

## Wilderness House Literary Review 11/2

*Mark Vogel*  
**Storm watchers**

An Oklahoma town going downhill  
maybe since the beginning,  
the nails loose in houses on a rough street  
left to cigarette butts, the detritus of motorcycles,  
six empty stores, a vinyl motel obscene  
with ugly glare shimmering  
East West North South—hinting it is long past time  
for drifters fixed on bad weather  
to move West.

No one feels sorry for this landscape  
scraped/poisoned/deserted  
where for decades green hasn't returned.  
At town edges unfenced zinc lead silver mines  
lay with maws open—the excavated heart left  
to harden on blond piles,  
as if once-flush life has dehydrated,  
the workers long ago moved to Texas,  
California—away.

When electric air shows the frenetic computer  
a tornado zigzagging from  
the South, the judgment is clean and final  
that nothing here is worth saving.  
Across the way a greasy straggler surely  
knows how destruction lives  
for the long term. Defiant, he tosses  
a cigarette to the rising wind we are paid  
to document,

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as grit swirls, scooting cross the plain.  
We are young and invulnerable,  
eager to erase paper-thin histories as we  
break out equipment and joke. An unruly  
gust brings close the exploding chaos we  
desire as agents of change  
for once in the only place to be. We are  
happy to be without protection—  
willingly exposed.