

“H.S.”

By David Paul

(I have adapted this one act about my High School experience for 4 characters...2 male B1 & B2 & 2 female G 1 & G2... with no set character. It can be performed as a reader's theatre piece or staged as the director chooses.)

(The actors enter chanting in pairs with little enthusiasm...)

All: We're loyal to you Edgewood High...

Your colors are true Edgewood High!

B's: (mockingly) you're the best in the land

Because your girls are so grand...

G's: (as a reproach to B's)

And the Guys always send us

High, high, high...

All: We'll fight for you ol' Edgewood High

In all that we do Edgewood High.

B's: You're always a part of us

G's: making the best of us!

All: Edgewood High, for you we'll always try!

G's: (halfhearted cheerleaders) Rah!!

B's: (not much effort) Rah!!

All: (weak & soft) Rah! Rah! Rah!

B1: Now where's your "school spirit" team? (Like he has heard it before, imitating "the coach")

G1: How can we be joyous after finishing our second losing season?

B2: Well ...there is always next year...

G2: or the year after that!

B1: Well one of these years we've got to win at least one game!

G1: I wonder what winning feels like...

B1: It's not the winning that counts,

but how you play the game! (As "the coach")

B2: Thank you Coach Schimdt,

G2: Principal Hardy,

B1: and our apologetic faculty!

G1: Well at least we are good at one thing...losing!

B2: Yeah, we've had lots of practice.

G2: I wonder if this could have a psychological effect on our will to succeed.

All: It's not the winning that counts...

G1: but just getting by! (All laugh in agreement)

B1: (directed to the audience, the other actors stay frozen in time)

It's rather discouraging being on a losing team for the last two years. You begin to realize it's hopeless when even your parents stop coming to the games. At first they told me that it was just a bad streak and that it takes time & experience to build a good team. After a while they even stopped saying that. It's not that winning is all that important, but things get pretty dark after losing for such a long time. I wasn't even going to try out this year, but we all can't be quitters with the small team we have left. After the parents stopped coming to the games, the next ones to drop off was the fans from school, which is your only support after your folks. I can't blame them, we're all too use to losing...so why even try? Sports in general are not the most popular activity at Edgewood any more, no one ever wants to back a loser. Let the dying dog die...besides everyone knows that jocks are just big, dumb animals. I don't care how apathetic or unpopular it gets...I need the game! I've got nothing else, I've got no brains and there's nothing else for me to do well in. Sports are for MEN and so I work at it...I need the chance to prove myself by myself alone...even though no one else may care, it's important to me...I care!

G1: I don't know why they do it? The loyal fans of Edgewood High, even if they're only a handful. Me? I go because of them...they go & I tag along. It's my group, even though it is NOT my thing! I HATE sports, gym and sweat in that order. But give me the bright lights and the stage...and I come alive as unique & special. Someone has to try out for the leads in musicals. We may have a lousy sports program, but to make up for it we excel in the fine arts! After Edgewood's first losing season, the money and prestige that was normally lavished on sports made a quick and strategic detour to other departments that held more potential. I use to be your typical pom-pom cheerleader along with

my friends, until I saw the change coming. So I took up singing to fill up all the extra time. First glee club, then concert chorus, then small parts in musicals, a couple of music contests and then even bigger parts! I came up slowly, but I came up on my own! No more friends to point me where to go. And my folks...they were so proud of me....finally. It's such a thrill for them that they are on Cloud Nine for months. Honestly I think they enjoy it more than I do. Yeah...I still hang around my friends, who follow our losing team...I HAVE TO...there is only ONE musical a year!

B1: Another day of school over how many more does that leave now?

G1: Approximately 150

B1: Is that all! ("Will it never end?")

G2: Have you met the new kid in school yet?

B1: Of course I have...he's only been here since the beginning of the school year. After a couple of months, you're bound to run into everyone here!

G1: He strikes me as....strange, if you know what I mean. He's not out for any sports and I heard pretty lousy in gym.

B1: Let's go over and talk to him....give him an official Edgewood welcome!

G1: Hi! Welcome to Edgewood High!

G2: We know we're a couple of months late, but you know what's it like in the beginning of the school year.

B2: Gee...thanks. I really haven't met too many of you yet. It's always hard to make a fresh start all over again.

B1: Yeah? Well we wouldn't know anything about that, we've lived here all our lives and waiting for a chance to get out!

