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Close the Door So It Can't Get in Your Room

**Drama by
Ev Miller**

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(CLOSE THE DOOR SO IT CAN'T GET IN YOUR ROOM)

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CLOSE THE DOOR SO IT CAN'T GET IN YOUR ROOM

Characters

(10 females, 11 males, extras)

The Students

Kyle Braun
Lucas Burton
Carol Howe
Gerald Ismus
Bob Krieg
Elizabeth James
Betty Larson
Extras

The Faculty

Jess Jespersion
Marge Dohn
Wayne Morgan
Gertrude Berg
Ed Hargrave
Peggy Marshall
Lannie Harris
Dale Malefield
Paul Bennett, Narrator
Extras

The Parents

Mr. Braun
Mr. Burton
Mrs. James
Mrs. Lang
Mrs. Larson



PLACE: A high school

TIME: Today

Playing time: 90 minutes

NOTE: The characters in this play and their names are fictitious. None of the characters is a real person, living or dead.

ABOUT THE PLAY

What makes a good teacher? That question constantly comes up in legislatures, school board meetings, and wherever a group of parents gets together. But the question is not easy to answer.

Not easy, but not impossible. This play may provide an answer. It's about Paul Bennett in his first year as a teacher. It shows his anxiety on the eve of his first day in the classroom, his boredom at faculty meetings, his sigh of relief when the Christmas holidays arrive, his consternation at the attitude of some of the other teachers. (Aside to drama teachers: You may do your school's faculty a good service by letting them see themselves as others see them.)

Paul Bennett wants to be a good teacher, but obstacles stand in his way—the students. There's Kyle, the jock who refuses to let classes interfere with athletics; Carol, who uses class time to write love letters to the boy who will be waiting at the door when the bell rings; Lucas, who uses the class to catch up on his sleep—and others whom every teacher and every student will recognize.

And then there are the parents—those who don't care what happens to their kids, and those who care too much.

Throughout the play Paul Bennett struggles with the question: should he stay in teaching, or should he get out?

The author, a veteran educator in the North Dakota schools, has given us a play that will tingle the emotions and tickle the laugh-box of everyone who has anything to do with education—teachers, administrators, students, parents, and taxpayers.

And everyone fortunate enough to see the play will agree—the author was obviously a good teacher.

CLOSE THE DOOR SO IT CAN'T GET IN YOUR ROOM

ACT I

[The set is a high school classroom in a rather old, run-down school. The classroom contains several beat-up student desks, an old-fashioned teacher's desk Stage Right, a chalkboard, a few posters, etc. The classroom is completely open to the audience except for a doorframe which is placed at an angle at Left. It is through this door that both faculty and students pass to get in and out of that classroom. Farther Down Left is a smaller desk. It contains a telephone and a diary. Another desk Down Right contains only a telephone.]

The curtain opens to a silent tableau of FACULTY MEMBERS sitting in the classroom area. The narrator, PAUL BENNETT, is at his desk, Down Right, writing in his diary as he speaks (the director might choose to have Bennett speak directly to audience here or a taped voice may be used as he writes)]

BENNETT. Dear diary . . . well, tomorrow I start my first day of teaching at Central High School. I have to admit I'm really nervous about it. It's going to be a lot different than my practice teaching last year at Campus High. Central has three times as many students and I won't have Mrs. Swenson to rely on. *[Pause while he bites on the pen, thinking]* I have five classes . . . three of American Lit and two of composition. But, I think I'm ready . . . I hope I'm ready . . . We had our first faculty meeting today . . . it wasn't quite what I expected . . . *[He rises and walks to the classroom as the LIGHTS come up on the FACULTY and they begin to talk animatedly. He takes a seat in one of the student desks]*

JESPERSON. *[He is a man of about 60, balding, heavyset]* All right! *[He rises slowly]* All right, you people! Let's quiet down and get this meeting started! *[The noise continues]* I said quiet!! *[Slowly the noise subsides]* All right, I want to welcome all of you back to Central for another school year. *[He grins]* Another 180 days with the little monsters. *[There is a collective groan]* Well, just think how they must feel! We have two new faculty members this year I'd like to introduce. Miss Lannie Harris . . . please stand, Miss Harris . . . *[A gorgeous brunette in her mid-twenties rises. She is dressed in a tight sweater and skirt. There is a collective whistling and stomping of feet among the male members]* All right, you animals, knock it off! Miss Harris is replacing June Wald in the business department.

