



J.W. Major

Dust

He was sure it was him in the mirror,
the famous mirrored face
in a place called The Lonely Hours,
walls caked with smoke from old cigarette days,

drinking tequila something or other,
mold to sweeten the staleness, men with coughs,
absolutely no music nor any thought of it.
He wanted to bite the dead air,
wolf-language wet in his mouth,
rouse the mirror face out of its face.
The wife came in, upright in model's walk
even though fat enough to waddle.
She's in mid-hilarity, drunk in her showgirl style.
Comes at him with her raucous smile,
sending the stool-bound drunks down
into ghost-infested depths, mistaking her blaze of teeth
and breath for vengeance, all her vigorous glamour
stirring up past agonies. That man once had a grin,
he said, pointing at the mirror. Wonderful grin. Remember?
Till they found the head. It wouldn't silence our daughter, though.
She kept singing at us. Doing her child routines.
Dancing herself right back into our screwball memories.
The voice he used didn't go with the face
that accompanied a bad tune playing on dust motes.
Think dust, his wife said in an old blues singer's voice.
Molested, murdered, dismembered, yes. But dust. Think dust.
He awoke for an instant from his scrounge life of sitting,
to walk again without moving. Hate our love, his wife sang.
She had a different tone for every sentence, kept the words
moving, laughing without a sound, leaving the bar,
calling out madly for somebody, headed for cars and horns.
Her absence left a steady din behind his eyes.

J.W. Major has published more than thirty poems and stories in various journals. He lives in Florida.

Drawing: Richard Phillips, "Mirror"