

Chapter 10

Dally ran out the door while I fell into a chair. I felt like passing out but I didn't. I looked around the room and seen *Gone With The Wind* on the night stand. I got up to get it and took it with me as a memory of Johnny. I knew he liked it so I had to keep it. When I picked it up, a little envelope fell out. I picked it up and noticed that it had my name on it in Johnny's handwriting. I couldn't resist opening it.

Dear Ponyboy,

I'm so sorry that I got you into this mess and trouble with the law. You never bailed on me and for that, I'm thankful. Thanks for always being my pal. You were my best friend. Don't ever worry about being separated from your brothers. Darry, Soda and the gang would never let that happen. The day will come when you won't be labeled as a greaser but as an ordinary person. You'll get away from all that trouble someday. You still have a lot of time to make yourself be what you want. Tell Dally to stay out of trouble and that there's still lots of good in the world and that it was worth saving those kids. Make sure that he doesn't break a law or do anything he's going to regret. I want you guys to know that at first, I was scared to die and I thought it was unfair. As I thought about it, I accepted it. I'm not scared anymore and at least I'll be at peace. I'm sure I'll see you guys again someday. The gang was never friends, you were all the family that I never had. Like brothers. You guys meant a lot in my life. Your buddy, Johnny.

While I read the letter, I could hear his voice and it felt like he was actually talking. All I thought was that I had to find Dally before it was too late and it's what Johnny would've wanted. I was still a little sore from the rumble so I jogged home. I didn't know where Dally

would be until I was at the lot and saw his car. This was Johnny's place so it figures he'd be here. I walked and there he was with about six beer bottle scattered next to him. His eyes were filled with pain and they were watery. Once he noticed me, a tear dropped but he quickly wiped it so I couldn't see. It's not everyday that you see Dallas Winston shed a tear.

When i approached him, "Dally what the hell are you doin'? Look at all this beer! This isn't what Dally would've wanted...for you to waste yourself like this."

"Pony it's not fair. He didn't deserve to die that way and he was so young. He never got to experience the world." He didn't cry. His face was sort of buried in his arms. I've never seen anyone of the gang react this way but it was so odd that out of anyone, Dally acted emotional. His face showed it all. The frown and sad eyes. He was even talking low and different. For once, he sounded innocent and honest. I never thought i'd use those words to describe him.

"I know it's not fair. Johnny deserved the best but I guess...sometimes the world isn't fair. Johnny was our buddy and he looked up to you. I have something that might make you feel better that's from Johnny."

I handed him the letter and his face started to brighten up. He opened it and started reading. His eyebrows lowered and had a confused look as he got more into it.

"...I think this letter is for you."

"Yeah I know but he wanted me to give you a message and you're mentioned in the letter. Just read the whole thing."

"Oh." a peaceful grin appeared on his face he laughed as he remarked, "Why does everyone think that I'm always in for trouble?"

"...because you're Dallas Winston," I added as I laughed. "Are you okay now?"

"Yeah don't worry about me, I'm fine. I promise not to get in trouble...for Johnny."

"Good."

“There’s still lots of good in the world. Does the gang know?”

“No not yet. I was going to tell them after I met up with you.”

“Alright well we gotta do it now. Lets go.”

We walked to my place and as soon as we stepped in, the whole gang was there and looked at us. I had the impression that they were waiting on us for a while.

“Hey guys,” I said nervously. “Were you waitin’ up on us?”

“Yeah we figured that you left to go see Johnny. How is he?” Soda questioned.

Dally stepped in and revealed,” He died when we got there. He couldn’t suffer anymore and considered all of us family. He wanted you guys to know that.”

Dally looked at his shoes the whole time he was talking. I think it was hard for him to let the words out. The room was so silent, it was scary. No one said a word. Instead, they put their heads down and thought. It was hard to speak at a time like this. There was nothing really to say.

Darry gave me a sorry look since he knew Johnny was my buddy. Johnny was always at our house.

“He was family to us and I’ going to miss him a lot.” Darry tried to sound positive and remarked in a good tone to try and break the awkwardness. The gang looked around and gave a poor grin and put their heads down again.

When everyone left, I was tired and I didn’t feel too good so Darry, Soda, and I went to bed. The next morning when I woke up, I felt awful. Things just didn’t feel the same without Johnny. It was almost eight thirty so I got up and made breakfast. I didn’t eat much since I was nervous. I heard Dally come in and he had a lost look running through his eyes.

“Hey Pony.”

“Hey.” I didn’t know what else to say.

“So...so what happens now? I don't know what to do. I feel ...sort of lost.”

“Hate to tell you but I'm not sure either.”

I heard a knock on the door thinking it was one of the gang but when I opened it, Jerry was standing there. It was so odd, I never thought he'd be at my door.

