

DREAMING OF AN OLD TOMORROW

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A lovely woods on a late summer or early autumn day. The sun is high in the sky and the trees softly sway in the breeze.

SAWYER (10) is playing the woods. He is stocky, and highly energetic. He has a toy rifle, and runs from one tree to another, taking cover.

The boy is playing war, and with it come the sounds. He provides all the parts, from the MACHINE GUN sounds he imitates, and the EXPLOSIONS.

SAWYER

I need help...

(beat)

send in support...

(beat)

They're flanking us! Bring up more men.

He comes to the edge of the woods and stops to look out at a house nearby. He stares at it for a moment, curious.

EXT. RURAL HOME - DAY

An older home, isolated on a large lot, stands with doors open. A moving truck in the driveway indicates a new family in town.

He sees a large tree which almost stands guard, a sentinel to the ages. Underneath is sits JENN (10), a slightly built young girl, reading a large, hardcover book.

A WOMAN (40's) steps out the back door. She looks tired from handling the move. Sawyer uses a tree as cover to listen to the conversation.

WOMAN

Jenn? You out here?

Jenn peaks around the tree.

JENN

Over here, mama.

WOMAN

What're doing?

JENN

Reading.

WOMAN

(to self)

Reading. Of course. What else would you be doing?

JENN

You need my help?

WOMAN

No, we're fine. But you shouldn't just sit there. Get out and play. It's a nice day. Go see if there are other kids around.

JENN

(under her breath)

Yes, mama.

She puts the book down and looks up. She notices Sawyer.

JENN (CONT'D)

Hello? You watching me?

Sawyer at first hides, but then realizes it will do no good and steps out.

SAWYER

Yeah, sorry. I was just playing and wandered over here. You new around here?

She gets up and heads over to him

JENN

Sorry, I didn't mean to stop you from playing.

SAWYER

It's OK. I kind of get into the whole war thing. My name's Sawyer. Sawyer Tompkins. I live past the woods on the other side.

JENN

Jenn. We just moved in.

SAWYER

In the old Hawkins' place? That place has been empty forever.

JENN

Yeah, well, I guess we bought it.

SAWYER

Whatcha doing there?

JENN

Reading. But mom sent me out to play. Nice day and all.

SAWYER

I hear ya. Course that's pretty much all I do. I love to play war. You?

JENN

Me? No, I'm not into war stuff. I like to read.

Sawyer makes a face that shows that's not for him.

JENN (CONT'D)

Why do you like playing war so much?

SAWYER

Going to be a general someday. Like my dad.

JENN

(impressed)

Your dad was a general?

Sawyer looks proud.

SAWYER

Yep. He was a big hero. Saved a town and everything.

She nods, trying to understand.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

You want to play war with me? You can be the spy who gathers secrets for me.

JENN

I don't think so. I probably should get back to my house.

SAWYER

Wait! Before you do that, you want to see a secret place I found?

JENN
Secret place? What kind of secret
place?

SAWYER
Come on. I'll show you. It's not
far.

He starts to head off. Jenn is unsure, looking back toward the house, but decides to check it out.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The two walk a ways through the woods. Periodically, Jenn checks back, looking for the house, and seeming uncomfortable.

JENN
I really should be getting back...

SAWYER
It's right up here. Come on. It'll
be fun. Don't be a scaredy cat.

She bristles at the idea.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The two emerge into a clearing. In front of them are three tanks, silent, remembrances of a battle long gone.

Sawyer stops and admires them with a huge grin. Jenn stares at them.

JENN
What are they?

SAWYER
Tanks, silly.

JENN
I can see that. But what are they
doing here?

SAWYER
I don't know. Found them a while
ago, and this became my secret
place. I like to come here and play
on them.

JENN

But they must belong to someone.
Isn't the army going to come and
get them?

SAWYER

Haven't yet.

Sawyer runs to one and climbs up on it.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

General Tompkins, reporting for
duty.

JENN

We're going to get in trouble.

SAWYER

Don't be a baby. No we're not. Come
on. Jump on that one over there.

He pretends to throw a grenade and then takes his gun and
pretends to fire.

Jenn is more cautious. She walks over to one, and touches it,
studying it as she does. The tank seems to glow with her
touch, but Sawyer doesn't notice.

JENN

These look like they've been here a
while. Maybe there was a battle
near here.

Sawyer pops up from behind the turret of one.

SAWYER

What?

JENN

I said maybe there was a battle
around here?

Sawyer pops up from behind one of the turrets.

SAWYER

Don't know. But there's one now.

He continues to pretend that he's in heavy fighting. Jenn
walks around, not joining in, thinking.

JENN

You ever think about the people who
were in these tanks?

Sawyer stops and looks at her.

SAWYER
You know, you don't play war very good.

JENN
I'm not playing war. I don't like war.

SAWYER
Why not? War is cool.

JENN
Cool? What's cool about it?

SAWYER
The good guys beating the bad guys. People being rescued. Heroes, all that.

