

No Country for Old Men Study Guide

No Country for Old Men by Cormac McCarthy

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Plot Summary

No Country For Old Men by Cormac McCarthy is a look at the changing times a sheriff faces towards the end of his career in law enforcement. Sheriff Ed Tom Bell investigates a massacre in the desert with obvious ties to heroin and Mexico. It is a sign of changing times that Bell is sorry to see and has a difficult time relating to. It punches a large hole in what he had always seen as his responsibility - to keep his town and the people in it safe.

Llewelyn Moss is the first one on the scene, out hunting and stumbling across the carnage. One man is still alive and asks Moss for water, but Moss has none. He looks around at the bodies and the firepower they carried, notes the drugs in the back of the third vehicle, and comes to some simple conclusions. He is sorry he ever approached these vehicles and thinks that there must have been someone else. He wipes every surface down that he might have touched and tracks the last man to his final resting place not much farther away. A document case sits near by, and Moss opens it to find it full of money. His next decision changes everything. He makes his first mistake when he picks up the case, and goes home. His wife Carla Jean is waiting for him, and she knows that the money is nothing but trouble. She doesn't want anything to do with it. Moss makes his second mistake when he gets out of bed later, his conscience bothering him, and goes back to the desert to bring the survivor the water he asked for. Approaching the vehicle, he sees the door is now open and the man has a new gunshot wound right between his eyes. The drugs are gone, and Llewelyn knows he just made the dumbest mistake of his life.

The men who own the drugs and the money are not going to simply let him go, he discovers as he returns to his truck and sees the man looking at it. He knows right then he will never see his truck again, and sets out in the opposite direction. He manages to elude them that night, but the clock is now running. Llewelyn is only too aware that by Monday morning, they will be able to trace his truck to learn his identity. The chase has already begun. In the days that follow, Moss will send his wife to her mothers in Odessa, hoping to keep her safe while he just concentrates on staying alive. With over two million in a case, he tries to disappear, but is tracked by way of a transponder in the case, and comes face to face with one of several people who want it back. The initial investor has sent a lunatic named Chigurh who enjoys the job of killing way too much; the Mexicans send a group to recoup their investment; and the law is simply trying to do their job, but it all adds up to a run for his life that leaves a trail of bodies in his wake. Eventually, almost everyone connected to the case will die with the exception of Chigurh who offers his services to the man who financed the deal, and Sheriff Bell who manages to stay out of harms way, and retire with his wife Loretta.

In a story that is full of violence, this novel is a glimpse at the nature of change and how each generation looks at those coming and can hardly recognize their place in it anymore. It is a story of love, fear, greed, and determination to do the right thing.



Chapter I

Summary

No Country For Old Men by Cormac McCarthy is a look at the changing times a sheriff faces towards the end of his career in law enforcement. Sheriff Ed Tom Bell investigates a massacre in the desert with obvious ties to heroin and Mexico. It is a sign of changing times that Bell is sorry to see, and has a difficult time relating to. It punches a large hole in what he had always seen as his responsibility - to keep his town and the people in it safe.

Chigurh is cuffed and standing in the corner of the office while the deputy reports to the Sheriff. It will be the last report he makes. As soon as he is off the phone, Chigurh uses a move that he practiced often to slip the cuffs in front of him and wrap them around the deputy's neck. Within minutes, he is free, having practiced this move many times before. He then uses the police car to pull over another vehicle on the road, and kills the driver to take it from him.

Llewelyn Moss lowers his binoculars noting the position of the antelope. He sets up his rifle, fires a shot, and the miss is enough to send them running. He looks again through the binoculars. He sees three vehicles and what appears to be men on the ground. He watches for some time, but nothing moves and so he approaches carefully. The first vehicle contains one dead man and two more along with a dog lie on the ground near by. The second vehicle is empty, but the third contains a driver who tries to talk to him through bloodied lips. He asks Moss for water, but he has none. The truck contains a load of brick sized, plastic wrapped parcels containing loose brown powder. Keeping an eye on the horizon, he takes out his handkerchief and begins wiping down every surface he may have touched. It is obvious to Moss that one man is missing, so he cuts a wide trail searching for a sign of him. He finds a trail of blood in the grass, searches the surrounding area and sees something blue. He watches for a while but nothing moves. He is dead and a leather document case sits beside him. He opens the case and it is filled with one hundred dollar bills bundled with bank tape identifying each as \$10,000. He closes the case knowing one thing for certain. Someone will come looking for it. He goes back to his truck, and sets the case inside behind his seat. When he gets back to the Desert Aire trailer, he hides the gun he took from the dead man. She is on the couch and asks him for his keys to go out for cigarettes, but Moss has already picked some up. Shortly after one in the morning, he counts the packets and determines that there are 2.4 million dollars in the case. He thinks about the man in the third truck and decides to take him water. When he approaches, there is a lot more blood and an additional bullet hole in his head. Half way back to his truck he realizes that someone is standing beside his truck and knows he will never see his truck again. He heads for the river while a truck searches for him. Two hundred yards from the river he hears the truck again. It dogs him, shining spotlights over the landscape, searching. He makes it to the river and manages to elude his pursuers but the reality of his future worries him. By Monday, there will be no where that he or anyone related to him can hide.



Analysis

Chigurh is caught, but not for long. He takes advantage of the deputy's complacency to get his manacles around the deputy's neck. It is over in moments, and Chigurh is free again. This is only possible because of the many times he has practiced this very move. Chigurh is thorough, and likes to prepare for all eventualities. It is also his habit not to leave any witnesses behind.

Moss is hunting antelope when he comes across the three trucks in the desert. One truck is packed with bricks of brown powder and he is immediately sorry he even approached the vehicles. He wipes every surface he can think of, realizing there must be at least one more man so he sweeps the area, finding him without too much trouble because he is also dead. He has a leather case beside him, and Moss opens it, revealing a large amount of cash. Moss is nervous. He takes the money home, along with a gun he took from one of the dead men, and finds his wife sitting on the couch. He hides the leather case under the bed after determining that there are approximately 2.4 million dollars inside. For that kind of money, he knows that they will never stop looking for him. She sees the new gun and doesn't even want to know where he got it, as long as he didn't purchase it. She distracts him by taking him to bed, but he wakes after midnight and can't stop thinking about the man who was still alive. Guilt gets him out of bed and dressed again. She asks him where he is going, but his answers are vague. He tells her to pass on a message to his mother if he doesn't return, but she reminds him that his mother is dead, so he tells her to never mind - he'll tell her himself. She is worried, and doesn't want him to leave, but he tells her he will be home soon. He stops at a filling station to examine a map and marks the route he will take back. Everything is as he left it except that the driver's door on the third truck is now open. He chastises himself for having come back, knowing that this simple act of kindness - taking the dying man water -- is likely going to get him killed. This thought is confirmed by the extra bullet wound now in the third man's head. He looks around nervously, feeling like a bug in a jar, before heading back to the truck, intending to get as far away as he can. As he nears, he sees a man standing beside it and immediately realizes that he must say goodbye to his wheels. He hears the truck before he sees it and when the spotlight searches for him, he knows there is no where close that he can hide. He drops face down to the ground and hopes they don't notice him, trying not to think about the snakes and spiders that make their homes in the area. When the truck is far enough away, he gets up and heads in the opposite direction, toward the river. They find him before he manages to reach the river and the growing darkness makes things both better and worse at the same time. They see him before he manages to reach the water, but he manages to get into the water, using the current to take him downstream. A mile or so down, he gets out on the opposite side, sure that the men haven't given up. He goes through some tall grass and hides until two of the men pass, almost close enough to touch him on the way by. As they search, he thinks about his truck, and it occurs to him that he has only about twenty four hours before they check the registration and know who he is. Then even his brother in California won't be safe, despite the fact that he knows nothing. He starts up the canyon and at the top he sees the vista of red dirt stretching out in front of him. It is thirty miles to Langtry, Texas in a straight line - his feet



are already sore and his arm hurts where a small amount of buckshot clipped him as he fled.

Vocabulary

talus, increments, caldera, guttural, methodically, amphitheater, caroming, commence



Chapter II

Summary

Moss thinks about the close calls he has had in law enforcement and wonders if it is more dangerous now than it was then. Sheriff Bell a call when he gets into the office that is inconsequential, but the radio call that comes next has him getting up. He tells Torbet to shut the trunk, keep his lights on, and wait. It will take him fifty minutes to get there and when he and Wendell arrive, they look over the scene. Will Wyrick is dead in the trunk, shot once through the forehead with what looks like a wadcutter. Bell tells Torbet to take Lamar's cruiser to Austin and when he is done, back to Sonora where one of them will come and get him. He doesn't even want the report to list Wyrick by name. Wendell tells him that if he gets stopped on the way and anyone looks in the trunk, he should play dumb. He heads to Sonora, stopping only to move a red tail hawk off the road that had been killed by a passing vehicle. In Sonora, the Sheriff is beside himself. Yellow crime tape stretches across the lot and Sheriff Bell and Ed Tom discuss the lunatic on the loose.

It is 1:20 a.m. in the morning when Llewelyn gets back to Sanderson by bus. The driver drops him right at the trailer and Carla Jean is in his arms before he can hardly get in the door. He showers while she makes food for him. She asks him questions that he won't answer, and instead he tells her to pack a bag and go to her mother's in Odessa until she hears from him.