MORGAN. [*An athletic-looking man dressed in slacks with a school jacket*] How do I get to teach in the business department, Jess?

JESPERSON. You have to have an I. Q. above 80. [*The others hoot and yell*] Please forgive Mr. Morgan, Miss Harris. He's a Phys. Ed. instructor . . . that should explain his behavior. [*He grins at Morgan*] Miss Harris comes to us fresh out of the university. Our other new teacher is Paul Bennett. Stand up, Mr. Bennett. He, too, will be starting his first year of teaching. He's in the English Department. [*He looks around the room*] I think that's about it for introductions . . . everybody else here is old. [*Pause*] Now, you have class lists in your packets. We tried to keep the classes at a reasonable number . . . we're up about twenty-five students total, so we should be okay. [*A hand goes up*] Yes . . . Gertrude . . .

MISS BERG. [*Rising. She is a huge woman in her mid-fifties, but she looks much older. She constantly is pulling down on her dress or searching for a strap to adjust under her shoulder. She speaks very precisely*] I see I have Lucas Burton back in American History again. Why is that?

JESPERSON. What do you mean?

MISS BERG. Well, shouldn't another of the history teachers have him this year?

JESPERSON. Gertrude, who failed him last year?

MISS BERG. Well, I did . . .

JESPERSON. Well, then, you get him back.

MISS BERG. Oh! That's not fair!

JESPERSON. If you wanted fairness, Gertrude, you should have gone into another profession. [*She sits angrily*] Marge wants to say a few words about attendance. For you two new people, Marge Dohn is our assistant principal in charge of attendance. Marge . . .

MRS. DOHN. [*Rising. She is a professional-looking woman in her mid-thirties*] I'd like to encourage everyone to get off to a good start this year taking attendance. We can't keep track of these kids unless everyone does the job. I don't want another situation like the one we had with Pat Freemont last spring.

HARGRAVE. [*A small white-haired man*] What was that? I don't remember.

MRS. DOHN. Sure you do, Ed. He was a senior and he needed all his credits to graduate. He didn't go to one class for nine weeks before I discovered it. [*All heads turn toward a woman in their midst*]

MRS. MARSHALL. That wasn't my fault! I thought he had brought in a drop.

MRS. DOHN. Well, we're just going to have to double check those things. It was pretty rough when we found out he didn't have enough credits to graduate. Now . . . also, let's keep the traffic flowing in the halls a bit better. Remember the system we started last year, especially for movement on the stairways where the bottlenecks seem to be . . . N. D. down north; U. S. up south. Just remember, North Dakota and United States.

MORGAN. We remember, but do the kids?

MRS. DOHN. It's up to us to remind them.

MISS HARRIS. [*Innocently and sweetly*] What was that again? South Dakota and what?

MRS. DOHN. No . . . North Dakota and United States.

MISS HARRIS. Oh . . . North Dakota . . . there's so much to remember!

MORGAN. Don't worry . . . I'll help you out.

MRS. MARSHALL. [*Interrupting*] Marge, where's the chalk?

MRS. DOHN. Huh?

MRS. MARSHALL. The chalk . . . the chalk . . . I ordered five boxes of chalk . . . three yellow and two white. I got only one yellow and one white.

MRS. DOHN. Well, we can check that later . . . I'm sure it's around here somewhere.

MRS. MARSHALL. It's just that I *like* plenty of yellow chalk. It shows up so much better on the board and I use so much of it.

MORGAN. Maybe if she didn't eat so much of it . . . [*He says this under his breath but she hears*]

MRS. MARSHALL. I do not eat chalk! That's just a terrible story the students have made up!

JESPERSON. Wayne, why don't you try to behave? Anything else, Marge?

MRS. DOHN. No, I think I'm done.

MRS. MARSHALL. Mr. Jesperson, I'd like to say a word about the audio-visual equipment if I may.

JESPERSON. It's not on the agenda, Peg. Can't it wait?

MRS. MARSHALL. [*Standing*] It will just take a minute.

JESPERSON. Oh, okay . . . but try to be brief. Mrs. Marshall is in charge of audio-visual equipment in the building so if you need a projector or videotape, you check it out with her.

MISS HARRIS. What room is that?

JESPERSON. 212. On second floor.

