

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
Edmond, Oklahoma
Dr. Joe C. Jackson College of Graduate Studies

Cher Ami

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH
CREATIVE WRITING

By

Cheryl Homen

Moore, Oklahoma

2014


Cher Ami

A THESIS

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

December 2, 2014

By  MFA
James Daro, MFA

 Ph.D
Susan Spencer, Ph.D.

 Ph.D
Timothy Petete, Ph.D.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my children Campbell, Haden and Ethan for their patience, understanding, and sacrifice of my time, while I strove to be a better role model with my exceedingly long road to increase my knowledge and to show that it is never too late to follow your dream. Here's to turtle power.

ABTRACT OF THESIS

AUTHOR: Cheryl Homen

TITLE: Cher Ami

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: James Daro

PAGES: 89

My thesis work is a screenplay, specifically a family drama, based on a pigeon who becomes a hero. Similar to *Fly Away Home* and *Duma*, both directed by Carroll Ballard, I envision the use of live animals with computer generated imaging for challenging scenes. While I have nothing against animated films, I would prefer to see the natural beauty of the animals and scenery along with the dismal signs of war that only live footage can capture. And because I want to project reality, I blocked my urge to have animals talking with each other. However, in contrast with the two films mentioned that had human narrators, and because I wanted to show Cher Ami's perspective, I did give him the voice of the off camera narrator. John Fusco used this method in *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*. This was my main model when thinking on how I wanted to structure my story.

CHER AMI is based on a real pigeon that flew in WWI and saved the Lost Battalion, an American outfit led by Captain Whittlesey. Gaining a popular following immediately after the war, Cher Ami is displayed in the Smithsonian, but yet it would be hard to find anyone who still remembers or even knows about his heroism. When I went to the WWI museum in Kansas City there was no mention of him or any of the thousands of carrier pigeons that were instrumental in transporting communications across war grounds. My goal was to bring his memory back to life. There are so many stories about

brave horses, dogs, even cats, but it is very rare that a pigeon, typically considered rats with wings, are noticed for gallantry, let alone even considered more than just a pest. I took what truth I could find and created a tale of a magnificent creature in a “little train that could” plot with a background to show how love and support can help even small things attain triumph.

My challenges were many since I knew nothing about pigeons or WWI, and not much about England or France. Watching *Downton Abbey* was an easy fix to gain a bit of knowledge, but I wanted to learn as much as possible to make the story as authentic as I could. I first learned of Cher Ami listening to NPR so I used the web quite a bit in the beginning, but I found that most of the stories said the same thing. They only described Cher Ami’s heroic last flight. When I first set out to work on research, the Pigeon Museum wasn’t open, but as the time drew closer to the need for me to write, it unlocked its doors for business. It was instrumental for helping me to gain knowledge of pigeons. Other resources that were instrumental in my research were the use of the interlibrary loan service, where I got *Pigeons in the Great War* by Lt. Col. A.H. Osman, the use of the microfilm newspaper collection in the UCO library, and a 1920s travel book on Lille, France. I too, requested information from the National Archives and Records Administration out of Maryland, hoping I could learn more about Cher Ami’s eleven other missions he completed, but I did not have the funds to purchase.

I find it challenging to go one direction when writing. For me that challenge was met by using a song to help guide me with the story. The song came to me as I was pondering on what I would use to show how Cher Ami gained his “little train that could” character. The song, *Flume* sung by Peter Gabriel, led me to his mother as the catalyst

for his bravery. Learning that pigeons truly are very family oriented helped to support this connection. Pigeons mate for life. This song was a great inspiration and helped me to stay on track.

Films can manipulate so easily. I want to create works that inspires, educates, and helps make a difference for the better. I want to produce works that honor females and children. Three of my mentors are William Goldman who wrote *The Princess Bride*, and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*; John Hughes who wrote *Sixteen Candles* and *She's Having a Baby* and Walt Disney. When looking at their work it is obvious they are and were passionate about their craft. It was Goldman that I watched in an interview on YouTube whose advice to new writers is to realize that the first screenplay one writes is probably going to suck. I'm glad I heard those words, because at this stage I want my piece to be so much better. But, as he also pointed out, in this business you have to be willing to do it again, and again, and again till you get it right. As a dancer and dance instructor, one thing I'm very familiar with and willing to do, is do it again till it is right.

CHER AMI

An original screenplay

Written by

Cheryl Homen

Based on a true story

1037 S.W. 3rd
Moore, OK 73160
(405) 326-6025
Cheryl.Homen@gmail.com

INT. DOVECOTE

In a pigeon coop called a dovecote in a village in Havant, close to Portsmouth, England on a warm spring evening in 1916, we see several nesting boxes with pigeons.

"SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 1916 - HAVANT, ENGLAND"

Gazing over the surroundings, we focus on a picture hung on the wall, of JOHN TURNER, the owner of the dovecote, holding in one hand LADY JANE, a black and white checkered female pigeon with a silver glaze around her neck, and a medal in his other hand.

Beside that is a sign that reads:

DEFENCE OF THE REALM REGULATIONS.

Regulations 21.

Number J181

PERMIT TO KEEP CARRIER OR HOMING PIGEONS.

To All whom it may concern.

By Virtue of the Powers vested in me under the provisions of Regulation 21 of the Defence of the Realm regulations, I hereby grant permission to the Person named below to be in possession of Carrier or Homing Pigeons, not exceeding one hundred and fifty in number.

NAME OF HOLDER.

John A. Turner

Christian Name, Jonathan

Jonathan Turner

Signature of Holder. With date: 5th June, 1915.

Close on two eggs resting under a cooing Lady Jane. The crackling of an egg can be heard and suddenly a wing peaks out. Beak and head protrude next from the shells. Continuing out of the egg comes BUDDY/CHER AMI.

Lady Jane immediately feeds Buddy/Cher Ami locking her beak over his. BIG TOM, a red copper cock, struts into the picture to admire his first son and joins in the feeding.

BUDDY/CHER AMI (V.O.)

That's me. Yeah, I know I look a little like a rat, but don't dare confuse me for one. We are very different. I'm a pigeon. A homing pigeon and this is my story, from the beginning. As you can see, life is good. I have perfect parents. Can't you tell by the way they coo over me?

John, early 30s, has a subtle limp due to a peg leg. He walks into the dovecote.

JOHN

Ahhh, Lady Jane, so one is here finally.

John moves Jane over a little so he can get a better look at the new bird.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Tom, how proud you must be. Look at the squeaker. Keep up the good work and I'll have a bevy of racing champs.

John is very diligent to check the bird's water and food stations. He takes one more moment to give Jane an extra stroke on her head.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now, hurry and hatch the other egg.

He shuts off the lights and exits. The moon illuminates the dovecote through the windows that are secured with chicken wire.

INT. SCULLERY/KITCHEN - EVENING

John comes into the house.

JOHN

Lizzie, where are you?

ELIZABETH

In the scullery, John.

John joins his wife, ELIZABETH, in the scullery which is right off the kitchen where she is doing dishes. He gives her a kiss and hug.

JOHN
First one hatched, Lizzie. I bet
he's faster than lightning.

He picks up a dish towel and cracks it out aiming for Elizabeth's rear.

ELIZABETH
John!

She grabs the towel so she can begin drying the dishes.

JOHN
They'll be champs, I just know it.
I think I'll let JAMISON name him.
First heir names the first heir.
Seems fitting.

ELIZABETH
Oh, he will be delighted you gave
him such a task, John. He will be
delighted. Will you help me finish
up here?

Elizabeth tosses the towel to John.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I need to run and check on
Beatrice. She didn't want to go to
sleep and I'm worried she may be
coming down with something.

FADE OUT ON WINDOW SHOWING DARK EVENING

FADE IN ON WINDOW SHOWING THE SUN COMING UP

INT. KITCHEN MORNING / NEXT DAY

Soft sounds of cooing pigeons and clucking chickens can be heard from outside.

John, JAMISON, their son who is ten, and LUCY, their daughter who is five, sit around the table in the kitchen as Elizabeth serves them holding BEATRICE, the baby, who is just seven months old, in her arms.

JOHN
Did you two sleep well last night?

LUCY

I did.

JAMISON

Can't sleep very well right now just thinking of those pigeons. I'm just dying to crack open those eggs myself if they don't soon hatch.

JOHN

Ha, just think of what your poor Mum suffered. She had to wait a whole nine months.

ELIZABETH

That's right, it seems like an eternity the waiting. Eighteen days waiting is nothing compared to nine months. I wish I could have the life of those pigeons, especially your father's. You'd think they were the King's personal stock.

JOHN

King George wishes.

JAMISON

Dad, once they are born, how long till you can take them out for their first flight?

JOHN

We'll have to give them a couple of months to be ready. How about we head out to the dovecote and check on them.

John and Jamison finish off their breakfast shoving it into their mouths so they can get outside.

As they are approaching the door, there is a knock. John answers to find a man delivering a telegram. He signs for it and shoves the delivery into his pocket.

Lucy, who has left the rest of her breakfast on her plate scurries after her father and brother.

EXT. FRONT YARD INTO DOVECOTE

John, Jamison and Lucy, walk from the house to the dovecote. A Collie named SADIE comes to walk with them. John bends down to pat her head.

Chickens and pigeons are on the ground pecking at grains. A few sheep are seen in a fenced pen in the background with two modest shelters for other animals, an outhouse, and a coal containment building behind them.

The telegram delivery man rides away in his horse drawn carriage.

John and Jamison open the door to the dovecote and go inside, Lucy following behind. Jamison moves quickly to Lady Jane and Big Tom's nest. John moves Big Tom over so Jamison can see the baby pigeon.

JAMISON

Dad, one has hatched.

LUCY

Let me see, let me see.

John picks Lucy up, positioning her to see in the nest.

JOHN

Yes, I know. He came out last night.

LUCY

He looks ugly!

JAMISON

Why didn't you tell me?

JOHN

He'll get better looking with age, Lucy.

It was late, Jamison. I didn't need you jumping out of bed to come out and see him. You and the little bugger need rest. What do you think?

JAMISON

I think he looks swell.

LUCY

That's not a pigeon.

JOHN

But it is, Lucy. You'll see.

JAMISON

Is it a boy or a girl?

JOHN

Don't know yet, but we should be able to tell once it is older by certain characteristics.

Jamison, how would you like to name him?

JAMISON

Oh you know I would.

LUCY

I want to name him, father.

JOHN

I'll let you name the next bird, Lucy. It shouldn't be long. Now let's let them be. You two need to get to school.

Close on Big Tom tending to the new squeaker. The three leave the dovecote to go back into the house.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Jamison and Lucy disappear to get their school satchels, and John goes to the kitchen to kiss Elizabeth goodbye.

ELIZABETH

What was the telegram about, John?

JOHN

I completely forgot, I haven't opened it yet.

He pulls the envelope out of his coat pocket and opens it. His demeanor drops causing Elizabeth to stop what she is doing and sit in a chair.

INT. HOUSE/KITCHEN (LATER)

Elizabeth, while holding the baby, with Lucy's help, sets the table for dinner and then goes to the scullery to work on the meal.

John is reading a paper that shows a car advertisement - stating that you can purchase a new car when you get back from the war.

Jamison is fidgety, waiting for the meal to be served.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)

How was school Jamison?

Lucy sets a plate of bread on the table and then sits down.

JAMISON

Alright, I had a hard time focusing on anything other than the pigeons. I decided to name the new pigeon Buddy.

LUCY

Aaahh, I don't like that name. Can't we name it Butterfly?

JOHN

Now, Lucy, you will get to name the next one. That's a promise.

How was your day?

LUCY (IMITATING JAMISON)

It was alright, I had a hard time focusing, thinking of the pigeons.

JOHN

Yes, I'm sure you both did.
(TURNING TO JAMISON) Just wait till training time, but before we talk about that, I have some other news. It grieves your mother and me very much. I have received a conscription.

John pulls out the conscription.

LUCY

A what?

JOHN

It means I have to go back in the war.

JAMISON

No, they can't. What about your leg? They can't take you.

JOHN

Well, they can. Word has gotten out about my Tom and Lady Jane. They're bringing me back in as a pigeoneer. Even worse, I have to leave day after tomorrow. There's lots to be done between now and then.

Jamison jumps up to hold his father and starts to cry. Lucy jumps up to be a part of the hug. The baby starts to cry and then Elizabeth as she envelopes them all.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now, now. This will soon pass, I'm almost certain.

John pulls them away so he can look them all in the eye.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Look at last time. Only gone four months.

John lifts his peg leg up so it plunks on the ground.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Of course wouldn't want that experience again. The pain was unbearable.

John picks up Lucy and puts her in his lap.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This will be different. You'll see.

The food, now on the table, Elizabeth sits down. The family bows their head to pray and do the sign of the cross as Catholics.

