

MAN Side #1

8.

START



What is it, Daddy?

EMMA

What'd I tell you 'bout dragging your feet?

HUGH

I ain't...

EMMA

(HUGH interrupts, coming towards her, shuffling his feet.)

Shuffle.
Shuffle.
Shuffle.
That's how you do.
Drives me crazy.
Man wants to take a nap
and all the time
Shuffle
Shuffle
keeping me awake.
Pick up your feet, girl.

HUGH

Yes, Daddy.

EMMA

I got fifteen children.
All of 'em but you pick up their feet...

HUGH

(HUGH looks around at the audience.)

Why they here?

They're here cuz of me.

EMMA

You?
Why?
You ain't special.
Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle
that's all you are.

HUGH

Daddy... EMMA

You fought in a War? HUGH

No, sir but... EMMA

I did. HUGH
 War Between the States.
 I was there.
 You tell 'em that?

Not yet... EMMA

Union soldier tried and true! HUGH
 I was special.

(To audience, saluting)

Private Hugh Caldwell
 Company D
 First Regiment
 West Virginia Veteran Infantry.

(End salute)

Daddy... EMMA

(To audience, ignoring her) HUGH
 Joined up November
 1861.
 17 years old.
 Saw lots of action.
 Charleston.
 Buffington Island.
 Cloyd's Mountain...

(Beat as he considers.)

EMMA

Thank you, Daddy...

HUGH

(Interrupting, to audience)

Opequon
Fisher's Hill
Cedar Creek...

That last one
Cedar Creek
that was October 18 and 64.
Heavy fog.
Shenandoah Valley.
We was sleeping.
Johnny Reb attacked early
surprised us.
Fighting was fierce.
Bullets like hailstorm.
We fell back.
Sun come up.
Fog burns off.
Still they come.
Men dying.
Morning becomes noon becomes afternoon.
Me and my unit was pinned down behind a rock fence...

(He snaps his fingers at EMMA.)

The fence, girl.
The fence!

*(EMMA places another crate on top of the first, creating the fence.
HUGH pushes EMMA out of the way and crouches in front of it, as
if the enemy was on the upstage side, addressing audience.)*

There we was
imagine this now
there we was
pinned 'gainst this fence.
Bullets
spraying over our heads.

HUGH (cont.)

Pew!

Pew!

Pew!

No way a knowing how close them Rebs was

'less one of us stuck his head over the fence

peeked a look.

But that would be suicide.

Only a fool would do that.

A fool...

or a hero.

That's when ol' Sarge said...

(To EMMA)

You be Sarge.

EMMA

Daddy, no...

HUGH

Do it!

(He grabs EMMA's arm and drags her down with him. HUGH turns back to audience.)

That's when ol' Sarge said...

(He looks at EMMA. She hesitates.)

Go on now!

Say the words

(To audience)

That's when ol' Sarge said...

EMMA

(As the Sarge)

Boys

I need me a volunteer to reconnoiter the enemy position.

HUGH

(To audience)

Remember now
them bullets
they're zipping over the fence.
Pew!
Pew!
Pew!

EMMA

(Still resigned)

Who among you
is brave enough to look over the fence?

HUGH

(To audience)

Pew!
Pew!
Pew!

EMMA

(Let's wrap it up)

Who among you
is a hero?

HUGH

(To audience)

'Fore them other boys could even think to open their mouths
I shot my head up.
Snuck a peek over that fence.
Just like this...

(He quickly peeks over the fence then hunkers back down.)

You see that?
I was real quick.
Here
let me show you again.

EMMA

Daddy...

(He quickly peeks over the fence then hunkers back down.)

HUGH

(To audience)
See?

EMMA

That was real good, Daddy, but...

HUGH

(Interrupting, to audience)
What I did there?
Risking my life like that?
Changed the course of the battle.
In that brief moment
I was able to ascertain the enemy position.
With that information
General Sheridan himself
commanded a counterattack.
Had those Rebs running!

END

(To EMMA)

I'm done with the fence.

(EMMA removes the top crate and places it elsewhere. HUGH takes a seat on the remaining crate, and wearily stretches out one leg. To audience)

Later on that day
during the counterattack
I caught a bullet in the leg
just back of the shin.
In and out
through the calf muscle.
Wrapped it up tight.
Kept on fighting

By the time the battle was over
I was hurting bad.
Dragging that leg.
Foot scraping the ground.
Shuffle.
Shuffle.
Shuffle.