



Sample passage from Rough Draft

Don't worry, this isn't a spoiler. Keep in mind, this is an UNEDITED excerpt from the rough draft, it may or may not survive the multiple rounds of edits and re-writes, it may not even make it into the final manuscript.

This excerpt is a Shane memory flashback moment – an insight into Shane's character:

I'd never had to take summer school in all my life and I wasn't about to start now, besides I had better things to do with my summer vacation than to sit in a damn stuffy classroom with losers. I remember the one time I'd just barely escaped a sentence to summer school, I was in the third grade and for no reason my grades started to plummet. Momma was called to meet with my teacher and the school principal.

During the meeting, I sat quietly, fuming in the background as the principal quizzed Momma about our home life. “How are you and the mister getting along? Are there mitigating circumstances that we should know about?” the principal asked of Momma. I felt really awful for Momma having to endure that line of questioning, all because of me. The principal might just as well have shown a bright light in Momma's eyes and interrogated her like she was a goddam criminal. Momma had no idea as to why my grades had nosedived. She was just as baffled as my teacher and the relentless principal with his endless string of nose questions.

The principal suggested an experiment, if Momma was up to the challenge. He led Momma, me, and my teacher into my classroom. Once inside, the principal asked me to sit at my usual desk. I did as I was told. The principal asked my teacher to write something on the chalkboard, but I couldn't make out exactly what the principal told her to write. My teacher wrote on the chalkboard while Momma stood near the door frowning. My teacher stepped away from the chalkboard. Then the principal asked me to read out loud what was written on the board. I squinted my eyes really hard, but I couldn't make out the blurred calk markings, it might just as well have been hieroglyphics for all I cared, that's what it looked like to me.

“I see the problem,” the principal chuckled and turned to Momma. “Your son is nearsighted – he can't

see the blackboard from his desk in the back of the room.”

Momma and my teacher were relieved, but I wasn't so happy. You see, a few days later Momma took me to see an eye doctor, he was a nice enough man and all. He fitted me in a pair of eyeglasses. Sure, I could see, probably better than I'd ever seen before, but I didn't like my reflection in the mirror. I was afraid of what the kids at school would say. Kids at that age can be really cruel, especially when someone is different than them in any way. I was definitely different with the new eyeglasses. It turned out, the kids called me names like: four-eyes, geek, and Poindexter.

Granted my grades did come back up and the potential threat of summer school had been aborted. But, I still didn't look good in my eyeglasses. I felt like I was damaged goods – I was flawed – I no longer looked like the other kids. My glasses made me self-conscious and I didn't feel comfortable to be 'round the other kids. I started to avoid the kids and chose not to play with them on the playground. I knew I didn't meet the standards of the other kids – I was hopelessly inadequate.

I suppose that's when my self image took a big hit and I realized I no longer measured up to my peers – I was a pathetic loser. I accepted the fact I'd never be like the other kids. You wanna know something else? I've never told anyone this before, but every time I looked at my reflection in the mirror – a total stranger always stared back at me. Even today, that strange boy is still hiding inside every mirror I look into. Ya know? After a couple of years I finally came to accept the truth that I was a goddamned loser – a nobody – a failure – I was flawed and there was nothing I could do to change that. I'd always be different – an outcast.

DISCLAIMER

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This is a period work of southern literary fiction told from the perspective of an eighteen-year-old male, set between the years of 1971 – 1974, along with his memory flashbacks from the 1960's. In keeping with the true integrity of the southern literary genre; regional terms, words and common slang of the specified time period have been used in the telling of this tale and should not be construed as politically incorrect, derogatory, demeaning, or to belittle or insult persons in any fashion by today's social standards.