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Goolrick, Robert. Heading Out to Wonderful

Goolrick?s second novel (after *A Reliable Wife*, 2009) is an Appalachian folk ballad given life. It?s just after WWII and Charlie Beale drives into the small Blue Ridge town of Brownsburg, Virginia, looking for something. A place to call home, a place to put down roots. Brownsburg, where no crime has ever been committed and where the landscape makes Charlie?s heart sing, seems to be the perfect place. He offers his services to the local butcher, Will Haislett, buys up land, and begins to settle in. But even as he finds his way in the town, he remains an outsider. The locals love him, but do not socialize with him much. And Charlie makes mistakes, too. He visits every church in town before finding a spiritual home in the African-American Episcopal chapel; he buys more land than he truly needs; he begins to feel like a second father to Sam, Will Haislett?s 5-year-old son; and most dangerously, he falls in love with Sylvan Glass, the young beautiful wife of local small-time plutocrat Harrison Glass, who looks at Sylvan more as an investment than a wife. Sylvan is an outsider like Charlie; born in a small backwoods hollow, she nevertheless dreams of Hollywood and dresses and acts like a movie star. As their affair progresses toward the inevitable explosive climax, poor young Sam struggles to understand something far beyond his young experience and is altered irretrievably by what he witnesses.

Told in alternating viewpoints, this is a timeless tale of illicit passion and violence that builds slowly to a haunting climax. Fans of Goolrick?s first novel will not be disappointed.

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