

Feudal Familial

Carolyn S Brajkovich

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The green rolling hills were no longer pristine as they were now covered with bodies in motion, undulating in their ferocity to reach a hated enemy. Clashing of iron, furious battle cries, thunderous hoof beats, and inhuman moans of pain could be heard in every direction. And the stench of death and sweat masked the once intoxicating smells of nature. The battle had been waging on for what seemed like an eternity. No matter where one looked, there was war. And this was not a war of propriety, but one of savage intent with the ultimate goal of total destruction for an enemy immortal.

In the distance, a trio on horseback watched the chaos unfolding. Three youths sat astride, fidgeting as much as their loyal steeds. An invisible thread stopped the two princes' forward movement, held in place by the lone young girl in similar battle gear so as to hide her gender. For war was not the place for a female, or so her father constantly preached. He would be furious if he knew of their current location. Even though he knew perfectly well that the princess had trained side by side with his soldiers, and was just as proficient as any of them. Their soldiers were known throughout the land for their battle skills, and she had also acquired a reputation as silent and deadly. Now, each heir sat in frustration, aching to

prove his worth as a leader. They never thought of the possibility that their family line could end with the blink of an eye should all of them fail to return. And it was this fear that kept the princess's rein over them until the moment was right.

A lone horseman broke loose from a pack and galloped towards the silent group, heedless of his surroundings. He was of similar age, dressed in glorious battle gear, but with many years of experience ahead of the group that he now approached. His sight locked onto the lone figure at the rear, called by her as though it was his destiny. One that he would have consciously fought had he but known that destiny.

History had chosen that these families would be forever in battle. But history was always waiting to be proven wrong. And the thundering hooves were a precursor to the next hopeful chapter in history.

The princes tracked the lone invader approaching at thunderous speeds, but stood rooted to the ground by their inexperience and fear. Suddenly, their horses were forced apart as their sister charged forward towards her own destiny. Within minutes, the two figures clashed with drawn swords, slashing at one another with the

single-minded intent to conquer. As one body advanced the other receded, unconsciously symbolizing the yin-and-yang pattern embedded in their respective family crests. Moves and countermoves bred frustration as two opponents continued a battle that had been started by relatives long forgotten for reasons no longer remembered.

Before the brothers could assist their beloved sister, they were descended upon by other horsemen from the opposing army. Fighting with all of the skills bred into them, they held their own while they prayed for their sister's safety. They had yet to realize that this was the enemy's strategy, to divide and conquer. With all of the protectors engaged in battle, they would not be able to protect the next generation of rulers. And when the future rulers were destroyed, the relentless conflict would end and bring together their land. But destiny still had a hand to play, and she was determined.

The young lord kept pushing his opponent away from the other brothers. He was following a gut instinct that told him to keep this particular ruler by his side. And he had not achieved what he had by ignoring his instincts.

Although the princess was intent on her own battle, she kept an ear attuned to her younger siblings. Upon hearing their wounded cries, she turned in time to see her brothers being overtaken by what looked like a pack of frenzied wolves. A guttural scream tore through the air as she broke free to gallop towards her family, intent in her desire to protect as only an eldest would understand. The piteous sound spooked the warriors who stopped their torture of the princes to watch the approaching hellion. Strangled by her grief, she had only moments before strong arms encircled her form. Two figures dropped to the ground in a furious test of wills, with neither giving an inch. Only their horses would be witnesses to the changing tide of history.

The young lord easily overcame his opponent's violent limbs that spoke of great hidden strength. A sense of respect came to him that such a small form contained such vicious power. But awe changed to disbelief when the helmet fell, and long black hair cascaded down his opponent's back like flowing silk. At that moment, he realized that he had been fighting a woman. His honor would not allow the fight to continue, so he used his heavier weight to overpower her until she was reluctantly subdued. Only her eyes belied her defeat as she pulled out a slim dagger to strike a final blow. But a

whisper held her still momentarily so that destiny could play her hand.

The princess's enemy slowly uncovered his face, and their fate was sealed. Black pierced into jade, and man captured woman as he had for centuries. They were inexorably drawn to one another, for that was their destiny. But they did not go quietly into the night. This moment would change the participants of war, but it recognized that human nature is not for the faint-hearted.

History would record this as the moment when two kings recognized that the ways of old were at an end. A call was heard throughout the valley, as the fighting slowed to a halt and forces were ordered to withdraw. It was the dawn of a new age, and destiny smiled with pleasure at her victory. Now, her work could finally begin and history approved of its new path.

As the years passed, the families melded to bring about long lasting peace and prosperity to their united lands. The union would be fruitful and eternal, proving that love did indeed conquer all. But not without some trials and tribulations that made for enchanting fairytales to tell their future generations.