

The Tracing Game

by Teresa Houle

Shadows skipped across the bedroom wall at 80 km/hour. It wouldn't be so bad if people wouldn't use their high beams but it's the price you pay for living on a dark highway with low property taxes.

"How do you sleep in here?" Sandra asked from her sleeping bag on the floor next to the bed.

"You get used to it," I said. I had the whole bed to myself while my bestfriend tried to find comfort like a dog.

"You should share my bed with me."

"But everyone will think we are dykes."

"Only if we tell them that we slept in the same bed."

"Okay, don't tell anyone then," she said. "This floor is *killing* me."

Sandra crawled out of her sleeping bag and into the warm double bed with my Holly Hobbie sheets and matching pillowcases. I knew that they were little kids sheets but I still loved them.

After several minutes of awkward positioning and making sure that none of our parts touched, we settled into talking about boys we would kiss.

"Davie is cute, but I always see him digging for gold," Sandra said. "It makes him un-kissable."

"Ewwww...I didn't know he was a picker."

After making our way through the boys in our class then our grade we ran out of boys to talk about.

“You know what helps me relax to sleep?” Sandra asked. “If someone traces words and pictures on my back with their finger.”

My stomach suddenly leapt into my throat.

“Okay.” I tried to not sound so nervous.

She rolled and lifted up her pajamas to expose her clean white back.

“Don't tell me what you are writing,” she said. “Let me guess.”

I started with my name, which she knew immediately. “Do something hard, but don't push too hard. Be *gentle*.”

I started to trace the name of my dog into her back when she turned around suddenly.

“Your turn,” she said. “I want to show you how I like it.”

I turned around and exposed my back. I hoped that it was as clean and white as hers.

Ripples of gooseflesh radiated up my body when her delicate tips met my skin. She barely touched me as she moved slowly in lines and circles. I felt her warm breath on my cool back. I was relaxed yet stimulated; her touch consumed me.

“You haven't guessed yet.”

“I haven't figured it out,” I lied. “It's my first time doing this. Keep trying.”

She repeated her strokes and her breath became slower, more relaxed.

I could feel the letters taking shape on my skin.

I love you, over and over, I love you.