JOHN (CONT'D)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We thank you for the meal we are about to receive.

LUCY

And please bring daddy and Tom back fast.

JOHN

In the name of the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit. Amen.

They begin to eat.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Jamison, now that you're older, I am depending on you to be the man of the house. It will be a lot of responsibility, but you can handle it.

LUCY

What about me? Do I need to have responsibility?

JOHN

Oh yes, I need you to be extra good and listen to your Mum. When she needs your help you get right to it. Can you do that?

LUCY

I guess, but can I help with the pigeons? Jamison will probably need my help.

JOHN

Yes, you need to help Jamison with all the animals. You'll need to listen to him. He will be taking my place for the time being.

LUCY

Oh, must I? He's been acting like you forever. Can't I take your place?

JOHN

Not this time. But you will have plenty to keep you busy. Remember we're in this together.

LUCY

Yes, daddy.

Close on the same newspaper John was reading earlier now laying on table showing a family pictured similar to their own with the words "Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?"

INT. HOUSE - DAY

John carries a bag from the back of the house to set beside the door. The rest of the family gathers around him to say goodbye.

ELIZABETH

Please write better than you did last time.

JOHN

You know I will, Lizzie.

John goes to grab some feathers off of his desk. He hands one to Lucy and keeps two in his hands.

LUCY

What's this?

JOHN

I've made a quill pen for you with Tom's feather. That's for you to use to write to me. I want lots of letters and pictures.

LUCY

Oh yes, Daddy!

John turns his attention back to Elizabeth. Lucy begins throwing her feather to watch it fly.

JOHN

I'm more worried about you and the children than how I will make out. Do you think your sister will have time to help out every once in awhile?

ELIZABETH

I hope so, but Jane is working at the munitions factory so much, I'm not certain. I'm wondering if Gretchen could help. We'll go visit them on Sunday after church.

John and Elizabeth embrace and do not separate till Lucy comes in the middle. Jamison walks in the door.

JAMISON

I have the pigeons and Big Tom secure in their baskets.

JOHN

Thanks.

John hands Jamison a paper with notes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Here's a list to follow on all your chores.

John hands Jamison one of the feathers.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I saved one of Big Tom's feathers for you to use to write to me with and this one is Lady Jane's for me to keep part of her with me.

ELIZABETH

Ah, any chance you have something of mine?

JOHN

Of course I do! I snuck one of your scarves to wear around my neck at night.

ELIZABETH

It better not be the one you brought back from France.

JOHN

I know better than that.

Turning his attention back to Jamison.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Lady Jane's other egg should hatch any day. I wish I had more time to go over everything, but I think you've watched and helped me enough to know what to do.

JAMISON

Don't worry, I'll be fine. You take care of yourself and Big Tom. I'm sure going to miss him.

JOHN

I hate taking him before his next egg hatches, but they asked me to bring all I could.

Once Buddy is older and trained, I'll send Big Tom back and have you send him to me.

JAMISON

Let's hope the war's over before that day gets here.

JOHN

Yes, let's. Take good care of your Mum and sisters. I'm counting on you.

There is a knock at the door. A man is there to pick John up. The entire family holds him in their final embrace before he departs.

INT. DOVECOTE - EARLY MORNING NEXT DAY

Jamison is in the dovecote checking on Lady Jane's unhatched egg and Jane. He pays special attention to Buddy/Cher Ami.

JAMISON

Hi ya, little fellow. How are you doing?

He does his best to stroke the little birds very small head and pats Lady Jane.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Sorry about Big Tom, Jane. I hope you understand he is good and will be back as soon as we win the war.

Jamison goes out the door, which he secures and then proceeds to tend to the rest of the chickens, cows and sheep.

INT. HOUSE

Jamison enters the house and goes to the kitchen where he finds his Mum and the girls sitting at the table that still has breakfast dishes.

His Mum is trying to help Lucy cut out clothing for her paper dolls while also holding Beatrice. Jamison makes his way to the table to relieve his Mum of the cutting.

LUCY

I miss daddy. When will he be back?

ELIZABETH

He left just yesterday. He will be gone for quite some time. We just need to stay busy so we won't think of his absence so much.

Seeing that Jamison has finished cutting out the last outfit.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

There, that should do it. You now have four beautiful outfits for your doll. I think you should dress her up to go to a party.

Lucy watches as Jamison places the outfit he just helped to cut out on her paper doll and then pushes up his imaginary long hair trying to look girly.

LUCY

Give me that.

Lucy takes the doll and outfit out of Jamison's hands.

ELIZABETH

How was it Jamison, your first morning? I'm not sure how you will manage on weekdays during school. Thank goodness it's soon time for Easter break. How are Lady Jane and Buddy? Probably as dismal as I. At least I know where my husband is.

JAMISON

Yes. I'm certain they feel lost, like I do.

INT. DOVECOTE

Lady Jane is feeding Buddy/Cher Ami. Once Buddy/Cher Ami has had enough he looks outward of the nest.

BUDDY/CHER AMI (V.O.)

My Mum figured John and Big Tom went on a race because of their absence occurring together, although she thought his timing was odd. She wondered where the other pigeons had gone. She wondered why John would take Tom when she needed his help to take care of me and sit on the other egg. And where were the other pigeons? Things seemed mighty strange.

Jane nestles Buddy/Cher Ami into a comfy position for rest.

EXT./INT. - YARD/DOVECOTE - DUSK

Jamison is checking on the pigeons to prepare them for night.

JAMISON

Hi you two. It's kind of quiet out here without Tom and the other pigeons.

Lucy enters the dovecote bringing in SADIE, the family's older Collie, and interrupts Jamison.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Get the dog out of here, Lucy.

Lucy leads Sadie outside.

LUCY

I'll be back in a minute, girl.

She comes back in.

JAMISON

What are you doing?

LUCY

I just wanted to see Butterfly.

JAMISON

You mean Buddy.

LUCY

I think she looks like a Butterfly.

JAMISON

Well, I think it's a boy and his name is Buddy.

LUCY

Butterfly.

JAMISON

You'll get to name the next egg, dad said.

LUCY

Well daddy's not here.

JAMISON

But he told you, you need to mind me. Show me some respect.

LUCY

Oh words! Why do I have to show you respect?

JAMISON

Because, I'm the man of the house for now, Lucy.

LUCY

You don't look like a man. Men are bigger and have deeper voices.

JAMISON

I might not look like one on the outside, but on the inside, I'm getting there. Besides you don't want dad to come home and wallop you, do ya? Cause you know he will, if I say to.

LUCY

Oh, Jamison, don't do that. I'll respect you. I just need some responsibilities. Can I help?

JAMISON

Well the pigeons are ready for bed, but I could use your help closing up the other pens and making sure everything is locked down.

As Jamison is talking, he and Lucy exit the dovecote. Focusing on his conversation with Lucy, Jamison forgets to secure the door.

EXT./INT. YARD/DOVECOTE - (LATER THAT NIGHT)

The unsecured dovecote door is to the luck of a very hungry fox. With his nose to the ground, the fox approaches the dovecote, and pushes against the door with a paw. The door opens a small amount and with a budge of the nose, the fox sneaks in causing quite a commotion. The pigeons start screeching.

The fox sees the egg in Lady Jane's nest and laying low works to get at it. Lady Jane, trying to keep Buddy/Cher Ami protected, pecks with all her might at the fox.

Sadie, who is asleep on the porch, awakes and begins to bark and heads to the dovecote.

In the house, the ruckus of the pigeons can be heard, waking Elizabeth and Jamison. They quickly throw on jackets as they approach the door. Elizabeth grabs a gun.

ELIZABETH

I hate to put this on you, Jamison,
but you know better how to shoot
this thing than I.

Jamison grabs the gun from his mother's hands and they head out the door.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Bloody war!

They cautiously approach the dovecote to see the fox escaping. Sadie runs after the fox.

Jamison tries to shoot at it, but frightened of hitting Sadie, aims high. From the power of the gun and the positioning it knocks him to the ground.

He jumps back up to run inside the dovecote. Elizabeth follows after.

Once inside they see that Lady Jane and Cher Ami are not in their nest, but on the ground.

JAMISON

Buddy, are you alright?

Jamison scoops Buddy in his hands and inspects him as Elizabeth inspects Lady Jane. The two seeing no harm approach the nest and notice the egg is missing. They look back down and discover remnants of egg shell lying on the ground.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Look, the egg!

As Elizabeth reaches down to pick up the broken shell, Jamison starts to cry, but then his demeanor turns to anger as he recalls his negligence with the door.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

This is all my fault! I remember
now, I was so busy talking to Lucy,
I forgot to latch the door.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Jamison.

Jamison blindly runs out of the dovecote towards the house.

Elizabeth checks that the food and water dishes are full and that Lady Jane and Buddy/Cher Ami seem to be calming down before she turns out the light to return to the house.

Once out of the dovecote, she finds that Jamison is waiting outside the door to see that she makes it back in safely, but once she is close to the door he bolts.

Elizabeth tries to grab at him, but he is too quick. He runs to his bedroom and shuts the door.

The baby has awakened, causing Elizabeth to make a detour before entering Jamison's bedroom. Jamison is lying on his bed crying.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

It will all turn out.

JAMISON

No, it won't. The fox got the egg. Dad will be so disappointed. I've let everybody down. What if Big Tom is killed at war?

Elizabeth pulls Jamison up from his position and cradles him in her one arm while holding Beatrice in the other.

ELIZABETH

I know you are hurting and yes, your father will be disappointed, but it is not the end of the world. Big Tom is one of the best flyers. He'll be dodging the enemy, knowing Lady Jane is sitting at home waiting on his return. Just you wait and see.

Elizabeth starts to cry as well.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You'll see your father and Big Tom will come home soon and all will be back to normal.

INT. DOVECOTE - EVENING

The moonlight is bright and shining through the window. Close in on Jamison asleep on ground with Lady Jane asleep in his lap, and an alert Buddy on his chest.

BUDDY/CHER AMI (V.O.)

I was glad Jamison wanted to hold us that night.

(MORE)

BUDDY/CHER AMI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I didn't want to ever leave my Mum's side. I had asked her what the furry four legged beast was. She called it a long tooth. I asked her if they came inside often. She said never before, but that there is a bigger one that is around all the time named Sadie. She said Sadie is our friend. After enemies like that, I was glad to know Sadie was our friend. Did you get a good look at Sadie's teeth?

INT. KITCHEN - (NEXT DAY) MORNING

Elizabeth is setting the table for breakfast with Lucy's help.

LUCY

Is Jamison already doing his chores?

ELIZABETH

Yes, I need to tell you something.

LUCY

What is it?

ELIZABETH

There was an awful ruckus last night. When Jamison and I went to check, we saw a fox coming out of the dovecote.

LUCY

A fox?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

LUCY

Do we get to keep him?

ELIZABETH

No, Lucy. They are wild.

LUCY

Oh.

ELIZABETH

The bad thing is the fox ate the other egg.

LUCY

What?!

ELIZABETH

I know.

LUCY

That was my egg.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

LUCY

This is all Jamison's fault.

ELIZABETH

That's why I wanted to talk to you before you see him. He is very upset about it.

LUCY

He should be. That was my egg.

ELIZABETH

Now, Lucy. There will be other eggs. You only have one brother, one very upset brother.

LUCY

That was one of his responsibilities.

ELIZABETH

Yes, it is his responsibility to look after the pigeons and everything else. He now feels like he let your dad and you down. He knows how excited you were, but please, when he comes in don't make it harder on him.

The door opens and a very tired and somber Jamison saunters in, slumps into a chair at the table, he looks at Lucy, and before either can speak he gets up to leave.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Jamison, what about your breakfast?

JAMISON

I'm not hungry. I remembered I forgot to milk the cow.

EXT. TO BARN

Lucy takes after Jamison, filling her mouth with the rest of her toast and jam.

Out the door they go to the barn, Sadie following after them.

LUCY

Mum told me about my egg.

JAMISON

I'm sorry, Lucy.

LUCY

Mum told me I need to forgive you.

JAMISON

No you don't.

LUCY

Yes, I do. But I really don't want to.

JAMISON

I'm truly sorry. I was actually looking forward to Buddy having a Butterfly for a sister.

They have arrived at the barn where Jamison grabs a milk bucket.

LUCY

You were?

JAMISON

Very much so. Everybody should have a sister.

He grabs a stool to milk the cow. With this Lucy seems to brighten up in contrast to Jamison, who is still down. Lucy places another bucket beside the cow's neck and begins to sing.

LUCY

This ole man
He played one
He played nick knack on my thumb
With a nick knack, patty whack
Give a dog a bone
This ole man came rolling home

As she continues singing to the cow, the uninterested cow eats the hay.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Elizabeth and family are dressed in their Sunday best. They carry a couple of umbrellas. The family begins to walk to church. Sadie follows.

ELIZABETH

Stay, Sadie.

