

THE ROCKBOUND WELCOME

By Alan Haehnel

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CHARACTERS

MERRIAM (F)	A new student who has just come to Rockbound High
GARRETT (M)	Peppy/Preppy Student Council Member
AMY (F)	Same as Garrett
DOCTOR GARRISON (M)	Tyrannical Dean of Rockbound High
SECRETARY (F)	Tyrannical Secretary to doctor Garrison
JOCKS1-6	Stereotypical Athletes
BRANIACS 1-8	Stereotypical Scholars
RETROS1-6	Stereotypical Non-conformants

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SETTING: Cafeteria.

AT RISE: The stereotypical high school groups are in their places—the jocks, the brainiacs, the retro-hippies, etc. At the center table, MERRIAM sits down with her lunch. SHE looks around at the pandemonium around her, shakes her head a bit, takes out a sandwich. After a moment, GARRETT and AMY come and sit on either side of MERRIAM. THEY are extremely peppy/preppy/student council types.

GARRETT: Hello!

AMY: Hi, there!

MERRIAM: Uh, hi.

GARRETT: I'm Garrett.

AMY: And I'm Amy.

GARRETT and AMY: Welcome to Rockbound High School!

MERRIAM: Thanks.

GARRETT: Home of the Rockbound Chipmunks!

AMY: Gooooo, Chippers!

GARRETT: So. You're Merriam, right?

AMY: You're new, right?

MERRIAM: Well, I've been here for a couple weeks now.

GARRETT: We know.

AMY: As student council new student liaison personnel, it's our duty to know.

MERRIAM: Great. So, anyway, yeah, I'm new.

AMY: So, what do you think of Rockbound so far?

MERRIAM: Uh, it's. . .

GARRETT: Cool? Super-cool? Stupendously uber-cool?

MERRIAM: Well. . .

AMY: Eight state championships in sports ranging from football to tennis last year.

GARRETT: 90% of the teaching staff holding a Master's Degree or higher.

AMY: State-of-the-art science laboratories.

GARRETT: Peer tutoring in every subject.

MERRIAM: Look, you don't have to recruit me. I'm already here.

GARRETT: Here and loving it, right?

MERRIAM: I wouldn't exactly. . .

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AMY: So here's the question we have for you, Merriam. Garrett and I are confused. These are our confused faces.

(THEY both put on confused faces.)

GARRETT: And concerned. See the concern?

(THEY both put on concerned faces.)

AMY: We are concerned and confused.

(AMY wears the concerned face; GARRETT the confused one.)

GARRETT: Sometimes we switch.

(THEY switch.)

AMY: And sometimes both of us feel both emotions at exactly the same time!

(THEY put on concerned/confused faces.)

MERRIAM: You know, lunch is pretty short, and. . .

GARRETT and AMY: About you, Merriam.

MERRIAM: What?

GARRETT: We are confused and concerned about you, Merriam.

MERRIAM: Oh. Uh. . . well, you don't have to be. I'm all right.

AMY: Do you believe her, Garrett?

GARRETT: Not a 100%, Amy.

AMY: Why not, Garrett?

GARRETT: Look around you, Amy. Do you see anyone else sitting all by their lonesome here in the cafeteria of Rockbound High, where we offer not only breakfasts and lunches of high nutritional value, but also a vibrant and vital social atmosphere?

AMY: I do not see anyone else sitting all by their lonesome, no, I don't.

GARRETT: So who is the only one sitting all by her lonesome?

AMY: Why, I believe it is only our newest addition to our Rockbound school community—Merriam.

GARRETT: I believe you are right. And would that not be a matter of both confusion and concern for us, faithful members of the student council new student liaison personnel team?

AMY: I believe it would be a matter of deep concern and confusion, Garrett.

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(AMY and GARRETT turn with intense confused/concerns looks, focused on MERRIAM.)

MERRIAM: Ummm. . . *(reaching in her bag, pulling out some crackers)*
Goldfish?

GARRETT: Why do you sit alone, Merriam?

AMY: Why have you not yet fit in, Merriam?

MERRIAM: Listen, can I be honest?

GARRETT and AMY: We love honesty.

MERRIAM: Great. See, the thing is, I find Rockbound High. . . a very strange place.

GARRETT and AMY: Strange!?

MERRIAM: Yeah, I mean, no offense or anything. . .

AMY: None taken.

GARRETT: Oh, not at all.

MERRIAM: Great.

AMY and GARRETT: Strange!?

MERRIAM: Yeah. See, I've been to quite a few schools in my life.

AMY: Have you?

MERRIAM: I have.

AMY: She's a traveler, Garrett.

GARRETT: I'll note that.

MERRIAM: Good. My parents are in the milit. . . Anyway, you see, I usually don't have much trouble, you know, finding kids to hang out with, but here. . .

AMY: I think I know the problem, Garrett.

GARRETT: Do you, Amy?

AMY: The problem is not with Merriam.

GARRETT: No?

