

1.

SHE WAS MY BROTHER

by Julie Jensen

Scene I:

This scene takes place outside, perhaps near their tent, with a silhouette of the pueblo in the shadows.

TULLIS is packing. WILSON runs in, coughing and breathless.

TULLIS

Do not give me opposition on this point, Wilson. I cannot abide much more from you.

WILSON

But the Colonel is feeling much better. I saw him less than an hour ago. He was improved.

TULLIS You saw what you wanted to see.

WILSON

We spoke of the Zuni, particularly the function of humor in their religious life. Do you not find him unusually handsome in this illness?

TULLIS Yes. On occasion I do.

WILSON

I told him that this morning. He laughed. And when he laughed, he was the Colonel again, the scientist, the sage, the leader of...

TULLIS

His fever has intensified.

WILSON

I felt his forehead. It was cool.

TULLIS

We will leave as soon as the boys can pack our gear. Within the hour, I should think.

WILSON But I am not ready to leave.

TULLIS You are not going.

WILSON
But I must.

TULLIS We are leaving the equipment and the gear behind...with you.

WILSON No, no, I will ready myself with utmost dispatch.

TULLIS

We brought thousands of dollars worth of equipment, all of which will disappear if no one attends to it.

WILSON I am to guard the equipment! Out of the question. I am a *trained* scientist.

TULLIS Are you, now?

WILSON In process, yes. And you know very well my achievements.

TULLIS

Then you can begin the work. Others will join you by and by. I anticipate returning myself in the near future. Perhaps with the Colonel.

WILSON Please, Tullis, I do not know how to “begin the work.”

TULLIS

No one does. It’s a young science. There is no systematic method.

Learn as much as you can about these people. Within a generation they will all disappear. What we preserve of them is all that will survive. Your task is to make that record. It’s a noble undertaking. Perhaps the most important scientific work of our time.

By the way, I am taking these gloves of yours. I need them if I am to drive the wagon.

WILSON They were a gift from the Colonel.

TULLIS They were nothing of the sort. They go with me.

WILSON They were a gift, Tullis, From him.

She pauses, looks at the gloves.

TULLIS

I see.

She returns them.

WILSON (*With difficulty.*) I have...never been alone before.

TULLIS

I thought as much. And I told him so.

WILSON I have been ill most of my life.

TULLIS Yes, I know. We all know.

WILSON

There was someone next to me at all times. A nurse, a caretaker, a woman from town. I was never alone.

TULLIS

Well, no one has the time right now to teach you how to be alone. But I have faith that you will manage it.

WILSON And you insist on making light of me, at every turn.

TULLIS

I must see to it that the Colonel gets medical attention. We can get that in St. Louis. And yet the longer we wait, the weaker he gets.

WILSON I cannot survive without him.

TULLIS

The Colonel has given you an opportunity he would love for himself. Think of it that way.

WILSON You mean to leave me here without provision, without support.

TULLIS

I mean to take my husband back to civilization. Where medical care might save him.

WILSON

There are no white people within days of here.

TULLIS There are traders. And Spanish priests....

WILSON He is my anchor.

TULLIS As he is mine.

WILSON I do not know what to do without him.

TULLIS Think about what he would like to read. And write that story. In the meantime, keep careful records and speak with them when you can.

WILSON Speak?

TULLIS There is someone in the pueblo who knows English. The traders tell us so.

TULLIS closes the bag, now full, and sets it aside.

WILSON May I see the Colonel before you leave? Just once more....

TULLIS You may see him, but do not upset him. Between here and St. Louis is two weeks of hard travel, four days by wagon. I want him to preserve his energy for the trip.

WILSON Then why risk the trip at all?

TULLIS Because there is a hospital in St. Louis. Physicians.

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WILSON If I were with him, I could keep him alive.

TULLIS Could you now?

WILSON
I could.

TULLIS And just how would you accomplish that?

WILSON I would *will* him to live.

TULLIS
I see.

WILSON
That's what the Susquehanna did.

TULLIS The Susquehanna disappeared a generation ago.

WILSON I know that.

TULLIS Then how do you know what they did?

WILSON I thought about it, and it was true.

TULLIS
You invented it.

WILSON

Yes. But then when I was very ill. And after the doctors had done all that they could do. And after the priest had been called, and I had received the last rites. After all that, I willed my own recovery. And it came to pass. I did recover.

TULLIS That is a fairly narrow sample,
Wilson.

WILSON I believe in this gift. I believe that I
possess this gift.

TULLIS That you possess the power of death
and life.

WILSON
Yes.

TULLIS
Perhaps that is so. But you will forgive me if I do not trust my husband's life
to your gift. And if you please, Wilson, do not speak of this to anyone else.
You could embarrass us all. The Institute in particular.

WILSON Then take me
with you.

TULLIS
You have a job here. This is your time. Your place. Your chance to define a
whole people. The Colonel needs you to do this work. The world needs
you. This is your day, Wilson. The opportunity of a lifetime!

*TULLIS claps him on the shoulder and exits. A stifled cough from
WILSON.*
