

## Wilderness House Literary Review 11/4

*Jay Sizemore*

### **Anton Chigurh decides the fate of the election**

*~after Cormac McCarthy*

Friendo, this quarter was stamped with a date  
the day it was made. Since then, it has traveled.  
Who knows how many hands, how many pockets,  
how many lives, carried it, or were carried.  
What it bought over time.

People think I am the angel of Death.  
But I'm just the messenger.  
How much would you pay  
for a glass of water?  
The sky leeches it from you.  
Hang your tongue out the window like a dog.  
Wash your hands in poison,  
they'll never be clean.  
Something seems obvious about that.

What's the most you ever lost in a coin toss?  
Your whole life summed up  
in a quick flick of the wrist.  
Do you feel that hair bristling  
at the back of your neck?  
That's recognition. Staring into the eyes  
of a wolf, knowing the campfire is burning out,  
knowing that the wolf is just a man  
draped in fur and desperation, thirst and hunger.

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Every day is a bet against time,  
a bet you will lose, so risk everything.  
Tell the murderers to fuck themselves.  
Call out the liars.  
Let the wolves drink rain water  
from your hands.  
From the tap, it tastes like gasoline.  
You've been on a winning streak  
every morning you've opened your eyes.

There's a darkness that waits  
like a world without breath.  
The entire future of existence  
drawn into the head of a match,  
and someday, someone will strike it,  
fearing blindness, that suffocating caul.

These rules are yokes  
chaining us to the weight we carry.  
That's the sound of everything  
you've ever done, dragged  
like a dead Cadillac behind you,  
such a long, rutted road  
of triumph, of loss, the universe.

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This coin is a symbol of fate.  
Such a slender representation of choice,  
either/or  
resting between my thumb and forefinger,  
cold, objective and plain,  
primed for release by powers  
greater than those dirty hands  
segregating the lucky  
from the unlucky.  
Do you know what is at stake?  
Everything or nothing.  
So, call it.

This poem responds to the news that some of the voting results were decided by coin tosses in the recent primary elections in Iowa. It factors in that decisions are made like this while the reality of people living without clean drinking water still persists in Flint, and was something caused by the decisions of people in power. With so much at stake, relying on mere chance to make important decisions like these seems counter-intuitive to the will of the people.

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### No Sign, No Warning

His poems were about jazz,  
Chicago, a father who wasn't.  
His poems were percussive,  
a drum beat pounded

like a femur against a rain puddle  
where every listener  
was the reflection of his face  
he just didn't want to see.

Small round spectacles  
shimmered, crooked  
before his buggy eyes.  
Unshaven, splotchy cheeks

he licked his thin lips  
before he would speak.  
But he had the voice of a nerd,  
someone desperate to find it

in every dog-eared page,  
in every perfect bound notebook  
kept more pristine  
than any shirt on his back.

His poems were often not his own,  
readings of those he admired,  
of those he longed to live through,  
wearing their words like another body

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with another face, a full head of hair.  
That thick class ring,  
blue gemstone on his right hand,  
the way his jeans never seemed to fit.

He'd smile, prop his foot up on his knee,  
and thumb through his work  
before his turn to read,  
and returning to the table,

he'd kiss his wife on the lips or cheek,  
and take her hand,

in that familiar way lovers do  
before committing murder.