

Sincerely, ponyboy

Business



Dear Ms. MacMillan, I have recently been informed that you are my assigned social worker and that you will ultimately decide if I am to stay with my older brothers, Darry and Sodapop.

Over the past year I have been through some difficult and traumatic experiences. I lost my parents in a car accident, was present when my best friend killed another teenager in self-defense, and lost my two friends Johnny and Dally. Although these experiences have been tough the lessons I learned through them have made me a stronger, more responsible young man. Therefore, I should be able to stay with my brothers. One lesson that I learn over this past year was that stereotypes are not always true and that you need to look at people as individuals instead of members of a group.

My friends Cherry Valance and Randy Adderson helped me learn this lesson. They are most socs, rich kids who live on the west side of town. At first I thought that they, along with the other socs, had good grades, good cars, good girls, madras, and Mustangs and Coviers. I thought they had perfect lives. Cherry explained a lot of things to me that changed my mind. Cherry told me some things that showed me the truth behind them.

She said, " We're sophisticated-cool to the point of not feeling anything. Nothing is real with us. You know some times I'll catch myself talking to a girlfriend, and I don't mean half of what I'm saying. I don't really think a beer blast on the river bottom is super-cool, but I'll rave about one to a girlfriend just to be saying something. ... Rat race is a perfect name for it...We're always going and going, and never asking where. Did you ever hear of having more than you wanted? So that you couldn't want anything else and

then you started looking for something else to want? It seems like we're always searching for something to satisfy us, and never finding it.

" It seems like we don't have that much in common but when you really look deep, you find that they are like us in many ways. I began to see Cherry as a person rather than a member of a group when she told me that she watched sunsets. The socs really surprised me at the hearing when they told the truth and stuck to the story. Cherry stuck up for me and truthfully testified that Bob had been drunk and that the boys had been looking for a fight when they took her home. Bob had told her that he'd fix us for picking up his girl. Cherry had once told me things are rough all over and I understood what she meant when Randy Adderson talked to me while I was in the hospital.

He told me this, " I wouldn't mind getting fined but I feel lousy about the old man. And it's the first time I've felt anything in a long time." Randy was talking about letting his father down. It was the first time I realized that a soc actually could feel emotions. I had always thought they were cold, mean, and unemotional.

I never really thought of them as people, but they are just like you and me. They have problems too. When I told Randy about how I might be put into a home he looked worried, he really did. A socs, even, worried because some greaser kid was on his way to a foster home or something. That was really funny. I don't mean funny.

You know what I mean. When I saw Randy at Tasty Freeze he told me about his friends Bob, the teenager Johnny killed. " I'm sick of all this. Sick and tired. Bob was a good guy.

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He was the best buddy a guy ever had. I mean, he was a good fighter and tuff and everything, but he was a real person too...He's dead- his mother has had a nervous breakdown. They spoiled him rotten. I mea, most parents would be proud of a kid like that good-lookin' and smart and everything, but they gave in to him all the time. He kept trying to make someone say ' No' and they never did. They never did.

That was what he wanted. For somebody to tell him ' No'. To have somebody lay down the law, set the limits, give him something solid to stand on. That's was we all want really." After I talked to Randy, Two-Bit asked, " What did Mr. Super-Soc have to say? And I replayed, " He's not a soc.

He's just a guy. He wanted to talk. I began to see socs as people rather than one group of rich, mean, unemotional teens. I learned a lot from my friends and I hope to learn even more. I now understand that stereotypes are not always true and that has made me a more mature person. Another important lesson that I learned was that often people don't understand their loved ones as much as they think they do.

My brothers Darry and Sodapop helped me learn this lesson. Soda understands everything. He's always grinning and happy-go-lucky so I just assumed he didn't have any problems. I later found out that poor Soda had many difficult problems. Soda's girlfriend Sandy got pregnant and moved to Florida to live with her grandparents.

He wrote her a letter, but it returned unopened. He was devastated. I asked Darry about it and he said, "...It wasn't Soda Ponyboy. He told me he loved her, but I guess she didn't love him like he thought she did, because it

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wasn't him.... He wanted to marry her anyway, but she just left... Why didn't he tell you? I thought he told you everything.

" I realized that I didn't listen to Soda. How many times had Soda started to tell me something, only to find I was daydreaming or stuck in a book? He would always listen to me, no matter what he was doing. Soda's problems don't stop there. He hated it when Darry and me fought. A few nights ago he confronted us about it and said, " It's just...I cant stand to hear y'all fight. Sometimes...I just have to get out or...its I'm the middleman in a tug o' war and I'm being split in half...I mean I cant take sides...Golly, you two, it's bad enough having to listen to it, but when you start to get me to take sides....

We're all we've got left. We ought to be able to stick together against everything. If we don't have each other, we don't have anything." It really struck me how much we hurt Soda and how we really never understood him. I also misunderstood my oldest brother Darry. Darry was always yelling at me.

I could never please him. He yelled at me for not using my head and not carrying my blade, but he would have hollered at me for carrying a blade if I had carried one. If I brought home B's, he wanted A's, if I got A's, he wanted to make sure they stayed A's. If I was playing football, I should be studying, and if I was reading, I should be out playing football. I thought that Darry thought I was just another mouth to feed and somebody to holler at. When Cherry asked me what Darry was like I replayed, " He's...he's not like Soda at all and he sure ain't like me.

