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.