

# Time

*by* Erin

The sky was painfully blue that day. So bright, so cheerful that attempting to look at it, to probe its depths would cause one's eyes to tear up. There was not a cloud in sight, just miles and miles of blue as far as the eye could see. Off on the horizon, the land met the sky, golden fields and very distant trees meeting the vibrant blue. The colors clashed terribly, but still spoke of warmth, and comfort, and long summer days.

Beneath that bright sky was a woman, sprawled in the grass, her hair loose from its braid, her hands behind her head, supporting it. The woman was petite, with skin that had become golden from the sunlight. Daydreaming was no occasional pastime, she could almost always be found in this field on sunny days. She had chores and responsibilities, just like everyone else, but she had time, plenty of time.

There was tomorrow, and the day after, and such a long train of day-afters that she didn't quite know what to do with them. It wasn't as though she was rushed. There was plenty of time in which to get everything done. The laundry could wait just one more day and the dishes that were in the sink could be done in the evening, rather than right after the morning meal. It wasn't as though there was anyone else relying on her, not since her husband had died. It didn't matter if food was on the table at five-o'clock sharp; there would be no one waiting there for it.

Indeed, Analise Durango barely remembered what time it was. Several years of five-o-clock sharps had passed her by without a second thought. She had time, plenty of it. Her husband had been old, and she had been young, and then he had died, and she had still been young. She had a whole lifetime spread out before her, plenty of time in which to do whatever needed to be done.

The fact that the dishes went un-washed, the laundry un-done, the beds un-made, and the floor un-swept bothered no one. The fact that Analise was out in the field, watching the occasional

bird fly by with great interest disturbed only the farmer, who had to come check and make sure she knew that it was the fourth Thursday in September, and that he would be baling the hay that she so loved to lay in. The farmer had reminded her every day that week, coming by around the middle of the day, when she was at her dreamiest, squinting against the bright sun right above her. He had told her again that day, but it felt like ages ago. Perhaps she was merely remembering last year still, perhaps it was no longer September and the long days had simply blurred together to seem endless.

The dull roar of the engine attracted her attention vaguely, but she couldn't remember why she felt as though she should be vaguely alarmed by it. Maybe she would think of it later, it wasn't as though she didn't have time to sit down and think later. Soon the sounds of the engine had faded into the back of her mind. She'd ponder it later, she had plenty of time. Maybe later she would make a pie, an apple pie. It was fall, right? Yes, she believed it was fall. The grass was golden, drier than it was in summer, warmer, too. Maybe she would just relax in the sun and take a nap. She had plenty of time, there was still daylight left; the sun had not yet begun its long arc down to the horizon. There was time.

It might have been hours later, or only a few minutes, but Analise was jolted awake by the sound of a huge engine only a few feet away. Looking up, she could see only a large shadow and the huge shape of the hay baler looming over her. A small squeak escaped her lips, only that tiny gasp, and the realization that maybe she didn't have time after all. Maybe there was no more time for her. It was the last thought she had time for.

The hay baler froze, right where it was. The farmer as usual had thought of Analise, and knowing her tendency to forget, wanted to be sure she was not in the field still. All he saw was her body lying there in the grass. Later, the coroner said it was likely a panic-induced heart attack. But maybe she had just finally run out of time.

