

Dally's Difference

“For everything you have missed, you have gained something else, and for everything you gain, you lose something else.” Ralph Waldo Emerson once said. This can be true about Dallas Winston. In the novel The Outsiders, seven penurious boys, including Dally are members of a street gang, called the Greasers. One night two boys from the Greasers, Ponyboy and Johnny, get into a street fight with their rival gang the Socs and things turn ominous as one of the enemies' ends up dead. Throughout this journey Ponyboy's perception of Dally changes from a jeopardous, vulgar, and guarded hooligan into a gentle, concerned, and compassionate, brother.

Dally had always been seen as the wildest one in the group. “He (Dally) had quite a reputation. They had a file on him down at the police station. He had been arrested, he got drunk, he rode in rodeos, lied, stole, rolled drunks, jumped small kids—he did everything. I didn't like him,…” (11) Although Dallas did not have the best judgment on things, he was intelligent, and several people esteem him for it. One person who would always look over him was his adolescent buddy Johnny. He could always make Dally think twice about his actions. The reason the two of them had a great deal of respect for each other is because they both grew up with no adult figures in their lives; they are the family they never had. Many people are terrified by Dally, but Johnny is not and wants everyone to comprehend who the true Dallas Winston.

After the street fight, Ponyboy and Johnny run away, to a hide in an old church that Dallas told them about. At this point in the novel Johnny and Ponyboy are eating their first filling meal in almost a week with Dally. Since they have been on the run for about a week now they have only been eating baloney sandwiches and are now eating at the local Dairy Queen. While quietly stuffing their mouths with subs, Johnny unexpectedly says “Were goin' back and turning ourselves in.” (87) The other two Greasers are flabbergasted by what they just heard, and have no idea how to react to what they just heard.

Finally something comes out of Dally. “Johnny,’ Dally said in a pleading, high voice, using a tone I have never heard from him before, ‘Johnny, I ain't mad at you. I just don't want you to get hurt. You don't know what a few months in jail can do to you. Oh, blast it, Johnny' ...'you get hardened in jail. I don't want that to happen to you. Like it happened to me...’” (89-90) For the first time ever Ponyboy is truly seeing who the real Dallas Winston, someone who is caring and wants the best for someone, not a tuff hood. Shortly later on in the book Ponyboy realized that Dally only talks about his time in jail to brag about it not to say how bad it was.

After seeing that one of his best friends might change to into what he is, Dally changes into an ungraded, soft, and caring man after he was once known as a dreadful, uncouth, and antagonistic hood. He does this because he does not want Johnny to get tough, cold, and hard, like he is. Before Ponyboy thought that Dallas was just looking at

for himself, but after seeing him looking out for Johnny, Ponyboy is seeing him as a pal rather than a member of his gang. It is only too bad that his happens a few days before Dally's death.