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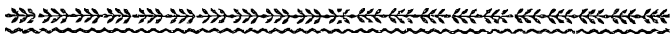
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Dramatic Publishing





Room 222

A Play by CHRISTOPHER SERGEL

Based on Original Material by
JAMES L. BROOKS, STEVE PRITZKER
and ALLAN BURNS



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(ROOM 222)

ROOM 222

A Full-Length Play

For Nine Men, Twelve Women, and Extras

CHARACTERS

SEYMOUR KAUFMAN..... *Principal*
ALICE JOHNSON..... *a student teacher*
MISS DUNPHY
MR. DRAGEN
PETE DIXON
HELEN
SUZY
HANK
JASON
PATTY
MARGE
ABBY
HARVEY
CAROL
MARIANNE
JERRY
RICHE
ELLEN
MR. SHAFFER..... *Jerry's father*
LIZ McINTYRE..... *a counselor*
MRS. MURPHY..... *the supervisor*
STUDENTS..... *extras*

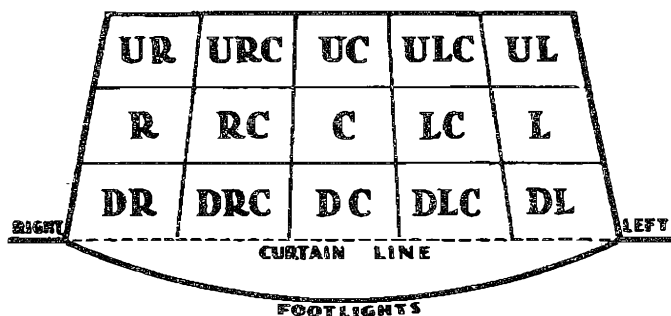
..... *teachers*

..... *students*

PLACE: *A large city high school.*

TIME: *Now.*

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

GENERAL NOTE: The costumes should, of course, suggest a difference between members of the faculty and students. In the beginning the only student wearing extreme clothes is Jerry. The other students should be wearing typical but relatively "quiet" school clothes to make the contrast between what they wear and what Jerry wears obvious. This will also make their entrance at the end of the first act, when they come on dressed in the same extreme clothes worn by Jerry, much more effective. In the second act all of the students may be dressed in more colorful clothes than when first seen in the first act, but they should not still be wearing the extreme outfits used for the end of the first act.

There are a few places in the play where it is possible for students to be talking ad lib. When they do so, they should do so casually and the conversation should be on the subjects with which the play is concerned. If the director elects to avoid these bits of ad lib conversation, the students may busy themselves at these times with schoolwork.

FACULTY

PETE DIXON: Black, capable and handsome. The fact that he "made it the hard way" does not make him insensitive to others who may not be able to bring it off as he did. If he has a fault, it's that he can't help identifying with the problems of his students--to the point where the Principal has to remind him, "You're a teacher, not a social worker."

Actually he's an extraordinarily good teacher and while something of an idealist, he gives hard, straight answers to specific problems. He is very much in love with another teacher, Liz McIntyre, but they try to keep their personal relationship away from school. However, when their different attitudes collide on a problem, this isn't entirely possible.

SEYMOUR KAUFMAN: He tries to present a firm exterior--and with the problems he faces, this is essential. However, Mr. Kaufman is almost as easily involved with the problems of individual students as Pete Dixon. Still, Seymour Kaufman is the responsible head of the school, responsible to school boards and P. T. A. 's, just as much as he is to the students he cares about. Further, he is a pragmatist and must keep his school a going concern. With all this he has a dry wit and an ability to see himself and others with amused perspective.

LIZ McINTYRE: Black, refined, and lovely, she's the counselor and very capable at it. While her heart is as warm as Pete's she is much more strict than he is and determined to do things "according to the regulations." This puts her in painful conflict at times with Pete Dixon, who is sometimes ready to put the needs of an individual student above the rules. Not so with Liz. She touches all the bases, and it's a great joy to her--as it is a relief to Pete--that she is able to solve a major problem and yet stay within her rulebook.

MISS DUNPHY: A well-intentioned but sometimes nervous teacher who in addition to her duties teaching English also supervises the school paper. She has an unexpected wit, and just as she is being taken for granted she makes an unexpected decision to give the student Harvey Butcher a job on the paper.

