about finding another room to be in quieted as Cogsworth raised his hand. He didn't seem like himself, at least not the over-stressed and somewhat pompous version that she saw during the day.

"It's all right. Collette, isn't it?" At her nod, he continued, "Come, sit down. How are you settling in? Everything going all right? And please, don't call me 'Sir'. That term is best used for the Master or any other male guests we might have. Call me Cogsworth."

Collette blushed and accepted the rebuke, as she set her bag of yarn down and sat in the chair across from the majordomo. "I am doing fine, Cogsworth, everything is going fine. Thank you for asking." She was wondering what was going on. Cogsworth looked older then he was, as if the stress and weight of his position was prematurely aging him. "How are you doing, Cogsworth?" The temptation to call him 'Sir' was still there, as what she had seen of the majordomo made it clear that he expected orders to be obeyed to keep the household running smoothly. However, running a household was a difficult job and he didn't look like he had anyone to talk to about it who would understand what he was going through that wouldn't either make a joke of it or spread it around to the other staff. Well, maybe Mrs. Potts, but the older cook had a smaller staff to work with and even Lumiere knew better to get on her bad side. She decided then and there to be that person for no other reason then that he not only was a friend of her father's, but it didn't seem like he had that friend. "I promise whatever you tell me won't be repeated unless you give me leave to talk about it and even then, it will be with whomever you say I can talk about it with and no other except yourself."

From the look on Cogsworth's face, her offer was the last thing he expected. Though, as he went over it in his mind, it was consistent with the type of behavior he had come to expect from Pierre when he had first met the man. It made sense that his daughter would make a similar offer. He smiled at her, already feeling some of the stress of the job leave his shoulders. The two soon fell to talking, and after a short while, he asked Collette what was in her bag. She quickly blushed.
"My maman, when she had the time, taught me to crochet, knit, and sew. It helps pass the time after the evening chores are done," she replied, still blushing. "I didn't bring out my current project while we were talking because I didn't want to seem rude or disrespectful." Why am I blushing right now? He's about ma pere's age and I don't know him all that well. I don't want to make the same mistake with him as I did with Jean! Collette resisted the urges to both run from the room and bang her head upon the closest hard surface.

Sensing her discomfort, accompanied by the blush quickly spreading across her face, Cogsworth went over to her and placed his hands on her shoulders. "Collette, I don't mind if you work on your projects while you're talking to me. I know I come across as a bit of a strict taskmaster during the day, but all you really see of me is in the kitchens before and during the meals."

Collette smiled. "There is no need to explain yourself or your behavior to me, Cogsworth. I'm sure you know that my father holds the same position for the Rochefort family. He was one way when it was just family, but when it came to doing his duty, he could be just as strict as you are, when the situation called for it." She frowned, unsure how to phrase what she wanted to say, which was that he needs to find a way to relax outside of his job. This wasn't like it was when she was at home, where she could say what she thought in private to her father, within reason. Here, she knew very few and the man she was talking to was, for all intents and purposes, her boss, not her father. On top of that, they were just starting to get to know each other outside of their duties. It wouldn't be proper to suggest such a thing at that moment, if at all.

Chapter End Notes

Well, That's it for this chapter. Still not happy about how I did Cogsworth at the end there, but I promise that when I write scenes between him and the canon characters, he'll sound more like he does in the movie. As always, any suggestions on how to do the canon characters better is appreciated. Flames, though, will be used to make s'mores.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Don't own any characters except my own. Though if Cogsworth were to show up on my doorstep, HE'S MINE, ALL MINE! :D

A/N: Again, I apologize if any of the canon characters seem 'off', but I promise to write them as faithfully as possible to the movie versions whenever I can. Whenever they are by themselves, like this chapter will show, they may seem slightly different at the very least. For the most part, that's on purpose, as this story is focusing more on the supporting cast of the servants and I'm trying to develop them beyond what you see in the movie. If I seem very off on the characterization of the canon cast, let me know, please, so that I can go back and correct it if I can. I am going off of 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Beauty and the Beast: The Enchanted Christmas', so if I don't include anything from any other Disney-related Beauty and the Beast something, it's because I've not seen it or it's been a while since I've seen it.

As Cogsworth headed to bed, he found his thoughts turning to the new young cook/kitchen maid. 'I am surprised at how well she is fitting in here, though she seems to have only a couple of friends. Outside of her confrontation with Lumiere, I've seen very little of that temper that Pierre warned me about.' He realized that from what little he knew of both the situation and of what had led to Collette's dismissal from her previous post, Lumiere likely had it coming. Pierre hadn't said much about it in the letter that Collette had brought with her and Collette hadn't seemed inclined to talk about it earlier. Whenever they had come close to discussing it, she had hesitated, seemingly not wanting to say anything about it to the man who had essentially given her a job. He hadn't brought the subject up, thought he was curious. 'This is only her first week here and I don't want to drive her away like that. It would be nice to have...’ Cogsworth quickly squashed that thought when he realized where it was going. He felt that he was too old for her, that she deserved a younger man, someone closer in age to her. He wouldn't say no to her friendship, though. Outside of the more senior staff, the majordomo knew he had very few friends in the castle.

After he entered his room and closed the door, he sighed. Just from tonight's conversation, he had the feeling that while Collette was being honest with him, there were a few things that she wasn't telling him, not just the story of why she was dismissed from her previous post. Cogsworth realized that she likely didn't want to jeopardize her position here. He wanted, no, needed to gain her trust, but also reassure her that no matter what, she would always have a place at the castle. He remembered when the Mistress first came to the castle, how alone she was and realized that Collette was in the same position. It had been that same feeling that had prompted him, in behavior very much unlike what he would have normally done, to tell her that she could use that room for her own personal use. His observations led him to believe that she wouldn't abuse the privilege. Most of the servants either hung out in the kitchen or depending on the gender of the servants in question-one or other of the various bedrooms. There were those that might use the library or one of the similar rooms, but those tended to be few and far between.

He'd also noticed that a few times, she'd seemed on the verge of saying something, but had held back, for some reason. I wonder if it's because she sees me as her boss right now, instead of a friend. Shaking his head, he put it out of his mind, telling himself that he either imagined it or if he hadn't,
that she would tell him in due time.

The next few weeks fell into a similar pattern. During the day, both Cogsworth and Collette would go about their duties, but at night, they would meet in the study and just talk. They both would sometimes talk about their days, but other times, they would talk about other topics, like some of the parties that the Master and Mistress threw that she either was unfamiliar with or had details beyond what she knew from her life at the Rochefort house. He knew that Mrs. Potts would give her the details specific to her duties as a kitchen maid, but he wanted her to know the other details just in case she was required to perform other duties. He didn't foresee her needing to do them, but it was better safe then sorry. It was in this way that their friendship began to develop.

Neither knew it, but some of the other staff had noticed the developing friendship between the two. Most that had noticed it were relieved, others jealous. Those that were relieved were such for one of two reasons, one being that they were hoping that this friendship would cause the majordomo to relax a bit on how strict he was; two being that they were thinking along the lines of 'About time' or 'He's been alone for so long, he needs someone'. Those that were jealous were so mainly because they either wanted Collette for their own or wanted to marry Cogsworth because of the prestige that being married to the majordomo would bring, never minding that he was just friends with Collette. They saw her as a rival for the other's affections, however imagined.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Don't own it. If I did, Cogsworth would've gotten a girl long before Lumiere ever did, and Gaston would've met the Enchantress at some point...preferably before she met the Beast.

If I am moving the plot along too fast, let me know. Also, one of the things I brought up last chapter, about some of the maids wanting to date Cogsworth, well, we don't see most of the staff interactions during the film, and the ones we do see are mainly between the staff that's important to the plot. I'm addressing a bit of that in this chapter, along with just some of the research I've done. It seems natural (to me anyway) that's there's going to be a few females who'd want to marry him just because he's the head of staff and single, personality aside. Of course, that's just me.

Babette will seem a little OOC in this chapter, but I needed a servant around Collette's age from the movie for her to trust. I'd had Babette marked as that, so that's why. I also figured that Babette has a serious side.

In the next few weeks, Collette came to realize that her friendship with Cogsworth was the cause of jealousy amount some of the under house maids. Here she was, the newest scullery maid, and already had an 'in' with the majordomo, to hear some of the maids speak. Why they would be jealous, she couldn't fathom until she asked Babette one day while doing chores in the kitchen after luncheon.

"Cherie," Babette replied with a chuckle, "they're jealous because they have been tried to get Cogsworth's attention for years now, but he's not paid them an ounce of attention except to order them to go back to work. Then you come along, and gain his attention seemingly without trying. That you manage to do in several weeks what they've been trying to do for years, that's why they're jealous." She continued, telling the young scullery maid about some of the rumors going around about what she and Cogsworth were doing in the evenings.

"I can believe some of those about some of the other servants, but Cogsworth and I? Not likely, not now," Collette replied, shaking her head. "Cogsworth has been helping me get used to the castle. Don't get me wrong, the help that you and Mrs. Potts gave me the first few days has helped, but he has been telling me about what might be required of me outside of the kitchens when the galas come around." Holding her hand up to stall Babette, she added "I realize that it's normally Mrs. Potts or you that would, but he decided to do so for some unknown reason. I know my father and Cogsworth knew each other, but I don't know the specifics. My father didn't have the time to tell me before I came here and I don't know Cogsworth well enough to ask."

