

Packing Up

by Rhonda Pettit

His aunts and elder cousins called him Gorie, but he was already off the farm and out of ear-shot, even though its dirt still cuffed his pants and crunched between his teeth. He would go to Transy next week. No wagon he. No cistern dependent on rain. He willed himself a blank screen waiting to reveal the invisible engine of his future, that locomotive hauling a circus in his veins ready to set up tents and roar with beasts, freaks, and high-wire feats. *And there he was, his trapeze on its upward arc, his arms reaching out for her hands, hers reaching for his, reaching reaching, and a split-second after they clasped round and up they'd go, their hearts applauding.* That's how it would be, that's how it would be if only it would be, and soon. Until then, he avoided newsreels, savored the coming undoing of his innocence, ignorance, and imagined unknowns. He would leave the farm for college, pledge himself to Phi Kappa Tau, its red carnation sophisticating him. While he flirted with Hazel across the aisle who shared his history book in class, where Somme Valley soldiers changed little but the depth and color of mud there, Roosevelt and Hitler would take their seats, look his way. North of Munich, Dachau would open for business, another German first. The Great Depression would roll toward war, but Gorie wouldn't feel depressed. He scoffed at nets.