MR. DRAGEN: Strict and defensive, he seems very much a "heavy." Much of this comes from an

underlying insecurity that makes him assertive and dogmatic. He is someone who has difficulty in "moving with the times." This isn't his fault any more than it's the fault of a short man that he isn't a tall man. Near the end of the play, however, when Mr. Dragen poses his very basic question, he touches something that actually concerns all teachers, and as the others concede--they are far from sure that he is wrong.

ALICE JOHNSON: A young, attractive, exuberant student-teacher faced with her first opportunity. She gives off waves of eagerness, excitement and concern about her chosen profession. She is also terribly insecure and thus quite vulnerable. She is not at the beginning already a good teacher who only needs a chance. She has a great deal to learn, and one of the major undertakings of the play is to show her development to the point where she is probably going to be a very fine teacher.

SUPERVISOR: If possible she should be tall, imposing and a bit inscrutable. She is a specialist in her field and not inclined toward snap judgments. She's a fair person, and she arrives at her opinion by judging carefully. She dresses conservatively.

MR. SHAFFER: Although he is not a teacher, he is included here because he is one of the adults. Mr. Shaffer is the mild-mannered, nervous, excuse-me-for-living father of the most wildy-dressed boy in the school, Jerry Shaffer. Mr. Shaffer is so eager to please and so afraid of giving offense that he almost falls over himself in his effort to agree with almost everyone. In the end, when he finds the strength to take a strong stand--being led into it by Alice Johnson's superb teaching effort--it's not only a transformation of the man but also of his relationship with his son.

STUDENTS

RICHIE: Black and gifted like his idol, Pete Dixon, whom he imitates both in manner and in dress. Richie lives with a terrible fear--that he'll be sent back to another school where he's sure he'll be defeated. While very much a member of the group, Richie has strong ambitions to achieve something important with himself and acts accordingly. In class he's always focused and interested.

JERRY: The key to his character is in his relationship to his father, and no doubt the rebellion Jerry is expressing through the startling clothes he wears is directed against his ultra-conservative and unobtrusive father. Early in the play Jerry underplays his exasperation with his father so that when it finally breaks through--when he hears that his father abstained--it carries greater impact. When Jerry finds a new and sudden respect for his father, it should reveal itself in a new energy and warmth that he has not shown before. A possible costume for Jerry is contained in the text of the play.

MARGE: Without realizing it, Marge has probably been a little interested all along in Harvey Butcher, but early in the play this only gives her rejection of Harvey a special vehemence. Late in the last act, when Harvey is no longer pushing, Marge's line about being glad that he'll come to the party is an indication that perhaps more will come of this later. She is attractive and very capable in her work on the school paper.

HARVEY: If possible he should be at least a bit overweight--and if this must be done with what he wears, it should not be an obvious "Santa Claus" stuffing. Harvey has tremendous energy and quick wit--in fact, he's quite brilliant. His problem is that he is not particularly attractive to girls and

so the matter has grown out of proportion in him. As a result, he comes on very strong, especially with girls, but unfortunately this has only the effect of pushing them further away. When Alice Johnson speaks frankly to him in the second act, he is shaken by what she says and for a time, he's sorting it over in his mind--coming to his conclusion when he speaks out near the end of the play.

ELLEN: Black, intelligent, and quietly humorous, she is also a very fair-minded person who calls a situation as she sees it--such as when she won't allow Hank to be punished for something done by Jason. Ellen is interested in Richie and perhaps something will come of this. Like Richie, she dresses typically a bit on the conservative side.

HELEN: Probably she should be a tiny girl, but if this isn't possible, at least she should have a tiny voice. However, the soft way she speaks has little to do with what she's saying, and she demonstrates this when she reminds the teachers of a lesson and turns that lesson back on another situation. She wears pretty clothes.

JASON: Black, strong, and sure of himself, Jason is a power in the class. His clothes suggest a rebel, but while Jerry's costume is bright and colorful, Jason's is dark, almost menacing. Much of the menace in Jason, however, is affectation. At one point he's ready to do battle to protect Richie but there's no need. While Jason certainly tests the student-teacher Alice, he's also aware of the situation when she's being monitored and her back is to the wall. His gambit of putting his foot up on the desk and then taking it down again when she tells him to is entirely an effort on his part to help Alice by demonstrating her ability to maintain order.

