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All of Something for my Grandmother

Lee Varon

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ALL OF SOMETHING

For my grandmother.

She wanted to take the Jewish
out of me
as if she could pull ribbon
out of a braid.

She had that sad look
when she shook her head:
I just wish you were all of something.

But I was a sign
of her shame—
her daughter

who ran off with a Jew
who gave me my curly hair,
broad nose.

My grandmother loved me
in spite of herself
pretended I was pure,

dreamed my mother
had married a hometown boy
like the one she was engaged to

when she packed her trunk
with plaids and cashmere
and went off to college.

The one whose diamond
she gave back,
the one she left

and broke her mother's heart.
Sometimes I wanted to erase myself
take back that diamond

tell my mother she'd made a mistake
tell her I forgave her for having me
Pick up that other life, I'd tell her

Start over.

-Lee Varon
Cambridge, Massachusetts