A Battle for the Ages

Eternal war…

Or eternal happiness…?

It might seem like an easy choice to some, but when the fate of the world rides on your decision to wed, it turns out to be anything but simple.

I was nervous, and I could tell Keith was, too. But with every reassuring gaze, my con dence in our decision only grew.

As I moved to my bedroom, Keith followed close behind, not wanting me out of his sight.

"My Belle," he said, pulling me closer.

I cupped his face in my hands and kissed his soft lips.

"My Keith," I breathed between kisses.

He pulled at my shirt, and I outed toward him with excitement. With a simple pull, he lifted the fabric o my body.

Keith spun me onto the bed and grazed my neck with his lips, leaving a trail of kisses up to my mouth.

His hands found my waist and inched along my stomach, nally resting when they reached my breasts.

I moaned softly.

He pressed his lips into mine, and I suddenly felt an awkward sensation that made me nervous.

We're in my family's house.

"Let's not be too loud," I whispered.

Keith looked up at me and raised an eyebrow. "We can try."

He smiled, kissing me on the lips once more, this time biting my lower lip. Tiny nerves rustled through my body.

I moaned again—louder, this time.

The sudden need to be quiet got me hotter and hotter. Something about the secrecy of it intensi ed every touch.

CRASH!

An alarming sound of shattered glass tore us apart.

We jumped from the bed and ran down the stairs.

The sliding door was completely broken. My father had already shifted to wolf form and was in a brutal struggle with a demon.

"What the hell?!" Keith barked.

A second demon entered and shot straight at Keith. His quick reaction sent the demon sprawling to the ver n pain.

Then, another demon entered the house. And another.

Fear struck deep in my chest. Soon, we would be overwhelmed by their forces.

On instinct, I raised my arms in defense.

The pulsing of my veins and blue glow from my arms began to light the room. I felt a great force as my powerful magic sent a shock wave through the house.

The demons that had in trated our residence were all knocked to the ground, writhing in agony.

My family stared at me, dumbstruck. But now was not the time to be in awe of my power.

"What's happening?" I screamed.

"I don't know," my father admitted. "How have demons entered our world?"

"It's impossible!" Sean said, standing next to our mother.

I ran to the sliding door that was now completely shattered and walked through it.

"Belle, what are you doing?" Keith shouted, running after me.

I didn't respond. I was too busy looking up at the sky as hundreds of shadows descended upon the house.

"Oh. Moon Goddess, he's here," I panicked, as I ran back inside.

"Who?" my mother called.

"The Demon Lord!" I shouted.

I howled into the warm afternoon, letting my voice overtake the land.

For a moment, I waited for a response from my men, who were hidden on the outskirts of the neighborhood.

But they did not respond.

I watched as numerous demons descended upon the house, and my hope began to plummet.

This battle would be absolutely brutal…

Belle's entire family had shifted into their wolf forms and were starting to ght the demons while Belle's arms continued to grow.

She ran down the streets of her neighborhood, and I followed.

It was impossible to see anything as the daylight became clouded over by swarming demons.

I watched in fear as demons circled around Belle. She used her magic to de ect their attacks and knock them onto their backs.

I dug my claws into the ground and sprinted to be by her side, but she didn't need my help, not anymore.

Three more demons had tried to ambush from behind but were immediately tossed aside with a burst of ne .

Their bodies burned as they lay on the ground, writhing in agony.

She had found her true powers and was able to use them at her own will!

Her eyes caught mine as I came to a stop beside her. She nodded, and I returned the gesture.

The war had begun, and we were ready to ght.

Then, I heard it—the sound I had been waiting for…

The howl!

From over the hill, a number of wolves descended onto the neighborhood. My men had nally arrived, and just in the nick of time.

Xavier galloped to my side, and I could see fresh blood on his fur.

"We were ambushed!" he yelled above the commotion. "But we were able to fend them o . It's a bloodbath," he admitted.

I squeezed his arm and nodded. "Just how we like it," I said with assurance.

I didn't know if we would survive or how many would be left, but this was as good a time as any to give everything I had.

In the past, I had been afraid to.

Not anymore.

More werewolves came to our aid from the surrounding houses, likely part of the pack that lived here.

Everyone was alerted to the danger and had fallen in rank, ready to protect their own.

I felt pride swell in my chest. This was what being a part of a pack really meant: helping others when worse came to worse.

BAM!

A powerful blast knocked me o my feet and threw me several feet across the ground.

I struggled to get up and noticed this was no regular Demon.

"Hello, Werewolf King," the Demon Lord slithered. "Welcome to the party."

His smile was unsettling and his eyes puked a violent shade of red. I could tell he was led with bloodlust, and only death would stop him now.

I got up, struggling to maintain my balance, when I heard Belle's deafening scream.

Through a cluster of demons, I could see her dropping to her knees in pain.

A man engulfed in re walked up to her.

Azazel!

"There she is!" The Demon Lord smiled, catching my attention. "On her knees. Right where she's meant to be."

His smile was overwhelming and his eyes puked a violent shade of red. I could tell he was led with bloodlust, and only death would stop him now.

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"My love! It's been too long she's been away from me…" Lasaria said, slowly approaching me. "And now, she will see how pathetic you truly are."

"Get away from her!" I growled.

