

FADE IN:

SUPER:

"Inspired from a true story"

EXT. BULL RUN BATTLEFIELD - WOODS - DAY - 1861

SUPER:"FIRST BATTLE OF BULL RUN - JULY 1861"

UNION SOLDIERS barrel through the woods. SHOOT at the CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS behind the trees and bushes.

SCREAMS.

The Confederate soldiers leap out of their hidden spots. Caught by surprise by the onslaught, they scamper off in all directions. SHOOT in all directions.

BULLETS fly like mad bees.

More SCREAMS.

Rebs fall. Yanks fall.

Behind a cluster of bushes, two Union soldiers, a YOUNG ONE and an OLDER ONE, hunch down.

The young soldier, on the edge of tears, stares at the slaughter with horror and sadness.

He drops his rifle, holds his older comrade's arm, preventing him from setting his rifle in a firing position. Gently, his comrade nudges him away. But the young soldier doesn't want to let go.

The older soldier is patient, gives his comrade a brotherly squeeze on the forearm. Picks up the rifle, places it in his comrade's hands.

Reluctantly, the young soldier brings his rifle into a firing position.

The older soldier is relieved, turns to the action. Aims his rifle. SHOOTS.

His bullet strikes a Reb in the forehead.

There is an ENEMY in the young soldier's line of sight... he can see his face... young, in pain, scared, alive... the young soldier cannot shoot.

The older soldier SHOOTS. Reloads. SHOOTS.

Each bullet makes its mark.

GUNFIRE intensifies.

The young soldier moves his rifle left, right, left again... searches for another enemy... everywhere are the faces of men being torn asunder... he cannot shoot.

But the older soldier DOES. Reloads. SHOOTS again.

The young soldier lowers his rifle... looks above the horizon... the CANNONADE, the GUNFIRE, the SCREAMS slowly fade away...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE EDMONDS'S FARM - WOODS - DAY - 1861

SUPER: "MICHIGAN - SPRING 1861"

... The eyes are rebellious, the face shining with life.

It is the young soldier, sixteen, a cap on, bandana around the neck, dressed in farmer's clothes.

A hunting rifle in hand.

In his line of sight is a deer staring in the direction of the young boy crouched behind a tree.

His finger is on the trigger... a moment of hesitation.

He lowers his rifle.

To the right, a sound of crushed grass.

The deer steps back.

Footsteps, louder this time.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Damn you! Shoot!

But the young boy does not.

Panicked, the deer turns around, half-way into a leap.

A GUNSHOT goes off.

Strikes the deer on the neck.

The deer is not dead.

He sways a little but quickly recovers and disappears in the cover of the trees and bushes.

ISAAC EDMONDS, a large, sturdy man in his late forties, stomps behind the young boy, grabs him by the shoulder and shoves him against the tree.

ISAAC
You ain't no good. Too damn stubborn.
Too damn lazy.

Isaac grabs the boy's rifle and drags the boy toward the area where the deer has disappeared. He drops the boy hard on the ground. Forces the rifle in his hands.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Find him and finish him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOODS - SUNSET

The young boy kneels down, unlatches a canvas sack. Inside is an eclectic assortment of corn husks, linen and silk strips, vials, scissors, and even a clamp.

He grabs a vial and several silk strips, leans over the wounded deer lying in a ditch.

He pets the head of the deer and whispers soft words in his ear.

The boy moves his hands toward the area where the bullet is lodged. There is blood everywhere but it does not bother him.

He feels for the bullet, slides two fingers inside the wound, searching for the bullet.

The deer shivers, jerks his head up briefly.

The boy can't reach the bullet.

He knows the deer is dying.

The boy soaks a silk strip with some liquid from the vial and wipes the blood off the deer's wound.

He gives one last pet on the deer's nuzzle, stands up and grabs his rifle.

Takes several steps back.

Adjusts his rifle until the head of the deer is in his line of sight.

SHOOTS.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - SIMULTANEOUS

The kitchen is narrow, with crude walls and a slanted floor.

