



# A Thousand Country Roads: An Epilogue to The Bridges of Madison County

*Robert James Waller*

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At last, the rest of the story.

Epilogue: A concluding part added to a literary work.

There was something about this man that was out of the ordinary, something almost familiar about him.

Sunlight angled down and caught the right side of his face, caught the long gray hair parted in the middle and brushed back along the top and sides. The sea wind came up and blew his hair, and he reached to push it back from his face, pulled an orange suspender higher on his shoulder, adjusted the leather Swiss Army knife case on his belt. The sun passed behind a cloud, and he fell into shadow for a few seconds before sunlight again came on him. She experienced an involuntary shudder and had a powerful urge to walk outside and talk with the man.

And later:

He was glad he had come. It had not been a mistake. Here, in the old bridge, he felt a kind of serenity, and he bathed in the feeling and came quiet within himself. At that moment, he knew this place would be his home ground, the place where his ashes would someday drift out over Middle River. He hoped some of his dust would become one with the bridge and the land, and that some might wash far downstream and into larger rivers and then into all the seas he had crossed on crowded troop ships or night jets to somewhere.

--From A Thousand Country Roads

Ten years and twelve million copies after the first printing of The Bridges of Madison County, Robert James Waller brings to a poignant conclusion his story of the love affair between a wandering photographer and the conventional wife of an Iowa farmer. This stirring conclusion is for everyone who loved The Bridges of Madison County.

In A Thousand Country Roads, Robert Kincaid initially finds himself with little but memories; memories of a lonely existence lived mostly on the road and memories of Francesca Johnson, the woman whose passion he stirred so briefly and with such power.

So, with his memories pushing him, searching for something undefined, something to give meaning to the rest of his life, Kincaid takes to the road again in what becomes a journey of discovery and surprise.

With his dog Highway beside him in an old truck named Harry, Kincaid begins a long winding run back to Roseman Bridge in Madison County, Iowa, returning to the place of his great love affair.

Living her own solitary life, Francesca still visits Roseman Bridge and reflects on her days with Robert Kincaid. Cherishing the memory of the strange, wandering man who changed her world, she vows to search for him.

On the expedition he calls Last Time, Kincaid wanders through Oregon, northern California eastward to the

Dakotas, and on to Iowa. Along the way, a chance encounter with a woman from his distant past reveals another dimension of his life that he could not have imagined.

Finally, in a Seattle bar called Shortys, where saxophonist Nighthawk Cummings still plays on Tuesday nights, Kincaid turns in his chair, looking inward and outward at the same time, and smiles at what he sees sitting before him.

And so it comes, the ultimate loner finds he is not as alone as he once believed.



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#### **Jeanie Clark:**

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