



Where Do I Belong?

Plays About Fitting In



By Catherine Gourley



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Contents

On the Fringe 4

Think It Over 16

The Dancers 18

Think It Over 30

Your Turn 32

Glossary 32

About the Author 32

Note to the reader: Be sure to look at the Glossary on page 32 to find definitions of words that might be unfamiliar.

On the Fringe

When Joe looks at himself in the mirror, he sees an average guy in the ninth grade. He's not the most popular guy in school, but he's never lonely. Things change when Joe tries out for the football team. He discovers a talent he never knew he had—kicking. Making the team as a punter and placekicker shifts Joe from the fringe to the in-crowd. But is life any better for Joe now that he's on the inside?

Characters:

Narrators 1, 2, 3

Joe Galván, a ninth-grade student
and bass player

Arjun, Joe's friend who plays guitar

Chelsea, Joe's friend who plays drums

Coach Barnes

Connor Barkley, the quarterback

Gym teacher

Scene 1

Narrator 1: It's another ordinary school week for Joe Galván. On Monday, he takes a history test.

Arjun: How did you do on the test?

Joe: I knew most of the answers. I think I did really well!

Narrator 2: On Tuesday, the history teacher returns the tests. Joe's grade is less than what he'd hoped for—a C.

Narrator 3: When Joe looks in the mirror, he sees an average guy looking back at him. He's not too tall and not too short. He plays bass guitar, not expertly but not horribly, either. He's not the most popular guy in school—but he does have friends.

Narrator 1: This week, however, life is about to change for Joe.

Narrator 2: The change begins on Friday in gym class with a game of "punt bowl."

Arjun: I hate this game. I always lose. You'll see!

Joe: At least it isn't rope climbing. I still have rope burns on my knees from Wednesday. Just once, I'd like to make it to the top.

Narrator 3: The teacher divides the class into two teams. Each team takes turns punting a football to the other end of the field.

Narrator 1: The punter has to kick the ball inbounds. Otherwise the other team scores a point, and the punter is out. The player who catches the ball has seven seconds to punt the ball, or the kicking team scores a point.

Narrator 2: Arjun catches the ball and kicks. The ball sails into the bleachers. As he predicted, he is out of the game.

Narrator 3: Off to the side, the football coach hears the gym class cheering and jeering. He strolls over to watch.

Narrator 1: The football spirals high, and Joe catches it. The opposing team begins chanting: Seven, six, five, four, three, two—

Narrator 2: Joe drops the ball and kicks. It spirals high, long, and straight.

Coach Barnes: Nice kick! Who is that boy?

Gym teacher: Joe? Nice kid. Quiet mostly.

Coach Barnes: Do you think he can kick the ball like that again?

Gym teacher: Let's watch and see.

Narrator 3: A few minutes later, Joe catches the ball again.

Narrator 1: Joe's kick is once again right down the middle, over the heads of the other team but well within bounds.

Narrator 2: After class, the coach approaches Joe.

Coach Barnes: Hey Joe, where did you learn to kick like that?

Joe: In the street. You have to kick right down the middle or the ball bounces off parked cars. People hate that.

Coach Barnes: (*laughing*) Yeah, I guess they would. Ever think of going out for football?

Joe: Me? (*shakes his head*) Nah, sports isn't my thing.

Coach Barnes: You've got a powerful kick. I'd like to see how you do punting and placekicking. Think about it.

Joe: I don't know. I can't compete with those guys.

Coach Barnes: You don't know until you try. Come by practice on Monday. We'll talk more.

Scene 2

Narrator 3: Arjun, Chelsea, and Joe have formed a band. Every Saturday afternoon they practice in Chelsea's father's garage. The band has never played in public, and the friends can't seem to agree on a name.

Narrator 1: Joe finishes his can of soda and crunches the can.

Joe: How about "Light Metal"?

Chelsea: That's not the kind of music we play.

Narrator 2: Joe tosses his empty soda can into the recycling bin.

Joe: How about "The Recyclables"?

Chelsea: But we don't recycle music. We make our own. I have a suggestion. How about "The Fringe"?