Sadie turns and goes back to the house to lie on the porch.

The walk allows the viewer to see the lush greens and vibrant colors of various flower gardens as the family walks along a dirt road through the quaint village. They pass by neighboring homes and numerous waterways.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

We'll go see your Aunt MARY after church. I want to see if Gretchen can come stay with us on occasion to help me out.

LUCY

Oh goody. I love Gretchen.

JAMISON

Gee, Mum, aren't we enough?

ELIZABETH

You are doing a fine job, but I need some help inside and with Beatrice. Pick up your steps, children, I think it's about to rain.

A sprinkle begins as they scurry towards the church. They open up the two umbrellas and take cover as the rain increases.

EXT. TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH (SAME DAY)

The rain has stopped. As Elizabeth and family walk the streets there is an occasional greeting from another signifying the smallness of the town. The lack of men not in uniform, who are old enough to be at war, is also obvious. They pass a group of children and women who are picking up scraps along the streets (a sign reads: DO YOUR PART - TURN IN YOUR METAL, PAPER AND BONES). A newspaper boy on a corner of the street hollers out.

BOY

Belgium child's hands cut off by Germans. Read all about it!

Elizabeth hurries the children hoping they did not hear.

The tenant houses they pass, have brass steps leading to doorways with brass door knockers. This was England's "bling" during the period.

They finally stop at a door and Elizabeth taps the knocker. Lucy reaches for the knocker, wanting to tap as well, but being too short, she settles for using her own knuckles and knocks.

ELIZABETH

Alright, Lucy, that is enough. I think they've heard us.

GRETCHEN, a young girl of thirteen, Elizabeth's niece, answers the door.

GRETCHEN

Oh, hello Aunt Liz. How nice to see you.

ELIZABETH

Hello, Gretchen. Is your Mum home?

GRETCHEN

Yes, I'll go get her.

The family walks into the house. MARY, with yellowish skin, appears from a room. Seeing her guests she quickens her pace and hugs them each. She then takes over holding the baby for Elizabeth.

MARY

My, my what have we here. Have you missed your Aunt Mary, my little love?

She coos over the baby.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well this is a lovely surprise. Gretchen, could you please get us some tea?

Gretchen departs.

MARY (CONT'D)

My, it seems the children are growing like weeds. Lucy, how lovely you look today.

Lucy takes a curtsy. She loves to visit her Aunt Mary and Gretchen. They so dote on her.

LUCY

Does Gretchen still have those
dress up clothes?

MARY

I believe she does.

Lucy beams.

MARY (CONT'D)

How have you been, Jamison? School
going well?

JAMISON

Yes.

Gretchen returns with the tea. She sets it on a table in
front of a settee. She then takes Jamison and Lucy into
another room.

MARY

Oh, Lizzie, I've heard the news.
You must be devastated.

ELIZABETH

We thought John was through after
getting trench leg. I know it's
not the worst thing that can happen
out there, but we thought it was
enough. At least he gets to work
with pigeons. But this time
already seems harder. It was one
thing, having Jamison younger and
Lucy just two, but now.

MARY

I can only imagine.

ELIZABETH

Jamison has been so good to try to
take his dad's place. Of course
last time, you were able to come
out to help. I know you are always
busy at the munition factory, but
do you think you could spare
Gretchen every once in awhile?

MARY

Spare her? How about she move in
for awhile? She can walk to school
with Jamison and Lucy and since the
break is soon here, it shouldn't be
a problem.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Besides, she gets mopey if she doesn't have plenty to do during breaks. She wants me to take her to the factory to work, but I can't bear the thought of her being there. I don't want her turning yellow like me.

ELIZABETH

Any idea what's causing it?

MARY

They say it's from the stuff we put in the ammo, but not to worry.

ELIZABETH

Oh, I so wish this war were over.

MARY

I know. Over by Christmas, they told us, but now... look at us. Losing all our men, we are.

ELIZABETH

I know, at church, there were 20 injured and 3 killed from our parish last week. I don't know if I can take it much longer.

MARY

I just heard from Peter. He's in the back again, thank goodness. I wish he could just stay there. Gretchen misses her dad so.

ELIZABETH

I'm at least thankful Jamison is too young to go.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

MRS. HENSLEY, Jamison's teacher, an older woman, somewhat hard of hearing, is talking in front of the classroom about Dickens.

MRS. HENSLEY

How many read your assigned pages in David Copperfield?

Everyone, but Jamison raises their hands. Close in on Jamison whose head is dropped and is slumping in his chair, looking out of sorts.

MRS. HENSLEY (CONT'D)
Jamison, is everything alright?

JAMISON (SPEAKING LOUDLY)
Yes.

Still focused on Jamison, but closing in we can see PAUL DOWNHILL, a plump boy sitting further in the back whispering to a couple of boys TOMMY and TIM sitting beside him. Paul chuckles.

MRS. HENSLEY
Are you sure? What have I been talking about?

JAMISON (SPEAKING LOUDLY)
Ummm. Well...

PAUL
(Laughs.)

This causes a stir of several others laughing with Paul.

JAMISON (SPEAKING LOUDLY)
I let a fox...(BEAT) My dad had to go back into the war.

MRS. HENSLEY
What? Your dad had to go back? To war! Sorry to hear that Jamison.

JAMISON (SPEAKING LOUDLY)
They called him in as a pigeoneer.

PAUL
Bahk, bahk, bahk.

The two boys that are closest to Paul chuckle. Some of the other children laugh as well. Mrs. Hensley doesn't seem to notice.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Paul and two other boys can be seen walking behind Jamison. Paul makes clucking sounds. Tim and Tommy join in.

TIM, PAUL & TOMMY
Bak, bak, bak, bak

PAUL
What's this I hear about your dad going back to war, Jamison?
(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

You know they'll send him home again in a few months. Just like last time. Can't hold his own, can he?

JAMISON

That's enough, Paul.

PAUL

Sounds to me like he's going to the birds. Only chickens go to war to be with birds. Right chaps? You're dad's nothing but a chicken.

Paul turns to his friends and then runs over to Jamison, spins him around and punches him in the eye.

Noticing this a few other boys in the yard gather around.

Jamison drops his satchel and is somewhat thrown off balance, but after regaining he stands tall and turns his face.

STUDENT ON SIDELINE

Hey, here comes Mrs. Hensley.

They all scatter leaving Jamison.

MRS. HENSLEY

Everything alright?

JAMISON

Yeah.

Jamison picks up his satchel and begins to walk home.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jamison, Gretchen and Lucy walk in the house. Elizabeth calls them to the kitchen where she is playing with the baby.

ELIZABETH

How was school?

GRETCHEN

Great, I enjoyed the refreshing walk from here, better than from Portsmouth.

ELIZABETH

Very good.

LUCY

Having Gretchen made it fun.

GRETCHEN

Is there anything I can do to help you?

ELIZABETH

Oh, yes, you and Lucy can both help. I've struggled trying to get anything done with Beatrice constantly needing me.

GRETCHEN

We'll take her.

Gretchen grabs Beatrice and she and Lucy take off. Elizabeth has noticed Jamison has been very quiet and is about to dart off.

ELIZABETH

Hold on, how was your day?

JAMISON

Fine.

He begins to walk away.

ELIZABETH

Look at me.

Elizabeth notices Jamison's eye is blackened.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

What happened to your eye?

JAMISON

Nothing.

ELIZABETH

Something has happened. It wasn't black when you left this morning.

JAMISON

I just got in a scuffle.

ELIZABETH

That's not like you. What was it over?

JAMISON

A kid called dad a chicken.

ELIZABETH

A what?

JAMISON

A chicken.

ELIZABETH

What did you do?

Elizabeth retrieves a piece of meat, wraps it in a rag, and places it on Jamison's eye.

JAMISON

Walking home from school, I could already sense there would be trouble. Paul and 2 other boys started following me.

Jamison is holding the wrapped meat on his eye while Elizabeth is getting Jamison something to drink as she is talking.

ELIZABETH

Paul Downhill! Why, he just lost his father, didn't he?

JAMISON

Yes.

Elizabeth inspects Jamison's eye.

ELIZABETH

Well, I'm sure he's sad, but doesn't give him the right to take it out on you.

JAMISON

I turned the other cheek.

ELIZABETH

You did?

JAMISON

I felt I deserved it after the other night.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean?

JAMISON

I feel so bad about Jane's other egg. I almost wished Paul would have punched me harder. It barely hurt, what he did here.

ELIZABETH

Jamison, you've got to forgive yourself. Things turn out for the best. So did Pauly hit you again?

JAMISON

No, Mrs. Hensley came out.

ELIZABETH

I'll have to visit Pauley's Mum.

JAMISON

No. Please don't tell her. I don't want to start anything. It will be alright. With school out for awhile, no need to get anything started.

ELIZABETH

It better be the end of it. You don't deserve to be treated like that.

JAMISON

Yes, Mum.

ELIZABETH

We are all in this together. Makes no sense for Paul to call your father a chicken. A chicken indeed. Now run along and do your chores. I'll have dinner ready shortly. By the way, where were the girls when this happened?

JAMISON

Oh, they weren't there. We met up right after. Probably for the best.

ELIZABETH

Yes, probably.

Jamison runs to drop off his stuff in his room and then exits the front door.

INT. DOVECOTE - JUNE, 1916

Jamison and Elizabeth are together in the dovecote with a band to put on Buddy/Cher Ami.

JAMISON

I sure wish father would have let
me do this at least once on my own.

ELIZABETH

You'll be fine.

Jamison picks up Buddy/Cher Ami, who is now 6 weeks old and has yellow feathers. He slips the band over Buddy/Cher Ami's first three toes, and then gently pulls out the claw that is like a thumb.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

There you go, you did it, see?
Great job.

Elizabeth leaves the dovecote. Jamison carefully strokes Buddy/Cher Ami and then places him back in his nest with Jane.

JAMISON

Now you're marked for life. With
this number you are registered.
You are officially number 615.

Jamison cleans out their nest and replenishes their food and water dishes.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

I so wish dad and Tom were here.
It's soon time to start training
you to fly home.

Jamison walks out of the dovecote making certain to latch the gate.

EXT. DOVECOTE

Buddy/Cher Ami peers out a window and is the only pigeon in the dovecote. We see Buddy/Cher Ami's perspective, watching the chickens, watching Elizabeth hanging laundry with Gretchen's help.

Buddy/Cher Ami drops to the ground, walks to the doorway and sticks his head out. Close in on Jane not far from the entrance way. Jane looks up at Buddy/Cher Ami.

He jumps back when he hears the chickens make a loud noise. Jane moves closer to him. Buddy/Cher Ami goes back to the entry way, he places one leg out, but brings it quickly back in.

Lucy runs through the yard making certain to run through the gathered chickens, knowing it will cause them to stir and open a path, bodies flying all around her. The commotion causes Buddy/Cher Ami to give up and flap up to his nest in the safety of the dovecote.

Jamison is working in the garden and notices Buddy/Cher Ami's hesitation to leave the dovecote. Jamison puts away his hoe and goes to Buddy/Cher Ami. He gently picks him up and coos to him. This allows Jamison to take him out of the dovecote. Once Buddy/Cher Ami does realize he is outside of the dovecote, he jumps out of Jamison's hands and bolts back inside. Jamison returns inside and again gently picks Buddy/Cher Ami up to take him outside, repeating the cooing. This time Buddy/Cher Ami drops to the ground before he can get him out the door. Jamison picks him up and places him back into his nest.

JAMISON

Now, now Buddy. It's jolly good.
We'll get you out there yet.

BUDDY/CHER AMI (V.O.)

I had no idea what this boy wanted from me. I just knew that beast that my mother called Long Tooth came from outside and there was no way I wanted anything to do with it. The world out there was scary and my place was inside this little room.

ELIZABETH (O.S. HOLLERING)

Children come inside.

INT. HOUSE - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

The children all run into the house to find Elizabeth in the front room.

ELIZABETH

We have a letter from your dad.

Elizabeth opens the letter.

MONTAGE - EXT. MILITARY PIGEON LOFT:

John is sitting at a small desk in a tent writing a letter by candle with the feather he took from the house that belonged to Lady Jane. He has Elizabeth's scarf around his neck.

JOHN (V.O.)

Dear precious family, All is well.
I'm kept very busy training all the
pigeons. You should see them all.

John is releasing a number of pigeons from baskets with two other men. Close up of the pigeons as they raise to the sky, circle together and then all go the same direction. The men jump in a military vehicle to follow.

JOHN (V.O.)

If it weren't for the war and
missing you all, I would think I
was in Heaven.

John and two other men are looking over nests with pigeons sitting on eggs. Close in on them giving baby pigeons vitamins.

JOHN (V.O.)

Jamison, don't worry about the egg.
It was taking so long to hatch, the
fox probably did us a favor. I
would have hated you having to deal
with a sickly pigeon. Lucy, I
promise there will be more babies
soon enough.