AMY: No. She has traveled. She has made friends. She has fit in in other places. The only possible conclusion, then, is that the problem, Garrett—and this is not easy to admit—is us.

GARRETT: You mean. . . ?

AMY: Yes. We have not performed our duties adequately. We have let Merriam, and all of Rockbound High. . . down.

MERRIAM: Oh, now. . .

GARRETT: Nooooooo! Our duty, our alma mater, our responsibility, our school spirit! We have betrayed them all! Noooooo!

AMY: But!

GARRETT: But?

AMY: We can fix it.

GARRETT: Do you think so, Amy?

AMY: I do, Garrett.

GARRETT: When?

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AMY: Now.

GARRETT: How?

AMY: By showing Merriam the range of social possibilities available here at Rockbound High!

MERRIAM: No, really, you don't have. . .

AMY: (*aside to GARRETT*) Ask me why.

GARRETT: What?

AMY: You forgot the why.

GARRETT: Oh, oh, yes. Why, Amy?

AMY: (*standing*) Because, Garrett. . . (*SHE signals for GARRETT to stand; HE does.*). . . as the student council new student liaison personnel team, it is our job!

(*GARRETT and AMY stand still in their noble poses.*)

MERRIAM: Yeah. See, the thing is, if I don't finish my lunch, I end up with a bad head. . .

GARRETT: (*getting MERRIAM up*) Come, Merriam; we shall find you your place.

MERRIAM: I'm fine, I'm telling you!

AMY: Never again will you sit alone at lunch; we'll see to that.

MERRIAM: Guys, please, I don't need the social tour. I never should have said anything. Rockbound is a wonderful place, and I'm sure I just need a little more time to. . .

(*By now, AMY and GARRETT have dragged MERRIAM over to the jock table.*)

GARRETT: Hello, everyone—meet Merriam, our new student.

(*In unison, the JOCKS grunt.*)

JOCK 1: What do you play?

MERRIAM: I, well, I. . .

JOCK 2: Haven't seen you out on the field.

JOCK 3: You want to hang with us, you gotta be tough!

ALL JOCKS: Tough!

JOCK 4: Rough!

ALL JOCKS: Rough!

JOCK 5: And you can't wash your socks for weeks.

ALL JOCKS: Check her socks!

MERRIAM: No, no, no—that won't be necessary. My socks are clean.

JOCK 6: How clean?

MERRIAM: I put on a fresh pair every morning.

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ALL JOCKS: (*ad libs*) She's no jock. Get lost. Forget it. Who needs her?

MERRIAM: I do like sports, though. I used to pitch for the softball team.

AMY: That's the spirit!

JOCK 2: Why ain't you out there now?

JOCK 3: Yeah—you look like you got a decent arm.

(*JOCK 3 punches MERRIAM in the arm.*)

MERRIAM: Ow!

JOCK 3: Pretty solid.

GARRETT: No violence, now.

JOCK 5: Get lost, Prep!

GARRETT: No violence directed at me, at least.

JOCK 2: So what's the story? You gonna try out or what?

MERRIAM: I, I was thinking of it. I might.

JOCK 3: Tell you what—you make the team, then you can hang with us. Maybe.

ALL JOCKS: Maybe.

AMY: Well, that sounds like a reasonable offer.

GARRETT: A perfect match, first thing! I think we've done our job!

MERRIAM: Hang on, though. I appreciate the opportunity, really, but . . . could I just ask a question?

JOCK 4: Shoot.

MERRIAM: What do you do besides sports?

ALL JOCKS: Huh?

MERRIAM: What are your other interests?

ALL JOCKS: Huh?

AMY: I think you're confusing them, Merriam.

MERRIAM: Besides play games, you must do. . . other things.

JOCK 1: Sure. Sure we do.

(*The other JOCKS murmur their assent, then start calling out other things THEY do, amidst grunts and cheers.*)

JOCK 2: We go to practice.

JOCK 3: We eat!

JOCK 4: We sleep! Jock's gotta sleep to play!

JOCK 5: We talk about sports!

JOCK 6: We eat some more!

ALL JOCKS: Eat, sleep, play! Eat, sleep, play!

MERRIAM: That's it?

GARRETT: Merriam, what is your point?

JOCK 5: I go to the bathroom.

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(MERRIAM starts to walk away from the JOCKS. AMY and GARRETT follow.)

MERRIAM: Okay, never mind. Like I said, I appreciate you trying to help me and all, but I really don't need. . .

AMY: Let's take a further look around, shall we? After all, one of the great things about being a student at Rockbound High is all the options you have. Isn't that so, Garrett?

GARRETT: What? Oh, oh, yes. You know, I almost got punched back there. I did not like that.

AMY: Like I've always said, "You're not a Rockbound Chipmunk if you don't have options!"

GARRETT and AMY: Rockbound, Rockbound, Chippy, Chipper, Chip, Chip!

MERRIAM: Okay, see, that headache thing I mentioned earlier? I'm starting to feel it.

(AMY and GARRETT have brought MERRIAM over to the BRAINIAC table.)