G1: We know our team isn't on a winning streak, but we were wondering why you didn't even try out?

G2: Yeah....you're in all the plays and chorus...

G1: and the school paper and annual...

B1: guess you aren't much of a jock? (No response...snicker from group)

G2: We maybe on a losing streak, but we have the best beer parties! (Laughter in agreement)

G1: See that girl over there....she's the preacher's daughter. You'd never guess that she has run away twice, had an abortion and goes to a psychiatrist!

B1: You might say she's easy (snickers from the group) if you know what I mean.

G1: Why don't you go over and make friends with the preacher's daughter....then you both can be strange together. Maybe she'll loan you some of her weird clothes!

B1: Strange isn't the right word....but QUEER is!

G1: Yeah....you might say he's a queer sort of fellow! (Snickers from the group)

B1: Not man enough to care what we call you? Better leave him with the girls, I've got practice to go to. See you at the party tonight girls.

B2: That's some kind of welcome...

G1: Don't listen to him...he thinks he is the super Jock of Edgewood...allot of brawn but no brains... even his brawn won't help a losing team. But I would watch out for her...she only hangs out with the slime of the school...she has a reputation of being a real whore...lots of crazy ideas! Maybe we'll see you at the party tonight?

B2: Yeah, sure.....if they're the friendly group, maybe she doesn't seem that strange to me. She's in a couple of my classes, a real nonconformist. She usually has her reasons but she doesn't flaunt them. What's wrong with being a little "different"? Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words can...cause real bruises! Somehow I thought this town might be different. It's always nice to move to a new town, away from the mistakes & bruises in the hopes that something different may happen this time. Sure I've tried to be like them: play their sports, spread their gossip, drink their beer...but somehow I'm not happy that way...I guess it's not the real me. I just don't like sports, fights, beer or guns...what's wrong with that? Any kind of lasting peace isn't going to come by force. It seems I just can't digest everything people try to feed me...I naturally rebel. I don't want to be force fed their values & ideas...I need to form my own, even if it has to come at the price of a few bruises. I don't really like the names they brand me with...I try to ignore them, but it never seems to stop. It really begins to gnaw at you after awhile and hurt deep. Maybe the preacher's daughter may have some answers. We've already have "being different" in common....I really can't believe she's as bad as they try to make her out to be....I'm not! Then again, maybe they're right...maybe I am queer?

G2: Looks like he got the typical Edgewood welcome! Any time something a little extra ordinary happens, they label it strange, weird...or queer for those guys that feel they don't have to prove their manhood. Me? I'm the non-typical preacher's daughter. Before I was even conceived, I was already being

pre-molded in my parent's minds. Miss prim and proper, religious and upright, the perfect specimen of holiness and goodness. The rub is...that is not MY mold, I really did try...but I can't anymore! How can they expect so much of me, when I don't know for myself who I really am? "You're different just for the sake of being different" my folks keep saying as they're embarrassed by whatever I do. Would you believe they won't even allow me to burn candles in my room? "For fear that the church's house may burn down" they say....so I burn them in my closet! I've surpassed their tolerance level a number of times when it seems I just can't find myself here or they won't let me, so I take my search to the open road. They always seem to find me somehow and drag me home. Then it is off to the shrink to convince me to stay here to survive and recover so I can become their preacher's daughter again. I really don't want to hurt them...but I need the space to explore and experience who I really am. There is so much beauty when you can see...I want to fly but they seek to train me for their cage. I'm not sorry....for being me!

B1: Sticks and stone may hurt my bones

G1: but labels can only limit me!

B2: Labels only describe only some of the contents

G2: but not the essence of who we are.

B1: If you were popular, labels can be a positive boost to your ego

G1: but if you were not part of a popular clique, they can cut deep.

B2: My fellow classmates, as we leave Edgewood High School, let us remember the friends we have made and the value we have learned. Much is expected of us as we each go our separate ways into different roles in life. May what we have share here....live on as a part of our lives forever. Let us always place the greatest value on the rights won for us as our American Heritage: namely the freedom to be the individual of our own choice and making. This personal freedom that lets us respect the dignity of those who choose not to conform to our own values, just as we expect to be respected for our own values. When we see this personal liberty die...so will the Democracy we all hold so dear!

G2: Rah! (Very half-heartedly)

B1: Rah! (Apathetically)

All: Rah! Rah! Rah! (Weak and soft)

(Blackout)

