

Leo Gao

A close reading of pages 55-56

This section showed us a little background information about the difference between the man's and the woman's perspective on the daunting world. This passage was about a memory of the man with his wife and how the man is begging his wife to "stay with him" and their child. The author, Cormac McCarthy uses dialogue to show the wife's contrasting view of the world to reveal the man's motivation for the survival of him and their kid. Their conversation felt more like a debate, which side giving their own argument for whether or not they should hold on to living in this world or leaving it.

"We're survivors he told her across the flame of the lamp.

Survivors? she said.

Yes.

What in God's name are you talking about? We're not survivors. We're the walking dead in a horror film.

I'm begging you.

I dont care. I dont care if you cry. It doesnt mean anything to me.

Please.

Stop it.

I am begging you. I'll do anything."

The man described themselves as "survivors" whereas the woman completely disagrees and thinks they are the walking dead meaning they are living in the world with no life or purpose but just to survive. We also see that the man doesn't have much to argue against the woman at this moment but is only repeatedly begging for her to stay.

"Such as what? I should have done it a long time ago. When there were three bullets in the gun instead of two. I was stupid. We've been over all of this. I didnt bring myself to this. I was brought. And now I'm done. I thought about not even telling you. That would probably have been best. You have two bullets and then what? You cant protect us. You say you would die for us but what good is that? I'd take him with me if it werent for you. You know I would. It's the right thing to do."

This dialogue was spoken by the woman only and it shows how badly she wants to leave the deadly world. She believes that from the start they would not survive for long and instead of waiting for her death, she choose to end it early and it was perhaps the only thing she could have chosen in this world. She argues that there is no protection from anyone not even the man with his gun, even if he dies for them that would only slow down the people coming after her and their child.

"You're talking crazy.

No, I'm speaking the truth. Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won't face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I can't. I can't. She sat there smoking a slender length of dried grapevine as if it were some rare cheroot. Holding it with a certain elegance, her other hand across her knees where she'd drawn them up. She watched him across the small flame. We used to talk about death, she said. We don't any more. Why is that?

I don't know.

It's because it's here. There's nothing left to talk about.

I wouldn't leave you.

I don't care. It's meaningless. You can think of me as a faithless slut if you like. I've taken a new lover. He can give me what you cannot.

Death is not a lover.

Oh yes he is.

Please don't do this.

I'm sorry.

I can't do it alone."

At the peak of their argument, it becomes obvious that the man doesn't really have anything to say against what the woman has said. The author doesn't give the man much dialogue instead only a few words in each sentence, showing us that he doesn't have a confident stance for why he is fighting for their survival, making the reader's question, "why is the man fighting so hard to live in what seems like a guaranteed death in the world they are living in?" On the other hand, the woman has been given much more dialogue and she has stated many valid reasons to commit suicide. She also called herself a "faithless slut" because she has taken a new love, death. This clearly reveals that she does not love the man anymore, a reason could be that there is no point in loving someone when you both have no future to share together. Instead, she chose to love death, the inevitable death that no one can escape, and the only cure she can think of to save herself from the world they live in.

This section showed us through dialogue how two important characters feel about the setting of the book. One has been given short dialogue and no argument to fight for survival yet still holding on to the life he was given. Meanwhile, the other character has been given many dialogue and many reasons to why dying in that world is a much better solution.