

Teacher_Tandi Rucker Subject __ELA__ Dates__5/4/2020 to 5/8/2020 7-12 Weekly Planner

Welcome to our Distance Learning Classroom!

Student Time Expectation per day: **30 minutes**

Content Area & Materials	Learning Objectives	Tasks	Check-in Opportunities	Submission of Work for Grades
<p>Reading Literature 7.1, 7.2, 7.3</p> <p>Outsiders Chapter 6-9</p> <p>Study Sync Novel Study Packet for Chapters 6-9</p>	<p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. • Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. • Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact. 	<p>PDFs of assigned readings and questions will be uploaded. These can be printed out at home or read online. Students can either email responses to questions, or write answers on paper to turn in.</p>	<p>I am available throughout the day, via REMIND. I will hold dedicated office hours from 1:00 to 2:00 daily via email. I have also scheduled ZOOM meetings daily to be available for questions and discussion. These are optional, but recommended. ZOOM Daily Monday thru Friday, 1:00 PM to 2:00PM. Email: Trucker@tusd.net M-F 1:00-3:00 PM Remind: @1920cor or @1920core</p> <p>Tandi Rucker is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.</p> <p>Topic: Week 3 Office Hour Drop In Time: May 4, 2020 01:00 PM Every day, until May 8, 2020, 5 occurrence(s) May 4, 2020 01:00 PM May 5, 2020 01:00 PM May 6, 2020 01:00 PM May 7, 2020 01:00 PM May 8, 2020 01:00 PM</p> <p>Join Zoom Meeting https://zoom.us/j/662350664?pwd=SmV5SlJlU9vWkdNY2o2dmgxdmY0dz09</p> <p>Meeting ID: 662 350 664 Password: Rucker7</p>	<p>Students read Outsiders chapters 6-9 and complete the discussion questions in the guide provided.</p> <p>Work is due Friday, May 8th by 3:00 PM</p> <p>Students may complete scan, take a photo of work and email to trucker@tusd.net</p> <p>Students without the ability to scan or send photos may delivery completed work to school on the designated turn in days (see district provided calendar).</p>

Shared Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion 	Optional activities: *See notes in attached reading guide.				
Scaffolds & Supports	Optional Activities: *See notes in attached reading guide. Join teacher for discussion during scheduled ZOOM time.				
Teacher Office Hours <i>2 hours daily (all classes):</i>	Monday 1 PM-2 PM via ZOOM 1 PM to 3 PM via Email: Trucker@tusd.net Remind App	Tuesday 1 PM-2 PM via ZOOM 1 PM to 3 PM via Email: Trucker@tusd.net Remind App	Wednesday 1 PM-2 PM via ZOOM 1 PM to 3 PM via Email: Trucker@tusd.net Remind App	Thursday 1 PM-2 PM via ZOOM 1 PM to 3 PM via Email: Trucker@tusd.net Remind App	Friday 1 PM-2 PM via ZOOM 1 PM to 3 PM via Email: Trucker@tusd.net Remind App

CHAPTER 6: Fire!

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 6, Paragraphs 73–78

In this passage, Ponyboy is riding in an ambulance, being taken to the hospital. It is just after he, Johnny, and Dally entered the burning church to rescue the children who had gone inside. Jerry, one of the adults in charge of the children, is telling Ponyboy that Dally came out all right, but that Johnny was badly burned by a falling beam. He goes on to praise the three boys for their heroics. Ponyboy rejects his “heaven-sent” characterization, explaining that the three of them are greasers with police records and bad reputations.

YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

Discussion Prompt: Based on this section, what can you determine about the way Ponyboy is changing? Analyze the potential reasons for these changes. Do you think these changes are good or bad? Why?

VOCABULARY

breed**breed** *noun*

A number of persons from the same stock, class, or kind

You could tell we were a working breed by our calloused hands.

conviction**con•vic•tion** *noun*

A strong belief or opinion

It was her conviction that avoiding meat was the best way to help animals.

testify**tes•ti•fy** *verb*

To make a statement of the facts after swearing to their truth; to give proof of something

She agreed to testify to everything she saw and heard on the night of the party.

survey**sur•vey** *verb*

To view or consider comprehensively; to examine

He surveyed the rocky terrain, looking for a secure foothold.

embers**em•bers** *noun*

Pieces of glowing coal or wood from a fire

He warned the children not to stay too close to the campfire, fearing they might be burned by the stray embers.

CLOSE READ

1. Why does Dallas think Cherry refused to get a coke with him? Does Ponyboy agree with his reasoning?

2. When does Johnny look like he's having the "time of his life"? Why do you think he is so happy?

3. When Ponyboy wakes up in the ambulance, what does he think the siren noises mean? Why do you think he makes this assumption?

4. What does Ponyboy realize about Darry when he sees him crying? How does this revelation connect to some of the greater themes in the book?

CHAPTERS 7–9: A Rumble and a Death

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 7, Paragraphs 108–111

This passage is part of a conversation between Ponyboy and Randy, one of the Socs who attacked him the night he nearly drowned. Randy has called Ponyboy over to his car after the Socs meet Ponyboy and Two-Bit at the Tasty Freeze. A rumble has been planned between the two groups that night. Randy confides in Ponyboy that he's not going to the rumble, that its outcome is meaningless. Even if the Socs lose, they will still be favored by society and the greasers will still be rejected. He feels stuck and wants to leave town. Ponyboy realizes what Cherry meant when she said that everyone has it rough, Socs and greasers alike.

YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

Discussion Prompt: Why do you think Randy confides in Ponyboy? How does Randy's confiding help Ponyboy understand what Cherry meant by "Things are rough all over"? Discuss the value of that understanding in *The Outsiders* and in your own experience, citing examples.

VOCABULARY

charity**char·i·ty** *noun*

Generosity and helpfulness toward the needy and poor

*He was a hard-working and prideful man who refused to accept charity even when he had little money.***spruce****spruce** *adjective*

Neat or clean in appearance; cleaned up to be made more attractive

*She had just gone on a shopping trip and looked very spruce in the new red dress.***affectionately****af·fec·tion·ate·ly** *adverb*

In a manner showing or feeling love or warmth

*She tousled her little brother's hair affectionately.***prime****prime** *adjective*

Of the best quality or value

*The bench by the lake was a prime spot for our picnic***hoarse****hoarse** *adjective*

Rough or harsh in sound

Her voice was hoarse from screaming.

CLOSE READ

1. Why could Darry have been a Soc if not for the gang?

2. What does Johnny mean when he says “stay gold” right before he dies?

3. Why do you think Dally is “raving” toward the end of Chapter 9? Why is Ponyboy so confused by his conduct?

4. What does Two-Bit think is wrong with the headline “Juvenile Delinquents Turn Heroes”? How would you rewrite the headline to reflect the themes of *The Outsiders*?

Chapter 6

JOHNNY GAGGED AND I ALMOST DROPPED MY HOT-FUDGE sundae. "Cherry?" we both said at the same time. "The Soc?"

"Yeah," Dally said. "She came over to the vacant lot the night Two-Bit was jumped. Shepard and some of his outfit and us were hanging around there when she drives up in her little ol' Sting Ray. That took a lot of nerve. Some of us was for jumping her then and there, her bein' the dead kid's girl and all, but Two-Bit stopped us. Man, next time I want a broad I'll pick up my own kind."

"Yeah," Johnny said slowly, and I wondered if, like me, he was remembering another voice, also tough and just deepened into manhood, saying: "Next time you want a broad, pick up your own kind . . ." It gave me the creeps.

THE OUTSIDERS

Dally was going on: "She said she felt that the whole mess was her fault, which it is, and that she'd keep up with what was comin' off with the Socs in the rumble and would testify that the Socs were drunk and looking for a fight and that you fought back in self-defense." He gave a grim laugh. "That little gal sure does hate me. I offered to take her over to The Dingo for a Coke and she said 'No, thank you' and told me where I could go in very polite terms."

She was afraid of loving you, I thought. So Cherry Valance, the cheerleader, Bob's girl, the Soc, was trying to help us. No, it wasn't Cherry the Soc who was helping us, it was Cherry the dreamer who watched sunsets and couldn't stand fights. It was hard to believe a Soc would help us, even a Soc that dug sunsets. Dally didn't notice. He had forgotten about it already.

"Man, this place is out of it. What do they do for kicks around here, play checkers?" Dally surveyed the scene without interest. "I ain't never been in the country before. Have you two?"

Johnny shook his head but I said, "Dad used to take us all huntin'. I've been in the country before. How'd you know about the church?"

"I got a cousin that lives around here somewheres. Tipped me off that it'd make a tuff hide-out in case of something. Hey, Ponyboy, I heard you was the best shot in the family."

"Yeah," I said. "Darry always got the most ducks, though. Him and Dad. Soda and I goofed around too much, scared most of our game away." I couldn't tell Dally that I hated to shoot things. He'd think I was soft.

"That was a good idea, I mean cuttin' your hair and bleachin' it. They printed your descriptions in the paper but you sure wouldn't fit 'em now."

Johnny had been quietly finishing his fifth barbecue sandwich, but now he announced: "We're goin' back and turn ourselves in."

It was Dally's turn to gag. Then he swore awhile. Then he turned to Johnny and demanded: "What?"

"I said we're goin' back and turn ourselves in," Johnny repeated in a quiet voice. I was surprised but not shocked. I had thought about turning ourselves in lots of times, but apparently the whole idea was a jolt to Dallas.

"I got a good chance of bein' let off easy," Johnny said desperately, and I didn't know if it was Dally he was trying to convince or himself. "I ain't got no record with the fuzz and it was self-defense. Ponyboy and Cherry can testify to that. And I don't aim to stay in that church all my life."

That was quite a speech for Johnny. His big black eyes grew bigger than ever at the thought of going to the police station, for Johnny had a deathly fear of cops, but he went on: "We won't tell that you helped us, Dally, and we'll give you back the gun and what's left of the money and say we hitchhiked back so you won't get into trouble. Okay?"

Dally was chewing the corner of his ID card, which gave his age as twenty-one so he could buy liquor. "You sure you want to go back? Us greasers get it worse than anyone else."

Johnny nodded. "I'm sure. It ain't fair for Ponyboy to have to stay up in that church with Darry and Soda worryin' about him all the time. I don't guess . . ."—he

THE OUTSIDERS

swallowed and tried not to look eager—"I don't guess my parents are worried about me or anything?"

"The boys are worried," Dally said in a matter-of-fact voice. "Two-Bit was for going to Texas to hunt for you."

"My parents," Johnny repeated doggedly, "did they ask about me?"

"No," snapped Dally, "they didn't. Blast it, Johnny, what do they matter? Shoot, my old man don't give a hang whether I'm in jail or dead in a car wreck or drunk in the gutter. That don't bother me none."

Johnny didn't say anything. But he stared at the dashboard with such hurt bewilderment that I could have bawled.

