

# S. E. HINTON

*Author of The Outsiders*



## RUMBLE FISH



# ONE



I ran into Steve a couple of days ago. He was real surprised to see me. We hadn't seen each other for a long time.

I was sitting on the beach and he come up to me and said, "Rusty-James?"

I said, "Yeah?" because I didn't recognize him right off. My memory's screwed up some.

"It's me," he said. "It's Steve Hays."

Then I remembered and got up, brushing sand off. "Hey, yeah."

"What are you doing here?" he kept saying, looking at me like he couldn't believe it.

"I live here," I said. "What are you doin' here?"



"I'm on vacation. I'm going to college here."

"Yeah?" I said. "What you goin' to college for?"

"I'm going to teach when I get out. High school, probably. I can't believe it! I never thought I'd see you again. And here of all places!"

I figured I had as much chance of being here as he did, even if we were a long way from where we'd seen each other last. People get excited over the weirdest things. I wondered why I wasn't glad to see him.

"You're goin' to be a teacher, huh?" I said. It figured. He was always reading and stuff.

"What do you do here?" he asked.

"Nothin'. Bum around," I answered. Bumming around is a real popular profession here. You could paint, write, barkeep, or bum around. I tried barkeeping once and didn't much like it.

"Lord, Rusty-James," he said. "How long has it been now?"

I thought for a minute and said, "Five or six years." Math ain't never been my strong point.



"How did you get here?" He just couldn't seem to get over it.

"Me and a friend of mine, Alex, a guy I met in the reformatory, we just started knockin' around after we got out. We been here awhile."

"No kidding?" Steve hadn't changed much. He looked about the same, except for the moustache that made him look like a little kid going to a Halloween party. But a lot of people are growing moustaches these days. I never went in for them myself.

"How long were you in for?" he asked. "I never found out. We moved, you know, right after . . ."

"Five years," I said. I can't remember much about it. Like I said, my memory's screwed up some. If somebody says something to remind me, I can remember things. But if I'm left alone I don't seem to be able to. Sometimes Alex'll say something that brings back the reformatory, but mostly he don't. He don't like remembering it either.

"They put me in solitary once," I said, because Steve seemed to be waiting for something.



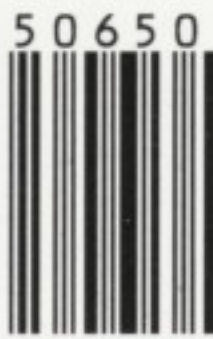
**R**usty-James is the number one tough guy among the junior high kids who hang out and shoot pool at Benny's, and he enjoys keeping up his reputation. What he wants most of all is to be just like his older brother, the Motorcycle Boy. Rusty-James isn't book-smart—he relies more on his fists than his brains. When he gets in over his head, the Motorcycle Boy has always been there to bail him out. But one day Rusty-James's world comes apart. And this time the Motorcycle Boy isn't around to pick up the pieces.

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