

THE OUTSIDERS PASSAGES

Passage 1

I looked at all of them, a little frightened. "Johnny... he's dead." My voice sounded strange, even to me. But he's not dead, a voice in my head said. "We told him about beatin' the Socs and... I don't know, he just died." He told me to stay gold, I remembered. What was he talking about?

There was a stricken silence. I don't think any of us had realized how bad off Johnny really had been. Soda made a funny noise and looked like he was going to start crying. Two-Bit's eyes were closed and his teeth were clenched, and I suddenly remembered Dally.... Dally pounding on the wall...

"Dallas is gone," I said. "He ran out like the devil was after him. He's gonna blow up. He couldn't take it."

How can I take it? I wondered. Dally is tougher than I am. Why can I take it when Dally can't? And then I knew. Johnny was the only thing Dally loved. And now Johnny was gone.

"So he finally broke." Two-Bit spoke everyone's feelings. "So even Dally has a breaking point."

I started shaking. Darry said something in a low voice to Soda.

"Ponyboy," Soda said softly, like he was talking to an injured animal, "you look sick. Sit down."

I backed up, just like a frightened animal, shaking my head. "I'm okay." I felt sick. I felt as if any minute I was going to fall flat on my face, but I shook my head. "I don't want to sit down."

Darry took a step toward me, but I backed away. "Don't touch me," I said. My heart was pounding in slow thumps, throbbing at the side of my head, and I wondered if everyone else could hear it. Maybe that's why they're all looking at me, I thought, they can hear my heart beating...

The phone rang, and after a moment's hesitation, Darry turned from me to it. He said "Hello" and then listened. He hung up quickly.

"It was Dally. He phoned from a booth. He's, just robbed a grocery store and the cops are after him. We gotta hide him. He'll be at the lot in a minute."

We all left the house at a dead run, even Steve, and I wondered vaguely why no one was doing somersaults off the steps this time. Things were sliding in and out of focus, and it seemed funny to me that I couldn't run in a straight line.

We reached the vacant lot just as Dally came in, running as hard as he could, from the opposite direction. The wail of a siren grew louder and then police car pulled up across the street from the lot. Doors slammed as the policemen leaped out. Dally had reached the circle of light under the street lamp, and skidding to a halt, he turned and jerked a black object from his waistband. I remembered his voice: I been carryin' a heater. It ain't loaded, but it sure does held a bluff.

It was only yesterday that Dally had told Johnny and me that. But yesterday was years ago. A lifetime ago. Dally raised the gun, and I thought: You blasted fool. They don't know you're only bluffing. And even as the policemen's guns spit fire into the night I knew that was what Dally wanted. He was jerked half around by the impact of the bullets, then slowly crumpled with a look of grim triumph on his face. He was dead before he hit the ground. But I knew that was what he wanted, even as the lot echoed with the cracks of shots, even as I begged silently--- Please, not him... not him and Johnny both ---I knew he would be dead, because Dally Winston wanted to be dead and he always got what he wanted.

Nobody would write editorials praising Dally. Two friends of mine had died that night: one a hero, the other a hoodlum. But I remembered Dally pulling Johnny through the window of the burning church; Dally giving us his gun, although it could mean jail for him; Dally risking his life for us, trying to keep Johnny out of trouble. And now he was a dead juvenile delinquent and there wouldn't be any editorials in his favor. Dally didn't die a hero. He died violent and young and desperate, just like we all knew he'd die someday. Just like Tim Shepard and Curly Shepard and the Brumly boys and the other guys we knew would die someday. But Johnny was right. He died gallant.

(Hinton, 1967, pp. 129-131)

He asked Darry and Soda a little bit about Dally, I think to check our background and find out what kind of guys we hung out with. Was he a real good buddy of ours? Darry said, "Yes, sir;" looking straight at the judge, not flinching; but Soda looked at me like he was sentencing me to the electric chair before he gave the same answer. I was real proud of both of them. Dally had been one of our gang and we wouldn't desert him.

