

The Great Vampire Hunters of the Gorbals

by Anthony Rintala

We were innocent when we hunted death,
the all of us, knit by parental excuse
and buoyed by our arms, linked so.
Armed ourselves with rake, stake, steak knife,
jewelry, Bible verse, and play-yard scripture,
then snuck to the Necropolis straight from school
to catch the beast that ate someone someone else knew.

We were strong when all we knew of horror
came in Chinese whispers. One heard grinding feet,
a horse's hooves, a goat's. Another, teeth that smashed
like iron gates, milling children's bones, sillioned flesh with
claws, no, horns. A scythe. Exposed bones puncture eyes.
Pride. "There's the vampire," one of us cried. We pulsed like hearts,
snuck as grandmother's footsteps, toward the ghoul that was never there.

We were bold when we could rise in a hunt, hounding
the grave alleys with filled fists, then scatter with the dawn.
Now the Gorbals is a crypt itself, shattered along the Clyde,
a cenotaph of sky-worn grey where we all will die.
Time swooped down on cancerous wings, bit our veins,
poisoned what was once and mangled us in industrious ways,
leaving us drooped in doorways or over our children's graves.