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The Same Conversation with my Grandmother

By: JACQUELINE BISHOP

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Jacqueline Bishop

THE SAME CONVERSATION WITH MY GRANDMOTHER

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No, I did not know my mother's mother,
the woman who would have been
my grandmother on my mother's side.
My mother did not know

Her own mother, last name Scott ---
died when my mother was nothing more
than a year and nine months old.
I heard her talk about this once,

a slow whisper, wondering
what her mother must have been like,
What she must have looked like ---
Photographs were not readily available those days.

My mother's people were from Swift River,
not far from here, not far from Nonsuch;
All of us, you, me, your mother ---
we are Portland women, through and through.

When my mother's father died,
My mother, then only twelve years old,
Was sent to live with an older sister in Nonsuch,
Where she met the white man, your great grandfather,
And you already know the end to that story.