Dally cussed under his breath and nearly tore out the transmission of the T-bird as we roared out of the Dairy Queen. I felt sorry for Dally. He meant it when he said he didn't care about his parents. But he and the rest of the gang knew Johnny cared and did everything they could to make it up to him. I don't know what it was about Johnny—maybe that lost-puppy look and those big scared eyes were what made everyone his big brother. But they couldn't, no matter how hard they tried, take the place of his parents. I thought about it for a minute—Darry and Sodapop were my brothers and I loved both of them, even if Darry did scare me; but not even Soda could take Mom and Dad's place. And they were my real brothers, not just sort of adopted ones. No wonder Johnny was hurt because his parents didn't want him. Dally could take it—Dally was of the breed that could take anything, because he was hard and tough, and when he wasn't, he could turn hard and tough. Johnny was a good fighter and could play

it cool, but he was sensitive and that isn't a good way to be when you're a greaser.

"Blast it, Johnny," Dally growled as we flew along the red road, "why didn't you think of turning yourself in five days ago? It would have saved a lot of trouble."

"I was scared," Johnny said with conviction. "I still am." He ran his finger down one of his short black sideburns. "I guess we ruined our hair for nothing, Ponyboy."

"I guess so." I was glad we were going back. I was sick of that church. I didn't care if I was bald.

Dally was scowling, and from long and painful experience I knew better than to talk to him when his eyes were blazing like that. I'd likely as not get clobbered over the head. That had happened before, just as it had happened to all the gang at one time or another. We rarely fought among ourselves—Darry was the unofficial leader, since he kept his head best, Soda and Steve had been best friends since grade school and never fought, and Two-Bit was just too lazy to argue with anyone. Johnny kept his mouth shut too much to get into arguments, and nobody ever fought with Johnny. I kept my mouth shut, too. But Dally was a different matter. If something beefed him, he didn't keep quiet about it, and if you rubbed him the wrong way—look out. Not even Darry wanted to tangle with him. He was dangerous.

Johnny just sat there and stared at his feet. He hated for any one of us to be mad at him. He looked awful sad. Dally glanced at him out of the corner of his eye. I looked out the window.

"Johnny," Dally said in a pleading, high voice, using a tone I had never heard from him before, "Johnny, I

THE OUTSIDERS

ain't mad at you. I just don't want you to get hurt. You don't know what a few months in jail can do to you. Oh, blast it, Johnny"—he pushed his white-blond hair back out of his eyes—"you get hardened in jail. I don't want that to happen to you. Like it happened to me . . ."

I kept staring out the window at the rapidly passing scenery, but I felt my eyes getting round. Dally never talked like that. Never. Dally didn't give a Yankee dime about anyone but himself, and he was cold and hard and mean. He never talked about his past or being in jail that way—if he talked about it at all, it was to brag. And I suddenly thought of Dally . . . in jail at the age of ten . . . Dally growing up in the streets . . .

"Would you rather have me living in hide-outs for the rest of my life, always on the run?" Johnny asked seriously.

If Dally had said yes, Johnny would have gone back to the church without hesitation. He figured Dally knew more than he did, and Dally's word was law. But he never heard Dally's answer, for we had reached the top of Jay Mountain and Dally suddenly slammed on the brakes and stared. "Oh, glory!" he whispered. The church was on fire!

"Let's go see what the deal is," I said, hopping out.

"What for?" Dally sounded irritated. "Get back in here before I beat your head in."

I knew Dally would have to park the car and catch me before he could carry out his threat, and Johnny was already out and following me, so I figured I was safe. We could hear him cussing us out, but he wasn't mad enough to come after us. There was a crowd at the front of the church, mostly little kids, and I wondered how they'd

THE OUTSIDERS

gotten there so quickly. I tapped the nearest grownup. "What's going on?"

"Well, we don't know for sure," the man said with a good-natured grin. "We were having a school picnic up here and the first thing we knew, the place is burning up. Thank goodness this is a wet season and the old thing is worthless anyway." Then, to the kids, he shouted, "Stand back, children. The firemen will be coming soon."

"I bet we started it," I said to Johnny. "We must have dropped a lighted cigarette or something."

About that time a lady came running up. "Jerry, some of the kids are missing."

"They're probably around here somewhere. You can't tell with all this excitement where they might be."

"No." She shook her head. "They've been missing for at least a half an hour. I thought they were climbing the hill . . ."

Then we all froze. Faintly, just faintly, you could hear someone yelling. And it sounded like it was coming from inside the church.

The woman went white. "I told them not to play in the church . . . I told them . . ." She looked like she was going to start screaming, so Jerry shook her.

"I'll get them, don't worry!" I started at a dead run for the church, and the man caught my arm. "I'll get them. You kids stay out!"

I jerked loose and ran on. All I could think was: We started it. We started it. We started it!

I wasn't about to go through that flaming door, so I slammed a big rock through a window and pulled myself

THE OUTSIDERS

in. It was a wonder I didn't cut myself to death, now that I think about it.

"Hey, Ponyboy."

I looked around, startled. I hadn't realized Johnny had been right behind me all the way. I took a deep breath, and started coughing. The smoke filled my eyes and they started watering. "Is that guy coming?"

Johnny shook his head. "The window stopped him."

"Too scared?"

"Naw . . ." Johnny gave me a grin. "Too fat."

I couldn't laugh because I was scared I'd drown in the smoke. The roar and crackling was getting louder, and Johnny shouted the next question.

"Where's the kids?"

"In the back, I guess," I hollered, and we started stumbling through the church. I should be scared, I thought with an odd detached feeling, but I'm not. The cinders and embers began falling on us, stinging and smarting like ants. Suddenly, in the red glow and the haze, I remembered wondering what it was like in a burning ember, and I thought: Now I know, it's a red hell. Why aren't I scared?

We pushed open the door to the back room and found four or five little kids, about eight years old or younger, huddled in a corner. One was screaming his head off, and Johnny yelled, "Shut up! We're goin' to get you out!" The kid looked surprised and quit hollering. I blinked myself—Johnny wasn't behaving at all like his old self. He looked over his shoulder and saw that the door was blocked by flames, then pushed open the window and tossed out the nearest kid. I caught one quick look at his face; it was

THE OUTSIDERS

red-marked from falling embers and sweat-streaked, but he grinned at me. He wasn't scared either. That was the only time I can think of when I saw him without that defeated, suspicious look in his eyes. He looked like he was having the time of his life.

I picked up a kid, and he promptly bit me, but I leaned out the window and dropped him as gently as I could, being in a hurry like that. A crowd was there by that time. Dally was standing there, and when he saw me he screamed, "For Pete's sake, get outa there! That roof's gonna cave in any minute. Forget those blasted kids!"

I didn't pay any attention, although pieces of the old roof were crashing down too close for comfort. I snatched up another kid, hoping he didn't bite, and dropped him without waiting to see if he landed okay or not. I was coughing so hard I could hardly stand up, and I wished I had time to take off Dally's jacket. It was hot. We dropped the last of the kids out as the front of the church started to crumble. Johnny shoved me toward the window. "Get out!"

I leaped out the window and heard timber crashing and the flames roaring right behind me. I staggered, almost falling, coughing and sobbing for breath. Then I heard Johnny scream, and as I turned to go back for him, Dally swore at me and clubbed me across the back as hard as he could, and I went down into a peaceful darkness.

When I came to, I was being bounced around, and I ached and smarted, and wondered dimly where I was. I tried to think, but there was a high-pitched screaming going on, and I couldn't tell whether it was inside my head

THE OUTSIDERS

or out. Then I realized it was a siren. The fuzz, I thought dully. The cops have come for us. I tried to swallow a groan and wished wildly for Soda. Someone with a cold wet rag was gently sponging off my face, and a voice said, "I think he's coming around."

I opened my eyes. It was dark. I'm moving, I thought. Are they taking me to jail?

"Where . . . ?" I said hoarsely, not able to get anything else out of my mouth. My throat was sore. I blinked at the stranger sitting beside me. But he wasn't a stranger . . . I'd seen him before . . .

"Take it easy, kid. You're in an ambulance."

"Where's Johnny?" I cried, frightened at being in this car with strangers. "And Dallas?"

"They're in the other ambulance, right behind us. Just calm down. You're going to be okay. You just passed out."

"I didn't either," I said in the bored, tough voice we reserved for strangers and cops. "Dallas hit me. How come?"

"Because your back was in flames, that's why."

I was surprised. "It was? Golly, I didn't feel it. It don't hurt."

"We put it out before you got burned. That jacket saved you from a bad burning, maybe saved your life. You just keeled over from smoke inhalation and a little shock—of course, that slap on the back didn't help much."

I remembered who he was then—Jerry somebody-or-other who was too heavy to get in the window. He must be a school teacher, I thought. "Are you taking us to the police station?" I was still a little mixed up as to what was coming off.

"The police station?" It was his turn to be surprised.

THE OUTSIDERS

"What would we want to take you to the police station for? We're taking all three of you to the hospital."

I let his first remark slide by. "Are Johnny and Dally all right?"

"Which one's which?"

"Johnny has black hair. Dally's the mean-looking one."

He studied his wedding ring. Maybe he's thinking about his wife, I thought. I wished he'd say something.

"We think the towheaded kid is going to be all right. He burned one arm pretty badly, though, trying to drag the other kid out the window. Johnny, well, I don't know about him. A piece of timber caught him across the back—he might have a broken back, and he was burned pretty severely. He passed out before he got out the window. They're giving him plasma now." He must have seen the look on my face because he hurriedly changed the subject. "I swear, you three are the bravest kids I've seen in a long time. First you and the black-haired kid climbing in that window, and then the tough-looking kid going back in to save him. Mrs. O'Briant and I think you were sent straight from heaven. Or are you just professional heroes or something?"

Sent from heaven? Had he gotten a good look at Dallas? "No, we're greasers," I said. I was too worried and scared to appreciate the fact that he was trying to be funny.

"You're what?"

"Greasers. You know, like hoods, JD's. Johnny is wanted for murder, and Dallas has a record with the fuzz a mile long."

"Are you kidding me?" Jerry stared at me as if he thought I was still in shock or something.

THE OUTSIDERS

"I am not. Take me to town and you'll find out pretty quick."

"We're taking you to a hospital there anyway. The address card in your billfold said that was where you lived. Your name's really Ponyboy?"

"Yeah. Even on my birth certificate. And don't bug me about it. Are . . ."—I felt weak—"are the little kids okay?"

"Just fine. A little frightened maybe. There were some short explosions right after you all got out. Sounded just exactly like gunfire."

Gunfire. There went our gun. And *Gone with the Wind*. Were we sent from heaven? I started to laugh weakly. I guess that guy knew how close to hysterics I really was, for he talked to me in a low soothing voice all the way to the hospital.

I was sitting in the waiting room, waiting to hear how Dally and Johnny were. I had been checked over, and except for a few burns and a big bruise across my back, I was all right. I had watched them bring Dally and Johnny in on stretchers. Dally's eyes were closed, but when I spoke he had tried to grin and had told me that if I ever did a stupid thing like that again he'd beat the tar out of me. He was still swearing at me when they took him on in. Johnny was unconscious. I had been afraid to look at him, but I was relieved to see that his face wasn't burned. He just looked very pale and still and sort of sick. I would have cried at the sight of him so still except I couldn't in front of people.

Jerry Wood had stayed with me all the time. He kept thanking me for getting the kids out. He didn't seem to

THE OUTSIDERS

mind our being hoods. I told him the whole story—starting when Dallas and Johnny and I had met at the corner of Pickett and Sutton. I left out the part about the gun and our hitching a ride in the freight car. He was real nice about it and said that being heroes would help get us out of trouble, especially since it was self-defense and all.

