

Love Burns Brightly

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A short story in the GreenSky universe

Set prior to *Green Sky and Sparks*

“How are you feeling?”

The dark-haired woman looked up from where she was hammering a peg into the rocky ground. “I’m fine. Stop worrying.”

“Don’t strain yourself, love.”

“Stop worrying!” A final smack put the tent-peg in firmly, and S’ian leaned back with a smile for her partner. “I know you’re worried, but hammering pegs isn’t going to strain me.”

“I don’t want you to...to damage anything more.”

The dark-haired woman put the hammer down and stood up carefully as her partner came over, and then slid her arms around his waist as he wrapped his own around her shoulders. It was a familiar embrace, even though the world around them had changed.

“I’m healing, Kett,” she said quietly. “I know it wasn’t long ago, but I am healing.”

“I was scared,” he admitted into her hair after a long silence. “I didn’t know what to do.”

“I didn’t either, really.”

“I thought you’d have come across miscarriages before...”

“It’s always harder when it’s happening to yourself.” She was the Healer for a moment, clinical and detached. “I knew what was happening, but-”

He tightened his arms. “I didn’t like seeing you in pain.”

That got a shaky laugh. “I would have been anyway, giving birth!”

“Yes.” He leaned his head down to rest his forehead on her hair again, listening to the river tumbling in the valley below them.

“S’ian...it hasn’t really sunk in, that’s all. We lost our son.”

“We can try again. I’m healing. There’ll be other chances.”

“I know that. It just feels different.” His voice cracked on the words. “We were going to be going with...with *him*, and it was going to be a new life, and then-”

Her tears were soaking through his jerkin. “I know. But we’re still going. We’ve still got the chance.” She pulled away a little and gave him a grimace of a smile. “Come on, let’s get the tent up and enjoy these few days before we have to think about travelling again.”

“Do you want a blanket?”

“That’d be nice. It’s getting a bit cold.”

S’ian wrapped her arms around her knees as Kett collected the plates and stood up. The fire was starting to burn down, and the sunset was just lingering on the tops of the surrounding peaks. She was admiring the way the yellow glow was highlighting the rocks when a thick fabric was draped around her shoulders, and Kett’s cold nose poked her cheek in a tiny fragment of a kiss. “I’ll just go wash up. Back in a minute.”

She watched as he trod carefully down the rocky slope towards the river that tumbled in the valley. They’d chosen to pitch their tent near the top of the slope, giving them a view over the whole area, but it did mean a bit of a walk down to the river. There was still enough light that she could watch her partner, and she drew the blanket closer around her shoulders, feeling her body still aching. There had been no reason

that she could find - and as a Healer, it made the loss doubly painful. She knew that life could be capricious, but to take her child for no reason...

“Are you warm enough?” Kett had come back up the slope, the plates wet in his hands.

“I could be warmer.” She smiled at him, and got the quirk of a smile that she liked so much in return.

“I’ll be right with you.”

True to his word, he put the plates in the tent, stoked the fire and then made himself comfortable against the large rock next to their fire, holding out his arms for her to settle into. She made sure the blanket was wrapped over both of them, and then laid her head on his shoulder, just enjoying the silence.

Slowly, the sky faded from green to blue to purple, and the fire crackled and sparked as the darkness drew in. Kett caught the flickers of bats overhead, and then S’ian sighed.

“I’m going to miss Belmont.”

“I think you’ll like Meton, though. I’m looking forward to seeing it again.”

“When were you there?”

“Years ago, now. I think we passed through there on our way to something...” Kett frowned. “I just remember the towers shining. Of course, Lord Toru wasn’t building his flying machines then.”

S’ian wrinkled her nose. “I don’t see the point of those.”

“What, you don’t want to fly?” he teased.

One shoulder rose and fell. “I like my feet on the ground. I don’t think we’re likely to see much of him, though.”

“He’s going to be too grand for the likes of an engineer and a Healer.”

“He’ll like you, though, if he’s an engineer too.”

“I don’t expect our paths will cross, love.”

“I suppose not.” She kissed his chin lightly. “Anyway. A few days here, then sailing to Calne...”

“You’ll be fine. I’ve never known a Healer to get seasick.”

“I could be the first!”

“I doubt it.” He kissed her hair. “Then through the Pass and to Meton, city of spark. You’ll be a Healer in the Castle and I’ll be working on the roads. We’ll get a house on the cliff-side, looking out over the Plains, and we’ll try for another little one.”

Her arms tightened around him. “I love you, Kett.”

“I love you too.” He wrapped his arms around the tiny Healer who shared his life and his heart. “I’m looking forward to the next few days with you.”

His partner smiled up at him, dark eyes shining in the firelight. “I’m looking forward to the rest of our lives together.”

“Well, that too.” He smiled back at her. “I like the idea of having a lifetime with you.”

“Let’s do that, then.”