Chigurh pulls into a filling station in Sheffield and the small talk by the station owner sets him on edge. Chigurh asks him if he's lived there all his life, and what the most he's ever lost on a coin toss is. Confused by the conversation, and trying to get ready to close, he wonders what the man is getting at. Finally Chigurh manages to talk him into selecting heads or tails, telling him that he is betting his whole life on it. He calls heads, and luckily it is. Chigurh gives the quarter to the proprietor, and tells him to hang on to it before getting back into his car and pulling out without turning on his headlights. He drives to where Moss's truck sits, and he and the other two men who are waiting for him walk down to where the three men and dog lie dead. He asks about the box and is told that no signal can be heard. He stands there for a moment before he turns to the other two and shoots them dead.

Analysis

Moss remembers what it was like when he first took office and the worst offenses were fist fights. He knows that anything can happen when a vehicle is pulled over, and how frightening it is to be on the receiving end of a hail of bullets. Now it's reached a point where Carla Jean won't even read the paper anymore, and he fears she is right.



Sheriff Bell sits at his desk and fields a call from Mrs. Downie about a cat in a tree, wondering how much money he has to have before he doesn't have to listen to people talk about cats in trees. A call over the radio has him heading for Torbet who is waiting for him beside Bill Wyrick's car. Wyrick had been shot in the head and put in his own trunk. Bell closes it again and tells Torbet to take the vehicle to Austin where Lamar will be waiting for him. Then either he or Wendell will come to get him. They speculate as to whether the killer has left the area, but both have the feeling he hasn't, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. Torbert asks if they will come and get him if he gets pulled over with a body in the trunk and they joke about either freeing him or joining him but Bell warns him that he shouldn't be joking where the dead are concerned. When he gets to Sonoma, Lamar greets them telling Bell and Ed Tom that there is hell to pay. Bell tells Ed Tom he is thinking about quitting as they watch Lamar go up the stairs to his office. Ed Tom hopes Bell doesn't quit. He knows they will need all hands.

Llewelyn takes the bus back to Sanderson and Carla Jean is relieved to see him. She had feared he was dead when he had been gone so long. She asks questions that he answers but she never knows whether he is telling the truth or not. She asks about the case, and he tells her it is full of money which she doesn't believe. She asks him what he's done, and he claims to have robbed a bank. She calls him a liar. She asks where his truck is, and he tells her it is dead. Then, while eating the breakfast she makes him, he tells her that he wants her to get on the bus that morning and go to her mothers in Odessa. She asks him about his wound and he tells her he's been shot, but when her worry level increase, he tell her he was just joking.

Chigurh is looking for trouble. He pulls into a filling station and give the proprietor a hard time for just about everything he says and does. Finally, he tells him to choose - heads or tails - and flips a quarter into the air. He tells him that he is playing for his whole life, and the proprietor has no idea how serious Chigurh is. Luckily, he guesses right, and wins the quarter and his life. Chigurh leaves, driving the rest of the way to where Moss's truck still sits. Two guys are waiting for him, and the three of them walk to the dead bodies below together. He does not give any warning or indication that he is going to shoot them and these men do not get any coin toss first.

Vocabulary

perpetrator, arroyos, abscissa, opaque, succession, quadrant, proprietor



Chapter III

Summary

Moss takes a bus with his wife as far as Fort Stockton. He grabs the document case and his bag, and says goodbye to her, promising to call her in a few days. Bell is just beginning his dinner when the phone rings. He tells the caller that he'll be there in forty minutes. He finishes dinner and invites his wife to join him. They meet Wendell at the scene, the '77 Ford truck still burning. At 9:30 am, Torbert calls and Bell sends Wendell to get him but before he can get there, Bell calls him back. He asks him to go to his house and saddle both his and Loretta's horses, and hook up the horse trailer. They ride back to the scene, taking in large tire tracks, and assessing the situation much like Moss had earlier, they surmise a man is missing from the scene. They search for him, and find him as well. By then, the drugs have already been taken, but some powder evidence remains to identify it. Both Bell and Wendell can identify Moss's truck and wonder where he is. Bell tells Wendell to look for Moss after returning the horses and thanking Loretta. Then he calls Torbert and tells him he is on his way. They discuss the case on the way back. Nine bodies are the total so far, including Deputy Haskins.

Chigurh arrives at Moss's trailer just before noon. He knocks and when no one answers, he shoots out the lock. At the front office, he asks for Moss, but they have no information, so he tries the local diner and then the garage. Meanwhile, Moss gets off the bus in Del Rio and takes a cab to the Trail Motel. There he stashes the bag of money deep in the air duct vent, pushing it way back out of sight. He hides the gun under the mattress and takes a cab to Ciudad Acuna where he buys bandages for his feet and then get some dinner. When he returns to the motel, the curtains are parted, and he tells the driver to take him to the Ramada Inn. In the morning, he buys a twelve gauge, and the hardware needed to saw it off, along with a bag of tent poles. He goes back to the Ramada, saws off the shotgun and calls the Trail Motel to tell them he'll want his room for another night. Then he buys some clothes and a bag at Walmart, and later uses the bag to take the stock and the barrel of the shotgun to the lake and disposes of them.

Analysis

Carla Jean worries about Llewelyn and asks him to promise her that he won't try to take the document case on the plane, or hurt anyone as he leaves her in Fort Stockton. Moss tells her not to worry. Bell's dinner is interrupted by a call. He listens, and hangs up after telling them he'll be there when he's finished. He and Loretta finish dinner and he invites her to come along with him, which she does. Wendell is waiting for them, and after Loretta makes a comment about wieners and marshmallows, Bell walks around the scene and notes the tire tracks left behind, and the fact that Moss is nowhere to be found. The next morning, he and Wendell go back to the site on horseback, and ride down to the other bodies below. This is something neither of them have seen before,



and the number of bodies is almost staggering. Like Moss, they find the last man and both agree that it is unlikely that no money would be there. Interest in Moss is growing. Bell asks Wendell to look for him, while he goes to get Torbert.

Chigurh is also looking for Moss. He goes to the trailer, and shoots off the lock when there is no answer. He looks around, trying the office, the local diner, and even the garage, but finds no trace of him. Moss gets off the bus in Del Rio and checks into a motel. He sets up a great hiding place for the document case, and hides it carefully. He goes out for dinner, and to get bandages for his still bleeding feet. When he goes back to the motel, he sees a change in the way he left the curtains. He has the cab take him to another motel, and spends the night there. Then he arms himself with a shotgun, and modifies it until it is two feet long. He throws the barrels and stock into the lake to get rid of them.

Vocabulary

enforcement, pommel, executed, penetrated, calibers, grackles, claymore



Chapter IV: Pages 90 - 106

Summary

Bell has breakfast in the cafe and then he and Wendell go to Moss's trailer. Bell notices the lock and they enter carefully, but no one is there. By Wednesday, news is getting around. Reporters approach Bell at breakfast and on the way back to the crime scene, Torbert reminds Bell that including Wyrick they now have a body count of ten. DEA agent McIntyre arrives by helicopter at the crime scene. They speculate as to why Moss's truck is the only one not shot up. The bodies are bloated and McIntyre makes a sketch of the scene. They both agree that if the heroin is gone, and so is the cash, it makes sense that someone else is missing. When Bell gets the ballistic reports, he tells Torbert he knows what happened, describing for him how a modern slaughterhouse works using air guns.

Chigurh has no trouble picking up the transponder's signal, narrowing it down to the Devil's River Bridge span located just to the west of Del Rio. He uses a bird as target practice out his window as he drives by, using a pistol with a unique silencer, but misses. He finds the motel and rents a room parking at the side of the building. In the room, he takes off his boots and leaving his bag, he comes back out with the receiver and a shotgun. Using the air gun also fitted with a silencer, he blows out the lock and enters. He shoots the Mexican on the bed before he can even react and then puts three rounds into the bathroom - two through the closed door and one through the wall. He waits until he sees blood on the tiles and then goes in to finish the man inside. It doesn't take long to find the drag marks in the dust of the duct work.

Moss rents a second room in the motel, using a map to determine the exact room he is looking for. He rents a room at the back of the motel. He opens the duct grille and can see the edge of his bag at a junction ten feet away. He connects and then tapes three tent poles and creates a hook on the end using coat hangers. Then he uses it to fish the bag out, put everything back the way it was and leave. Then he goes back outside taking only the receiver, battery pack and shotgun. Bell realizes why no shell casings or bullets are found in the third truck, and tells Torbet about the kind of technology now used in cattle slaughterhouses. He drives along the row of rooms, watching the receiver on his lap. Finally, having located the room, he goes to the desk clerk and rents a room.

Analysis

Bell and Wendell go to Moss's trailer, and wonder if he knows what kind of people are after him. On Wednesday they go back to the crime scene, and are met by DEA agent McIntyre. He confirms what they have already determined, and they discuss the firepower used. Moss is being searched for by more and more people as the days pass. Bell comments that they need to get the bodies out of the desert sun, now bloated and



getting worse. McIntyre agrees. Ballistics are no help other than that they tell Bell that an air gun was used.

Chigurh is on his way, following the transponder's signal, and anxious to get the job done. He's armed to the teeth and ready to try out his new silencer, made from a hairspray can with brass mapp-gas burner fitted inside and stuffed with insulation. Chigurh has no trouble making short work of the two men in the room where his transponder led him. Then he goes to the door to make sure he hasn't attracted any attention before returning to search the room. The duct is the obvious hiding place, and he finds the drag marks inside.

