

Tamara Remembers

The Characters:

Tamara Johnson—A bright girl in the third grade
Kathy Johnson—Tamara’s step-sister, a sixth grader
TJ Johnson—Tamara’s step-brother, an eighth grader
Angelina Johnson—Tamara’s mother, head nurse at Vista Falls General Hospital
Bill Johnson—Tamara’s step-father, a security guard
Andrea Wyatt—Tamara’s bubbly and energetic best friend
Isaac Friedman—Kathy’s friend from sixth grade
Rick Drischoll—TJ’s good friend from junior high school
Virginia Wyatt—Andrea’s stepmother
Kitty Conn—The eighty-something-year-old candy shop owner who welcomes everyone into her heart and is always ready with some words of wisdom and some cookies
Officer Colbert—Vista Falls’ Chief of Police

The Scene

A chilly Saturday morning finds the Johnson family sipping hot chocolate in “Kitty Conn’s Candy Corner.” The Candy Corner is legendary in Vista Falls—long the source of many warm chats and happy times thanks to the kindness and generosity of Mrs. Conn. Each child in the Johnson family has been allowed to bring one friend along to share this special morning. After their hot chocolate, the group plans to take a car ride to neighboring Mapleford for the annual Autumn Festival. Andrea’s step-mom, Virginia, will take half of the group in her car while the other half goes with the Johnsons. Everyone is quite excited. But, what should be a joyous morning is a little tense, however, due mostly to Tamara’s foul mood.

TAMARA: (*Taking a sip from her mug.*) This cocoa is cold. (*She frowns.*)

KATHY: I’m sure Mrs. Conn will warm it up for you.

TJ: Yeah, Tammie. She won’t mind.

ANGELINA: I’ll call her for you, Sweetie. She’s just in the kitchen.

TAMARA: (*Grumbling.*) Don’t bother. I don’t want it anyway.

BILL: What’s gotten into you today, Tamara? You’re not acting at all yourself.

ANDREA: Do you have a stomach ache or something?

TAMARA: No! Do I look like I have a stomach ache?

ANDREA: (*Meekly.*) No. I was just asking.

TAMARA: Well, it’s a stupid question!

ANGELINA: Tammie! That’s no way to talk to your friend.

TAMARA: Come on, Mom. You know it’s a stupid question. You can tell when someone has a stomach ache. You know that’s true. You’re a nurse.

ANGELINA: That isn’t true, Tamara. Sometimes people are very good at hiding what they’re feeling. Sometimes you can’t tell at all.

ANDREA: That’s right. You know, when my grandma was sick, she didn’t tell anyone for a long time. And, you couldn’t tell she was sick by looking at her. My dad said she had a high...ummm...

ISAAC: Blood pressure? That’s what my grandmother had.

ANDREA: I’m sorry to hear that, but, no, that’s not what I meant. She had a high...oh...you know...you couldn’t tell she was feeling bad.

RICK: Maybe you mean she had a high pain tolerance. She could feel awful, but she didn’t show it because she didn’t let it bother her.

ANGELINA: Like you Rick. That’s the way you were after your surgery.

RICK: (*Embarrassed.*) Aw, I don't know, Mrs. Johnson.

ANDREA: Yes, that's it. She had a high pain tolerance. She was very brave about the whole thing. But, she was brave about everything. I miss her a lot. We always had so much fun together. I was so sad when she died.

VIRGINIA: We were all sad. Your Uncle Chauncey, especially. After all, your grandma was his sister.

ANDREA: That's why we helped him put all his old pictures from when they were little in a nice new photo album.

VIRGINIA: That way he could look at them whenever he wanted to.

TJ: Great idea!

ISAAC: That's what my mom did for my grandpa when my grandmother died. She was great, my grandma. She made the best chocolate chip cookies. Don't tell Mrs. Conn, but I think they were even better than hers!

MRS. CONN: (*Entering.*) That's okay, Isaac. (*She smiles.*) I remember your grandmother's cookies and I will be the first to agree that they were better than mine. I wonder if your mother will give me the recipe.

ISAAC: I'll bet she would! That would be great if you could make cookies that tasted just like hers.

MRS. CONN: I could try.

TAMARA: (*Angrily.*) Do we have to talk about dead grandmas and hospitals and surgery and sickness and all this dumb stuff?

KATHY: It's not dumb, Tammie. Isaac was just remembering his grandma and her cookies.

ISAAC: Yeah.

TAMARA: Let's just talk about something else, okay?

BILL: Tamara, you're being very unpleasant today.

TAMARA: (*Rolling her eyes.*) Sorry.

BILL: Seriously, Virginia, does Andrea ever act like this?

VIRGINIA: Well...

ANDREA: Hey!

MRS. CONN: (*Trying to keep the peace by changing the subject.*) So, what was everyone talking about while I was in the kitchen?

TJ: We were talking about how sometimes you can't tell what a person's feeling.

MRS. CONN: Ah, yes. Sometimes people are very good at hiding their real feelings. But, when they do, it always comes out in other ways.

RICK: What do you mean, Mrs. Conn?

MRS. CONN: Well, for example, let's say I was sad about something and I was trying to hide that fact from my friends and family. It's hard to hide how you feel. So, I might get frustrated and end up yelling at everyone.

