

# **Beauty and the Beast Tidbit (100 words)**

**by Zara Wilder**

## **Love Survives Alchemy**

Father woke, sweat-slimed, bandaged shoulder throbbing.

So much blood pooling on the rocks.

“A dream,” he muttered. “Endings that never happened.”

He gingerly arose and swallowed two ibuprofen tablets dry. Someone in the Library heard him moving beneath the mezzanine. Quiet footsteps approached. It was Vincent. Father’s nightmare shivered through him.

Catherine, felled by Vincent’s hand. Groggy realization dawning in Vincent’s stupefied eyes. Despairing claws rending Vincent’s arteries. Vincent lying beside her to die. Both murdered.

Timid with residual shame, Vincent asked, “Can I get you anything?”

Father embraced him, one-armed.

“Just yourself, just as you are.”

“Done,” Vincent whispered.