Moss gets back to his motel and asks the desk clerk for a second room, informing her that he still wants to keep the first one. It is an unusual request and she gets flustered at first, but there is no shortage of rooms available. She offers him the adjoining room, but he prefers the room above and gives her a room number. When he gets to the room, he listens to the ambient noise around him, and then satisfied that things sound normal, he opens the duct cover and can see the bag at the junction in the duct work. Relieved, and nervous, he turns out the light and listens again before using the tent poles he purchased to retrieve the document case. He checks it, and leaving the poles in the duct, closes things up again, and leaves the room much as he found it, leaving the key on the desk.

Vocabulary

evidence, transponder, slipstream, chenille, silencer, maul, chute



Chapter IV: Pages 106 - 122

Summary

Moss takes a cab to Eagle Pass, sleeping most of the way, and then checking into the Hotel Eagle. He thinks about his situation, and then pulls the money out of the bag. He checks the bag carefully, finding nothing, but going through the money packages, he finds the transponder. He sets it to one side, and goes back down to the office. The night shift has just begun, and Moss offers him a hundred dollars if he will simply call Moss if anyone checks in. The clerk agrees. Moss goes back to his room and sleeps until something wakes him. He turns on the shower and then hides under the bed with the shotgun. Shortly after, he gets company. Moss manages to surprise him and holding the gun on him manages to get away, but has no idea where he is going. Before he manages to get too far, Chigurh is on the hotel balcony, and firing in his direction. Hit twice, he lopes across the street. Two men join the chase, coming from a car and firing. He sinks to the sidewalk once, but manages to get up again, with blood collecting even in his boots. He manages to make it through the bridge turnstile and crosses towards the Mexican side. Before going through, he buys a coat from three passing teenagers, and heaves the document case over the rail and into the carrizo cane growing on the American side. He continues on into the town of Piedras Negras in the State of Coahuila. He passes out on a bench and as it gets light he pays the first man he sees to take him to a doctor, leaving the bloody bench behind him.

Chigurh ties off his leg with a section of window blind cord and leaves the motel. He shoots his way past the men on the street who all seem armed with Uzi's. Only a block from the courthouse, he knows there will be a response soon. He takes an Uzi from one of the dead men, taking the clips from his pocket too. One man lies in a pool of blood and asks him to help. Chigurh tells the man to look at him, wanting to see his eyes lose their life as he shoots him in the head. Then he limps his way back to his vehicle.

Analysis

Once in Eagle Pass, Moss checks in the Hotel Eagle. He sits on the bed and thinks about his predicament. He realizes there is no way anyone would easily find him unless he was being tracked. He takes the money out and checks the document case carefully. Finding nothing, he checks the bills where he finds the sending unit. He takes it out and wonders if he'll ever be able to stop hiding or running. He tries to think of all the angles, and to be prepared for whatever happens, but still feels as though he has failed to do something. He even pays the desk clerk to warn him if any men check in, but no calls come. He wakes without apparent reason just after four in the morning, and stands at the door, listening. A draft warns him that a door was opened somewhere, so he starts the shower, closes the door and hides under the bed with his gun. He hears the key go into the door, and watches the ostrich boots enter. Moss knows he has few chances of survival. He manages to surprise Chigurh, and tells him to drop his weapon. The man



never says a word. Moss backs out of the door, telling him that if he follows, he will be shot. Then he turns and runs. He sees the feet of the night clerk sticking out from the counter, and by the time he crosses the street, Chigurh is on the balcony and firing. The first shot tugs at his bag and the second hits his side. He can't help but marvel at what a good shot the man is. The gunfire continues and he slides down to the sidewalk once, berating himself and forcing himself to his feet, knowing that if he stays there he will die. He manages to get to the bridge, and buy a coat from a passing group of kids who consider trying him on when they realize he's been shot, but Moss tells them to move on and that he will only warn them once. When they are gone, and it appears no one else is around, he takes out wad of bills and then tosses the document case over the rails and into the carrizo cane below. He makes his way across to the State of Coahuila and finds his way to a bench. When he sees an old man coming, he offers to pay him to take him to a doctor.

Chigurh doesn't get off without injury either. The buckshot from Moss hits him in the leg, and he wraps it before heading out. He surveys the area, shooting anyone who is out of place. He enjoys his work, taking the time to watch the last man as his life leaves his eyes after Chigurh shoots him in the head. Then he heads back to his vehicle.

Vocabulary

transoms, intersected, kiosk, pandemonium, turnstile, reverence, intersection, balustrade, capillaries, squandered



Chapter V

Summary

Sheriff Bell drives to Odessa and Carla Jean opens the door when he knocks. He takes her for coffee at the Sunshine Cafe where she insists that she has no idea where Moss is. He asks her if she understands how much trouble Llewelyn is in, but she is fairly certain that he can take care of himself. Bell tries to make it clear to her that these are men who will not give up. He asks her if she and Moss have been having trouble, but she assures him that they are fine. Bell suggests that if Moss turns in the money, perhaps that by putting it in the paper, they can keep him from being killed. Carla Jean thinks that they should do that anyway, but Bell refuses. They talk for a while longer, and Bell tries to talk her into helping them but Carla Jean says that she'd die and live in hell before she'd turn him in. Then she tells him how she and Llewelyn met. He returns her to her mother's and before he heads back to Sanderson he gets a call from the Sheriff at Eagle Pass. They both agree that it seems like an all out war is in progress. He takes a look at the scene, and asks what shell casings were found. They go to where the body of the clerk lies, and Bell tells him that he wasn't shot and that ballistics will confirm. Then he heads home to have dinner with his wife.

Wells is called into a Houston office building and asked to sort out the rapidly deteriorating situation with regard to the missing drugs and money. Chigurh is to be taken care of. Wells heads out, and begins by checking into the hotel that Moss stayed in. He goes to his room and washes up before checking out the rooms that Moss rented. Going out to the street, he can still see where Moss was shot, and notices bullet holes on the second floor level. Investigating further, he finds an old woman in a rocking chair, shot dead where she sat. He takes a photograph and leaves the scene undisturbed.

Moss wakes to find a man sitting in the chair beside his bed, holding flowers. He asks Wells how many of him there are, but Wells assures him that he is the only one Moss needs to worry about. When Moss asks about Chigurh, Wells tells him he can make him go away. Moss believes he can do that himself, but Wells doesn't think so. Wells confirms that Moss didn't take the heroin, and in fact had little to do with anything beyond just happening on the scene first. He tries to warn Moss how dangerous Chigurh is, but Moss brushes him off. He gives Moss his card, and tells him not to wait too long because if he has to recover the funds from Chigurh, it will be too late for both him and his wife.

Analysis

When Carla Jean opens the door and sees Sheriff Bell standing there, she immediately thinks the worst, but Bell assures her that he is only there to talk to her, and that as far as he knows, Llewelyn is fine. Knowing that the sight of him will panic her mother as



well, she gets her jacket and they go to the Sunshine Cafe. She insists that she doesn't know where Moss is. He reminds her that money changes people, but Carla Jean is convinced that will not be the case with Moss. Sheriff Bell looks over the carnage at Eagle Pass before heading home to a dinner with his wife, and appreciating the fact that they have time together. They talk about the case, and she asks him if Moss is likely to send for Carla Jean. Bell says that he is a fool if he doesn't.

Carson Wells is sent for, and asked to handle Chigurh and retrieve the money. He has no trouble tracking Moss from the hotel to the doctors where he is sitting with flowers when Moss wakes up. He tries to convince Moss of the degree of trouble he is in, but much like was the case between Carla Jean and Sheriff Bell, Moss simple doesn't believe he can't handle it himself. Wells tries to convince him that he can help, and that the best bet Moss has is to return the money to him, but Moss doesn't believe it. Wells leaves him his telephone number and tells him not to wait too long, or it will be too late to help.

Vocabulary

jurisdiction, cartel, randomly, generated, validated, psychopathic, vulnerable, invincible, squalid



Chapter VI: Pages 158 - 179

Summary

Chigurh finds a veterinarian listing in a phone book located about thirty minutes away. He drives to a Cooperative and hobbles in, collecting a bag of supplies including Betadine, cotton, tape and gauze, forceps, and scissors. Next, he drives to a pharmacy and creates a distraction by setting the car out front on fire. Inside, he finds syringes, Hydrocodone tablets, tetracycline and sulfa. He adds crutches to the mix and hobbles out the rear door. He drives to a motel outside Hondo and cleans himself and his leg wounds, disinfecting and dressing them. Then he gives the maid ten dollars and tells her not to clean the room. He stays there for five days, recuperating, until on the fifth night when two Valdez County deputies entered the restaurant where he sat having dinner. They look him over carefully, and Chigurh knows it is time to go. Walking as evenly as he can, he goes back to his room, packs his things and leaves.

Wells stands on the same bridge as Moss did and looks out at the water. Using the blood stains to guide him, he looks over the edge of the bridge and is suddenly convinced that he knows where the money is. Bell leaves his office, ignoring the call from McIntyre and asking Molly to call his wife after he is gone to tell her that he is going to Eagle Pass. On the way, he notices a flatbed coming up the street and turns his cruiser around to pull him over. The flatbed contains the wrapped bodies from the crime scene and the tarp has come loose. He asks the driver how many bodies he left with, and the driver insists he still has all of them. He ties it back down and leaves.