(Hinton, 1967, p. 143)

Passage 2

Anyway, I went on walking home, thinking about the movie, and then suddenly wishing I had some company. Greasers can't walk alone too much or they'll get jumped, or someone will come by and scream "Greaser!" at them, which doesn't make you feel too hot, if you know what I mean. We get jumped by the Socs. I'm not sure how you spell it, but it's the abbreviation for the Socials, the jet set, the West-side rich kids. It's like the term "greaser," which is used to class all us boys on the East Side.

(Hinton, 1967, pp. 3–4)

I about decided I didn't like it so much, though, when I spotted that red Corvair trailing me. I was almost two blocks from home then, so I started walking a little faster. I had never been jumped, but I had seen Johnny after four Socs got hold of him, and it wasn't pretty. Johnny was scared of his own shadow after that. Johnny was sixteen then.

I knew it wasn't any use though--- the fast walking, I mean--- even before the Corvair pulled up beside me and five Socs got out. I got pretty scared-- I'm kind of small for fourteen even though I have a good build, and those guys were bigger than me. I automatically hitched my thumbs in my jeans and slouched, wondering if I could get away if I made a break for it. I remembered Johnny--- his face all cut up and bruised, and I remembered how he had cried when we found him, half-conscious, in the comer lot. Johnny had it awful rough at home--- it took a lot to make him cry.

I was sweating something fierce, although I was cold. I could feel my palms getting clammy and the perspiration running down my back. I get like that when I'm real scared. I glanced around for a pop bottle or a stick or something--- Steve Randle, Soda's best buddy, had once held off four guys with a busted pop bottle--- but there was nothing. So I stood there like a bump on a log while they surrounded me. I don't use my head. They walked around slowly, silently, smiling.

"Hey, grease," one said in an over-friendly voice. "We're gonna do you a favor, greaser. We're gonna cut all that long greasy hair off."

He had on a madras shirt. I can still see it. Blue madras. One of them laughed, then cussed me out in a low voice. I couldn't think of anything to say. There just isn't a whole lot you can say while waiting to get mugged, so I kept my mouth shut.

"Need a haircut, greaser?" The medium-sized blond pulled a knife out of his back pocket and flipped the blade open.

I finally thought of something to say. "No." I was backing up, away from that knife. Of course I backed right into one of them. They had me down in a second. They had my arms and legs pinned down and one of them was sitting on my chest with his knees on my elbows, and if you don't think that hurts, you're crazy. I could smell English Leather shaving lotion and stale tobacco, and I wondered foolishly if I would suffocate before they did anything. I was scared so bad I was wishing I would. I fought to get loose, and almost did for a second; then they tightened up on me and the one on my chest slugged me a couple of times. So I lay still, swearing at them between gasps. A blade was held against my throat.

"How'd you like that haircut to begin just below the chin?" It occurred to me then that they could kill me. I went wild. I started screaming for Soda, Darry, anyone. Someone put his hand over my mouth, and I bit it as hard as I could, tasting the blood running through my teeth. I heard a muttered curse and got slugged again, and they were stuffing a handkerchief in my mouth. One of them kept saying, "Shut him up, for Pete's sake, shut him up!"

Then there were shouts and the pounding of feet, and the Socs jumped up and left me lying there, gasping. I lay there and wondered what in the world was happening--- people were jumping over me and running by me and I was too dazed to figure it out.

(Hinton, 1967, pp. 5–6)

Passage 3

*The next four or five days were the longest days I've ever spent in my life. We killed time by reading *Gone with the Wind* and playing poker. Johnny sure did like that book, although he didn't know anything about the Civil War and even less about plantations, and I had to explain a lot of it to him. It amazed me how Johnny could get more meaning out of some of the stuff in there than I could--- I was supposed to be the deep one. Johnny had failed a year in school and never made good grades--- he couldn't grasp anything that was shoved at him too fast, and I guess his teachers thought he was just plain dumb. But he wasn't. He was just a little slow to get things, and he liked to explore things once he did get them. He was especially stuck on the Southern gentlemen--- impressed with their manners and charm.*

"I bet they were cool ol' guys," he said, his eyes glowing, after I had read the part about them riding into sure death because they were gallant. "They remind me of Dally."

