

LOTTIE

Her given name meant *gentle*,
but everyone called her Lottie
except the nuns.

They thought
Lottie was short for Charlotte.
As Charlotte she taught, became
a nurse and spoke with ease
in three languages.

As Lottie
she played the lute and sang
to her own accompaniment and once
with a pianist from the New York
Philharmonic.

After she chose
my father, he ordered from Damascus
a lute specifically sized
for her.

I still have it.
She cared enough to adopt
a Serbian girl until
her parents could immigrate.
In a one-line letter to my aunt,
she wrote, "Hi, Sis, how's
your love life?"

She died
when I was six.

Decades back,
a woman I'd never met
stopped me and said, "I'm named
after your mother."

She smiled
as if she'd kept a vow
she'd made to tell me that.