John runs up to Big Tom as he flies in for a landing in the loft. He retrieves a message from Tom's leg, handing it to a military messenger carrier. Then John rewards Tom with several strokes on the top of his head and then with food and water.

JOHN (V.O.)

You all would be very proud of Big
Tom. He's been on five missions
and helped immensely. I think he
knows how important he has become.
He holds his head a little higher.
Give our birds extra pats from me.

Close up of John writing. He grabs at the scarf and smells it.

JOHN (V.O.)

I hope you all are doing well.
Have you gone to see if Gretchen
can help out, Lizzie? I sure miss
you all. Don't know how much
longer, but I'm counting the days
until my return. Your loving dad
and husband, John

INT. FRONT ROOM

Close in on Elizabeth looking up at the family.

LUCY
When's he coming home?

ELIZABETH
Don't know. Let's hope soon. See, Jamison, I knew he wouldn't be terribly upset.

LUCY
Can I write him back?

ELIZABETH
Of course you can, Lucy. He would love that.

Elizabeth goes to the desk, grabs out paper, an ink jar and the two special feathers. She hands it to Lucy and Jamison.

JAMISON
Ah, Tom, I'm so glad dad left these.

The children go to the table to write.

EXT.- DAY

Jamison is in the dovecote again trying to get Buddy/Cher Ami outside. This time it works. Buddy/Cher Ami stays in his arms.

Jamison sits down close to Jane, who is pecking up food off the ground. He gently strokes Buddy/Cher Ami's head and neck. Finally Buddy/Cher Ami gets off of Jamison's lap and joins his Mum picking up food. Jamison remains still, enjoying his success.

Gretchen comes out to join, causing Buddy/Cher Ami to return back to the dovecote.

GRETCHEN
What you doing?

JAMISON
Ah, Gretchen!

GRETCHEN
What?

JAMISON

I just got Buddy out of the
dovecote.

GRETCHEN

What do you mean?

JAMISON

He was frightened by a fox when he
was a baby. I think, he thinks the
fox is still out here.

GRETCHEN

Oh, that's too bad. Is there
anything I can do to help?

JAMISON

No.

GRETCHEN

Well, I came out to tell you we're
having a fruit loaf.

JAMISON

I'll be in, in a minute.

Gretchen turns to leave. Jamison goes back into the
dovecote.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

We'll get you out there yet, Buddy.

Jamison pats him and heads for the house.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

I had to hand it to him. He wasn't
giving up. I just couldn't
understand what all the fuss was
about.

Buddy/Cher Ami gets down from his nest and walks to doorway.
He ventures closer to his Mum, who is outside, so he can
watch the chickens, who play games when people are away.

He moves closer to a chicken that has its face pressed up
against a tree and is clucking as if counting while the rest
scatter to hide.

Buddy/Cher Ami gets behind his Mum.

The clucking chicken runs around looking for other chickens. Some of the other chickens run to the tree before the clucking chicken can peck them and they peck the tree, but finally the clucking chicken gets a slower chicken before it can get to the tree. After this the group of chickens that were still hiding come out.

Buddy steps out from behind his Mum. When the chickens see Buddy/Cher Ami do this they begin to cluck as if laughing at him. Some of the clucks even sound as if they are calling him "chicken."

CHER AMI (V.O.)

Why were the chickens calling me a chicken? So I didn't want to leave my Mum's side. Did they have a long tooth try to eat them in their infancy? At least my Mum understood. She always stayed close where I could see her. She told me to ignore them, my day would come.

EXT./DAY

Jamison, coming outside, finds Jane mixed in with the chickens more than usual and Buddy/Cher Ami more out of the dovecote than his usual.

Jamison picks Buddy/Cher Ami up, gives him a pat and then lifts him into the air. Buddy/Cher Ami flutters his wings, but comes swiftly back to the ground with no knowledge of his capability to fly.

Jamison picks him up again and throws him up, and again Buddy/Cher Ami comes straight back to the ground.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

I couldn't understand what he wanted. Why must he throw me in the air?

Lady Jane spreads her wings and flies up into a tree above her son.

Jamison gently throws Buddy/Cher Ami again a little higher and this time Buddy/Cher Ami opens his wings and with the wind below them feels a lift. He has the instinctual urge to flutter and up he goes. He is flying.

JAMISON

That's it, Buddy. You're doing it.

Jane watching, joins him.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
And that's when I learned why I was
alive. To fly!

Cher Ami looks towards his Mum.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
I was so excited to be up high with
my Mum.

Jane looks at him. They both go higher and soar to a nearby tree, landing on a branch.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
Wow! It was like nothing I could
have ever imagined. The rush of
the air under my wings was
sensational. The view was
glorious.

Jane takes off again and Buddy/Cher Ami follows. They fly over the quaint home of their family, who below are taking care of their chores. Jamison watches on, beaming.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
I showed those chickens that day.
And they thought I was one of them.

Close on of chickens pecking at food on the ground below. A few looking up at Buddy/Cher Ami flying.

JAMISON
Look, Mum, Buddy is flying.

Elizabeth looks up from hanging laundry.

ELIZABETH
Yes, he is Jamison. He looks
grand.

The birds come back to the loft, where Jamison is placing their food and water.

JAMISON
Now we begin the next phase, Buddy.
It's training time.

MONTAGE - EXT. - TAKEN PLACE DURING SUMMER AND FALL 1916,
DURING WEEKENDS SINCE SCHOOL WOULD BE IN SESSION:

We see Jamison begin training by placing Jane and Buddy/Cher Ami's food and water in the outside lofts of the dovecote right as they take off to fly in the yard. This helps to lure them back to their loft.

Buddy/Cher Ami soars higher and higher with each experience.

Jamison carries both Jane and Buddy/Cher Ami in a basket a mile away from their home and releases them. We can see both pigeons circle the sky and then gaining their bearings, head back to the house where they meet back up with a proud Jamison. The visuals from the view of the flights show the lush countryside.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

After I got used to the elated feeling of flying, I started paying more attention to my Mum. She was magnificent, the way her wings spread so wide and whirred in the wind. She told me, I too could be fast like her if I would just follow her lead. I tried as best I could to position my body just like hers. Beak down, to gain speed; a tip of the wing to turn sharp turns. I tried to shadow her every move.

Jamison takes the birds out further with each run, however, once the distance becomes greater he takes the scooter so that he doesn't have to walk the trip, this allows him to get back to the house at about the same time as Jane and Buddy/Cher Ami.

The releases are done from different directions to the house. With each run we can see the various visuals as we follow them back to their home.

EXT. - OCT. 1916 - LATE AFTERNOON.

In the woods of Havant about a mile from Jamison's home. There is a boarded up older home in the background.

Several boys of the same age as Jamison, dressed in Boy Scout uniforms, are gathered in a group at DR. MURPHY'S, a veterinarian in his 70s.

Dr. Murphy is building a tent with an umbrella and long green cloth that he tightens at the top of the structure with a cord that is already sewn into the fabric.

DR. MURPHY

This structure allows you to get right by a bird's or animal's habitat to watch their natural behavior. You boys want to try it out?

Jamison and another boy get in the tent to look through the holes. Dr. Murphy pretends to be different animals and walks in front of the structure. Jamison and the other boy come out.

JAMISON

That's really nice, Dr. Murphy.

Paul Downhill is a part of the group and is obvious in talking about Jamison with Tommy and Tim, who too are involved with the Scouts. Jamison does his best to ignore them.

DR. MURPHY

Yes it is, of course, you have to be quiet. It only works if they think the tent is part of the surroundings. And you never want to disturb them. We are there as guests not intruders.

Dr. Murphy looks towards Paul and the two boys.

DR. MURPHY (CONT'D)

Paul, do you have something you want to share?

PAUL

No, sir.

DR. MURPHY

Remember we will gather at Jamison's for our next meeting so he can explain racing pigeons. You all are in...

Dr. Murphy stops in mid-stream and they all look up since a large shadow is cast down upon them. After a few seconds they can see the beginnings of a Zeppelin coming over them.

DR. MURPHY (CONT'D)

Quickly boys, to the pill box at my house!

DR. MURPHY'S HOME (IS ONLY A FEW HOUSES AWAY FROM THE
TURNERS')

The boys run through the woods a little distance before coming to the clearing. A bomb sound comes from the area they just left. They slide into the cement like igloo, all trying to squeeze inside. With so many Dr. Murphy is left to hover outside the doorway watching as the balloon passes.

After it passes, the boys cautiously emerge.

JAMISON

Was that a Zeppelin?

DR. MURPHY

Yes, it was Jamison. I never thought I would witness one in my lifetime.

Some of the parents begin to show up.

ELIZABETH

Jamison, were you hurt?

JAMISON

No, mum.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, Dr. Murphy. How scary was that? Let's hurry home.

The two walk towards their home.

DR. MURPHY

Jolly good, boys, let's get you all home in case another one's lurking close behind.

At that point bombing can be heard in the distance. They all begin to scream, picking up their pace to get to their own homes.

INT. - HOME

Elizabeth and Jamison walk in the door to a frightened Gretchen. When she sees Jamison she runs to hug him.

JAMISON

I'm fine, Gretchen. What do you think they hit?

GRETCHEN

Oh, Aunt Liz, do you think my Mum
is doing well?

She runs to her aunt and falls into her arms.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

Please say she is good.

ELIZABETH

I'm sure she's fine. They probably
bombed the ships in the harbor. I
will run back to Dr. Murphy's and
use his phone to call.

GRETCHEN

No, what if there are more? You
can't leave.

ELIZABETH

I'll go first thing in the morning.
How about we have a sleep in, in
our front room tonight? Sound
good?

LUCY

Oh, yes, Mum!

They all go to their rooms to grab their bed linens and make
a huge pallet on the floor.

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Elizabeth already has breakfast prepared and ready to serve.
She gently nudges and kisses each child on the forehead to
wake them up, excluding Beatrice, who is already in her arms.

ELIZABETH

Wake up sleepy heads.

GRETCHEN

Aunt Liz, can I go to Dr. Murphy's?

ELIZABETH

I already did and your Mum is fine.
She said the Zeppelin tried to bomb
the ships, but our navy chaps
outsmarted them and shone their
lights so bright towards their big
ole balloon that they couldn't see
where they were dropping. They
missed.

GRETCHEN

Oh that is good news.

JAMISON

Did you all see the balloon? It was so big.

ELIZABETH

Yes, it was. We were all outdoors when it came overhead. I had to find Lucy. She was in the barn with the milk cow.

LUCY

Well, I thought Sally needed more oats.

JAMISON

Thank you, Lucy. I'm glad we are all safe.

EXT./OUTSIDE DOVECOTE

The Boy Scout meeting is beginning at the Turners' home by the dovecote.

JAMISON

This is my Dad's pigeon home. We call it a dovecote. When he went away he left me in charge. My Dad was called back in because he is so good with pigeons. They needed him to be a pigeoneer. In the military they use the pigeons to send communications when the radios and phones don't work. My dad trains pigeons to fly communications from war zones to base camp.

Jamison pulls out a tube, used to carry messages, his father had sent him.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

They use these tubes to carry the secret messages.

Jamison hands the tube to one of the boys to be passed amongst each other.

A BOY

Wow!

PAUL (UNDER HIS BREATH)
Pigeon-chicken.

ANOTHER BOY
Do the pigeons ever get caught by
the Germans?

JAMISON
Yes, my Dad said they lose pigeons
to the Germans all the time, but
sometimes they come back to our
camp if the Germans are fool enough
to release them.

DR. MURPHY
It is a great gift these birds have
to be able to remember their home.
They travel faster than a cheetah
when bred and trained well. That's
why Buddy is so special. Both his
Mum and Dad are top racers. It's
in his blood to be fast.

JAMISON
Would you like to see him and his
Mum fly?

A BOY
Sure!!

The boys start following Jamison around. Jamison first
places some food in the food dishes.

He gets the tube from Paul, who has been holding onto it
stopping it from going to other boys. Jamison places a
message that was in his pocket in the tube. He gets
Buddy/Cher Ami out of the dovecote and places the tube on his
leg and then places him in the basket.

He retrieves Jane and places her in the basket.

The boys walk a a good distance from the dovecote.

A BOY (CONT'D)
Sure hope another Zeppelin doesn't
fly over.

JAMISON
Don't we all.

Jamison releases both birds. They fly high, circle and head
to the dovecote.

A BOY
Why do they circle like that?

JAMISON
They are getting their bearings to
know which way to fly.

The boys follow them running back to the dovecote. The birds beat them. Once the boys get to them, the birds have already landed and are eating.

Jamison takes the tube off and pulls the message out.

JAMISON (CONT'D)
My mum wrote the message so even I
do not know what it says.

Jamison reads the message.