Chigurh gets a beep from the transponder receiver and then it goes silent again. As darkness falls, the beep returns, slow and steady. He pulls into the hotel and registers, then goes to his room and lies down. When he wakes, he ponders the fact that the transponder is back at the hotel. Believing Moss is dead, that left only the police or an agent of the Matacumbe Petroleum Group. He goes down to the desk and asks to see the register, taking note of the rooms Moss rented. He finds the transponder and decides to leave it where it is. Then he goes down to the lobby and waits for Wells who shows up at 11:30. Chigurh follows him upstairs and when Wells turns halfway up, he says hello. They go to Wells' room where Wells tells he doesn't have to do what he is doing. He offers Chigurh money, but Chigurh refuses. He watches Wells go through his last thoughts, enjoying the moment. Wells won't play. He tells Chigurh to get on with it, and finish him. In a last effort, Wells tells him that he knows where the satchel is, but Chigurh tells him it doesn't matter because it will come to him. Then he shoots him in the face, finishing him like he had the others.

Analysis

Chigurh needs to repair himself before he can go any further. He assembles the supplies he needs and checks himself into a hotel where he soaks himself in a tub, and



then uses forceps to pick the pieces of material out of the wounds in his leg. He stretches out on the bed after he is done, sweat beading on his forehead, and the only indication that his labor caused him any discomfort. He stays there for five days, turning on the television and leaving it on the same channel, just watching whatever programming it contained. On the fifth day, he went to the restaurant for dinner and noticed the close scrutiny of two deputies. Rather than take any chances, he walks as normally as possible back to his hotel, packs his bags and gets on the freeway.

Wells follows Moss' trail. He can see by the pooling of his blood where he stopped and for how long. To maintain an inconspicuous look, he has a camera that he uses to take pictures whenever it appears as though any one is paying any attention to him. He sees one point at which Moss stood for a minute and looking over the edge of the bridge, he can see the most likely place that Moss would have hidden the satchel of money. Bell goes back to Eagle Pass, noticing the makeshift morgue on his way out. He turns around to pull him over, disgusted by the lack of care and attention being paid to the dead loaded on the back. The tarp that was supposed to cover them had pulled free, exposing the bodies to anyone who looked, and risking the likelihood of losing one accidentally. The driver, chastised by Bell, assures him that he's lost no one, and secures the tarp again before leaving.

Chigurh gets a signal from his receiver that stops as quickly as it started. When it picks up again, it leads him directly back to the motel Moss stayed in. Further investigation reveals the unit sitting in one of the rooms Moss used, but Chigurh is reasonably sure that Moss is no longer alive, so his list of possible suspects is narrow. He leaves the unit where it was, and goes down to the lobby to watch. His patience is rewarded when Wells shows up. Considered as his equal, Chigurh enjoys the advantage he has over Wells, and makes no secret of it. He sits him down in the room, and encourages him to share his final thoughts. Wells isn't playing. He'd rather that Chigurh just take him out without preamble. When he looks at his watch, he can see that he has three minutes of life left, according to the old lady. True to her prediction, as the seconds tick away, Chigurh shoots him in the face, going right through the hand.

Vocabulary

dilute, serum, quadriceps, cordial, commence, arrogance, burnished, extricate



Chapter VI: Pages 179 - 194

Summary

Moss begins exercising his way up and down the ward. Later than night he calls Odessa and talks to Carla Jean. She finally admits that she doesn't even want the money. All she wants is for them to go back to who they were and be happy again. Moss thinks about it for a minute and asks her if she will agree to hide if he promises to give the money back. She agrees, asking him how he plans to do that. He tells her about his meeting with Wells and promises to call him. Carla Jean asks him if he trusts Wells, and he admits that he likely can't, but Wells is still his best hope. When he calls the number that Wells gave him after finishing his conversation with his wife, he knows immediately that someone else answered the phone. He asks who he is talking to, and Chigurh tells him he already knows, and suggests that he bring the document case to him. Moss asks where Wells is, but Chigurh tells him that Wells can't help him anymore. He knows where Moss is, and tells him he is going to pay his wife and mother in law a visit. Chigurh says that while he can't save himself, Moss can still save them. Moss promises to make a special project out of Chigurh who seems to enjoy the idea. Before daylight, Moss leaves the hospital in only his gown and the coat he bought on the bridge. He pays a cab driver twenty dollars to take him across the bridge but the driver only gets a far as the border gates before being turned around. Thankfully, the guard though suspicious at first lets Moss go after discovering he served three tours in Nam. He walks until he finds a clothing store, and knocks on the door when he sees a light in the back. The proprietor opens it and without comment, helps Moss with a full set of clothes.

Sheriff Bell talks to the Eagle Pass Sheriff and learns that the hotel is likely going to stay closed. Two desk clerks killed in less than one week is enough to keep employees from coming to work. They go over to have a look around and discover the transponder unit. They both figure that whoever is responsible has found what he is looking for, but Bell still thinks something doesn't smell right about the whole situation. They have an identification on Wells, and know that he was a twenty-four year veteran of the army, but Bell knows that somehow this still isn't over because of Moss' involvement.

Analysis

Carla Jean's mother gives Llewelyn a rough time when he calls to talk to his wife, telling him at first that she doesn't want to talk to him. When she finally agrees to wake her, Moss can almost believe that she was telling the truth. Carla Jean is short, abrupt, and less than receptive when Moss tells her that she should leave. When she says she doesn't want to leave her mother alone, Moss suggests that they both retreat to somewhere safe. Carla Jean doesn't want to do that either because her mother is sick. Finally, Moss asks her if he promises to find a way to give the money back, would she and her mother go into hiding, and she agrees. He gets off the phone and immediately



calls the number Wells gave him, intending to make good on his promise, but Wells doesn't answer. Instead, he finds himself talking to Chigurh, who is anything but reasonable. By the time Moss gets off the phone, instead of arranging a place to hand over the cash, he is threatening to make a special project out of Chigurh himself. Chigurh is happy to hear it, enjoying the challenge, but before his confrontation with Moss, he intends to kill his wife and mother in law. Moss leaves the hospital at daybreak wearing only a gown and coat, and in his bare feet, flags down a cab. The driver gets him to the bridge but the border guards stop them there. They find Moss suspicious without shoes and clothes, and question him for some time before discovering his service connections, and then let him go after recommending that he apologize to his wife for whatever they were fighting about, and go home. He assures them that is his intention and walks across. He finds a clothing store where the proprietor helps him to assemble a full set of clothes without once showing any surprise that he is almost naked.

Bell and the Eagle Pass sheriff discuss the events at the hotel, feeling bad that they didn't think to stake it out in case the killer returned - if he ever left of course. Now, the hotel is unlikely to open again, having lost two night clerks. They find the transponder and the sheriff wonders if Bell is holding back information, but he assures him that they both have the same facts. The only question now seems to be what will happen to Moss and Carla Jean.

Vocabulary

accountable, loiterers, dubious, scrabbling, sallow, paunch, homicidal



Chapter VII

Summary

Before going to Odessa, Chigurh goes to see the man who sent Carson Wells to kill him, and fires a full load of double ought buckshot into him, watching him die while he explains that he used buckshot out of consideration for the people walking below the window. This way, there was no falling glass. Meanwhile, Carla Jean does as she promised and leaves Odessa, headed for El Paso with her mother who is anything but pleased about it all. She complains to all around her, telling anyone who will listen that she has cancer.

Chigurh sits outside the Odessa home for a few minutes before breaking in and determining that no one was home. He wanders through the house, helping himself to a soda, and sorting through the old woman's things. Finally, he wedges a chair under her bedroom door handle, stretches out on her bed and goes to sleep. When he wakes in the morning, he shower and helps himself to cereal. Then he goes through her bills, looking for a clue as to their destination.

Moss sleeps naked, hanging his new clothes in the closet. When he wakes, he cleans and redresses his wounds, and calls a cab. He asks the driver if he wants to make some money without having to do anything against the law. They agree on five hundred dollars, and Moss rips the bills in half, giving him half and pocketing the other half to keep him honest. They drive to the bridge where Moss directs him to park underneath and wait while he goes to retrieve the bag. When he finds it, he goes back and negotiates a ride to San Antonio for a thousand dollars. He spends the night in a Rodeway Inn and in the morning he uses the newspaper to locate and purchase a gun. He test fires it, and then goes back to his room to clean his wounds and redress them. Then he buys a 1978 Ford pickup and checks out of the Inn, putting the Tec-9 under the seat. He is about to get onto the interstate when he sees a young girl hitchhiking, he picks her up and asks her if she can drive, making her promise to keep to the speed limit. He sleeps for a while and when he wakes, gives her directions where to turn and asking her to pass him the gun.

Bell goes home and his wife has supper waiting, along with a note from Carla Jean. He calls her and she asks if he can promise that if she tells him where Moss is, that he will ensure his safety. All Bell can do is promise no harm will come to Moss from him.

A man sitting at a table calls out to Listo who is stretched out on the bed. He tells him he has it, and tears off a sheet of paper, handing it to him. Listo gets into a Plymouth Barracuda and leaves taking a sub machine gun and spare clips with him.



Analysis

Chigurh doesn't like anything that inconveniences him in any way. Having to deal with Wells, while somewhat satisfying, was an unpaid inconvenience. As such, the person who ordered it would pay. It was his first stop and despite the elaborate security system, Chigurh was able to penetrate and then execute the man who sent Wells after him. Carla Jean and her mother leave Odessa as promised, but Carla Jean's mother isn't going quietly. She tells anyone in earshot that she has cancer and doesn't know anyone in El Paso.

