

from The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton

1 Johnny and I never went to the front of the church. You could see the front from the road, and sometimes farm kids rode their horses by on their way to the store. So we stayed in the very back, usually sitting on the steps and looking across the valley. We could see for miles; see the ribbon of highway and the small dots that were houses and cars. We couldn't watch the sunset, since the back faced east, but I loved to look at the colors of the fields and the soft shadings of the horizon.

2 One morning I woke up earlier than usual. Johnny and I slept huddled together for warmth—Dally had been right when he said it would get cold where we were going. Being careful not to wake Johnny up, I went to sit on the steps and smoke a cigarette. The dawn was coming then. All the lower valley was covered with mist, and sometimes little pieces of it broke off and floated away in small clouds. The sky was lighter in the east, and the horizon was a thin golden line. The clouds changed from gray to pink, and the mist was touched with gold. There was a silent moment when everything held its breath, and then the sun rose. It was beautiful.

3 “Golly”—Johnny’s voice beside me made me jump—“that sure was pretty.”

4 “Yeah.” I sighed, wishing I had some paint to do a picture with while the sight was still fresh in my mind.

5 “The mist was what was pretty,” Johnny said. “All gold and silver.”

6 “Uhhmmm,” I said, trying to blow a smoke ring.

7 “Too bad it couldn’t stay like that all the time.”

8 “Nothing gold can stay.” I was remembering a poem I’d read once.

9 “What?”

10 *“Nature’s first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf’s a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.”*

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