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High above the carbon labyrinths of southern West Virginia, rising skyward through the region's endless oak and ash there is a giant sandstone spur, the last remnant of a mountain sculpted back by time.

Alone, a person can be shrouded like a stone inside a mountain – buried in the rubble of one's becoming, the scree of failed love and luck. Caught nightly in a laptop's glow, comparing pixelated portraits, gauging strangers' fondnesses for obscure music, dogs, or places to explore.

And yet, in this manner, two fumbling mountains might agree to meet. And as if carved by wind and water the superficial facts give way to presence and attention. She sees he listens earnestly. He sees her, famished and unapologetic, eating her weight in pizza, and he is charmed.

And like time and weather constant on a hillside, their outer earth is slowly washed away. He feels the warm and natural grace of her self-possession. She marvels that his sincerity's sincere, his patience genuine and deep.

And like hours and element applied to rock, in time their deepest selves emerge. He comprehends her lifelong urge to heal. To him, she learns, electricity is more than trade, but, too, the sum of sparks that animate the heart.

And by the autumn day they bounded up the trail to Pinnacle Rock, all the mountain in between them had eroded to that single spur of sandstone where they stood.

All about for miles, the valley's groves of hickory and maple twinkled in the breeze as time collapsed into a single, otherworldly instant:

The mighty mountain faded to the landmark rock, and then that rock became a single, blushing stone, set into a golden ring, glowing in the light

of all good things to come.

