History book highway
By Lizzy Wallis

I am buying up every billboard. Eleven per mile marker evenly interspersed along interstate I-70, eight-hundred fourty-one miles from Denver to St. Louis. After twelve years and over twenty times doing the drive, getting my sight slapped by a hundred dozen scolding signs that swear by the salvation of Jesus Christ, I decided to give them something tangible, something beautiful, to call divine.

I am making the sky blush over corn fields through Kansas, and birds swoon in murmurations across Missouri. On each billboard, in big bold brilliant letters, I am telling the story of our love.

Billboards painted with splatters of the jungle juice that jostled your courage to first kiss our freshman year. Pictures of pine needles from our first camping trip, shy hands intertwined on a granite slab. Infinite potential twinkling brightly in our bellies underneath a glowing Milky Way, us not yet grasping what a gift it is to greet one's universe so clearly. A billboard of toothpaste for the first moment I knew I loved you: twenty years old on a ski getaway, when I forgot my toothbrush back home and you let me borrow yours. So certain was my novice heart at that moment, I would have let the words slip out if minty paste not coated my tongue.

The next hour's worth of billboards will be dedicated to our early dating days: stumbling in heels to the symphony and preparing a basket with a picnic lunch for the park. Countless hours studying for tests side by side at coffee shops. Hours spent learning the ins and outs of our bodies in bed. Billboards depicting our post-college move to Wisconsin, dancing in the dollhouse of our attic apartment, sipping beer on the terrace. Playing board games and trivia and going for long walks along the lakes. Then, moving back to Denver, our cars bursting at the seams with all our belongings.

The day I knelt on one knee in the meadow with a frost-covered pine perimeter and sunshine sparkling across the snow. My giddy fingers pulling a simple gold band from my pocket to place my promise of forever onto your hand. Only to have your newly adorned finger fumble in your own bag seconds later, pull out a small smirking box, and propose right back to me.

The next billboards will feature the watercolor palette we hand-painted onto each wedding invitation. Followed by an animated display of us teaching ourselves how to dance, laughter spilling off the screen as our sweatshirt wrapped bodies choreographed our routine to Brandi Carlile's "*The Story.*" An exclamation point on the billboard is dotted with the coin we flipped to see who would walk down the aisle first, both yearning the chance to watch the other walk toward us.

Billboards with mundane moments and every adventure. The night we swam with bioluminescent plankton, dipping into an ocean that presented itself to us as the night sky. The night we hiked a tent up along a ridge in Big Sur, and camped on the side of the earth. A billboard of us kayaking in the morning mist off the coast of Maine, and making out with strangers in a gay bar in Mexico City.

A billboard dedicated to every sly smirk you've ever sent me. Another billboard of all the love poems I've written for you. Topographic billboards tracing the contours of our puzzle piece bodies. A scratch and sniff billboard of the americano I have ready to place in your hands the moment you emerge from the bedroom each morning. Drivers will be swooning for a sip.

A billboard depicting my most consistent mantra: *"you're my favorite person in the entire world."* The next billboard, your promise pouring back to me, all the seriousness punctuated with a wink in your words: *"yeah, you're up there for me too."*

A billboard of you wrapping me in your arms. A billboard of your hand in mine. Billboards showcasing the giggles you gather from my lips like a field of wildflowers, assembled into a bouquet of laughter to brighten our home.

I will keep buying billboards until every beautiful moment of our story is made visible with visuals. And should the bigots set ablaze all the billboards, and believe me I am certain they will try, worry not. For I am teaching the clouds to tell our tale by day, the constellations to carry our canon by night. Because I have seen the intentional annihilation of loves that look like ours from the liturgy, and I will ensure there is no means for plausible deniability. I'll be damned if the history books try to say we were roommates all along.