JAMISON (CONT'D)
"Would you all like some stuffed
figs? If so come to the front
porch."

The boys take off to the front porch to get their dessert. Dr. Murphy trails behind them.

DR. MURPHY
Why Elizabeth, you didn't need to
go to all this trouble.

ELIZABETH
Well we all need something to bring
a little cheer, no harm in having
something sweet now and again.

A BOY
Yum, this is good!

ANOTHER BOY
Sure is.

As the boys finish off their cobbler, Dr. Murphy starts gathering them up to walk them home.

PAUL
We're going to run along, Dr.
Murphy. My Mum wanted me to bring
Tommy and Tim by to give them
something.

DR. MURPHY
Jolly good, boys. See you at the
next meeting.

Paul, Tommy and Tim run ahead, but then circle around in the woods so as not to be seen and double back to Jamison's.

By this time Elizabeth and Gretchen are inside the house, Lucy is trying to dress Sadie up, and Jamison is in the barn taking care of the animals for the evening.

Paul, Tommy and Tim sneak up on Buddy/Cher Ami and Jane, who are on the ground feeding. Paul pulls out a homemade sling shot . He starts shooting small rocks at Buddy/Cher Ami, who begins making an alarming sound, signalling Jamison to come out to see what's going on.

Jane gets between Buddy/Cher Ami and the boys.

When Jamison recognizes that Paul is using a sling shot he instantly pushes him down and grabs it.

JAMISON

What are you doing, Paul?

PAUL

Teaching your pigeon what it feels like to be shot at.

Paul begins grabbing for his sling shot and punching at Jamison, who now is enraged and fights back.

Noticing this, Lucy begins to holler.

LUCY

Mum, come quick!

Lucy takes off to help her brother. She grabs a broom and tries to swat at Paul, but misses. The force causes her to fall down. Elizabeth comes running out of the house. Gretchen, holding Beatrice, comes out behind them.

ELIZABETH

Boys, stop this instant!

TIM

Get him Paul!

TOMMY

Yeah, Paul, get the White Feather.

Seeing that her words will not break up the two boys she goes to get her laundry water and dumps it onto them. They stop immediately. Lucy is now back up ready to go after Paul. Elizabeth stops her.

JAMISON

He was shooting Buddy with rocks.

Jamison holds up the sling shot to show his Mum.

ELIZABETH

Paul, that's enough of this behavior.

Paul runs off with the other boys.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Paul, you come back here right now!

Elizabeth grabs Jamison by the hand to walk down to Paul's house, which is only three acreages away.

JAMISON

Mum, what are you going to do?

ELIZABETH

Don't know yet, Jamison, but this is enough!

JAMISON

Don't forget about his dad.

ELIZABETH

Oh, I'm not, but that doesn't give him the right to act a heathen or endanger the war effort!

JAMISON

I can't believe he would do such a thing.

ELIZABETH

I can't either. That's why this must be put to a stop. He had no right to strike out at an innocent creature. He had no right to strike out at you.

They get to the house and Elizabeth begins to pound on the door. A drunk MARGARET DOWNHILL, Paul's Mum, opens the door.

MARGARET

What do you want?

ELIZABETH

Mrs. Downhill, your son just shot rocks at our pigeon.

Elizabeth holds up the sling shot.

MARGARET

What? (She screams out) Paul, come here this instant!

ELIZABETH

Now I know things are tough right now, but that doesn't give your son the right to go off on our birds or my son for that matter.

MARGARET

What do you mean, your son? I thought you said he shot rocks at your pigeon?

ELIZABETH

Well, your son hit mine one day after school and has been continually calling Jamison and my husband names.

Paul has entered the room in a quiet demeanor. Margaret pulls him further into the room by pulling on his hair.

MARGARET

Paul, is that true?

PAUL

Yes, Mum.

MARGARET

What do you have to say?

PAUL

Sorry, Jamison. Sorry, Elizabeth.

Margaret slaps Paul on the back of the head.

MARGARET

Sorry, Paul. Is that all? I think you better offer some sort of repentance, don't you think?

PAUL

Yes, Mum. Mrs. Turner, can I help you all in any way?

ELIZABETH

No, Paul, that is alright. This just better be the end of it.

MARGARET

I can assure you it is.

ELIZABETH

Thank you. Is there anything we can do for you? I know it has to be tough right now.

MARGARET

No, we are fine. If you don't mind, though, I need to get back to making dinner.

Elizabeth and Jamison leave the house.

ELIZABETH

That's funny, Jamison, I didn't smell anything cooking. All I could smell was the booze.

JAMISON

I'm sure it has been hard.

ELIZABETH

Yes, but this isn't the time for booze. She needs to work on being strong for Paul. Let's stop by Dr. Murphy's and see if he can check on her later.

EXT./LATE NIGHT

Elizabeth is awakened by a knock at the door late at night. It is Dr. Murphy.

DR. MURPHY

Mrs. Turner, have you seen Paul?

ELIZABETH

No not since earlier. Why?

DR. MURPHY

Apparently, he ran off.

ELIZABETH

Oh no. Any idea where?

DR. MURPHY

No, after you came by, I went to check on them. You were right about Mrs. Downhill, she's not doing well. I told her she ask for help, for Paul's sake.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

DR. MURPHY

She thought Paul went to bed after you all left and didn't bother to check on him till a little while ago. She came straight to my house when she didn't find him in his room.

ELIZABETH

Hold on. Do come in.

Elizabeth goes to awaken Jamison. As they are coming to meet Dr. Murphy, Elizabeth shares the news with Jamison.

JAMISON

Hello, Dr. Murphy.

DR. MURPHY

Good evening, Jamison. Any idea where Paul might be?

JAMISON

No, except the place you took us to the other day for our meeting, used to be a place where we would play when we were younger. It wasn't as grown over back then. You think he may have gone out there?

DR. MURPHY

Maybe. Better go check it out.

JAMISON

Do you want me to go with you?

DR. MURPHY

Mrs. Turner, do you mind?

ELIZABETH

Not if he stays with you.

JAMISON

Let me get Buddy and Jane. I'll take the tube and if we get in a fix, we'll send them back with a message.

ELIZABETH

Good idea.

Jamison, runs into the house and comes out carrying paper, pen, ink and the tube. He quickly loads up his traveling basket with Buddy and Jane and sets out with Dr. Murphy.

Heading into the dark woods, the night sounds bellow.

As they get closer to the old home, they can hear someone crying out "help."

DR. MURPHY

Paul?

JAMISON

Paul?

PAUL

Over here. Help, I'm stuck.

Dr. Murphy and Jamison find Paul down in a hole that looks to be very deep.

JAMISON

See Dr. Murphy, good thing I brought the pigeons. We can send a message to get more help. You and I will never be able to get him out of there on our own.

PAUL

Hurry, I feel like there's no air down here.

JAMISON

Hold on, Paul. We'll get you out of there.

Jamison writes a note and places it in the tube. He secures it to Jane's leg and sends Buddy and Jane home.

EXT. DOVECOTE

Elizabeth watches for the birds. She runs out to the loft when she notices Buddy and Jane come in. She takes out the message and puts the birds in the dovecote and secures the building.

Elizabeth runs into the house so she can read the message to Gretchen, who is now awake.

ELIZABETH

"Paul is down a deep hole. Need a long rope and strong man to help pull him out.

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Use Dr. Murphy's phone to call into town. We're at the old Tate home. Hurry!!"

If you'll stay here with the girls, I will run to Dr. Murphy's.

GRETCHEN

Wouldn't it be faster if I went out to meet them and help? I'm pretty strong and I could get the rope from the barn.

ELIZABETH

Are you sure?

GRETCHEN

Yes, I can take Sadie with me.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Gretchen, I'm not sure I like that idea.

GRETCHEN

It will go much faster and I'm certain speed is important if he's in a hole. I'll take the pigeons again and if there's any problems, I will send them back.

ELIZABETH

Be careful.

Gretchen puts on a thick jacket, goes outside and gets a rope and lamp. Elizabeth puts water in a canteen and collects the pigeons back up in their traveling basket. She includes in the basket the paper, pen, ink and tube and takes it out to Gretchen.

GRETCHEN

Thanks. Come, Sadie.

Gretchen and Sadie set off into the woods. Elizabeth goes back into the house and finds a groggy Lucy.

LUCY

Where's Gretchen going?

ELIZABETH

She is going to try to help Paul. How about you, Beatrice and I go to Dr. Murphy's to make a call for help for just in case?

LUCY

Yes, Mum.

EXT. OLD TATE HOME

DR. MURPHY

How you doing, Paul?

PAUL

I want out of here!

JAMISON

Remember when we used to come out here?

PAUL

Yes.

JAMISON

We used to climb that one tree and swing in that old wooden swing.

PAUL

Yes.

JAMISON

Those were fun times.

PAUL

Yeah. Much rather be up there swinging than down here.

JAMISON

Me too! Shouldn't be much longer.

They can hear something coming through the woods, but can't imagine it to be help this soon. They begin to see a light.

Sadie, who appears, lets out a bark when she sees Jamison. Gretchen hands the rope and lamp to Dr. Murphy. He hangs the lamp on a tree limb over the hole.

DR. MURPHY

What happened to the plan?

GRETCHEN

We figured it would work better if I came. I'm strong and we need to get him out quick, don't we?

DR. MURPHY

Sure do.

All three make a line with Dr. Murphy in front and Gretchen in back. They put the rope behind their backs. Dr. Murphy makes a bowline knot on the end of the rope before he drops it in.

DR. MURPHY (CONT'D)

Paul, you need to wrap the rope around your hips and tighten it. It's a bowline knot. Remember we practiced on the proper way to tighten them? Make it secure and we should have you out of there in no time.

PAUL

Yes.

Paul works on the rope.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm ready.

DR. MURPHY

Good.

You two on the count of 3, start pulling.

One... two... three.

Dr. Murphy, Jamison and Gretchen use their backs like a pulley and pull Paul up.

Once Paul is out he bends over to cough up all the dirt. He then begins to cry. Dr. Murphy wraps his arms around him.

DR. MURPHY (CONT'D)

Now, now son.

PAUL

Thank you, Dr. Murphy. It hurts you know. I miss him so much.

DR. MURPHY

I know son. I'm sure it does.

Paul holds onto Dr. Murphy a little longer, and then regaining looks up at the others.

GRETCHEN

Here's a drink.

Gretchen hands Paul a canteen.

PAUL

Thank you.

Paul drinks like he's never had water before.

JAMISON

Glad to see you out.

PAUL

I'm really sorry, Jamison. Those birds helped to save my life tonight.

JAMISON

Yeah, they are really good birds and definitely not chickens.

Jamison puts his arm around Paul and pats him on the shoulder.

EXT. DOVECOTE SPRING 1917.

"SUPERIMPOSE: SPRING 1917"

It is a beautiful fall day. Elizabeth has walked outside to begin washing clothes. Jamison is preparing the birds for a flight.

ELIZABETH

What's your plans for today, Jamison?

JAMISON

I'm going to take the birds to the beach.

ELIZABETH

Are you sure they are ready for that run?

JAMISON

Yes. It's time for a long flight. Buddy is flying fast and strong. You should see him and Jane together. He is like her shadow.

ELIZABETH

Alright, don't stay gone too long.

EXT. PORTSMOUTH

When Jamison gets to the beach, he wastes no time to release the birds. He watches them circle and then begin their turn towards home. Not wanting to miss their arrival at the house, he jumps on his scooter and begins his way home trying to keep an eye on them for as long as he can. Once he is in the trees he loses their images.

Because there is a wide span of land that lacks trees and foliage along the beach, the birds can be seen by their predators, hawks. One has appeared and set his sights on Buddy/Cher Ami. Jane, realizing the hawk is in pursuit of an unsuspecting Buddy/Cher Ami, who seems to be admiring his reflection in the water, follows in behind the hawk to distract him.

The hawk, realizing he is now being pursued circles and begins to pursue Jane.

Buddy/Cher Ami notices the danger they are both in and tries to figure out how to make things right. He flies directly under the hawk, hoping the rush of wind might cause him to lose his height, giving his Mum the advantage to increase the distance between the hawk and herself. The fledgling Buddy/Cher Ami comes so close that he is snagged with one of the hawks talons. This thrusts him downward.

Seeing this the hawk changes his direction and now drops down to try to catch Buddy/Cher Ami for his dinner.

Jane circles again and this time runs straight into the hawk, jolting both of the bird's bodies sideways away from each other.

Buddy/Cher Ami regains his flight and dives down towards his Mum's free fall to catch her on his back. To the advantage of Jane and Buddy/Cher Ami, the hawk, shaken by the thrust, loses interest and flies back towards the ocean.