I was sitting there, smoking a cigarette, when Jerry came back in from making a phone call. He stared at me for a second. "You shouldn't be smoking."

I was startled. "How come?" I looked at my cigarette. It looked okay to me. I looked around for a "No Smoking" sign and couldn't find one. "How come?"

"Why, uh," Jerry stammered, "uh, you're too young."

"I am?" I had never thought about it. Everyone in our neighborhood, even the girls, smoked. Except for Darry, who was too proud of his athletic health to risk a cigarette, we had all started smoking at an early age. Johnny had been smoking since he was nine; Steve started at eleven. So no one thought it unusual when I started. I was the weed-fiend in my family—Soda smokes only to steady his nerves or when he wants to look tough.

Jerry simply sighed, then grinned. "There are some people here to see you. Claim to be your brothers or something."

I leaped up and ran for the door, but it was already open and Soda had me in a bear hug and was swinging me around. I was so glad to see him I could have bawled. Finally he set me down and looked at me. He pushed my hair back. "Oh, Ponyboy, your hair . . . your tuff, tuff hair . . ."

Then I saw Darry. He was leaning in the doorway, wear-

THE OUTSIDERS

ing his olive jeans and black T-shirt. He was still tall, broad-shouldered Darry; but his fists were jammed in his pockets and his eyes were pleading. I simply looked at him. He swallowed and said in a husky voice, "Ponyboy . . ."

I let go of Soda and stood there for a minute. Darry didn't like me . . . he had driven me away that night . . . he had hit me . . . Darry hollered at me all the time . . . he didn't give a hang about me. . . . Suddenly I realized, horrified, that Darry was crying. He didn't make a sound, but tears were running down his cheeks. I hadn't seen him cry in years, not even when Mom and Dad had been killed. (I remembered the funeral. I had sobbed in spite of myself; Soda had broken down and bawled like a baby; but Darry had only stood there, his fists in his pockets and that look on his face, the same helpless, pleading look that he was wearing now.)

In that second what Soda and Dally and Two-Bit had been trying to tell me came through. Darry did care about me, maybe as much as he cared about Soda, and because he cared he was trying too hard to make something of me. When he yelled "Pony, where have you been all this time?" he meant "Pony, you've scared me to death. Please be careful, because I couldn't stand it if anything happened to you."

Darry looked down and turned away silently. Suddenly I broke out of my daze.

"Darry!" I screamed, and the next thing I knew I had him around the waist and was squeezing the daylights out of him.

"Darry," I said, "I'm sorry . . ."

He was stroking my hair and I could hear the sobs rack-

THE OUTSIDERS

ing him as he fought to keep back the tears. "Oh, Pony, I thought we'd lost you . . . like we did Mom and Dad . . ."

That was his silent fear then—of losing another person he loved. I remembered how close he and Dad had been, and I wondered how I could ever have thought him hard and unfeeling. I listened to his heart pounding through his T-shirt and knew everything was going to be okay now. I had taken the long way around, but I was finally home. To stay.

Chapter 7

NOW THERE WERE THREE OF US SITTING IN THE WAITING room waiting to hear how Dally and Johnny were. Then the reporters and the police came. They asked too many questions too fast, and got me mixed up. If you want to know the truth, I wasn't feeling real good in the first place. Kind of sick, really. And I'm scared of policemen anyway. The reporters fired one question right after another at me and got me so confused I didn't know what was coming off. Darry finally told them I wasn't in any shape to be yelled at so much and they slowed down a little. Darry's kinda big.

Sodapop kept them in stitches. He'd grab one guy's press hat and another's camera and walk around interviewing the nurses and mimicking TV reporters. He tried to lift

THE OUTSIDERS

a policeman's gun and grinned so crazily when he was caught that the policeman had to grin too. Soda can make anyone grin. I managed to get hold of some hair grease and comb my hair back so that it looked a little better before they got any pictures. I'd die if I got my picture in the paper with my hair looking so lousy. Darry and Sodapop were in the pictures too; Jerry Wood told me that if Sodapop and Darry hadn't been so good-looking, they wouldn't have taken so many. That was public appeal, he said.

Soda was really getting a kick out of all this. I guess he would have enjoyed it more if it hadn't been so serious, but he couldn't resist anything that caused that much excitement. I swear, sometimes he reminds me of a colt. A long-legged palomino colt that has to get his nose into everything. The reporters stared at him admiringly; I told you he looks like a movie star, and he kind of radiates.

Finally, even Sodapop got tired of the reporters—he gets bored with the same old thing after a time—and stretching out on the long bench, he put his head in Darry's lap and went to sleep. I guess both of them were tired—it was late at night and I knew they hadn't had much sleep during the week. Even while I was answering questions I remembered that it had been only a few hours since I was sleeping off a smoke in the corner of the church. Already it was an unreal dream and yet, at the time I couldn't have imagined any other world. Finally, the reporters started to leave, along with the police. One of them turned and asked, "What would you do right now if you could do anything you wanted?"

I looked at him tiredly. "Take a bath."

They thought that was pretty funny, but I meant it. I

THE OUTSIDERS

felt lousy. The hospital got real quiet after they left. The only noise was the nurse's soft footsteps and Soda's light breathing. Darry looked down at him and grinned half-heartedly. "He didn't get much sleep this week," he said softly. "He hardly slept at all."

"Hhhmmmm," Soda said drowsily, "you didn't either."

The nurses wouldn't tell us anything about Johnny and Dally, so Darry got hold of the doctor. The doctor told us that he would talk only to the family, but Darry finally got it through the guy's head that we were about as much family as Dally and Johnny had.

Dally would be okay after two or three days in the hospital, he said. One arm was badly burned and would be scarred for the rest of his life, but he would have full use of it in a couple of weeks. Dally'll be okay, I thought. Dallas is always okay. He could take anything. It was Johnny I was worried about.

He was in critical condition. His back had been broken when that piece of timber fell on him. He was in severe shock and suffering from third-degree burns. They were doing everything they could to ease the pain, although since his back was broken he couldn't even feel the burns below his waist. He kept calling for Dallas and Ponyboy. If he lived . . . *If?* Please, no, I thought. Please not "if." The blood was draining from my face and Darry put an arm across my shoulder and squeezed hard. . . . Even if he lived he'd be crippled for the rest of his life. "You wanted it straight and you got it straight," the doctor said. "Now go home and get some rest."

I was trembling. A pain was growing in my throat and I wanted to cry, but greasers don't cry in front of strangers.

THE OUTSIDERS

Some of us never cry at all. Like Dally and Two-Bit and Tim Shepard—they forgot how at an early age. Johnny crippled for life? I'm dreaming, I thought in panic, I'm dreaming. I'll wake up at home or in the church and everything'll be like it used to be. But I didn't believe myself. Even if Johnny did live he'd be crippled and never play football or help us out in a rumble again. He'd have to stay in that house he hated, where he wasn't wanted, and things could never be like they used to be. I didn't trust myself to speak. If I said one word, the hard knot in my throat would swell and I'd be crying in spite of myself.

I took a deep breath and kept my mouth shut. Soda was awake by then, and although he looked stony-faced, as if he hadn't heard a word the doctor had said, his eyes were bleak and stunned. Serious reality has a hard time coming through to Soda, but when it does, it hits him hard. He looked like I felt when I had seen that black-haired Soc lying doubled up and still in the moonlight.

Darry was rubbing the back of my head softly. "We'd better go home. We can't do anything here."

In our Ford I was suddenly overcome by sleepiness. I leaned back and closed my eyes and we were home before I knew it. Soda was shaking me gently. "Hey, Ponyboy, wake up. You still got to get to the house."

"HMMMMM," I said sleepily, and lay down in the seat. I couldn't have gotten up to save my life. I could hear Soda and Darry, but as if from a great distance.

"Oh, come on, Ponyboy," Soda pleaded, shaking me a little harder, "we're sleepy, too."

I guess Darry was tired of fooling around, because he picked me up and carried me in.

THE OUTSIDERS

"He's getting mighty big to be carried," Soda said. I wanted to tell him to shut up and let me sleep but I only yawned.

"He's sure lost a lot of weight," Darry said.

I thought sleepily that I should at least pull off my shoes, but I didn't. I went to sleep the minute Darry tossed me on the bed. I'd forgotten how soft a bed really was.

I was the first one up the next morning. Soda must have pulled my shoes and shirt off for me; I was still wearing my jeans. He must have been too sleepy to undress himself, though; he lay stretched out beside me fully clothed. I wiggled out from under his arm and pulled the blanket up over him, then went to take a shower. Asleep, he looked a lot younger than going-on-seventeen, but I had noticed that Johnny looked younger when he was asleep, too, so I figured everyone did. Maybe people are younger when they are asleep.

After my shower, I put on some clean clothes and spent five minutes or so hunting for a hint of beard on my face and mourning over my hair. That bum haircut made my ears stick out.

Darry was still asleep when I went into the kitchen to fix breakfast. The first one up has to fix breakfast and the other two do the dishes. That's the rule around our house, and usually it's Darry who fixes breakfast and me and Soda who are left with the dishes. I hunted through the icebox and found some eggs. We all like our eggs done differently. I like them hard, Darry likes them in a bacon-and-tomato sandwich, and Sodapop eats his with grape jelly. All three

THE OUTSIDERS

of us like chocolate cake for breakfast. Mom had never allowed it with ham and eggs, but Darry let Soda and me talk him into it. We really didn't have to twist his arm; Darry loves chocolate cake as much as we do. Sodapop always makes sure there's some in the icebox every night and if there isn't he cooks one up real quick. I like Darry's cakes better; Sodapop always puts too much sugar in the icing. I don't see how he stands jelly and eggs and chocolate cake all at once, but he seems to like it. Darry drinks black coffee, and Sodapop and I drink chocolate milk. We could have coffee if we wanted it, but we like chocolate milk. All three of us are crazy about chocolate stuff. Soda says if they ever make a chocolate cigarette I'll have it made.

"Anybody home?" a familiar voice called through the front screen, and Two-Bit and Steve came in. We always just stick our heads into each other's houses and holler "Hey" and walk in. Our front door is always unlocked in case one of the boys is hacked off at his parents and needs a place to lay over and cool off. We never could tell who we'd find stretched out on the sofa in the morning. It was usually Steve, whose father told him about once a week to get out and never come back. It kind of bugs Steve, even if his old man does give him five or six bucks the next day to make up for it. Or it might be Dally, who lived anywhere he could. Once we even found Tim Shepard, leader of the Shepard gang and far from his own turf, reading the morning paper in the armchair. He merely looked up, said "Hi," and strolled out without staying for breakfast. Two-Bit's mother warned us about burglars, but Darry, flexing his muscles so that they bulged like oversized baseballs, drawled that he wasn't afraid of any burglars, and that we didn't

THE OUTSIDERS

really have anything worth taking. He'd risk a robbery, he said, if it meant keeping one of the boys from blowing up and robbing a gas station or something. So the door was never locked.

"In here!" I yelled, forgetting that Darry and Sodapop were still asleep. "Don't slam the door."

