In the Hallway

Emily Lupita Plum*
In the Hallway

Emily Lupita Plum

In the hallway I pass by
an old friend from high school
whose sister, I heard, married Tilted Chair,
a drunk with a wooden leg my brother
used to revere, used to fetch beers for
on Saturday nights down by the creek.

Tilted Chair already had a wife,
so that caused some trouble.

And the twenty years between them,
how his daughter was a friend of hers,
well, that caused some members
of the small wheat growing town to mouth
Scandal! with their teeth and lips, slowly,
as they drove by the old farm house
where Tilted Chair would sit, half-naked,
on his porch firing bullets out
at the pile of cans filling up his yard.

I turned around in the hallway
to ask about her, if his sister,
was she doing well, if their mama
had gotten over her shock.

As his face came into focus,
I remembered, my friend, he
shot himself in the head, died
alone in his garage years ago
while I was walking down a long
dirt road, wiping the red dust
from my eyes with both hands.