I stumbled forward in a failed attempt to charge the Demon Lord.

Again, I dropped to the ground as several demons dropped from the sky, clawing at my head and back.

Lasaria laughed at my pain as I struggled to fend the demons o .

"Such a simple, stupid mutt. To think, it's taken me years to get here and only minutes to destroy you," Lasaria laughed.

I crawled forward, my claws and teeth shredding everything in my path.

"STOP!" Belle shouted. Her voice was tled with pain, and I couldn't bear to hear her like that.

I had to save her…

My legs buckled, and I tumbled to the ground, as Lasaria loomed over me.

"We will never stop…not until every last one of you is destroyed. Wiped clean o this earth," Lasaria said.

I looked up once more and saw Belle ghting for her life as Azazel raised his arming sword.

My heart leapt into my chest.

I tried to scream but all I could do was whimper, as Lasaria blasted me once more to the ground.

"Your time is up, King," Lasaria hissed, as he bent down to my level. "But don't worry. I'll take good care of your kingdom."

I could hear Keith's cries as he fought o Lasaria. I wanted to go to him, but the swarm of demons prevented me from doing anything but defend and counter-attack.

After a few concussive blasts from my palms, I was able to clear space. I turned to Keith but was suddenly knocked once again to my knees by his head pounding.

The demons cheered as Azazel approached. No doubt, the pain in my head was due to his telepathic powers.

I tried to free my mind, but it was no use…

I felt the heat as he approached. His body was engulfed with a raging re that could not be quelled.

He unsheathed his arming sword and held it high in the air.

"You have de ed us for the last time, girl," he sneered. "My brother insisted I leave you unharmed, but with some prodding, I was able to change his mind."

I shot a quick blast at Azazel, but his sword sliced through my magic, rendering it useless as I felt my body grimly weaker.

He laughed again, and the demons around him followed suit.

"You're no match for me," he hissed.

Flames shot out of his mouth, revealing his intense desire.

I looked around at the horror of my home turned battle ed.

Wolves and demons continued to ght, but more and more were dropping to the ground.

Keith struggled to keep Lasaria at bay, while my father was overwhelmed with demons.

A bloody human body, crumpled in a heap on the ground, made me well in pain. I knew that person like the back of my hand.

It was Sean!

Judging by his return to human form, he had been knocked unconscious, or worse…

Azazel cracked me across the face with a wild backhand.

My lip burst, spewing blood down my shirt and across the green grass.

"Don't worry. little one. I will only hurt you. Death would be too quick an answer for your fate," he said, raising his sword into the air.

I couldn't let it end this way, my family and friends painfully destroyed, all because of a fate I did not choose.

My skin began to glow brighter, and that familiar pulse snaked its way through my tired body.

No, they weren't my biological family, but they were all I ever wanted. They were all I would ever need!

I screamed at the top of my lungs, and even Azazel was frozen with surprise.

The power I had felt while destroying the vampire kingdom paled in comparison to the rampage I wanted to deliver to the demon army!

Focusing every last ounce of energy I could muster on Azazel, I released my fury and watched as his face tled with fear.

WHAM!

The blast was immense, and the ash nearly blinded me. I could feel unimaginable power shooting from my palms.

The intense impact picked Azazel o his feet and shot him straight into the air.

It seemed as if the entire world stopped to watch him disintegrate from the force of my blast as his ashes kept ying straight through the stratosphere.

"MY BROTHER!" the Demon Lord screeched.

Lasaria lurched on with such rage and hostility I could barely see his transformation.

He had begun to change into his true form. Something I'd never witnessed before, and it made me clench every muscle in anticipation.

He seemed to grow an extra three feet in size, his arms outstretched, with sharp yellow claws, and his skin turned a red hot.

"I will destroy you for that!" he screamed. "And I will make sure you will burn."

The werewolves charged the demon but it was no use. His powers picked him up o the ground and sent him ying through the air at an unnatural speed.

Within seconds, he was gone, but his words still rang in my head.

"We won!" a voice yelled out from the crowd, and it was followed by a deafening cheer.

I wanted nothing more than to join in, but I knew there was still work to be done.

Within moments, I was across the eld and beside my brother's unmoving body.

He still had a weak pulse, but his breathing was shallow, almost nonexistent.

"Sean," I cried, as tears fell my eyes.

Murmurs moved throughout the crowd as they realized what was happening. I refused to let another family member perish because of my fate.

I remembered back to when Tessa had healed Tannon and immediately tried to recreate her powers.

My body began to glow again, but this time, the power was not for attacking.

This time, I would use it to heal.

Closing my eyes and focusing my hands above his body, I imagined the pain and su ering slowly being sucked from him.

The crowd began to grow louder, and I could tell it was working.

My body grew weaker with each passing moment as the poison in cted from the demons rose out of him and disappeared into thin air.

I stayed in that position until I felt a hand touch mine.

My eyes opened to see Sean's smiling face.

"Did we win?" he asked, with a dazed expression.

The only thing I could think to do was hug him tight as he returned the gesture.

I could hear the crowd cheering with joy, and then another hand pressed down onto my shoulder.

I saw Keith standing over me in his naked human form and hugged him.

When we broke our embrace, he took my hand in his.

"It's time."

I did not need to ask what he meant…my body already knew the answer.