

Fine Yellow Dust

by Robert Crisman

In the dream Yesler rolled, a broad avenue made of fine yellow dust, from Third down toward Second, and I made my way in the silence and bright morning air. To my left on the corner of Second stood the old Mocambo cafe and lounge, home to drag queens in plumage and closed 40 years, in whose window I now saw the dead, standing and sitting in chairs and looking out blankly at nothing, and I felt their death crawl inside me; I didn't know yet that I had committed a murder.

I continued toward Pioneer Square, Yesler now thin cement, and I brushed through crowds that seemed to be ghosts and were silent as ghosts, and their faces and bodies were those of the people who'd always looked through me, and not even bothered to note my presumption in walking among them and breathing their air.

I slipped into Pioneer Square, a blackened brick warren of sorts, a bazaar of cafes and parties in clubs that people never attended.

I looked for Alicia through miles and miles, and maybe 10 cities, yet always these same eight square blocks; Alicia, the beauty who'd loved me, then fled to this dream and a home made of smoke, though I didn't know that 'til that night down the years when she cut my breath short once again.

Dreams are places that gut you and spill all your secrets, so legend has it, and that's why fear shrieks here, and why I redoubled my desperate efforts to hide as I had in my life, in the days when I claimed her love, and that's when I knew that my search for Alicia was also a hunt for a death not yet named, a death that would take place uptown in the dream, where the man that I murdered is buried.

