

# Cormac McCarthy Immitation

Stone Fields

February 24, 2025

When he came out of the lab the sun cut across the mountain top slicing down the valley like a sheet of the abyss casting its age old protection across the dust of the plain. Gravel fans that cradled the highway blistered under the grasp of the sun's ray. The light battered him as he got into the car and put his key into the ignition and he looked in the mirror and saw himself and looked away. Darkness. Decay. He put the car into drive and put his hand on the wheel and he went out of the parking lot and dove into the night. When he drove the tires rumbled on the road and he could hear his thoughts louder. He got home at around nine and he went inside and stood in front of the fire in his home, a hearth that emitted the only warmth he had known as of late. His wife sat in the armchair.

You got anything to eat?

Not for you.

All right.

Where have you been?

I was working late.

You was working late.

Yes.

You been working late a lot recently.

He lowered his head and looked into the fire. The embers were low and red with the last light of some ancient star, that primordial power that was the source of it all and here he saw them. The faces smudged and nameless calling and screaming, spectral in the dark like the recesses of our minds those he had buried and burned without knowing and the weapons scourging the landscape where people were pulled from the ashes.

She whispered to him but he didn't turn around. He knew he could not. He woke up next to her and got out of bed and he sat up and he stared at his hands, those claws that turned the keys and piloted the machine that took people and churned them out then spit them out again but he was in it too. He went on into the kitchen and walked through the dining room and went into the yard. He looked out across the fence peering at the pronghorns with the curtains of the sky framing the Sandia's, the Bernalillo wind carrying the Stellar Jay's and Red-Breasted Nuthatchers and their calls across the plains. There were stucco houses with yucca plants that sat sharp and low against the dust, the mountainous switchbacks looming in the background judging and towering over them as an insurmountable part of the land, the calls of the birds and the past dampening into the air. The mountain ciphered with pinion and ponderosa stared at him blankly like an ancestor long gone and

he looked for them and he felt so far away.

He went back inside and his wife was awake. Clothes were on the ground. The bed was unmade. The phone started ringing and he walked over and he picked it up.

It's time Cree.

I'm done.

You don't get to decide when you're done. You knew what you were doing when you signed up for this.

I know.

You will be expected to finish the job.

The line went dead and he stood there with his heart pounding and he know that it was time for the next. He thought that the last one was it. He closed his eyes and felt the terror swirling around him.

He walked into the bathroom and he got ready. In the kitchen his wife was fixing breakfast while he was buttoning his shirt.

Maybe you shouldn't go to work today.

I got to.

Cree, you haven't been the same.

I can't stop now.

What the hell are you talking about?

I know too much. Things no one should know. I've seen things that no one should ever have to see.

Maybe you should stay here.

How do you know what I should do? It's just business as usual.

Noon was breaking and sweat dappled his shirt and his forehead as he buckled into his seat and turned the key. Late. He passed on and approached the Base, the ocotillo looking up to the elder agave like a crowd of mass receiving teachings from their elders in a world far removed from the world he was walking in to, a world where the people die inside and then people die out. He passed the desert scrub and the mountains that loomed like silent sentinels detached and gazing as their shadow engulfed it all as the highway blurred into the background like a ray of darkness that led to the edge. In his rear view mirror the world began to fade as he saw the the Base rise from the earth like a scar against the ripped earth.

He took the key out and got out of the car. He walked across the parking lot and the dust clinged to his boots like ashes. He scanned his ID in and he made eye-contact with the secretary. He saw reflected in their eyes what he saw. Sometimes the eyes of others are not their own but rather are the reflection of your own consciousness. Inside he saw nothing. Hollowness. That feeling that caves the chest in and takes the breath away. He felt shallow and he wavered under the force of this world surrounding and encapsulating him.

He's waiting for you in his office.

Okay.

He clambered through the door and saw Negan sitting there with his shadowy hat and his gaze blank and muted. He had black pupils that eradicated

everything that crossed their gaze and they spun around like two singularities where nothing could escape.

You think you can just walk away Cree?

I'm done. I can't do this anymore.

I can see it in your eyes. I see those eyes and they are the eyes of someone who can't see the world. The world you lived in was one you never escaped. Never could escape. This world is the one which follows you everywhere you go when you're sleeping there in your home or you look upon the mountains. The world you've created for yourself is that which overrides others. These people that we kill live in ours. We don't live in theirs. They never had a chance. You never did either Cree. You have to finish the job. You are surviving off the machine and you're also the one powering it. Feelin' sorry for yourself like you didn't know what you were getting yourself into.

Yeah but I know that I can walk away. You don't control me.

Every time you step into that lab you think you have a choice that you can walk away whenever. That things can go back to what they were. You think that you walk into this world and then you can go. But we watch you. We watch and loom over you as our world surrounds you, as you silently loom over the lives of the people whose lives you take. This is the world and it is no longer mine or yours.

I don't live in your world Negan. I know what I do is wrong.

They're in our grasp. Every time you do work for us you suck them in too and yourself. There's no escape Cree, and it's about time you stop actin'

like there is.

Anything else?

We'll be speaking.

He walked out of his office and into the lab. He felt for his keys then he reached for the door and he felt someone reaching out to him like the residues of a ghost but he knew this one. He reached out to the hand of those gone. Those he welcomed into the world and then sent them away to the next. He saw the mangled hand and he cast his gaze down upon the wretched grip and he touched the harrowing grasp and felt all the pain and the suffering the misery and the despair as he saw himself in the ashes with him and his family those who he hated and those he loved and saw the world towering over him and he opened the door and he stepped into the room and he began to work.

He exited the building and walked across the empty parking lot as the reclusive moon peaked out behind the coasting blanket of the dark clouds dimly illuminating him as he floated along in the orbit he couldn't leave. He put his key in the ignition and he looked in the mirror and he couldn't see anything but everything behind him all the things that wouldn't let him go as he decided it was time to go to the next. He saw the dark silhouettes of the brush and the trees as he drove up to the Sandia mountains. He took his key out of the ignition and he got out of the car and he walked into the trees and forward into the endless night like an insignificant rock being cast into the void.