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The Outsiders: Re-Write

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."

"I don't care, we need to see him," Dally growled at the doctor. He brought out the switchblade that he took from Two-Bit and held it up so the the doctor could clearly see what he was thinking. "If you don't let us see him i'll-i'll stick this in you so hard it'll go right through till tomorrow." Dally's voice was shaky and it seemed as though he was about to cry. I've never seen Dally like this before.

"I'll let you see him only because you are his friends, not because I am scared of your silly knife," the doctor spoke calmly to Dally as he let us in. Dally gave him major side eye but the Doctor didn't seem to notice.

Dally ran to his side but Johnny was still. He wasn't moving and for a second I almost broke down. Were we too late? Was Johnny dead already? Dally whispered to him to try and wake him up. "Hey, Johnny, we won! We won the rumble and we beat those Socs so hard they gave up and ran away." Johnny slowly flickered his eyes open. He was naturally tan but the burns on his skin made him look darker than usual. Most of his arms were covered in scars and scabs and raw skin. It almost made me feel sick to look at him so I focused on his face. He looked tired. He looked so, so tired like he could fall asleep and sleep forever. Dally was telling him all about what had happened at the rumble earlier.

"Why do y'all need to fight so much?" Johnny squeaked out. He could barely talk and I could tell that he was giving all of his energy into his words. "What's the point in fighting man?" Johnny was looking right at me and I was speechless. Tears were stinging in my eyes and I was fighting the urge to just run.

I wanted to run forever and not look back just so I didn't have to see Johnny like this. I could see how much pain he was in and all I wanted to do was just fix him. "I don't know Johnny, I don't know. I don't like fighting and I want it to end so badly. I want so much to happen but I can't help it, I can't help it man and it kills me." I could see the life start to drain out of his big, friendly, black eyes. Dally was blank. He showed no emotion in his face but he was shaking. He was trembling so hard that it looked like he was about to boil over and explode.

Dally was looking at Johnny with love in his eyes. Dally saw Johnny as the little brother that kept him sane. "Johnny, this is what you get for being a hero. This is what happens when Greasers try to do good things." Dally tried to sound angry but he couldn't be mad at Johnny. Johnny was the one that kept the gang sane. He was the one that Dally trusted and listened to.

“ Watch a sunset sometime Dal, It’ll be good for you. Watch one with Ponyboy, you’ll learn something. You know what though? Being a hero was worth it. Those kids lives are worth more than mine would have ever been. I want you to know that, Dal.” Johnny started to cough lightly. Dally looked confused at what Johnny was saying.

“Why should I watch a sunset, that’s such a girly thing to do. I don’t even know where to watch one Johnny.” Dally whispered to Johnny in the most forgiving voice i’ve ever come from his mouth. Dally was supposed to be the tough one. He was always taunting the cops and getting arrested and most of the time he was kind of carefree and wild. Now, he was serious and maybe even afraid.

“I’ll be right back, bathroom,” I said to Dally. I had to go to the bathroom but I needed to be alone to process all of this. Johnny was talking about all this stuff like he wouldn’t be there to do it with us. I went to the bathroom and I was in there for a good 5 minutes. I heard a clutter, and I thought that Dally must have knocked something over. Hopefully he didn’t touch any of the machines that Johnny was hooked up to, especially the oxygen. If Johnny didn’t have enough oxygen, he would die quickly.

Johnny looked at me, drained, and asked me to read him some of his book. I picked up *Gone with the Wind* and cradled it in my hands. I flipped open the book and tried to find the page that we had left off on, in the church. Johnny made a weak grumbling sound to get my attention for a second. He was struggling so much to talk, it hurt me inside when he did. “Whatever happens, remember that rumble and what it did to us. Remember how you feel right now about all of that fighting. Man, remember what it feels like to be a hero, to save those kids. It was worth it. Stay gold, Ponyboy, stay gold.” Johnny closed his eyes and then I realized why he wanted me to read the book. He wanted me to be distracted so i didn’t have to see what was coming next. I couldn’t talk because just as I opened the book his head drooped like he had fallen asleep right then and there.

The heart rate monitor that he was hooked up to make a loud flat screeching noise, similar to a car horn but this was a heartbreaking noise. Johnny was dead. The doctor ran into the room and shut the machine off, with a look of pity on his face. He folded his hands together and looked Dally straight in the eye. “ You take as long as you need to say good-bye,” The doctor said in a stern but yet compassionate voice. He walked out of the room completely cool and collected. How can he be acting like that when a 16 year old boy just died! Has he dealt with so much death that he doesn’t feel anything anymore? I looked at Johnny and then I fought tears harder than I had fought at the rumble. This was so much more difficult.

Dally was frozen. He was shaking earlier while he was talking to Johnny but now he was still as a rock. Tears were streaming down his face and he held Johnny’s hand as if it were the most valuable thing in the world. “Dal? You alright?” I tried not to sound shaky, I tried to sound confident, so he would be calm, but what came out was squeaky and weak. Dally looked at me, straight in the eyes, and what he did I can never forget. He got up out of his seat, slowly, and

walked over and embraced me. He hugged me so tightly it seemed like he was trying to choke the life out of me. He was sobbing now but he clearly didn't want me to see his face so he stood there, with me in his arms, crying. "Dal?" I choked out, "you're kinda hurting me Dal."

"He's dead Ponyboy. He's dead."

"I know, Dally, he is right there."

Dally was still frozen but he released his viper like grip on me. I got him to sit down back in his seat beside Johnny. Why did Johnny have to die, why couldn't it have been someone who didn't matter, like some Soc or something. Johnny was a good kid, he didn't like to fight, and he stayed away from illegal things for the most part. He didn't deserve the life he got and I feel so mad at everything. He had a terrible home life and his mom and pop probably won't even give him a decent burial. "Dally, why did it have to be Johnny?"

Dally looked at me with an angry expression on his face. His eyebrows furrowed and his lips were pursed. If looks could kill, I would be a goner. "He doesn't deserve this. We are going to make sure he is honoured like no other." He growled that along with other words at me and I knew he was mad. I was mad too but the thing that Dally loved the most was now gone. What would he hold onto now from going insane. He looked like he was going to run any second now.

I tried to calm him down. "Dally, let's go back to my house. You can talk about it if you want. That's what Johnny would want."

"Don't you tell me what Johnny would want. How dare you put words in his mouth, the kid just died and i don't think he would appreciate you talking for him. If he could talk he would tell you to shut your trap and keep to yourself. Don't be a wus." Dally was yelling now and I froze. It was bad enough that Johnny was gone, and it was already hard to keep the tears away. I couldn't cry if Dally was crying, i'm not girly like that but when he yelled at me, I broke.

Tears were streaming down my face and I ran out of Johnny's room and down to the main doors. I leaned against the wall and crumbled. I sobbed for what felt like an eternity and finally when I felt I had calmed down enough, I looked up to see a hand, offering to help me up. It was Dally. I thought he would have ran away and never looked back, maybe commit a crime and go to prison, but here he was helping me up even after he was super mad and was yelling at me.

"Ponyboy, man, i'm sorry. I didn't mean to snap like that but, you know." Dally sounded apologetic and I was confused. "Can we just go back to yours? I'm tired."

We were walking back to my house from the hospital and Dally was sulking. He was a step behind me, but he was usually 3 strides in front. He was dragging his feet and he didn't look twice at the girls that we passed. Dally was different. It had only been about an hour since

Johnny died, but I could tell he was different. He was shattered. Johnny had shattered him. I know he didn't want Dally to be hurt, but he was, and I don't know if any of the gang will be able to help him.

We got back to my house and all of the boys were there. Two-Bit was there, in yet another Mickey Mouse shirt. This one was a faded green and the sleeves were cut off, just like he did to all of his shirts. He was sitting on the floor in our living room with a massive slice of chocolate cake. Typical Two-Bit, eating cake instead of food. The rest of the gang was also in the living room tripping over Two-Bit in the middle of the floor.

