

THEATRE THREE presents *The Bridges of Madison County*

CAROLYN, MICHAEL, FRANCESCA.

CAROLYN. Michael! What is that in your mouth?

MICHAEL. Beef jerky.

CAROLYN. Gross!

FRANCESCA. (*Answering phone.*) Johnsons'.

CAROLYN. Michael says I can't wear his red shirt.

FRANCESCA. Where are you?

CAROLYN. A gas station.

MICHAEL. Mom!

CAROLYN. Michael says he has to wear the red shirt or he won't win. And if he wears it, it will stink and his presentation is right before mine.

MICHAEL. I don't stink. You stink.

CAROLYN. Do you have another red shirt you could bring me?

FRANCESCA. Your Dad would not sit there and wait while I brought you another shirt. Michael, you don't need luck to win. Neither does Carolyn, but if she's scared, the shirt will help.

CAROLYN. Thanks, Mom. (*To MICHAEL.*) I told you she's say that.

MICHAEL. Is that what you're going to do? Call Mom for the rest of your life?

MICHAEL, CAROLYN. [1]

MICHAEL. Hey. Want a drink?

CAROLYN. What have you been doing?

MICHAEL. Talking to people.

CAROLYN. About what?

MICHAEL. I don't want to be a farmer.

CAROLYN. You don't want to be a farmer? Dad is going to kill you.

MICHAEL. No, he won't. I already told Mom. She's going to talk to him.

CAROLYN. Then who's going to run the farm.

MICHAEL. You are.

MICHAEL, CAROLYN. [2]

CAROLYN. Mom! I won a BLUE RIBBON! Stevie got Best Steer! Want to see it?

MICHAEL. Wait 'til you see the slideshow.

CAROLYN. And I met this great guy who's going to teach me calf-roping.

MICHAEL. You're going to break your neck.

CAROLYN. I'm a way better rider than you

MICHAEL. Well, I think we should return all the horses to the wild anyway.

CAROLYN. Michael spent all his time talking to an anti-farm guy.

MICHAEL. An animal rights activist.

CAROLYN. Just what we need, for all the animals to be free. Then they can get hit by cars or break into houses, and eat all the cat food.

MICHAEL. That's not what he wants. He wants decent treatment for them, in their life and their death.

CAROLYN. Great. Maybe he can talk to vegetables, too! Maybe the corn would like to be planted in circles.

MICHAEL. What we should do is ditch this vegetable thing and plant marijuana. They sat it's gonna cure glaucoma one day. Or poppies. Last night this guy showed me how if you just scrape back the poppy bark, you can get some of the gummy stuff they make—

CAROLYN. Shut-up, Michael—

MICHAEL. —opium out of. All the hospitals use it for morphine.

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FRANCESCA, BUD.

FRANCESCA. Johnsons'.

BUD. There you are! I called ten minutes ago and you didn't answer.

FRANCESCA. I think I was asleep in the swing.

BUD. You sound different. Is everything OK?

FRANCESCA. Well. I did have a little glass of that brandy I bought for an anniversary I think. Long time ago.

BUD. The anniversary where Michael's girlfriend fell in the lake.

FRANCESCA. Michael was very brave going in after her the way he did.

BUD. I'm not sure we ever got the complete story on that one.

FRANCESCA. It's a beautiful night here. There are thousands of stars out tonight.

BUD. I wish I were there with you. Did Marge come over, or Charlie and Marge? What made you think of the brandy?

FRANCESCA. No, I was by myself. I guess I just thought it had been up there long enough.

BUD. OK. Now don't sleep in the swing. Go get in the bed.

FRANCESCA. Goodnight.

BUD, CAROLYN.

CAROLYN. I'm so nervous, I can't stand it.

BUD. Well, you have to stand it. Just don't talk to the judges unless they talk to you. And say Ma'am and Sir, no matter what they ask you. Like it was the army.

CAROLYN. What if he does something stupid?

BUD. Stevie is a steer. What is he going to do? You did everything you can. All you have to do now is wait. The judges know what they're looking for. He's either got it or he doesn't. My personal opinion is that he does. He could be Steer of the Year for all we know.

CAROLYN. Could you stand somewhere else?

BUD. You don't want me with you?

CAROLYN. I want them to know he's mine. That I raised him, not you.

BUD. OK. Just remember. He's the big deal here. They don't like a farm kid being too proud.

CAROLYN. I know that.

BUD. Carolyn ... you're gonna be fine.

MARGE, CHARLIE.

