There is just a woman, and a road and four things: a measuring tape, a stopwatch, a pencil, and a notebook.

She walks. She walks, and looks around, and she stops occasionally to lay down her tape or to stretch it above her or alongside her and take a reading, or to press the button of her watch and wait and press it once again, and take a reading.

She has been doing this for as long as she can remember. She has never met another, although she suspects that others exist.

The road is dry, and it’s windy, and sometimes she smells what should be a plant alongside the road, and sometimes she hears what should be a bird in the sky overhead, and sometimes she feels what should be a raindrop on her skin, but she does not know how to see a plant, or hear a bird, or feel a raindrop. In the language that she knows, there is no word for plant, or bird, or raindrop. There are no words for she or her, for I or you, for road, or wind, or walking. No word for self, or other. Her language describes only kinds of proximity, ways of being close or far. Those, she sees and knows and feels and tastes. Those, she records in her notebook, because she is the lexicographer, and it is her job to language kinds of distance.
The word for the intensity of the translucent green of a leaf when it’s placed atop another.
The word for the sound of the feathers of a wing brushing against the dirt.
The feeling of a raindrop sliding down your cheek.
The gentle pressure of chestskin against wool when inhaling on a cold day.
The time between wishing and forgetting the wish, the length of a sniffle, the span between the parts of her body she could wiggle, between kissing and being kissed, the time it took the pink of a pinch to fade, the time between cut and bleed.
She recorded each of these as a number, filling the pages of her book with them, each naming a kind of distance. The pages held a mathematical language of desire.
There were homophones in her book. The same number marked the length of a certain glance on a certain day, and the distance between two bits of eggshell on the road. The imagined heat of an imagined lover’s breath on her hand was equal to the time it took to scrawl that imagined lover’s imagined name in the dust.
Each night, she scans the pages of that day’s labors and she makes note of these synonyms, for whomever might come after, for whomever she might teach to speak this language, for whomever might care to learn.
But now, we watch as she records the final number on the final page of her notebook, and closes the cover, and sits in the middle of the road.
We watch as she opens the book again, turns to the first line of the first page, picks up a stick, and commences adding in the dirt.
4306. 3. 65. 81. 3490. 2.
We do not keep track of how long she sits and adds. We simply sit, and wait, and watch.
When she is done, when she has summed all of the numbers—all of the words in her language, all of the many names of desire—we watch as she scrawls a single number in the dirt. She stands and reads the number aloud.
And as she does, we watch as the outline of her begins to blur, the sky becomes visible through her skin, the wind moans through the thin spaces where parts of her used to be. And once she is gone (she did not know we were here, she did not know we had heard her), we go to her book, and we pick it up, and we open the pages, and we begin to read from it.

8. 95. 12849. 600. 12.

As we speak each name, a world of sensation opens up around us, in us, and we gradually learn her language, and we come to understand that she has become that language, too. The more we speak, the less we know who we are, and the more we can feel each other, and can feel her arms reaching out to gather us close and help us joyfully unlearn.