BILL: (*Looking at Tamara.*) I can't imagine anyone doing that.

MRS. CONN: Really? I can.

ANGELINA: Tell us, Kitty.

MRS. CONN: Well, I did it myself once.

KATHY: You, Mrs. Conn? But, you're such a nice person.

MRS. CONN: (*Laughing sweetly.*) Thank you, Kathy. But, even nice people do some not so nice things sometimes. You see, after my husband, Moss, died, I was so terribly upset.

TAMARA: (*Muttering under her breath.*) Oh great. More death stories.

MRS. CONN: What's that, Tamara?

TAMARA: Nothing.

ANGELINA: Sweetie, let Mrs. Conn finish. You were saying, Kirty?

MRS. CONN: Just that after Moss died I was very sad. Not only didn't I want to feel sad, I didn't want to bother anyone with my sadness. I didn't want to make anyone feel bad, so I tried not to think about Moss at all. And, the more I didn't think about him, the more I missed him and the sadder I got. Well, pretty soon, I was shouting at people and saying awful things.

TJ: Why?

MRS. CONN: I was frustrated and I was upset and I had no way of letting all those feelings out. So, it came out as anger.

RICK: What did you do?

MRS. CONN: Well, soon I realized that I was hurting myself by not remembering Moss. It wasn't fair to me and it wasn't fair to him. Sure, sometimes, remembering made me sad because it made me miss him. But, soon, remembering made me happy because I felt closer to him. After awhile, the sad times were a lot less than the happy ones.

BILL: So, Kirty, you're saying that it's okay to remember. And, it's even okay to let remembering make you feel sad. (*He looks at Tamara.*)

MRS. CONN: That's exactly what I'm saying. It's important to remember the special people in our lives that are waiting for us in heaven. It's those memories that keep them next to us until we can all be together some day. Does that make sense?

ANDREA: Yes, it does. I felt the same way when my grandma died.

ISAAC: Me, too. I didn't like to think about her at first because it made me sad. But, now I like to remember her and talk to my mom and dad and grandpa about her.

ANGELINA: (*To Tamara.*) You know, Sweetie, that's how I felt when your father died. It was hard to remember at first. It would make me cry. But, talking to you helped me remember the happy times.

TAMARA: Happy times... (*She looks away.*)

ANGELINA: We had a lot of happy times, the three of us. (*Glancing at Bill.*) Not that we don't now since I've married Bill and he and TJ and Kathy came to live with us. But those times with your father and you were special all by themselves. Do you remember, Tammie?

TAMARA: No.

MRS. CONN: Oh, I remember your dad, Tamara. He loved you so much. I recall a Saturday just like this when you were about six years old. You and your mom and your dad came in here and had hot chocolate. Andrea and her father came, too.

ANDREA: Yeah! That was the first time we went to the Autumn Festival in Mapletford together. Oh, boy, we had a great time! Don't you remember, Tamara? Your dad played that game where you have to knock down the bottles and he won you that stuffed poodle you have in your room.

TAMARA: (*Looking away.*) Her name is Princess.

ANDREA: That's right—Princess. Yeah, that was a great day. We came back here afterwards and Mrs. Conn gave us hot apple pie.

MRS. CONN: You had two pieces. Even as a little girl, you had a big appetite.

TAMARA: (*Smiling.*) Dad made you wrap up the rest of the pie for us to take home because he said mom's apple pie tasted like gravel.

ANGELINA: (*Laughing.*) I was so mad. But, he was right.

TAMARA: You were only pretending to be mad. I knew because you had that twinkle in your eye. You and dad always teased each other like that.

MRS. CONN: (*Knowingly.*) So, you remember that day, too?

TAMARA: (*Sadly.*) I miss him.

ANGELINA: So do I, Sweetie. But, he's in heaven now. He's happy, waiting for us.

(*Officer Colbert enters. He looks glum.*)

MRS. CONN: Good morning, Steve! The usual?

OFFICER COLBERT: No thanks. Not today, Kitty. Just coffee for me.

MRS. CONN: Maybe you'd like some cherry turnovers. I just iced them. On the house, even.

OFFICER COLBERT: No thanks. Not cherry turnovers. They were...

VIRGINIA: (*Gently.*) They were Detective Muldoon's favorite.

OFFICER COLBERT: (*With sadness.*) Yeah.

RICK: (*With concern.*) How are you doing, Officer?

OFFICER COLBERT: I don't know. Everything's different since he's gone.

TAMARA: That's why you should have the cherry turnover. It'll be like having Detective Muldoon with you. You can think about all the times you two came here and ate them together. It'll make you feel better. (*Adding shyly.*) Right, Mrs. Conn?

MRS. CONN: Right, Tamara.

OFFICER COLBERT: (*Smiling.*) All right. Thanks. I'm glad I came here this morning. (*He pauses.*) By the way, anyone have any idea who owns that white minivan out front? It's parked in front of a fire hydrant. I'm going to have to write a ticket...after I have my breakfast.

VIRGINIA: Oh! I was only going to park there until another space opened up. I forgot to move it! (*She stands, presumably to go and move her car.*)

TAMARA: Wow, I guess remembering is important in all kinds of ways! (*Everyone laughs.*)

END SCENE.