

# Blue Ridge

*by* Mathew Paust

“Wow.” It came out soft and breathy as a sigh, which matched my own feeling so closely it seemed to come from me as well. I had gone remote after our brief exchange that eased us back to a sense of normalcy after the trauma/comedy of the traffic stop. She'd either felt my need for privacy, and was respecting it, or had slipped into her own thoughts for the hour or so of uneventful wheel time toward our destination.

Our wonderment now was for the spectacle on the horizon ahead. The sun, swollen and going red and lolling above a row of hazy blue teeth was about to be swallowed like a radiant yolk by an epicurean barracuda. The victim orb shrieked richly hued tongues of fire that reached to a docile stratus ceiling far above, illuminating the clouds in a glorious farewell display. We stared transfixed until the sun dropped out of sight, pulling its colorful wake with it. The twilight sky had begun rolling out its nighttime star show before Jamie broke our silence.

“Blue Ridge,” was all she said, recognizing Virginia's stretch of the Appalachian Mountain chain, growing longer in tooth and of a sharper, darker blue the nearer we approached.

