PAMPNIGHT1/2/22

City At Night

by Edmund Siejka

It was cold outside

I hadn’t shaved in days and I was hungry

I was going to walk it

Only a few blocks

Through the same streets I walked every day

So how bad could it be

At 1 AM?

The Diner’s neon sign

Shone in sharp relief in the night.

A greasy spoon type of place

Inexpensive meals

And large portions.

The waiter leaned against the chrome soda dispenser

Dark circles under his eyes

Anything good? I asked

Everything’s good he answered

Quickly taking my order

He resumed his post.

I’ve been coming here for awhile and I don’t ever think I saw you around

Without turning around

I answered the stranger

I’m just getting something to eat.

I’ve been around lots of places he said

And I think I can spot a victim of disappointment

I’m a writer by day and at night a denizen of the streets

Because of who I am I have become frugal

So, I eat here to stay alive.

Ignoring him I started eating

When his chair creaked and swiveled

I caught sight of his back when he left.

I left the Diner around 2 am

Footsteps echoed around me

Anxious I looked around

To be sure

I was alone.

Up ahead

Two men were talking

The taller of the two leaned against a car

Arms crossed against his chest

Watching me as I got closer

Cold night, isn’t it? he asked.

My breath curled out in the frigid night

I carefully answered,

Yes, it’s a little cold

Out for a night time stroll? he inquired

Before I could answer, the shorter of the two turned away

It was then I quickly turned

And hurriedly walked away.

Behind me the thudding sound of a car door slammed shut

Loud laughter broke the quiet of the night

Theirs was a private joke

And I was the intruder.