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When You See Me

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When You See Me

in some dream and don’t believe your eyes are closed, there is a sure way to tell if I am real. Give me your hand. You will feel the same chill I feel when the sky wants to open before it starts to rain, the chill a man who is about to die finds in the cone of the lily a girl cuts to put on his grave. She tries to wake him. The anther smears its pollen on the back of his wrist where the scar doesn’t show.
The lines in his palm
spell out your name
except for the t
which is not crossed
and looks like the i
with no dot or like
the stem of the lily
now that the girl is gone.
The veins run parallel
to my life. Under the surface
roots form a sweet bulb
like those Shoshone women
dug with their camas sticks
and saved to roast
over tipi fires on cold nights
when their men had gone
to war or to follow
the west trail home.

—Donnell Hunter