Buddy/Cher Ami isn't able to carry his Mum very far when he has to come to the ground to rest. He sees that his Mum's side is bloody. He makes certain to find a covered area so they will be covered from any more dangers from above, and he lays beside her, placing her head on top of his neck.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

I wasn't certain what to do. I didn't want to leave my Mum, but how was I to help her? I knew I needed Jamison. He would know what to do, but I didn't want to leave her like this.

When Jamison arrives at the house, he anxiously goes to the loft knowing it shouldn't take Jane and Buddy/Cher Ami long to arrive.

EXT./DOVECOTE/DUSK/ RAINING

ELIZABETH

Jamison, why are you out here?
You're getting all wet.

JAMISON

The birds aren't back. I'm
worried.

ELIZABETH

There's nothing you can do. That's
part of it, sometimes. It's a
waiting game. They're probably in
shelter out of the rain. I'm sure
they'll come home first thing in
the morning. But it's time for bed
for you.

JAMISON

But Mum, they should have been home
hours ago. I'm going to go look
for them.

ELIZABETH

No, Jamison, it is too late.

JAMISON

But...

ELIZABETH

Jamison, no. Come inside and get
ready for bed.

INT./JAMISON'S BEDROOM

Jamison inside his bedroom prepares for bed, by placing his pajama shirt on top of his regular shirt. He lays down, awaiting his Mum's good night kiss. She comes into his room and sits on his bed.

ELIZABETH

Now get some rest, and first thing
in the morning, you can go look for
those birds, although I'm sure you
will find them in the loft.

JAMISON

Yes.

ELIZABETH

I promise to keep an eye and ear out for them.

JAMISON

Good night.

Giving him a kiss on the cheek.

ELIZABETH

Good night.

Elizabeth shuts out the light and exits his room. Jamison wastes no time at getting out of bed and sneaking out the window.

EXT./HOUSE/EVENING

Jamison walks the scooter far away from the house to prevent anyone in the house from hearing it as he starts it up. He heads back down the path towards the beach traveling slowly, calling out to the birds and cooing.

EXT./PIGEON'S LANDING PLACE

Buddy/Cher Ami is still lying with his Mum. Thinking he hears Jamison from far away, he takes flight and begins his trip back to the house following the path that he remembers Jamison took to get them to the beach. He also listens for sounds that seem familiar.

Jamison turns off the scooter and begins to walk the bike, continuing to call out Jane and Buddy. Then he hears the flutter. He looks up in the darkness and realizes it is Buddy/Cher Ami.

JAMISON

There you are, Buddy. Oh, how happy I am to see you. Where's Jane?

Buddy/Cher Ami turns around in the air and leads Jamison to his Mum. Jamison quickly scoops Jane up checking to see if she is still alive. She is, but other than her warmth her limp body indicates she is not good. He puts both birds into the one basket and drives back to the house as quick as he can. He takes the basket into the house.

INT./HOUSE

Jamison runs towards his Mum's room. She comes out to meet him hearing the commotion.

ELIZABETH

Where have you been?

JAMISON

I had to go look for them. I shouldn't have left them when I did. Jane is hurt. Something got her.

Jamison opens the basket, to which Buddy/Cher Ami walks out so that Jamison can pull Jane out to show his Mum.

ELIZABETH

I bet she did battle with a hawk or falcon.

JAMISON

Did I take them to the beach too soon?

ELIZABETH

I don't know, I can't remember when your Dad would take them for that run.

JAMISON

It's all my fault, she's hurt.

ELIZABETH

Stay positive. Let's hope she pulls through.

JAMISON

Can you help her?

ELIZABETH

I don't know. I will try.

Elizabeth goes to the kitchen and brings back a bottle of an oil type substance and an open basket where she has placed a large piece of cloth.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I saw your Dad use this on injuries like this. Let's give this a try and see how it goes.

Elizabeth places Jane in the basket, applies the ointment on her wounds and then covers her up. Buddy/Cher Ami gently jumps into the basket beside her and lies down.

JAMISON

Thank you. Can I keep them in my room for tonight?

ELIZABETH

You know how I feel about animals in the house.

JAMISON

But, Mum, just this time.

ELIZABETH

Alright, just this time.

Elizabeth carries the basket with the birds inside to Jamison's room. Jamison strokes Jane's head.

JAMISON

Jane, please pull through.

INT./MORNING/KITCHEN

The children are eating breakfast before going off to school.

ELIZABETH

How's she doing, Jamison?

JAMISON

I can't tell, Mum. Her eyes are still closed.

ELIZABETH

I think I'll call Dr. Murphy and see if he knows what to do.

JAMISON

Do you think he will know? He usually works with horses.

ELIZABETH

Yes, but it won't hurt to ask.

The children go off to school and Elizabeth follows out with them carrying Beatrice to go after DR. Murphy.

INT./JAMISON'S ROOM

Dr. Murphy looks after Jane.

DR. MURPHY

My, my she took a pretty good hit,
didn't she?

ELIZABETH

I think so.

Dr. Murphy looks at Buddy/Cher Ami.

DR. MURPHY

And how are you faring, there
little one? Might guess she was
defending you.

ELIZABETH

Probably! She is a good Mum.

DR. MURPHY

I'm sure she is. I know she's
fast.

ELIZABETH

You can imagine how important it is
she makes it through. John would
be heartbroken. I think he loves
this bird more than me.

DR. MURPHY

I know that's not true, but his
love is strong for her. There's
something special a man gains when
he feels he contributed to another
being's success. With this bird,
John feels he has connected with
nature's beauty. I felt it when I
competed in dressage with my
horses. It's a sensation like no
other.

ELIZABETH

Yes. But I know two other hearts
that will be broken if she doesn't
pull through. We've just got to
help her make it through.

DR. MURPHY

Yes, well, I don't know that
there's much more I can do. This
salve you're using is exactly what
I would have recommended.

ELIZABETH

But what about eating, do we need
to force feed her?

DR. MURPHY

Can't do that. Going to have to put it in God's hands now. When she does wake up, though, you can give her this in some mushed oats.

Dr. Murphy hands Elizabeth a little bottle of powder.

Buddy/Cher Ami nuzzled in closer to her.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

Why wasn't my Mum waking up?

DR. MURPHY

Probably best to put him outside with the others so she can have some peace.

ELIZABETH

Something tells me this is where he needs to stay, right by his Mum.

DR. MURPHY

Have it your way. Just make certain he doesn't disturb her too much.

The doctor gets up to leave. Elizabeth walks him to the door.

ELIZABETH

Thank you.

DR. MURPHY

Keep me posted.

INT./EVENING/JAMISON'S ROOM

Jamison is looking on at Jane and petting Buddy/Cher Ami's head. There are now two nesting boxes so that Buddy cannot disturb his Mum. Jane finally wakes up.

JAMISON

Mum, come quick.

Elizabeth, holding Beatrice, comes into the room.

ELIZABETH

What is it?

JAMISON

She's awake.

ELIZABETH

Oh, wonderful news! You need to try to get some food in her. I'll go make up the paste with what Dr. Murphy gave us.

Elizabeth leaves.

JAMISON

Thank you, Jane.

Jamison pets Jane and coos at her.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

You sure had us all worried.

Lucy and Gretchen come into the room.

GRETCHEN

How is she doing?

JAMISON

She is at least awake. I hope that means she will be fine.

LUCY

Let me see.

Lucy works to get in a position where she can see the birds.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Hi ya Jane. We sure were worried.

Elizabeth comes back into the room.

ELIZABETH

Girls, better get ready for bed and let's leave Jane to some peace. We don't want to wear her out so soon.

Elizabeth shows Jamison how to feed her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Jane this will make you stronger.

She hands the paste to Jamison. She then leaves the room. Jamison begins to feed her.

JAMISON

Thank you, Jane.

INT./HOUSE/FRONT ROOM

When the children return home from school, Elizabeth calls out to Jamison.

ELIZABETH

Jamison, you have a special package today.

Jamison looks around to see what she is referring to. And he spots the travel basket with Big Tom.

JAMISON

Big Tom, you're home! Mum, did you know Dad was sending him home?

ELIZABETH

No, but he must have thought the best therapy for Jane would be Tom.

He rushes to the basket, Lucy, Gretchen, and Elizabeth all gather around and follow Jamison to his room for the reunion. Jamison lets Big Tom out to join Lady Jane, who is still resting in her nest. She looks up to see Big Tom, but is still too weak to move. He goes to her and lies down with her.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

When I first saw him I had no idea he was my Dad. To me he was some strange bird messing with my Mum.

Cher Ami gets up to find out who was with his Mum.

JAMISON

Buddy this is your Dad, Big Tom.

Big Tom gets up to take a look at his son. He hugs his neck.

INT./KITCHEN MORNING

The family is gathered around the table.

ELIZABETH

Jamison, the time has come. Your Dad is ready for you to send Buddy to take Big Tom's place.

JAMISON

What? Not yet.

ELIZABETH

I'm afraid so.

LUCY

No, Mum. We will miss him.

ELIZABETH

I know, children, but it is the plan. They need as many pigeons as they can have.

Jamison runs to his room. He grabs onto Buddy/Cher Ami and cries.

EXT./OUTSIDE DOVECOTE

Jamison loads up Buddy/Cher Ami to take him for a run on his own. Once they get to the location, Jamison removes him from the basket.

JAMISON

Here we go fellow. Our last run together for awhile. You'll be going to war soon. Please dodge the shrapnel.

He pushes Buddy into the air. But Buddy comes back down. He has never flown without his Mum.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Go on, Buddy. Fly home.

But Buddy/Cher Ami stays still as if frozen.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Are you still worried about your Mum? She's sure to pull out of it now that your Dad is back.

Jamison throws Buddy into the air again and this time he takes off.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

I don't know if I'm going to be able to take this.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

I didn't like being without my Mum. I had never flown without her. It was all my fault she was not with me now. I'd prefer to stay in that room and never let her out of my sight.

Buddy/Cher Ami flies to the porch. Sadie raises her head, but lays it back down. Jamison holds Buddy/Cher Ami close to his chest and coos.

JAMISON

I will miss you so much!

He takes Buddy/Cher Ami back to his room to be with his parents.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Jane, I don't know why, but we have to send Buddy to war. It doesn't seem like anybody or anything is left untouched.

Buddy/Cher Ami jumps into the nesting box with his Mum and nestles against her.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

Ever since the accident my Mum hadn't said much. Not to my dad; not to me. But that night she looked out the window and told me to keep comfort in knowing that no matter where we are in the world, we all see the same moon. How did she know I was about to leave?

EXT.

Gretchen loads up the basket with Buddy/Cher Ami in it and places it on the scooter. The family is gathered around.

GRETCHEN (TO JAMISON)

Are you sure you don't want to go?

JAMISON

No, I'm better off to stay here.

GRETCHEN

He'll be alright, you know?

JAMISON

Hope so, Gretchen.

Jamison runs back into the house.

ELIZABETH

Jamison!

LUCY

Bye, Buddy. I'm sure going to miss you.

Elizabeth waves the baby's hand.

ELIZABETH
Make Jamison proud, Buddy.

Gretchen drives away headed to Portsmouth.

SHIPYARD

A seaman on the ship notices Gretchen and approaches her.

SEAMAN
Is this NURP Number 615?

GRETCHEN
What?

SEAMAN
Is this the pigeon we're taking to war?

GRETCHEN
Oh, yes! Buddy.

Gretchen begins to well up with tears.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)
Bye, Buddy. We'll miss you.
Please stay safe!!

SEAMAN
Don't worry, he'll do just fine.
We've been expecting him.

Orders are to take special care of
you, No. 615.

The seaman takes the basket to the Captain's quarters.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
I wasn't certain what was
happening. Where was I? Why were
they taking me away from my Mum?
She needed me right now. This
place was very musty. I couldn't
wait to get out of it.

EXT. PIGEON LOFT LANGRES - PIGEON CENTER

"SUPERIMPOSE: SUMMER 1917 - LANGRES, FRANCE - PIGEON CENTER"

At the base pigeon loft there are pigeons in every cage. Military men can be seen at different stations outside of the loft providing care for the birds. Some are giving shots, some are putting bands on babies and some are cleaning cages. John and JACQUES, a large French man who is a Lieutenant and John's team worker as a pigeoneer, are giving immunizations.

A jeep pulls up. A SOLDIER gets out and retrieves the basket carrying Buddy/Cher Ami. John jumps up to meet the soldier. They salute.

SOLDIER

Are you John Turner?

JOHN

Yes, I am.

SOLDIER

I'm delivering National Union
Racing Pigeon Number 615, a blue
check cock.

JOHN

Yes sir, that would be Buddy.

John anxiously takes the basket and walks to a box. Jacques, who finishes up with the last bird joins John.

JACQUES

Is this him?

JOHN

Yes.

John pulls Buddy out of the basket.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Here he is. Buddy.

JACQUES

Yes, he looks like a fine flyer.

JOHN

Oh you know he is. He looks
exactly like his Mum. Let's get
him rested so we can see how well
he flies.

