PONYBOY. I was comin' home from the movies. I didn't think—

DARRY *(breaking in)*. You don't ever think, not at home or anywhere when it counts. You must think at school with all those good grades, and you've always got your nose in a book, but do you ever use your head for common sense? No sirree, bub. And if you had to go by yourself you should've carried a blade.

PONYBOY *(unhappily)*. No matter what I did you wouldn't like it.

SODAPOP. Leave my kid brother alone, you hear? It ain't his fault he likes to go to the movies, and it ain't his fault the Socs like to jump us, and if he'd been carrying a blade it would've been a good excuse to cut him to ribbons.

DARRY *(impatiently)*. When I want my kid brother to tell me what to do with my other kid brother, I'll ask you—kid brother. *(SODAPOP laughs.)*

Johnny figured it was Soda holding him. He started shaking and crying—couldn't stop himself. He said there was a whole bunch—a blue Mustang full. Soda kept holding him saying, "Don't talk," and over and over, "They've gone. They've gone, Johnnycake."

CHERRY *(cautiously)*. A blue Mustang?

PONYBOY *(nods again)*. Johnny tried to run, but they caught him. One of them had rings on his hand. That's what cut Johnny so bad.

CHERRY *(disturbed)*. All Socs aren't like that. You have to believe me, Ponyboy. Not all of us are like that.

PONYBOY. Sure.

CHERRY. That's like saying all greasers are like Dallas Winston. I bet he's jumped a few people.

PONYBOY *(conceding, nods)*. Lotsa times.

START CHERRY. You think the Socs have it made, don't you?

PONYBOY *(sharply)*. Well you do.

CHERRY. It may come as a surprise, but we have troubles you've never even heard of. You want to know something. Things are tough all over.

PONYBOY. Then why are we so different?

CHERRY *(considering)*. You're more emotional. We're sophisticated—cool to the point of not feeling anything. I'll catch myself talking and realize I don't mean half what I'm saying. I don't really think a beer blast on the river bottom is super-cool, but I'll rave about it just to be saying something. *(She suddenly smiles at him.)* I've never told that to anyone. You're the first person. *(Truly curious.)* Why is that?

PONYBOY *(wryly)*. Because I'm a greaser and because I'm younger. So you don't have to keep your guard up.

CHERRY *(admiring)*. For a kid, you're awful smart.

PONYBOY. Probably I'll outgrow it. *(Nods left.)* We'd better buy some popcorn and get back. *(Movie music is climaxing and then ends.)*

CHERRY *(glances at the imaginary screen)*. The picture's ending. *(Curiously.)* You read a lot, don't you, Ponyboy?

PONYBOY. Yeah. Why?

CHERRY. I could just tell. And I bet you watch sunsets. *(PONY nods.)* I used to watch them, too, before I got so busy.

(MARCIA, TWO-BIT and JOHNNY are coming across

JOHNNY. Yeah, but one night I saw Dallas gettin' picked up by the fuzz, and he kept real cool. They were gettin' him for somethin' Two-Bit did. And Dallas knew it. But he took the sentence without battin' an eye or even denying it. That's gallant.

PONYBOY. He's your hero now? Go back to sleep. *(JOHNNY sighs and leans back. PONYBOY continues, front.)* Dawn the next morning—all the lower valley was covered with mist. The clouds changed from gray to pink, and the mist was touched with gold. There was a silent moment when everything held its breath—then the sun rose.

JOHNNY. Golly—*(PONYBOY is startled by JOHNNY's voice.)* That's sure pretty.

PONYBOY. Wouldn't it be cool to be able to paint that sky? *(JOHNNY's standing to see, as is PONYBOY.)*

JOHNNY. Too bad it can't stay like that.

PONYBOY *(this triggers a memory for PONYBOY. He's quoting)*. "Nothing gold can stay."

JOHNNY. What?

PONYBOY. A poem I read once. I was remembering it. *(As he recalls it.)*

Nature's first green is gold
Her hardest hue to hold
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour—
(Embarrassed.)
It goes on.

JOHNNY *(wanting him to continue)*. Well, you go on.

PONYBOY. Then leaf subsides to leaf
So Eden sank to grief
So dawn goes down to day

(He lets out a breath.)

Nothing gold can stay.

JOHNNY. Where'd you learn that?

PONYBOY. Robert Frost wrote it. *(Bothered.)* He meant more to it than I'm gettin' though.

JOHNNY. How come you remember it?

PONYBOY. Because I keep tryin' to figure it out. I never quite got what he meant by it.

JOHNNY. I never noticed colors and clouds and stuff till you started reminding me about them. It seems like they were never there before.

PONYBOY. I couldn't tell the others about stuff like that. I couldn't even remember the poem around them. They don't dig. Just you, and Sodapop sometimes—and maybe Cherry Valance.

JOHNNY *(with a pleased sigh)*. I guess we're different.

PONYBOY. Shoot, maybe *they* are. *(Front again.)* I was so tired of baloney, I got sick lookin' at it. We'd eaten all the candy bars, and I was dying for a Pepsi. By that time, I'd read up to Sherman's siege of Atlanta, and I owed Johnny a hundred and fifty bucks from poker games. *(Amused at himself.)* I was beginning to think I'd always lived in a church, or maybe during the Civil War—or both. *(There's a low whistle signal ending with the sudden high note.)*

JOHNNY. Pony—hear it? *(The whistle is repeated.)*

PONYBOY *(tense)*. Who d'ya think?

(DALLAS is crossing to them.)

DALLAS. Glory—look at the church mice.

JOHNNY. Hey, Dallas!

DALLAS. Little Johnnycake and—Ponyboy.

END