They slammed the door, of course, and Two-Bit came running into the kitchen. He caught me by the upper arms and swung me around, ignoring the fact that I had two uncooked eggs in my hand.

"Hey, Ponyboy," he cried gleefully, "long time no see."

You would have thought it had been five years instead of five days since I'd seen him last, but I didn't mind. I like ol' Two-Bit; he's a good buddy to have. He spun me into Steve, who gave me a playful slap on my bruised back and shoved me across the room. One of the eggs went flying. It landed on the clock and I tightened my grip on the other one, so that it crushed and ran all over my hand.

"Now look what you did," I griped. "There went our breakfast. Can't you two wait till I set the eggs down before you go shovin' me all over the country?" I really was a little mad, because I had just realized how long it had been since I'd eaten anything. The last thing I'd eaten was a hot-fudge sundae at the Dairy Queen in Windrixville, and I was hungry.

Two-Bit was walking in a slow circle around me, and I sighed because I knew what was coming.

"Man, dig baldy here!" He was staring at my head as he circled me. "I wouldn't have believed it. I thought all the wild Indians in Oklahoma had been tamed. What little squaw's got that tuff-lookin' mop of yours, Ponyboy?"

THE OUTSIDERS

"Aw, lay off," I said. I wasn't feeling too good in the first place, kind of like I was coming down with something. Two-Bit winked at Steve, and Steve said, "Why, he had to get a haircut to get his picture in the paper. They'd never believe a little greasy-lookin' mug could be a hero. How do you like bein' a hero, big shot?"

"How do I like what?"

"Being a hero. You know"—he shoved the morning paper at me impatiently—"like a big shot, even."

I stared at the newspaper. On the front page of the second section was the headline: JUVENILE DELINQUENTS TURN HEROES.

"What I like is the 'turn' bit," Two-Bit said, cleaning the egg up off the floor. "Y'all were heroes from the beginning. You just didn't 'turn' all of a sudden."

I hardly heard him. I was reading the paper. That whole page was covered with stories about us—the fight, the murder, the church burning, the Socs being drunk, everything. My picture was there, with Darry and Sodapop. The article told how Johnny and I had risked our lives saving those little kids, and there was a comment from one of the parents, who said that they would all have burned to death if it hadn't been for us. It told the whole story of our fight with the Socs—only they didn't say "Socs," because most grownups don't know about the battles that go on between us. They had interviewed Cherry Valance, and she said Bob had been drunk and that the boys had been looking for a fight when they took her home. Bob had told her he'd fix us for picking up his girl. His buddy Randy Adderson, who had helped jump us, also said it was their fault and that we'd only fought back in self-defense. But

THE OUTSIDERS

they were charging Johnny with manslaughter. Then I discovered that I was supposed to appear at juvenile court for running away, and Johnny was too, if he recovered. (Not if, I thought again. Why do they keep saying *if*?) For once, there weren't any charges against Dally, and I knew he'd be mad because the paper made him out a hero for saving Johnny and didn't say much about his police record, which he was kind of proud of. He'd kill those reporters if he got hold of them. There was another column about just Darry and Soda and me: how Darry worked on two jobs at once and made good at both of them, and about his outstanding record at school; it mentioned Sodapop dropping out of school so we could stay together, and that I made the honor roll at school all the time and might be a future track star. (Oh, yeah, I forgot—I'm on the A-squad track team, the youngest one. I'm a good runner.) Then it said we shouldn't be separated after we had worked so hard to stay together.

The meaning of that last line finally hit me. "You mean . . ."—I swallowed hard—"that they're thinking about putting me and Soda in a boys' home or something?"

Steve was carefully combing back his hair in complicated swirls. "Somethin' like that."

I sat down in a daze. We couldn't get hauled off now. Not after me and Darry had finally got through to each other, and now that the big rumble was coming up and we would settle this Soc-greaser thing once and for all. Not now, when Johnny needed us and Dally was still in the hospital and wouldn't be out for the rumble.

"No," I said out loud, and Two-Bit, who was scraping the egg off the clock, turned to stare at me.

"No what?"

"No, they ain't goin' to put us in a boys' home."

"Don't worry about it," Steve said, cocksure that he and Sodapop could handle anything that came up. "They don't do things like that to heroes. Where're Soda and Superman?"

That was as far as he got, because Darry, shaved and dressed, came in behind Steve and lifted him up off the floor, then dropped him. We all call Darry "Superman" or "Muscles" at one time or another; but one time Steve made the mistake of referring to him as "all brawn and no brain," and Darry almost shattered Steve's jaw. Steve didn't call him that again, but Darry never forgave him; Darry has never really gotten over not going to college. That was the only time I've ever seen Soda mad at Steve, although Soda attaches no importance to education. School bored him. No action.

Soda came running in. "Where's that blue shirt I washed yesterday?" He took a swig of chocolate milk out of the container.

"Hate to tell you, buddy," Steve said, still flat on the floor, "but you have to wear clothes to work. There's a law or something."

"Oh, yeah," Soda said. "Where're those wheat jeans, too?"

"I ironed. They're in my closet," Darry said. "Hurry up, you're gonna be late."

Soda ran back, muttering, "I'm hurryin', I'm hurryin'."

Steve followed him and in a second there was the general racket of a pillow fight. I absent-mindedly watched Darry as he searched the icebox for chocolate cake

THE OUTSIDERS

"Darry," I said suddenly, "did you know about the juvenile court?"

Without turning to look at me he said evenly, "Yeah, the cops told me last night."

I knew then that he realized we might get separated. I didn't want to worry him any more, but I said, "I had one of those dreams last night. The one I can't ever remember."

Darry spun around to face me, genuine fear on his face. "What?"

I had a nightmare the night of Mom and Dad's funeral. I'd had nightmares and wild dreams every once in a while when I was little, but nothing like this one. I woke up screaming bloody murder. And I never could remember what it was that had scared me. It scared Sodapop and Darry almost as bad as it scared me; for night after night, for weeks on end, I would dream this dream and wake up in a cold sweat or screaming. And I never could remember exactly what happened in it. Soda began sleeping with me, and it stopped recurring so often, but it happened often enough for Darry to take me to a doctor. The doctor said I had too much imagination. He had a simple cure, too: Study harder, read more, draw more, and play football more. After a hard game of football and four or five hours of reading, I was too exhausted, mentally and physically, to dream anything. But Darry never got over it, and every once in a while he would ask me if I ever dreamed any more.

"Was it very bad?" Two-Bit questioned. He knew the whole story, and having never dreamed about anything but blondes, he was interested.

THE OUTSIDERS

"No," I lied. I had awakened in a cold sweat and shivering, but Soda was dead to the world. I had just wiggled closer to him and stayed awake for a couple of hours, trembling under his arm. That dream always scared the heck out of me.

Darry started to say something, but before he could begin, Sodapop and Steve came in.

"You know what?" Sodapop said to no one in particular. "When we stomp the Socies good, me and Stevie here are gonna throw a big party and everybody can get stoned. Then we'll go chase the Socs clear to Mexico."

"Where you gonna get the dough, little man?" Darry had found the cake and was handing out pieces.

"I'll think of somethin'," Sodapop assured him between bites.

"You going to take Sandy to the party?" I asked, just to be saying something. Instant silence. I looked around. "What's the deal?"

Sodapop was staring at his feet, but his ears were reddening. "No. She went to live with her grandmother in Florida."

"How come?"

"Look," Steve said, surprisingly angry, "does he have to draw you a picture? It was either that or get married, and her parents almost hit the roof at the idea of her marryin' a sixteen-year-old kid."

"Seventeen," Soda said softly. "I'll be seventeen in a couple of weeks."

"Oh," I said, embarrassed. Soda was no innocent; I had been in on bull sessions and his bragging was as loud as anyone's. But never about Sandy. Not ever about Sandy. I

THE OUTSIDERS

remembered how her blue eyes had glowed when she looked at him, and I was sorry for her.

There was a heavy silence. Then Darry said, "We'd better get on to work, Pepsi-Cola." Darry rarely called Soda by Dad's pet nickname for him, but he did so then because he knew how miserable Sodapop was about Sandy.

"I hate to leave you here by yourself, Ponyboy," Darry said slowly. "Maybe I ought to take the day off."

"I've stayed by my lonesome before. You can't afford a day off."

"Yeah, but you just got back and I really ought to stay . . ."

"I'll baby-sit him," Two-Bit said, ducking as I took a swing at him. "I haven't got anything better to do."

"Why don't you get a job?" Steve said. "Ever consider working for a living?"

"Work?" Two-Bit was aghast. "And ruin my rep? I wouldn't be baby-sittin' the kid here if I knew of some good day-nursery open on Saturdays."

I pulled his chair over backward and jumped on him, but he had me down in a second. I was kind of short on wind. I've got to cut out smoking or I won't make track next year.

"Holler uncle."

"Nope," I said, struggling, but I didn't have my usual strength.

Darry was pulling on his jacket. "You two do up the dishes. You can go to the movies if you want to before you go see Dally and Johnny." He paused for a second, watching Two-Bit squash the heck out of me. "Two-Bit, lay off. He ain't lookin' so good. Ponyboy, you take a couple of

THE OUTSIDERS

aspirins and go easy. You smoke more than a pack today and I'll skin you. Understood?"

"Yeah," I said, getting to my feet. "You carry more than one bundle of roofing at a time today and me and Soda'll skin you. Understood?"

He grinned one of his rare grins. "Yeah. See y'all this afternoon."

"Bye," I said. I heard our Ford's *vrrrrroooooom* and thought: Soda's driving. And they left.

"... anyway, I was walking around downtown and started to take this short cut through an alley"—Two-Bit was telling me about one of his many exploits while we did the dishes. I mean, while I did the dishes. He was sitting on the cabinet, sharpening that black-handled switchblade he was so proud of—"... and I ran into three guys. I says 'Howdy' and they just look at each other. Then one says 'We would jump you but since you're as slick as us we figger you don't have nothin' worth takin'.' I says 'Buddy, that's the truth' and went right on. Moral: What's the safest thing to be when one is met by a gang of social outcasts in an alley?"

"A judo expert?" I suggested.

"No, another social outcast!" Two-Bit yelped, and nearly fell off the cabinet from laughing so hard. I had to grin, too. He saw things straight and made them into something funny.

"We're gonna clean up the house," I said. "The reporters or police or somebody might come by, and anyway, it's time for those guys from the state to come by and check up on us."

"This house ain't messy. You oughtta see my house."

THE OUTSIDERS

"I have. And if you had the sense of a billy goat you'd try to help around your place instead of bumming around."

"Shoot, kid, if I ever did that my mom would die of shock."

I liked Two-Bit's mother. She had the same good humor and easygoing ways that he did. She wasn't lazy like him, but she let him get away with murder. I don't know, though—it's just about impossible to get mad at him.

When we had finished, I pulled on Dally's brown leather jacket—the back was burned black—and we started for Tenth Street.

"I would drive us," Two-Bit said as we walked up the street trying to thumb a ride, "but the brakes are out on my car. Almost killed me and Kathy the other night." He flipped the collar of his black leather jacket up to serve as a windbreak while he lit a cigarette. "You oughtta see Kathy's brother. Now there's a hood. He's so greasy he glides when he walks. He goes to the barber for an oil change, not a haircut."