AMY: Look, look, look, here's another fabulous group who, I'm sure, would love to have you join them.

GARRETT: If you, you know, have the interest and, well, qualifications.

AMY: Hey, everybody, how's it going?

ALL BRAINIACS: Shhh!!

GARRETT: They tend to be a pretty focused bunch.

AMY: Everyone, I know you're studying and all, but we'd like to introduce you to Merriam, a new student here at Rockbound High.

BRAINIAC 1: You're in my advanced physics class.

MERRIAM: Um, yeah, I am.

BRAINIAC 2: What's your GPA?

MERRIAM: It's about a. . .

BRAINIAC 3: About?

ALL BRAINIACS: About? Ha, ha, ha! Dumb.

MERRIAM: Now, wait a minute; I am not dumb. My GPA is *about* a 3.7. I say "about" because I haven't seen a recent progress report in some of my classes, so I'm not 100% sure, that's all.

BRAINIAC 4: We update our averages daily so as to enable us to calculate our GPAs to the exact decimal when called upon.

BRAINIAC 5: The lowest average of any of us is a 3.989.

BRAINIAC 6: Why don't you check with the jocks? I think one of them once had a 3.7.

BRAINIAC 5: Or thought about having one.

ALL BRAINIACS: Ha, ha, ha. Imbeciles.

BRAINIAC 1: I must note, however, that this individual, this Merriam, did make three mildly intelligent comments during a brief group project we worked on in physics.

GARRETT: Mildly intelligent. From these guys, that's a big compliment.

MERRIAM: Oh, uh, thanks.

BRAINIAC 2: Did any of these aforementioned comments cause a significant alteration to your previously—held hypothesis?

BRAINIAC 3: Did her responses stem from an earnest investigation of the facts or merely a perfunctory attempt to analyze the situation?

BRAINIAC 1: While I have not sufficiently triangulated the data to answer the latter question with authority, I can say, in response to the initial query that, in fact, one of her observations did change the course of my investigation and had significant impact on the conclusion.

BRAINIAC 4: And what of the group's score?

BRAINIAC 1: A++ and a miniature candy bar taped to each group member's paper.

ALL BRAINIACS: Hmm. . .

AMY: They're impressed.

(The BRAINIACS circle around MERRIAM, peppering her with questions.)

BRAINIAC 5: How long is the half-life of Carbon 14?

BRAINIAC 6: What event precipitated the fall of the Ming Dynasty?

BRAINIAC 1: What are the first 15 numbers of Pi after the decimal point?

BRAINIAC 2: Give me an example of synecdoche found in a classic work of literature.

MERRIAM: What? This is crazy!

GARRETT: Guys, guys—even you would need a little prep. time for questions like these, wouldn't you?

ALL BRAINIACS: *(after looking to one another briefly)* No.

BRAINIAC 3: Fine, then. Just give us your SAT score.

MERRIAM: I don't really think that's any of your business.

ALL BRAINIACS: None of our business. Ha, ha, ha. Moron.

MERRIAM: Now, hang on!

BRAINIAC 4: *(looking at his laptop)* Actually, people, as unstellar as this Merriam may appear, her score of 2240 on the SAT may well make her eligible to join our group.

MERRIAM: How did you. . .?

AMY: 2240! You are a Brainiac!

MERRIAM: That's not supposed to be public information!

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BRAINIAC 5: Yes, and the files containing all of the SAT scores are supposed to be infallibly secure, as well, but any Mensa candidate with Internet access and 58 hours of uninterrupted time can pretty much read them like the phone book.

GARRETT: Well, well, well, Merriam—I guess we have found you a home. Mission accomplished.

BRAINIAC 6: Not so hasty, there! We must confer before offering admittance!

(The BRAINIACS put their heads together and murmur.)

AMY: I'm sure they'll take you.

MERRIAM: Well, that's nice and all, but. . .

ALL BRAINIACS: *(breaking from the huddle briefly)* Ha, ha, ha! Dunce.

(THEY go back to their previous position and noise.)

GARRETT: I mean, you'll probably have to work hard to catch up with them, but that's what Brainiacs do, right? Study, study, study!

MERRIAM: See, that's the thing. I admit, I'm pretty smart in some areas, but I like to do more than just study.

AMY: Oh, I've heard they sometimes take field trips to observatories and genetics laboratories. You'll have a blast!

(The BRAINIACS suddenly break from their huddle.)

BRAINIAC 1: We have come to our decision.

ALL BRAINIACS: We have.

BRAINIAC 2: Merriam, you may have a seat.

GARRETT and AMY: Chipper, Chippy, Chip, Chip, Chip! That's great!

BRAINIAC 3: Here's a copy of our study sessions. We will be meeting for five hours at my house this afternoon. Attendance is mandatory.

MERRIAM: Hold on! Wait! Guys, it was great to meet you and I appreciate your invitation, but. . .

ALL BRAINIACS: Offer rescinded. Withdraw.

(All the BRAINIACS turn back to their laptops and books, shutting out MERRIAM, AMY and GARRETT.)

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