Babette, setting the last of the plates down in the cupboard, nodded. "Forgive me if this seems to personal, but when you became old enough to become a maid at your old home, what did your father do with you?"

Collette, surprised, replied that it was similar to what she and Cogsworth did in the evenings, that he told her about situations that could happen. During the day, if she wasn't being a scullery maid, she was doing the duties of a lady's maid, training under her mother to hopefully take over the duties of
being lady's maid to Lady Rochefort, but that fizzled when the aforementioned lady passed away. "It was only about 5-6 months before I came here that her death happened." Blushing, she asked if she'd been foolish or naïve to believe that she wouldn't run into any new situations in her new household.

"Oui, chérie, a bit, a bit, but that's how you learn." Both knew, and Babette knew not to add, that as a scullery maid, especially as the newest one, Collette was at the bottom of the pecking order.

Collette realized that she should have known this from the first, that as the newest maid, with the least seniority, she shouldn't become a favorite of the majordomo or any of the senior staff within several weeks of arriving. It was expected that the senior staff and upper servants would be friends, but that the junior staff, especially the understaff, wouldn't do too much mixing with the upper house staff or the family, especially in a castle. There was just too much work to be done for starters, especially at gala time. In the Rochefort household, Collette, as the only daughter of the majordomo and being trained as both a scullery maid and a lady's maid, was in a grey area as far as where she stood. As a scullery maid, she was a under servant. As a lady's maid, an upper servant, but also very much alone. With her father in charge, she was freer to mix with the upper house servants that were her family.

Here at the castle, she shouldn't have had that luxury to do much mixing. Granted, meals was one such thing, or when one of the upper maids like Babette was assigned to train or assist her in duties that Mrs. Potts couldn't teach her, but even in her off times, there were certain places that were normally off limits. She was now finding this out, as some of the maids made disparaging comments towards her when they thought that no-one was listening.

Aside from her, there were two kitchen maids, Aimee and Marie. Marie had the afternoon off that day and the other was sweet on one of the footmen, not paying too much attention to her duties when he was around, hence why Cogsworth and Mrs. Potts had Babette helping out in the kitchen that day verses her normal duties. Collette had a feeling that Mrs. Potts would be having a few words with Aimee. Collette had tried to do it herself, but was brushed off.

Feeling a hand on her shoulder, she looked up to see Babette looking at her.

"You're working hard and trying not to make waves because of what happened with Jean," Babette stated quietly, and somewhat seriously for the flirty maid. Babette had kept her voice low because she knew that certain maids and a few of the other staff would try and cause problems if the story of why her friend had come to the castle got out.

Collette nodded as she finished putting away the last of the cups. "I do not want to leave here. Some of the maids aside, the staff has been so friendly and helpful. I don't want to risk that."

Babette nodded, having heard of what could happen to servants, maids especially, who left in disgrace, without a good reference. The lucky ones found husbands or new homes where the masters or mistresses didn't care about the servant's past. They sometimes ended up working as tavern wenches, which could be a good or bad thing depending on the maid and the tavern. The maids worse off made a living in the red light districts. There was one thing though. Looking around, she noticed the kitchen maid Aimee was gone, her duties finished until preparations for dinner begun and no other staff except the two of them. She placed both of her hands on the younger girl's shoulders.

"You should tell Mrs. Potts and Cogsworth at some point as to what led to your dismissal from your last household. That way, if it comes out, they will be able to protect you a little better. Plus, the Master and Mistress, as I'm sure you've heard, are very protective of the staff. There's been more then one servant that's come in with one or two dubious events in their background. They're good staff, otherwise they wouldn't be kept on."
Collette, for the next month, stewed over that conversation with Babette, who was quickly turning into her closest female friend in the castle. It was the news, though, of the spring gala coming up and who might be invited that prompted Collette into action. In part because of the cook's kindly nature that made Collette sit down with Mrs. Potts first. That, and she didn't want to worry Cogsworth any more then he already was over the gala. Waiting one day until Aimee and Marie, both having their chores done, were both out of the kitchen, she asked Mrs. Potts if she could talk to her. It was after the evening meal, but Cogsworth wouldn't be expecting her for another hour or two and her tale wouldn't take that long.

Mrs. Potts, though, having seen this from other maids more then once, quickly put on a pot of tea over Collette's protests. "You look like you need it, my dear," she replied, placing her hand near Collette's elbow. Guiding the young scullery maid to a seat and handed her a cup of tea, she asked Collette to tell her what was troubling her.

Wiping away a few tears, Collette burst out with "It's the invite list for the gala! Is it true that the Rochefort family is coming?" Getting an affirmative, she continued. "They're the family I worked for before coming here. My parents hold the same positions for the family that you and Cogsworth hold there. My brothers, well, Andre is the Master's son's valet and Henri is one of the footmen. Henri isn't too bad, but Andre is horrid! He's got this idea in his head that I should marry a nobleman and has managed to convince Jean, the Rochefort heir, that I would be a great bride. Jean tried to get me to sleep with him more then once. I ended up punching him the nose to get away, which is why I ended up being dismissed. If my pere hadn't written that letter to Cogsworth, I don't know what would have happened." Collette tried to continue, but the tears were coming down too hard. She found that Mrs. Potts had wrapped her in a hug.

"You're worried that either Andre, Jean, or both might try to do something," Mrs. Potts stated.

"Oui, or one of the other maids who doesn't like me. I've seen some of them give me looks as if they are jealous of something." At this, Mrs. Potts frowned, a rare expression on her face. Collette's worry got worse. "Please don't say anything on my account! That can make things worse if they think I've been carrying tales, trying to get them in trouble."

Mrs. Potts quickly calmed the young scullery maid down. "The maids likely to cause you trouble are ones who came here with troubles in their past as well. If it comes to that, I'll remind them of that."
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own BATB, nor any character names you may recognize. All other characters are my own unless I specifically disclaim owning them. Same goes for plot ideas-if I know it comes from a fic that I've read before, or given to me by a fellow BATB author, I'll credit them. If you recognize something from another fic, let me know so I can credit them if it's a fic that I've read.

AN: If I make any mistakes, spelling or canon characters, please tell me. I try and catch things when I can. I'm flying without a beta by choice, so any help is appreciated. My daily schedule can be unpredictable, and not fair to anyone willing to beta me.

However, I do ask that you please tell me if I make any goofs. If a canon character seems OC, it may be by choice, but feel free to say something anyway. It may be something that I wasn't intending to write that way. Give Cogsworth for example. If he's alone, or with Collette, he will be different then how he is when he's on duty. As far as French goes, it has been 12+ years since I've had a French lesson and I don't know where my dictionary is. A lot of stuff got packed away after high school. If I use a word in French in the wrong context, or with the wrong word, please let me know. I'm generally using the words I remember, which-after 12 years-isn't much at all. Also, please note that this is done from the perspective of a servant (or several) and that I will being the appropriate terminology. Now, other authors will use 'The Prince' or 'Belle' when when a servant isn't talking. I'm doing this more as being inside Collette's brain unless it's done from the perspective of another character and how they think of the Prince and Belle. I won't be naming the Prince until the new film comes out. I don't consider 'Adam' canon as there is nothing in the original animated movie to prove. I've only seen the musical once and don't remember a name from that either.

After Mrs. Potts had successfully called the young maid down, she asked Collette if she wished for Cogsworth to know. Understandably, that resulted in another meltdown. What the kindly cook was able to discern from the crying is that Collette didn't want the majordomo to think any less of her. Mrs. Potts was also sure that there was a fear of losing another position as well. An understandable fear, to be sure. It was a fear of any servant, to lose a position without a reference from their employers.

Raising Collette's chin so that their eyes met, she said, "Love, Cogsworth won't think less of you. Neither will the Mistress or Master. Any staff that would or will can deal with me. Some have forgotten that it's a bad idea to anger the one that in charge of the household's cooking. I know you fear losing your position here. You won't for this. I'm sure by now you've been told that any female servant has the right to say no to any relationship. Cogsworth would understand, as would the Master and Mistress. If your former master's son tries anything while he's here, he'll be in for a world of hurt. So will your brother, especially if it's found that he's aided or instigated with what his master had planned." Seeing that Collette was calming down once again, she contined, "Now, I would recommend that you tell Cogsworth about your past and your worries, but if you don't feel ready for that yet, I can suggest to him that some of the guests and their staff may need reminding of the rules regarding relationships with the female staff here."
"I'd like for you to talk to Cogsworth, please, Mrs. Potts" Collette replied, wiping away the remainder of the tears that the kindly cook had started to do. "As much as Cogsworth and I have been talking, I don't feel comfortable bringing the issue up quite yet. As much as I know that not telling him the full story quite yet will come back to haunt me, I would rather he get it from someone he trusts. Please don't bring my past up just yet, just that you heard some talk about how some of the guests have treated maids in the past or something along those lines. Even the flightiest maid knows that the kitchen staff forgets more gossip then there is food on earth."

A week after the talk with Mrs. Potts and two weeks before the guests were to arrive, Collette made her way to the study where Cogsworth and she usually talked, only to find him and the Master both in there, quietly talking. Both looked at the door when she entered, not allowing her to slip out without being noticed.