Chigurh's next stop is the Odessa home. He breaks in easily, and spends time there. He drinks soda, sleeps in the master bedroom, makes cereal, and has a shower - confident that Moss would not show up, but wishing that he would.

Moss collects the document case and pays the cab driver to take him to San Antonio. Once there, he manages to arm himself and buy a 4WD Ford. On his way to the interstate, he sees a young girl hitchhiking and picks her up, asking her immediately if she knows how to drive. Moss knows he needs to rest, and having someone else drive is the answer. He tells her to stay at the speed limit because if they get pulled over, it'll be trouble for both of them. When he wakes, they are almost where he needs to go. He tells her when to turn and reaches for his Tek-9.

Bell stands in front of the windmill, realizing that he really doesn't know anything. At home, a message from Carla Jean waits. She is looking for some kind of guarantee that Moss will not be harmed if she tells Bell where he is. He promises that he won't do anything, but of course can't speak for anyone else.

Someone named Listo gets the information he's been waiting for and leaves shortly after.

Vocabulary

diode, laboriously, identification, chaparral, notarized, elliptic, camouflage



Chapter VIII: Pages 216 - 236

Summary

Moss and the girl stop to have a meal. He asks her what happened to her, noticing the difficulty walking she has, but she is less than forthcoming. She asks him what he does, and he tells her that three weeks ago, he was a nine to five, law-abiding citizen, but sometimes things happen that you just don't expect. She asks what is in the briefcase, and he tells her it's his briefs. Moss determines that she is going to California, and peels off a thousand dollars worth of one hundred dollar bills, handing it to her. She can't believe he expects nothing in return. When they get back in the truck, he drives and she sleeps most of the way to Van Horn. Then they grab a bite and he rents them two motel rooms. He leaves her in hers and comes back a short while later to offer her a beer. She gratefully accepts and invites him to join him on the steps to drink his with her. They talk and he tries to warn her about the perils of road travel and asks her to promise that when they get to El Paso, she'll take some of the money he gave her, and hop a bus the rest of the way to her destination. She agrees. She offers him herself, but he turns her down, citing the fact that he is already married.

In a truck stop outside of Balmorhea, the Barracuda pulls in and heads for the adjoining car wash. The driver exits and looks at the blood and assorted matter on the vehicle. He gets change from the machine and carefully washes it all away before getting back in and heading westward once more.

Analysis

Moss enjoys traveling with his young companion. She asks him about himself, and he is a cryptic about his life and his destination as she is about hers when he returns the favor. He covers up his injury by telling her it's an old war wound, but she isn't convinced any more than he is convinced with her cover stories. He tells her that as recently as three weeks ago, he had been a law abiding citizen. He worked a nine to five job but things happen and they don't often ask permission to invade or mess up our lives. It's a sentiment she understands. Her curiosity extends to the briefcase; to whether or not he's killed before; whether or not he's married; happily; and why he carries a gun that is so illegal. He assures her that when it comes to a gunfight, it is much preferable to have a gun than to be legal. He gives her a thousand dollars, telling her there are no strings attached when she looks suspicious, insisting that all he wants her to do is get to her destination safely. She accepts the money gratefully, and offers herself to him anyway, but he declines. Llewelyn is faithful to Carla Jean.

The man in the Barracuda pulls into a truck stop to avail himself of the car wash. He spends some time cleaning off the blood and other matter from his vehicle before continuing westward.

Vocabulary

compliment, abomination, permission, desperado, intentions, penitentiary, appreciate, adjoining



Chapter VIII: Pages 236 - 247

Summary

Bell leaves the house and heads in the direction of Van Horn. He passes a burning vehicle just west of Fort Stockton, but doesn't stop. He reaches Van Horn just before ten thirty and though he isn't sure what he is looking for, the state police cars with their lights on make for a good beacon. Yellow crime scene tape secures the motel and the local sheriff tells him they had a little shootout. The woman was already dead and two men were taken to hospital by ambulance. It is unlikely that more than one of the two will pull through. The sheriff tells him that none had any identification, but that one of the victims told him that the Mexican started it. Sheriff Bell asks to see the victims and is taken to the clinic where he sadly identifies Moss, knowing he will have to tell Carla Jean that her husband is dead. He doesn't look forward to telling her about the young girl either. By the time he is finished at the clinic, the local sheriff is already gone. Bell conveys his thanks through the deputy and considers heading in the direction of El Paso. Something still doesn't sit right about this case.

Chigurh arrives after the victims are gone and watches from a safe distance. He sets his alarm for one and when it goes off he goes back to the motel and enters the room, ignoring the crime scene. He opens the air duct and pulls out the bag he finds inside. He gets back in his truck and is about to start it when Bell pulls in. He waits, and watches as Bell enters the room he just left. Bells sees the grille and screws on the table. He walks back to his cruiser, looking at the cars in the lot on his way. He pulls out of the lot, and when he is out of sight of the motel, he calls the sheriff's office and waits while they send two cruisers. He's already decided that if anyone comes out of the lot, he will run them off the road. Chigurh outsmarts them however, and is already gone. He apologizes for bringing them out for nothing, showing them the grille and then heading for El Paso. When he gets there, Carla Jean opens the door and Bell tells her he is sorry.

Analysis

Bell travels two hundred miles to Van Horn, passing a burning car on the I-10 on the way. Something about the scene disturbs him, but he doesn't stop. He arrives in Van Horn at 10:25, unsure of what he is looking for, but finding it without any trouble when he sees the two Culberson County patrol cars and a state police car at the motel. He pulls in and is recognized by the local sheriff who comments that bad news travels fast. They discuss the victims, and lack of identification on any of them. All three were wounded in the shootout, the woman dying at the scene and one of the men soon after. Bell identifies Moss despite the shot he had taken to the face, and doesn't relish the task in front of him, especially after the promise he made to Carla Jean. The body of the woman is unfamiliar to him. Bell learns that they had rented separate rooms and he sits in the sheriff's office looking at the phone. He considers calling Carla Jean, but knows



that he can't do this notification on the phone. He goes out and asks the deputy how far they are from El Paso. After learning it is about one hundred and twenty miles, he thanks the deputy and leaves a message with him that he will call the sheriff the following day.

Chigurh checks into another motel and watches the action through binoculars. Then he goes back to his room and sleeps for a while. When the police are gone, he goes over for a closer look. It takes him only moments to find the bag and most of the money, and he leaves the room without even bothering to put the grille back in place. He sits in the parking lot of the motel, watching as Bell pulls in. The cruiser parks and Bell goes up to the room. Chigurh is careful not to draw attention to himself, managing to leave before the extra units that Bell calls in arrive. He shows them the grille, air vent and lock and apologizes for bringing them out for nothing. Then he drives to El Paso to make the notification to Carla Jean. He had done so many times before, but for some reason, this time is more difficult for him. When she opens the door and sees him standing there alone, her face crumples. He doesn't even have to tell her, and simply says he is sorry instead. When she falters, backing into the room, he apologizes again, and Carla Jean gets mad. She tells Bell that if he apologizes one more time, then she'll bring out her shotgun.

Vocabulary

registration, sidewinders, machinist, autopsy, intersection, louvered, expression, cylinder



Chapter IX: Pages 248 - 262

Summary

Chigurh takes the remainder of the money, which is about two hundred thousand dollars short, back to the man who owns it. The owner is reluctant but Chigurh asks him to consider how he managed to lose the money to begin with, but the man doesn't want to answer him immediately so Chigurh gives him a two day window during which to consider it. He asks what happened to the people he was dealing with, and Chigurh tells him that they've moved on to other things.

Carla Jean buries her grandmother in March, surprised by how many people have shown up to mourn her passing. She had the feeling that someone was watching her, and even turned around more than once to check. By the time she gets home, it is dark outside. She goes upstairs and discovers Chigurh sitting in her bedroom. She stands there looking at him for a few moments before finally admitting that she knew she hadn't seen the end of this issue. He tells her she is a smart girl. She tells him she doesn't have any of the money left, having spent it a long time ago on bills. Now, she admits that she doesn't even have enough money left to pay for the funeral she just attended. She tells him she doesn't have to hurt her, but Chigurh insists that he promised Moss he would kill her and must keep his promise despite the fact that Moss has long been dead. Chigurh explains that Llewelyn had a chance to save her and refused so now with apologies, he has to kill her. She doesn't understand why, but Chigurh tells her that there is a reason for everything and asks her if she has anything she wants to say. Finally, he agrees to give her a chance. He flips a coin and tells her to call it. She refuses at first, but finally calls heads. He reveals the coin, showing tails and apologizes to her. He explains that her fate was ordained and that he is unable to change it. When she tells him she understands, he shoots her dead. Chigurh gets into his truck and leaves, but three blocks away he is hit by a car in an intersection, breaking his arm in two places, some ribs and suffering multiple lacerations. He staggers to a nearby lawn and sits assessing the extent of his injuries. A couple of boys approach him and ask him if he is okay, and he tells them he just needs to sit for a minute. Then he offers to buy a shirt from either of them. He rips it in half, and uses one half as a bandanna to keep the blood out of his eyes and fashions a sling from the other half, asking the boys to tie it for him. Chigurh gets up, pulls a bill out of his clip and hands it to the boys. They refuse it at first but he tells them that they never saw him. They agree and he walks away, limping. They go over to the cars after he walks away, spotting his pistol on the floor of the truck and take it before the emergency vehicles arrive.