ELIZABETH EDMONDS, early forties, a gentle, worn-out woman, a speck of spunk still flashing in her eyes, pours a ladle of hot soup into Isaac's bowl.

Sitting by Isaac is FRANKIE EDMONDS, a thirteen year old in a skinny and tiny body. His distorted hands grab the edge of the bowl, waiting for his soup.

ISAAC

Our daughter as Mr. Gilroy's wife and
I'll oversee his estate. All for
twenty dollars a month.

ELIZABETH

She's never met Mr. Gilroy.

ISAAC

She will. Tomorrow.

Elizabeth pours some soup into Frankie's bowl. She then places the pot back on the stove, pours herself some in a bowl.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Tomorrow. I'm marrying Sarah to Mr.
Gilroy.

He slurps a spoonful of his soup.

In shock, Elizabeth almost drops her own bowl. She places it by the stove, holds herself against the edge of the sink.

ELIZABETH

(whispers)
Tomorrow... but...

Frankie drops his spoon into the bowl, now on the edge of tears.

ISAAC

Mr. Gilroy wants the sons his late
wife couldn't give him.

Elizabeth turns around, stares at her husband's back.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Gilroy's twice Sarah's age.

Isaac takes another spoonful of his soup, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, turns around to face Elizabeth.

ISAAC

And who's gonna pay the farm debts?

ELIZABETH

I can find work in town. Help with
the money --

He slides his chair back, jumps to his feet and faces Elizabeth.

ISAAC

Woman. No work of yours will pay off
our debts. With Sarah's marriage,
I'll have my debts paid off in
eighteen months.

INT. BARN - SIMULTANEOUS

The boy kneels down, unlatches his medical canvas sack. He extracts a medical book and opens it to a bookmark.

INSERT BOOK

"LESSON 17 - HOW TO DRESS AN AMPUTATED ARM"

There are drawings and photographs of a severed human arm in the various stages of dressing.

BACK TO SCENE

The boy places the book down, grabs the silk strips, a corn husk, vial and the scissors. Opens the vial and pours the liquid on the strips.

He leans over a black mare, pets him. Applies the silk strips on the mare's hoof. The mare remains still.

He cuts the corn husk in narrow strips, wraps them around the dressing, and makes sure they are tight around the hoof.

The mare licks the boy's face, leaving a trail of saliva on his cheek.

He smiles, wipes the sticky saliva off and picks up his medical sack. A handful of brochures fall out.

All are from medical schools, "calling men to become doctors."

He picks up the brochures, stares at them, brings them against his chest and daydreams. Stares at the brochures again, his eyes swelling with tears.

ISAAC (O.S.)
DAMN IT, WOMAN!

The boy startles, cringes. The mare neighs.

Abruptly, the boy stuffs the brochures back inside the sack. Removes the dressing, puts everything away. Carefully hides the sack behind a pile of logs.

He pets the mare and dashes outside, toward the farmhouse.

INT. KITCHEN - SIMULTANEOUS

Elizabeth has her back against the sink. Isaac looms over her.

ELIZABETH
She is but a child.

ISAAC
Her time to be a child is over.

He turns his back to her, his face taut with anger.

ELIZABETH
(whispers)
I won't let you.

ISAAC
What, woman?

Isaac whirls around, strikes her jaw hard. Elizabeth gasps, catches herself on the sink.

Frankie lets out a cry. He stuffs his tiny hands into his mouth, sobbing out of control.

Isaac glares at Frankie. With disgust he leaves the room, bumps into the young boy.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
How many times have I told you not to wear a cap in the house?

He reaches out to snatch the cap off the boy's head. The boy cowers, steps back, away from his father's reach.

Isaac grabs the boy's arm, yanks him toward him.

With violence, Isaac doffs the cap off the boy's head, releasing two braids.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Starting tomorrow, you'll only wear dresses. You're never to wear boy's clothes again.

Isaac grabs Sarah's left hand. He pulls out a gold ring from his shirt pocket.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Mr. Gilroy's promise to take you as his wife.