Bobbing a curtsy, she said, "I'm sorry for interrupting, Master, Mr. Cogsworth. I was unaware that the room was in use." She turned to leave and close the door behind her, presuming that they were making arrangements for the gala, arrangements that couldn't have been made until now. The study wasn't that far from Cogsworth's office, though on the 'upstairs' side. She knew that Cogsworth would have to finalize a few things with the Master that the Mistress didn't handle, namely the signing off of the wine lists and a few other things.

The Master raised his hand, stalling her. "Collette, please stay. I have some things I would like to discuss with you." At that, she came in, closing the door behind her. She moved into the room, standing next to Cogsworth, but did not sit down as she normally would have.

A servant did not sit in front of their Master or Mistress unless otherwise asked to. It just wasn't done and a servant that did so, especially an underservant like a scullery maid, was considered to have ideas above their station. Even a servant who had a standing invitation to do so would not take advantage most of the time as not to seem too presumptuous or familiar with their employers. Even if they did so, they would not do so where others could see, especially if there were outsiders around.

Collette was starting to feel very nervous. Her mind racing, she hoped she wasn't about to be fired, or that Cogsworth had put his career on the line to save her. She didn't want him to get in trouble for what she had done to her previous master's heir, if that story had even made the rounds. She hadn't heard any rumors of the sort, but not everyone was willing to repeat them where she or her closest confidants could hear.

"You're not in trouble, Collette," she heard the Master saying. "In fact, you coming in here saves Cogsworth from sending for you. Belle's ladies maid has just given her notice. If my memory serves me right, do you not have some training in that area?"

"I do, my lord. Begging your pardon, though, I would prefer staying as a scullery maid." Collette replied, thinking to herself Just when I think I'm free from having to deal with that rat-faced bastard,
THIS comes along! "It is just that it's been long enough since my training that I have forgotten much of what I have learned."

Hesitating a moment, she asked and received permission to leave. After she left, the Master turned to Cogsworth.

"She seemed nervous, Cogsworth. More so then normal, especially after I mentioned the ladies maid position. Most young maids would go for such a position. She didn't. Do you know why?"

Cogsworth rather nervously replied, "Not quite, Master. I know that one of the families coming is the family that she previously served. I also know that there was some issue with them that resulted in her dismissal, but her father-the butler there-did not detail what that was in his letter to me. I have yet to ask because I've noticed that anytime she is asked, she tends to go silent about it and refuses to answer. She may wish to not put herself in a position where she will have to deal with her previous master and his family, rather dealing with the servants. She also may not want to cause trouble for you. A sort of safety net, if you will."

"Do not press her on the issue, Cogsworth. Your reading of the situation is the same as mine. She did seem on the verge of stating what that issue was, instead giving me a reason, while valid, was not why she is declining the position. I will be reminding the families, as Mrs. Potts suggested, about my rule on relationships with the servants. If any decides to cause trouble with her or any servant, they will not get off easy."

"I will be reminding the staff of the same, Master. With your permission, I or Mrs. Potts will be investigating the servant's side of any claim against any of the guests. It wouldn't be the first time an unfounded claim has been made against someone who had a provable alibi at the time that the incident allegedly took place...on either side."

With that settled, the men separated, the Master to his rooms and the Mistress, Cogsworth in search of Collette. Finding she had already retired for the night, he did as well, though not before hearing what sounded like crying coming from her room.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own Beauty and the Beast, nor any of the characters you recognize, save my original characters. I will admit to unashamedly grabbing character names from The Phantom of the Opera, though just the names and not the character profiles. If I DO have a Comte de Chaney, it will be the Grandfather or Father of the Comte of novel and musical fame, not Raul himself. I will be likely grabbing names for any other throwaway and original characters from novels, television shows, movies, and musicals that take place in France or any other country as necessary. This is mostly due to, as I mentioned last chapter, 12 years or thereabouts, since my last French lesson. I make no claim on the fandoms that their names come from or any similarities thereof.

A/N: This chapter will jump into part, if not all, of the party. I don't know MUCH about French wines. Italian and American wines, yes, but not French. I do realize that all American wines are modern, so they won't be showing up. I will be doing research, but most of the information about wines out there are on modern wines. If anyone knows about French wines of the early 1800's, please let me know.

I use time jumps when I can't think of anything to put in that time period that can't be explained by a time jump. Yes, I could hash out conversations between two characters, but in some cases, will completely ruin what exists of my storyline. So, time jump with first paragraph explaining what's happened since the last chapter.

Again, I would appreciate you letting me know of any mistakes, spelling or otherwise, that I make. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, I have a new laptop and no Microsoft Office. The program I'm using has no spellcheck that I can find. I'm catching everything that I can find, but I'll admit that even though I'm a native English speaker, English spelling rules are horrible and I'm not sure I have everything.

Several weeks had passed and the day that the guest would begin arriving for the Spring Gala had come. Cogsworth and Collette had come to a sort of agreement on her background—he hadn't pressed her on it, but had let her know, in private, that he was somewhat aware of her past with her previous family by way of her father's letter. He further let her know that if she wanted to talk to him about it, or not, he would not hold the issue against her. Neither would the Master or Mistress, which to Collette supported what Mrs. Potts and the other female servants had told her. On Babette's suggestion, she had made more friends among the underservants, primarily among the maids. Though, due to the Gala coming up, they had very little time for socializing. Cogsworth understood when she elected to spend time with her new friends then him. He had rather been expecting it and encouraged it, seeing as he felt she needed friends closer to her own age and among her gender. As he was the majordomo and she a mere scullery maid, they both were aware of the rumors surrounding their relationship. Neither wanted to cause scandal, especially early on in her employment.

Isofar as the Mistress' ladies maid went, another maid had been found among the staff with the training necessary. She had earlier acted as a ladies maid for female guests without a maid of their own. As the castle now had enough staff, she would not have to perform those duties for other guests.
Today, though, Collette and the rest of the staff were busy getting everything ready. Cogsworth was up by the front door, welcoming guests, along with his other duties. Collette was kept in the kitchen, assisting Mrs. Potts and Chef with anything they needed, the other two main kitchen maids doing the same thing. Various servants wandered in and out, not just for meals, but in the case of visiting servants, to acquaint themselves with the kitchen staff. At least, that's what they said, but more likely, as Aimee had mentioned, their masters or mistresses didn't need them, so the kitchen was a good place to hang out until they were summoned. If nothing else, they might be able to either snag some food or flirt with other servants, along with exchanging gossip. Granted, nobody was supposed to talk about their family, but this gossip was more along the lines of confirming what they had heard from their families.

Collette, as busy as she was, was completely shocked when her brother Andre entered the kitchen. Outside of a handful of letters exchanged between her and either Henri or her father, she had little contact with her family. She had not been aware of which servants the Rochefort family would be bringing. She'd hoped Andre would have been left at home, but here he was.

He appeared to be looking for her, but she elected to keep her head down and stay busy. She knew that the kitchen was busy enough that he would have a tough time finding her at first. Aimee tapped her on the arm, both peeling vegetables for the evening meal. The two had become friends, after Collette had gotten over some of her fears and now talked while sharing duties, along with talked after they had finished their chores. Aimee even helped Collette with some, when needed. Collette did the same, as they were chores she needed to learn.

"What do you need, Aimee?" Collette asked, not looking up.

"The valet you were looking at, you seemed shocked to see him. What's up with that?" Aimee replied, tossing another peeled potato into a pan that they were sharing.

"He's one of my brothers. We don't get along, period. He wants me to marry a noble. Me, I would rather stay a servant. It's the world I'm more comfortable with. I wouldn't be happy bossing around servants. I know that the Master and Mistress aren't like that, but not every family is like that. He's thick with the Rochefort heir, Jean. He and I have an even worse history. I'll explain later, if it doesn't blow up in my face before then."

"Ah, the type of servant with an ego and ideas above his station. My type of guy...NOT!" They both giggled, knowing Aimee was more interested in a relaxed relationship then a steady one. "Thank goodness Marie and her footman finally hooked up. I was considering seeing if I could lock them in a broom closet if they hadn't hooked up by the end of the Gala."

"Better a broom closet then the wine closet. You know what Lumiere would have done."

"Oui. I have heard of what he does to those who use the wine closet for romantic rendezvous. He doesn't even use it with Babette. He makes Cogsworth look tame. No offence."

"None taken. My father's the same way-he holds the same position that Cogsworth does at the Rochefort household. You don't anger staff in charge of certain areas. Doing so chances that issues will arise with the Family." Both maids knew that Cogsworth, more then any other staff member except for Chef, relied on Lumiere's knowledge of wines and other alcohols.

Aimee didn't bother replied to the last statement, as it was the same here as it was anywhere else. "Anything else I need to pass on to other maids regarding your brother?"

"Oui. His name is Andre and he fancies himself a ladies man, as does his master. Compared to Lumiere and a few of the true ladies men among the male staff here, neither are. Granted, a few maids wouldn't mind Andre's ego, but from what I remember growing up, he wasn't as good in bed
as he claimed. Warn and pass along that he and Jean both are to be avoided at all costs. We have help on our side, but still be careful. Stay in groups of three or more if you can. If not, stay in areas where there's more of our people that can help, even if it's for a temporary hook up. Andre and Jean both won't go after maids if presumably obviously taken." Looking up, she noted Andre had moved on to a maid, but then looked over to where she and Aimee were working. "He's looking this way. What's the status on our bags?"

