

Peregrine

by David W Brown on September 22, 2021. ©

I see them from a block away; slouching indolently against the wall of the bodega, expensive Nike shod feet a gauntlet for passersby.

But not for me.

I watch the embers of their passing blunt glow in the early evening gloom and mentally calculate the pacifying effect and impairment it will have on their brains.

Meanwhile, I am as clear-headed as a Peregrine falcon triangulating the position of a vole in a meadow.

As I close the distance, my footsteps become purposely louder, the pace random and erratic as one would expect from an elderly drunk.

The glow from the blunt lights the face of the one nearest to me and I recognize the visage of a child in wolf's clothing. That is not my problem. My problem is the money they've stolen from my friends. The vicious beating they gave to the quiet boy who lives down the hall. The toll they demand from all who pass them outside the bodega.

I am a few strides away as the biggest one nudges his companion, sizing me up as cowards are wont to do. I am an old drunk in ragged clothes on a darkening street, a victim stumbling into their lair.

But I am a man still and he cranes his neck out to look me over.

But he's too late.

I smooth my hair as I open the door to the bodega, the ringing of the little bell waking Amelia, the cat. I bend down and scratch her behind the ears and the man behind the counter waves and asks me how my evening is.

"Maravilloso", I reply and smile back at him. "Y tú mi amigo?".

Amelia purrs loudly and the man smiles, nodding towards the wall where the trolls had leaned.

"Maravilloso".