HANK: Like Jason, Hank can't resist testing the new student-teacher, and late in the play, with

Harvey too involved in self-analysis to take center stage, Hank tries briefly to be the class comedian. He's an above-average student, and very persistent when interested by a subject. He's athletic and wears the same general sort of costume worn by Jason.

ABBY, SUZY, MARIANNE, PATTY, and CAROL: They are attractive, interesting high school girls. Their clothes are casual school clothes until their entrance at the end of the first act, at which point they should be as wildly dressed in the most outrageous costumes they can get into in the time they have. (The costumes worn earlier might be a trifle on the dull side to make the contrast at the end of the first act more apparent.) In the second act they are no longer wearing the outrageous clothes seen at the end of the first act, but there's no reason now why their regular school outfits shouldn't be each girl's favorite school outfit. Let the girl cast in each role give that role her individual interpretation, but generally they speak lightly, they are interested in what is happening, they build the direction the play is going at the moment the action is happening.

PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Blackboard, teacher's desk and chair, double row of chair-desks, room divider with door marked "Room 222"; cafeteria tables and chairs, platform with steps side and center (optional). Attendance book, papers, pen or pencil on teacher's desk, other accessories as desired. Chalk and eraser at blackboard.

MR. KAUFMAN: Tray containing breakfast items, including glass of orange juice; school paper.

ALICE: Breakfast tray. Sheet of paper, handkerchief.

MR. DRAGEN: Breakfast tray.

PETE: Breakfast tray, Harvey's essay. Book.

JASON: Eraser.

MARGE: Small table.

ABBY: School paper.

HARVEY: Tickets, telephone.

MR. SHAFFER: Car keys in case.

LIZ: Breakfast tray (half a grapefruit), folder containing letter. Copy of dress code, book.

STUDENT: Note.

MRS. MURPHY: Clipboard, pen.

ALL STUDENTS: Books, notebooks, pens and pencils, etc. as desired.

ACT ONE

THE HOUSELIGHTS DIM OUT AND THE CURTAIN RISES: The set is not yet visible, however, for the stage is dark.

When the light does come up generally, it will reveal a divided set with a suggestion of a classroom which extends in from the right a little more than halfway across the stage. At R are a blackboard and a teacher's desk and chair. To the left is a row of small chair-desks. At the left side of the indicated classroom, there is a room divider coming in a few feet, with a door in it, now swung in revealing the number which is, of course, "Room 222." The classroom area is upstage to allow a playing area in front.

To the left, and upstage of the door to Room 222, is a suggestion of the school cafeteria with several tables with chairs set about. This area should be definitely separate from the classroom and should not interfere with the entrance to Room 222. If possible, it should be on a raised platform, with steps up to it, from both off L and directly in front.

As the houselights go out, a spot of light comes up DC, and a pleasant, wryly humorous man, SEYMOUR KAUFMAN, strolls into it.

MR. KAUFMAN (regarding audience a moment, then nodding back over his shoulder). Walt Whitman High School. Early morning. At this hour, a building without life--without purpose. A large, ancient structure--one of the first schools built by the state. (Turns briefly for a glance at it, then back to the audience. He speaks with affection.) Good-looking old building. Quietly majestic. (Amending quickly.) At this hour, that is. (Smiling.) Usually I get a strong impulse about this time of the morning. I get an impulse to phone in sick. (Regretfully.) But I can't phone in sick. I'm the principal. (With bow of introduction.) Seymour Kaufman. (Bravado.) I don't let the problems of the school affect me. I save myself for the disasters. (Noticing.) Usually I'm the only one around at this hour. But we have a new student teacher--so eager she's waiting for the doors to open. And with the long subway ride she has to take, that's very eager.

(An attractive, outgoing, vulnerable young woman, ALICE JOHNSON, is revealed by a spot at R.)

ALICE (to audience, diffidently). Of course I'm eager. After all the preparation--suddenly here I am! (Conceding with a wry smile.) A scared-out-of-her-mind first day student teacher.