"Empty," Aimee replied, tossing the last of them into the pot. "Let's take them over to Chef, see if he needs us to do anything. If not, either he or Mrs. Potts will have enough for us to do so that we can claim to be too busy for your brother to talk to us." Collette had confided somewhat in both Aimee and Chef-as had Mrs. Potts-that they both understood that their newest maid needed to be kept as busy as possible during the Gala to avoid any issues with her former family. As she said the last part, they each grabbed a handle of the pan towards the stove, also grabbing the cloth bags that the various vegetables had been in. Chef was planning various roasts for the evening meal and had needed various vegetables, included potatoes, for it.

As it turned out, Chef did have more to do, needing to be kept busy or not. Having conferred with Mrs. Potts, they decided to keep Aimee with Collette while the Gala was going on, as Marie's head could sometimes turn at the slightest sign of flirtation from a manservant that she found attractive, footman follower or not. Setting them to helping with cutting the vegetables that they had just been peeling, he asked Collette to point out her brother and if this was the brother that needed to be headed off or not. Receiving the information, he keeps an eye out for Andre and makes sure that it appears that Collette is too busy to talk. Chef knew what visiting servants were like in the kitchen and most tended to shy away from those who had tasks to keep them busy. He knew that this valet could be trouble, though.

His suspicions were proven correct several minutes later. Andre had found his way through the throng of servants that were in and out of the kitchen. Chef grabbed the younger man's arm before Andre got to his sister. "I do hope you were not about to engage either of the maids at that table in conversation, young man. We are busy with getting food on the table and getting the evening meal ready for tonight. If you are trying to catch up with your sister, you will have to wait. She is busy with her chores and will continue to be so throughout the entire Gala. If by chance she is free, it will be up to her to engage contact. In case you have forgotten, the maids here, including your sister, have the right to say 'non' to any relationship. This includes relationships with servants or with any invited guests, like your master. You would do well to remind your master of that fact. My master will come down hard on any guest who abuses a maid in the house's employ. Now, as your sister is busy, away with you. The two of you can catch up later if she has some free time."

Andre, though angry, left, not seeing his sister's look of relief. Searching out his master, he waited for a free moment, then quietly tapped him on a shoulder. "When you have a moment, Master. I have some new information for you about the person we talked about earlier." Receiving a nod, Andre faded into the background.

A couple hours later, the time had come. Andre had laid out his master's outfit for the evening meal. Even though the meal was an hour and a half away, Jean was expected to be there earlier, as was his father and Andre was doing valet duty for both. Jean came in and as Andre helped him dress, Jean asked what Andre wanted to tell him.

"Master, you know that after my sister left your family's employ, she found new employment elsewhere. I saw her working in the kitchens here earlier. Some of the staff here, particularly those in charge of the kitchen staff, seem to be aware of my sister's history with your family. One in particular warned me off and reminded me of a rule that I admit to have previously forgotten. It seems that the
Prince and his family are rather protective of their staff and allow them to say 'non' to any guest or a guest's staff who desires a relationship. He did ask me to pass that information on, as well as the fact that the Prince seemingly does not approve of a guest who forces themselves on their staff, regardless of past relationships."
Jean frowned. Collette, temper aside, was very beautiful. He was aware of an arraigned marriage that his father had made for him, but that was a way aways. Collette, Jean felt, would be better. Granted, that was mainly based on what Andre had told him. Jean had no reason to doubt his valet and the two were as close as a noble and his valet could be. He was aware of Andre wanting to better himself and wanted to help him in any way he could. If he married Collette, then he would hopefully find a way for Andre to become more then just a servant.
"It's not your fault, Andre. We'll have to adjust our plans, that's all. There are other kitchen maids, yes?" Receiving a 'oui' in reply, he continued, "Find a way to get Collette up here if you can, even if you have to flirt with another maid. I have no doubt that the single maids are being told to go about in groups. If you can get one of the maids to pair with Collette and then get both up here, that will work. Whatever you can do that will work, do so. I leave the details up to your discretion. Be careful."
Chapter 7

Later that day, Cogsworth, Mrs. Potts and Babette were gathered in the former's office, with Cogsworth's face in his hands.

"There's no way out of this for her, is there?" He asked, having been informed that one of the regular maids had fallen ill earlier in the day, and as Collette was one of the few kitchen maids who could function in both the dining and ballrooms, not to mention having the lowest seniority, it looked like it was it.

Babette, after finding the maid ill, had gone to the younger maid to see if she could at least, the very least, tell Cogsworth about Collette's past. The response had been uncertain and hesitant, but finally, Collette had consented to having the general bits known. Unbenownst to the young maid, Cogsworth and the Master both had figured out some of the generalities.

She would have been horrified if she'd known; she was scared enough that they knew the general bits, being afraid she would be fired with nowhere to go but one of the big cities and work a less respectable trade. Her fears still haunted her after so many months despite both Mrs. Potts and Cogsworth, as well as her closer friends Babette and Little did she know that her fears would be laid to rest that very night.

"Afraid not, mon ami. She is scared out of her mind, as her former master's son is here as a guest. You and I both know that there is some not so good history between them. If we can keep her at a point in both rooms where they are unlikely to meet, that will work. Add to that, if we can keep several of her friends close by, that will help."

Hopefully was thought by all in the room, but not said aloud.

"I know that this is a rush, as there is very little time to show her everything she needs to know," Cogsworth began, before being interrupted by Mrs. Potts.

"I have Aimee, one of the kitchen maids, on that. She's done the role before, but she handled the last fill-in. It's Collette's turn, so Aimee is making sure to fill the gaps as best as possible. Collette's a smart girl. She'll catch on quick, Cogsworth, don't worry. We need to get going."

Collette was hurrying. After changing into a clean uniform-the one she'd been wearing earlier had gotten dirty from all the kitchen work and not suitable for work in front of the family-she'd hurried to meet Aimee, who was showing her where she needed to go. After Mrs. Potts had told them the news, Aimee started quizzing the younger maid about what to do during a dinner party. Questions like what side are dishes served from, which drink goes in which glass (and how to pour each), how to properly address each guest by their title and if the guest in question was a child, adult, and married or widowed. How to reply to various common questions that guest might ask of her. This was after it was explained about how the kitchen maids rotated during various galas into the serving
rotation during meals if a upper maid who usually helped fell ill, as what had happened today. She was so nervous about this being her first gala that she almost forgot about Jean and Andre. That was before a hand grabbed her and spun her around, revealing her eldest brother.

"Andre, now is not the time. I need to get back to work."

"How would your master feel if he found out you'd snuck away? Not to mention dressed in a new, clean uniform." The look on his face suggested what he thought she'd been up to.

"Probably relieved that Cogsworth and the rest of his staff are on top of things, as usual. One of the upper-house maids fell ill. I'm filling in for her tonight. If I was going to sneak away for a bit of romance, it wouldn't be when all hands were needed to help. Now, please let go, or I shall be late. If that happens, I'll make sure to let them know you're to blame." After looking at her oddly, he let her go and vanished back to where he'd come from.

Shouting after her brother, she added "Oh, and not a word of this to your master" before heading back on her path.


Andre, after hearing that last sentence, smiled. As much as he and his sister didn't get along, she never failed to make him smile. It was only too bad that they had such a difference of opinions regarding her marrying. There were many young (and not so young), wealthy or noble men who wouldn't mind a young bride who was stubborn, with a quick sense of humor and a temper. Jean was his first choice, but that was because his master had promised to help him find a high-born bride of his own. That's not to say Andre disliked being a servant, the opposite in fact. It was just he didn't want to marry a servant himself. He had high ambitions and marrying a servant wouldn't help those happen. If he couldn't do that with his own marriage, it was up to him to find one for his only sister. That she was young and presumably fertile was in her favor. There were likely nobles out there looking for heirs that wouldn't care if the bride in question had once been a servant. After all, the bride of their host tonight had been a commoner! It wasn't that much of a stretch that if a prince can marry a common woman and make her a princess, then a noble can raise a servant in rank by doing the same.


For all her nervousness, the dinner went as well as could be expected. Cogsworth had complimented her on how well she had done that evening. The formal ball wouldn't be until the next night, but he informed her that until the maid whose duties she was covering recovered, she would be covering the meal duties and what limited duties she could do during the ball itself. Even if the maid had not fallen ill, she would have been required to be on duty during the ball, all the staff would be. Jean had not made a move during dinner. Granted, his dinner companions were keeping him too busy to look for her and Cogsworth had been careful to keep her where he wouldn't spot her unless he happened to look her way. Still, she was worried about the next night. Aimee, it turned out, would be her constant companion during the whole gala. She even knew a servant or two who would be willing to hook up for the pretence of a relationship. Servants who, Aimee assured her, wouldn't go further then a few kisses. One of them was Aimee's own current paramour. The other, a friend who, as kitchen gossip would have it, wasn't that interested in girls, but was willing to help a fellow servant in need if they needed to have a pretend love interest. Hopefully, it would be enough.
Chapter 8

Disclaimer: I don't own Beauty and the Beast. It belongs to Disney. I will admit to unashamedly grabbing names and locations from various musicals and books that take in France that I have either seen or read. I don't own those either. They belong to their various authors/publishing companies/movie companies-the locations if they don't exist in real life and any titles if they didn't really exist in early 19th century France.

