

Child Of God- Cormac McCarthy

“To watch these things issuing from the otherwise mute pastoral morning is a man at the barn door. He is small, clean, unshaven. He moves in the dry chaff among the dust and slats of sunlight with a constrained truculence. Saxon and Celtic bloods. A child of God much like yourself perhaps.”

“In the patch of rheumy light a spider hung. A rank odor of earth and old woodsmoke. He wadded newspapers and set them in the hearth and lit them. They burned slowly. Small flames sputtered and ate their way along the rims and edges. The papers blackened and curled and shivered and the spider descended by a thread and came to rest clutching itself on the ashy floor of the hearth.”

“Ballard leveled the rifle at the bird but something of an old foreboding made him hold. Mayhaps the bird felt it too. It flew. Small. Tiny. Gone. The woods were filled with silence.”

“It’s like a lot of things, said the smith. Do the least part of it wrong and ye’d just as well to do it all wrong. He was soring through handles standing in a barrel. Reckon you could do it now from watchin? He said. Do what, said Ballard.”

“Coming up the mountain through the blue winter twilight among great boulders and the ruins of giant trees prone in the forest he wondered at such upheaval. Disorder in the woods, trees down, new paths needed. Given charge Ballard would have made things more orderly in the woods and in men’s souls.”

“Seems like trouble ought ot make people closer stead of some trying to rob others.”

“No, those were sorry people all the way around, ever many jack a three hundred and sixty degree son of a bitch, which my daddy said meant there was a son of a bitch any way you looked at them.”

“You think people was meaner then than they are now? The deputy said. The old man was looking out at the flooded town. No, he said. I don’t. I think people are the same from the day God first made one.”

“He watched the diminutive progress of all things I the valley, the gray fields coming up black and corded under the plow, the slow green occlusion that the trees were spreading. Squatting there he let his head drop between his knees and he began to cry.”

“He had resolved himself to ride on for the could not turn back and the world that day was as lovely as any day that ever was and he was riding to his death.”

“He cast about among the stars for some kind of guidance but the heavens wore a different look that Ballard did not trust.”

Surprised by: 1. The resiliency of Ballard (why didn’t he kill himself given the circumstances, his father did?) 2. His seeming lack of care for the rifle, even though it is the one thing that sustains him. 3. He doesn’t completely give up and become an outcast (e.g. goes to church, even if he is offensive to others with his sniveling)