

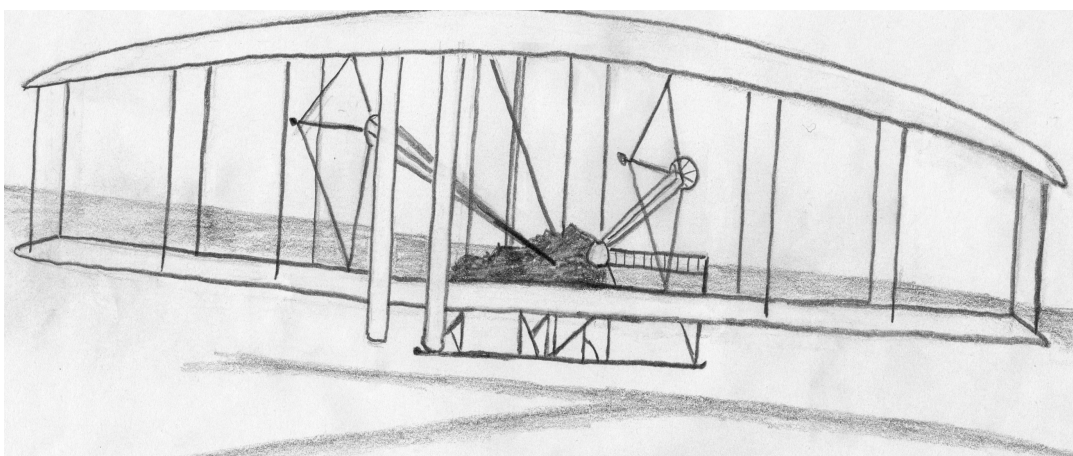
WINSTON, N.C., 1909—

One evening during the following week, Mother asked Helen to step into the kitchen where she was cutting cabbage on the slaw cutter. “I want you to run out to the barn to get Alan and Cal. They should be up in the loft checking the squab. Now is time for them to come to the house and wash up for supper.”

Her brothers raised squab to sell to the Francis Hotel. Papa had made the arrangements through his grocery business, but the boys were responsible for the care of the young pigeons until they were fat enough to be sold. They had built cages for them among the rafters of the barn.

Since her hands were occupied making the slaw, Mother nodded her head toward the hook near the back door where the umbrella hung. “Don’t forget to take that,” she reminded Helen. “I’m not certain that the rain has stopped. It may be drizzling still, and I don’t want you to get wet.”

Helen took the umbrella and walked to the back porch. She picked her way down the wet steps, through the soggy yard and under the dripping apple tree and grape arbor to the barn. There she stopped to peer from under the opened umbrella at the chickens, thrusting their heads forward and back and scratching in the dirt made



Wright Brothers airplane

soft from cool spring rains. They made good use of this time before roosting, poking the ground for worms that were near the surface. The late day sun was just coming from behind the clouds and glistening on the chickens’ feathers.

Then into the barn she went, passing the empty horse stall where Maude was kept. She headed up the ladder that led to the hayloft. Keeping the umbrella high, she balanced herself with it, like the aerial artist she had seen once in the circus parade downtown.

“Alan, Cal,” she called to them. “Mother wants you to come inside now.”

Cal responded with a cough he had had for several days.

As Helen climbed near the top, she looked over the floorboards into the eerie light of the loft. She saw silhouettes of Alan and Cal as they pitched hay out for Maude through the loft door beyond them. The fading

sunlight that came slanting into the barn caught a few drifting pigeon feathers and floated them in a river of pale light. The pigeons cooed as they settled in their nests for the night.

“Come on up,” Cal called as first the umbrella and then Helen appeared in the loft. She walked over to join them near the hayloft door and looked down at the alley. She thought Papa would soon be rattling home this way with Maude and the wagon.

While she stood there, umbrella still in hand, Cal exploded with an idea. “Why don’t you try to fly, Helen? You’re so light. With that big umbrella, you’d probably float down like one of those feathers.”

Alan shook his head, “Don’t tell her that, Cal; she just might do it.” Then he turned to Helen to make certain that she knew jumping was a wild idea.

Cal continued, “You’ve heard of the Wright brothers,

haven’t you? Two men with flying machines?”

Cal waited for Helen to show that she understood what he was saying. “You know they’ve experimented with flight and, in the last few years, the brothers have learned a lot about it.”

Alan spoke directly to Helen, “Well, you are crazy if you think that umbrella you’re holding would help you fly to the ground! And Cal is too!”

Alan stamped the hay from his feet and brushed his hands clean before heading down the ladder from the loft.

“You can do it.” Cal repeated after Alan left,

“You’ll just float down. And you will have a soft landing.”

Nothing in Cal’s voice made Helen afraid. With Alan gone, no one was there to warn Helen or remind her to be careful.

She wanted to try flying to please Cal and to show him that she loved adventure as much as he did. Besides, she did think jumping would be fun. Without another word, she held the umbrella over her head and stepped out of the loft door. Before Cal could say or do anything, she fell. When he looked down, he saw her lying on the ground in the hay, with the broken umbrella by her side.

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Alan was stooped next to Helen, holding one of her hands when she opened her eyes. He brushed the hay from her face as he spoke to her. “Thank goodness for the hay!”

“Tell me, “ Alan asked. “Does it hurt badly? Tell me where you hurt.”

Helen moved and started to sit up but was too stunned to speak. She saw

Alan glaring up at Cal who looked horrified that she had actually tried to fly.

“She seems to be all right,” Alan shouted as he lifted Helen in his arms and turned toward the house. “Lucky for her, and for you, too, that we had pitched the hay out for Maude!”

“Now, you can be the one to rake the hay inside the stall, and you can be standing here to explain all this when Papa gets home,” Alan said

What happened to Cal turned out to be far worse than any punishment.

next chapter—Red paper reads ‘quarantine’

Adapted and reprinted with permission. Written by Helen Marley based on her mother’s stories; illustrated by Thorne Worley. Provided by the N.C. Press Foundation, Newspapers in Education.

ACTIVITY: What does this chapter tell you about Helen and Cal and their relationship? What do you learn about their Papa? Cite evidence from text.

Read a comic strip or other news story or column that involves a family and explain what you learn about the family members and their relationships.

HISTORY: Winston-Salem’s major daily is over 100 years old. What local newspaper serves your area?