Darry and Soda were sitting on the couch hunched over what looked like a letter. Darry had his arm around Soda and it looked like Soda was crying, or at least had been crying. I walked in beside Dally and everyone looked up at us with so much hope in their eyes. Even Soda, who seemed like he was in a mood, looked up at me like I had just walked in with the greatest news on the planet. "How is he? Was he excited about our beating those socs?" Two-Bit hopped up off of the ground with so much excitement it made me feel nauseous.

"No. Johnny is dead." I choked out those words but then I ran to the bathroom and threw up everything that was in my stomach and more. I had a bit of a fever before the rumble but I took some Advil so I thought I was fine. I guess not. I groaned as I held my stomach and hurled one more time before everything went black. I guess I passed out.

"Hey, buddy, how you doing? You must have been real sick, I knew you should have stayed home from that rumble, that's probably what sent you over the edge. Two-Bit told me about your fever before the rumble. I'm pretty mad at him right now." Darry was sitting on the edge of my bed holding his hand up against my forehead. I was so cold I was shivering but I was sweating at the same time. My whole body was aching and it hurt to move even an inch.

"I don't know, kind of better I guess. Where is everyone?" I felt like I was going to throw up again. I reached for the bucket beside me and I grabbed it just as my jaw clenched together and I emptied out my stomach, yet again. I had managed to get some soup down that Darry made for me but that didn't last long.

"Hey, hey, hey, it's alright just lay down and rest." Darry was whispering now.

"What time is it?" I said but my voice was weak and sickly.

"You passed out last night after you got back from the hospital. It's 8 in the morning now." Darry looked like he was ready for work but then he started to take his work belt off. I motioned for him to go to work but he wouldn't go even if I begged him. I knew Darry, last time Soda was sick like this a couple months ago, Darry stayed home from work and he missed 3 days of work to take care of him until he felt better.

“Go to work Dar, I feel a little bit better, I think that’s the last time I will throw up.”

“No way Ponyboy, i’m staying here until I know for sure that you’re better. I’ll take the day off work to stay here.” I knew there was no point in fighting with Darry. He would stay here and make me feel helpless until I was good again.

Darry went to the kitchen and I looked around. I was in the room I share with Soda and there was blankets piled up on me so high that if I laid flat i couldn’t see over them. Soda had lots of posters hung up on the walls but I had a desk with a bookshelf on it. That’s all i really needed was a place to read and do my homework, it didn’t matter that Soda had claimed all the wall space.

After about an hour or two of Darry coming in and out of my room and offering me various food, I finally fell asleep. I can’t remember what I dreamed about but all I know was that I woke up terrified. I don’t know what happened but I think it was about Johnny. Soda was at work so he wasn’t there to calm me down like he usually was. I was feeling better than earlier but I still wasn’t hungry. I got up and walked downstairs where Darry was, watching something on the television. It was getting dark now, and I wondered if Dally was watching the sunset that Johnny told him to.

I sat on the couch and Darry was immediately all over me, taking my temperature and hounding me with questions about how I was doing, If I threw up again, stuff like that. I mostly just grumbled and nodded because I was afraid that if i were to open my mouth I would throw up again.

Sodapop came home from work that evening and was sitting on our bed. He looked sad and I remembered how he was looking at that mysterious letter. “Are you OK?” I asked him, and he looked up at me but then looked back down at the piece of paper he was holding in his hand. “What’s up with the letter?” Soda looked surprised. He looked at me like he was wondering when I was going to finally ask him that question.

“It’s a letter from Sandy. She sent another one about going to live with her grandmother in Florida. Her parents are letting her come say goodbye to me but I don’t know when she is coming or if I can even face her.” Sodapop was never this emotional about anything. He always had more of a carefree attitude but this was a side of him I hadn’t seen since our parents died. We got up and went to the living area where Darry was. Steve had been there earlier but had since left to go home.

All of a sudden there was a loud, hollow, knock on the door. Our door was kind of old and the wood made a really echoey sound when someone knocked on it. Darry looked confused because rarely anyone knocked on our door. The gang usually just waltzed in, but we didn’t mind. Our home was their home. If they needed a place to stay, they could crash here.

Darry got up and mumbled something under his breath. It kind of sounded like he was asking who was there but it was indecipherable.

I couldn't hear what they were saying but I could tell that it was a girl at the door. Her voice sounded kind of squeaky and high pitched. She sounded kind of sad, but they were still at the door. Darry finally invited her in and they turned the corner and it was Sandy. Sandy, the girl that Sodapop was going to marry. The girl that had moved away and broken his heart. She was here to say goodbye to him.

Sodapop jumped to his feet. He was looking at her with so much love and affection I thought his heart might just beat right out of his chest. Those two were perfect for each other. She was a pretty blonde greaser girl. She had bright blue eyes and perfectly painted lips. Soda was also very handsome. He could have had any girl he wanted, he could have even dated a Soc girl but he wanted to be with Sandy.

She walked up to him very gingerly. She looked like she was about to cry and Sodapop embraced her like this was the end of the world. It almost was the end of the world to him because Sandy was his whole life. She pushed away from him, she had never done that before. "Sodapop, we can't be together, you know that. I am moving away to Florida and I want you to move on. I want you to find a pretty girl and marry her instead. You can start your own little family eventually, but it can't be with me. I'm so sorry." Sandy's voice was stern and calm but Soda looked like he had just seen his favourite puppy get run over by a truck.

"I don't understand. Why are you doing this to me?" Soda was about to start crying as he said those words. Darry grabbed my arm and pulled me upstairs so they could have some privacy. I wanted to help Soda so badly. I just wanted to touch his forehead and make him forget all of the pain he had went through so he didn't have to be hurt. I wanted to fix everything but I couldn't. I thought of Johnny and how I wanted to fix him, but I knew that Johnny couldn't be fixed. Johnny was broken but we all were there for him. We were all trying to help him get better. Tears stung my eyes and I couldn't contain it anymore. Darry had went downstairs to see what we could eat for supper and I broke. I cried. I knew crying wasn't going to make anything better but it felt good to just let it all out alone.

I was only alone for about two minutes when Darry came back upstairs to come and get me to see what if I felt like eating any supper. He looked at me with pity and he left me alone to be emotional. He knew that I wouldn't want anyone to see me like that. I heard the front door slam shut and I cringed. Was that Sandy leaving in a huff about Sodapop? What was going on?

I walked downstairs, careful not to make any noise because Darry might send me straight back upstairs. I snuck past the kitchen and around the corner, Sodapop was on the couch, with his face buried in his hands. I don't think he was crying but he looked frustrated. I could hear him mumbling stuff to himself but it was indecipherable. He was rocking back and forth and it seemed as though he was about to run away and never come back. I sat down beside him on the edge of the couch and put my hand on his back. As soon as I did that,

Sodapop had his arms around me and pinned me down on the floor. I think he must have been real mad, because he looked like he was going to hurt me with the look on his face. He knew I was sick but he didn't care if I was contagious. He had red eyes and it looked like he had been crying. I knew he was crying because of Sandy but I was almost too scared to ask. "What happened?" I asked Soda, quietly because I didn't want to set him off.

"She wasn't in love with me anymore. She was pregnant with another guy's kid and she came here to tell me that. She wouldn't tell me his name because she was afraid I might react badly or something." Soda's voice was weak and it would crack and squeak a little bit.

"Oh." I couldn't say anything else because Soda got up and walked away. I thought that he went out to the back step because I heard the screen door open and close. I went to go check on him but he was in the kitchen and it was Dally that had walked in. Soda and Dally were sitting at the table, I guess talking about what happened. I turned around to see Dally standing right behind me, in the living room.