Analysis

Chigurh returns the briefcase full of money to its owner, to his great surprise. Chigurh tells him that he no longer has to work with incompetent and unreliable help, and that now that he has arrived, things will be different. Chigurh senses the man's reluctance,



but reminds him of how poorly his choice of employees had performed, and tells him he can have a couple of days to think about it. Chigurh still has other issues to deal with.

When Carla Jean returns home after burying her grandmother, she finds Chigurh in her bedroom waiting for her. She knows he is there to kill her, and begs him to just leave her alone, but he made a promise to Moss and plans to live up to it. No matter how much Carla Jean sobs, or begs, his mind is made up. Then, inexplicably, he does something he has never done before. He takes a coin out of his pocket and flips it in the air, offering her a fifty fifty chance of changing her future. She selects heads, after at first arguing that God would not want her to bet on her life, but he assures her that a chance for life is still a chance. Sadly, the coin is tails. After a discussion about fate, and destiny, she finally admits that she understands that he has no choice. Glad that she gets it, he shoots her dead.

Chigurh leaves and three blocks away is involved in an accident that breaks his arm in two places, as well as several ribs, and multiple lacerations, one of which persistently leaks into his vision. Two young men who witness the accident come to his aid, one of them even selling him the shirt off his back. He gives them a generous payment, insisting they take it and forget they ever saw him. Then he walks off. The boys go over to the wreckage and discover his pistol on the floor, taking it before the authorities arrive.

Vocabulary

receptionist, recover, establish, reliable, identical, exaggerate, capabilities, dilation, scrupulous



Chapter IX: Pages 263 - 280

Summary

Bell goes to visit his uncle Ellis who is sitting in the kitchen. He offers him coffee which Bell refuses and then tells him that Loretta wrote to him recently. In fact, Loretta writes to him frequently, he admits, to tell him the news in the family. Her last letter tells him that Bell is quitting. Bell asks Ellis what his biggest regret in life is. He isn't sure how to answer that. They talk about life and how happiness, and how difficult it is to attain either without regrets. He reminds Bell that he never knows what worse luck his bad luck might have saved him from. They talk about family and reminisce about those who have come and gone before them. His Uncle asks him if he ever did something he was ashamed of to such a degree that he didn't want to tell anyone. Bell tells him that just about anyone would have and admits that he would have to say his story involved the commendation he received during the war. He tells his Uncle the story, and admits that he has many times wished he could go back and do things differently, knowing that his father would have. He asks Bell why he chose this moment to unload the story, and Bell admits that he is thinking about telling Loretta. He asks Uncle Ellis how he thinks Loretta will take the information, and Ellis thinks he might be surprised at the fact that he will likely come out better than he thinks.

Analysis

Uncle Ellis greets Bell warmly and invites him in. He offers him coffee, but looking around at the crumbs and dirty dishes, and smelling the stale woodsmoke and old bacon grease, Bell declines. Over all the other smells, there is a tang of cat urine. Ellis mentions the letters that Loretta sends him, letting Bell know that he is aware of all the latest family gossip. While Bell is aware that his wife has kept in touch, he had no idea how often or detailed these letters were. Ellis already knows that Ed Tom plans to quit, for example. He rolls himself a cigarette and lights it, wheeling his chair sideways to watch Bell a little closer. Bell asks Ellis what his biggest regret in life is. Ellis tells him that he already knows what made him the most unhappiest in life, and, he adds, it isn't the chair he is confined to or the bad eye. They philosophize on life for a while, talking about the kinds of things that a person might expect from life versus what actually comes as a result. No one would blame him if he quit, Ellis says, but if it's just because the job has turned out to be tougher than he imagined it would be, that would be another matter entirely. He asks him what it would take to cause Loretta to leave him. It would have to be something pretty bad, Bell guesses. He decides to have a coffee anyway and makes them both a cup. They discuss the mistakes they've made and what they would change if they could. Then Bell confesses his one true regret in life. It is the cornerstone of the rest of his life. When he was given the military commendation after the war, he tried to refuse it. The Sergeant didn't understand why, so Bell told him. When he was finished his story of cowardice, the Sergeant told him that he would not



only accept it, but would never tell his story again to anyone. Now, he finally worked up the courage to tell Loretta, and he's hoping she won't be disappointed or worse in him.

Vocabulary

gauging, skedaddle, tourniquet, ignorant, confession, commendation, grenades, infidel



Chapter X

Summary

When Bell gets home, the phone is ringing. He picks it up to hear Detective Cook from the Odessa police department. He tells Bell that he is calling regarding the murder of Carla Jean Moss the previous March and asks Bell what his interest in the case is. Bell tells him, and is given the number for Roger Catron who is the investigator of the incident. Bell calls and before long he is in Odessa talking to David DeMarco who is the youth who took the gun from Chigurh's truck. Questioning him, Bell learns that his suspect wears Ostrich boots and when he finds the friend who was with him, he learns his suspect has a darker complexion, medium height and build, with dark hair and and that he gave David a hundred dollars to forget him. The latter surprised Bell until the boy explained that David had given him his shirt to make a sling out of. The boy is relieved to find out that he is not in trouble and agrees when Bell suggests that you just never know where an action will lead.

Analysis

Bell is reaching the end of his career, having decided to quit working as a lawman. When he gets the call from Odessa, he feels like he is tying up loose ends. The call from Detective Cook puts him in touch with Roger Catron who is investigating the accident that occurred on the same night just three blocks away. The driver of the second vehicle still had not been found, but they had found the young man who took the gun from the floorboards of the truck involved, and now Bell was going to have the opportunity to talk to him. He drives out, and Catron arranges a meeting in advance. The youth strides into the restaurant the following day, seemingly unconcerned about anything. Bell asks him leading questions about the man who got out of the pick up truck that day and at first doesn't learn much beyond what he initially reported - mid-thirties in age and covered in blood. David claims to have been on his own, but a neighbor interviewed claimed there were two boys although Davis still denies it. He does recall the man as being of medium height and wore boots that might have been ostrich.

The next day, Bell talks to David's teachers at school and gets a short list of his friends. From there, it isn't difficult to determine which of them is the one who was with David that night. Bell finds this young man much more inclined to talk, and he quickly admits that if he had it to do again, he'd do it differently. He admits that the man didn't look like anyone you'd want to mess with. The young man seems to have taken an important lesson away from their encounter and Bell asks him if he thinks David learned something as well, but the boy just shakes his head, saying he can't speak for David.

Vocabulary

obligation, ordained, aggravation, superstition, ignorance, lunacy, ballistics



Chapters XI and XII

Summary

Molly finds Llewelyn's father in San Saba for Bell and Bell drives up to tell him about his son in person. They sit on the porch as Bell tells him everything they know. They talk about the war, both veterans as well, and Bell finally leaves. He is down to his last day on the force and he drives back, contemplating whether or not he accomplished anything in his years on the force. He isn't sure how he feels about it all. Loretta hadn't believed him when he first told her he was quitting. Bell also goes to see the Mexican who was convicted of killing the officer he set on fire in his car. He'd actually gone to tell the man that he didn't think he'd done it, and apologize for being unable to help, but the man laughed at Bell, and recounted how he'd committed the crime. When he gets home, Bell sees that Loretta's horse is gone. He saddles his own and goes out to find her. They ride out to Warner's Well together enjoying the last of the day.

The next day he leaves the courthouse for the last time. He feels beaten and knows he will have to find a way past that. He thinks about his father, and dreams about him. He dreams that he is going through a mountain pass in the cold and his father rides by wrapped in a blanket and carrying fire in a horn like they used to. In his dream, he knows that he will ride ahead so that when Llewely arrives he will be there. Then he wakes up.

Analysis

Llewelyn is a source of pride for his father, who recounts his war history and insists he would never be involved in drugs. Bell is comfortable on the porch with him, feeling as though the years could easily slip by as they sat there. Bell drives back, thinking about his time as a sheriff and wondering if he's managed to accomplish anything positive in all his time in office. He tried hard over the years to maintain a certain level of security and peace of mind in his county, but now he looks around at the streets in Texas, and sees the kids with green hair and things pierced through their noses, and finds that he feels like they speak a language he doesn't even understand. He wonders if he would have believed it had someone told him this was the future of our youth way back in his earlier days, and if it would have made more or less sense had he known that his generation's grandchildren would be part of it. Funny, he'd never had any of these doubts before.

Once home, he joins Loretta out on her horse and they talk about the decision he's made. He wonders if he's making a mistake but she says it's nice just to be there together with him. Bell wishes he was spiritual like Loretta. He always thought that being older than her, she'd learn from him in life, but now, looking back, he sees their history from a different perspective. He knows that the debt lies the other way around. When he leaves the courthouse for the last time, he feels strangely defeated. He dreams about



his father and in his dreams, his father waits by the warmth and the light of the fire for him.

Vocabulary

complicated, dismounted, brindled, spiritual, intentions, chiseled



Characters

Sheriff Ed Tom Bell

Sheriff Ed Tom Bell follows in his father's footsteps, making a career out of law enforcement after he gets out of the service. He is an honest man who wants little more than to protect and serve his small town and the people in it. When the bodies are discovered in the desert, he knows that they signify the beginning of a change in people that he doesn't understand or want to understand. After forty one years without an unsolved homicide in the county, Bell is faced with ten in one week alone.

