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.