When You Love Somewhere for a Long Time

He has planned this road trip for no reason except he loves her and it is summer and he needs something to do. She sits beside him in the truck, a basket of apples on the floorboard, a map across her lap. He loves Nevada, loves leaving their Midwest home for the spare embrace of desert, open light, loves the way the land here allows a man to feel as if he has potential.

They've driven through Currant and Warm Springs and he has promised that when they get to Tonopah he will buy her dinner in the old hotel where gamblers and boxers have left their stories and the ghost of a jilted woman in a red dress wanders the third floor. He tells her next time they will travel out to Tuscarora or down to Boundary Peak. He does love the land, this man. He does the driving, most of the talk. He's trying to teach her things, bring her closer to the world outside of kitchen and bedroom and yard. She listens. If she spoke there would be things she could tell, things a man just somehow misses when he travels, no matter how large his heart:

Somewhere in a valley there is a road called Breakaheart, and along its washboard rests a graying farmhouse. She has often imagined the woman who must live there, perhaps her name is Hannah, how her husband may have one day taken down the gun and driven off. Although she would be sad, Hannah wouldn't be surprised to hear the hounds, the good men come to tell her she's now alone. For three days Hannah neglects to brush her hair, but on the fourth she is up, hanging laundry, forgiving everyone she's ever known and looking up into the sweet, strong sun.

But he drives, hums along to the country stations, talks, asks her if steak will be good tonight, a fat rare one. She smiles and nods. These road trips are worth their dust, their unfamiliar beds, their exaggerated
hope. These are the only times she lives
in long, luxurious stretches of time,
when she lives, utterly complete, without him.

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