

INSPIRATION

Written by

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INT. LORI'S ROOM - DAY

Small, windowless, nondescript walls, tile floor, single bed, a length of red tinsel is taped over the desk where CAPTAIN LORI WELLS, 27, pretty but plain, sits.

No makeup, short hair, in pilot's jumpsuit, US Air Force. There is a line of books on the desk, a lamp, the Spartan life of a pilot in a combat zone.

She opens an envelope and removes a photo and a one-page note. She glances at the photo and reads a note with large printing.

LORI (V.O.)

Hello, my teacher says soldiers in the field, whatever that is, like to get mail, especially at Christmas. So, this is a letter to tell you that everyone here is thinking of you and wishing you a Merry Christmas. Oh, and thank you for your service. If you are ever in Harvey Texas, stop in for Christmas dinner. Or any dinner. Sincerely, Billy Carr.

She picks up the photo and looks at BILLY CAR, 8, blonde and smiling, as wholesome as apple pie. He stands inside a large barn.

She opens the desk drawer, pulls out a roll of tape, and tears off a strip that she uses to tape the note to the wall. She takes the photo and puts it in her pocket.

She wipes away a single tear and looks at her watch. Time to go. She stands, grabs her garrison cap, and leaves.

INT. LORI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Door opens, and Lori, in uniform, duffle bag over shoulder enters. She looks around a place that hasn't been used in months. She drops the duffle, goes across the room, and pulls back the curtains.

In the distance loom the snowy peaks of Colorado.

INT. LORI'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATER

In sweats, Lori uses a magnet to place the note and photo on the fridge. She touches the photo gently. The radio plays CHRISTMAS MUSIC.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Smallish, with standard issue government desk and computer. The single window has a view of the Washington Monument in the distance. Closer, the ground is covered in snow.

Lori, a major now, older, in uniform, walks in, her briefcase in hand. She goes to the desk and looks around, surveying her new office. She sets down her briefcase and opens it, taking out the note and photo, both a bit worn.

She spots a picture of the pentagon on the wall. Goes to it and tucks the note and photo into the frame. She smiles. Home.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Large office with a big desk and a big window that provides a view of the flight line and a row of planes on the tarmac. A Christmas wreath hangs in the middle of the window.

Lori, older still and a colonel. She turns from the window with a smile. She goes to a picture of a F-16 fighter and plucks out the note and photo tucked into the frame.

She glances at the worn items before she slips them into her briefcase.

EXT. LORI'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Lori loads the trunk of her car with wrapped, Christmas presents. To one side is a carrying case for a pistol. She shuts the trunk, climbs behind the wheel, and backs out.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Christmas decorations festoon the pumps and building. Christmas MUSIC plays on the speakers. As Lori pumps gas into her car, she stretches her back. This is a long drive.

INT. LORI'S CAR - DAY

Lori drives. Ahead, a sign -- HARVEY 5 mi. She smiles.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Lori slides out of her car and looks at a large, old house, set amidst leafless trees. Winter bleakness outlines the house. She half smiles.

Out the front door comes BILLY CAR, 20 now, long, oily hair, jeans, and a cowboy shirt.

BILLY
Can I help you?

LORI
Billy Carr?

BILLY
Yes, ma'am.

LORI
(opening trunk)
Help with these presents.

INT. FARM HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Billy slides the last present under a shabby tree as Lori looks on.

BILLY
We certainly appreciate the gifts,
but I'm not sure why you're here.

She pulls out the note and photo.

LORI
Remember this?

He takes the note and photo and smiles.

BILLY
Mrs. Crawford made us do this. I
mean, we all wanted to do it, but
she made sure we did, you know?

LORI
You have no idea what that has
meant to me over the years. It
always brought me luck.

He hands back the note and photo.

BILLY
Hard to believe how much things
change.

LORI
The note promises Christmas dinner.
What do you say? My treat. Where
are your folks?

BILLY

They went to Fort Worth to be with my sister. Grandkids, you know? On Christmas eve I think maybe one place is open. That OK?

LORI

That will be just fine.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Lori sips wine; Billy sips beer. The remains of the meal on the table between them. The bar has been decorated for Christmas, but it's mostly vacant. A local place.

BILLY

I started college, but I wasn't mature enough, you know? After one semester, I left. But I'm getting ready to go back. I know life gets easier if I get a degree.

LORI

You might try the services. The air force has certainly been good to me.

BILLY

Yeah, yeah, I got that on my plate too. I just don't know which is better.

LORI

I'm sure you'll figure it out.

An overweight WAITRESS comes to clear the table.

WAITRESS

Get you anything else?

Lori looks at Billy who shakes his head.

LORI

(to Waitress)
Just a check.

