The Perfect Mango
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The Body

I cannot write the end of my body. You cannot read this chapter and see it as the last. There is no end to my body. In my toenail I see my reflection. I am a circle. There is no end to the story written on my body.

I was going to write you a love-story, a story about love. I was going to trace the lines on my body. I was going to explore the wrinkles and find the holes and the gaps in my story. I promised you a love story. I promised you a happy ending.

The chapters I am not going to write are the missing chapters. They are the mystery chapters. They are the chapters that offer a conclusion. They are your conclusion. They are for you to write.

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Finding the perfect mango is a very elusive endeavour. Even I the seasoned mango eater cannot tell you how to choose a mango and be sure that it is the mango you have been longing for. Mangoes are a very tricky fruit and very deceptive. Sometimes my hand grabs for the most beautiful one the one with the bright red and yellow skin the one that feels soft to my touch but then when I bite into
it the juice is rancid and I have been fooled by vanity. The opposite is not true either. I have chosen the ugliest mangoes only to find that they taste as bad as they look. And yet mangoes are unquestionably the fruit of desire. There is nothing like a perfect mango.

If you do find a perfect mango I can tell you that eating it will be the experience you always hoped it would be. If you are like me and you like the skin the first thing you must do is discard the bitter stem. Then bite carefully down onto the skin and pull with your teeth. If it is the perfect mango that you have found you will find that the skin peels back in pieces just the right size. Eat the skin slowly. When all you have left is the fruit perfectly peeled yellow orange dripping a little in your hands take your first mouthful. Don’t worry if the sweet juice drips onto your fingers and most importantly don’t use a cloth to wipe it off. Your hands are now part of the mango. Lick them as you would the delicious mango. Your body is the perfect mango.

Every day I crave mangoes. I look forward to the stickiness. I look forward to the challenge of eating mangoes without covering my shirt with yellow stains. I look forward to the yellow stains. Today I ate two mangoes. I am sad because I am finishing my book. I thought writing a mango into my story might give my book the delicious ending that it lacks. I don’t like endings.

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This is a love story. It does not have a happy ending. It does not have an ending. August is here and the air is cooler. When I began writing my love-story the air was still. Today I can feel a breeze.

My hands still sticky from the mango I trace the outline of my story onto my body. On the surface nothing has changed. I do not need a mirror to see the reflection of my body. I probe deeper with my fingers. One by one I
uncover the changes. My story has left marks on my body. On my right thigh I find the discarded sentence from page eighteen. On my baby toe I feel the leftover commas. On my eye I see the pages I could not write. I follow the trajectory of my body. I am searching for something I have not yet found. I want to give it to you. My fingers are tired of searching. I cannot give you the missing chapters. I cannot give you the ending. I cannot give you my body.

It is mid-afternoon it is mid-chapter it is the middle of my life I feel the pain in my stomach the pain of the middle. The middle scares me it is much more difficult than beginnings or endings yet here I am in the middle of my day in the middle of my story with you waiting at my side. I feel your eyes on me I feel your questions and I know there are no answers. I have let you touch my body I have let you see me I have let you feel the memories as they appeared on the page. Fractured and ravaged I have lent you my body. Today I feel my body swimming into a new skin. I am shedding the old, the old engraved on the new.

This is a love story, a story about love. It is the story of my body as it appears to me in the morning. It is the story of my body as my fingers hit the keys and the words appear on the page. It is the pain I feel when I wash away the vomit from the bathroom floor. It is the ecstasy I feel when my lover’s hands carve desire onto my body. It is the joy of knowing that there is no ending.