Author's note: Once again, I have accounts on both AO3 and with the same penname (mrmistoffelees). Please, if you see this story under a different penname on a different site, please let me know. I do use different pennames on some sites, but if I don't say so, assume it's not me. Otherwise, if it's under mrmistoffelees, it's me. I just got Microsoft Word, so I now have spell check. I'll admit that even with that, I don't catch everything. If something looks odd, let me know, but any Brit readers, please understand I am American and some words are spelled different-i.e.: realize (US) vs. realise (UK). If it still looks odd and you're not sure, say something please-it's either a real goof or it's just difference in spelling. Anyone, too, who can point me in the direction of a list of wines popular or around in 1820-1840's era France, I will forever be in your debt. Those that can, if you wish, I will either name a character for you or a location. Also, if you spot something wrong with any bits of French that I use, please let me know and I'll change it. I've not had a French lesson in years, with no clue as to where my textbooks and dictionaries are, so any help is appreciated.

Also: warnings for a bit of a strong insult.

Chapter Eight

Very early the next morning, Collette found herself shook awake by Aimee. The two had become roommates after Marie had been caught trying to sneak her footman sweetheart into their shared maid's quarters several nights previous. Marie had been put on reprimand and would be kept from her sweetheart for several weeks, primarily due to the fact that it was her first offence. Mrs. Potts knew that the older maid had a good head on her shoulders and despite also being in a relationship, had known better from the start about bringing a male servant into the maid's section of the servant's quarters was a huge no-no. There were rooms plenty for that, even downstairs.

"What's the matter, Aimee?" She asked, still somewhat asleep.

"Hurry up and get dressed. Now that you're to help with serving meals, there's a lot more to do," Aimee replied as her friend, roommate, and fellow maid quickly went through her morning routine.

"Just be glad you don't have to help light fires in the rooms, or anything like that. Those duties are the responsibilities of the tweenies. I'll explain everything else on the way to the kitchens. Let's go!"

Aimee knew that if they didn't get some of the things started, both of them would be in trouble when it was all said and done. That and it wouldn't be the first time that a servant had to have stuff invented for them to do because of issues with visiting staff-and it likely wouldn't be the last. Collette would learn more about it in the years to come.

Collette was puzzled as to why her friend was in such a hurry, but didn't question it. They were up slightly earlier the she expected, but assumed that it was because of the work involved in palace galas. She wouldn't find out the truth until the next one. The truth being that her brother would be down with the rest of the servants. The run-in with him had rattled both she and Aimee, though they were the only ones aware of the situation-that's the way they wanted to keep it for the time being.
As they hurried down to the kitchen, Aimee began describing all the details that were required for staff serving meals. Some were already familiar to Collette, as they were the same as what she'd learned at her previous household. Others just made absolutely no sense.

"Aimee, I'm confused. There's enough staff to cover the ballroom, even with someone being ill. Why do I need to be in the ballroom?" Collette was not just confused, she was half upset. She would prefer being in the kitchen, being able to deal with Andre verses the ballroom where she could be seen and approached by Jean. Heck, she'd even take dining room duty like she'd done the previous evening.

Aimee looked around, and not seeing anyone, pulled Collette into an empty room near the kitchen. "Collette, you need to come clean with me. I know you are scared to be seen by the family you used to serve. Though most of the senior staff has likely guessed what has happened-if they don't know already, your reluctance to talk about it means we can't help you if we don't know how. We know that something happened, your and your brother's actions yesterday prove that much. The master and mistress won't fire you based on actions that happened prior to you being hired here. If there's something we need to know, please tell us."

Twisting her apron in her hands, Collette broke down crying. In between sobs and hiccups, she explained that Jean fancied himself a lady's man and would try romanticizing the maids at home. Most maids had given in, or were otherwise unavailable for him to romance. She'd refused, wanting to wait to have sex for her marriage bed. That decision just made Jean pursue the matter further, until she'd punched him in the nose. She'd been fired over the incident, though her previous master had understood the reason why it had happened. "I'm scared that he'll try again, Aimee. Jean isn't someone who will stop, even when warned off by others. If he sees a chance to try again, he'll take it. I heard about a follower that the mistress had in her old village. Jean seems to be very similar, but willing to do in private what the hunter wouldn't."

To say Aimee was angry on her friend's behalf was like asking if the sky was blue or grass green. Even then, she gave her friend a huge hug. "Cherie, you have my word that I will do everything in my power to keep Jean away from you. I know Cogsworth and the other staff are doing the same thing. Even if Jean tries something, we'll be on him before he can do anything more then pin you against a wall. Just promise me this-if that connard* manages to get you alone, you start screaming. That will bring everyone running. He won't get away with hurting you, Collette. This I can promise you."

With Collette calmed down, the two headed into the kitchen, ready to start their day. Nobody made mention of her red eyes or wet apron, though there was no admittance of listening at the door either. Any maids that had heard anything made sure to spread the word that the Rochefort heir and his valet were to be avoided, as they had hurt one of their own. For the staff, no other details were needed. Any guest or staff that hurt the staff of the castle was to experience a dry spell. Even those who were jealous of Collette and Cogsworth's friendship didn't appreciate one of their own being hurt by visiting guests and their staff.

Before she knew it, it was time for Collette to help with the gala. Having had a chance to change in to her 'upstairs' uniform, she waited with the other staff. Over lunch, one of the upper staff approached her. A friend of Lumiere and Babette's, he had been made aware of the fact that she needed a temporary follower for the night due to issues with one of the guests and he had agreed, pending her acceptance. Colette agreed to his help, having been told of some of the ways that they protected each other in cases like this. When the gala was going on, they would stick by each other, as if they were together romantically. Most of the guests would think that Raoul was teaching her things, or that she was his assistant for the night, if they noticed at all. The visiting staff would be warned off starting a romance with her, with suggestions given that she and Raul were seeing each other.
*Connard means bastard in French

That's it for the chapter. As before, reviews and constructive criticism are welcome. Flames will be used to light fires in the castle.
Chapter Summary

Collette gets attacked. Cogsworth rescues and comforts her.

Chapter Notes

Warning for attempted rape. If you want to skip reading this chapter because of it, go ahead. I don't want any of my readers to read something that they're not comfortable with. If you do read this chapter and feel that I've got something wrong, please tell me. I strive for accuracy. I will say this: I am aware that most rape victims are not near as lucky as I've made Collette here, especially for maids in her position in the early 19th century and in today's day and age.

Disclaimer: I don’t own Beauty and the Beast. The version I’m going with belongs to Disney. Any characters or fictional locations that I unashamedly borrow from books, musicals, and movies that I’ve seen also belong to their respective fandoms and companies.

AN: This story and any related sequels or stories that involve a David Ogden Stiers character that follow are dedicated to the late and extremely talented David Ogden Stiers who brought Cogsworth to life, as well as many other characters-animated and live films and television shows. His talent is sorely missed.

Chapter 9

Collette had to admit, the ballroom brought to life was simply amazing. She had—like many of the staff—had taken a peek while it was being set up, but nothing could compare an empty, but decorated, ballroom with one brimming with life. She was still worried, though with the gala ending in two days, tonight was the last night she was on duty before she could escape back to the comfort of the kitchen. The bug that the maid whose duties she was covering had caught luckily was over quick. She jumped when a hand was placed on her shoulder.

“Mademoiselle, I am sorry for startling you.” The hand and voice belonged to Jean-Paul, her footman ‘follower’ for the evening. “I did not mean to startled you. The nobleman who you pointed out earlier has been stealing glances our way all evening, much to the consternation of the lady he is dancing with.”

“Her name is Eponine Thenard. She is the daughter of either a Comte or Vicomte, I can’t recall which. She is his betrothed, so I can understand her annoyance. I pray that she will hold his attentions long enough after the ball is over for us to go back to our quarters.”

Jean-Paul, for obvious reasons, had been told enough of the reasons why Jean had to be kept away from Collette. It was no issue—he had done it before, with other maids. Usually, though, the nobles that were problem causers lost interest in a hurry when it appeared that a particular maid was spoken
Jean-Paul privately thought that this particular noble might not, as it were, take a hint. He was also privately hoping that the entitled heir would embarrass himself in some other way so that Collette didn’t have to worry about retaliation, or anything else. It was his experience that nobles—or their heirs—that embarrassed themselves in front of the master usually didn’t get an invite back until they proved that they had changed or had done some suitable apologizing. He reassured Collette as such, adding that usually the reminder of the rule of the servants to say ‘No’ to a relationship, coupled with the fact that a guest forcing themselves on a female-maid or guest-usually saw the offender tossed out that day—or the next morning, after a lengthy chewing out by the master. The offender usually didn’t get invited back, though their family might be, depending on their behavior.

All too soon, the ball was over. Collette and the others were hurrying back to their rooms when one of the maids who had come with a guest came up and asked how to get to a certain room where her mistress was.

