

## **Allister's dad**

Emily Lazar

took her out on Old Spiceland Road  
to put a bullet in her temple.

It was summer and the dust wouldn't settle;  
his high powered rifle sent it scrambling.

This is how the locals tell the story,  
their ear canals cotton-stuffed, noses  
downward in diner mugs.

But I saw Allister walk away from that fight alive,  
alone, with a torn shirt, bloody  
lip dripping, face smeared  
like a finger painting. And slung over  
her left shoulder, the relic weapon  
her father'd drug up the steps of the cellar  
that morning. I asked  
what happened, saw her lips purse,  
pronounce murder  
like she was licking skin  
off a cherry pit, that precise.

And she said if I'm to die, it'll be my finger  
that pulls the trigger and my  
daddy who darkens ditchwater  
on the side of Spiceland Road  
in the meantime.

Nine days later, she was dead from tetanus  
contracted while touching  
her split lips to the gun's rusted barrel,  
redeemed.