"Military Hill"

&

"The Elysian"

from *The One That Got Away*

by Graham Allen



Military Hill

What do you want?
What would you have wanted?

I see you sometimes in the street, I did not mean to keep you unborn.

You are playing football. You have brown eyes and a hurt nose.

You are running for your life. I cannot help you.

From this distance you have no name. You burn in the palm of my hand.

You stand, unseen, outside of every window. We did not hear you calling,

or you yourself were deaf. But we need you now,

Cork boy with matted hair, a toy gun and torn trousers,

kicking cans down Military Hill, madly excited about tomorrow.

The Elysian

Ghost factory,
high-rise imitation,
empty observatory.
The only occupants are resident tonight,
they have made two camp fires,
square eyes gazing northwards.
The blue haze of the television flickers,
tiny people in a fragile doll's house.
I see their shades
as they walk past sources of light.
The bedroom lamp is constant.

Above them a green fist, one finger pointing at the moon.

Down the unpaced corridors, out of untried locks and windows, through unopened shopfronts, down into the unviewed garden vista flows the news about tomorrow. The visionaries have all gone blind under orange emergency strip lighting.

If you listen very carefully, without motion, without breath, you can almost hear the sound of children playing in the elevators, splashing in the sculptured rock pool, plunging to their early deaths.

What others are saying about *The One That Got Away:*

"Graham Allen's The One That Got Away is an astonishing advance on his earlier poetry. Those I have read interested me but seemed still in transition. This new work is a throwback to the High Romantics. It is haunted by Blake, Shelley, and Keats, and is a worthy continuation of their magnificent tradition.

Should Graham Allen continue to leap ahead of himself like this, he may yet achieve permanence as a poet."

- Harold Bloom

"Graham Allen shines a light on the processes that connect what we know with how we feel, as well as being witty, exuberant and truthful. These are poems that impel us to search and renew our experience and our ways of thinking. They excavate inside metaphors; to use his phrase, they swivel the maps."

– Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin

"The unrecognisability of the present is Allen's theme and his poems are a kind of anti-prophecy, bearing constant anxious witness to our unsure and destabilizing period in which we cannot guess what's coming next. The one that got away is a recommended read for all the doubters, questioners and heretics of the literary world."

– Dave Lordan