Writer’s Note

The Radiator Saints began with the feeling of one of my favorite albums, Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks*. I wasn't interested in adapting a particular song or borrowing a story from the album. What stayed with me was the emotional territory: looking back at a relationship after it has ended, remembering love and resentment at the same time, and gradually realizing that the version of the breakup you've been carrying around for years may not be entirely accurate. I wanted to turn that feeling into a road movie.

Zack is a poet who hasn't written anything in years. He has traded the creative life he once imagined for brutal physical work in the New Mexico heat and a nearly empty trailer. Then an old book of poetry in his glovebox brings back a memory of Bailey, the woman he once loved, and he decides he needs to find her.

The trip takes him out of New Mexico, through Colorado, and eventually toward the Oregon coast. Along the way, ordinary things keep pulling him backward: a match, rain, a diner, a book, something heard on the radio. At first, the memories support the story Zack wants to remember. He and Bailey were two broke young artists freezing together in a terrible apartment, convinced they were going to conquer the world. There is something romantic about that version.

The geography was personal to me too. I've spent much of my life in New Mexico, but I also lived in the Pacific Northwest for a while. I always liked the contrast between the dry heat and open landscape of New Mexico and the rain, forests, and coastline of the Northwest. It felt like a natural way to reflect how far apart Zack and Bailey's lives had become.

The farther he travels, though, the harder it becomes to maintain the version of the past he prefers. Other memories begin surfacing: pride, jealousy, opportunities he sabotaged, things he said that can't be taken back, and the ways he sometimes used the idea of being a suffering artist to excuse behavior that hurt someone who loved him. The road trip gradually becomes less about finding Bailey and more about remembering their relationship honestly.

I didn't want to write the familiar story where someone crosses the country, appears on an old love's doorstep, and discovers that they were destined to be together all along. Real life isn't like that. People move on. They create lives you weren't part of. Sometimes regret doesn't give you the right to reenter someone's world.

I was also interested in the way we can romanticize relationships after they're gone. Zack has spent years treating what happened with Bailey almost like part of his artistic mythology. Remembering it honestly means admitting that pain isn't profound just because you're an artist. Sometimes people simply hurt each other.

The creative part of Zack's life became just as important to me as the relationship. He has convinced himself that Bailey was somehow connected to his ability to write and that losing her meant losing that part of himself. His journey forces him to question that story too. Maybe what he has really been unable to do is move forward while continuing to live inside his preferred version of the past.

I think most people have some relationship they can remember differently depending on which part of it they revisit. There are things we wish we'd said, things we wish we hadn't, and occasional thoughts about what might have happened if we'd been older, kinder, or simply different people at the time. *The Radiator Saints* isn't about getting another chance at the past. It's about understanding it well enough to move on.