MR. KAUFMAN. Alice Johnson spent a good part of her adolescence listening to matronly women exclaim--"My, what a lovely child." The trouble is, they're still saying it--and Alice is twenty!

ALICE (still front to audience). But now I don't care--because starting today I get to do

something. From the moment the bell rings, there's a reason for me!

MR. KAUFMAN (looking over toward her). We need every new teacher we can get--need them badly. Unfortunately--"eager" isn't enough.

ALICE (closing eyes with pain at this; she's heard it before). I know "eager" isn't enough!

MR. KAUFMAN (looking past ALICE, to R; noticing). More faculty coming.

ALICE (also looking R). Some of the real teachers. (She steps back, to be out of the way, then exits R.)

MR. KAUFMAN. Miss Dunphy. Mr. Dragen. (Hopefully.) With luck I'll make it to the school cafeteria before they have "matters to take up with me." A cup of coffee, two eggs----

MISS DUNPHY (from off R, coming on). Mr. Kaufman!

MR. KAUFMAN (dwindling). Buttered toast----

(MISS DUNPHY, a sympathetic teacher, but one who is easily upset, is approaching, as is MR. DRAGEN, a strong-minded disciplinarian.)

MISS DUNPHY. The band played outside my eleven o'clock window again yesterday. And can I please have someone fix the lock on my home-room? I can hardly open the door.

MR. DRAGEN (also to MR. KAUFMAN). Why do I have to keep on buying my own chalk? They're still ignoring my requisition slips.

MR. KAUFMAN (nodding L, hopefully). Let's all have some coffee and----

MR. DRAGEN (as he's going). It's outrageous.

MR. KAUFMAN. I'll look into it. Check it personally. If necessary, your next box of chalk is my treat. (They've gone off L. He calls after

them.) No fire drill today. If the alarm goes off, ignore it. (Pause.) Unless it's a real fire.

PETE (a voice calling from off R). Good morning, Seymour.

MR. KAUFMAN (looking R). Good morning, Pete. (Back to audience.) Pete Dixon--one of the teachers who holds the school together. Furthermore, he doesn't start every day with a list of troubles. I'll show you.

(PETE DIXON, young, black, and capable, is coming on R.)

MR. KAUFMAN. Anything bothering you, Pete?

PETE (smiling). On such a beautiful morning?

MR. KAUFMAN (to audience). See? (Back to PETE.) I happen to know that when you requested history books yesterday, they sent you thirty copies of "Introduction to German."

PETE (amused). Now I know why Saunders is trying to teach German with biology texts. (Noticing off R.) Excuse me a minute. (PETE is going off R.)

MR. KAUFMAN (after him). Sure. *Auf Wiedersehen!* (Back to audience.) He's expecting to meet another faculty member, Liz McIntyre--who is well worth meeting.

(The light is coming up now, revealing the set described earlier.)

MR. KAUFMAN (noticing). And here come the students. (To audience.) Walt Whitman has three thousand. As a teacher might put it--three thousand strong!

(STUDENTS are crossing R to L, each carrying the usual for a school day, talking as they cross.
NOTE: If desired, extras may be used here to give a sense of a larger student body. If used, they cross from R to L, talking casually as they go, but not in such a way as to call attention away from those with specific lines.)

HELEN. Did you do your history?

SUZY. Of course I did my history.

HELEN. Could I look at your history?

SUZY. Never.

HELEN (as they exit). Why never?

(HANK and JASON are entering R.)

HANK. Hey, Jason, did you notice Jerry? Wow!

JASON. How could you not notice Jerry?

HANK. Really wild outfit! (They are going off.)

JASON. Maybe Jerry likes detention.

MR. KAUFMAN (considering). I hadn't thought of that possibility. Maybe Jerry likes detention. (Explaining to audience.) The dress code at Whitman is a bit antiquated, but Jerry Shaffer's attack on it is overkill.

(PATTY and MARGE have come on R.)

PATTY (crossing). What'd you do to your hair?

(They are crossing L.)

MARGE. Like it?

PATTY. The perfect date--for Harvey Butcher.

MARGE (horrified). Please--I'll wash it out tonight!

MR. KAUFMAN. Harvey Butcher has a problem.

