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Salvation Army

Katharyn Howd Machan

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Machan: Salvation Army

MILTON KESSLER POETRY CONTEST FINALIST

SALVATION ARMY

Katharyn Howd Machan

So they become others' stories, my chairs.
What I tipped over and draped with lace

as I turned into a dragon lover, fearing nothing
but my grandmother's voice as she coldly called me

to soup. What someone's cautious hands had cut
and curved and screwed and polished deep

oceans away in a land called Denmark
years before I cracked the world with my

smile of fire and ice. What my father and mother
chose to offer Connecticut guests, first in their

home of Colonial splendor, then in their broken
house of dark dust. What my brother inherited

and used to play cards with the dim-eyed men
who swore they saw nothing wrong with his days

of shuttered windows, broken toilet, unwashed hair
over ears without song. What I carried away

when he killed himself, silent, short winter dawn
time's sharp laugh against love. Impossible smoke

forced them into my cellar, cigar reek his touch
until quince blossoms bloomed. Even then my front porch

could not bear his harsh ashes: what once guarded
treasure turned into stained bones.