John places Buddy in a loft box that was already prepared for his arrival with food and fresh water. He pats his head.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

Now of all the strange things.
This human seemed familiar.

(MORE)

CHER AMI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 There was a certain smell on him
 that reminded me of Jamison, but
 who was he?

EXT. PIGEON CENTER LANGRES - LATER

John and Jacques walk over to Buddy/Cher Ami's cage.

JOHN
 Hello little fellow, let's give you
 a test flight.

John takes Buddy out of his cage and shows him his food dish. But when he goes to move him to the dish he lets him slip and Buddy/Cher Ami takes off. Buddy/Cher Ami turns towards Havant.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 No, Buddy, come back. Buddy, come
 back!! Oh bollocks!! Bloody pigeon
 feathers!

JACQUES
 Well, that's not good. He's headed
 home, the only one he knows.

JOHN
 Yes.

JACQUES
 I hope he can make it over the
 channel?

JOHN
 Yeah. I hope he stays out of the
 way of hawks.

I guess I better get to writing.
 Let's hope he makes it.

EXT. ENGLISH CHANNEL

Buddy/Cher Ami is flying over the channel.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
 I had no idea why I did what I did,
 I just knew I needed to head home.
 I needed to see my Mum; I needed to
 know she was doing well.

Buddy passes a group of diver/loons. He is hesitant at first not knowing if they were friend or foe. They made their call as if in greeting. Liking the company, he stayed close.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

The loons stayed with me as I flew over the channel. I think they knew I had no idea of what I was doing. They said I was a sky bird and not a water bird like they were. They warned me to stay high away from the water. I knew I should trust them.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - MORNING

Jamison is in his class. Paul sits right beside him. Mrs. Hensley is at the front of the room working on math problems on the board.

A pecking sound can be heard on the glass. Close in on Buddy/Cher Ami at the window.

PAUL

Jamison, look.

Jamison looks at the window.

JAMISON

Buddy?

Jamison jumps up and runs out of the room.

MRS. HENSLEY

Jamison? Jamison!

PAUL

Mrs. Hensley, I think that's Jamison's pigeon. He was supposed to be in France.

MRS. HENSLEY

In France?

PAUL

Yes, he was sent to help in the war.

STUDENTS

Can we go see him? Please?!

MRS. HENSLEY

Yes.

The classroom runs out the door to follow.

MRS. HENSLEY (CONT'D)
Slow down!!

She follows them.

Jamison is checking Buddy/Cher Ami out seeing if he has any injuries. The class gather around them.

JAMISON
What are you doing here? Paul,
look it's Buddy.

PAUL
I see.

Paul pets Buddy/Cher Ami.

MRS. HENSLEY
Jamison, do you need to run him
home?

JAMISON
Can I?

MRS. HENSLEY
Yes, I think you probably better.

She looks around at the students who are in awe.

JAMISON
Thanks.

MRS. HENSLEY
Here, here, everybody back to
class. We've seen pigeons before.

Jamison takes off.

EXT. HOUSE

Jamison is running up the road to the house.

JAMISON
Mum! Come quick! You're never
going to believe. Mum!

Elizabeth comes out of the house.

ELIZABETH
What is it?

JAMISON
Buddy, Buddy came home!

ELIZABETH
What?!

JAMISON
He came to my classroom and found me.

ELIZABETH
You're joking.

JAMISON
No. What do you suppose happened.

ELIZABETH
I don't know, but you need to get back to school. I'll take him and put him in the dovecote with Jane and Tom. He'll be happy to see his Mum fully recovered.

JAMISON
Oh, Mum, must I go back to school

ELIZABETH
Yes, Jamison. But go ahead and take some time to put him up.

Jamison runs out to the dovecote to rejoin Buddy/Cher Ami with his parents.

JAMISON
Look who's here.

Lady Jane runs to her son and hugs his neck with hers. They dance around each other.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
Seeing Jamison was nice, but seeing my Mum was wonderful. She was better and was up and around like before.

JAMISON
I'll leave the door open so you all can spend the day outside, but stay out of trouble.

Jamison runs in the house.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Mum, what do you suppose happened?
Do you think we will be able to
keep him here?

ELIZABETH

I don't know, but am anxious to see
your father's next letter. I
wouldn't count on him staying. Run
along.

JAMISON

I've left them outside. Will you
keep an eye on them?

ELIZABETH

Certainly.

Jamison takes off down the road.

EXT. DOVECOTE

After it is clear of people the chickens begin their game of
hide and seek.

Buddy/Cher Ami begins to play with them. He first hides in a
tree and is super quick to get to base before the chicken
who's counting with clucks.

The next chicken counts. He hides behind a tree that his
colors blend with and because he is camouflaged the chicken
walks right past him. When he moves the chicken realizes he
is there and turns to run to base. Buddy/Cher Ami begins to
run as well, but then intentionally slows down to allow the
chicken to beat him.

When it is his turn to count with coos he finds them all.

INT. A FEW DAYS LATER AFTER A SCHOOL DAY

The children come through the front door.

ELIZABETH (HOLLERS OUT) (CONT'D)

Put your satchels up. Jamison I
need to talk to you when you're
done.

Jamison comes to the kitchen.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Jamison, I now know what happened.
It seems Buddy got away from your
father's hands. We will need to
send him back tomorrow.

JAMISON

Already?

ELIZABETH

Yes. They need him. In the letter your father asked when Buddy arrived. He said if he got here by morning, then he must have flown by night. He said it is rare for them to do that, but it makes him even more so needed.

JAMISON

Great! Why do good things have to end up bad?

ELIZABETH

It all depends on how you look at it. I'm sure it will all turn out for the best. Can you take him in the morning to the ship before school or do you want to have Gretchen take him again?

JAMISON

No, I will take him this time.

EXT. ON WAY TO SHIP YARD

Jamison is riding the scooter with the basket on the back. When he arrives to the ship yard he pulls the basket off and holds it up talking to Buddy/Cher Ami as he is walking to the ship.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Alright, Buddy, this is it. You need to stay with my Dad or wherever he sends you. You know your Mum will be fine and I know you will be fine.

SEAMAN

Is this N.U.R.P number 615?

JAMISON

Yes, it is. Take good care of him.

SEAMAN

You know we will.

The seaman takes the cage from him.

JAMISON

Wait!

Jamison opens up the basket and takes Buddy/Cher Ami out to give him a final hug and pat.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

I'm sure going to miss you. Take care of yourself, my little Buddy.

CHER AMI

Here we go again. Now that I knew my Mum was fine, I did feel better. I was ready to find out what was so important back at that place they were so intent on sending me.

EXT. LANGRES, FRANCE - PIGEON CENTER

The same jeep that dropped off Buddy/Cher Ami the first time pulls into the pigeon center. John salutes and greets the soldier in the jeep.

SOLDIER

John, didn't we just do this a couple of weeks ago with this same bird?

JOHN

Yes, Yes, we did, won't happen again, I can assure you.

John takes the basket.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hello there Buddy. Welcome back.

Jacques walks over.

JACQUES

Bonjour, Cher Ami.

JOHN

What?

JACQUES

We're in France, John. Call him by his real name. Cher Ami, Dear Friend.

JOHN

Cher Ami? I like it.

Cher Ami.

John puts Buddy/Cher Ami in his cage.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Here you go, my little Cher Ami.
Your new home with two great
neighbors. You have the smallish,
but not to be ignored, Spike to
your left and the beautiful French
Florence to your right.

Close in on Buddy/Cher Ami's neighbors. FLORENCE, a girl
pigeon, is about the same age as Buddy and is very sleek
looking. On the other side is SPIKE, a small beat up looking
bird also about the same age.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

Hmmm. Things looked much better
this time around. I couldn't
believe all the pigeons.

EXT. PIGEON LOFT WINTER 1917

"SUPERIMPOSE: WINTER 1917 - LANGRES, FRANCE"

JACQUES

I think he's ready, John.

JOHN

Yes, it's exciting how fast they
can learn home when you don't let
them slip out of your hands.

JACQUES

You should be proud he will fly
with the Intelligence Service.
That accident of yours sure did get
him attention.

JOHN

Yes. It certainly did. Who would
have considered it? I didn't think
I'd ever see a pigeon fly at night.
I told you they want Jamsion to
take care of some dispatch pigeons,
didn't I?

JACQUES

Hmmm, did you tell me anything
about that? *Je pense que peut-être
dix fois dans la dernière heure.*

Sub title "I think maybe 10 times in the last hour."

JOHN

Huh?

He is going to be thrilled. I wonder how fast they are?

JACQUES

Comme la foudre!

Sub title "Like lightning!"

JOHN

Yes, like lightning.

JACQUES

Ah, you're picking up.

JOHN

How can I not? *Vive la France!*

EXT. - LATE DAY

John and Jacques are loading up a basket with Cher Ami and Spike. They take them to a runway and load them onto a plane with a PILOT and an AIRMAN. The airman takes the basket. The plane takes off.

AIRMAN

Let's see how fast they make it back.

EXT. - ONE HOUR LATER - NIGHT - OUTSKIRTS OF LILLE, FRANCE

It has gotten dark and the plane is flying low over Lille, France. Close in on ground where a small light can be seen flashing upward towards the plane.

"SUPERIMPOSE: - LILLE, FRANCE"

The pilot points to the light showing the airman and flies directly over. The airman opens the door to the plane and drops the basket that has a parachute on it that opens shortly after being dropped.

Once the basket lands, the person that was flashing the light on the ground grabs it and quickly inserts two message tubes on both of the pigeons' legs. He releases one and then the other. He hides the basket under some foliage and sneaks away.

The birds go up circle together and take off in the same direction. We can see the pigeons flying in the moonlight.

Spike lands in the first tree he comes to. Cher Ami noticing comes back. He flies circles above him until Spike joins back in flight to head to Langres. They land in the moonlight. When they go through their trap door it causes a bell to jingle. John and Jacques come running out of their tents to get the tubes.

JACQUES

C'est magnifique. Tout simplement incroyable!

Sub title "Beautiful. Just amazing!"

JOHN

Yes. Unreal.

They take the messages to the officer in charge who quickly unfolds them and begins to read.

MAJOR WALEY

Aha, this one tells us that Captain Huffman is planning an escape tomorrow. This is good news men. Good news. Those birds are little miracles.

EXT. PAUL'S HOME

Jamison is at Paul's door.

PAUL

Hello, Jamison. What's going on?

JAMISON

I thought you might like to come help me add a flight yard to the dovecote. I've received special orders from the Intelligence Unit to keep pigeons for communications in case the enemy lands in Portsmouth.

PAUL

Jolly good thing.

JAMISON

Dr. Murphy's going to help, but he said we could use more hands if I could get some. Want to help us?

PAUL

Sure, let me ask my Mum.

Paul's Mum can be seen through the doorway. She looks much younger and more vibrant than before.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Mum, can I go to Jamison's?

MARGARET

Of course you can. Just be back in time for dinner.

JAMISON

Would it be alright if he stayed for dinner with us?

MARGARET

Why certainly. That would be fine, but get home right after.

PAUL

Yes, Mum.

The boys take off down the road.

EXT. TURNER HOME WINTER, 1917

Jamison has just gotten up.

ELIZABETH

Jamison, come here quick. The pigeons are here.

Four baskets are sitting by the door.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Jamison this is such an honor. I know Dr. Murphy plans to help, but are you sure you can keep up with this? You have so much.

JAMISON

Oh yes! I've asked Paul to help.

ELIZABETH

Very good. How often will you release these to go back to their home loft in London?

JAMISON

They said I should send two of them every two weeks and they will send them back in time to go out for the next rotation. Of course, if the Germans land, I send them immediately.

ELIZABETH

Of course.

JAMISON

They keep their mates there for inspiration.

ELIZABETH

So do you have the boys or the girls?

As he holds up the baskets he reads their names to his Mum.

JAMISON

I have the girls. They are June, Maude, Ava and Frances.

ELIZABETH

What fine names. Well you best go get them situated.

Jamison starts carrying two baskets out of the house.

EXT. LANGRES PIGEON CENTER

Cher Ami and Spike are loaded on the plane to fly to Lille.

The plane follows the same procedure, finds the light, drops the basket. This time, however, after the pigeons get their tubes, several German soldiers can be seen running their way.

The person on the ground that gives the birds their messages takes off and gets undercover without notice.

The Germans shine a light on Spike and Cher Ami and begin shooting. With the light blinding the birds they drop to the ground.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

Thanks to those fluffy white feather balls from home, I knew just what to do. We got down in the tall grass and hid.

The Germans not seeing any flight assume they must have hit the birds and they move on.

EXT. LANGRES PIGEON CENTER

MAJOR WALEY

John, you and Jacques need to pick out about thirty of your finest birds.