(ABBY has entered R.)

ABBY (calling). Marge--Patty--wait up.

MR. KAUFMAN (continuing, to audience). There's an expression, "as the twig is bent," and so forth. You might say we're in the twig-straightening business.

(A decidedly overweight boy with a cherubic expression on his face and tremendous energy hurries on R. This is HARVEY. He hesitates as he sees the girls.)

MR. KAUFMAN (going right on; an invitation to the audience and a key to the play). Out of our three thousand twigs, let's straighten a few together.

HARVEY (calling). Girls--I've got good news. Tidings of great joy!

MR. KAUFMAN (gesturing toward him). That's Harvey Butcher. At his weight you may have a little difficulty seeing him as a twig, but try. (ABBY, MARGE and PATTY are looking back at him with absolutely no interest.)

HARVEY (as he hurries across). I have two tickets for a great show--Friday night. Absolutely fabulous! (None of the girls respond. HARVEY takes out tickets.) The touring company is the same cast that did it in New York. (Hopefully.) Big Broadway hit!

ABBY (has turned back to others). Did either of you do your history?

HARVEY. Maybe you'd like to cut the cards--draw straws--see which is the lucky----

MARGE (to ABBY). Why didn't you do your own homework?

ABBY. I have a good excuse--but you wouldn't believe it.

HARVEY (still trying). Not often a show like this----

ABBY (continuing, to MARGE). More important-- neither will Mr. Dixon.

HARVEY (running down). So I thought--(With faint emphasis.)--if one of you ladies----(They turn toward him at this. HARVEY realizes he's going too far, and decides to make the best of the rejection. He takes a breath, managing a big smile and a bravado that suggests this was his intention all along.) The reason I've got two tickets is that I take up two seats! (He leads the brief laugh at his size, but that's it. They're not about to include him. HARVEY breaks an uncomfortable pause.) Boy--you gotta be fast to keep up with all this fascinating conversation. (Still no response. He manages another big smile.) Sorry, girls--I have to tear myself away. (He sees someone off L. He calls:) Hey--Jo Ellen. (Doing a funny shuffle as he goes off L.) Here comes Harvey! (The girls look at each other and shrug.)

PATTY. Why's he always on?

MARGE. Wears me out.

ABBY (as they're going off L, to MARGE). What'd you do to your hair?

MR. KAUFMAN (has been looking off after HARVEY). I have a feeling that inside that fat boy is a thin boy--and he's a very lonely young man.

(CAROL and MARIANNE are entering R.)

CAROL (is saying). I'm willing to wear sensible clothes, but my parents don't give me any latitude.

MARIANNE. That's everyone's parents.

CAROL (gesturing back R). Not Jerry Shaffer's parents.

MARIANNE (as she looks back). You're right.

(JERRY is sauntering in R.)

MARIANNE. That is liberation! (They are right. JERRY, a lanky, loose-limbed young man, is dressed outrageously. The details should be left to the actor and director, but here's a suggestion: His hair is shoulder length and he wears wire-rimmed yellow glasses, a full-sleeved orange silk gypsy-type blouse, beaded Indian vest, patchwork pants, and buckskin moccasins.)

CAROL (softly). Wow!

MARIANNE (hushed admiration). Fantastic!

MR. KAUFMAN (to audience). You might think of Jerry as a twig off a Christmas tree.

MR. SHAFFER (from off R). Wait, Jerry--I have to lock the car. (JERRY is waiting, somewhere between patience and resignation. Meanwhile, the girls are continuing off L.)

CAROL (as they exit). Why couldn't I have parents with such a liberal outlook?

MR. KAUFMAN (challenging audience). What would you expect the father of the gaudiest boy in school to look like? Buffalo Bill? General Custer?

(MR. SHAFFER is coming on R, buckling his car keys back in their case. He is "careful-looking," dressed in conservative clothes that are unimpressive even in that sense. He is a bit nervous, apologetic, and perhaps a bit shorter than his son, Jerry.)

MR. SHAFFER (looking about apprehensively). This is your school, Jerry--very nice.

MR. KAUFMAN (to audience). You guessed. For a boy to be expressing so much rebellion, his

father would have to be----(Stops himself.)
Forget it. I'm not a qualified psychiatrist! I
shouldn't try to analyze.