MISS HARRIS. So I go up the south stairs and down the north?

JESPERSON. [*Blankly*] Why, yes . . . that's correct, Miss Harris. Go ahead, Peg. Remember, I'd like to get out of here by Christmas.

MRS. MARSHALL. [*Very important*] I shall try to be brief, Mr. Jesperson. But, I do feel it is my duty to chide each of you for the care you have taken of our equipment . . . or shall I say, lack of care.

MORGAN. [*Sarcastically*] Oh, my! Chide! [*Laughter*]

MRS. MARSHALL. It is no laughing matter! That equipment is very expensive and valuable and we must take care of it. Why, you cannot imagine the condition I get that equipment back in. Why, last spring, one teacher, who shall remain nameless, fell asleep during a movie and his students pushed the projector against the wall so the reel wouldn't turn and it burned out the motor!

MALEFIELD. I did not fall asleep!

MRS. MARSHALL. You did too!

MALEFIELD. Did not!

JESPERSON. [*Dryly*] All right, let's keep this on at least a semi-professional level if that's possible.

MRS. MARSHALL. Well, these machines are our teaching tools . . . our aides . . . our friends, as it were . . .

MORGAN. That projector isn't the only thing around here with a burned-out motor.

MRS. MARSHALL. I resent that!

JESPERSON. [*Sighing*] All right! Anything else, Peg?

MRS. MARSHALL. [*Almost in tears. Sitting*] NO!

MORGAN. [*Standing*] As long as we're all getting a chance to talk, I'd like to say something.

JESPERSON. [*Exasperated*] What is it, Wayne?

MORGAN. I've got a running back and a tight end who are scheduled into a seventh period class. Now, you know, Jess, that I start practice at three o'clock.

JESPERSON. They're out by three-ten.

MORGAN. But they got to get taped and dressed and on the field. That takes at least a half hour.

MRS. DOHN. Those two boys are seniors and they have to take that class . . . it's a required and they put it off until this year.

MORGAN. Well, for Pete's sake! How are we supposed to build a football team this school system can be proud of if we can't have some cooperation?

JESPERSON. Sorry, Wayne . . . there's no alternative in this case. It's the only period we could schedule them into.

MORGAN. Well, all I've got to say is, it's a lousy way to run a railroad!

MRS. MARSHALL. If this were a railroad, you'd be the caboose.
[Laughter]

MISS HARRIS. *[Very worried]* Mr. Jesperson, my room is 314. Is that on third floor?

JESPERSON. Why . . . yes . . . why?

MISS HARRIS. Oh, I hope I can remember which is up and which is down.

JESPERSON. *[Kindly]* Please . . . don't worry about it, Miss Harris. I'm beginning to wish we hadn't brought it up.

MRS. DOHN. Me too . . .

MALEFIELD. Let's get on with some important things, should we, Jess? Are the parking lot assignments the same as last year?

JESPERSON. Well . . . I think so . . . *[He looks at Mrs. Dohn]* Marge?

MRS. DOHN. *[Shaking her head sadly]* Yes, Jess, they are . . .

MALEFIELD. Gad! *[He slaps the desk]* That means I'm parked right next to Marshall's old Rambler!

MRS. MARSHALL. What's the matter with my Rambler?

MALE TEACHER. Nothing except it should have been junked ten years ago. I bought a new car this summer and everytime you open the door on that junker you wipe out half the parking lot.

MRS. MARSHALL. Oh! That's a lie!

MALEFIELD. Ha! You should have seen the door on the car I just traded in. It was banged up so bad, it lowered the value at least three hundred dollars.

JESPERSON. *[Another sigh]* Look . . . maybe you can just trade spots with someone else.

HARGRAVE. I'll trade with him, Jess . . . I'm driving the old pick-up to school everyday anyway.

MRS. MARSHALL. Oh, sure! That means my Rambler will get all scratched up.

JESPERSON. *[Firmly]* I think we've heard enough about the parking lot, don't you? *[They subside somewhat]* Now . . . next order of business . . . *[He checks his notes]* Oh, yes . . . as usual, the summer crew did not get around to all the painting and repairs we asked for . . .

MORGAN. What else is new?

MRS. MARSHALL. Have the dividers in the lavatories been put back?

JESPERSON. [*Suspecting trouble*] No . . . we figured that until we can afford to put in some sturdy ones and do the job right, they'd just get ripped out again.