"Ponyboy, Johnny's dead." Dally said like he had just found out. Johnny died yesterday but Dally must have been in shock or something. "I went into a store and I almost gave in and trashed the place, but I remembered Johnny. He told me to watch a sunset but I uh, I don't know how to do that." Dally sounded lost and afraid but it didn't show in his stern, serious face. Dally was 17 but from what he had been through in his life with going to jail, he could be in his thirties.

"It's not hard to watch one, you just have to appreciate it." I explained to Dally. He looked at me confused.

"How do you appreciate something like a sunset, that's such a girly thing. Where does the sun even set?" I chuckled a bit at that question because it is something that you learn in school, how the solar system works.

"You go outside and you just sit there and watch I guess. Think about life I guess, that's what I do when I watch one, i'm not an expert or anything." I was shocked that Dally was even talking to me about this. Dally is the least emotional person out of our entire group and I guess he was just honouring Johnny's wishes. Was this Dally's way of getting closure?

"When do we do this, like where does the sun set, you never answered my question," Dally grumbled.

"It sets in the west, you can see it real good from the back porch here." I coughed out. I was still quite sick and I felt like if I did much more talking I might hurl again. If I did, Darry would never let me be.

Dally was leaning up against the wall on the other side of the hallway. He was standing up tall and strong to show how powerful and confident he was, but I could see right through him. The way he talked about Johnny, he sounded defeat. He sounded like he had just lost a big fight with a Soc and he sounded ashamed. Dally was never ashamed of anything, he just shook it off and kept living, but this was different. It was like a piece of him was missing and I think that piece was Johnny. Johnny was the part of Dally that kept him from snapping and getting in a bunch of trouble, but if I could talk to Dally about it, maybe he will understand that we are all here for him.

I led him out to the back porch and sat on the step. The sun was just starting to set and the sky was a beautiful blue, orange, and pink mixture. The sky was still blue on the east side but on the west, the sun was casting colourful rays as it fell behind the horizon. I could see it perfectly from where we sat and it peeked over the fence we had in the backyard. It was an old creaky fence, with holes in it, but it was nicer than some of the other fences in the Greaser neighbourhood.

“What happens, what do we do?” Dally anxiously whispered. He was sitting beside me and he looked nervous.

“Do you want to talk about Johnny?” I asked him and his face went from nervous to cold, and hard. He had a protective look on his face but his eyes were soft.

“No, I’m dealing with it.” Dally grumbled like he was getting angry and protective.

“How?”

“I just am, now shut up about it.”

Dally was being difficult and I knew it would take some convincing to get him to even say anything. His emotions were all over the place and that was probably because he was letting it stow away in his brain. He thinks that it will just go away eventually, but he needs some kind of closure. So do I. I needed to talk with Dally and it would help both of us to get it off our chest. Johnny was my best friend and he just died. My best friend was dead.

“This is boring.” Dally was grumbling again. He was trying to hide all of his emotions so he didn’t appear weak. “What am I even doing here, I’m leaving.”

“Sit back down, I thought you were doing this for Johnny. Johnny wanted you to do this.” I raised my voice but I was scared that Dakka was going to hit me.

“What do you know what Johnny wanted, he was sick and dying, he could have just spouted anything before he died so he had actual last words instead of something dumb.” Dally walked down the steps and I followed him down.

"I knew Johnny too, you know, he was my best friend and he just died. He's dead now just like my parents and I now all I have is two brothers. A brother who jokes around and kinda cares and a brother who hates my guts. I'm alone now. I have nobody." I was yelling now and Dally looked like he was in shock. I never got this emotional around anyone in the gang but I didn't care anymore.

"Ponyboy, you have all of us. Your brothers love you and you're not alone. You're definitely not alone. Johnny is dead and there's nothing we can do about it." Dally didn't seem mad anymore, but I was definitely getting angrier by the minute.

"You don't understand, everything I do Darry is on my back. If I get a bad mark in school, he's all up in my face about it. He's always judging me and I can never do anything right. I could talk to Johnny about these things but now he's dead. He's dead. He's actually dead," my voice trailed off. Johnny was dead. He won't be back tomorrow, or the next day, or ever. I hadn't thought about it like that yet. He was never coming back to crack jokes with Two-Bit, or to mess around with Dally, or to watch the sunset with me. He wasn't coming back home to his horrible parents ever again.

"Darry isn't mad at you, he's trying to help you do better. All of a sudden one day he was in charge of your life on top of you guy's parents dying. He's just frustrated is all," Dally's voice was calm and collected. He went from almost leaving to calming me down. He was still avoiding talking about Johnny. I couldn't understand why he wouldn't say anything. He also wasn't making eye contact with me.

"Why won't you talk about Johnny?" I was almost afraid to ask. Was I afraid of him hurting me? Maybe I was afraid of his answer. He winced when I asked and I could have sworn that a tear was running down his face.

"I-I-I don't uh, I can't, I uh," Dally was stumbling to get his words out. We had both calmed down from my yelling episode, now I was curious.

"It's alright, whatever you say, we'll be here for you. Me and the whole gang, we've got your back." I was the calm and collected one now.

"I don't know if I can say it out loud. I don't-I don't know if I can tell you. I'll get in big trouble." Dally was afraid and now, he was making me afraid of what he was going to say.

"It's alright, I'll understand, whatever happens, even if it's terrible," I was shaky and I was weak. I couldn't show any weakness in front of Dally, especially when he was about to actually talk to me about Johnny.

“When-when you went to the bathroom, in Johnny’s hospital room, Johnny closed his eyes, he was getting tired.” Dally paused and it looked like he was holding back tears.

“Yeah, I went to the bathroom, what of it?” I asked. I was afraid of where this was going.

“He just looked so sad. I didn’t want him to be like that, in pain everyday. I-I made that loud sound to hide what I was doing.” Dally started to quiet down. His voice was getting weak. A tear escaped his eye and then, I was terrified of what he was going to say next.

“I killed him.” I think it killed him inside to say that. His voice broke, and then I knew for sure he was crying.

“What? Why? How? Why? What?” There was so many emotions happening all at once. Did Dally really kill Johnny?

“I-I unhooked him from the oxygen so he would die, somewhat peacefully. I couldn’t stand to see him like that and I just wanted it to be over, all this pain and suffering.” Dally’s voice was getting weaker and more crackly by the second. I was speechless. Dally killed Johnny. Johnny could have lived. It would have taken him time to heal, but eventually he would have been better right? He had to. I was barely alive without Johnny, and now, Dally just confessed to killing him.

“Dally,” I barely choked out his name and then I ran inside. We were supposed to be outside watching the sunset and talking about Johnny. Things had taken a turn for the worse and I was real mad at Dally for doing something so horrible. I was in my room, Darry and Soda were still in the kitchen, but the rest of the gang was there now. I heard the loud slam of the back door and footsteps clomping up the stairs. Dally poked his head into my room.

“Hey, I would appreciate if you didn’t tell the gang for a few days. I’m going to turn myself into the cops because jail will be a better place than living here without Johnny. I want to say goodbye to them first and i’ll be out of your hair.” Dally was talking like this was the last time I would ever see him.

“He could’ve got better.” I said as I glared at Dally.

“No, kid. Johnny was the kind of broken that you just can’t fix. He couldn’t feel his legs, and his skin was falling off. It’s better this way. I hate what I did but there’s no fixing what happened to him. Don’t hate me.” I wiped the tear running down my face as I turned away from him. I heard my door creak shut, and his footsteps as he left to go downstairs. Within 2 days, 2 of my friends had gone. One dead, and the other- well you know. My jaw clenched and I ran to the upstairs bathroom and was sick, yet again.

I was sick in bed for the next couple days after Dally told me what happened. Our court day was exactly one week after Johnny's death. I thought I wouldn't be able to make it on an anniversary like that, but I had too. I wanted to stay with Darry and Soda. The Judge didn't ask me any questions about Johnny. He just asked if I liked living with Darry. I said yes, and he didn't ask me anything else. Probably because he knew what happened last week. As we were walking out of the courthouse Darry was silent. The Judge let us stay together, only if we didn't get into anymore trouble.

