Excerpt from James Baldwin’s *Another Country*:

Then he stood at the subway steps, looking down. For a wonder, especially at this hour, there was no one on the steps, the steps were empty. He wondered if the man in the booth would change his five-dollar bill. He started down.

Then, as the man gave him change and he moved toward the turnstile, other people came, rushing and loud, pushing past him as though they were swimmers and he was nothing but an upright pole in the water. Then something began to awaken in him, something new; it increased his distance; it increased his pain. They were rushing—to the platform, to the tracks. Something he had not thought of for many years, something he had never ceased to think of, came back to him as he walked behind the crowd. The subway platform was a dangerous place—so he had always thought; it sloped downward toward the waiting tracks; and when he had been a little boy and stood on the platform beside his mother he had not dared let go her hand. He stood on the platform now, alone with all these people, who were each of them alone and waiting in acquired calmness, for the train.

But suppose something, somewhere, failed, and the yellow lights went out and no one could see, any longer, the platform’s edge? Suppose these beams fell down? He saw the train in the tunnel rushing under water, the motorman gone mad, gone blind, unable to decipher the lights, the tracks gleaming and snarling senselessly upward forever, the train never stopping and the people screaming at windows and doors and turning on each other with all the accumulated fury of their blasphemed lives, everything gone out of them but murder, breaking limb from limb and splashing in blood, with joy—for the first time, joy, joy, after such a long sentence in chains, leaping out to astound the world, to astound the world again. Or, the train in the tunnel, the water outside, the power failing, the walls coming in, and the water not rising like a flood but breaking like a wave over the heads of these people, filling their crying mouths, filling their eyes, their hair, tearing away their clothes and discovering the secrecy which only the water, by now, could use. It could happen. It could happen; and he would have loved to see it happen, even if he perished, too. The train came in, filling the great scar of the tracks. They all got on, sitting in the lighted car which was far from empty, which would be choked with people before they got very far uptown, and stood or sat in the isolation cell into which they transformed every inch of space they held.

Baldwin, James. *Another Country*. New York: Vintage Books, 1960. 84-85. Print.

Excerpt from Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road:*

When it had cleared they went down to the cart and pulled away the tarp and got their blankets and the things they would need for the night. They went back up the hill and made their camp in the dry dirt under the rocks and the man sat with his arms around the boy trying to warm him. Wrapped in the blankets, watching the nameless dark come to enshroud them. The gray shape of the city vanished in the night’s onset like an apparition and he lit the little lamp and set it back out of the wind. Then they walked out to the road and he took the boy’s hand and they went to the top of the hill where the road crested and where they could see out over the darkening country to the south, standing there in the wind, wrapped in their blankets, watching for any sign of a fire or a lamp. There was nothing. The lamp in the rocks on the side of the hill was little more than a mote of light and after a while they walked back. Everything was too wet to make a fire. They ate their poor meal cold and lay down in their bedding with the lamp between them. He’d brought the boy’s book but the boy was too tired for reading. Can we leave the lamp on till I’m asleep? he said. Yes. Of course we can.

. . .

He was a long time going to sleep. After a while he turned and looked at the man. His face in the small light streaked with black from the rain like some old world thespian. Can I ask you something? he said.

Yes. Of course.

Are we going to die?

Sometime. Not now.

And we’re still going south.

Yes.

So we’ll be warm.

Yes.

Okay.

Okay what?

Nothing. Just okay.

Go to sleep.

Okay.

I’m going to blow out the lamp. Is that okay?

Yes. That’s okay.

And then later in the darkness: Can I ask you something?

Yes. Of course you can.

What would you do if I died?

If you died I would want to die too.

So you could be with me?

Yes. So I could be with you.

Okay.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. 8-9. Print.