

Day 3

Cartography

by

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*“She” and “Her” are strewn together on the couch,
watching TV. “She” stares at “Her.”*

SHE

I keep looking at your lines.

HER

(Covering her face)

Don't.

SHE

Not those lines.

HER

Smile lines.

SHE

Not those.

HER

Then what lines?

SHE

All of them.

HER

All of what?

SHE

All the lines. Up down left right. From the strands of hair cascading all the way down to the curve of your foot as it rests on my leg. Every line, every swoop, every jagged interruption, every rise and dip. I'm learning the cartography of you.

HER

Don't be poetic about ogling me.

SHE

I'm not ogling--

HER

You're licking me up and down with your eyes.

SHE

I'm studying you.

HER
Well stop it.

SHE
You can look at me.

HER
I've seen you.

SHE
How have you seen me?

HER
What?

SHE
How have you seen me? How do you look at me?

HER
I look at you.

SHE
Ogle me?

HER
Not like you ogle me.

SHE
Study you. I see you as a series of lines, down to the microscopic lines. I see the larger lines of your arms. Then they divide into the lines of your fingers, which are made up of the lines of your joints and knuckles. Then the hair and nails. Then the lines, do you ever look at the back of your hand? You just see the back of your hand. But hold it there, push your eyes past the lines of your fingers and dig them into the lines, the cracks in your skin, crisscrossing across the back of your hand, like broken, crusty sand in a dried field.

HER
Are you complimenting me?

SHE
I'm saying--

HER
You sounded like you thought you were complimenting me, but describing my cracking skin isn't--

SHE

Not just your skin. Everyone's skin is cracked like that. We all have those lines, like crosshatching up and down ourselves. I take notice of your lines. I see you. I see them. I doubt you look at yourself and see as much detail as I do when I look at you. I could probably show you something on your skin that you haven't noticed.

HER

Again, the way you're speaking implies that you're attempting to compliment me, but you're creeping me out. Yes, I can see you think that saying things like the "cartography of me" or that you "study me" seems poetic. And I'm sure it sounded that way when you planned to tell me this. Because it sounds planned out, really well. Like this whole exchange you thought up while you were in the shower, trying to find a way to say, "I love you. I think you're beautiful." But you didn't want to say that. You wanted to be poetic and original or to set yourself apart from all the others who've told me "I love you. I think you're beautiful." I appreciate that. I think it's really great. But this particular metaphor that you're crafting for me, isn't really for me. It's not connecting with me. These lines you've written and practiced in your mind and massaged aren't what I want to hear. And I don't want to hear "I love you, I think you're beautiful" either. All I really want to hear from you is "Yes, let's watch the next episode of 'Breaking Bad'" or "No, I'm tired, let's go to bed."

Pause.

SHE

No. I'm tired. Let's go to bed.

(Beat.)

You know I wasn't trying to say I love you. I wasn't trying to say I think you're beautiful. Would I call you beautiful? Maybe, but not in a "beautiful" way.

HER

What do you mean by that?

SHE

You're pretty. But beautiful? I suppose you're some gradation of beautiful, but it's--

HER

Gradation?

SHE

It's not the defining adjective I'd use for you. If I had to map out the adjectives I'd use to describe you, "beautiful" would be somewhere way out there.

HER

Way out there. Really. I'm that far removed from "beautiful?"

SHE

I was just making conversation and you took it the wrong way.

HER

I didn't take it the wrong way.

SHE

I wasn't complimenting you in a roundabout way, I was telling you that, quite honestly, I was looking at the lines of your body. Not in a sexual, "oh my God, the curve of your ass" or some kind of "ogling" way. I was innocently looking--

HER

Innocently?

SHE

--at the lines of your body. All of them, the little ones, the big ones. I wasn't making judgment or lusting over them or anything other than looking at them, tracing them. You can assign whatever you want to that. Compliment, insult, "come on" or "put down." I was just looking.

They sit down. "Her" sits, bundles up next to "Her" on the couch. They stare at each other.