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When I Saw You

Camille Balla

at my front door
 you still had the long hair—
 and now a floppy leather hat
 that made it back
 with you from Peru.

Within seconds
 words popped into my head—
 words from a favorite friend:
 Just enjoy him.

You stepped inside;
 I looked past your hair and hat,
 hugged you—and your fresh spice
 aftershave. I gazed
 behind your honest eyes.

When I saw you
 we sat down near the fireplace.
 You talked
 about the Temple of the Sun,
 the shaman, pachymama,
 how cocoa leaves please Mother Earth.
 You brought me—your mom—
 chocolate from Cuzco.
 Now even sweeter.

When I saw you
 you told of days of fasting
 and ayahuasca, weeks of hiking,
 climbing in the Andes
 near Machu Picchu.
 You brought pictures
 of a small girl and sheep;
 townspeople, a shaman
 in the Amazon jungle,
 yourself with a black leather journal.

When I saw you
 you said, “People are getting tired
 talking about my long hair—
 and your messy papers.”
 Together we laughed.

Later, you added,
 “This is the best visit
 we ever had”