JENN
I don't know. I think about people dying. People being scared. Homes being destroyed. There were people in these tanks. And there were people running from them. That's what I think about.

Sawyer hops down.

SAWYER
Girls!

She is offended.

JENN
What's that supposed to mean?

SAWYER
Just that girls always worry about that kind of stuff. Not me. I think war is cool.

She continues to study the tanks.

JENN
This is an attack tank.

SAWYER
A what?

JENN

A attack tank. Light armor.
Maneuverable. Can reach a top speed
of forty five kilometers per hour.
Not much good against other tanks.
Deadily against troops and
civilians.

Sawyer stares at her.

SAWYER

What are you talking about? How do
you know all that?

JENN

Huh? Oh, like I said, I read. Guess
something I read once.

Sawyer shrugs and runs toward the back, to take up a
position. Jenn notices something on the ground, a glint of
metal. She bends down to touch it, and it too, glows a bit.

JENN (CONT'D)

Look at this.

Sawyer jumps down and comes over.

SAWYER

What?

She points to the metal, and he gets down to look at it. He
digs a bit and pulls it out.

JENN

What is it?

He pulls out a dog tag on a chain. It's caked in dirt, but he
wipes some off.

SAWYER

Cool!

JENN

What?

SAWYER

Look.

He holds up the dog tag.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

I bet this came from a real
soldier.

He cleans it a bit more to be able to read it.

JENN
What's it say?

SAWYER
Hard to read. But looks like it's
from a Sargent Collins. Something
like that. L. Collins.

She takes it and looks at it.

JENN
Wow! Just think. This belonged to
someone once.

SAWYER
I bet he died right here.

JENN
I bet he had a wife. Kids.

He looks at her unable to comprehend.

SAWYER
But he was a soldier!

At first that thought excites him, but then he realizes he
may be sitting on a spot where a dead person was, and he
kicks back away from it in horror.

Jenn laughs.

JENN
Now who's a scaredy cat?

Sawyer is annoyed.

SAWYER
You come and sit on someone's
grave.

She comes and sits down next to him, holding the dog tag,
their backs against the tread of the tank.

JENN
It's weird, isn't it?

SAWYER
What?

JENN
The idea that someone actually died
here.

(MORE)

JENN (CONT'D)

War games are all fun with sticks and rocks for grenades. But when there are real tanks, and real dead people... I don't know. It doesn't seem... so cool.

Sawyer thinks for a moment.

SAWYER

Yeah, maybe you're right. It does feel different.

The two just think for a moment. Finally Jenn breaks the silence.

JENN

Was that stuff about your dad true?

Sawyer looks a bit chagrined.

SAWYER

No, not really. He WAS in the war. But he wasn't a general.

JENN

And a hero?

Sawyer shrugs.

SAWYER

I don't know. I know he died. I like to think it was for a good reason, doing something brave. I just know I miss him.

JENN

Where did he die?

SAWYER

There was a big battle. Battle of Wadkin's Glen they called it. That's what mama says. I don't know much about it. Just that he died there.

Jenn is silent for a moment. Then gets a far away look.

JENN

They came from the north. The town had no idea. The soldiers thought they were hiding spies, but we weren't. We had no warning. None at all.

She looks at the dog tag, then clutches it tightly.

Sawyer can't figure out what's happening.

SAWYER

We? You said, we...

She slowly puts her arm around him, and the two sit there. Finally, Jenn breaks the moment.

JENN

I really should get going. It's getting late.

The two get up, and start to walk off, Jenn in the lead, a stunned Sawyer looks at her and trails behind.

Suddenly, behind them, there is a sound of BIRDS being flushed. Sawyer turns, startled. When he realizes what it is he laughs and turns back.

Over his shoulder, there is the same shimmer that was apparent when she touched the tank. But when he looks, Jenn is gone.

He looks all around, but there is no sign of her. He jumps up on a tank, and tries to find her, to no avail.

SAWYER

Jenn?

(beat)

Where'd you go?

(beat)

Jenn? JENN!?

In a panic, he begins to run through the woods. Trees snap at him, he trips, but he keeps going.

EXT. RURAL HOME - DAY

He comes out of the woods at Jenn's house. Now the house is dark, no signs of life. The tree is still there, a "For Sale" sign in front, but no people, no vehicles, or life of any kind.

Cautiously, he approaches the tree. He looks at it, and the house. Then he sees a glint of metal. He bends down to pick up the dog tag. He looks around. Confused.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The woods are silent, with just the three tanks sitting there. The wind blows, swaying the trees.

OLDER SAWYER (V.O.)

I never saw Jenn again. To be honest, I don't know what I saw that day. But I never felt quite the same way about war after that summer. Jenn, whoever or whatever she was, taught me something important. War was not about tanks, or guns, or even heroes. It's about the men and women who are in the middle of it all, and are affected by it. She got me thinking about things I never wanted to think about before, but have thought a lot about since.

In the foreground there is a small plaque, that had not been visible before. It reads "To The Victims of Wadkin's Glen. May We Never Forget." Hanging on the sign is the dog tag.

FADE OUT.

THE END