Forcefully, he slides the ring on Sarah's finger.

INT. FRANKIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A minuscule, low-ceiling room, very dark except for the rays of a half-moon drifting over Frankie in bed, a long night-shirt on.

He is asleep.

Sarah enters the room, holding a candlestick. She steps toward the bed and places the candlestick on a makeshift night-stand. Leans over Frankie and kisses his forehead.

He opens his eyes and smiles.

SARAH
Not sleeping yet?

Frankie shakes his head, giggling. She ruffles his hair, tickles his neck. Frankie tries to tickle Sarah, but his distorted arms fall on the bedspread like dead weight.

SARAH (CONT'D)
You're tired, little bro. Time for your nighttime medicine.

Sarah reaches for a jar next to Frankie's pillow, opens it. Inside is a yellowish ointment.

Gently, Sarah unfolds Frankie's scrawny body until he lies on his back. His legs are as distorted as his arms and hands.

She unbuttons his night-shirt, slides it off his body. Sarah rubs Frankie's body in deep, circular movements.

He grins, moans with contentment.

FRANKIE
You're not leaving. It's not true what father said.

Sarah can hardly look at him as the tears pool in her eyes. In silence, she continues to rub his shoulders and arms.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Tell me it's not true. Tell me you're not leaving. You can't go... no...

Sarah can hardly control her tears.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Mom won't let you go away... I know. You stay. Here. With me. With Mom. Until I die.

With great effort, Frankie reaches out to Sarah and holds himself to her shoulders.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
You can't go. Can't go. Can't go.

He hiccups as the tears overpower him.

SARAH
I'm not going very far, little bro. Mr. Gilroy lives three miles from here. I'll come and visit you often.

FRANKIE
Every night?

She nods, lies Frankie back down on the bed and continues to rub his body.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
You'll take care of me? Every night?

Again she nods, continues to rub Frankie's body. For a moment, it is silent except for Frankie's moans of contentment.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Every night?

SARAH
(whispers)
Yes. Every night.

FRANKIE
You promise?

SARAH
I promise.

She kisses his forehead, slides his night-shirt back on his tiny body.

SARAH (CONT'D)
You sleep now.

He shakes his head hard, moans with displeasure.

SARAH (CONT'D)
What is it?

FRANKIE
Will you also read to me? Every night?

SARAH
Yes. Every night.

FRANKIE
Read to me, tonight. Please. Your doctor's book.

She almost shakes her head no, but instead turns to the nightstand and pulls out a worn leather book. Opens it to a bookmark.

SARAH
"The subject of the pneumatic treatment of lung diseases is an extensive one."

Frankie grins, moves his head onto Sarah's lap, closes his eyes and sighs with contentment.

SARAH (CONT'D)
"There have been many forms of apparatus for the use of compressed air in respiratory diseases..."

Her voice cracks but she goes on reading. For Frankie.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

A light mist whirls itself around the trees and bushes. Two figures, close together, slide through a cluster of bushes.

It is Sarah and Isaac, each with a rifle. Behind them is a Labrador.

Isaac pushes her down on her knees, points to several pheasants in the clearing ahead. He too kneels down.

She aims her rifle. Watches the pheasants pecking seeds. She does not shoot.

ISAAC
(whispers)
Damn you! Shoot now!

He sticks her hard with his rifle butt. Reluctantly she SHOOTs.

One pheasant drops to the ground.

The other pheasants SQUEAL, SCATTER away.

Quickly, Isaac takes her rifle, gives her his.

She stares at the last pheasants flying away.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Damn it to hell! Shoot! Now!

Again, he pokes her hard with his rifle butt.

The pheasants are almost out of shooting range. She SHOOTs.

One pheasant spins to the ground.

All the pheasants have now disappeared.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Goldie! Go fetch!

The Labrador sprints toward the fallen pheasants.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Nothing but a weakling. We could've gotten three. You're no good. No good.

Sarah stands up, turns her back to Isaac.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Girl. I told Mr. Gilroy you need to be tamed.

She walks away.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
I swear he will.