"Look at this," he grumbled to me. On the front page of a newspaper Darry bought was a picture of Dally. It was a sketch. The headline said *17 year old boy robs bank and murders two bank clerks*. The article was about how he killed Johnny and how when he told the cops, they didn't believe him. When they didn't believe him, he went to the bank with his gun and shot two of the clerks. When the cops showed up, he pointed his gun at them, and they shot him 9 times. It only took 1 to kill him why 9? I choked. Dally was dead. He didn't want to live in a world without Johnny so he went and got himself killed. It was a big bloody way to go out, but Dally was with Johnny now. They were probably happy now together.

Me and Soda read the article and were shocked. Had Dally told them what he did in the hospital? Darry looked at me. "What is this talking about, killing Johnny? Did you know anything about that?" Darry sounded mad.

"He told me not to tell you about it until he was gone. He told me that he unplugged Johnny's oxygen machine so there was no more pain and suffering. I don't know if he was talking about himself, or Johnny." It made me sick to talk about this.

"You knew, and you didn't tell us? Why not? We could have helped him that little-"

"No. When Johnny died, Dally died with him. He was broken to pieces and there was no going back."

Darry ripped up the newspaper and threw it on the ground. He kept walking home but the whole way there was silent.

When we got home, I went straight to sleep because I had to go back to school in the morning. I had missed over a week with the trip to Windrixville, and being sick and everything. Darry was going to drop me off at school and explain to my teachers why I missed so much. He gave me the whole lecture about getting my grades back up or bad news.

In the morning, I woke up, showered, and did the usual routine with Chocolate cake and eggs for breakfast. Today seemed like a normal day, but it wasn't. I was scared to see what my grades looked like because of my mind being elsewhere all the time at school. Darry drove me in his pickup truck and walked me to my class. I had English in first. There was a young lady

intern in my class, she was in university getting teaching experience. She was quite pretty and around Darry's age.

"Good morning, Ponyboy, how are you feeling? I heard you were sick," she said in the most cheerful voice I had ever heard come from somebody's mouth.

"I'm better now, Darry took real good care of me," I said. I didn't care about my reputation anymore. I was going to be myself at school, whether I was a greaser or not. That's what Johnny would want me to do. He would want me to be myself and not care what other people thought of me.

"Darry is your brother?" She asked. She must not have noticed the brick wall that was Darry standing behind me.

"I'm Darrel, Pony's brother. You can call me Darry. You are?" Darry was being really polite and his voice sounded somewhat flirtatious.

"Hi, Darry. I'm Mary, I'm an intern in Mr. Michael's english class. I'm in school to become a teacher." She winked at him after she finished. This was getting awkward.

"Oh, thats nice. You must be a pretty smart girl." Darry winked back, I wanted to leave right now. I was standing in between them and honesty, I wanted to just shrivel up and float away. Mary blushed, and went to look for something in her bag.

"You can leave, superman," I said sarcastically to Darry. He glared at me and shook his head.

"Mary, I must be going to work now, but it would be real nice If I could call you on the phone later. Would you mind if I asked for your number?" Darry was talking in his flirty voice that I've only ever heard once before. That was when he was trying to trick a Soc girl into going to the prom with him a couple years ago. That was back when Darry had a carefree attitude and could manipulate people into doing anything he wanted. He used to be real selfish.

"Let me grab a pen, I'll write it on your hand," She said, almost too seductively. I wanted to rip my hair out. I've heard pretty girls use that line on Soda, or something similar, just so they could touch his hand. I was getting real grossed out right about now. Darry was hear to talk to Mr. Michael's, not his Intern. I went to my seat, and left them alone. I was the first one in class, and Darry, and Mary were at the back of the room, chatting it up. The class slowly started to fill up and then the bell rang. I guess Darry left without talking to my teacher about what happened because straight away, Mr. Michael's started talking about the lesson the class did last day.

I tried to follow along during the class, but I just couldn't. I was thinking about Johnny, and Dally. I was thinking about how Dally never got to finish watching the sunset because we

started fighting. The last thing I ever said to him was rude and I regret it. I didn't want my friends to be dead. There was nothing I could do about it. Before I knew it, the bell rang and class was over. I started to get up and leave, I don't know how on earth I would catch up.

"Mr. Curtis, can I speak with you for a moment?" I froze where I was standing. Mr. Michaels wanted to talk to me. I was in trouble for sure.

"Yeah, OK," I said as confidently as I could, but I was afraid of what was coming next. "Ponyboy, I don't want to alarm you, but I'm afraid you're failing english this year."

"What? But I was doing alright before,"

"Yes, but it's not enough. You missed some major assignments and you are sitting at a D right now."

"Great," I grumbled sarcastically at him.

"There is a way you can bump it up to a C," he didn't seem to pick up on my sarcasm. "If you write me a story about something that has happened in your life, can be recent or not, I can bump up your grade."

"Really!" I said, probably a bit too enthusiastically. "Deal I'll do it."

"Great, It's due next week."

Wonderful. I was already going to be piled with homework from all the other classes I missed. I was doing well in those classes, so I guess that's alright. I nodded and went to my next class. On the way out, Mary smiled at me. This was going to be weird if she started dating Darry. I shuddered. The rest of my classes were kind of alright, I expected a C, or B in most and possibly, maybe, an A in math. I was quite good at math, and I thought that I could catch up quite easily.

On my way home, I walked into one of the Soc guys in the grade above me. I was scared at first but then I realized that he was the guy from the rumble that cut my face up. I knew that he knew better than to try and come after me, because Darry beat him to a pulp. He glared at me and kept walking. I think people started to understand that all of this fighting was pointless. It only took two people dying for them to understand that we were all fighting for no reason. I just wish it didn't take that much for them to understand.

I got home and both Darry, and Soda were working. Two-Bit was there, eating some cake.

“Hey, how you doing?” I asked him. He was focused on the television, so he was obviously watching Mickey. He didn’t seem to hear me so I went upstairs to start on my homework. I didn’t know how on earth I was going to start so I went out to sit on the back porch and think about what to write about.

Darry got home at about 7 and talked on the phone with Mary for a very long time. Eventually, she showed up at our house and they talked for quite a few hours. He was falling in love, hard and fast. This was going to be so awkward.

I started to think about Johnny and what he was going through. I was so lucky to have a family that cared about me, even though my parents were dead. Then it hit me. I would write about this past month. I would write about how us Greasers had a bad relationship with the Socs. I would write about my best friend Johnny. This would be the memorial he never got. I ran upstairs and started writing and I didn’t stop until it was dark out and Soda was already in bed sleeping. I didn’t eat, but I wasn’t hungry. I wanted to make sure this was right. I was doing this for Johnny.

Ever since Johnny was in the hospital, I knew that he wasn’t appreciated enough, but isn’t it true that once someone dies, people learn to appreciate them even more than if they were alive? I hope that’s the case with Johnny. He deserves it more than anyone else on the planet. More than the president, more than me. I wasn’t the big hero that saved those kids, it was Johnny. He was willing to stay in that church to get the kids out. That’s what being a hero is, willing to sacrifice yourself for someone else. Johnny’s parents didn’t give him a funeral, they left his body for medical research. That made me mad but they couldn’t have given him a good enough funeral anyway.

Tears started to well up in my eyes as I continued to write. Dally was dead and so was Johnny. That was an experience I wanted to share. I wanted people to know that fighting wasn’t the answer to everything. Fighting is what gets people, good people, killed. Johnny was a good person, so was Dally. I wanted revenge. I wanted Johnny to have died for something and I was going to get it, no matter what.

The Outsiders Rewrite Edited Version

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."

"I don't care; we need to see him," Dally growled at the doctor. He brought out the switchblade that he took from Two-Bit and held it up so the doctor could clearly see what he was thinking. "If you don't let us see him I'll-I'll stick this in you so hard it'll go right through till tomorrow." Dally's voice was shaky, and it seemed as though he was about to cry. I've never seen Dally act like this before.