“Hi Jerry. How are you?”

“Hello Ponyboy. I feel awful...I know about Johnny. I went to visit but they had told me that he passed last night.”

“Yeah he did. Please come in and have a seat.”

“Oh thank you.” as he stepped in. Dally recognized him so he waved. “I'm sorry you guys lost Johnny.”

“Thank you.” Dally and I said at almost the same time.

“I know I'm still a stranger to you but when I went down to the hospital, the nurses mentioned that only you two knew he passed. Besides me, you're the only ones that visited him. His parents don't have a clue.”

“Yeah and they don't care. Johnny's parents have never cared for him. They're out of our lives.” Dally sounded a bit angry.

“It's true.” I added.

“Wow, his parents have no heart. That's just cruel. Ummmm...so I'm guessing that there's no funeral?”

I didn't even think about a funeral. I knew his parents wouldn't fund for it and we didn't have the money. I guess it was a no. I felt bad that our buddy died and we couldn't have a ceremony to remember him.

“No, his parents wouldn't pay and we don't have the money so we can't.”

“Yeah guess not.” Dally mumbled.

“Well, what if I told you that I could pay for a certain amount and I’m sure that the town would pay for the town’s hero’s funeral. He was a hero and should be remembered. I’m sure that the town would be helpful with organizing it. You guys don’t worry about a thing.”

“That’s so nice and generous of you Jerry. Thank you.” I was thankful.

“Thanks Jerry.”

“Alright well I better get to planning so I’ll see you later.”

I was completely surprised since I didn’t think Johnny would have a funeral. There was only one thing that I forgot and it was school. I hadn’t been there in so long that I didn’t want to go back. I knew it would be awful.

Once Darry and Soda woke up, I told them about the funeral and thought it was nice of Jerry to do that. Dally said he needed sometime to think so he left and said he’d be back later. Darry and Soda sat down and they were very quiet.

Darry started, “So we know that Johnny just passed last night but your school is concerned when you’re coming back.”

“I don’t want to go back. It won’t be the same.”

“You’re not going to drop out like me. You’re going.” I was a bit surprised that Soda showed a little attitude.

“Soda’s right. You’re returning Monday.”

“Fine.” I mumbled as I walked out of the living room. School was the last thing that I needed. I just didn’t want to stress about grades and studying all the time. I was bored of school since I had to work nonstop. I thought I’d deal with it Monday morning.

The rest of the day went by so slow and I felt so out of place that I didn’t know what to do next. It was hard for me to go back to my normal routine and everyday life knowing that Johnny was gone. It was seven fifteen at night and Jerry stopped by again and told us the

details of the funeral. It was going to be at Rose Oaks Cemetery at ten thirty am. We had to be there early to prepare what we were going to say. The bad news was that his parents were invited. I wasn't so sure that would work out and there would be a couple of reporters to take pictures.

Jerry left and then the gang was over so I told them the details for the next day. I told them to prepare what they were going to say so we all sat around writing them on index cards. The room was quiet since we all concentrated. They all left soon after that and I was getting tired so I went to bed.

The next day when I woke up, I picked out my best looking clothes and ironed them. Darry and Soda dressed nice and looked sharp. When we were out the house, we drove to Rose Oaks Cemetery. We were there a bit early to prepare what we were saying. I was a little nervous but it was mostly the gang attending so I felt okay. I sort of rehearsed but I wondered who would go first. I didn't want to be first.

The ceremony had started and his parents were there. I could tell that his mom was fake crying and his dad's speech was also fake. I'm not sure if his parents loved him but I sure as hell knew that his dad didn't mean a single word he said. Funny that he didn't mention beating on Johnny all the time. I lost interest in his parents so I started looking around to see who was there. It didn't take me a long time to notice the bright red hair. It was Cherry and she was standing next to Marcia and Randy was farther back.

Cherry looked like she had seen a ghost or something. She was pale, her eyes watery, and a couple tears came down. She didn't notice me. Even though Cherry had the saddest look on her face, she looked as pretty as ever. She was wearing a black sweater and black skirt which made her hair stand out.

When Johnny's parents were done, Two-Bit went up first and then Darry, Soda and so on until I was next. I mentioned *Nothing Gold can Stay* and *Gene with the Wind*. I said that Johnny was my buddy and like family. I had a lot more on my index card but it was hard for me to speak about everything. Dally was the last person to speak and his face was just filled with sadness. I knew it was even harder for him to talk about Johnny. Dally didn't say much but I knew he had a lot more to say.

The ceremony ended a couple of minutes after and people were getting ready to leave while others were talking. Cherry noticed me and came up to me when I didn't expect it.

"Hi Ponyboy." she mumbled in a low voice.

"Hi Cherry."

"I'm so sorry for your loss. I knew you guys were great friends. I know that I didn't really know him but from what I saw, he was a great person."