MRS. MARSHALL. For goodness sake! How do you expect anyone to use them that way? A person might as well go down to Main Street.

MORGAN. Go ahead . . . nobody'd notice.

JESPERSON. Wayne . . .

MORGAN. Sorry . . .

HARGRAVE. Peg is right, though, Jess . . . one of my girls was late to class last year and when I asked her why, she said she had to run down to Skip's Service Station on Sixth Street to use the lavatory because there's no privacy here.

MRS. MARSHALL. [*Whining*] Why can't we get a faculty bathroom? And how far is that station, anyway?

JESPERSON. Peg, there is a small bathroom in the central office and you know it.

MRS. MARSHALL. Oh, sure . . . so everybody in school knows what you're doing!

MORGAN. For Pete's sake, Peg! It's normal! Everybody does it!

MRS. MARSHALL. I don't care! I want some privacy!

MISS BERG. [*Sullen—out of the blue*] I still don't see why I should get Lucas Burton back again!

JESPERSON. What?

MISS BERG. I said, it isn't fair that I should get Lucas Burton . . .

JESPERSON. I heard you, Gertrude . . . I thought we had that all settled.

MISS BERG. It's just that I think we have a personality conflict.

MORGAN. Ha! Lucas Burton has a personality conflict with everybody. I understand he had a doozer of a personality conflict with the police this summer.

MISS BERG. You see, Mr. Jesperson, I have a great deal of difficulty in showing that young man understanding and affection.

MORGAN. What she means is, she can't stand the sight of him!

MISS BERG. Yes, that too.

JESPERSON. Gertrude, we all know what kind of a boy Lucas Burton is. Your class wasn't the only one he failed. He has to take both sophomore and junior English over, too, even though he's supposed to be a senior.

MISS BERG. But, in someone else's class, he might . . .

FEMALE TEACHER. [*From back row*] Well, I' m theonly other person who' teachi ngAmeri carhi storyand I sure don' want hi m.

JESPERSON. Just gi vət a try, Gertrude. He' ɔnly i ɔschool about half the time, anyway.

MORGAN. Besi ds, Gertrude, remember, i ɦ chi ld fails, it is not the chi ldwho i ɦai li nɦut the teacher . . . [*He says this sarcastically*]

MALEFIELD. Yeah, and don' tyou remember, Gertrude, there' ɔno such thi ngas a bad boy. He i ɦust a bi tmi s-dɛctɛd at the moment. He' lɦo strai ɦɦb neof these days.

MORGAN. Strai ɦɦto the state pen i ɦny guess.

JESPERSON. Okay, you two, k nocki tɦff! [*To Miss Berg*] Just give i ta try for a few weeks, Gertrude. If he gives you too much trouble, we' lɦee what we can do.

MISS BERG. He never gives *too* much trouble . . . that' s thɦproblem . . . never enough to expel hi nɦfrom school.

MALEFIELD. Poor Lucas! He' ɦo mi ɦnderstood!

JESPERSON. [*Losing patience*] You know, we have talked about everythi nɦere exc eptwhat' ɦ i mportat!

MALEFIELD. Huh? What do you mean, Jess? This is all important.

MORGAN. Yeah . . . what are you getti nɦt, Jess?

JESPERSON. [*His voice rising*] I mean, the start of a new school year . . . I mean begi nni nɦgasses . . . I mean li ttlɦhi nɦsi kɦthe several hundred students who wi lɦe showi nɦɦ here tomorrow morni nɦ

MORGAN. [*A long silence—they all look at each other*] Well, jeez, Jess . . . why didn' tyou say you wanted to talk about that?

JESPERSON. [*Slaps his forehead*] Oh, lord!

MALEFIELD. Yeah, we woulda li stend. [*He looks at his watch*] ɦo . . . let' s ɦebn wi thi tɦJess. It' ɦettin' late.

MORGAN. Yeah, I got football practi cɦ rtwenty mi ntes.

MRS. MARSHALL. I have to get my audi o-visuɦtquipment in order...

MISS HARRIS. I hope I have time to check out the north and south stai rway . . .

JESPERSON. [*Exasperated*] Mr. Bennett, you have been very q ɦiet for your first day here . . . do you have any questions?

BENNETT. [*Rising; he is stunned*] Uh . . . no . . . uh, I mean, I don' t think so . . .