"I'll let you see him only because you are his friends, not because I am scared of your silly knife," the doctor spoke calmly to Dally as he let us in. Dally gave him major side eye, but the Doctor didn't seem to notice.

Dally ran to his side, but Johnny was still. He wasn't moving and for a second, I almost broke down. Were we too late? Was Johnny dead already? Dally whispered to him to try and wake him up. "Hey, Johnny, we won! We won the rumble, and we beat those Socs so hard they gave up and ran away." Johnny slowly flickered his eyes open. He was naturally tan, but the burns on his skin made him look darker than usual. Most of his arms were covered with scars and scabs and raw skin. It almost made me feel sick to see him like this, so I focused on his face. He looked tired. He looked so, so tired like he could fall asleep and sleep forever. Dally was telling him all about what had happened at the Rumble earlier.

“Why do Y’all need to fight so much?” Johnny squeaked out. He could barely talk, and I could tell that he was giving all of his energy into his words. “What’s the point in fighting man?” Johnny was looking right at me, and I was speechless. Tears were stinging in my eyes, and I was fighting the urge just to run.

I wanted to run forever and not look back so that I didn’t have to see Johnny like this. I could see how much pain he was in and all I wanted to do was just fix him. “I don’t know Johnny; I don’t know. I don’t like fighting, and I want it to end so badly. I want so much to happen, but I can’t help it, I can’t help it man and it kills me.” I could see the life start to drain out of his big, friendly, black eyes. Dally was blank. He showed no emotion in his face, but he was shaking. He was trembling so hard that it looked like he was about to boil over and explode.

Dally was looking at Johnny with love in his eyes. Dally saw Johnny as the little brother that kept him sane. “Johnny, this is what you get for being a hero. This is what happens when Greasers try to do good things.” Dally tried to sound angry, but he couldn’t be mad at Johnny. Johnny was the one that kept the gang sane. He was the one that Dally trusted and listened to.

“Watch a sunset sometime Dal; It’ll be good for you. Watch one with Ponyboy; you’ll learn something. You know what, though? Being a hero was worth it. Those kids lives are worth more than mine would have ever been. I want you to know that, Dal.” Johnny started to cough lightly. Dally looked confused at what Johnny was saying.

“Why should I watch a sunset, that’s such a girly thing to do. I don’t even know where to watch one Johnny.” Dally whispered to Johnny in the most forgiving voice I’ve ever heard come from his mouth. Dally was supposed to be the tough one. He was always taunting the cops and getting arrested and most of the time he was kind of carefree and wild. Now, he was serious and maybe even afraid.

“I’ll be right back, bathroom,” I said to Dally. I had to go to the bathroom, but I needed to be alone to process all of this. Johnny was talking about all this stuff like he wouldn’t be there to do it with us. I went to the bathroom, and I was in there for a good 5 minutes. I heard a clutter, and I thought that Dally must have knocked something over. Hopefully, he didn’t touch any of the machines that Johnny was hooked up to, especially the oxygen. If Johnny didn’t have enough oxygen, he would die quickly. I left the bathroom and sat on Johnny’s bed where I was before

Johnny looked at me, drained, and asked me to read him part of his book. I picked up *Gone with the Wind* and cradled it in my hands. I flipped open the book and tried to find the page that we had left off on, in the church. Johnny made a weak grumbling sound to get my attention for a second. He was struggling so much to talk; it hurt me inside when he did. “Whatever happens, remember that rumble and what it did to us. Remember how you feel right now about all of that fighting. Man, remember what it feels like to be a hero, to save those kids. It was worth it. Stay gold, Ponyboy, stay gold.” Johnny closed his eyes and then I realized why

he wanted me to read the book. He wanted me to be distracted, so I didn't have to see what was coming next. I couldn't talk because just as I opened the book his head fell as if he had fallen asleep right then and there.

The heart rate monitor that he was hooked up to make a loud flat screeching noise, similar to a car horn but this was a heartbreaking noise. Johnny was dead. The doctor ran into the room and shut the machine off, with a look of pity on his face. He folded his hands together and looked Dally straight in the eye. "You take as long as you need to say good-bye," The doctor stated in a stern but a still compassionate voice. He walked out of the room completely calm and collected. How can he be acting like that when a 16-year-old boy just died! Has he dealt with so much death that he doesn't feel anything anymore? I looked at Johnny, and then I fought tears harder than I had fought at the rumble. This was so much more challenging.

Dally was frozen. He was shaking earlier while he was talking to Johnny but now he was still as a rock. Tears were streaming down his face, and he held Johnny's hand as if it were the most valuable thing in the world. "Dal? You alright?" I tried not to sound shaky; I attempted to sound confident so that he would be calm, but what came out was squeaky and weak. Dally looked at me, straight in the eyes, and what he did I can never forget. He got up out of his seat, slowly, and walked over and embraced me. He hugged me so tightly it seemed like he was trying to choke the life out of me. He was sobbing now, but he apparently didn't want me to see his face, so he stood there, with me in his arms, crying. "Dal?" I choked out, "you're kinda hurtin' me Dal."

"He's dead Ponyboy. He's dead."

"I know, Dally, he is right there."

Dally was still frozen, but he released his viper-like grip on me. I got him to sit down back in his seat beside Johnny. Why did Johnny have to die, why couldn't it have been someone who didn't matter, like some Soc or something. Johnny was a good kid, he didn't like to fight, and he stayed away from illegal things for the most part. He didn't deserve the life he got, and I feel so mad at everything. He had a terrible home life and his mom and pop probably won't even give him a decent burial. "Dally, why did it have to be Johnny?"

Dally looked at me with an angry expression on his face. His eyebrows furrowed and his lips pursed. If looks could kill, I would be a goner. "He doesn't deserve this. We are going to make sure he is honoured like no other." He growl, along with other words at me and I knew he was mad. I was mad too, but the thing that Dally loved the most was now gone. What would he hold onto now from going insane. He looked like he was going to run any second now.

I tried to calm him down. "Dally, let's go back to my house. You can talk about it if you want. That's what Johnny would want."

“Don’t you tell me what Johnny would want. How dare you put words in his mouth, the kid just died, and I don’t think he would appreciate you talking for him. If he could talk, he would tell you to shut your trap and keep to yourself. Don’t be a wuss.” Dally was yelling now, and I frozen. It was bad enough that Johnny was gone, and it was already hard to keep the tears away. I couldn’t cry if Dally was crying, I’m not girly like that, but when he yelled at me, I broke.

Tears were streaming down my face, and I ran out of Johnny’s room and down to the main doors. I leaned against the wall and crumbled. I sobbed for what felt like an eternity and finally when I felt I had calmed down enough, I looked up to see a hand, offering to help me up. It was Dally. I thought he would have run away and never looked back, maybe commit a crime and go to prison, but here he was helping me up even after he was super mad and was yelling at me.

“Ponyboy, man, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to snap like that but, you know.” Dally sounded apologetic, and I was confused. “Can we just go back to yours? I’m tired.”

We were walking back to my house from the hospital, and Dally was sulking. He was a step behind me, but he was usually three strides in front. He was dragging his feet, and he didn’t look twice at the girls that we passed. Dally was different. It had only been about an hour since Johnny died, but I could tell he was different. He was shattered. Johnny had broken him. I know he didn’t want Dally to be hurt, but he was, and I wasn’t sure if any of the gang will be able to help him.

We got back to my house, and all of the boys were there. Two-Bit was there, in yet another Mickey Mouse shirt. This one was a faded green, and the sleeves were cut off, just like he did to all of his shirts. He was sitting on the floor in our living room with a massive slice of chocolate cake. Typical Two-Bit, eating cake instead of regular food. The rest of the gang was also in the lounge tripping over Two-Bit in the middle of the floor.