“First time here?” Collette asked, not realizeing that the maid had been bribed by her brother Andre. The maid HAD been there before, but only once. Reassuring the other castle maids that she’d be fine, she volunteered to take the maid to the right hallway. “The castle can be a bit of a maze if you’re not used to it. I spent my first month here exploring when I wasn’t working-usually on my afternoons off and if I had time after my usual duties were finished.” At the maid’s astonished look, she elaborated: “The master and mistress have no real issue with it as long as we don’t disturb anyone. Usually, that means staying out of bedrooms, as there’s enough empty bedrooms among the staff bedrooms for a romp; sitting rooms are fine if we have no guests; and the library is not off limits as long as we aren’t lax in our duties.” Getting to the correct hallway, she pointed the maid to the right room. After seeing that the maid slipped in the door, she turned around and started heading back to one of the many hidden staircases that would take her back to the servant’s quarters.

She only got far away from the bedrooms that her scream wouldn’t be normally immediately heard when one hand went over her mouth and another around her arm. Jean grinned as he spun her around, keeping a hand over her mouth and pushed her against a wall.

“Your little ruse with that footman might have worked for any other noble, but not for me. Your brother is clever and that maid that pulled you away a foolish thing. Too bad for you that she was so easily bribed.” Jean took his hand off her mouth, expecting her to be cowed by her fright, like so many maids. Her scream, though, was right in his ear. “Merde, you slut! You really do have a set of lungs” the last part was muttered as he rubbed his ear with his free hand. “Do not expect your friends or employer to come running,” he warned.

Collette scoffed. “This isn’t the Rochefort mansion. You don’t know this castle as well as you might think.” She didn’t get a chance to finish before she got dragged into an empty bedroom and tossed on the bed, Jean undoing his pants while he did so.

“I really don’t care either. How long do you think you’ll stay employed here once I tell my side of the story? How I was led along by you, and then refused what you seemingly were promising. Oh, don’t tell me that you told your side of the story already, I doubt you’re that smart—or stupid.” Collette shut her mouth. In her half-frightened state, she was just about to tell him that. Thankfully Jean, who was above her at this point, didn’t get to finish what he started.

Gentle arms slowly helped her sit up and wrapped themselves around her as she cried in relief. Once she was done, she looked up to see her almost-rapist pinned against the wall by the master. The empty bedroom being very close to his wing of the castle, he had heard Collette scream, as had
Cogsworth, who was currently also acting as his valet. It was Cogsworth holding and comforting her.

“Are you alright?” He asked, concern and worry evident on his face.

Wiping tears from her face, she replied that she would be, eventually. “I’m sorry if I caused any trouble. If you want me to leave I will.”

“No, you are safe here.” This came from the still angry Master. “It is not your fault that this young man is an ass. I have very little patience for men like him. Rest for tonight, we’ll talk in the morning, as soon as you’re free.” With that, Cogsworth led the still crying Collette out the bedroom and via several passageways-hidden and otherwise-to their usual sitting room.

“I know the master wants to speak to you in the morning, but can you tell me what happened—or at least some of it?” At the look on her face, Cogsworth was quick to add that he wasn’t upset or angry with her, he was just trying to get a handle on what had gone wrong.

Collette, using her apron to dry her tears, slowly and haltingly told her friend what had happened. In that moment, the social hierarchy was ignored. In most circumstances, Cogsworth would have asked her questions standing in for the Master—or, given Collette’s position-Mrs. Potts or Chef would have done the questioning, being her direct supervisors and the ones who had truly hired her in the Master and Mistress’s name. But Cogsworth was an observant man and could tell that Collette needed her friend more then she needed her boss at that moment.

After her tale was done, Cogsworth was quick to reassure her. “You have probably heard a lot of this before, and from others. You are safe. You aren’t the first to be employed here with a dubious background. Yours is the most common, to tell you the truth. The fact that you haven’t made waves outside of our friendship earns you credit, as is the fact that you work hard and learn quick. The master would have no real reason to fire you. He isn’t a spiteful man, not anymore. Even when he was, he wasn’t foolish enough to fire good help. Even if he were to be inclined to try to fire you, he would be hard pressed to mount a good defense against Mrs. Potts, Chef, and myself. He would have to have many good reasons and the word of a spoiled noble heir is not one, especially since you’ve consented to have parts of your story known to those who are in the power to do something about it.” He noticed her look of relief.

“Merci, Cogsworth. I have been frightened-still am. I have heard enough horror stories about what befalls maids who can’t find honest work after they do what I had done. Not many nobles would want a maid with a temper and a history of punching the heir in the nose.” Cogsworth’s eyebrows rose, this was a part of the story he hadn’t known. Pierre’s letter had just mentioned an incident with the Jean Rochefort and Collette’s temper getting the better of her. Apparently, Pierre had heard those same stories, or was just being cautious with his only daughter’s ability to work for a good family.

As soon as Collette’s exhaustion started to overtake her as she calmed down, Cogsworth delivered her to the worried arms of Mrs. Potts, Aimee, and Marie, with the admonishment not to question her too hard, as she needed her rest.


After a restless night, Collette was up early, slightly earlier then she usually rose.

“Couldn’t sleep?” Aimee asked. Receiving a negative reply, she continued. “Not surprising, after what happened. Oh, don’t give me that look! It’s not that hard to figure out that that ass of an heir tried something. If the Master and Cogsworth hadn’t arrived when they had, your attacker would’ve found out that you don’t mess with the maids here a different way.”
Collette was still in shock, her lack of sleep not helping matters either. As she finished getting dressed, she asked when Aimee thought that the Master would want to see her.

“Oh, probably not until everyone-guests and staff-has ate. Breakfast will probably be a little later than normal-usually it during the galas after a ball. Most of the guests are too hungover. Mrs. Potts or Cogsworth will fetch you when it’s time, no worries.”

Chapter End Notes

To continue from the notes at the top: A maid like Collette would have been very lucky to have found a position in another noble or royal house like she has after losing her temper. I can see the Prince from Beauty and the Beast not really caring at this point-he's not really in charge of hiring and firing. Belle is the final say. Generally, in the 1800's, it was seen to be better to have a cranky master and kind mistress. Add to that the Prince knows what it is like to have temper issues, plus due to Gaston-he has little patience with men who would force their way on women, even if it considered 'acceptable' if the woman is of the lower, working classes. At least, that's my interpretation, one that has been formed, in part by reading fanfiction and the rest comes from the original, animated film and the Broadway production.
Chapter 10

Disclaimer: I don’t own Beauty and the Beast. That belongs to Disney. Nor do I own any characters unashamedly borrowed from various pieces of fiction-they belong to their original creators. Like Eponine Thenard-she’s borrowed from Les Misérables, the daughter of the innkeeper and his wife. Only reason I didn’t do her character’s full last name is I was too lazy to use Google and my copy of the Les Mis book is somewhere, as is my copy of the musical soundtrack. The only things I own are my OCs and the plot. Not to mention my laptop.

Chapter 10

While Collette and the other maids were getting the morning meal ready, they and the rest of the staff would have been none too surprised to find their master in the tower, looking at a pair of exhausted prisoners. A master that was very angry indeed and felt no sympathy for the two men on the other side of the bars. As a safety measure, he had put both men in different cells and made sure that they wouldn’t be able to break out. The only reason why they were in cells is none of the staff wanted to guard all entrances to Jean Rochefort’s room and Andre would have ended up sleeping in a muddy ditch if the mutterings Cogsworth and Lumiere had heard among some of the staff were to be believed.

“Do either of you want to give me any reason why you thought that the behavior exhibited last night by you, Jean, would be considered acceptable here? Especially when I’ve been given credible information that this behavior is not new?” Seeing the look on the young heir’s face, he continued, “And before you say I have one source, Cogsworth has been able to independently confirm much of it. As I trust his word and judgement on matters involving my staff, I’m inclined to believe him. Add to that, your behavior suggests that this is not unusual behavior for you. In fact, if I were to talk with either of your fathers, I wager that they would confirm it, as would your fiancé.”

Turning to Andre, he added that he was surprised that the valet would deliberately encourage his master to have a liaison with a maid working for a different master. And not just that, but at a house where the maid had the right to refuse. “On top of that, she’s your sister!” The Prince was furious. Having no siblings of his own, the Prince had no real experience of what sibling relationships were like on a personal level save for what he saw among his peers, nobles, and staff. He did, however, view the staff that had been with him for most of his life as family and the idea of someone trying to hurt a family member-including trying to force a relationship on them-made him more than a tad pissed. It was times like this that made him glad he no longer had his cursed form.

The look on Jean and Andre’s faces crumbled as they realized that they had no real defense would have been comical had the situation not been so dire. The only question they had was when they would be allowed out.

“When your fathers arrive-which shall be after my other guests leave. I’ve sent a messenger with a letter detailing the seriousness of your situation. In the meantime, you shall stay in the tower. I have arraigned for meals to be brought up. That is about the extent of my ‘mercy’, gentlemen.” With that, the Prince left for his quarters to walk his wife, the Princess Belle, down to breakfast. He had heard that the maid Collette was back to work. She had been offered the day off to recover, but had declined, stating she would do better if she was allowed to go back to work. He hadn’t been so sure about that, but Cogsworth had been when asked about it later.
Cogsworth’s exact words had been, “As much as both you and I would like to give her the next day or two off, I dare say she’ll be in better hands in the kitchen. Mrs. Potts and Chef Bouche will keep an eye on her, as will the other kitchen staff. If they think she’s working herself too hard, or if she needs a break, they’ll deal with it.” He added that Mrs. Potts was good at getting upset maids to calm down and trust her. Madame de la Grande Bouche, the court performer who was married to Chef, was another, but she and Collette had little contact with each other outside of meals. The Prince believed that, as both ladies had made fast friends of Belle in her early days at the palace. Neither man would be surprised to find that Belle was planning on checking on the young maid after her chores had been done and offering her another kindred soul to talk to. That was just how Belle was.