MORGAN. [*Whispering to neighbor*] Ki dɦexpresses hi nɦself real nice, don' tɦe?

JESPERSON. I mean, anything at all, Mr. Bennett?

BENNETT. Well, I think I understand the traffic movement on the stairs, and the parking lot . . . uh, I did have one or two questions about grading and semester sheets and report cards . . . things like that.

MORGAN. C'mon, Jess, we been through that a hundred times already.

MALEFIELD. Yeah . . .

JESPERSON. Uh, Mr. Bennett, why don't you and Miss Harris stay for awhile after this meeting and Marge and I will go over any of that with you. Any other business? [*MRS. MARSHALL's hand goes up along with one or two others. He ignores them*] This meeting is adjourned! See you all bright and early in the morning . . .

[The scene again arrests in sudden silent tableau. BENNETT walks back to his desk as the scene DARKENS. He sits and begins to write as he talks]

BENNETT. So, the faculty meeting wasn't quite what I expected. I guess parking spots and lavatories and running backs are important to a school, too. Anyway, I didn't decide to become a teacher so I could go to faculty meetings . . . it's the kids I'm interested in. I've made up my mind to be the best! Before this year is over, every student of mine will be a changed person. Those who haven't liked literature in the past will become fanatics; those who use "ain't" will squirm in disgust every time they hear the abominable word. Adoring mobs of students will follow me down the halls, throwing flowers in my path. Girls will look at me in adoration and love; boys with respect and reverence. "Teacher of the Year" is too small a goal! Well . . . my mother always did say I was an optimist . . .

[BENNETT walks quickly to the classroom door and stands outside. STUDENTS move hurriedly up and down the hall. They chatter and laugh, some have miniature radios plugged into their ears. As each goes into his room, BENNETT smiles, nods, says hello. To his immediate right, just a few feet away, a high school couple (CAROL HOWE and BOB KRIEG) embrace madly. He has his arms around her and they gaze longingly into each other's eyes without speaking. BENNETT glances at them, unsure what to do. A boy (LUCAS BURTON) enters the classroom, takes a desk at the back, immediately puts his head down on the desk and goes to sleep. A lovely young girl (BETTY LARSON), who is constantly primping—combing hair, applying lipstick, etc.—enters and stops near Bennett]

BETTY. Hi!

BENNETT. Hello . . .

BETTY. Is this 312? [*She flirts openly*]

BENNETT. Yes, it is.

BETTY. Then, like wow!* I'm here! [*She holds out her schedule.*

**Use current slang here and elsewhere as desired*]

BENNETT. Yes . . . yes, you are.

BETTY. I'm Betty Larson. Like, you're new here, huh?

BENNETT. Yes, my first year.

BETTY. Far out! 'Bout time they hired some cute teachers.

BENNETT. Thank you . . .

BETTY. I suppose, like, wow, your wife must be nice, too, huh?

BENNETT. I'm not married.

BETTY. [*Added interest*] You're not? Well, most of the time I think English is really gross, I mean to the max, but, like wow, I think I'm gonna like it this year. [*She reaches for her brush and begins to brush her hair as she enters to find a desk. A tall, good-looking boy (KYLE BRAUN) with a GIRL on each arm struts in. He wears a very gaudy letter jacket*]

KYLE. Hey, teach! This English?

BENNETT. Yes . . .

KYLE. [*To girls*] Well, I better get in and find a desk big enough for these long legs. [*The GIRLS sigh*] See you after class.

1ST GIRL. See you later, Kyle!

2ND GIRL. 'Bye, Kyle. Don't forget lunch . . .

KYLE. I won't . . . [*He watches GIRLS exit and then says to Bennett*] Oh well, some of us got it and some of us ain't.

BENNETT. Well, I . . .

KYLE. [*Interrupting*] Any special desk, teach?

BENNETT. No, not yet . . . just sit anywhere.

KYLE. Gotcha . . . [*He ambles in, sees a couple of girls, and joins them. The BELL rings. BENNETT looks at the lovers, who have not moved an inch. He walks toward them*]

BENNETT. Uh . . . it's time for class . . . [*They do not hear, but continue to stare into each other's eyes*] It's time to go to class! Are either of you in 312?

CAROL. [*Dreamily*] I am . . . I think . . .

BENNETT. Then, you better get in there.

CAROL. [*Hands touching as they part—overly dramatic*] 'Bye, bye, Bobby . . .