MARGE. Charlie, come in here quick. I think there's a man picking vegetables in Frannie's garden. She told me this afternoon, a strange man came up her driveway in a blue truck. You don't think he's been there this whole time, do you?

CHARLIE. Marge, would you look at yourself? Put down those binoculars. If Francesca wants to let a photographer have a few zucchini, that's her business. We're all of us givin' food away this time of year. Put down those binoculars.

MARGE. How did you know he was a photographer?

CHARLIE. Pete sat next to him at lunch in town. Said he was here to take pictures of the covered bridges, Pete told him where they were. Drives a dark blue pickup. Lives in Washington State. Asked Pete where he should stay, Pete told him the Motor Court.

MARGE. If Pete told him how to find the bridges, then why did he drive up in Frannie's driveway this afternoon when we were talking on the phone.

CHARLIE. Maybe he was lost. I saw his truck over at Roseman Bridge myself, so she probably told him the back way.

MARGE. If he's have driven up my drive, I'd have told him where to go, that's for sure.

CHARLIE. I'll drive you over to Francesca's right now, if you want to make a fool of yourself and find out what's going on with all this vegetable picking.

MARGE. Oh, no. I would never do that.

CHARLIE. Then stop talking about it and let's go. What time did he kids say? Did you make a pie?

MARGE. Yes, I did. And a cake. And if we play any Bridge, you have to promise me you won't open with five clubs, ever again. I don't care if your cheating card shark thingamajig tells you to. Don't do it.

CHARLIE. What kind of pie?

MARGE. Your favorite.

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ROBERT [I]. It's hard to take a good picture. Sometimes I see tourists taking pictures and I want to say, "get closer," you know? "Move in on the thing so we can see it." And turn your camera up to vertical, especially if you're taking pictures of people. People are vertical. Usually. (*Beat.*) Thanks again for everything. But especially that wonderful supper. I don't remember the last time anybody cooked for me. And I was thinking maybe if you kept that brandy at the front of the cupboard, or even out on the counter, you might get a little more enjoyment out of it.

ROBERT [II]. People been drivin' all day taking pictures of the hippie taking pictures of the bridge. It always happens—everywhere I go. Like it's not right for a man to just be passing through. You'd think I'd be used to it. But I'm always suspect somehow. That time I went to Iceland, a lady wouldn't rent me a room because she said I was one of the Hidden People. Said her mother told her you should never go into a cave with a Hidden Person, so no room for me.

ROBERT, FRANCESCA.

ROBERT. You are so beautiful. Do you know how beautiful you are? How did I get here?

FRANCESCA. I invited you.

ROBERT. Is it OK if I touch you?

FRANCESCA. Is this what always happens when you come to a town? You meet a woman who opens up to you for some reason, she doesn't know why, she invites you for dinner again—

ROBERT. No. I tried to leave yesterday. I tried not to eat supper here. You saw that. No, this isn't what always happens. I *never* let this happen. I never go into this world where people belong to each other. As soon as I know I got the shots they need, I will be gone and on to the next job. So, I know I can't stay anywhere, regardless of what happens. This is why ... I never walk into the house, I never drink the tea, I never stay for supper, I never come back the next night, I never get this close, I never touch our arm, I never do this.

FRANCESCA. I understand.

ROBERT. And you don't do this either.

FRANCESCA. No. I don't.

ROBERT. So, if you're going to make me go to the Motor Court, do it now, OK. I think I could leave now if you wanted me to.

ROBERT, FRANCESCA, BUD.

FRANCESCA. I liked being out in the world with you today.

ROBERT. Well, I don't know if I'd call Des Moines "the world," but I liked it, too. Then again, I've never felt like this so I don't know what to call anything.

FRANCESCA. Felt like what?

ROBERT. Dizzy. And happy. I don't feel like we're in Iowa. I feel like we've been picked up in a tornado and we're on our way to ... (*Phone rings.*)

FRANCESCA. Johnsons'.

BUD. Frannie. I was getting worried. I've been calling the house all day.

FRANCESCA. I went to Des Moines.

BUD. What for?

FRANCESCA. I went to the movies.

BUD. You don't go the movies.

FRANCESCA. I would if you liked them.

BUD. What movie did you see?

FRANCESCA. Bud, I'm so tired. I don't remember the title. A western. Bud. If the kids left you alone, you should go down to the bar.

BUD. Where do you think I've been for the last two hours?

FRANCESCA. I'm glad you're having a good time. Goodnight, Bud.

BUD. Good night.

ROBERT. Do you want me to go?

FRANCESCA. No, please.