

OLD TOWN BLUES: A MONOLOGUE

*by Jennifer Havah Marx*

My edges are furious with traffic. Burnside. Broadway. Naito Parkway.

Be careful where you step.

But do cross over. Come on in.

I'm shady. Even in the sunny places, I'm shady.

I'm spooky. I'm ghostly.

Ghosts fly between my windows from building to building.

They rattle at the closed doors, coated in two dozen layers of paint.

They peer out at you through the mirrored windows. (You can't look in.)

I'm quiet.

I won't bother you if you don't bother me.

Please, my walls are faded enough.

My doors are scratched enough.

My windows are cracked enough.

Just take care of me, and I'll take care of you.

I won't tell anyone who you are or where you came from or what you did.

I'll cover you.

I can't really hide you.

Most of my doors are shut. Most of my windows are shut.

But I can cover you. Give you a little stoop or alcove.

And you'll find companions here.

Friends, I can't promise. But companions, yes.

And a few of my doors are open.

And there are big-hearted people inside who will feed and clothe you.

Come on over. Cross over.

I used to be grand. See my jewelry? My charms? See how well I'm made?

It's just my surface that is dusty and pock-marked and crumbly.

If you have some money to spend, I'm kind of fun.

I'll pour you a beer. Give you something to look at. Show you a good time.

Come back later. I'm sleepy right now. Had a late night.

But don't forget me.

Come back tonight. Spend your money then.

Daytime, nighttime, do cross over.

Come on in, whoever you are.

You can peer in, yes.

But don't forget, I'm peering out. I see you.

I see exactly who you are.

I know exactly why you're here.

But don't worry, I won't tell.