I would have laughed, but I had a terrific headache. We stopped at the Tasty Freeze to buy Cokes and rest up, and the blue Mustang that had been trailing us for eight blocks pulled in. I almost decided to run, and Two-Bit must have guessed this, for he shook his head ever so slightly and tossed me a cigarette. As I lit up, the Socs who had jumped Johnny and me at the park hopped out of the Mustang. I recognized Randy Adderson, Marcia's boyfriend, and the tall guy that had almost drowned me. I hated them. It was their fault Bob was dead; their fault Johnny was dying; their fault Soda and I might get put

THE OUTSIDERS

in a boys' home. I hated them as bitterly and as contemptuously as Dally Winston hated.

Two-Bit put an elbow on my shoulder and leaned against me, dragging on his cigarette. "You know the rules. No jazz before the rumble," he said to the Socs.

"We know," Randy said. He looked at me. "Come here. I want to talk to you."

I glanced at Two-Bit. He shrugged. I followed Randy over to his car, out of earshot of the rest. We sat there in his car for a second, silent. Golly, that was the tuffest car I've ever been in.

"I read about you in the paper," Randy said finally. "How come?"

"I don't know. Maybe I felt like playing hero."

"I wouldn't have. I would have let those kids burn to death."

"You might not have. You might have done the same thing."

Randy pulled out a cigarette and pressed in the car lighter. "I don't know. I don't know anything anymore. I would never have believed a greaser could pull something like that."

"'Greaser' didn't have anything to do with it. My buddy over there wouldn't have done it. Maybe you would have done the same thing, maybe a friend of yours wouldn't have. It's the individual."

"I'm not going to show at the rumble tonight," Randy said slowly.

I took a good look at him. He was seventeen or so, but he was already old. Like Dallas was old. Cherry had said

THE OUTSIDERS

her friends were too cool to feel anything, and yet she could remember watching sunsets. Randy was supposed to be too cool to feel anything, and yet there was pain in his eyes.

"I'm sick of all this. Sick and tired. Bob was a good guy. He was the best buddy a guy ever had. I mean, he was a good fighter and tuff and everything, but he was a real person too. You dig?"

I nodded.

"He's dead—his mother has had a nervous breakdown. They spoiled him rotten. I mean, most parents would be proud of a kid like that—good-lookin' and smart and everything, but they gave in to him all the time. He kept trying to make someone say 'No' and they never did. They never did. That was what he wanted. For somebody to tell him 'No.' To have somebody lay down the law, set the limits, give him something solid to stand on. That's what we all want, really. One time . . ."—Randy tried to grin, but I could tell he was close to tears—"one time he came home drunker than anything. He thought sure they were gonna raise the roof. You know what they did? They thought it was something they'd done. They thought it was their fault—that they'd failed him and driven him to it or something. They took all the blame and didn't do anything to him. If his old man had just belted him—just once, he might still be alive. I don't know why I'm telling you this. I couldn't tell anyone else. My friends—they'd think I was off my rocker or turning soft. Maybe I am. I just know that I'm sick of this whole mess. That kid—your buddy, the one that got burned—he might die?"

"Yeah," I said, trying not to think about Johnny.

"And tonight . . . people get hurt in rumbles, maybe killed. I'm sick of it because it doesn't do any good. You can't win, you know that, don't you?" And when I remained silent he went on: "You can't win, even if you whip us. You'll still be where you were before—at the bottom. And we'll still be the lucky ones with all the breaks. So it doesn't do any good, the fighting and the killing. It doesn't prove a thing. We'll forget it if you win, or if you don't. Greasers will still be greasers and Socs will still be Socs. Sometimes I think it's the ones in the middle that are really the lucky stiff . . ." He took a deep breath. "So I'd fight if I thought it'd do any good. I think I'm going to leave town. Take my little old Mustang and all the dough I can carry and get out."

"Running away won't help."

"Oh, hell, I know it," Randy half-sobbed, "but what can I do? I'm marked chicken if I punk out at the rumble, and I'd hate myself if I didn't. I don't know what to do."

"I'd help you if I could," I said. I remembered Cherry's voice: *Things are rough all over*. I knew then what she meant.

He looked at me. "No, you wouldn't. I'm a Soc. You get a little money and the whole world hates you."

"No," I said, "you hate the whole world."

He just looked at me—from the way he looked he could have been ten years older than he was. I got out of the car. "You would have saved those kids if you had been there," I said. "You'd have saved them the same as we did."

"Thanks, grease," he said, trying to grin. Then he stopped. "I didn't mean that. I meant, thanks, kid."

THE OUTSIDERS

"My name's Ponyboy," I said. "Nice talkin' to you, Randy."

I walked over to Two-Bit, and Randy honked for his friends to come and get into the car.

"What'd he want?" Two-Bit asked. "What'd Mr. Super-Soc have to say?"

"He ain't a Soc," I said, "he's just a guy. He just wanted to talk."

"You want to see a movie before we go see Johnny and Dallas?"

"Nope," I said, lighting up another weed. I still had a headache, but I felt better. Socs were just guys after all. Things were rough all over, but it was better that way. That way you could tell the other guy was human too.

Chapter 8

THE NURSES WOULDN'T LET US SEE JOHNNY. HE WAS IN critical condition. No visitors. But Two-Bit wouldn't take no for an answer. That was his buddy in there and he aimed to see him. We both begged and pleaded, but we were getting nowhere until the doctor found out what was going on.

"Let them go in," he said to the nurse. "He's been asking for them. It can't hurt now."

Two-Bit didn't notice the expression in his voice. It's true, I thought numbly, he is dying. We went in, practically on tiptoe, because the quietness of the hospital scared us. Johnny was lying still, with his eyes closed, but when Two-Bit said, "Hey, Johnnykid," he opened them and looked at us, trying to grin. "Hey, y'all."

THE OUTSIDERS

The nurse, who was pulling the shades open, smiled and said, "So he can talk after all."

Two-Bit looked around. "They treatin' you okay, kid?"

"Don't . . ."—Johnny gasped—"don't let me put enough grease on my hair."

"Don't talk," Two-Bit said, pulling up a chair, "just listen. We'll bring you some hair grease next time. We're havin' the big rumble tonight."

Johnny's huge black eyes widened a little, but he didn't say anything.

"It's too bad you and Dally can't be in it. It's the first big rumble we've had—not countin' the time we whipped Shepard's outfit."

"He came by," Johnny said.

"Tim Shepard?"

Johnny nodded. "Came to see Dally."

Tim and Dallas had always been buddies.

"Did you know you got your name in the paper for being a hero?"

Johnny almost grinned as he nodded. "Tuff enough," he managed, and by the way his eyes were glowing, I figured Southern gentlemen had nothing on Johnny Cade.

I could see that even a few words were tiring him out; he was as pale as the pillow and looked awful. Two-Bit pretended not to notice.

"You want anything besides hair grease, kid?"

Johnny barely nodded. "The book"—he looked at me—"can you get another one?"

Two-Bit looked at me too. I hadn't told him about *Gone with the Wind*.

"He wants a copy of *Gone with the Wind* so I can read

it to him," I explained. "You want to run down to the drugstore and get one?"

"Okay," Two-Bit said cheerfully. "Don't y'all run off."

I sat down in Two-Bit's chair and tried to think of something to say. "Dally's gonna be okay," I said finally. "And Darry and me, we're okay now."

I knew Johnny understood what I meant. We had always been close buddies, and those lonely days in the church strengthened our friendship. He tried to smile again, and then suddenly went white and closed his eyes tight.

"Johnny!" I said, alarmed. "Are you okay?"

He nodded, keeping his eyes closed. "Yeah, it just hurts sometimes. It usually don't . . . I can't feel anything below the middle of my back . . ."

He lay breathing heavily for a moment. "I'm pretty bad off, ain't I, Pony?"

"You'll be okay," I said with fake cheerfulness. "You gotta be. We couldn't get along without you."

The truth of that last statement hit me. We couldn't get along without him. We needed Johnny as much as he needed the gang. And for the same reason.

"I won't be able to walk again," Johnny started, then faltered. "Not even on crutches. Busted my back."

"You'll be okay," I repeated firmly. Don't start crying, I commanded myself, don't start crying, you'll scare Johnny.

"You want to know something, Ponyboy? I'm scared stiff. I used to talk about killing myself . . ." He drew a quivering breath. "I don't want to die now. It ain't long enough. Sixteen years ain't long enough. I wouldn't mind it so much if there wasn't so much stuff I ain't done yet and so many things I ain't seen. It's not fair. You know

THE OUTSIDERS

what? That time we were in Windrixville was the only time I've been away from our neighborhood."

"You ain't gonna die," I said, trying to hold my voice down. "And don't get juiced up, because the doc won't let us see you no more if you do."

Sixteen years on the streets and you can learn a lot. But all the wrong things, not the things you want to learn. Sixteen years on the streets and you see a lot. But all the wrong sights, not the sights you want to see.

Johnny closed his eyes and rested quietly for a minute. Years of living on the East Side teaches you how to shut off your emotions. If you didn't, you would explode. You learn to cool it.

A nurse appeared in the doorway. "Johnny," she said quietly, "your mother's here to see you."

Johnny opened his eyes. At first they were wide with surprise, then they darkened. "I don't want to see her," he said firmly.

"She's your mother."

"I said I don't want to see her." His voice was rising. "She's probably come to tell me about all the trouble I'm causing her and about how glad her and the old man'll be when I'm dead. Well, tell her to leave me alone. For once"—his voice broke—"for once just to leave me alone." He was struggling to sit up, but he suddenly gasped, went whiter than the pillowcase, and passed out cold.

The nurse hurried me out the door. "I was afraid of something like this if he saw anyone."

I ran into Two-Bit, who was coming in.

"You can't see him now," the nurse said, so Two-Bit handed her the book. "Make sure he can see it when he

THE OUTSIDERS

comes around." She took it and closed the door behind her. Two-Bit stood and looked at the door a long time. "I wish it was any one of us except Johnny," he said, and his voice was serious for once. "We could get along without anyone but Johnny."

Turning abruptly, he said, "Let's go see Dallas."

As we walked out into the hall, we saw Johnny's mother. I knew her. She was a little woman, with straight black hair and big black eyes like Johnny's. But that was as far as the resemblance went. Johnnycake's eyes were fearful and sensitive; hers were cheap and hard. As we passed her she was saying, "But I have a right to see him. He's my son. After all the trouble his father and I've gone to to raise him, this is our reward! He'd rather see those no-count hoodlums than his own folks . . ." She saw us and gave us such a look of hatred that I almost backed up. "It was your fault. Always running around in the middle of the night getting jailed and heaven knows what else . . ." I thought she was going to cuss us out. I really did.

Two-Bit's eyes got narrow and I was afraid he was going to start something. I don't like to hear women get sworn at, even if they deserve it. "No wonder he hates your guts," Two-Bit snapped. He was going to tell her off real good, but I shoved him along. I felt sick. No wonder Johnny didn't want to see her. No wonder he stayed overnight at Two-Bit's or at our house, and slept in the vacant lot in good weather. I remembered my mother . . . beautiful and golden, like Soda, and wise and firm, like Darry.

"Oh, lordy!" There was a catch in Two-Bit's voice and he was closer to tears than I'd ever seen him. "He has to live with that."