"Dally?" I said, startled. "Shoot, he ain't got any more manners than I do. And you saw how he treated those girls the other night. Soda's more like them Southern boys."

"Yeah... in the manners bit, and the charm, too, I guess," Johnny said slowly, "but one night I saw Dally gettin' picked up by the fuzz, and he kept real cool and calm the whole time. They was gettin' him for breakin' out the windows in the school building, and it was Two-Bit who did that. And Dally knew it. But he just took the sentence without battin' an eye or even denyin' it. That's gallant."

That was the first time I realized the extent of Johnny's hero-worship for Dally Winston. Of all of us, Dally was the one I liked least. He didn't have Soda's understanding or dash, or Two-Bit's humor, or even Darry's superman qualities. But I realized that these three appealed to me because they were like the heroes in the novels I read. Dally was real. I liked my books and clouds and sunsets. Dally was so real he scared me.

Johnny and I never went to the front of the church. You could see the front from the road, and sometimes farm kids rode their horses by on their way to the store. So we stayed in the very back, usually sitting on the steps and looking across the valley. We could see for miles; see the ribbon of

highway and the small dots that were houses and cars. We couldn't watch the sunset, since the back faced east, but I loved to look at the colors of the fields and the soft shadings of the horizon. One morning I woke up earlier than usual. Johnny and I slept huddled together for warmth--- Dally had been right when he said it would get cold where we were going. Being careful not to wake Johnny up, I went to sit on the steps and smoke a cigarette. The dawn was coming then. All the lower valley was covered with mist, and sometimes little pieces of it broke off and floated away in small clouds. The sky was lighter in the east, and the horizon was a thin golden line. The clouds changed from gray to pink, and the mist was touched with gold. There was a silent moment when everything held its breath, and then the sun rose. It was beautiful.

"Golly"--- Johnny's voice beside me made me jump--- "that sure was pretty."

"Yeah." I sighed, wishing I had some paint to do a picture with while the sight was still fresh in my mind.

"The mist was what was pretty," Johnny said. "All gold and silver."

"Uhmhhh," I said, trying to blow a smoke ring.

"Too bad it couldn't stay like that all the time."

"Nothing gold can stay." I was remembering a poem I'd read once.

"What?"

"Nature's first green is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf's a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.

Nothing gold can stay."

Johnny was staring at me. "Where'd you learn that? That was what I meant"

"Robert Frost wrote it. He meant more to it than I'm gettin' though." I was trying to find the meaning the poet had in mind, but it eluded me. "I always remembered it because I never quite got what he meant by it"

"You know," Johnny said slowly, "I never noticed colors and clouds and stuff until you kept reminding me about them. It seems like they were never there before." He thought for a minute. "Your family sure is funny."

"And what happens to be so funny about it?" I asked stiffly.

Johnny looked at me quickly. "I didn't mean nothing. I meant, well, Soda kinda looks like your mother did, but he acts just exactly like your father. And Darry is the spittin' image of your father, but he ain't wild and laughing all the time like he was. He acts like your mother. And you don't act like either one."

"I know," I said. "Well," I said, thinking this over, "you ain't like any of the gang. I mean, I couldn't tell Two-Bit or Steve or even Darry about the sunrise and clouds and stuff. I couldn't even remember that poem around them. I mean, they just don't dig. Just you and Sodapop. And maybe Cherry Valance."

Johnny shrugged. "Yeah," he said with a sigh. "I guess we're different."

"Shoot," I said, blowing a perfect smoke ring, "maybe they are."

(Hinton, 1967, pp. 65–68)