

Stephanie Rubright

The German Soldier

Tattered roof shingles look like the
cobblestones my grandmother runs barefoot
on when she is a granddaughter.

Shabby, too, the dress she wears when fleeing across
overgrown fields, practicing the English her mother taught her
with which to name the cows. Inside the house

are feet much bigger than her own, and a sharp voice
is jarring against Snowball's low groan. A manure breeze
whistles across golden wheat stocks, but the sound is lost.

Grandfather wants the pliers. *Opa*, she would tell me
much later, *als er sprach, hörten wir*. The shed's contents
racketed, tools hanging by hooks shuffling

from the gust of the opening door. She grabs
pliers larger than her hand and scurries, resembling
more of a farm rat than a small girl.

Sturdy stance, sun concealing a view of his eyes,
grandfather watches her run to the old porch.
Hands reach for the metal scissors, fingers

rough like a gate caught in rain.
The heavy flat line of his mouth changes to one
of a gapping fish, and pliers jump into the black hole.

Blood, and a yellow tooth, come out with it.
Ich verließ den Bauernhof, she would tell me
much later, *I left Snowball and traveled*
across an ocean.