THE OUTSIDERS

We hurried to the elevator to get to the next floor. I hoped the nurse would have enough sense not to let Johnny's mother see him. It would kill him.

Dally was arguing with one of the nurses when we came in. He grinned at us. "Man, am I glad to see you! These — hospital people won't let me smoke, and I want out!"

We sat down, grinning at each other. Dally was his usual mean, ornery self. He was okay.

"Shepard came by to see me a while ago."

"That's what Johnny said. What'd he want?"

"Said he saw my picture in the paper and couldn't believe it didn't have 'Wanted Dead or Alive' under it. He mostly came to rub it in about the rumble. Man, I hate not bein' in that."

Only last week Tim Shepard had cracked three of Dally's ribs. But Dally and Tim Shepard had always been buddies; no matter how they fought, they were two of a kind, and they knew it.

Dally was grinning at me. "Kid, you scared the devil outa me the other day. I thought I'd killed you."

"Me?" I said, puzzled. "Why?"

"When you jumped out of the church. I meant to hit you just hard enough to knock you down and put out the fire, but when you dropped like a ton of lead I thought I'd aimed too high and broke your neck." He thought for a minute. "I'm glad I didn't, though."

"I'll bet," I said with a grin. I'd never liked Dally—but then, for the first time, I felt like he was my buddy. And all because he was glad he hadn't killed me.

THE OUTSIDERS

Dally looked out the window. "Uh . . ."—he sounded very casual—"how's the kid?"

"We just left him," Two-Bit said, and I could tell that he was debating whether to tell Dally the truth or not. "I don't know about stuff like this . . . but . . . well, he seemed pretty bad to me. He passed out cold before we left him."

Dally's jaw line went white as he swore between clenched teeth.

"Two-Bit, you still got that fancy black-handled switch?"

"Yeah."

"Give it here."

Two-Bit reached into his back pocket for his prize possession. It was a jet-handled switchblade, ten inches long, that would flash open at a mere breath. It was the reward of two hours of walking aimlessly around a hardware store to divert suspicion. He kept it razor sharp. As far as I knew, he had never pulled it on anyone; he used his plain pocket-knife when he needed a blade. But it was his showpiece, his pride and joy—every time he ran into a new hood he pulled it out and showed off with it. Dally knew how much that knife meant to Two-Bit, and if he needed a blade bad enough to ask for it, well, he needed a blade. That was all there was to it. Two-Bit handed it over to Dally without a moment's hesitation.

"We gotta win that fight tonight," Dally said. His voice was hard. "We gotta get even with the Socs. For Johnny."

He put the switch under his pillow and lay back, staring at the ceiling. We left. We knew better than to talk to Dally when his eyes were blazing and he was in a mood like that.

THE OUTSIDERS

We decided to catch a bus home. I just didn't feel much like walking or trying to hitch a ride. Two-Bit left me sitting on the bench at the bus stop while he went to a gas station to buy some cigarettes. I was kind of sick to my stomach and sort of groggy. I was nearly asleep when I felt someone's hand on my forehead. I almost jumped out of my skin. Two-Bit was looking down at me worriedly. "You feel okay? You're awful hot."

"I'm all right," I said, and when he looked at me as if he didn't believe me, I got a little panicky. "Don't tell Darry, okay? Come on, Two-Bit, be a buddy. I'll be well by tonight. I'll take a bunch of aspirins."

"All right," Two-Bit said reluctantly. "But Darry'll kill me if you're really sick and go ahead and fight anyway."

"I'm okay," I said, getting a little angry. "And if you keep your mouth shut, Darry won't know a thing."

"You know somethin'?" Two-Bit said as we were riding home on the bus. "You'd think you could get away with murder, living with your big brother and all, but Darry's stricter with you than your folks were, ain't he?"

"Yeah," I said, "but they'd raised two boys before me. Darry hasn't."

"You know, the only thing that keeps Darry from bein' a Soc is us."

"I know," I said. I had known it for a long time. In spite of not having much money, the only reason Darry couldn't be a Soc was us. The gang. Me and Soda. Darry was too smart to be a greaser. I don't know how I knew, I just did. And I was kind of sorry.

I was silent most of the way home. I was thinking about

THE OUTSIDERS

the rumble. I had a sick feeling in my stomach and it wasn't from being ill. It was the same kind of helplessness I'd felt that night Darry yelled at me for going to sleep in the lot. I had the same deathly fear that something was going to happen that none of us could stop. As we got off the bus I finally said it. "Tonight—I don't like it one bit."

Two-Bit pretended not to understand. "I never knew you to play chicken in a rumble before. Not even when you was a little kid."

I knew he was trying to make me mad, but I took the bait anyway. "I ain't chicken, Two-Bit Mathews, and you know it," I said angrily. "Ain't I a Curtis, same as Soda and Darry?"

Two-Bit couldn't deny this, so I went on: "I mean, I got an awful feeling something's gonna happen."

"Somethin' is gonna happen. We're gonna stomp the Socs' guts, that's what."

Two-Bit knew what I meant, but doggedly pretended not to. He seemed to feel that if you said something was all right, it immediately was, no matter what. He's been that way all his life, and I don't expect he'll change. Sodapop would have understood, and we would have tried to figure it out together, but Two-Bit just ain't Soda. Not by a long shot.

Cherry Valance was sitting in her Corvette by the vacant lot when we came by. Her long hair was pinned up, and in daylight she was even better looking. That Sting Ray was one tuff car. A bright red one. It was cool.

"Hi, Ponyboy," she said. "Hi, Two-Bit."

THE OUTSIDERS

Two-Bit stopped. Apparently Cherry had shown up there before during the week Johnny and I had spent in Windrixville.

"What's up with the big-times?"

She tightened the strings on her ski jacket. "They play your way. No weapons, fair deal. Your rules."

"You sure?"

She nodded. "Randy told me. He knows for sure."

Two-Bit turned and started home. "Thanks, Cherry."

"Ponyboy, stay a minute," Cherry said. I stopped and went back to her car. "Randy's not going to show up at the rumble."

"Yeah," I said, "I know."

"He's not scared. He's just sick of fighting. Bob . . ." She swallowed, then went on quietly. "Bob was his best buddy. Since grade school."

I thought of Soda and Steve. What if one of them saw the other killed? Would that make them stop fighting? No, I thought, maybe it would make Soda stop, but not Steve. He'd go on hating and fighting. Maybe that was what Bob would have done if it had been Randy instead of him.

"How's Johnny?"

"Not so good," I said. "Will you go up to see him?"

She shook her head. "No. I couldn't."

"Why not?" I demanded. It was the least she could do. It was her boyfriend who had caused it all . . . and then I stopped. Her boyfriend . . .

"I couldn't," she said in a quiet, desperate voice. "He killed Bob. Oh, maybe Bob asked for it. I know he did."

THE OUTSIDERS

But I couldn't ever look at the person who killed him. You only knew his bad side. He could be sweet sometimes, and friendly. But when he got drunk . . . it was that part of him that beat up Johnny. I knew it was Bob when you told me the story. He was so proud of his rings. Why do people sell liquor to boys? Why? I know there's a law against it, but kids get it anyway. I can't go see Johnny. I know I'm too young to be in love and all that, but Bob was something special. He wasn't just any boy. He had something that made people follow him, something that marked him different, maybe a little better, than the crowd. Do you know what I mean?"

I did. Cherry saw the same things in Dallas. That was why she was afraid to see him, afraid of loving him. I knew what she meant all right. But she also meant she wouldn't go see Johnny because he had killed Bob. "That's okay," I said sharply. It wasn't Johnny's fault Bob was a booze-hound and Cherry went for boys who were bound for trouble. "I wouldn't want you to see him. You're a traitor to your own kind and not loyal to us. Do you think your spying for us makes up for the fact that you're sitting there in a Corvette while my brother drops out of school to get a job? Don't you ever feel sorry for us. Don't you ever try to give us handouts and then feel high and mighty about it."

I started to turn and walk off, but something in Cherry's face made me stop. I was ashamed—I can't stand to see girls cry. She wasn't crying, but she was close to it.

"I wasn't trying to give you charity, Ponyboy. I only wanted to help. I liked you from the start . . . the way you

THE OUTSIDERS

talked. You're a nice kid, Ponyboy. Do you realize how scarce nice kids are nowadays? Wouldn't you try to help me if you could?"

I would. I'd help her and Randy both, if I could. "Hey," I said suddenly, "can you see the sunset real good from the West Side?"

She blinked, startled, then smiled. "Real good."

"You can see it good from the East Side, too," I said quietly.

"Thanks, Ponyboy." She smiled through her tears. "You dig okay."

She had green eyes. I went on, walking home slowly.

Chapter 9

IT WAS ALMOST SIX-THIRTY WHEN I GOT HOME. THE RUMBLE was set for seven, so I was late for supper, as usual. I always come in late. I forget what time it is. Darry had cooked dinner: baked chicken and potatoes and corn—two chickens because all three of us eat like horses. Especially Darry. But although I love baked chicken, I could hardly swallow any. I swallowed five aspirins, though, when Darry and Soda weren't looking. I do that all the time because I can't sleep very well at night. Darry thinks I take just one, but I usually take four. I figured five would keep me going through the rumble and maybe get rid of my headache.

Then I hurried to take a shower and change clothes. Me and Soda and Darry always got spruced up before a rumble.

THE OUTSIDERS

And besides, we wanted to show those Socs we weren't trash, that we were just as good as they were.

"Soda," I called from the bathroom, "when did you start shaving?"

"When I was fifteen," he yelled back.

"When did Darry?"

"When he was thirteen. Why? You figgerin' on growing a beard for the rumble?"

"You're funny. We ought to send you in to the Reader's Digest. I hear they pay a lot for funny things."

Soda laughed and went right on playing poker with Steve in the living room. Darry had on a tight black T-shirt that showed every muscle on his chest and even the flat hard muscles of his stomach. I'd hate to be the Soc who takes a crack at him, I thought as I pulled on a clean T-shirt and a fresh pair of jeans. I wished my T-shirt was tighter—I have a pretty good build for my size, but I'd lost a lot of weight in Windrixville and it just didn't fit right. It was a chilly night and T-shirts aren't the warmest clothes in the world, but nobody ever gets cold in a rumble, and besides, jackets interfere with your swinging ability.

Soda and Steve and I had put on more hair oil than was necessary, but we wanted to show that we were greasers. Tonight we could be proud of it. Greasers may not have much, but they have a rep. That and long hair. (What kind of world is it where all I have to be proud of is a reputation for being a hood, and greasy hair? I don't want to be a hood, but even if I don't steal things and mug people and get boozed up, I'm marked lousy. Why should I be proud of it? Why should I even pretend to be proud of it?)

THE OUTSIDERS

Darry never went in for long hair. His was short and clean all the time.

I sat in the armchair in the living room, waiting for the rest of the outfit to show up. But of course, tonight the only one coming would be Two-Bit; Johnny and Dallas wouldn't show. Soda and Steve were playing cards and arguing as usual. Soda was keeping up a steady stream of wisecracks and clowning, and Steve had turned up the radio so loud that it almost broke my eardrums. Of course everybody listens to it loud like that, but it wasn't just the best thing for a headache.

