

Big Bridge Over the Loup

A One-Act Play

By

Brian Kokensparger

SETTING: Roadside, just south of the big bridge over the Loup River near Columbus, Nebraska.

AT RISE: OLD MAN is standing a stone's throw from the road, a little distance away from his car, which is offstage, unseen.

OLD MAN

Wanna take a ride with me? Wanna come along? It won't be a long ride, it'll be a quick ride. Real short. Yeah. It'll be short. Over there, see that? That's the big bridge over the Loup. It's a seven span 8 panel Parker through truss. One thousand, two hundred and seventy feet. It was built because of the original Lincoln Highway. Long ago. 1932,1933, somewhere around then. Replaced some little podunk bridge long forgotten. See that bridge used to be two-way for the longest time. It's aligned to run north and south. But it's where the people are goin' that counts. It's where the people are goin'. The people goin' south on the bridge are really goin' to the west once the road turns, just down there a bit. An' of course the cars goin' north on the bridge turn to the east, right down 23rd Street. Cars used to go north and south. Both on the same bridge. Now they just go one way, to the south - westbound, if they keep goin'. An' most of 'em do. They don't wanna stop here. Wanna blow on through. Both lanes. Two lanes a' traffic blowin' through to the west. They built that new one over there for

east-bound traffic. Two lanes over there, too. Our little town grew up. A two-way bridge wasn't good enough for us anymore. Nope. Gotta build another bridge right next to it so you can have twice as many cars whippin' to and fro. Progress.

So what would happen if a car did go to the north on the south-goin' bridge, the big bridge over the Loup? What would happen? That's what we're going to find out, aren't we? Shit yeah, we're going to find out. What happens when a car goes east on the big old bridge over the Loup river? You drink up. Coke's better when it's cold. You don't want it to heat up, 'cause then it starts fizzin' more and tastin' like the can a little bit. That's right. Drink up. See, when I was growin' up, just a little guy. That was always the bridge. That bridge was the way into town, and the way out a' town. Now it's only the way out. It's not the way in anymore. Huh, uh. The bridge has changed. It's changed. Tell you how much it's changed, over here on the south side of the bridge, see how there's a sign that says do not enter? Can't see it? Vision a little blurry? That happens. Do not enter. Do not *enter*. Do *not* enter. No matter how you say it, you can't help but hear the "no." I was married back in 54, beautiful young lady, had ourselves three kids: Matthew, Tommy, then the princess Aileen. Good kids all, for the most part. Sure they had their troubles, but, what kid

growin' up in Columbus doesn't have their trouble, you know what I mean? It's a small town; too much going on. Way too much going on, but at the same time not enough. Kids don't have enough to do, and they start lookin' for trouble. And you know if enough kids start lookin' for trouble, they find it, without too much trouble. We got em up through grade school and high school. Sure Matt was hauled in once for drinkin' at a senior party. Hell, if that's the worst thing he ever did, then I guess we're okay, but, of course, that's not the worst thing he ever did. We don't need to get into that right now. Good ole Aileen, she was the baby. You know the babies get away with everything. Yep. And she did. She did it all. Pretty much anything you can think of, I guess she did it. She told us. Last year she got jacked up on this methamphetamine business that's been around here the last few years. Stole a six pack of Mountain Dew from the Quicke Mart an' when Old Beehive Hair chased her across the highway she got face planted into the concrete by a Peterbuilt. I guess she's over in Omaha now, doin' 5 to 7, for involuntary manslaughter. Of course it was a

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