

**Barrelhouse**  
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HOW TO KNOW PEOPLE BY THEIR HANDS  
*After Josef Rinaldo, 1938*

You look at my hands and say I'll never have kids. It's not too cold, but a breeze blows in. The sheets stick wet to our backs. Palms, fingertips. I think first the word *trace*. How the white comforter grabs at the dust on the floor. Light cuts through the hole in the blinds. It's afternoon. The sun has its way of burning inside. You show me the difference: my hand, from yours. *See?* Your child lines prove you'll be a good dad someday, but mine are missing. I'm infertile, I think. What a waste of fear, and pills, and procedures. How awful, never to hold her. I laugh. It's stupid, how I'm prone to belief. I say: *My palms took my dad's advice. Best to adopt so you don't ruin your body.* You say, *Jesus*. You kiss along my ribs. Then, *It is a great body*. I think the word *gaze*. You admit you never remember what this tattoo says. *Dare to know*, I repeat. *Horace. Foucault.* Your lips dip back to my fingers. Our lifelines, you say they're the same. I think only: *Bullshit*. Now: *See how they split? You'll move far from home. Start a new life.* But I already left twice. I mean New York, and now here. I mean: I worry you're the one I want but won't fully trust. Look how you're kind. How you try to believe we hold these maps on our hands. Here's to your good life, here. Here's to those other men, wrecked as my bed. The fitted edge snapped up off the mattress. The white blanket, filthy on the haptic hardwood. You make no move to pull up the sheets. No move toward your jeans in their stepped-off heap. It's a sculpture of how to know people by leaving. Your palm reader says you'll never find your one true love. *She's right about that*, I say, and we laugh. We both do.

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