MR. SHAFFER (to JERRY, nervously). If I'm to
see any teachers, I'll have to go inside.

JERRY (it's obvious). You're so right----

MR. SHAFFER. Yes--get right to it. (Nervously
he's adjusting his tie and flicking lint off his
suit as he goes. With bored amusement,
JERRY follows him off L.)

MR. KAUFMAN. I can sense it. That ridiculous
outfit is going to turn into a ridiculous mess.

(RICHIE, who is black and very well-dressed--in
much the same manner as teacher PETE
DIXON--strolls on R, pausing to stretch.)

MR. KAUFMAN. Richie Lane--best student in
school. He dresses a little like his history
teacher, Pete Dixon. And with a little luck,
he'll be another Pete Dixon.

(ELLEN, an attractive black girl, has come on R.)

ELLEN (teasing RICHIE). Get a little sleep at night,
you wouldn't be so tired now.

RICHIE (smiling). I'm not tired--just kinks from
the subway.

ELLEN. How far could you be riding? The school
district isn't that big.

RICHIE (strolling L together). I cramp up easy.

MR. KAUFMAN (watching them go). Perfect attend-
ance, great marks, edits school paper, helps
others--(Facing front.)--and my worst worry
in the whole school. (Grimly.) I don't worry
about that twig getting bent. I worry about that
one getting broken.

(ALICE JOHNSON has entered R and approached him, hesitantly, during this.)

ALICE. Mr. Kaufman----

MR. KAUFMAN (startled). Yes? (Seeing her.)
Good morning, Miss Johnson. You got here very early. I saw you before.

ALICE (smiling). Can't stay away. You've been talking to yourself.

MR. KAUFMAN. Talking to----When?

ALICE. Just now. You're worried about the trees.

MR. KAUFMAN. Trees?

ALICE. Twigs?

MR. KAUFMAN (pained). One of the first rules-- student-teachers should not eavesdrop when the principal starts talking to himself.

ALICE. I'll remember. (Starting to go.) Excuse me----

MR. KAUFMAN. No, wait. (Gestures R.) I want you to meet Mr. Dixon. You're going to work with him. Brilliant teacher.

(PETE and LIZ McINTYRE are entering R.)

PETE (is saying to LIZ). Have you started hitching rides to school in a truck, Miss McIntyre?

LIZ. Didn't you see the sign on that truck, Mr. Dixon?

PETE. McIntyre Trucking?

LIZ. My father.

MR. KAUFMAN. Good morning.

LIZ. You're always here before the staff.

MR. KAUFMAN. Not before Miss Johnson. Our new student teacher. (Introducing.) Liz McIntyre--counseling.

ALICE (shaking hands with her). Hi----

LIZ (smiling). Student teachers keep looking

younger.

ALICE (nervously). I hope that's good.

MR. KAUFMAN. Pete Dixon. Your immediate boss.

ALICE (pumping his hand). It's a pleasure. I hear you're a brilliant teacher.

MR. KAUFMAN (simulating bewilderment). Where'd you hear that?

ALICE. You were just telling me that----

MR. KAUFMAN (interrupting). Miss Johnson is here to dry the area behind her ears. She's going to spend the rest of this semester with you student-teaching. Then if she's smart, she'll go back to college and change her major.

ALICE. I won't! I'd never!

LIZ (taking his arm firmly). Time you had your breakfast, Mr. Kaufman.

MR. KAUFMAN. If you're hinting I'm not my charming self before I've had----

LIZ (amused). Hinting is hardly the *mot juste*.

MR. KAUFMAN (humorously helpless). What's she mean, Pete?

PETE. She means you're pretty crabby before you get some food in you.

MR. KAUFMAN. I was only telling the girl to be realistic.

ALICE. That's all right, Mr. Kaufman. It's just you don't understand how much I want to be a teacher. (As they all look at her, she continues earnestly.) I hope this is going to be a meaningful semester for all of us.

MR. KAUFMAN (wryly). Just what we all need--a meaningful semester.

LIZ (giving his arm a tug). Time for coffee and eggs, Seymour.

MR. KAUFMAN. The way you're going on, maybe I'd better have some Danish, too.