

## Wilderness House Literary Review 10/4

*Geoffrey Craig*  
**an errand**

he  
cruised the dusty streets,  
the sun harsh in his eyes.  
a nondescript town:  
the desert's edge,  
tarpaper shacks  
lining the gullies,  
potholes  
that could crack a tire,  
a moldy main street:  
bars -  
grime-dark windows,  
stores -  
gaudy junk.  
he  
had slept  
on sheets gray  
and frayed  
like the town,  
showered  
in a rust-stained tub,  
the motel redolent  
of piss and bleach.  
he  
cared not a whit.  
his business,  
god willing,  
soon to be done  
and the armpit of a town  
left in the dust.  
he  
cruised slowly,  
carefully -

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there:

an ochre house -

the yard uncluttered -

2 an errand

a brown woman:

black hair tied back,

swollen belly,

wide hips,

full breasts.

she

held a boy by the hand.

she

would do.

he

got her on the first shot.

he

considered

getting the boy

but

drove on.

god

had said nothing

about a boy.

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### last gasp

squat vermont hills rolled  
by; a searing summer  
sun caused sparkling light  
to dance on the shallow, swift  
stream that bordered the wild  
meadow and unkempt  
road, long left to its own  
devices. she passed a rotting  
house and barn, the only  
sign that people had  
once lived and worked  
in the stubby valley. she  
considered stopping to pull  
down some loose-hanging boards –  
they would come in handy – but  
instead drove on; she was far  
from Anywhere. the valley  
narrowed and curved; a waterfall  
cascaded; she swerved to  
miss a rusting hulk, hunkered  
in the road, the seats and steering  
wheel long gone. fearfully she  
checked the gauge, not even  
a quarter tank. a hundred yards  
further on, she stared in  
horror: square in the  
road, a fire's remains,  
burnt branches, and bones,  
and a human head tossed  
lightly to the side as if of  
little consequence. she  
clamped down the urge  
to retch and drove on. not

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quite an hour later, on a flat  
stretch, a gas station, the Exxon  
2 last gasp  
sign askew, the screen door  
flapping in the warm  
breeze. another twenty  
minutes and her car bucked  
and jerked and she  
knew what she had all along  
known: she hadn't made  
it and never would.