"You like fights, don't you, Soda?" I asked suddenly.

"Yeah, sure." He shrugged. "I like fights."

"How come?"

"I don't know." He looked at me, puzzled. "It's action. It's a contest. Like a drag race or a dance or something."

"Shoot," said Steve, "I want to beat those Socs' heads in. When I get in a fight I want to stomp the other guy good. I like it, too."

"How come you like fights, Darry?" I asked, looking up at him as he stood behind me, leaning in the kitchen doorway. He gave me one of those looks that hide what he's thinking, but Soda piped up: "He likes to show off his muscles."

"I'm gonna show 'em off on you, little buddy, if you get any mouthier."

I digested what Soda had said. It was the truth. Darry liked anything that took strength, like weight-lifting or playing football or roofing houses, even if he was proud of being smart too. Darry never said anything about it, but I

THE OUTSIDERS

knew he liked fights. I felt out of things. I'll fight anyone anytime, but I don't like to.

"I don't know if you ought to be in this rumble, Pony," Darry said slowly.

Oh, no, I thought in mortal fear, I've got to be in it. Right then the most important thing in my life was helping us whip the Socs. Don't let him make me stay home now. I've got to be in it.

"How come? I've always come through before, ain't I?"

"Yeah," Darry said with a proud grin. "You fight real good for a kid your size. But you were in shape before. You've lost weight and you don't look so great, kid. You're tensed up too much."

"Shoot," said Soda, trying to get the ace out of his shoe without Steve's seeing him, "we all get tensed up before a rumble. Let him fight tonight. Skin never hurt anyone—no weapons, no danger."

"I'll be okay," I pleaded. "I'll get hold of a little one, okay?"

"Well, Johnny won't be there this time . . ."—Johnny and I sometimes ganged up on one big guy—"but then, Curly Shepard won't be there either, or Dally, and we'll need every man we can get."

"What happened to Shepard?" I asked, remembering Tim Shepard's kid brother. Curly, who was a tough, cool, hard-as-nails Tim in miniature, and I had once played chicken by holding our cigarette ends against each other's fingers. We had stood there, clenching our teeth and grimacing, with sweat pouring down our faces and the smell of burning flesh making us sick, each refusing to holler, until Tim happened to stroll by. When he saw that

THE OUTSIDERS

we were really burning holes in each other he cracked our heads together, swearing to kill us both if we ever pulled a stunt like that again. I still have the scar on my forefinger. Curly was an average downtown hood, tough and not real bright, but I liked him. He could take anything.

"He's in the cooler," Steve said, kicking the ace out of Soda's shoe. "In the reformatory."

Again? I thought, and said, "Let me fight, Darry. If it was blades or chains or something it'd be different. Nobody ever gets really hurt in a skin rumble."

"Well"—Darry gave in—"I guess you can. But be careful, and if you get in a jam, holler and I'll get you out."

"I'll be okay," I said wearily. "How come you never worry about Sodapop as much? I don't see you lecturin' him."

"Man"—Darry grinned and put his arm across Soda's shoulders—"this is one kid brother I don't have to worry about."

Soda punched him in the ribs affectionately.

"This kiddo can use his head."

Sodapop looked down at me with mock superiority, but Darry went on: "You can see he uses it for one thing—to grow hair on." He ducked Soda's swing and took off for the door.

Two-Bit stuck his head in the door just as Darry went flying out of it. Leaping as he went off the steps, Darry turned a somersault in mid-air, hit the ground, and bounced up before Soda could catch him.

"Welup," Two-Bit said cheerfully, cocking an eyebrow, "I see we are in prime condition for a rumble. Is everybody happy?"

THE OUTSIDERS

"Yeah!" screamed Soda as he too did a flying somersault off the steps. He flipped up to walk on his hands and then did a no-hands cartwheel across the yard to beat Darry's performance. The excitement was catching. Screeching like an Indian, Steve went running across the lawn in flying leaps, stopped suddenly, and flipped backward. We could all do acrobatics because Darry had taken a course at the Y and then spent a whole summer teaching us everything he'd learned on the grounds that it might come in handy in a fight. It did, but it also got Two-Bit and Soda jailed once. They were doing mid-air flips down a downtown sidewalk, walking on their hands, and otherwise disturbing the public and the police. Leave it to those two to pull something like that.

With a happy whoop I did a no-hands cartwheel off the porch steps, hit the ground, and rolled to my feet. Two-Bit followed me in a similar manner.

"I am a greaser," Sodapop chanted. "I am a JD and a hood. I blacken the name of our fair city. I beat up people. I rob gas stations. I am a menace to society. Man, do I have fun!"

"Greaser . . . greaser . . . greaser . . ." Steve singsonged. "O victim of environment, underprivileged, rotten, no-count hood!"

"Juvenile delinquent, you're no good!" Darry shouted.

"Get thee hence, white trash," Two-Bit said in a snobbish voice. "I am a Soc. I am the privileged and the well-dressed. I throw beer blasts, drive fancy cars, break windows at fancy parties."

"And what do you do for fun?" I inquired in a serious, awed voice.

THE OUTSIDERS

"I jump greasers!" Two-Bit screamed, and did a cart-wheel.

We settled down as we walked to the lot. Two-Bit was the only one wearing a jacket; he had a couple of cans of beer stuffed in it. He always gets high before a rumble. Before anything else, too, come to think of it. I shook my head. I'd hate to see the day when I had to get my nerve from a can. I'd tried drinking once before. The stuff tasted awful, I got sick, had a headache, and when Darry found out, he grounded me for two weeks. But that was the last time I'd ever drink. I'd seen too much of what drinking did for you at Johnny's house.

"Hey, Two-Bit," I said, deciding to complete my survey, "how come you like to fight?"

He looked at me as if I was off my nut. "Shoot, everybody fights."

If everybody jumped in the Arkansas River, ol' Two-Bit would be right on their heels. I had it then. Soda fought for fun, Steve for hatred, Darry for pride, and Two-Bit for conformity. Why do I fight? I thought, and couldn't think of any real good reason. There isn't any real good reason for fighting except self-defense.

"Listen, Soda, you and Ponyboy," Darry said as we strode down the street, "if the fuzz show, you two beat it out of there. The rest of us can only get jailed. You two can get sent to a boys' home."

"Nobody in this neighborhood's going to call the fuzz," Steve said grimly. "They know what'd happen if they did."

"All the same, you two blow at the first sign of trouble. You hear me?"

"You sure don't need an amplifier," Soda said, and stuck

THE OUTSIDERS

out his tongue at the back of Darry's head. I stifled a giggle. If you want to see something funny, it's a tough hood sticking his tongue out at his big brother.

Tim Shepard and company were already waiting when we arrived at the vacant lot, along with a gang from Brumly, one of the suburbs. Tim was a lean, catlike eighteen-year-old who looked like the model JD you see in movies and magazines. He had the right curly black hair, smoldering dark eyes, and a long scar from temple to chin where a tramp had belted him with a broken pop bottle. He had a tough, hard look to him, and his nose had been broken twice. Like Dally's, his smile was grim and bitter. He was one of those who enjoy being a hood. The rest of his bunch were the same way. The boys from Brumly, too. Young hoods—who would grow up to be old hoods. I'd never thought about it before, but they'd just get worse as they got older, not better. I looked at Darry. He wasn't going to be any hood when he got old. He was going to get somewhere. Living the way we do would only make him more determined to get somewhere. That's why he's better than the rest of us, I thought. He's going somewhere. And I was going to be like him. I wasn't going to live in a lousy neighborhood all my life.

Tim had the tense, hungry look of an alley cat—that's what he's always reminded me of, an alley cat—and he was constantly restless. His boys ranged from fifteen to nineteen, hard-looking characters who were used to the strict discipline Tim gave out. That was the difference between his gang and ours—they had a leader and were organized; we were just buddies who stuck together—each man was

THE OUTSIDERS

his own leader. Maybe that was why we could whip them.

Tim and the leader of the Brumly outfit moved forward to shake hands with each of us—proving that our gangs were on the same side in this fight, although most of the guys in those two outfits weren't exactly what I'd like to call my friends. When Tim got to me he studied me, maybe remembering how his kid brother and I had played chicken. "You and the quiet black-headed kid were the ones who killed that Soc?"

"Yeah," I said, pretending to be proud of it; then I thought of Cherry and Randy and got a sick feeling in my stomach.

"Good goin', kid. Curly always said you were a good kid. Curly's in the reformatory for the next six months." Tim grinned ruefully, probably thinking of his roughneck, hard-headed brother. "He got caught breakin' into a liquor store, the little . . ." He went on to call Curly every unprintable name under the sun—in Tim's way of thinking, terms of affection.

I surveyed the scene with pride. I was the youngest one there. Even Curly, if he had been there, had turned fifteen, so he was older than me. I could tell Darry realized this too, and although he was proud, I also knew he was worried. Shoot, I thought, I'll fight so good this time he won't ever worry about me again. I'll show him that someone besides Sodapop can use his head.

One of the Brumly guys waved me over. We mostly stuck with our own outfits, so I was a little leery of going over to him, but I shrugged. He asked to borrow a weed, then lit up. "That big guy with y'all, you know him pretty well?"

THE OUTSIDERS

"I ought to, he's my brother," I said. I couldn't honestly say "Yes." I knew Darry as well as he knew me, and that isn't saying a whole lot.

"No kiddin'? I got a feelin' he's gonna be asked to start the fireworks around here. He a pretty good bopper?"

He meant rumbler. Those Brumly boys have weird vocabularies. I doubt if half of them can read a newspaper or spell much more than their names, and it comes out in their speech. I mean, you take a guy that calls a rumble "bop-action," and you can tell he isn't real educated.

"Yep," I said. "But why him?"

He shrugged. "Why anybody else?"

I looked our outfits over. Most greasers don't have real tuff builds or anything. They're mostly lean and kind of panther-looking in a slouchy way. This is partly because they don't eat much and partly because they're slouchy. Darry looked like he could whip anyone there. I think most of the guys were nervous because of the 'no weapons' rule. I didn't know about the Brumly boys, but I knew Shepard's gang were used to fighting with anything they could get their hands on—bicycle chains, blades, pop bottles, pieces of pipe, pool sticks, or sometimes even heaters. I mean guns. I have a kind of lousy vocabulary, too, even if I am educated. Our gang never went in for weapons. We're just not that rough. The only weapons we ever used were knives, and shoot, we carried them mostly just for looks. Like Two-Bit with his black-handled switch. None of us had ever really hurt anybody, or wanted to. Just Johnny. And he hadn't wanted to.

"Hey, Curtis!" Tim yelled. I jumped.

THE OUTSIDERS

"Which one?" I heard Soda yell back.

"The big one. Come on over here."

The guy from Brumly looked at me. "What did I tell ya?"

I watched Darry going toward Tim and the leader of the Brumly boys. He shouldn't be here, I thought suddenly. I shouldn't be here and Steve shouldn't be here and Soda shouldn't be here and Two-Bit shouldn't be here. We're greasers, but not hoods, and we don't belong with this bunch of future convicts. We could end up like them, I thought. We could. And the thought didn't help my headache.