(MORE)

MAJOR WALEY (CONT'D)

Load them up in transport lofts to take to Rampport. The Americans need birds. Let's give them the best.

JOHN

Yes, sir!

John walks away to begin preparations.

EXT. LANGRES PIGEON CENTER - NEXT DAY

John, Jacques and other men can be seen loading pigeons onto transport lofts. They jump on the large vehicles and begin their drive.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

That was an incredibly bumpy ride. It took us a couple of days to get to our destination.

EXT. RAMPORT BASE CAMP

"SUPERIMPOSE: SPRING 1918 - RAMPORT, FRANCE"

CHER AMI (V.O.)

It was a place where there were so many men. Some were lying down injured, some were in vehicles driving here and there, but most were walking. None seemed in good spirits.

EXT. RAMPORT LATER THAT WEEK

Jacques and John are teaching the proper care of the pigeons to eight soldiers, one being LIEUTENANT LEEK, from Texas and another being LIEUTENANT SHAW, from New York.

JOHN

You want to keep the birds hungry during the day in case they need to take a message, but they must have water in front of them at all times.

JACQUES

Be sure to keep their food in a sealed tin can to keep moisture out.

John and Jacques continue to talk in background. Close in on Buddy/Cher Ami.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
They put me with a group of men
from America called the 77th. They
didn't seem as close as my family.
Sometimes they didn't see to
understand one another.

EXT. RAMPORT WEEK LATER

Spike, Cher Ami, and two other birds are loaded up, two to a basket. Lieutenant Leek and Lieutenant Shaw place the baskets on their backs.

PHILLIP
What ya got there?

LEEK
Pigeons.

PHILLIP
What the heck for?

SHAW
You'll find out if we lose radio
and phone service out there.

PHILLIP
They sure are little.

LEEK
Don't let it fool ya!

Trucks full of men are driven closer to the trenches. The men get out, including Leek and Shaw, and drop down into the trench to walk the rest of the way.

CHER AMI (V.O.)
I couldn't believe my eyes the
first time I went to the trench.
It was like a flume of water, mud
and blood. Why were these men
doing this to each other?

After walking through the trench showing the dismal setting, Leek and Shaw eventually get to their station.

LEEK
Alright, Cher Ami and Spike. Let's
get you fed and ready for bed.

SHAW
I'm thinking I would prefer to
sleep in the cage with them.

They feed and water the birds and place them in a larger metal cage. It is almost night.

EXT. LATER THAT NIGHT

The men try to sleep, but look longingly up to the sky. Two rats scurry past the men and go towards the pigeons. They try to break into the cage.

CHER AMI

Yes, that's when I met them. Beady eyes, long whiskers. They kept gnawing at the metal. Rats.

Leek moves to where the pigeons are to shoo the rats away. The rats are so brave that the soldier has to shoot his gun. Several soldiers jump up, running towards the area ready to shoot.

LEEK

No, don't shoot. Just getting rid of the rats!

MAJOR WHITTLESLEY, the New York lawyer that was the leader of this battalion, comes running. He motions for everybody to go back to their places.

MAJOR WHITTLESLEY

Get some rest, boys.

Leek let's try to find a different way to scare them. Stab them if you have to, but whatever you do keep them away from those birds.

CHER AMI

I knew I was going to like Leek, but after that I felt fortunate to have him watching over me.

EXT. TWO DAYS LATER

The soldiers are into the woods trying to push forward. The Germans throw gas bombs towards them. Leek quickly covers Spike and Cher Ami up with an oil cloth bag. He and the rest of the men place them on their own heads. The men retreat back to the trench. Once they are away from the fumes they remove the masks.

MAJOR WHITTLESLEY

Lieutenant Leek, I need to send two pigeons quick. I haven't seen our phone.

Leek gets the small papers for the messages so the Captain can tell him what to write.

MAJOR WHITTLESLEY (CONT'D)

Had to move back. Just been gassed. Send medical supplies and glycerine.

LEEK

Spike, you first this time.

Leek releases Spike. Waits a little bit and then send Cher Ami after him.

Close in on Cher Ami, who eventually catches up with Spike.

The view below shows tress, barbed wire in spaces where you can see the ground and trenches along the way.

There is a hawk that tries to catch up with them, but Cher Ami and Spike know all too well to zig and zag and fly low and high to wear the hawk out. The hawk gives up and goes on.

The birds come in for a landing at the loft in Rampart. As they hit the loft they go into their trap cages and a bell rings. John and Jacques come out immediately to retrieve their messages that say the same thing. Jacques takes the messages to the Commander's tent.

JOHN

You two look out for each other, don't you? My question is does the leader hold up for the 2nd or is the 2nd catching up with the first? You know it's kind of defeating its purpose if something happens to both of you, don't you?

Jacques comes back.

JACQUES

What's that you say?

JOHN

I was just telling them they should fly apart like they are sent, but they always manage to end up coming in together.

JACQUES

Can't beat friendship.

EXT. SEPTEMBER 1918 - VERDUN, FRANCE

The 77th returns to Rampart to reload, refresh, bring in the injured and dead and get more men. This time Cher Ami is taken with two other birds that he did not know.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

Time seemed to fly during all of this. They would just send me back and forth. I had gone on 11 missions up to this point. But something about this next trip out was different. I could sense the tension in them all.

Leek puts Buddy/Cher Ami to bed in the trench with the other two pigeons.

LEEK

Rest up, Cher Ami. Tomorrow we are pushing forward.

EXT. - OCTOBER 4, 1918 2:35 P.M. - VERDUN, FRANCE

CHER AMI (V.O.)

I grew to understand what Leek meant by push forward. The men just kept going towards the enemy. After many days and nights so many had disappeared. The two other pigeons were gone. I was the only one left. There were bombs going off all around us.

All the men are lying on the ground trying to keep themselves covered. Leek crawls over to Whittlesey.

"SUPERIMPOSE: OCTOBER 4, 1918 - VERDUN, FRANCE"

LEEK

Shall I prepare the message, Sir?

MAJOR WHITTLESEY

Yes, please, hurry.

Major Whittlesey mouths the message to Leek, who quickly prepares the message, opens the small container and pulling Cher Ami from the basket, places it on his right leg, making certain all was secure.

LEEK

Cher Ami, if you can understand anything I'm saying, know this.

(MORE)

LEEK (CONT'D)

Our fate is in your wings. Fly high, Cher Ami, fly high.

With that Leek tosses Cher Ami up to take flight, but Cher Ami lands in a tree sensing danger. He feels the rush of bullets zipping so close to his body as he steadies himself on the branch.

LEEK (CONT'D)

Fly, Cher Ami, fly.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

I could feel the bullets coming close and knew once I flew up from the trees I would need to get as much power as possible to avoid getting shot. I waited for silence, then with all my might I spread my wings and began the pulsing movements to lift quickly out of the tree.

As Cher Ami flies above the tree the German bullets begin again, whirling ever so close. Cher Ami is hit and falls to the ground. Whittlesey and Leek drop their heads.

But then they hear a rustle and without any hesitation Cher Ami lifts back into the air. There is only silence and all that can be heard is Cher Ami's heart beat with the steady movement of his wings. He envisions his Mum in the sky against a rising moon.

LEEK

There goes hope.

Cher Ami goes higher and higher until he tops the trees and is certainly out of the path of any bullets.

Montage:

View of what Cher Ami sees from a pigeon's perspective. [For a pigeon, resolution is twice as good with sideways monocular vision than forward binocular vision, whereas for humans the converse is true. They see ultraviolet parts of the spectrum, and other adaptations allow for the detection of polarized light or magnetic fields. Pigeons probably have an additional pigment and therefore might be pentachromatic.]

Cher Ami sees the base camp and zooms in towards his cage. John sees him coming in.

JOHN

Here comes a bird. It's Cher Ami from the lost battalion. Quick, get the message.

Jacques picks up Cher Ami and turns him over to get to the message container. Close in on Cher Ami's wounded chest and his missing right foot. Jacques fumbles, but works carefully to remove the message container. He opens the note and reads aloud.

JACQUES

We are along the road parallel to 276.4. Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us. For heaven's sake, stop it.

Jacques runs to tell the commander, while John takes Cher Ami to the doctor.

JOHN

You know you are a hero, don't you Cher Ami? What a very brave bird you have been.

Fade out.

EXT. PARIS, FRANCE Nov. 11, 1918

People are shouting. Bells can be heard.

"SUPERIMPOSE: NOVEMBER 1918 - PARIS, FRANCE"

CROWD OF PEOPLE

It's over. The war has ended.

INT. TURNER HOME - NOVEMBER 1918

Elizabeth is playing with Lucy in the kitchen. Everyone has aged almost three and a half years, with the most change showing in Beatrice, who is now a 3 year old toddler, Lucy who is now eight, and Jamison, who is now fourteen. John walks in to the home carrying a basket.

JOHN

Hello? Where is everybody?

Elizabeth, swooping up Beatrice, comes running to greet him.

ELIZABETH

John!

After an embrace and long kiss, John pulls Elizabeth away to get a better look at Beatrice.

Elizabeth puts her on the ground to show John how she is walking. John sweeps Beatrice back up and hugs and kisses her. Beatrice startled starts to cry. Jamison, Lucy, and Gretchen come in from outside.

JAMISON
Dad, you're home!

LUCY
Daddy!!!

They both give their Dad a hug. Gretchen comes in for a hug as well.

GRETCHEN
Welcome home, Uncle John.

JOHN
My, oh my, how you three have grown! It's so good to be home.

He walks over to the basket to retrieve Buddy/Cher Ami.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Here he is, Jamison.

John takes Buddy/Cher Ami out of the cage. He has a peg leg.

JAMISON
Wow, they fixed him up. They made him a peg leg too.

JOHN
Yes, they did. He has had the best treatment. He's quite a hero! Better get him out to see his old dovecote.

Jamison with the family right behind him, takes Buddy/Cher Ami out to the dovecote. He lets him go once inside. The birds reunite.

JAMISON
Welcome home, Buddy, I mean Cher Ami. It has a nice ring to it. Very French. Even if we only have you for a little while, it's nice to have you home.

Buddy/Cher Ami notices the two other girls in the loft.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

This is Ava and Frances. I'm sure they will get to stay home when they go back this next time. No need to worry with the enemy landing on our shores. The war is over!

John enters the dovecote with the rest following behind him.

JOHN

So these are two of the birds you have been watching over, huh?

JAMISON

Yes.

JOHN

What fine looking birds they are.

JAMISON

Yes, they are great birds. But how about Cher Ami? He was so brave for such a little bird in a big war.

ELIZABETH

God chooses those that seem meek to confound those that seem mighty.

JOHN

That's for sure.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY APRIL 1919

"SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 1919 - NEW YORK CITY"

A parade of war veterans march along the streets. People are gathered waving and shouting out in celebration. Cher Ami is being held by Major Whittlesey as he stands on a float with several pigeon cages holding other pigeons that were in the war. Spike and Florence are in a cage.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

My time with my family was nice, but it wasn't too long that they sent me away again on another one of those musty things. But when I arrived to my next destination, it was grand. All my friends were here. Shortly after my arrival they put us in a parade. What a spectacular event.

(MORE)

CHER AMI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I could tell I must have done something, because all these people knew my name.

SPECTATORS

Cher Ami! Hoo Rah! Whittlesley!

CHER AMI (V.O.)

When the parade was over someone they called General Pershing gave me an award. What I remembered best was bright lights flashing. It reminded me of the time we had those men chasing us. I was about to run and hide.

Cher Ami is presented with the Croix de Guerre by General Pershing. A picture is taken.

CHER AMI (V.O.)

Best of all when it was over, I went to a dovecote that was dry and warm and peaceful. I was surrounded by my friends, Spike, Florence and all the others I flew in the war with.

INT. DOVECOTE - HAVANT

Lucy in front of Jamison, Elizabeth and John are staring into a nest with two eggs under Ava.

JOHN

I can't believe Lt. Col. Osman agreed to give us Ava and Dickens Tale. Talk about prize birds. Jamison, do you know what this means?

JAMISON

Lots of medals.

JOHN

Lots of medals, I'll say. And to see that we're about to have some peeps from them. Lucy, what do you say?

LUCY

I can't wait.

An egg begins to hatch.

JAMISON

Why, I don't think you'll have to wait much longer.

A little yellow beak pops out of the shell.

LUCY

Butterfly!

JOHN

That's right, Lucy. You finally have your Butterfly.

Close in on picture that is on wall beside Lady Jane's. It is of Cher Ami receiving the Croix de Guerre. A large picture of the medal, a palm leaf cluster, is on the corner of the picture.

"SUPERIMPOSE: Cher Ami died on June 13, 1919 in America and is displayed at the Smithsonian Museum in the *Price of Freedom* exhibit to this day."

DISSOLVE

After credits show pictures of other pigeons and their accomplishments during WWI.