

The Boy and the Rescue Pigeon



Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

The Boy and the Rescue Pigeon

Aysel Banu YAVUZAL



On a windy Saturday morning, the boy climbed the last flight of stairs to his uncle's rooftop. His mustard-yellow rain jacket flapped, and his red rubber boots squeaked on each step. Above him, the sky was wide and grey, and a soft cooing sound floated down. He pushed open the heavy door and stepped into the light. "Uncle Ramon?" he called, looking around.



Uncle Ramon stood beside a wooden loft, his grey cap tilted back and his brown overalls dusty. "Welcome, little one!" he said, his warm brown eyes crinkling. "Come meet my rescue pigeons." The boy stared at the wire cage. Inside, about twenty pigeons fluttered and cooed. "They're just simple birds," the boy thought, wrinkling his freckled nose. "What's so special about them?"



Uncle Ramon laughed. "Simple? Watch this." He opened the loft door, and a blue-grey pigeon with a red leg band hopped onto his hand. "This is Pepper. She's the smartest of the flock." Pepper's neck shimmered green and purple in the light. She tilted her head at the boy, her bright orange eyes curious. The boy leaned closer, noticing a white patch on her wing.



Uncle Ramon handed the boy a small bag of seeds. "Pigeons are clever helpers, not just pretty birds," he said. "They can find their way home from miles away, even in bad weather. Rescue pigeons carry messages and help people." The boy sprinkled seeds into his palm. Pepper pecked gently, her pink feet tickling his skin. "Really?" he whispered, his dark-brown eyes wide. "How do they do that?"



Uncle Ramon pointed to Pepper's head. "They use the sun, the stars, and even the earth's magnetic field like a compass. And they remember landmarks." The boy watched the flock peck and preen, their coloured leg bands—red, blue, and yellow—glinting. Some had speckled wings. "They're not simple at all," the boy admitted. "They're amazing!" He felt a warm glow of respect growing inside him.



Suddenly, the wind howled, and dark clouds swallowed the sun. The pigeons fluttered wildly, their coos turning to frightened cries. "A storm's coming!" Uncle Ramon shouted. "Help me calm them!" The boy's heart raced, but he stood steady. He spread his arms wide, speaking softly, just like his uncle taught him. "Shh, it's okay, little friends. We're here."



Pepper flapped up to the boy's shoulder and cooed gently, as if she understood. The flock settled a little, watching her. Uncle Ramon blew his whistle—a low, soothing note—and the pigeons turned toward the loft. "They trust Pepper," the boy realized. "And Pepper trusts us." He walked slowly toward the loft door, and the birds followed, hopping and fluttering behind him.



The rain began to fall, light at first, then harder. The boy pulled his hood up, his curly black hair safe inside. "Guide them inside!" Uncle Ramon called over the wind. The boy opened the loft door wide and stood beside it, waving his arms gently. Pepper flew in first, her white wing patch flashing. One by one, the others followed, their feathers ruffled and wet.



But two pigeons were still outside, huddled on the ledge, too scared to move. "We can't leave them!" the boy shouted. Uncle Ramon nodded. "Together, then. I'll go left; you go right." They moved slowly, their voices soft and calm. The boy held out his hand, and one pigeon hopped onto his palm. Uncle Ramon scooped up the other. "Good teamwork," he said, smiling.



Inside the loft, the pigeons settled on their perches, safe and dry. The boy counted them, his lips moving silently. "All twenty," he said, sighing with relief. Uncle Ramon wiped rain from his face. "You did well, nephew. They stayed calm because you stayed calm." The boy looked at Pepper, who preened her blue-grey feathers. "She helped too," he said. "She's a real leader."



The storm passed as quickly as it came, and sunlight streamed through the loft windows. Uncle Ramon pointed to Pepper's red leg band. "She once flew home through a storm like that, all the way from the mountains. Rescue pigeons carry messages to people who need help. They're brave and smart." The boy nodded slowly. "And they deserve our kindness," he said softly.



The boy opened his satchel and pulled out a small notebook. "I want to remember everything about them," he said, writing down what he'd learned. Uncle Ramon smiled. "You can visit anytime. The pigeons will remember you too—they never forget a kind friend." Pepper hopped onto the boy's knee and cooed, as if agreeing. The boy stroked her soft feathers gently.



As the sun set, the boy helped Uncle Ramon clean the loft and refill the water dishes. The pigeons cooed contentedly, their colours glowing in the golden light. "You know," the boy said, "I used to think pigeons were just simple birds. But they're clever and loyal. And every animal deserves respect—even the small ones." Uncle Ramon nodded. "That's a fine lesson, little one."



The boy said goodbye to Pepper and the flock, promising to return soon. On the way home, he thought about the storm and how teamwork had kept every bird safe. He thought about Pepper's bright eyes and her gentle coo. He felt proud and warm inside. "Rescue pigeons are heroes," he whispered to himself, smiling as he walked.



That night, the boy drew a picture of Pepper in his notebook, with her red leg band and white wing patch. He wrote: "Pigeons are smart, brave, and kind. They find their way home." He fell asleep dreaming of flying high above the rooftops, leading the flock safely back to the loft, where Uncle Ramon waited with a smile.



The next weekend, the boy returned to the rooftop with a pocket full of seeds and a heart full of respect. Pepper greeted him with a happy coo, and the flock fluttered around him like old friends. "Welcome back, little one," Uncle Ramon said. "Ready to learn more?" The boy nodded, his freckled face beaming. Every animal, he knew, deserves kindness and respect.