I went back to stand with Soda and Steve and Two-Bit then, because the Socs were arriving. Right on time. They came in four carloads, and filed out silently. I counted twenty-two of them. There were twenty of us, so I figured the odds were as even as we could get them. Darry always likes to take on two at a time anyway. They looked like they were all cut from the same piece of cloth: clean-shaven with semi-Beatle haircuts, wearing striped or checkered shirts with light-red or tan-colored jackets or madras ski jackets. They could just as easily have been going to the movies as to a rumble. That's why people don't ever think to blame the Socs and are always ready to jump on us. We look hoody and they look decent. It could be just the other way around—half of the hoods I know are pretty decent guys underneath all that grease, and from what I've heard, a lot of Socs are just cold-blooded mean—but people usually go by looks.

They lined up silently, facing us, and we lined up facing

THE OUTSIDERS

them. I looked for Randy but didn't see him. I hoped he wasn't there. A guy with a madras shirt stepped up. "Let's get the rules straight—nothing but our fists, and the first to run lose. Right?"

Tim flipped away his beer can. "You savvy real good."

There was an uneasy silence: Who was going to start it? Darry solved the problem. He stepped forward under the circle of light made by the street lamp. For a minute, everything looked unreal, like a scene out of a JD movie or something. Then Darry said, "I'll take on anyone."

He stood there, tall, broad-shouldered, his muscles taut under his T-shirt and his eyes glittering like ice. For a second it looked like there wasn't anyone brave enough to take him on. Then there was a slight stir in the faceless mob of Socs, and a husky blond guy stepped forward. He looked at Darry and said quietly, "Hello, Darrel."

Something flickered behind Darry's eyes and then they were ice again. "Hello, Paul."

I heard Soda give a kind of squeak and I realized that the blond was Paul Holden. He had been the best halfback on Darry's football team at high school and he and Darry used to buddy it around all the time. He must be a junior in college by now, I thought. He was looking at Darry with an expression I couldn't quite place, but disliked. Contempt? Pity? Hate? All three? Why? Because Darry was standing there representing all of us, and maybe Paul felt only contempt and pity and hate for greasers? Darry hadn't moved a muscle or changed expression, but you could see he hated Paul now. It wasn't only jealousy—Darry had a right to be jealous; he was ashamed to be on our side, ashamed to be seen with the Brumly boys, Shepard's gang,

THE OUTSIDERS

maybe even us. Nobody realized it but me and Soda. It didn't matter to anyone but me and Soda.

That's stupid, I thought swiftly, they've both come here to fight and they're both supposed to be smarter than that. What difference does the side make?

Then Paul said, "I'll take you," and something like a smile crossed Darry's face. I knew Darry had thought he could take Paul any time. But that was two or three years ago. What if Paul was better now? I swallowed. Neither one of my brothers had ever been beaten in a fight, but I wasn't exactly itching for someone to break the record.

They moved in a circle under the light, counterclockwise, eyeing each other, sizing each other up, maybe remembering old faults and wondering if they were still there. The rest of us waited with mounting tension. I was reminded of Jack London's books—you know, where the wolf pack waits in silence for one of two members to go down in a fight. But it was different here. The moment either one swung a punch, the rumble would be on.

The silence grew heavier, and I could hear the harsh heavy breathing of the boys around me. Still Darry and the Soc walked slowly in a circle. Even I could feel their hatred. They used to be buddies, I thought, they used to be friends, and now they hate each other because one has to work for a living and the other comes from the West Side. They shouldn't hate each other . . . I don't hate the Socs any more . . . they shouldn't hate . . .

"Hold up!" a familiar voice yelled. "Hold it!" Darry turned to see who it was, and Paul swung—a hard right to the jaw that would have felled anyone but Darry. The rumble was on. Dallas Winston ran to join us.



THE OUTSIDERS

I couldn't find a Soc my size, so I took the next-best size and jumped on him. Dallas was right beside me, already on top of someone.

"I thought you were in the hospital," I yelled as the Soc knocked me to the ground and I rolled to avoid getting kicked.

"I was." Dally was having a hard time because his left arm was still in bad shape. "I ain't now."

"How?" I managed to ask as the Soc I was fighting leaped on me and we rolled near Dally.

"Talked the nurse into it with Two-Bit's switch. Don't you know a rumble ain't a rumble unless I'm in it?"

I couldn't answer because the Soc, who was heavier than I took him for, had me pinned and was slugging the sense out of me. I thought dizzily that he was going to knock some of my teeth loose or break my nose or something, and I knew I didn't have a chance. But Darry was keeping an eye out for me; he caught that guy by the shoulder and half lifted him up before knocking him three feet with a sledgehammer blow. I decided it would be fair for me to help Dally since he could use only one arm.

They were slugging it out, but Dallas was getting the worst of it, so I jumped on his Soc's back, pulling his hair and pounding him. He reached back and caught me by the neck and threw me over his head to the ground. Tim Shepard, who was fighting two at once, accidentally stepped on me, knocking my breath out. I was up again as soon as I got my wind, and jumped right back on the Soc, trying my best to strangle him. While he was prying my fingers loose, Dally knocked him backward, so that all three of us rolled on the ground, gasping, cussing, and punching.

THE OUTSIDERS

Somebody kicked me hard in the ribs and I yelped in spite of myself. Some Soc had knocked out one of our bunch and was kicking me as hard as he could. But I had both arms wrapped around the other Soc's neck and refused to let go. Dally was slugging him, and I hung on desperately, although that other Soc was kicking me and you'd better believe it hurt. Finally he kicked me in the head so hard it stunned me, and I lay limp, trying to clear my mind and keep from blacking out. I could hear the racket, but only dimly through the buzzing in my ears. Numerous bruises along my back and on my face were throbbing, but I felt detached from the pain, as if it wasn't really me feeling it.

"They're running!" I heard a voice yell joyfully. "Look at the dirty ——— run!"

It seemed to me that the voice belonged to Two-Bit, but I couldn't be sure. I tried to sit up, and saw that the Socs were getting into their cars and leaving. Tim Shepard was swearing blue and green because his nose was broken again, and the leader of the Brumly boys was working over one of his own men because he had broken the rules and used a piece of pipe in the fighting. Steve lay doubled up and groaning about ten feet from me. We found out later he had three broken ribs. Sodapop was beside him, talking in a low steady voice. I did a double take when I saw Two-Bit—blood was streaming down one side of his face and one hand was busted wide open; but he was grinning happily because the Socs were running.

"We won," Darry announced in a tired voice. He was going to have a black eye and there was a cut across his forehead. "We beat the Socs."

THE OUTSIDERS

Dally stood beside me quietly for a minute, trying to grasp the fact that we had really beaten the Socs. Then, grabbing my shirt, he hauled me to my feet. "Come on!" He half dragged me down the street. "We're goin' to see Johnny."

I tried to run but stumbled, and Dally impatiently shoved me along. "Hurry! He was gettin' worse when I left. He wants to see you."

I don't know how Dallas could travel so fast and hard after being knocked around and having his sore arm hurt some more, but I tried to keep up with him. Track wasn't ever like the running I did that night. I was still dizzy and had only a dim realization of where I was going and why.

Dally had Buck Merrill's T-bird parked in front of our house, and we hopped into it. I sat tight as Dally roared the car down the street. We were on Tenth when a siren came on behind us and I saw the reflection of the red light flashing in the windshield.

"Look sick," Dally commanded. "I'll say I'm taking you to the hospital, which'll be truth enough."

I leaned against the cold glass of the window and tried to look sick, which wasn't too hard, feeling the way I did right then.

The policeman looked disgusted. "All right, buddy, where's the fire?"

"The kid"—Dally jerked a thumb toward me—"he fell over on his motorcycle and I'm takin' him to the hospital."

I groaned, and it wasn't all fake-out. I guess I looked pretty bad, too, being cut and bruised like I was.

The fuzz changed his tone. "Is he real bad? Do you need an escort?"

THE OUTSIDERS

"How would I know if he's bad or not? I ain't no doc. Yeah, we could use an escort." And as the policeman got back into his car I heard Dally hiss, "Sucker!"

With the siren ahead of us, we made record time getting to the hospital. All the way there Dally kept talking and talking about something, but I was too dizzy to make most of it out.

"I was crazy, you know that, kid? Crazy for wantin' Johnny to stay outa trouble, for not wantin' him to get hard. If he'd been like me he'd never have been in this mess. If he'd got smart like me he'd never have run into that church. That's what you get for helpin' people. Editorials in the paper and a lot of trouble. . . . You'd better wise up, Pony . . . you get tough like me and you don't get hurt. You look out for yourself and nothin' can touch you . . ."

He said a lot more stuff, but I didn't get it all. I had a stupid feeling that Dally was out of his mind, the way he kept raving on and on, because Dallas never talked like that, but I think now I would have understood if I hadn't been sick at the time.

The cop left us at the hospital as Dally pretended to help me out of the car. The minute the cop was gone, Dally let go of me so quick I almost fell. "Hurry!"

We ran through the lobby and crowded past people into the elevator. Several people yelled at us, I think because we were pretty racked-up looking, but Dally had nothing on his mind except Johnny, and I was too mixed up to know anything but that I had to follow Dally. When we finally got to Johnny's room, the doctor stopped us. "I'm sorry, boys, but he's dying."

THE OUTSIDERS

"We gotta see him," Dally said, and flicked out Two-Bit's switchblade. His voice was shaking. "We're gonna see him and if you give me any static you'll end up on your own operatin' table."

The doctor didn't bat an eye. "You can see him, but it's because you're his friends, not because of that knife."

Dally looked at him for a second, then put the knife back in his pocket. We both went into Johnny's room, standing there for a second, getting our breath back in heavy gulps. It was awful quiet. It was scary quiet. I looked at Johnny. He was very still, and for a moment I thought in agony: He's dead already. We're too late.

Dally swallowed, wiping the sweat off his upper lip. "Johnnycake?" he said in a hoarse voice. "Johnny?"

Johnny stirred weakly, then opened his eyes. "Hey," he managed softly.

"We won," Dally panted. "We beat the Socs. We stomped them—chased them outa our territory."

Johnny didn't even try to grin at him. "Useless . . . fighting's no good. . . ." He was awful white.

Dally licked his lips nervously. "They're still writing editorials about you in the paper. For being a hero and all." He was talking too fast and too calmly. "Yeah, they're calling you a hero now and heroizin' all the greasers. We're all proud of you, buddy."

Johnny's eyes glowed. Dally was proud of him. That was all Johnny had ever wanted.

"Ponyboy."

I barely heard him. I came closer and leaned over to hear what he was going to say.

THE OUTSIDERS

"Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold . . ." The pillow seemed to sink a little, and Johnny died.

You read about people looking peacefully asleep when they're dead, but they don't. Johnny just looked dead. Like a candle with the flame gone. I tried to say something, but I couldn't make a sound.

Dally swallowed and reached over to push Johnny's hair back. "Never could keep that hair back . . . that's what you get for tryin' to help people, you little punk, that's what you get . . ."

Whirling suddenly, he slammed back against the wall. His face contracted in agony, and sweat streamed down his face.

"Damnit, Johnny . . ." he begged, slamming one fist against the wall, hammering it to make it obey his will.

"Oh, damnit, Johnny, don't die, please don't die . . ."

He suddenly bolted through the door and down the hall.