

EMMA SIDE#1

1949 N.H. Geographic Saw it in 1954

1.

ACT I

SETTING: *An amalgamation of crates that can be stacked in different ways to represent various locations in the life of EMMA GATEWOOD. Among these crates we'll find a National Geographic Magazine.*

AT RISE: *A crate sits center stage. Lights up on EMMA GATEWOOD standing on it. She holds a walking stick in one hand, and has a homemade denim sack tossed over the opposite shoulder.*

EMMA — START

(Singing)
Oh beautiful for spacious skies
For amber waves of grain...

(Beat. She notices the audience.)

Here I stand
atop a mountain.
A mountain in Maine.
A mountain called Katahdin.
Elevation five thousand
two hundred
sixty-eight feet.
Sometimes
atop this mountain
clouds are so thick
you can't see your hand front of your face.
Not today.
Today
September 25th, 1955
blue sky.
Wind, fierce and cold.
I can see for miles every direction.
The view is...

(She looks. She can't find the words.)

Words elude me.

EMMA (cont.)

(To audience)

If I was a painter
a poet
I could a looked over all this
and written words like
“spacious skies”
or “amber waves of grain.”
But I ain’t a painter.
Nor a poet.
I’m a mother.
A grandmother.
I make a good rhubarb pie.
Decent pot roast.
And I love to walk.

The last 146 days
I walked over two thousand miles
through 14 states.
First woman to solo thru-hike
the Appalachian Trail.
And the question
the one question
everybody asked me...
Why?
Why’d you risk your life?
Expose yourself to rain, snow, sleet, ice
mud, rocks, swollen rivers?
Bears, wolves, rattlesnakes?
Why do it?
Why make this journey?

I told ‘em
“I thought it would be a lark.”
But that didn’t satisfy ‘em.
Folks kept insisting
there must be more.
A deeper reason.
But there ain’t.
I thought it would be a lark.
I wanted an adventure.
That’s it.
The end.

(She looks around at the audience.)

EMMA (cont.)

(To audience)

I can see from the looks on your faces
 you don't believe me neither.
 Maybe some of you even think I'm flat out lying.
 But if you'd ever walked the trail
 you'd know

It ain't about the why.
 It's about the journey.

(The sound of wind.)

Storm's moving in.
 Gotta leave soon.
 Gotta make my way back down the mountain
 else be trapped.

I been trapped before
 but I fought like the devil and escaped.
 The Great Escape...

We'll start there.
 We'll call that
 the beginning of my journey.

My name is Emma Gatewood.
 I'm a 67-year-old woman from
 Gallia County, Ohio.
 You can call me Grandma.

END

(Music under as she steps off the crate and moves to another location.)

When most folks think of Ohio
 they think flat.
 Flat roads.
 Flat fields.
 Flat sky.
 Flat dialect.

(EMMA speaks in the flat, nasal dialect of a mid-westerner.)

"Oh my God, take your hands out of your pockets."