Back up in the tower cells, breakfast had been delivered to both prisoners. To the surprise of no-one, it was a simple, but filling meal of gruel, burnt toast and coffee that weaker than dishwater, in Andre’s opinion. An opinion that Jean shared, but was not about to voice as he had seen the very dirty looks sent his direction by the staff members who had delivered their food.

Looking up, he was surprised to find Eponine across the bars. A very pissed Eponine, to be exact. “What?” He said, trying not to choke on the gruel.

“If it weren’t for the fact that the contract between our fathers is ironclad and the ring you gave me is an heirloom, I would be stuffing it down your throat. Even if your father or mine decided to break the contract, they wouldn’t be able to. Papa said as much to me when he told me of the contract. So here is how it’s going to be. When we get back to your father’s house, you are going to obey his every rule. On top of that, if he doesn’t insist upon it, I will. Your valet has a younger brother, non? You will fire this valet and take his younger brother as valet. I hear the younger brother is much better, very protective of his sister and the maids at the mansion. Good. Perhaps if you had the younger brother as valet instead of this cretin, you would not be in this predicament.” With that, she left the tower. She and Jean would not see each other for quite a while.

Jean was thinking that his day couldn’t get worse and was about to say as much to Andre when he was shushed by the guards. Guards he hadn’t even noticed. Looking around, he also saw Andre sleeping-or at least trying to-in the hay and straw mix that seemed to serve as a bed. ‘Better then just the stones, I guess’ he thought before realizing he didn’t even have that. He hadn’t slept well the night before, due to the assorted aches and pains being thrown against the wall by his very angry host. He and Andre had also been trying to mount their defense, one that he now realized was shattered to pieces and one that his father was not likely to believe either. He realized that he had been given freer rein than he should have after his mother’s death. He had been a spoiled brat and needed to grow up.

Andre on the other hand, was only pretending to sleep. Like his master, he was thinking over what had gone wrong. He hadn’t counted on his sister being able to through a punch all those months ago. He also hadn’t counted on his father being friends with the major-domo here. He had thought his sister would have ended up as his master’s mistress. He would have then protected her during any pregnancy that resulted from that situation. Unlike Jean, he knew that getting a maid pregnant prior to the wedding was the only way for it to be called off. Once that happened, his master and sister would be wed. Now, with that out of the way, he was going to have to find another way for Collette to rise in rank. She kept claiming that she didn’t want to be anything outside of a servant. She would
change her mind once she married. Jean was out of the picture and given that he was about to need a new position, he would have to go to Paris or a similar big city. No-one there would give a fig about a valet leaving a previous position without a reference. Given the whole debacle with Napoleon and his family, valets often didn’t have time to get references from their previous families. It was easy to gain a new one, either among households that held similar beliefs to a prior one or, if a household held a different view, disclaiming you didn’t hold those beliefs was usually enough. If he was lucky enough, he would work his way into the heart of a daughter of the house and marry her, paving the way for Collette to marry a member of the nobility as well. That settled, he actually fell asleep.
Chapter 11

Jean and Andre had to wait another two days for their fathers to arrive. Those two days were some of the most miserable that they had known, though not as miserable as some of the days that followed. Jean knew that if he could have done everything over, including his fooling around with the maids at home, he would. From here on out, he would be faithful to Eponine, even if it destroyed his reputation among his friends.

Andre, however, had no such regrets. He had new plans forming, plans that didn’t involve Jean. Jean was a liability, he realized that now. He shouldn’t have used the plan he had. That had gotten them here. If he’d just let Jean do what he would have done anyway, but made the appearance of trying to stop his master, that would have been the plan to use instead of bribing a maid. Jean didn’t ask him to do so, so he didn’t even have that as a defense, not that it would have much in the way of good. He also knew that because of his actions, his father wouldn’t help him find a new job the way he’d
helped hurt Collette. His father never said if he’d suspected Andre’s involvement in the situations that lead Collette to her current master and mistress, though it wouldn’t surprise him. Nothing escaped the eyes and ears of the servants that were in charge of the household, especially his father and apparently Cogsworth, if the Prince’s actions and words were any indication.

The Prince could feel a headache forming and it was barely past the morning meal. Most of the party guests had left, save for the Thenards. That was understandable—they were waiting on the Duke du Rochefort, who was due to return that afternoon with his butler/valet, as well as a copy of the marriage agreement. The latter was the father of Collette and of the valet Andre, who was in one of the dungeon cells. Collette, with either Cogsworth or Mrs. Potts there to help keep her calm, had confessed everything to him the previous two days, when she wasn’t busy with needed chores. Knowing she feared being sent away due to everything that had happened, he not only reassured her that she would have a place here as long as she wanted one, he would also do his best to make sure she got out of this mess with no harm to her reputation. The Thenards, however, were the cause of his current headache. They were demanding that Collette be fired for-in their words—the fiancée of their daughter, that no man would sleep with a woman of a lower class unless she led him on and promised him whatever. That was the parents. The daughter, Eponine, not only understood what had happened, but privately told him she sided with the maid-her words—and would defend the maid against her parents if it came to that. He suspected the young lady would do more than that if possible.

He was also painfully aware of the gossip network that existed in any household with multiple servants. Mrs. Potts and Cogsworth, he knew, would keep what happened to Collette secret. He also knew that the de Rochefort valet possibly had told part of the story-slanted to favor him and his master. He had no doubt which version the Baron and Baroness Thenard believed. Given the rumors he’d heard about the Baron, he wasn’t surprised. He also knew some of the details, the ones Collette had made known through several friends of hers among his own maids, would make his staff believe her.

Turning his attention back to the Thenards, he rumbled, “If you two would please cease!” After he was reasonably sure that they would stay silent for a while, he continued. “I understand what you are saying. If Collette, the maid in question, had been a repeat offender here, I would agree with you and likely turn her out on her ear. That isn’t the case right now. She has been here since barely after Yule and has kept her head down. Granted, there have only been a few rumors regarding a friendship she has with my majordomo, but Cogsworth has assured me nothing scandalous is going on, that he’s just keeping an eye out for the daughter of an old friend. He has a better eye than myself for improper behavior—I swear if he wanted to, he could be making more money teaching etiquette and other subjects at a university in Paris. I trust his judgment on this matter, his and Mrs. Potts, my cook. I assure you, between the two of them, they will keep her busy enough that a second incident like this will be unlikely to happen.” Mostly because they’ll keep her in the kitchen and not up serving until society forgets, which will be at least a year, if not sooner.

Narrowing his eyes, he continued. “I am not about to fire her over this incident, which has been the first since she hired in. From the young du Rochefort’s own mouth, he chased her. It wasn’t her behavior that made him chase her, it was the suggestion of his valet, a young man with ambitions not unlike yours, Baron, if the rumors I’ve heard are correct. It wouldn’t surprise me, Baron, that if this
incident hadn’t happened, the valet would be trying to romance one of your two other daughters. Collette seems to be content as a servant, or so she claims. Add to that, she isn’t the first maid to hire in under dubious histories. Most stay discreet with any relationships. Those that don’t, especially where it causes issues with their ability to work, are given two chances to make it right and not do it again before they are let go. This is barring any pregnancy. Lumiere’s family has served mine, along with some others, for a number of generations. We have measures in place for that.” The expression on his face made the Thenards elect to keep quiet until the du Rocheforts arrived in a few hours. He suspected that the rumors regarding the couple were actually true, that they’d once been innkeepers.


When Collette saw her father enter the kitchen later that afternoon, she nearly collapsed. Not out of fear, but rather out of relief. Her father caught her and just let her cry herself out. A cry, he suspected, she hadn’t really given herself the chance to have. Being in between meals, he suspected that most of the maids had been sent elsewhere, out of earshot. It’s what he would have done-and had in one instance, though long before Collette’s birth. He noticed Mrs. Potts and Chef Bouche-that was the name Collette had mentioned in one of her letters home-had slipped out, presumably to give them some privacy, though he doubted that they were out of earshot. One of them, presumably, would remain as needed.

Rubbing his hand in circles around his daughter’s back, he just held her until he heard her tears end. “Ma chère, it’s okay. You’re safe,” he murmured, giving her the comfort she so desperately needed. Comfort he wished he’d been able to give her all those months ago. Guiding her over to the fireplace, they sat and he prompted her to tell him everything, which came spilling out from his daughter. Details he was sure his own master was getting from the Prince, albeit 3rd hand, maybe 2nd. 1st if the Prince actually took him to the dungeons to see Jean and Andre.

“Collette, I have to apologize. I thought you would have been safer here than you were.” What he was about to say next was cut off by a slightly upset and angry outburst from her.

“I AM, Papa! If this had happened back at the du Rochefort maison, I have no doubt that he would have been successful! The fact that I am here means he never would succeed. Cogsworth, Mrs. Potts, and some of the other servants have been keeping an eye out for me. I suspect that this isn’t the first time they’ve had to run interference. I would wager, too, that my master and mistress are unaware of most of it and probably for good reason. They wouldn’t be getting many people coming to the parties if it was known that situations like this have happened or would have happened here. I have heard of families being shunned for less.”

