

*Montana Lovesong*  
by  
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CAST

JESSIE

Mid to late 30s. The owner and proprietor of the Hungry Horse Diner in Hungry Horse Montana. She'd describe herself as being “happy enough.”

ROLLINS

Mid to late 30s. An inspector from the Department of the Interior on a bureaucratic mission in the uncivilized West.

LIZ

Mid to late 20s. A Ranger from Glacier National Park who has suddenly found herself in the Southern Nevada desert.

(A diner in the mountains.  
A desert plain with neon in the distance.

(In the diner, JESSIE is behind the  
counter, wiping it down. ROLLINS,  
wearing a suit and tie and looking like he’s  
not slept well for a few days, is finishing  
up his dinner, drinking coffee.

(LIZ, in a park ranger uniform with a  
small bouquet of wildflowers, stands apart,  
alone on the desert floor.)

JESSIE:

As I heard it told they met up in Glacier. Just started talkin’. She was a park ranger  
and he was some backpackin’ flatlander in Montana for the first time in his life. And  
what Jeannie told me was, they just outta nowhere kissed each other then hopped in  
her Jeep—

ROLLINS:

Actually, the park owned that vehicle—

JESSIE:

Whose ever it was, they drove it to Vegas. Eleven hours later they were married. But  
I don’t so much believe that part ’cause I don’t know no one who’s ever got to Vegas  
in less’n fifteen hours.

ROLLINS:

But they stopped in here on the way?

JESSIE:

’Course they did. My little Hungry Horse Diner, right here in little old Hungry  
Horse, Montana, population: 700—I guess even young folks in the throes of crazy  
love gotta eat.

ROLLINS:

And for this the state declared an official holiday?

LIZ:

On my days off I would climb up to the Continental Divide.  
Places without trails. And not the big peaks.  
There were always people on the big peaks.  
The glaciers too. Too busy—  
they're where the park gets its name after all.

ROLLINS:

Now, did you actually see the Jeep they were in?

JESSIE:

I got this magical story to tell and you wanna know about the Jeep?

ROLLINS:

That's why I'm here.

LIZ:

Still...

there are plenty of places to go where  
no one goes, or where you're at least less likely to run into  
someone. And I know 'em all. I know more of 'em than most of  
the rangers.

(beat)

So it was ...disarming to find him there.

JESSIE:

What did you say you do again?

ROLLINS:

No one else in this state seems to care what happened to federal property, so they  
sent me to find out.

JESSIE:

Who sent you?

ROLLINS:

Department of the Interior. I'm an inspector.

JESSIE:

This is National Park business.

ROLLINS:

The Depart of the Interior consists of eight bureaus. The National Park Service is one of those. So, you saw the Jeep?

JESSIE:

What're the other seven?

LIZ:

Not that I never run into anyone else, but this was different. He was sitting there with these wildflowers in his hand.

I was about to tell him, “You can't pick those.”

But he headed me off. He said,

“I know I can't pick these...but I saw you coming.

And I knew that they all had to be yours.”

ROLLINS:

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Bureau of Reclamation

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

U.S. Geological Survey

Office of Surface Mining

Minerals Management Service

JESSIE:

What's the Bureau of Reclamation do?

ROLLINS:

They manage water in the West.

JESSIE:

That include here?

ROLLINS:

Yeah, but just this corner of Montana. The area west of the Continental Divide.

JESSIE:

So what've they done for us?

ROLLINS:

They're the reason the Hungry Horse Reservoir exists.

LIZ:

So I took the flowers and it was like seeing them for the first time even though I climb up every year to see the wildflower blooms above the treeline.

JESSIE:

What'd you say your name was?

ROLLINS:

Rollins.

JESSIE:

No, your first name.

ROLLINS:

Mark?

JESSIE:

Mark.

(pause)

You're cute when you're talkin' about the Department of the Interior, Mark.

(beat)

ROLLINS:  
I'm not married.

JESSIE:  
I noticed.

(awkward silence)

ROLLINS:  
So...so what happened? After the wedding in Vegas?  
Where did they take the vehicle in question.

(pause)

JESSIE:  
You didn't hear?

LIZ:  
I don't know why we decided to go to Vegas  
Why not Spokane, where I'm from? Or Iowa, where he's from?  
Why not just stay in the mountains?

(pause)

I think it was the fact that Vegas *wasn't* the right choice.  
the opposite of where we should've gone.  
So it was the perfect proving ground.

JESSIE:  
What happened after the wedding is why they made it a statewide holiday.

LIZ:  
We made it through. Even in the glaring lights  
of the nighttime Strip, we knew it was right.  
We made it through...

(silence)

ROLLINS:  
What happened?

LIZ:  
Just in time we made it.  
It was something waiting a long time to take him.

JESSIE:  
Some sort of congenital heart defect.

LIZ:  
He should've gone years before. Each day was an unexpected gift. That's why he spent them all traveling to places he'd never seen. That's why he knew to find me when and where he did.

(silence)

ROLLINS:  
He just...died?

JESSIE:  
Yeah...

ROLLINS:  
And that's why you all—?

JESSIE:  
We get a bad rap here in Montana. Sure, we're a hard people. Mountains and plains and the bitter winters'll do that to ya. But underneath...we're just a bunch of romantics. We still believe in all the stuff that everyone else in this country's forgot. Wasn't a dry eye in the state when the story got out...

(pause)

ROLLINS:

What happened to her?

JESSIE

Oh right, you’ve got your investigation—

ROLLINS:

To hell with the investigation. I just wanna know what happened.

(silence)

JESSIE:

She never came back. Most people don’t think she ever will.

LIZ:

Just before... He bought me this atlas and  
showed me all the places he still had to go to.

(beat)

I’m gonna start with those.

ROLLINS:

That’s awful.

JESSIE:

It’s not so bad. Could’ve been worse.

(silence)

So what’s next for you? Down to Vegas to find that Jeep? Back to Washington?

(pause)

ROLLINS:

Well ...

I hear the Reservoir needs a new supervisor.

(Blackout.

End of play.)