

## 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.

Gailmarie Pahmeier

From *The House on Breakaheart Road*, University of Nevada Press