WAITRESS

(to Billy)
When did you get out?

BILLY

Don't say it like I was in prison or something.

WAITRESS
Just askin'.

Arms laden, the Waitress waddles away.

BILLY
(to Lori)
I got a little messed up at school.
But that's one addiction I got
over.

LORI
I'm glad to hear that. Excuse me.

Lori gets up to use the restroom.

INT. BAR - RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lori washes her hands at the sink. The Waitress enters and checks the paper towels.

LORI
I'm finished.

WAITRESS
Take your time. We're open another
hour.
(beat)
How you know Billy?

LORI
It's a long story.

WAITRESS
Yeah, I know, don't pry. Well, if
you know Billy, then you know. If
you don't, well, don't take his
every word as gospel. Know what I
mean?

LORI
I'll remember that.

Lori walks out.

INT. LORI'S CAR - NIGHT

Lori parks in front of Billy's house. She stretches and stands.

LORI
I need a walk. You?

BILLY

You go ahead. I'll get us some
beers.

EXT. FARM LANE - NIGHT

Lori walks briskly and reaches the road where she stops and turns back to the house. Behind the house, stands the big barn from the photo. She turns from the road and starts for the barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Lori enters the dark. She feels around the door frame and finds a switch that turns on an overhead light. Facing her is a new minivan, a vehicle that hasn't been in the barn long. She walks along the side and glances inside.

Dark stains mar the front seats. Blood?

She goes to the back of the vehicle and opens the tailgate. More dark stains on the carpeting. She closes the tailgate and looks around the barn.

EXT. FARM - CONTINUOUS

Lori opens the trunk of her car, opens the pistol case, and grabs an automatic. She tucks the weapon in her jeans and drapes her shirt over.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Billy leans against the counter and sips beer as Lori enters.

LORI

I'd like to talk to your parents.
Can we call?

BILLY

They don't have cells. I know that sounds impossible, but they're that way. And my sister said they were all going to her mother-in-laws, wherever the hell that is.

LORI

No emergency number?

BILLY
Just the sheriff. Don't think he's
up for presents.

Billy moves to the sink and picks up a big knife to rinse.

LORI
Did your parents drive?

BILLY
Yeah, you know, room for presents.

Lori's hand hovers near the hidden gun.

LORI
Minivans have room for just about
anything.

Billy turns off the water and grabs a towel.

BILLY
They didn't take the mini. They
took the truck.

He slowly dries the knife.

LORI
They made it there OK?

BILLY
I woulda heard if they hadn't.

He faces her, lightly holding the long knife, half smiling.

BILLY
What kinda plane did you fly?

LORI
Fighter. Very fast, very deadly.

BILLY
I bet that was a rush.

LORI
You wouldn't believe.

Billy spins and slides the knife into a block.

BILLY
I was thinkin' of a present for
you.

LORI
That isn't necessary.

BILLY

No, I want to give you something.

He nods at her and heads out.

INT. FARM HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lori goes to the tree and picks out a present. She moves to a table and examines a row of photos, all of Billy from birth to graduation photo.

BILLY (O.S.)

My mother still thinks I'm a baby.

Lori turns to find Billy in the doorway, an old musket in his hands.

LORI

Billy?

Using the present as a shield, her hand finds the pistol.

BILLY

This gun has been in my family
since the civil war.

He waves it even as her hand aims the pistol at him behind the present.

LORI

Quite an heirloom.

BILLY

And it still works.

He points it at her, and it FIRES in a huge cloud of smoke.

She FIRES.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Lori bandages Billy's arm.

BILLY

You coulda killed me

LORI

You fired the musket.

BILLY

It wasn't loaded.

LORI

Tell me about the blood in the minivan.

BILLY

That's easy. Dad is given to nose bleeds, especially since he started blood thinners. I bled on the other side when a chain saw bucked and cut my arm.

He shows her a fresh scar on his other arm.

BILLY

And the back came from some venison that wasn't wrapped tight. Blame our neighbor for that.

She regards him.

BILLY

I don't know why you'd think anything else.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

We found them.

Into the kitchen strides the SHERIFF, 50, substantial.

SHERIFF

The pickup was hidden in the woods on the back side of the farm.

BILLY

What pickup?

SHERIFF

They were cut up pretty bad.

BILLY

Who?

The Sheriff pulls out his cuffs.

SHERIFF

Behind your back, son.

BILLY

(putting his hands behind his back)

I don't understand.

Lori turns for the door.

BILLY

Wait, wait, you can tell them.

She doesn't stop.

INT. LORI'S CAR - NIGHT

She heads down a highway. She picks up the note and glances at it before she drops it out the window.

Then, she grabs the photo, Billy at a promising eight. She tosses it out.

FADE OUT.