"Thanks Cherry. That's really nice of you to say."

"Pony you and Johnny are the nicest people I know."

I didn't know what else to say so I just stared blankly at my shoes. There was nothing to say but I didn't know how to break the awkwardness so I didn't bother to. I could feel Cherry's eyes on me but I think she got the message.

"I'll see you around school," she said and then then leaned to kiss me on the cheek. She walked off before I could look up or even say anything. I felt my face get hot like blood was rushing through it. I was a bit confused since last time, she basically said that she would ignore me at school and now she's telling me she'll see me around and kisses my cheek? Maybe she really did just feel bad. I wasn't so sure. I then spotted her getting into a car leaving with Marcia.

I seen Randy heading towards my way and I was a bit surprised that he came. We did have a decent conversation the last time I seen him. When he reached me, he greeted me with, "Hi Ponyboy. How are you doing?"

"I'm hanging in there."

"I know you're probably wondering what I'm doing here but I feel bad that it had to be this way. We all got mixed up in this mess. My folks are upset I'm in this mess."

I stopped for a moment to think about what trouble he was in. Sure his parents were mad but they'd get over it and still have a stable place to live and the money for a fine. I get that Bob was dead but that was because he got himself into a mess for being a violent drunk. Johnny died because of him. I was worried about being separated from my brothers while Randy probably lived in a fancy mansion.

"That must suck for you," I sarcastically replied.

"Your folks must be pretty upset too."

"My parents died so I live with my older brothers Darry and Soda. Depending on what the judge says tomorrow, we still live together for now. I might be put in a foster home."

"I didn't know that," he actually sounded worried. It was strange to me that a Soc felt sorry for a greaser like me.

"Ponyboy, I'm sorry... for everything. About Bob starting this and your loss of Johnny. I hope you don't get put in a foster home. Well I guess I'll see you around. Take care."

"Take care Randy."

We all went home and the gang was over for a bit. I was exhausted so when they left, I secretly had a cigarette and went to bed. Darry wanted me to cut back so I didn't want him to think I was still smoking as much. I was really nervous about the judge. What would happen if we were separated? I tried not to think about it so I just went to bed.

The next morning, we all woke up and got ready for court. Two-Bit stopped by for a couple of minutes to wish us luck and told us that we wouldn't be separated. We all looked pretty sharp.

When we got there, we were seated in the room and the judge had begun. She was maybe in her mid forties. She didn't seem rude or mean so I thought we'd have a good chance. I didn't really understand the terms and what they were exactly saying. Once it was over, the judge told us that we would remain living together and that I wouldn't be in a foster home. I couldn't even explain how relieved I was. I was so unexplainably happy for the first time in a while.

The weekend went by pretty fast and before I knew it, It was Sunday night. I was getting my backpack together and thought what school would be like. Would my friends avoid me? Would they think of me different? I didn't know what would happen so I was once again, nervous.

I kept tossing and turning that night. It was impossible for me to fall asleep with my thoughts of school racing through my mind. I finally fell asleep around two am when I had to wake up at six.

When I woke up, I quickly got dressed and ready for school. I wasn't even tired. As soon as I stepped in the entrance, I recognized some of my friends. They smiled and waved joyously at me to come over. They all said that it had been a long time since they seen me and they read about me in the paper for being a "hero." I was glad that they still wanted to be my friend.

There was still about 10 minutes before class and I seen Cherry, Marcia, and Randy. It was the first time I had seen Cherry since the funeral. I was still confused so I thought I'd play it cool just in case. They were all headed my way.

“Hi Pony,” Cherry greeted me.

“Hi. How are you guys?”

“Alright.” answered Randy.

“You?” Marcia asked.

“Good so far.”

“It’s good to see you.” Cherry said.

“It’s good to see all of you guys too.” We all got into a casual conversation for the rest of the time. When the bell rang, they told me to meet them back at that spot at lunch time.

I walked to my English class and sat down in my seat. Mr. Syme looked at me in a weird way since he thought I probably wouldn’t be back. He came over to my desk and said, “Hey Ponyboy. It’s good to have you back. It’s alright if you don’t understand what we’re doing, just stop by after class to talk about it.”

There was a couple of things that were kind of confusing but for the most part, I understood it. When class was over, I went up to his desk.

“Ponyboy you were gone for a long time and missed a lot of assignments. Instead of you doing all of them, I want you to write about a subject or a theme. It can’t be less than five pages and it can be longer. Any questions?”

“No and thank you Mr. Syme, I’ll get to writing.”

The rest of the day was alright but when I got home, I got straight to doing homework. I knew what I was going to write and it was important to me. And I began like this: When I stepped out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the movie house, I had only two things on my mind: Paul Newman and a ride home...

Bibliography

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