Darry and Soda were sitting on the couch hunched over what looked like a letter. Darry had his arm around Soda, and it looked like Soda was crying, or, at least, had been crying. I walked in beside Dally, and everyone looked up at us with so much hope in their eyes. Even Soda, who seemed like he was in a mood, looked up at me like I had just walked in with the greatest news on the planet. “How is he? Was he excited about us beating those Socs?” Two-Bit hopped up off of the ground with so much excitement it made me feel nauseous.

“No. Johnny is dead.” I choked on my words but then I ran into the bathroom and threw up everything that was in my stomach and more. I had a bit of a fever before the rumble, but I took some Advil, so I thought I was all right. I guess not. I groaned as I held my stomach and hurled one more time before everything went black. I suppose I passed out.

“Hey, buddy, how you doing? You must have been real sick, I knew you should have stayed home from that rumble, that’s probably what sent you over the edge. Two-Bit told me

about your fever before the rumble. I'm pretty mad at him right now." Darry was sitting on the edge of my bed holding his hand up against my forehead. I was so cold I was shivering, but I was sweating at the same time. My whole body was aching, and it hurt to move even an inch.

"I don't know, kind of better I guess. Where is everyone?" I felt like I was going to throw up again. I reached for the bucket beside me, and I grabbed it just as my jaw clenched together, and I emptied out my stomach, yet again. I had managed to get some soup down that Darry made for me, but that didn't last long.

"Hey, hey, hey, it's alright just lay down and rest." Darry was whispering now.

"What time is it?" I said, but my voice was weak and sickly.

"You passed out last night after you got back from the hospital. It's 8 in the morning now." Darry looked like he was ready for work but then he started to take his work belt off. I motioned for him to go to work but he wouldn't go even if I begged him. I knew Darry. Last time Soda was sick like this a couple of months ago, Darry stayed home, and he missed three days of work to take care of him until he felt better.

"Go to work Dar, I feel a little bit better, I think that's the last time I will throw up."

"No way Ponyboy, I'm staying here until I know for sure that you're better. I'll take the day off work to stay here." I knew there was no point in fighting with Darry. He would stay here and make me feel helpless until I was good again.

Darry went to the kitchen, and I looked around. I was in the room I share with Soda, and there were blankets piled up on me so high that if I laid flat, I couldn't see over them. Soda had lots of posters hung up on the walls, but I had a desk with a bookshelf on it. All I needed in my room was a place to read and do my homework; it didn't matter that Soda had claimed all the wall space.

After about an hour or two of Darry coming in and out of my room and offering me various food, I finally fell asleep. I can't remember what I dreamed about, but all I know was that I woke up terrified. I don't know what happened, but I think it was about Johnny. Soda was at work, so he wasn't there to calm me down like he usually was. I was feeling better than earlier, but I still wasn't hungry. I got up and walked downstairs where Darry was, watching something on the television. It was getting dark now, and I wondered if Darry was looking at the sunset that Johnny told him to.

I sat on the couch and Darry was immediately all over me, taking my temperature and hounding me with questions about how I was doing, if I threw up again, stuff like that. I mostly just grumbled and nodded because I was afraid that if I were to open my mouth, I would throw up again.

Sodapop came home from work that evening and was sitting on our bed. He looked sad, and I remembered how he was looking at that mysterious letter. "Are you okay?" I asked him, and he looked up at me but then looked back down at the piece of paper he was holding in his hand. "What's up with the letter?" Soda looked surprised. He looked at me like he was wondering when I was going to ask him that question.

"It's a letter from Sandy. She sent another one about going to live with her grandmother in Florida. Her parents are letting her say goodbye to me, but I don't know when she is coming or if I can even face her." Sodapop was never this emotional about anything. He always had more of a carefree attitude, but this was a side of him I hadn't seen since our parents died. We got up and went to the living area where Darry was. Steve had been there earlier but had since left to go home.

All of a sudden there was a loud, hollow, knock on the door. Our door was old, and the wood made an echoey sound when someone knocked on it. Darry looked confused because rarely anyone knocked on our door. The gang usually just waltzed in, but we didn't mind. Our home was their home. If they needed a place to stay, they could crash here. Darry got up and mumbled something under his breath. It sounded like he was asking who was there but it was indecipherable.

I couldn't hear what they were saying, but I could tell that it was a girl at the door. Her voice sounded squeaky and high pitched. She seemed kind of sad, but they were still at the door. Darry finally invited her in, and they turned the corner, and it was Sandy. Sandy, the girl that Sodapop was going to marry, the girl that had moved away and broken his heart. She was here to say goodbye to him.

Sodapop jumped to his feet. He was looking at her with so much love and affection. I thought his heart might just beat right out of his chest. Those two were perfect for each other. She was a pretty blonde greaser girl. She had bright blue eyes and perfectly painted lips. Soda was also very handsome. He could have had any girl he wanted; he could have even dated a Soc girl, but he wanted to be with Sandy.

She walked up to him very gingerly. She looked like she was about to cry and Sodapop embraced her like this was the end of the world. It almost was the end of the world to him because Sandy was his whole life. She pushed away from him; she had never done that before. "Sodapop, we can't be together, you know that. I am moving away to Florida, and I want you to move on. I want you to find a cute girl and marry her instead. You can start a little family eventually, but it can't be with me. I'm so sorry." Sandy's voice was stern and calm, but Soda looked like he had just seen his favourite puppy get run over by a truck.

"I don't understand. Why are you doing this to me?" Soda was about to start crying as he said those words. Darry grabbed my arm and pulled me upstairs so they could have some privacy. I wanted to help Soda so badly. I just wanted to touch his forehead and make him

forget all of the pain he had gone through, so he didn't have to be hurt. I wanted to fix everything but I couldn't. I thought of Johnny and how I wanted to cure him, but I knew that Johnny couldn't be fixed. Johnny was broken, but we all were there for him. We were all trying to help him get better. Tears stung my eyes, and I couldn't contain it anymore. Darry had gone downstairs to see what we could eat for supper, and I broke. I cried. I knew crying wasn't going to make anything better, but it felt good just to let it all out alone.

I was only alone for about two minutes when Darry came back upstairs to come and get me, to see what I felt like eating for supper. He looked at me with pity, and he left me alone to be emotional. He knew that I wouldn't want anyone to see me like that. I heard the front door slam shut, and I cringed. Was that Sandy leaving in a huff about Sodapop? What was going on?

I walked downstairs, careful not to make any noise because Darry might send me straight back upstairs. I snuck past the kitchen and around the corner, Sodapop was on the couch, with his face buried in his hands. I don't think he was crying, but he looked frustrated. I could hear him mumbling stuff to himself, but it was indecipherable. He was rocking back and forth, and it seemed as though he was about to run away and never come back. I sat down beside him on the edge of the couch and put my hand on his back. As soon as I did that, Sodapop had his arms around me and pinned me down on the floor. I think he must have been real mad because he looked like he was going to hurt me with the look on his face. He knew I was sick, but he didn't care if I was contagious. He had red eyes, and it looked like he had been crying. I knew he was crying because of Sandy, but I was almost too scared to ask. "What happened?" I asked Soda, quietly because I didn't want to set him off.

"She wasn't in love with me anymore. She was pregnant with another guy's kid, and she came here to tell me that. She wouldn't say his name because she was afraid I might react badly or something." Soda's voice was weak, and it would crack and squeak a little bit.

"Oh." I couldn't say anything else because Soda got up and walked away. I thought that he went out to the back step because I heard the screen door open and close. I went to check on him but he was in the kitchen, and it was Dally that had walked in. Soda and Dally were sitting at the table; I guess talking about what happened. I turned around to see Dally standing right behind me, in the living room.

"Ponyboy, Johnny's dead." Dally said like he had just found out. Johnny died yesterday, but Dally must have been in shock or something. "I went into a store, and I almost gave in and trashed the place, but I remembered Johnny. He told me to watch a sunset but I uh, I don't know how to do that." Dally sounded lost and afraid but it didn't show in his stern, serious face. Dally was 17 but from what he had been through in his life with going to jail, he could have lived a lifetime of pain and sadness.

