

# I know everything's broken, but still I pretend

*by* Ryder Collins

We'd always hear them coming, sneezing and smashing. We'd hang old bottles we had no use for from the burnt up trees outside the gate. They couldn't resist. We'd hear the glass breaking; we'd sound the alarm. We'd defend our town and what was ours.

We always won cos we outnumbered them; we always won cos we feared them. We had rules and we maintained them and everything was always right.

Neat and proper and we all knew our place.

Rumor was the balaclavas they wore were melted on their faces in some strange initiation. Rumor was most of them were allergic to the wool. Rumor was their only mission was to smash all the glass in the world. They sneezed and smashed and laughed like hell.

Rumor was what gave me something to look forward to, day in and out in our little settlement.

Sometimes, late at night, I'd rummage alone through the wasteland by the gate, shifting through what'd been left behind. Things we had no use for cos we didn't understand any of it, what its use was or how it'd been made. I didn't ask any questions of the huge mounds, though; I was always only looking for glass. I wanted to feel its smooth surface. I wanted to test its cohesion. I'd find once jagged pieces rubbed down by the years; I'd carry these pieces with me under my smock and remember the impulse to run.