Ed Tom was twenty-one when he went into the army and one of the oldest in his class at the time. Within six months, he was in France. When he returned, he was called a war hero, but didn't feel like one. He had lost a whole squad of men and not a day could go by that he did not think about it. It would be four years before he took on the office of sheriff at the age of twenty five. Ed Tom was sheriff at the same time as his grandfather Jak. He never doubted that he would become the sheriff, or that it was his calling to do so. When he recognizes the truck Moss left behind, he knows that Llewelyn and Carla Jean are going to need protection. Having a wife like Loretta was also an important part of being the sheriff. She made sure the prisoners ate well, making them everything from cornbread to hamburgers, and often they'd return years later to introduce wives and family, doing well and happy in their lives. Ed Tom and Loretta have been married for thirty one years but had no children save for a daughter that they lost.

Ed Tom has a habit of speaking his mind and is an honest man. He does all that he can to protect Llewelyn and Carla Jean, but is unsuccessful on both counts. The drug related homicides that began in the desert that day take away any desire Bell has to be in law enforcement. After doing his best to solve the crimes related to this incident, but unsuccessful, Bell makes the decision to quit law enforcement, wanting nothing more than to live out his days with the love of his life - his wife Loretta.

Anton Chigurh

Chigurh has eyes that are as blue as a piece of lapis and seem to glisten while at the same time are totally opaque. Chigurh has a reputation for being dangerous, and almost invincible. Those who know him refer to him as a psychopathic killer and the description is accurate. Chigurh is the kind of man who does not see that life has value. In fact, if he is inconvenienced in any way by anyone, his answer is take their lives. He is ruthless, and has no conscience. In this story, Moss inconveniences Chigurh by taking the money. Chigurh is asked to retrieve the cash, and that is when his reign of terror begins. He follows the trail of the transponder hidden in the satchel with the cash, and the carnage reveals the path he takes. As a result of his search, he takes out two hotel workers, the Mexican cartel members that are also searching for the missing drugs and money, Llewelyn, and Carla Jean, as well as incidental deaths such as the two young



men who hit his truck when he was leaving the home where he killed Carla Jean, or the officer who pulled him over on the highway in the beginning.

Heartless and without conscience, he manages to eliminate the competition, retrieve most of the cash, and kill the man who sent Wells to kill him. He approaches the man who orchestrated the transaction originally, and makes no secret of the fact that he is the only employee this man will require in the future. The man with the money has little choice but to comply, especially since Chigurh eliminated all of his previous help.

Llewelyn Moss

Llewelyn Moss is hunting antelope when he stumbles upon the carnage that remains of a drug deal gone bad. Several men and even a dog are dead and he goes from vehicle to vehicle, checking the occupants. One man is still alive, and asks him for water but Llewelyn has none. He continues to the back of the vehicle and discovers it full of loose brown powder wrapped in bricks. The reality of his situation hits home, and he immediately regrets ever approaching the vehicles. He begins wiping down every surface he can think of, and as he does, it comes to his attention that there is at least one man missing. He backs away and finds his trail, tracking him to the place where he died. Beside him is a case containing a substantial amount of cash, and Llewelyn makes his second mistake when he takes the case home.

Llewelyn is married to Carla Jean and they live in a Desert Aire trailer. He is thirty six years old and though his wife is considerably younger, they have a strong and devoted relationship. Later that night, Llewelyn's conscience bothers him, and he gets up. He grabs a jug of water and drives back to the site but someone has been there before him. The man who was alive is now dead, shot in the head, and the drivers' door left open. Llewelyn curses his stupidity in coming back. He knows that he has made a huge mistake. He heads back to his truck, but someone is standing beside it and it is clear that Llewelyn must say goodbye to his truck. He also realizes that by Monday morning, he and Carla Jean must be long gone. He isn't even sure that his brother in California will be safe.

Llewelyn's life will never be the same. He puts Carla Jean on a bus to her grandmother's in Odessa, and spends the short time that remains of his life trying to avoid several groups who are trying to recover either the money, the drugs or both. A conversation with Carla Jean from the hospital had him ready to give the money back to just go back to his life with her. He actually calls Wells, who had told him that he could get them out of this mess if Llewelyn turned the money over to him, but Chigurh answers when Llewelyn calls him. Things go from bad to worse when Chigurh tells Llewelyn that if he brings him the money now, he'll spare Carla Jean, but there is no saving himself. Llewelyn meets his end trying to save his wife from Chigurh.



Carson Wells

Carson goes to the office on the seventeenth floor, taking note of the skyline view of Houston. He goes into the office and is asked if he knows Anton Chigurh by sight. Admitting he does is good enough to engage his special brand of services. Carson works for people who prefer not to get personally involved in the types of activities that draw attention. He agrees that he pays his own expenses, and is told that the daily rate has been elevated to twelve hundred dollars from one thousand. Carson is sent to clean up the mess made by Chigurh after the Eagle's Pass shootout, and retrieve the cash that belongs to his client. Wells is a former Lieutenant Colonel in the special forces. When he leaves Vietnam, he begins working as a man who is willing to find people, and settle accounts. Carson knows who his adversary is, and is also aware that if they end up face to face, only one of them will survive. Carson was told by an old woman that his life would end soon, and she even gave him a date and time, but Carson doesn't take this prediction seriously until he is facing death at Chigurh's hands. Chigurh lures him in, using the transponder as bait. Carson doesn't give him the satisfaction of showing fear, and instead just tells him to get it over with. Chigurh does and Wells' life as a hit man comes to an end.

Carla Jean Moss

Carla Jean is Llewelyn's wife. She is younger than he is but knows her mind and believes that he is that one special someone for her. She met him while she was working at Walmart at the age of sixteen. To Carla Jean, there was never any question. They've been married for three years. The money Moss brought home took away the life that she had with him. When he calls her from the hospital, she begs him to just give the money back so that they can go back to the way that they were. It is all she wants.

When Bell goes to see her, to talk to her about Llewelyn, Carla Jean tells him that she knew from the very start that he was the one for her. She asks Bell if he can promise to keep Llewelyn safe if she tells him where he is, and he does. None of that helps however as Chigurh finds him first. Chigurh comes after Carla Jean afterward as well. It takes time, but Chigurh made a promise to Llewelyn that he would kill Carla Jean and he keeps this promise after explaining to her the importance of doing so. When she finally admits that she understands the reasons he is there, he keeps his promise.

Loretta Bell

Loretta is Sheriff Bell's wife. He married her when she was eighteen. Much like Llewelyn and Carla Jean, Bell and Loretta were made for each other. She is the perfect Sheriff's wife. She helped him at every turn, preparing meals for the prisoners, and ensuring they were healthy, even if it meant that they go over budget every month. When Ed Tom decides to give up his seat as the Sheriff, she supports him there too.



Turbert

This is the Deputy Sheriff.

Agent McIntyre

This is the DEA agent sent to investigate the deaths in the desert.

Bill Wyrick

Found shot dead by a target round called a wadcutter on the side of the road.

Acosta

One of the people who sent men with guns after Moss.



Objects/Places

Desert Aire

This is the name of the trailer Moss lives in.

Langtree, Texas

This is the destination Moss heads for after abandoning his truck in the desert near the dead drug dealers.

Sanderson

This is the town that Bell is the sheriff of.

Wadcutter

This is the name for a target round and is what was used to kill Bill Wyrick.

Winston

This is Sheriff Bell's horse.

Devil's River Bridge

This is the bridge that Bell stops on to watch the sunset after chastising the driver of the flatbed that transported the bodies out of the desert for having his tarp come untied.

Matacumbe Petroleum Group

This is one of the groups that Chigurh thinks might be responsible for the transponder left behind at the hotel.

Transponder

This is the unit used by Chigurh to track the money taken by Moss.



Culberson County

This is the county where Moss is killed by Mexican.

Barracuda

This is the vehicle used by one of the men chasing Moss.

Themes

The Cost of Life

Llewelyn Moss is hunting antelope when he comes across the carnage in the desert. Closer investigation however reveals a drug deal gone bad where two sides accustomed to violence turned on each other, and in a bloody shootout, took each other out leaving the drugs and money in the desert. Llewelyn makes the decision to pack out the cash, even though he knows that whoever owns the money won't rest until they find it. It is a calculated gamble that will bring the criminals to his doorstep and into his life.

Moss, knowing that trouble is coming, sends his wife Carla Jean to stay with her mother in Odessa. Then he takes the money and tries to disappear. Unfortunately, a sum of over two million dollars can pay for a variety of blood hounds. By the time Llewelyn realizes there is a transponder in the money bag, Chigurh is already closing in on him, as are the Mexicans who are accustomed to the violence that comes with their chosen profession. Though Moss manages to get away at first, it is not without cost. Shot twice, he manages to hide the case and limp his way across the border into Mexico for medical help. The value of the drugs and the money involved in this single transaction will wind up costing at least fifteen people their lives before all is said and done.

Progression or Regression?

Sheriff Bell remembers reading in the paper about a survey that was sent out sometime during the thirties. It was sent to everyone in the county, and the people were asked to fill out the forms in the hopes that it would reveal what problems existed in teaching in those days. The answers weren't overly surprising. The biggest problems that anyone named were situations including talking in class; running in the halls, copying homework or chewing gum in class. These were the worst issues of the time.

Forty years later, someone came across the original surveys, and decided it would be a good idea to do it again and compare the answers to the original survey. They used exactly the same form, and sent it out to everyone in the county just as they had the first time. The answers that came back were a great deal different than anyone expected. In this survey, people cited drugs, suicide, rape, arson and even murder as the greatest problems that were facing teachers in the classroom now. Sheriff Bell thinks about these surveys a great deal. What frightens him is the thought of what the next forty years might bring. If so much can change so drastically in forty years, he can only speculate as to what the next forty might bring. One thing is for sure. Ed Tom is glad that he likely won't be around to see it.