"It's not hard to watch one; you just have to appreciate it." I explained to Dally. He looked at me confused.

“How do you appreciate something like a sunset, that’s such a girly thing. Where does the sun even set?” I chuckled a bit at that question because it is something that you learn in school, how the solar system works.

“You go outside, and you just sit there and watch I guess. Think about life I suppose; that’s what I do when I watch one, I’m not an expert or anything.” I was shocked that Dally was even talking to me about this. Dally is the least emotional person out of our entire group, and I guess he was just honouring Johnny’s wishes. Was this Dally’s way of getting closure?

“When do we do this, like where does the sun set, you never answered my question,” Dally grumbled.

“It sets in the west; you can see it real good from the back porch here.” I coughed out. I was still quite sick, and I felt like if I did much more talking, I might hurl again. If I did, Darry would never let me be.

Dally was leaning up against the wall on the other side of the hallway. He was standing up tall and firm to show how powerful and confident he was, but I could see right through him. The way he talked about Johnny, he sounded defeated. He looked like he had just lost a big fight with a Soc and he sounded ashamed. Dally was never ashamed of anything, he just shook it off and kept living, but this was different. It was like a piece of him was missing, and I think that piece was Johnny. Johnny was the part of Dally that kept him from snapping and getting in a bunch of trouble, but if I could talk to Dally about it, maybe he will understand that we are all here for him.

I led him out to the back porch and sat on the step. The sun was just starting to set, and the sky was a beautiful blue, orange, and pink mixture. The sky was still blue on the east side but the west, the sun was casting colourful rays as it fell behind the horizon. I could see it perfectly from where we sat, and it peeked over the fence we had in the backyard. It was a creaky old fence, with holes in it, but it was nicer than some of the other fences in the Greaser neighbourhood.

“What happens, what do we do?” Dally anxiously whispered. He was sitting beside me, and he looked nervous.

“Do you want to talk about Johnny?” I asked him, and his face went from nervous to cold, and hard. He had a careful look on his face, but his eyes were soft.

“No, I’m dealing with it.” Dally grumbled like he was getting angry and protective.

“How?”

“I just am, now shut up about it.”

Dally was being difficult, and I knew it would take some convincing to get him to say even anything. His emotions were all over the place, and that was probably because he was letting it stow away in his brain. He thinks that it will just go away eventually, but he needs some kind of closure. So do I. I needed to talk with Dally and it would help both of us to get it off our chests. Johnny was my best friend, and he just died. My best friend was dead.

“This is boring.” Dally was grumbling again. He was trying to hide all of his emotions, so he didn’t appear weak. “What am I even doing here, I’m leaving.”

“Sit back down; I thought you were doing this for Johnny. Johnny wanted you to do this.” I raised my voice, but I was scared that Dakka was going to hit me.

“What do you know what Johnny wanted, he was sick and dying, he could have just said anything before he died so he had actual last words instead of something dumb.” Dally walked down the steps, and I followed him down.

“I knew Johnny too, you know, he was my best friend, and he just died. He’s dead now just like my parents, and me, now, all I have is two brothers. A brother who jokes around and kind of cares and a brother who hates my guts. I’m alone now. I have nobody.” I was yelling now, and Dally looked like he was in shock. I never got this emotional around anyone in the gang, but I didn’t care anymore.

“Ponyboy, you have all of us. Your brothers love you, and you’re not alone. You’re not alone. Johnny is dead, and there’s nothing we can do about it.” Dally didn’t seem mad anymore, but I was getting angrier by the minute.

“You don’t understand, everything I do Darry is on my back. If I get a bad mark in school, he’s all up in my face about it. He’s always judging me, and I can never do anything right. I could talk to Johnny about these things, but now he’s dead. He’s dead. He’s dead,” my voice trailed off. Johnny was dead. He won’t be back tomorrow, or the next day, or ever. I hadn’t thought about it like that yet. He was never coming back to crack jokes with Two-Bit, or to mess around with Dally, or to watch the sunset with me. He wasn’t coming back home to his horrible parents ever again.

“Darry isn’t mad at you; he’s trying to help you do better. All of a sudden one day he was in charge of your life on top of you guy’s parents dying. He’s just frustrated is all,” Dally’s voice was calm and collected. He went from almost leaving to calming me down. He was still avoiding talking about Johnny. I couldn’t understand why he wouldn’t say anything. He also wasn’t making eye contact with me.

“Why won’t you talk about Johnny?” I was almost afraid to ask. Was I afraid of him hurting me? Maybe I was afraid of his answer. He winced when I asked, and I could have sworn that a tear was running down his face.

“I-I-I don’t uh, I can’t, I uh,” Dally was stumbling to get his words out. We had both calmed down from my yelling episode; now I was curious.

“It’s alright, whatever you say, we’ll be here for you. Me and the whole gang, we’ve got your back.” I was the calm and collected one now.

“I don’t know if I can say it out loud. I don’t-I don’t know if I can tell you. I’ll get in big trouble.” Dally was afraid, and now, he was making me scared of what he was going to say.

“It’s alright, I’ll understand, whatever happens, even if it’s terrible,” I was shaky, and I was weak. I couldn’t show any weakness in front of Dally, especially when he was about to talk to me about Johnny.

“When-when you went to the bathroom, in Johnny’s hospital room, Johnny closed his eyes; he was getting tired.” Dally paused, and it looked like he was holding back tears.

“Yeah, I went to the bathroom, what of it?” I asked. I was afraid of where this was going.

“He just looked so sad. I didn’t want him to be like that, in pain every day. I-I made that loud sound hide what I was doing.” Dally started to quiet down. His voice was getting weak. A tear escaped his eye and then, I was terrified of what he was going to say next.

“I killed him.” I think it killed him inside to say that. His voice broke, and then I knew for sure he was crying.

“What? Why? How? Why? What?” There were so many emotions happening all at once. Did Dally kill Johnny?

“I-I unhooked him from the oxygen so he would die, somewhat peacefully. I couldn’t stand to see him like that, and I just wanted it to be over, all this pain and suffering.” Dally’s voice was getting weaker and more crackly by the second. I was speechless. Dally killed Johnny. Johnny could have lived. It would have taken him time to heal, but eventually, he would have been better right? He had to. I was barely alive without Johnny, and now, Dally just confessed to killing him.

“Dally,” I barely choked out his name and then I ran inside. We were supposed to be outside watching the sunset and talking about Johnny. Things had taken a turn for the worse, and I was real mad at Dally for doing something so horrible. I was in my room, Darry and Soda

were still in the kitchen, but the rest of the gang were there now. I heard the loud slam of the back door and footsteps clomping up the stairs. Dally poked his head into my room.

“Hey, I would appreciate if you didn’t tell the gang for a few days. I’m going to turn myself into the cops because jail will be a better place than living here without Johnny. I want to say goodbye to them first, and I’ll be out of your hair.” Dally was talking like this was the last time I would ever see him.

“He could’ve got better.” I said as I glared at Dally.

“No, kid. Johnny was the kind of broken that you just can’t fix. He couldn’t feel his legs, and his skin was falling off. It’s better this way. I hate what I did, but there’s no fixing what happened to him. Don’t hate me.” I wiped the tear running down my face as I turned away from him. I heard my door creak shut, and his footsteps as he left to go downstairs. Within two days, 2 of my friends had gone. One dead, and the other- well you know. My jaw clenched, and I ran to the upstairs bathroom and was sick, yet again.

I was sick in bed for the next couple days after Dally told me what happened. Our court day was exactly one week after Johnny’s death. I thought I wouldn’t be able to make it on an anniversary like that, but I had too. I wanted to stay with Darry and Soda. The Judge didn’t ask me any questions about Johnny. He just asked if I liked living with Darry. I said yes, and he didn’t ask me anything else. Probably because he knew what happened last week. As we were walking out of the courthouse, Darry was silent. The Judge let us stay together, only if we didn’t get into any more trouble.

