



JES DON'T

A CIVIL WAR ERA SHORT STORY

NEED SAYIN'

H A N N A H L I N D E R

PRAISE FOR

JES DON'T NEED SAYIN'

“This story really packs a punch! The reader is hardly invited into the character’s lives but through the reading of a soldier’s letters to home. The ending left me with so many questions but at the same time it was the perfect conclusion.”

— 5-STAR REVIEW

“This short story couldn’t have been more than six pages long, but as the title suggests, some thing just don’t need to be said. [Linder] manages to capture the inner turmoil of her two characters, particularly her point-of-view character, within maybe a thousand words. I don’t believe she ever mentioned their names, but the narrator’s voice was so intimate and strong, it [was] as though he was speaking directly to me. I must applaud her for accenting the narrative with a Southern US dialect because it lent him and the story a measure of authenticity that couldn’t have otherwise been achieved.”

— 5-STAR REVIEW

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“All I am and all I have is at the service of my country.”

— STONEWALL JACKSON

JES DON'T NEED SAYIN'

I didn't need no letter tellin' me my son was dead. I knew the night it happened, jes like I know when the first night of frost is goin' to sneak up on summer's tail.

I think the missus knew, too. She was 'specially quiet that night. Soon as supper was finished, I saw her goin' to the mantel and takin' the lid from the box. She read his letters so often that they were right worn down.

Most of the time I wouldn't say anything. I'd go out back with my pipe and tobacco, jes sittin' and listenin' to a world closin' its eyes in sleep.

But that night, I didn't go out with my pipe. I sat there by the fireplace an' I asked straight out if she'd read 'em to me.

I 'member how her brows raised. Ne'er did say much, my missus. Always jes sort o' looked at me real slow like, an' when she

was finally of a mind to answer, her voice was sort o' hushed and quiet. Guess that's the thing I always did like 'bout her. Ne'er cared much for folks who were always talkin' and talkin', with nothin' much to say anyhow.

Well, I reckon the missus knew a bit o' pride went into my askin'. In all the years we'd been hitched, she ne'er did ask me if I could read, an' I ne'er did tell her I couldn't. I always figured such things didn't need to be said.

The first letter was the second night young Tommy was away. Said he wrote it in his saddle whilst he was still travelin', an' mailed it at the next town they come to.

The missus always smiled on that letter. I know 'cause her smiles were so scarce I always took account of what she were doin' and what were makin' her happy. A man likes to 'member something like that.

The next letter took away her smile, and I can't rightly blame her. Tommy ne'er was good with words, but I reckon he was better than me 'cause I could picture the battle jes like he wrote it. The red an' blue flag jes blowin' in the wind, the bugle call, the canon fire...an ol' Stonewall Jackson on his stompin' steed.

Pride an' sadness ain't likely related, but there weren't much to distinguish them that night. I leaned back in the rockin' chair an' watched the missus fetchin' another letter still.

That one she read real different than the others. Sort of teary-eyed and snifflin', which weren't her way at all. 'Twas on account of Tommy talkin' so much 'bout the Good Book, sayin' how prayerful he'd been and such. Even sayin' how he done prayed for the blue coats.

I stiffened and scowled a bit, but the missus only mopped up more tears. I figured she was kind o' happy he'd done that.

There was only one last letter in the box. The missus took it

out, smoothed the wrinkles, and tugged her chair closer to the fire, so's she could better see in the darkness. Ol' Tommy accounted a few things that sort of made me chuckle, like how he had to teach his lieutenant how to set a bear trap, an' how the only girl in camp kept asmilin' at him alone.

Then he wrote something that made my stomach start twistin' and turnin'. How he had no choice but to run his bayonet through a blue belly's throat, an' how the poor boy's scream kept afollowin' him day an' night.

The missus ne'er finished that letter. With her careful folding, she creased it an' put it back in the wooden box with them others. She ne'er said another word, jes gathered her knittin' an' slipped yonder into the bedroom.

That were months ago, clear back when the springtime was jes abloomin' an' the trees were dressin' with leaves. We both watched all summer long for another letter, but nothin' e'er came until summertime flew away and winter blew in.

Then the last letter came.

I didn't rightly know what to say when I brought it home. For all my lookin' at it, I couldn't tell if it were Tommy's scrawl or not. All looks like broken twigs on the forest floor when a person can't read.

She were standin' at the sink when I came up behind her. Her old shirt were rolled to her elbows, and them bony little hands of hers were plugin' in and out of soapy water. She must o' known I was there 'cause she turned all of a sudden and stared at me.

I thrust it toward her.

She dried her hands on a scrap of towel, one finger at a time. Took so long for her to open it, I thought the snow would be gone and another spring comin' by the time she finished readin'.

But it didn't take near so long, and when she finally lifted her eyes, I couldn't help wishin' she'd taken longer. There weren't no

tears, but I sensed that if she spoke, they'd come flowin' sure as rain.

I didn't hardly trust my own voice, but I asked her to read it to me anyhow.

But she didn't. She took a step close to me an' laid her wrinkled hand on my arm. A tear, a smile, another sad little frown that made me want to bury inside a sack of feed an' not come out again.

Then she unrolled her sleeves, an' went to the mantel, an' opened the wooden box. She put the letter with them others.

There wasn't much I could do, an' I didn't rightly know what to say, neither. I moseyed back outside and went to workin' with my pitchfork in the barn, tossin' hay into the air, an' sneezin' e'ery so often.

The missus ne'er did tell me what the letter said, an' I ne'er did ask her to read it again. I guess we both kind o' figured some things jes don't need sayin'.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



HANNAH LINDER, represented by Books & Such Literary Management, is a Christian author residing in the mountains of central West Virginia. She is a two-time 2021 Selah Award winner, an American Christian Fiction Writers (ACFW) member, and a Jane Austen member. When not writing, Hannah enjoys playing her instruments—piano, guitar, and

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