He's hard as a rock and about as human. He's got eyes exactly like frozen ice. He thinks I'm a pain in the neck.... He can't stand me. I bet he wishes he could stick me in a home somewhere, and he'd do it too, if Soda'd let him.

" I now realize how very wrong I was about my oldest brother. I did not understand him one bit until a couple months ago. When I ran away this year, Dally brought me a letter from Soda that said, "...Darry doesn't have the slightest idea where you are and it's killing him." By then I wasn't totally convinced he cared about me, but I finally understood that he did when in the hospital I realized that he was crying...tears were running down his face. I hadn't seen him cry in years, not even when Mom and Dad had been killed...Darry did care about me, maybe as much as he cared about Soda, and because he cared he was trying to hard to make something of me. When he yelled, " Pony, where have you been all this time?" he meant, " Pony, you've scared me half to death.

Please be careful, because I couldn't stand it if anything happened to you." I remember back to that night in the hospital, he was stroking my hair and I could hear the sobs racking through him as he fought to keep back the tears, " Oh, Pony, I thought we'd lost you...like we did Mom and Dad..." Now that I understand that Darry loves me and just tries to hard to make something of me. Darry is a good guardian; he makes me study and knows where I am and who I'm with all the time...he keeps me out of trouble. The three of us get along a lot better now and I know that Darry loves Soda and me more than anything. We don't always understand our loved one as much as we think we do, but now that I understand my brothers we are closer than ever.

Most importantly over this past year, I learned that it is important to stay innocent and maintain your ability to see good. Two people who taught me this were my friends Dallas Winston and Johnny Cade. Although both boys came from similar backgrounds, each took a different path in life. Both of their parents didn't care about them and abused them. Johnny's mother ignored him and his father beat him. Dally parents did likewise.

Dally believes that one should be tough, mean, and hard in life. He shows this when Johnny and I were rescuing kids from a burning church and he said, " For Pete's sake get outa there! That roof's gonna cave in any minute. Forget those blasted kids!" Dally also shows he is mean and hard when after Johnny asks about his parents Dally says, " Blast it, Johnny, what do they matter? Shoot, my old man don't give a hang whether I'm in jail or dead in a car wreck or drunk in a gutter. That don't bother me none." Dally also shows his way of thinking when he said, " We gotta win that fight tonight.

We gotta get even with the socs. For Johnny." He thought that violence was the only way to solve anything. Finally Dally represents his philosophy when after Johnny dies he told me, " I was crazy, you know that kid? Crazy for wantin' Johnny to stay outa trouble, for not wantin' him to get hard. If he'd been like me he'd never have been in this mess.

If he'd got smart like me he'd never run into that church. That's what you get for helpin' people. Editorials in the paper and a lot more trouble.... You'd better wise up Pony...You get tough like me and you don't get hurt and nothing' can touch you..." As a result of his opaque view of the world, he didn't die a hero. He died violent and young and desperate, just like we all

knew he'd die someday. Although Dally was hard and mean, Johnny kept his innocence, his ability to see good.

While we were saving the kids from the burning church he wasn't behaving at all like his old self. He looked over his shoulder and saw that the door was blocked by flames, and then pushed the window open and tossed out the nearest kid. I caught one quick look at his face; it was red-marked from falling embers and sweat-streaked, but he grinned at me. He wasn't scared either. That was the only time I can think of when I saw him without that defeated, suspicious look in his eyes. He looked like he was having the time of his life.

Johnny also showed his philosophy of keeping your ability to see good when he tells PonyBoy to stay gold. Staying gold means keeping your innocence and maintaining your ability to see good. Before Johnny died he wrote me a letter. In it he said, " I've been thinking about it, that poem, that guy wrote, he meant you're gold when you a kid, like green. When you're a kid everything's new, dawn. It's just when you get used to everything that its day.

Like the way you dig sunsets, Pony. That's gold. Keep it that way, it's a good way to be." Johnny died heroic and gallant. He stayed innocent.

I have really thought about what path I should take in life. Dally's or Johnny's. When I was at the grocery store a car drove up and three socs got out. I just sat there and looked at them and took another swallow of the Pepsi. I wasn't scared.

It was the oddest feeling in the world. I didn't feel anything- scared, mad, or anything. Just zero.... I busted the end off my bottle and held it on the neck and tossed away my cigarette. Then I said," You get back into your car or you'll get split"...I guess they knew I meant business, because they got in their car and drove off...Two-Bit told not to get tough and I thought," If you get tough you don't get hurt." They were Dally's words.

I was choosing Dally's way. Then I knelt down to pick up the glass. I didn't want anyone to get a flat tire. When I picked up the glass I chose Johnny's way. I chose to keep my innocence and see the good side of life.

Over the past year I have learned many valuable lessons. I learned that stereotypes are not always true and you need to see people as individuals, not members of a group. I also learned that understanding your loved ones is important and that we rarely do. Most importantly I learned that keeping your innocence is important and that you should maintain your ability to see good. Through these experiences and lessons I have become a more responsible and mature young man. Darry and Soda are all I have left.

We are a family and we deserve to stay together after all we have been through. Sincerely, Ponyboy Curtis