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In Warsaw, My Mother

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IN WARSAW, MY MOTHER

appears everywhere—as a woman with a hooked nose,
pigeon-toed gait we follow blocks to a café for black tea,

secret smoke, cloth shop full of charmeuse, brocade.
She's taller, of course, still we ask the shop keeper *how far*

when we mean *how much*, buy time until we have lost her
behind rows of linen or simply the door, spring evening

and the Vistula nearby still fixed with ice. There, I call you
by another's name, an easy mistake we don't mention,

instead refer to the gothic as baroque, the French embassy Italian,
believe there is already enough room for fault in a city brought back

from ash. On a bench, we stick our noses in English papers
while a beggar girl slides between us, the right hair, eyes

to be our own. *How big you've grown*, I coo into her neck though she is slight,
curved over us like a bean. She relaxes, understands this language

of want, fingers our watches in the same way we are trained to know
the thing we need when we see it. We give her names, kisses,

my right earring, when what we really mean is will you be ours,
take her by the hand already swallowed in our own.