

# Edinburgh International Film Festival 2016 Ithaca \*\*\*



Based on William Saroyen's book 'The Human Comedy', the film is set in wartime Ithaca, New York. The only thing which would have made the superb sets and costumes more realistic would have been a sepia tint.

Homer Macaulay, the young protagonist, an excellent Alex Neustaedter, goes to work in the local telegraph office after the death of his father, to help support his mother (Meg Ryan), sister and brother. His older brother has just gone off to war and writes him long, frank, supportive letters. To his horror, part of Homer's job is to deliver letters of condolence from the War Office, informing families of the death of their loved ones: in fact his first such job involves actually reading the telegram to the mother.

Sam Shepard excels as a crusty, drunken old telegraph operator and Tom Hanks cameos as Homer's dead father. [tweet\_box design="default"]Meg Ryan's directorial debut is a fine film which tells an interesting story but comes a little unstuck with one or two of the narrative details.[/tweet\_box]