So had Pierre, but that wasn’t much in the way of comfort. His daughter had still nearly been hurt, again, and in a place where she was supposed to be safe. If Cogsworth hadn’t been needed to guide Lord Claude to the Prince, Pierre had no doubt that sharp words would have been exchanged. He was going to have to talk to Cogsworth when there was some free time, get the rest of the details. Details that Collette hadn’t been able to give him, nor had been in the letters he and Lord Claude had received. He would than pass on what he had learned to his master and hopefully continue to keep Collette safe. His master still didn’t want Collette back under his roof, but hadn’t asked where Pierre had sent her. If he had, Pierre doubted Jean and Andre would have been allowed to come unaccompanied to the party, if at all. Pierre hadn’t found out where the party was until it was too late, as Lord Claude had elected not to go, but send his heir instead. Andre, who was supposed to tell
him, didn’t and was Pierre going to have words with his eldest son. Pierre didn’t know where he went wrong with André, given Henri and Collette turned out much better.

Mrs. Potts hurried back in, shaking Pierre out of his musings. Standing up, he went to apologize for effectively chasing her out of her own kitchen.

“It’s no problem, Pierre”—he had insisted she call him by his first name, unusual for a butler—“I had a few things I needed to check on. So did Chef Bouche. It’s too bad you and your master hadn’t come for the ball.”

Pierre agreed, both avoiding the elephant in the room, given the kitchen staff was starting to come in and get the evening meal ready. After checking on Collette one last time, he got out of the kitchen and headed first to the servant’s hall, followed by Cogsworth’s office, hoping to talk to his friend. Checking with a passing footman, he found that Cogsworth was still up with the Prince, evidently doing his best to keep Collette from being fired. Though, given what Collette had indicated both in her letters home and during their conversation, along with what the footman said, he needn’t worry. His daughter had a kind master, and most importantly, an even kinder mistress. He knew he was still worried—it was a parent’s prerogative to worry about their children. Pierre also knew his wife worried worse than he did. It took every ounce of convincing he had to keep her home, as she wanted to bring Collette straight back, not caring about their master’s orders. Following the footman, he found the rooms that his master would be staying in and started to unpack. Irrespective of what happened this afternoon, he knew that clearing the matter up would take another day, at minimum, but likely several more days, as arrangements would have to be made to take André to the nearest town. If both Lord Claude and—as Pierre would come to find out—the Lady Eponine hadn’t insisted André be fired with no reference, Pierre would have done it himself. This was supposed to be André’s first unsupervised excursion as valet before going with either Jean or his father to bigger events, both in Paris and elsewhere. Henri had already proven himself at home, even though he was younger buy a couple of years.

Hearing a knock at the door, he went to answer it. Thinking his master was finished for the afternoon and wanted to get ready for the evening meal, Pierre was pleasantly surprised to find Lady Eponine on the other side of the door instead.

“Lady Eponine, please come in,” he said, bowing slightly. “This is a surprise.”

“I am sorry for what happened to your daughter. Before you say there was nothing I could have done, I still feel horrible about it. I should have kept a closer eye on Jean, even if it meant doing something my future father-in-law wouldn’t quite approve of yet. Maybe this whole event could have been prevented.” She went on to add that she was impressed by Collette and would have liked to have had the young maid as her lady’s maid, but that she understood that Collette wouldn’t return to the du Rochefort house. “I actually asked her that, before Jean’s…actions a few days ago, if she would consider it. I wasn’t expecting an immediate yes and she didn’t give me one. She did say tell me yesterday that irregardless of whether or not Jean came back, if I ever returned without a lady’s maid, she would be happy to serve as such, duties permitting.” Chuckling at the surprised look on his face, she added, “I may have let her know-word for word-both what I said to Jean and my personal views on his behavior.”

“That would do it, my lady.” Already, his opinion of the future Lady du Rochefort had risen several notches. Her words and actions gave hope that she would do her best to not just protect Collette, but also keep any maids at the du Rochefort household safe and sound. “If there is anything else?” The hour was getting close to when the Duke du Rochefort usually wished to be getting ready for the evening meal.
“Not right now. I know you do have duties to be getting back to and I do need to get ready for dinner.” She left the room, leaving Pierre to finish putting out his master’s clothing for the evening meal. Thankfully, packing had been relatively easy, only needing several days’ worth of outfits, not counting travel clothing. Travel that thankfully had been free of mud, rain, sleet, or late snow, as it didn’t allow his master time to brood. Pierre knew that Lord Claude was dealing with the same big question he was—what went wrong. Personally, he felt Jean was just doing what so many young men of his age and station did. He didn’t agree with it, but he knew it was common. Andre, he didn’t know what was going on. While it was not unusual for servants to rise above their class—mostly due to doing some sort of favor for the king or some other high-ranking person, for someone to raise in social class by marrying a daughter was unusual. For a servant boy to marry even the daughter of a baron wasn’t heard of. A Musketeer’s daughter, maybe—servants and Musketeers tended to come from some of the same classes of people and it wasn’t unusual for someone who had served a family to become a Musketeer. Not uncommon, but not unusual either. The one downside with being a Musketeer was they didn’t always have a steady paycheck, but servants almost always did—save for those that worked for said Musketeers.


Finally, after a long day trying not to lose his temper or his nerves dealing with the Duke du Rochefort, Cogsworth collapsed into his usual chair in the room where he and Collette usually talked. Collette wasn’t in there, but he didn’t expect her there either. Mrs. Potts, as well as Collette’s closest friends Ami and Marie had spent the past two nights calming her down from her nightmares and had often sent her to bed after evening chores were over to get her to catch up on what sleep she was losing due to said nightmares. Based on what he heard, she would be having nightmares for a while. All they could do was be there for her. The good news was that Collette wasn’t going anywhere if she didn’t want to. That, both the Master and the Duke agreed on.

Thankfully, the Duke wasn’t behaving like the supposed Baron and Baroness Thenard. He was angry, but thankfully, it appeared, not at the Master or his staff. He wasn’t happy about his son being in the dungeon. Andre in there was expected, Jean not so much.

Even with the Master’s reason of trying to protect his staff, the Duke’s anger seemed to not go away. Cogsworth knew the Master was trying to protect Jean just as much as he was trying to protect Collette. They both knew Collette, despite the rumors surrounding his friendship with her, had many admirers and friends among the staff.

Cogsworth also wasn’t looking forward to dealing with Pierre. The man had started out as a mentor here in France and they had kept up a friendship, mostly through letters, though they had met up at the different functions that first the Master’s father and then the Master had attended. He knew Pierre was angry. He had every right to be. Cogsworth was responsible for her safety and was scared that Pierre would feel like he had failed. He was well aware that his nerves got the better of him on more than one occasion and his master being an ill-tempered, cursed Beast for the better part of his teen years didn’t help matters either.

“I don’t blame you, Cogsworth. Collette told me everything.”

Head snapping up, he stammered out a reply. “Pierre, I,” was about as far as got before being engulfed in a huge hug.
“You and the rest of the staff might not have been able to completely prevent Mister du Rochefort from doing what he did, but you did your best to stop him from completing what he started. Please stop beating yourself up over it,” Pierre told his friend, sitting down in what he would find out later was his daughter’s usual chair.

Cogsworth wasn’t able to stop his relief from showing on his face as he sat back down. “It’s too bad we’re not in my office, Pierre. Then again, I’m not sure you want to deal with Lumiere in a snit. He knows better than to come in here when I am. My office, though, is another matter and I have no doubt his fiancé Babette is half-heartedly trying to calm him down. Most of the staff that is close to your daughter is as angry as we are. Not just about what your master’s son did, but also the fact that the measures we have in place to prevent such an event failed.”

“Cogsworth, they didn’t fail. Not completely and not like they would have had at the Maison du Fleur.” Placing a hand on his friend’s shoulder, he continued, “From what I understand, the alarm was raised not long after Collette was separated from her friends and other servants kept an eye out on the likely rooms where illicit romances tend to happen. Truly, I couldn’t ask for a better place for my daughter to work.”

The two continued talking for another couple of hours before getting tired enough to call it a night. The next couple of days would hopefully be a lot less stressful, especially for Collette. Cogsworth had successfully argued against having her taken away from her duties at that point in time, given the Thenards where still there, but he knew he couldn’t protect her from being questioned either. 

_Hopefully, Pierre will have better luck on that score than I will._

Chapter End Notes

Thanks again for reading. Again, I do apologize for the rape aspect of the story. Despite this, I am trying to show this realistically, not just as it is viewed now, but also how such a situation would have been viewed in early 19th century France and how compassionate the Prince and Belle are being. From the best of my understanding, attitudes in 19th century France were similar to Victorian-era England, which is where most of my servant knowledge dates to. If someone can point me in the direction of a better resource, I would appreciate it.

End Notes

Some of you might recognize this story as one on fanfiction.net. I am posting it in both places simultaneously as I write new chapters. Each chapter will get longer and author notes shorter—hopefully. I’m currently running without a spellcheck, so anytime you see a spelling mistake, please let me know.

Please _drop by the archive and comment_ to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!