



Stand Up and Be Counted

by Cary Pepper

Characters:

Mike
Joan
Hank
Mr. Zand

Scene: a neighborhood schoolyard. Mike and Joan meet in the middle.

MIKE: Thanks for helping me study for tomorrow's test. The library's open until 6:00, so we'll have plenty of time. Meet you here at 3:00?

JOAN: OK. Did you hear about the video store?

MIKE: Yeah! Someone threw paint all over the windows. I saw it on my way to school this morning.

JOAN: Did you hear why?

MIKE: Uh-uh.

JOAN: Whoever did it slipped a note under the door. It said. "We don't want your kind in our neighborhood."

MIKE: How do you know that?

JOAN: Mr. Zand, my history teacher, told us.

MIKE: The Bowens own that store. What "kind" are they?

JOAN: They're not a *kind*. They're *people*.

KEN: There's something else you should know.

LEE: *[spotting Holly]* Sure. Later, man.
[Lee walks over to Holly and Peter.]

PETER: Glad you came.

LEE: So am I.
[He and Holly stare at each other]

HOLLY: When are you coming back to school?

LEE: Next semester. I saw Mr. Stein last week about my course schedule. If I go to summer school, I should be caught up by the beginning of next year.

HOLLY: I'm glad to hear it.

PETER: I'm going to check on the sound system. *[to Holly]*
See you later.

*[Holly and Lee look at each other uncomfortably.
They both try to talk at the same time.]*

HOLLY: When did you leave the—

LEE: My sister said she bumped into you at— *[They look at each other and laugh.]* OK, you first.

HOLLY: I stopped by to visit you in the hospital. But only your family could see you.

LEE: Thanks for trying. My mom told me you had been there. It meant a lot to me.

HOLLY: I'm just so sorry about that accident . . . about everything that happened that night.

LEE: Breaking up with me didn't cause the accident. I did. Of course, I had a lot of help. Six cans of beer made it real easy.

HOLLY: Your sister said you're OK now.

LEE: I'll let you in on a little secret. When I was boozing, I felt lonelier at parties than I do now by myself. And to tell you the truth, Sandra, it's a little scary for me to think about going. What do I do at a party? How do I act without a drink in my hand?

SANDRA: All the more reason to try a party sober. You might even like it.

Scene Two: the living room of Ken's house. Music is playing. A party is getting underway. There's a table with food and drinks. As Lee walks in, his friends Ken and Nell come up to welcome him.

KEN: *[patting Lee on the back]* Hey, man, it's good to see you. Glad you could make it.

NELL: How're you feeling?

LEE: OK. The leg's healing up fine. I'm going back to school next semester.

NELL: Terrific. We've really missed you. I kept meaning to stop by and say hello. But I wasn't sure when you got out of the hospital.

LEE: About six weeks ago.

NELL: I'm sorry. I didn't know it had been so long. *[looking uncomfortable]* I'm going to get something to eat. See you later.

[She walks to another corner of the room. Ken stays with Lee.]

KEN: Sorry about that.

LEE: That's OK. Some people are better at visiting than others. I don't take it personally.

KEN: I really am glad you made it tonight. Peter wasn't sure if you would be here.

SANDRA: He even showed up at the restaurant once. He wanted dinner on the house. But Dad tossed him out instead. He was drunk out of his mind. *[suddenly embarrassed]*

LEE: That's all right. Don't be embarrassed. Bobby Frank did drink a lot. He was like me. There's one difference. I have a disease. It's called *alcoholism*.

SANDRA: I'm sorry. I guess I said the wrong thing.

LEE: No, you didn't. It's not a big secret or anything. I'm a recovering alcoholic, and I take things day by day.

SANDRA: You've come a long way in just three months.

LEE: Hey, wrapping Dad's car around a tree helped. It was a painful way to get my act together. But the doctors and nurses taught me a few things.

SANDRA: *[smiling]* Like what?

LEE: No beer parties. They're against hospital rules.

[Lee takes an apple and walks slowly to the table. He's limping. Sandra watches him, concerned.]

SANDRA: How's your leg?

LEE: A lot better. I talked to Doctor Ransom today. He said the stiffness will be gone in about six weeks. Hey, I might even be shooting baskets with Dad soon.

[They sit down at the kitchen table.]

SANDRA: You know something? It's nice to have you back. I mean the old you.

LEE: Instead of the drunken clown. Remember? My friends called me the life of the party.

SANDRA: I remember.

LEE: Going to a party was one thing. Staying there was something else. Man, I needed that drink in my hand. Without it, I felt like a major loser. But even my best friends didn't know that.