BOB. I'll wait for you . . .

CAROL. I know . . . [*They part reluctantly. She enters the room, BENNETT behind her. He walks to the front and begins. He is very nervous*]

BENNETT. Good welcome . . . I mean, good morning and welcome. My name is Paul Bennett . . . two n's and two t's. I'd like to go over the class list and see if everyone is here and try to match faces with names a little. We only have ten-minute classes this first day, so I guess I won't get to know you too well. [*He swallows nervously*] I hope I don't foul up your names too badly. [*He reads from list, alphabetically*] Kyle Braun?

KYLE. Right here, teach.

BENNETT. My name is Bennett . . . Mr. Bennett . . .

KYLE. Oh, yeah, sure . . . gotcha . . .

BENNETT. You're a senior, Kyle . . .

KYLE. Right!

BENNETT. I see you have a letter jacket. What sport are you in? [*The CLASS erupts*] Did I say something funny?

GIRL. Where *have* you been, Mr. Bennett? Kyle was all-conference last year in both football and basketball.

KYLE. [*Correcting modestly*] *Second* team all-conference in football, but I'm gonna make the first team this year. I had some trouble with the option last year but both Coach Morgan and my old man been workin' on it with me all summer.

BENNETT. The option? . . .

KYLE. Yeah . . . don't you know what that is?

BENNETT. Doesn't it have something to do with the quarterback?

KYLE. Right! That's my spot. Things are lookin' up here! That old tarantula I had for English last year thought athletics had somethin' to do with Nero and the lions or somethin'! [*The CLASS laughs*] Anyway, I got the option down pat and we're gonna win the conference. Leastways, we gonna win it if I can get a coupla ends who can catch the ball when I throw it. My old man and the coach says there ain't nothin' I can't do in football if I get the option down.

BENNETT. Isn't . . .

KYLE. Huh?

BENNETT. *Isn't* noth-- . . . uh, I mean . . . anything you can't do . . . don't use "ain't."

KYLE. Oh . . . oh . . . gotcha . . . anyway, it takes a lot of time and

there ain't nothin' more important to me than football so I hope you ain't the kind of teacher who gives a lot of homework.

BENNETT. Well, there will be some, but I'll try to be reasonable.

KYLE. [*Finger to thumb in gesture of approval*] Gotcha!

BENNETT. [*Continues his reading of list*] Lucas Burton . . . [*No answer*] Lucas Burton! [*Still no answer*] Is Lucas Burton here?

GIRL. That's him, Mr. Bennett . . . [*She points at sleeping boy*]

BENNETT. [*Walks back to boy and shakes him*] Lucas? Lucas?

LUCAS. [*Coming out of fog*] Huh? What?

BENNETT. I would appreciate it if you'd try to stay awake.

LUCAS. Huh? Why?

BENNETT. Well, because this is a school and this is English class and you can't learn if you're not awake.

LUCAS. [*He starts to put his head down*] Who cares?

BENNETT. Lucas! [*LUCAS's head comes back up*]

LUCAS. Yeah?

BENNETT. Don't you want to learn?

LUCAS. School sucks.

BENNETT. [*Shocked*] What?

LUCAS. School sucks.

BENNETT. [*Not knowing what else to say*] Would you care to elaborate on that a bit more?

LUCAS. [*Long pause*] School sucks bad . . . [*His head goes down on the desk again*]

BENNETT. Yes . . . well . . . [*He turns to the list again*] Carol Howe? [*No response*] Is Carol Howe here? [*Another girl pokes CAROL, who is writing frantically*]

CAROL. Oh! Here . . . I'm Carol . . .

BENNETT. [*Joking*] You don't have to take notes yet, Carol.

CAROL. [*Demurely*] I . . . I was just writing a note . . . to Bobby . . .

BENNETT. But, didn't you just see him in the hallway?

CAROL. Yes . . . but we always write to each other between classes.

BENNETT. Every period?

CAROL. Yes.

BENNETT. I see . . . well, I hope you'll wait to write your notes in this class until you have some free time. [*He returns to the list*] Gerald . . . Ismus, is it? [*GERALD's hand goes slowly up. He is very shy*] Did I pronounce that name right? Is it Ismus? [*GERALD nods*] That's an unusual name, Gerald. What nationality is it? [*GERALD shrugs*] It's not