“Look at this,” he grumbled to me. On the front page of a newspaper Darry bought was a picture of Dally. It was a sketch. The headline said 17-year-old boy robs bank and murders two bank clerks. The article was about how he killed Johnny and how when he told the cops; they didn’t believe him. When they didn’t believe him, he went to the bank with his gun and shot two of the clerks. When the cops showed up, he pointed his gun at them, and they shot him nine times. It only took 1 to kill him why 9? I choked. Dally was dead. He didn’t want to live in a world without Johnny so he went and got himself killed. It was a big bloody way to go out, but Dally was with Johnny now. They were probably happy together.

Me and Soda read the article and were shocked. Had Dally told them what he did in the hospital? Darry looked at me. “What is this talking about, killing Johnny? Did you know anything about that?” Darry sounded mad.

“He told me not to tell you about it until he was gone. He told me that he unplugged Johnny’s oxygen machine, so there was no more pain and suffering. I don’t know if he was talking about himself, or Johnny.” It made me sick to talk about this.

“You knew, and you didn’t tell us? Why not? We could have helped him that little-”

“No. When Johnny died, Dally died with him. He was broken to pieces, and there was no going back.”

Darry ripped up the newspaper and threw it on the ground. He kept walking home but the whole way there was silent.

When we got home, I went straight to sleep because I had to go back to school in the morning. I had missed over a week with the trip to Windrixville, and being sick and everything. Darry was going to drop me off at school and explain to my teachers why I missed so much. He gave me the whole lecture about getting my grades back up or bad news.

In the morning, I woke up, showered, and did the usual routine with Chocolate cake and eggs for breakfast. Today seemed like an ordinary day, but it wasn't. I was scared to see what my grades looked like because of my mind being elsewhere all the time at school. Darry drove me in his pickup truck and walked me to my class. I had English in first. There was a young lady intern in my class; she was in university getting teaching experience. She was quite pretty and around Darry's age.

“Good morning, Ponyboy, how are you feeling? I heard you were sick,” she said in a very cheerful voice. More bright than I had ever heard come from somebody's mouth.

“I'm better now, Darry took real good care of me,” I said. I didn't care about my reputation anymore. I was going to be myself at school, whether I was a greaser or not. That's what Johnny would want me to do. He would want me to be myself and not care what other people thought of me.

“Darry is your brother?” She asked. She must not have noticed the brick wall that was Darry standing behind me.

“I'm Darrel, Pony's brother. You can call me Darry. You are?” Darry was being polite, and his voice sounded somewhat flirtatious.

“Hi, Darry. I'm Mary; I'm an intern in Mr. Michael's English class. I'm in school to become a teacher.” She winked at him after she finished. This was getting awkward.

“Oh, that's nice. You must be a pretty smart girl.” Darry winked back; I wanted to leave right now. I was standing in between them and honesty; I wanted just to shrivel up and float away. Mary blushed, and went to look for something in her bag.

“You can leave, Superman,” I said sarcastically to Darry. He glared at me and shook his head.

“Mary, I must be going to work now, but it would be real nice If I could call you on the phone later. Would you mind if I asked for your number?” Darry was talking in his flirty voice that I’ve only ever heard once before. That was when he was trying to trick a Soc girl into going to the prom with him a couple of years ago. That was back when Darry had a carefree attitude and could manipulate people into doing anything he wanted. He used to be real selfish.

“Let me grab a pen, I’ll write it on your hand,” She said, almost too seductively. I wanted to rip my hair out. I’ve heard pretty girls use that line on Soda, or something similar so that they could touch his hand. I was getting real grossed out right about now. Darry was here to talk to Mr. Michael’s, not his Intern. I went to my seat and left them alone. I was the first one in class, and Darry and Mary were at the back of the room, chatting it up. The class slowly started to fill up and then the bell rang. I guess Darry left without talking to my teacher about what happened because straight away, Mr. Michael’s started talking about the lesson the class did last day.

I tried to follow along with the class, but I just couldn’t. I was thinking about Johnny and Dally. I was thinking about how Dally never got to finish watching the sunset because we started fighting. The last com oration we ever had was rude, and I regret it. I didn’t want my friends to be dead. There was nothing I could do about it. Before I knew it, the bell rang, and class was over. I started to get up and leave; I don’t know how on earth I would catch up.

“Mr. Curtis, can I speak to you for a moment?” I froze where I was standing. Mr. Michaels wanted to talk to me. I was in trouble for sure.

“Yeah, okay,” I said as confidently as I could, but I was afraid of what was coming next. “Ponyboy, I don’t want to alarm you, but I’m afraid you’re failing English this year.”

“What? But I was doing alright before,”

“Yes, but it’s not enough. You missed some major assignments, and you are sitting at a D right now.”

“Great,” I grumbled sarcastically at him.

“There is a way you can bump it up to a C,” he didn’t seem to pick up on my sarcasm. “If you write me a story about something that has happened in your life, can be recent or not, I can bump up your grade.”

“Really!” I said, probably a bit too enthusiastically. “Deal I’ll do it.”

“Great, It’s due next week.”

Wonderful. I was already going to be piled with homework from all the other classes I missed. I was doing well in those classes, so I guess that’s alright. I nodded and went to my

next class. On the way out, Mary smiled at me. This was going to be weird if she started dating Darry. I shuddered. The rest of my classes were kind of alright; I expected a C, or B in most and possibly, maybe, an A in math. I was quite good at math, and I thought that I could catch up quite quickly.

On my way home, I walked into one of the Soc guys in the grade above me. I was scared at first, but then I realized that he was the guy from the rumble that cut my face up. I knew that he knew better than to try and come after me because Darry beat him to a pulp. He glared at me and kept walking. I think people started to understand that all of this fighting was pointless. It only took two people dying for them to figure out that we were all fighting for no reason. I just wish it didn't take that much for them to understand.

I got home, and both Darry and Soda were working. Two-Bit was there, eating some cake.

"Hey, how you doing?" I asked him. He focused on the television, so he was obviously watching Mickey. He didn't seem to hear me, so I went upstairs to start on my homework. I didn't know how on earth I was going to start so I went out to sit on the back porch and think about what to write about.

Darry got home at around 7 and talked on the phone with Mary for a very long time. Eventually, she showed up at our house, and they talked for quite a few hours. He was falling in love, hard and fast. This was going to be so awkward.

I started to think about Johnny and what he had been through. I was so lucky to have a family that cared about me, even though my parents were dead. Then it hit me. I would write about this past month. I would write about how us Greasers had a bad relationship with the Socs. I would write about my best friend, Johnny. This would be the memorial he never got. I ran upstairs and started writing, and I didn't stop until it was dark out and Soda was already in bed sleeping. I didn't eat, but I wasn't hungry. I wanted to make sure this was right. I was doing this for Johnny.

Ever since Johnny was in the hospital, I knew that he wasn't appreciated enough, but isn't it true that once someone dies, people learn to appreciate them even more than if they were alive? I hope that's the case with Johnny. He deserves it more than anyone else on the planet. More than the president, more than me. I wasn't the big hero that saved those kids; it was Johnny. He was willing to stay in the church to get the kids out. That's what being a hero is, willing to sacrifice yourself for someone else. Johnny's parents didn't give him a funeral; they left his body for medical research. That made me mad, but they couldn't have given him a good enough funeral anyway.

Tears started to well up in my eyes as I continued to write. Dally was dead, and so was Johnny. That was an experience I wanted to share. I wanted people to know that fighting wasn't

the answer to everything. Fighting is what gets people, good people, killed. Johnny was a real good person, so was Dally. I wanted revenge. I wanted Johnny to have died for something, and I was going to get it, no matter what.