



Witt's Daughter (2008) - By Duane L. Martin

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The Korean war is sometimes called the forgotten war because it wasn't on the scale of World War I or II, and didn't have the controversy of the Viet Nam conflict. This is a shame, and does a serious disservice to those who served in Korea. My father was one of those who served in that war, so I felt a very special connection to this film. Truth be told, this film could have worked if it had been set after any war, but director Carole Holliday chose Korea simply because it was the forgotten war, and it was definitely the right choice.

Witt's Daughter is the story of Lieutenant Witt Stringfield (Adam Edgar), who has just returned home from the war. He kept his return a secret so that he could surprise his wife May (Mandy Henderson) and daughter Catherine May (Alia Margaret). What he returned home to however, wasn't exactly the welcome he expected.

His wife didn't know he was coming, and had committed herself to babysitting for a friend whose young son who was in the hospital with appendicitis. She tried to find someone to take her place, but couldn't. This left Witt home with his young daughter, who was little more than an infant when he left. Unfortunately, while she knows he's her father, she doesn't really know him as anything more than just some guy who suddenly appeared in her life, and as such is very cold and stand-offish with him. The night that follows is awkward for both father and daughter. Witt doesn't know how to relate to his daughter, as he had come home with the expectation that he'd just settle back into his life and everything would be normal again, and Catherine May, now confronted with a man who is little more than a stranger to her, seems to go out of her way to be a pain in the butt. The entire evening is a struggle for both to reach that point where they can start to build a normal kind of a father daughter relationship that the war had stolen from them both.

I don't even know where to begin with this film. Everything about it was absolutely amazing. I'm literally at a loss for where to begin.

I guess I'll start with the story itself. I don't think people often realize the depth of the problems the soldiers face when they return back home. Especially those who have just had kids and then have to leave for a few years. It happens all the time, and it has to be

incredibly hard on both the soldiers and their families. Nowadays it's easier to keep in touch with video chats, e-mails and digital photos, but back during the Korean war, they didn't have those things. When Witt went off to war, that was it. He was just gone, and other than the letters I'm sure he wrote, he had no connection with his family until he returned back home. The story was brilliantly written and was played out with incredible sensitivity and in a way that made you really feel for the characters.

The cast of this film were all just wonderful, but I have to give special mention to the little girl, Alia Margaret, who played the daughter. I don't know how old she is, but my god that kid can act. She was just amazing. I don't know if I've ever seen a child that young give a performance like that, and when you consider how demanding the part was emotionally, it makes it even more amazing that she was able to do the wonderful job she did. I think personally, for me, the best part of the film was when he had to give her a bath. That was just hilarious. It's funny too because in the credits, there's actually a credit for a bubble wrangler.

The costuming and set design again were beyond compare. I don't know where they found it, but the entire house looked like it was straight out of the 50's, but...new. Nothing in it looked old, giving a far better impression of the era in which the film takes place. It's more than just the house though, the cars used in the film are from that era, the photos in the house, the furniture...everything just looked absolutely authentic. I will make note of one thing I've noticed about these period films though, and it holds true in this one. When you see cars in these films, they're always pristine, like they just rolled off the lot. I believe that's because it's really hard to find a car that old that hasn't been restored and kept looking like new. The ones that aren't are probably so trashed by now as to be unusable, and without a Hollywood style budget and machine shop to create aged looking replicas, you have to use what you can get, which are most often restored originals. This isn't a bad thing, it's just something I was thinking about while I was watching this film, because I've noticed it before in other films.

On a technical level, the film was well shot and edited. The shots were all set up really nicely, and the editing moved the film along at a perfect pace. The running time on this film is a bit odd, coming in at 39:18, which is longer than a short and shorter than a feature, but it happens to be just the right running time for this particular story. Could it have been longer? Sure, but it wouldn't have added much to the story that we weren't already given. There would have just been more of it, which in and of itself wouldn't have been a bad thing considering how great this film is. If it had been shorter however, we'd have been cheated out of some of what made this film so great. So I was pretty happy with how long this film was and how the time was utilized for it's maximum potential.

The sound and lighting were also extremely well done, with all the dialogue being clearly understandable and every scene having just the right level of lighting to set the proper mood. Everything about this film technically just screamed professionalism. Carole Holiday and her crew should all be commended for a very fine job of film making.

One last note I'd like to make is about the music. It's not often that you hear such incredible original music in an independent film, but this film...my god. The music suited the story so

perfectly. The original music was written by Gregory Hinde, and the closing song in the film was written by director Carole Holiday and sung by Christian Ebner, who it just so happens has a pretty fantastic voice.

I've been reviewing independent films for coming up on six years now, and it's a rare treat for me when I get the chance to review a film as heartfelt and special as this one. The film is playing at various film festivals, and has just recently been selected to appear at the GI film festival in Washington D.C. which takes place May 13th through the 17th of this year and honors the successes and sacrifices of American GI's. If you get a chance to see this film at a film festival, see it. I'm not sure if or when a DVD will be available for sale, but if and when it is, be sure to get it. This is one of those special films that's really worth going out of your way to see, and if you can come away from it without feeling really good, then there's something very, very wrong with you.

If you'd like to find out more about this film, you can check it out at the film's [website](#).

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