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Hana, Near Haiku

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HANA, NEAR HAIKU
For Stephen

Barbara Morningstar

Prelude

*I found a poem on my pillow
one cold autumn night;
just one word,
but titled "Poem,"
and signed with your name...
it said, "You."¹*

Something is missing²
on the road to Haiku,
past the blue and red carp flags
of the Japanese tea house
owned by a runaway

housewife from Omaha, near
the old abandoned Spreckles sugar plant,
where the white beach at Paia turns
rocky, but you can still taste Mama's papaya bisque,

Cocoribe spiked, with a squeeze of lime,
and smell the pink and white plumeria
kids string in the shade of perfumed plants.
Cracked pavement slugs up from the moist Puunene

Valley to the cool, lush hill country of fat Black Angus,
flocked with cattle egrets, grazing near Makawao, and

we stopped
at a place you might remember—a Hawaiian-Chinese

bakery where you bought a coconut custard-filled chocolate cake,
then drove on up toward Hana, pulling off by a mountain waterfall
to eat the whole cake, one piece at a time...
and still you were not full.

Here, where the red ginger spikes glow
against weathered blue-green planks of a rusted,
tin-roofed shack, like the glow of sunrise at Haleakala
when I noticed, for the first time, the freckles under your eyes. . .

we had come to the place where I thought I knew you,
and we climbed down the sanguine cliffs and painted
our faces and chests with muddy cinnabar clay,
using each other's eyes for mirrors, laughing so hard we

rolled into the sea.

But found when we awoke,

alone,

what was missing

is you.

Ineffable you.

Notes

1. "Poem" was written by Stephen Lake in 1982.
2. From the poem "MOVING & STRANGE" by Kathy Fagan.