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I'm In Love

by Rosalyn Hurst

To have survived the war that had careered across their lands for a lifetime was a bitter reward: her brothers killed either in the fighting, fleeing from the vengeful troops; her mother from despair; much of the farm stock from starvation and drought. Like themselves, the house had survived in parts and viewed from a distance and from ground level appeared intact; a journey into the depths of the building revealed the broken doors, the patched up windows, the hole in the roof. But as her father kept saying, they had the land and a few animals, tough lonely creatures that could not face leaving the sparse pastures.

Her father worried about her future observing her assured rejection of local suitors was well founded. She could detect spendthrifts, cowards, mountebanks now fleeing creditors that thought they could get the land for development, for oil, to pay off their debts. Only Tim, their neighbour, a farmer, like himself, importantly a friend though some twenty years younger, might stand a chance, for the father knew she had plans to get that land. But Tim was a shy fellow and had never made an approach to this confident young woman. Two days later he made the visit to his neighbour.

The following week father and daughter drove in silence the five dusty miles. He noticed the broken fences, the burnt cow byres, the ruined barn he had little energy to repair. She looked ahead, at the land, just beyond their boundary that had been saved from devastation. She had known this day was to come and trusted her plan might work.

Tim made a hesitant speech, "I'm in love with you and you don't want anything to do with me so I think we can make this work."

She was not convinced about his ardour, and at his age the possibility of many children was unlikely. She replied, "I have a condition, and if you agree, we can be married when the harvest is gathered."

Tim, and her father, were so astonished so delighted, that agreement was given there and then.

As the early sunlight made its way through the overcast skies, she was in the farmyard, giving the hens the meagre corn to keep them nesting in the new barn. Young Jethro was there harnessing up the bullocks, ready to go out the fields. She had watched him for the last year, he was just a farmhand, but handsome and true.

She took his hand, she said, "I'm in love with you and you don't want anything to do with me so I think we can make this work. When I marry Old Tim, you can come too and be the farm overseer to manage both the land here and over the way." And unsaid, but very clear, his duties would lie further than making sure the land was tilled, the stock thrived.

Jethro was an intelligent young man and knew that this might work, for he would not be bound by promises of marriage, but still would be a free person. He would be paid more, he would have some status in this small community.

That night he went to the local inn and managed to get a ride back on the cart with Ethan. They sat conformably side by side as the old mare picked her way along the track, not rushing, occasionally stopping to nibble some sweet cow parsley, for she realised her driver and passenger were in deep conversation.

Jethro said, "I'm in love with you and you don't want anything to do with me so I think we can make this work. I know you sometimes go to town and I know you sometimes get it off with other fellows. But I'll have money now if I keep that girls sweet and I'll have time for you and who could suspect that we would be more than boyhood pals?"

And that is what happened: her father died happy that his lands were saved; she was happy with the stolen moments in the cowshed, in the fields; Old Tim was happy and so delighted he had a son. Only Jethro was not too happy, tired out overseeing two farm lands, keeping her satisfied, and being consumed with jealousy at Ethan's freedom to make frequent visits to town.