The Generation Gap

Ed Tom Bell is one of the last of a dying breed. He was raised to treat his elders with respect, to be honest, and to care about his community and his fellow citizens. A large part of that can certainly be attributed to the fact that his father was also a sheriff, as was his uncle. Before Ed Tom takes his position as Sheriff of Sanderson county, he does a four year stint in Vietnam, serving his country, and adding to the strength of his character. Ed Tom belongs to a generation where human life matters, and people still care about each other and their neighbors.

Sadly, all that changes with the coming generation. Drugs are rampant and much like the days when liquor was illegal, drugs come with their share of violence and corruption, reaching border guards and even some police. This is a source of embarrassment and disappointment for Bell who views this kind of law enforcement officer as the lowest form of life. When the drugs and excessive violence comes to his community, Bell knows that his time as sheriff is done. He is unable to keep them from invading his world or adversely affecting those he has been charged to keep safe. He makes the decision to retire himself, and leave this kind of law enforcement to the next generation who might be better equipped to cope with it. The generation gap has gotten too wide for him.



Style

Point of View

No Country For Old Men by Cormac McCarthy is written in the first person taken from the perspective of the Sheriff of Sanderson County, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell. Sheriff Bell is an honest man with a reputation for being a stand up guy. He is a Vietnam veteran, decorated for his service but doesn't believe he deserved the reward for having lost his crew and surviving. Each chapter begins with a section that is written by Bell who keeps a running commentary throughout the novel. Bell goes into law enforcement. These insights are important in that they give the reader a good barometer by which to judge Bell and his efforts to keep his county safe. They also document his growing unease with the turn the country has taken, and his inability to understand the way young people think.

The title is an apt one, as the book clearly reveals that Bell is unable to relate to the kinds of crimes that are occurring now, and the youth are all but unrecognizable to him in many ways. He is quoted as responding to a reporter who asked him how he could let these kinds of crimes go on in his county by telling her that he believes it all begins when the youth in the country stop using Sir and Mam to communicate with their elders. It's all downhill from there as far as Bell can see. He belongs to a generation where respect for ones elders is expected, and can't relate to the youth he now sees and hears. As such, he finally resigns his position as Sheriff, realizing that the life he has left with Loretta is far more important.

Setting

No Country For Old Men is set primarily in Sanderson County near the border between the United States and Mexico. It is the county in which Sheriff Ed Tom Bell has office and in which he believes he can keep the peace. One of the people who lives in his county, Llewelyn Moss, stumbles across a drug deal gone wrong in the desert where he was out hunting antelope. After taking a closer look, and discovering death, drugs and guns, Llewelyn knows that he has just stepped into something best left alone, but the case of money he finds on the last victim is too great to ignore. He takes it home to his wife who waits in their Desert Aire trailer for him to return. Taking the money sets off a chain reaction of murder and mayhem on the once quiet streets as the dealers and those who finance them try to retrieve the product and money that is missing.

Llewelyn sends his wife to Odessa to be with the grandmother who raised her in an attempt to keep her safe. Then he takes the money and stays in a motel trying to figure things out. While most of the novel concentrates in California, there is a brief period of time that Llewelyn spends in Mexico after a shootout with Chigurh injures them both. Llewelyn discovers that Chigurh is on his way to Odessa to kill his wife Carla Jean, and he asks her to leave. She packs up and her and her grandmother head for El Paso,



where Llewelyn plans to join them. He is caught on the way, and killed along with the hitchhiker he gave a ride to. Carla Jean is killed by Chigurh right after she buries her grandmother. He himself is in an accident shortly afterward which almost costs him his freedom, but Chigurh slips away and Sheriff Bell turns in his badge to leave the carnage to someone else.

Language and Meaning

No Country For Old Men is written in a countrified style of English that blends the old west with a simpler time. Sheriff Bell comes from that time - believing that people are basically good folk and that he has a solemn duty to keep them safe in his county. To support this theme and style in the story, the author uses expressions such as 'in the turtle' to refer to something in the trunk. There are also terms that set the tone for the county such as 'arroyo' which refers to the landscape - specifically a steep, dry gully or 'wadcutter' which refers to a specific type of air gun ammunition. The writing style is an older, simplified grammar where contractions are often just written as an unbroken word, and letters are left off the end of many words and expressions. The author also uses words such as ain't, gettin, etc. that gives the reader an impression of a simpler time.

All in all, the author manages to combine the old and simple life that Sheriff Bell has always known with the new and more volatile life of drugs and crime that is coming with the younger generation which manages to bring home the overall theme of this story which is that the country is being overrun by a younger and more volatile youth and there is no room for the older generation and the ideals held by them anymore.

Structure

This novel is three hundred and nine pages in length and contains thirteen chapters. Each chapter is represented by roman numerals. The chapters range in length from three to thirty eight pages. The chapters each begin with a section that is written in diary like format by the main character, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell. These are his musings and observations which set up the tone and content of the chapter that follows. They also give a good insight into the kind of man that Sheriff Bell is, and give the reader some of his history as a veteran and as a man. These become an important information source, allowing the reader to better understand the theme of this story and the motivations of its main character.

Each chapter is further divided into sub sections, notable only by the break in text and the larger font style of the first letter of the first word in each section. The sections are divided as such to allow for either subject or character changes and give the reader clearly defined points of reference.



Quotes

Well darlin we're eye to eye on that cause I dont want to go neither." Chapter I, p. 24).

I just have this feelin we're looking at somethin we really aint never seen before."
(Chapter II, p. 46).

That's been some of that old Mexican brown dope in the back of this rig." (Chapter III, p. 74).

You show your face at the head of these stairs and I'll shoot you." (Chapter IV, p. 113).

Excuse me i wondered if you all would sell me a coat." (Chapter IV, p. 116).

Nineteen is old enough to know that if you have got somethin that means the world to you it's all that more likely it'll get took away." (sic) (Chapter V, p. 134).

The best way I can put it is that I've sort of caught up with myself." (Chapter VI, p. 173).

I've decided to make you a special project of mine." (Chapter VI, p. 185).

The reason I used the birdshot was that I didn't want to break the glass." (Chapter VII, p. 200).

Even a blind sow finds a acorn ever once in a while." (Chapter VIII, p. 223).

You say you're sorry one more tie and by God if I wont get my gun and shoot you."
(Chapter VIII, p. 247).

Your husband, you may be distressed to learn, had the opportunity to remove you from harm's way and he chose not to do so." (Chapter IV, p. 256).

You don't know where things will take you, do you:" (Chapter X, p. 292).

Any time you quit hearin Sir and Mam the end is pretty much in sight." (Chapter XII, p. 204).

I think we are all of us ill prepared for what is to come and I dont (sic) care what shape it takes." (Chapter XI: p. 295).



Topics for Discussion

Topic for Discussion 589167

What issue changes Moss's life? What decision does he make that sets events in motion? What could he have done instead? How might that have changed events?

Topic for Discussion 589168

Why doesn't Moss drive his truck home? When does he discover that it won't be possible? What tips him off that he will never see his truck again? What does he do then and why?

Topic for Discussion 589169

What natural dangers does Moss face? What unnatural dangers is he confronted with? Which are more lethal and why? What injuries does he suffer and how?

Topic for Discussion 589170

Where does Moss suffer his first injuries? Who or what inflicts them? How severe are they? What does he do about them?

Topic for Discussion 589171

How many different weapons are evident at the first crime scene? Which of these weapons is also commonly used in another arena entirely? What clue alerts the authorities that this is the weapon being used and who is the first to figure it out?

Topic for Discussion 589172

Where does Moss send Carla Jean? Why does he send her there? What is he hoping to accomplish in the meantime? What promise does he make to her as he is leaving her on the bus? Does he keep this promise?

Topic for Discussion 589173

What leads Chigurh to Moss the first time? When and where does Moss figure it out? What does he do about it? What could he have done instead?



Topic for Discussion 589174

What does Chigurh do the first time he catches up with Moss? What is the result of their encounter? Who is the worst off after their encounter? Where does each man go afterward and why?

Topic for Discussion 589175

What offer does Chigurh make Moss? How do they happen to be in a discussion to start with? Who initiates the conversation and why? What is Moss's response to the offer made to him by Chigurh? What promises are made and by whom?

Topic for Discussion 589176

What does Chigurh do when he finally finds Carla Jean Moss? What does he offer her that he offers none of his other victims? Why does Carla Jean refuse at first? What changes her mind? What is the outcome?

Topic for Discussion 589177

Where is Llewelyn Moss found? Who is he found with? What was his intended destination? Why was he going there? What extra casualty does Chigurh add to his list unnecessarily? Why is it likely that he did this?

Topic for Discussion 589178

What happens to Chigurh after he leaves Carla Jean? What is the cause of this problem? What happens to Chigurh? What does he do? Who helps him? What is unusual about Chigurh's contact with them? Why does he respond differently? What item does he leave behind?

Topic for Discussion 589179

What is unusual about the weapons used by Chigurh? Who is the first one to realize this difference and identify it for what it is? Why might Chigurh use this as a weapon of choice? Where does Chigurh commonly shoot his victims? What is the most likely reason for this?



Topic for Discussion 589180

Why does Sheriff Bell decide to resign his position as Sheriff in Sanderson? How does Loretta take the news? What is the hardest part of leaving the courthouse for the last time for Bell? What is Bell going to be most likely remembered for and why?