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Cedar Closet

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Susan de Sola

Cedar Closet

She's hung the suits of meaty tweed and twill,
aridified furs and heavy shearling coats,
and set in boxes, scarves and gartered stockings.
Plummy satins with acrylic buttons
carved into flowers, her widow's wedding suit
in watered lavender. She's kept the first
seed-pearled wedding gown concealed.

Repelled by a stole of baby foxes, mouth to tail
to claw-like clasp, I stroke the velvet hats
with veils and pins, and sueded platform pumps.
I try her rhinestone-studded party shoes,
and lift her slips in tints of angelskin,
her stacks of gloves in suede and calf and kid,
her handkerchiefs, initialed N. L. P.,
obsolete these seventy years.

He'd climbed
a mine-sown hill to save a soldier. A trap.
Blown up, he set off more while rolling down.
There wasn't very much of him left.

She's kept
for me the graduated pearls, too small
for my taste, and a dress of painted silk
that somehow fits, as does the pleated skirt
and ochre Pringle sweater set.

Forgotten,
the tarnished powder compacts, random lipsticks
and yellowed hankies slipped in every clutch,

in leather bags with heavy metal clasps
that snap shut—tight like the purse of her lips,
her clothes the only story that she tells.
A puff of dust drifts down the cedar walls.